ACTING THEORY AS POETICS OF DRAMA

A STUDY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF 'MOTIVATED ACTION' IN PLAYWRITING THEORY

By

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Abstract

Playwriting theory has, from its beginning, been concerned with the search for the essential nature of dramatic writing. Early playwriting treatises (poetics) defined the essential aspects of drama as being the plot (creation of sequences of fictional events), the moral character of its heroes, the idea of enactment, or the rhetorical and lyrical qualities of the text. These categories were kept through later treatises with different emphasis being put on each category.

An understanding of drama as a sequence of fictional events (plot) has been central in acting theory. Modern theories and techniques centred on Stanislavsky's ideas rely heavily on rehearsal methods that carefully establish the sequence of actions of the characters in a play as a result of psychological motivations. This method was described by Stanislavsky in *An Actor's Work on a Role*, published in 1938, and is known as the Method of Physical Actions.

This thesis reassesses the definition of playwriting as consisting essentially in the creation of a plot populated by suitable characters. Rather than discussing playwriting theory in isolation it attempts a bridge between acting theory and playwriting theory by using the Method of Physical Actions as an equivalent to plot. Acting theory is thus considered as a theoretical justification for the centrality of plot.

The method used is hermeneutic — a systematic interpretation of poetics, unveiling in almost an archaeological manner the relevance of the essential definitions of drama, such as character, source, genre, and language to the concept of plot.

The chronological path of development of dramatic theories is shown to be gradual: from the strict obedience to the narrative line imposed by the mythic sources, in classical treatises; through to an interest in the lyrical expression of the predicament of specific characters, in neoclassical theory; to an awareness of specific social types in the eighteenth century; and, finally, to the conception of the plot as a product of the mental life of individual characters in modern theory.

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/ — a break in verse

[ ] — complementary information

Note on referencing

This thesis began at the moment of the great boom in the electronic book market. Some of the books referred to in this thesis were acquired electronically. These versions are exactly the same as the printed version of the same year. Books made available through Amazon's device, the Kindle, were presented with an alternative 'page' system. Rather than the page number they provide a 'location'. There is no agreed method of referring to 'locations' yet. The system is new and the Library services at Brunel University were not able to provide an official referencing system. In the cases in which I could have access to print versions I have indicated page numbers. In all other cases I have followed the directives suggested by the Guide to the Harvard Style of Referencing (Anglia Ruskin University, 2010), providing the most detailed extant information. In the case of electronic books made available through Amazon's Kindle device I have used 'loc.' to refer to 'locations'.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of the Fundação para Ciência and Tecnologia — to them my deepest gratitude.

My first supervisor, John Freeman, was an enthusiastic and attentive presence throughout. John helped me keeping a sense of a larger picture of the thesis and I enjoyed greatly his insight and company. He produced some of the difficult questions I needed to ask myself and helped moulding an individual voice. He became in addition a great friend. Gretchen Schiller, my co-supervisor was a systematic reader. Her attention to detail helped clarify the language and style and she was greatly responsible for major alterations and the tuning of the structure. Some of the most important and most detailed remarks to this thesis were made by Gretchen. Meretta Elliott substituted John towards the end of the process. Her insight was paramount in the final stages of the thesis. She pinned down elements that needed to be highlighted in order to bring the central thesis to light. She was also enjoyable and supportive company.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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Guilherme Abel Ferreira de Mendonça

Introduction

This thesis discusses a conceptual parallel between acting theory and playwriting theory. The point of departure is the idea that, in addition to sharing the text of plays, playwrights and actors must share also an understanding of the essential nature of the dramatic text.

The research develops by a systematic comparison of one acting theory with playwriting treatises. The acting theory chosen is Stanislavsky's, given its wide dissemination in drama schools and among actors. Only aspects of Stanislavsky's theory concerning the use and application of texts in rehearsal are considered. The part of Stanislavsky's theory that deals with this is called the Method of Physical Actions. It consists of rehearsal procedures which presuppose a number of ideas about the mechanics and organization of the dramatic text.

The bulk of the thesis analyses playwriting treatises. The Method of Physical Actions provides the conceptual core in relation to which the analysis develops. The treatises are analysed in search of elements which evoke some conceptual similarity to the Method of Physical Actions.

Playwriting treatises are chosen mostly for their historical relevance. Five periods and seven authors are discussed: Aristotle and Horace from the classical period; Lope de Vega, from the Spanish golden age; D'Aubignac and Corneille from 17th century neoclassicism; Diderot from the eighteenth century; and Freytag from the nineteenth century.

When I first became interested in the problem discussed in this thesis I was concerned mostly with an essential definition of the dramatic text. I believed that such a definition could be reduced to one principle. I thought that this principle was action — that a dramatic text was a description of actions. As I started reading on the subject I was confronted with two problems that made me reassess my original idea. The first was the awareness that action had been much more important for playwriting treatises than what I had originally thought. The second was the realization that there was a need to define 'action' in the context of drama. Specific work on this thesis began in the moment in which I hypothesised that the agent's motivation to act was an essential element of the definition of action. This realization

was slow and it was partially prompted by the application of the Method of Physical Actions in rehearsal.

It is not my aim to explain in this introduction how the search for an essential definition of drama and the assumption of the centrality of action materialised in a thesis question — this is explained in **Introduction to the problem** and in **approach**. The reason I refer back to the early stages of the research is that those two aspects of the initial process (the search for an essential definition of drama and the centrality of action) are of consequence for the content of each chapter.

This thesis consists of two parts, the first setting up the conditions of the analysis of playwriting treatises and the second consisting of the analysis of such treatises. The first treatises analysed, Aristotle's *Poetics* (c.360–322 B.C.); Horace's *Ars Poetica*, (c.24–20 B.C.) and Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en este Tiempo* (1609), are inspired by the 'essentialist' approach. My point, when I first analysed those treatises, was not to prove unequivocally that drama could be defined by the actions of the characters. My point was to investigate whether this idea had been contemplated in playwriting treatises or not. The chapters on Aristotle, Horace and Vega are then very tentative — they seek to understand what the foundational ideas of poetic treatises were and in what sense, if at all, those foundational ideas evoke elements of the Method of Physical Actions.

The approach was refined when I moved to the neoclassical period with the analysis of d'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* (1657) and Corneille's *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique* (1660). By then I had already identified the major lines of the historical development of playwriting treatises, and I could direct the argument much more clearly. I knew the elements that had been taken from previous treatises and I knew which ones were likely to show conceptual similarities to the Method of Physical Actions.

Some recent PhD theses in the arts have put great emphasis on the documentation of the work process.[1] There is no ambition at a documentation of process in this thesis, but an acknowledgement of how the chapters reflect different stages in my understanding of the subject.

[1] John Freeman's, *Documenting the making process*, submitted to Brunel University in 2001 and Peter Paul Cheevers' *Subject and its performance*, submitted in 2005 to the same university, are examples. The former documents and reflects on the preparation and presentation of a performance; the latter consists of the simultaneous presentation of theoretical work and a theatre play.

There is no discrete literary review or discussion either. Each chapter is an analysis of a given treatise and in each chapter a discussion develops in parallel with the analysis.

The outline of the thesis structure is this. Chapter one, **subject**, describes in detail an episode in my own rehearsal practice that was the origin of this thesis. It explains the way I came to the Method of Physical Actions and the reasons why it became central to my research. Chapter two, **motivated actions in acting theory** contextualizes the Method of Physical Actions in its period and geography, explaining its principles and providing examples of its application. **Approach**, the third chapter, fulfils a number of important functions: it proposes a claim, an hypothesis and a research question; it establishes beginning conjectures, necessary for the unfolding of the discussion; and it acknowledges the relevance of other areas of study for the proposed investigation. Furthermore, it justifies the choice of the Method of Physical Actions as a comparison model theory and the choice of playwriting treatises to be analysed. Finally, it positions the investigation within the philosophy of drama and produces a sketch of the research method.

The discussion of treatises starts in chapters four and five with the analyses of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Both treatises are analysed for their foundational status in theory as well as for their possible conceptual links with the Method of Physical Actions. A hierarchy of classical dramatic components is identified and its relation to subsequent theories suggested. The limitations of early theories in what concerns plot and character are indicated.

The chapter on Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo* is transitional. It marks the passage from the analysis of foundational treatises, characterized by the enumeration of principles to a particularized view. The appearance of a new genre, the *comedia*, is acknowledged as an addition to the classical genre definitions. Aspects of Vega's ideas on character and plot construction are emphasised as a means to demonstrate the existence of a latent theory of action.

The seventh chapter, **reassessment of methodology**, discusses the historical links between Aristotle's theories, the formalist schools emerging in early twentieth century Russia, and Stanislavsky's theory. These links are used to justify an affinity of this thesis with the formalist schools. In addition to this the chapter re-assesses the

theoretical hierarchy of dramatic components, acknowledging the growing importance of 'character' in later treatises.

Chapter eight, **the neoclassical poetics** analyses two treatises, d'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* and Corneille's *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique*. D'Aubignac and Corneille create clear conceptual links between aspects of playwriting theory and aspects of the Stanislavsky's theory. They establish the need for the creation of an absolutely coherent fictional world for the characters which closely mirrors the creation of the universe of the character in the Method of Physical Actions. The chapter shows how neoclassical treatises set the conditions for the appearance of 'psychologically complex' characters in playwriting theories.

Diderot's theories are analysed in chapter nine, **eighteenth century poetics**. The chapter proposes a reassessment of the initial tragedy-comedy dichotomy based on Diderot's creation of the 'serious genre'. The eighteenth century's 'serious genre' is shown to be genetically close to Greek satyr dramas and sixteen century's tragicomedy. Chapter nine demonstrates how the idea of a 'serious genre' facilitated the emergence of the mental life of the character, and consequently a greater proximity between playwriting treatises and Stanislavsky's acting theory.

Chapter ten, **nineteenth century poetics**, completes the analysis of playwriting treatises. The author studied is Freytag, chosen for his clear formulation of the relation between the mental life of the character and his actions. Building on classical and neoclassical authors Freytag shapes a psychological theory of drama, detailing the significance of all aspects of the past and present conditions of the character's life for his actions. Concomitantly the chapter evidences the limitations of the Method of Physical Actions as a theory of the dramatic text given its disregard of aspects of the dramatic text not related to character.

Chapter eleven, **conclusion**, assesses the validity of the initial propositions. It verifies the claim, the hypothesis and the thesis' question against the results of the research. Building on the realization of the historical resilience of the initial classical hierarchy of dramatic components it proposes a number of new designations that clarify the chronological development of that hierarchy. In addition to this, it reassesses the position of the thesis in relation to the areas of knowledge specified in **approach** and points to directions for further research.

Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive list of playwriting treatises from Aristotle's *Poetics* to today. It is designed as a possible overview over the landscape of playwriting treatises.

Appendix 2 discusses a subject that is peripheral to this thesis: the use of Aristotle's *Poetics* as a regulative treatise and common interpretations of *mimesis*. That study belongs to a stage of research in which the thesis' question and aims were not yet clearly defined. The inclusion of those materials as an appendix is pertinent because it was through them that I first became aware of the scope and themes contained in playwriting treatises.

The problem treated in this thesis originated in the classroom, in rehearsal, and in my own private creative environment as I wrote. It emerged from personal and artistic concerns and not exclusively as an academic query. I wanted the thesis to convey this sense of proximity between the person researching and the problem discussed. I have opted to use the pronoun 'I' rather than an indefinite person as a means to do so.

Most of the extracts from French, Spanish or Portuguese documents quoted in this thesis were translated by me from their original languages. I used the earliest available source, when available; when not available I have used an authoritative recent edition or the English translation that was chronologically closest to the primary source.

The passages from Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo* were translated from the volume *Poesia Lírica* (1935). For d'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* I used the 1684 English translation. The 1715 French edition, *La Pratique du Thêàtre* was used for verification purposes. The passages in Corneille's *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique* were translated from Flammarion's 1999 annotated edition. Diderot's *Sur le Poéme Dramatique* was translated from the 1758 volume *Le Pere de Famile, Comédie en Cinq Actes, et en Prose, Avec un Discours Sur la Poésie Dramatique* [II Partie]. *Entretien sur le* Fils Naturel, by the same author, was translated from the 1875 volume *Ouvres Completes.* For Freytag's *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* I used the 1896 English translation. For Aristotle's *Poetics* I have used the 2005 Harvard University Press edition translated by Halliwell though comparing it with a variety of different translations in English, French and

Portuguese: these are listed in the **Bibliography**. The passages in Horace's *Ars Poetica* were taken from the 2005 Penguin edition, translated by Rudd. A list of versions used for comparison purposes is also available in the **Bibliography**.

Chapter one: subject

Introduction to problem

> Usually actors create behaviour to justify the text they are given. For instance, an actress cast as Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?* looks at Albee's script with the task of finding things to do on stage that will support her saying those words. (Sweet, 1993, *The Dramatist's Toolkit: The Craft of the Working Playwright*, p.87)

A consideration of the dramatic text as a work tool as seen from the perspective of the actor and of the playwright simultaneously has always fascinated me. Having trained as an actor and moved on to playwriting I have taken with me some acting processes into my writing. I mean by this that the practice of playwriting — for which I had sought information in the numerous existing manuals and treatises — was in me continually haunted by the idea of what could become actionable. I confronted problems of dramatic construction from an acting perspective.

This situation is not new: a great number of playwrights have started their careers as actors[2] and there is some literature that looks at the link between acting and writing.[3] What is less common, however, is the treatment of the subject from within an academic frame, attempting a relation between a given acting theory and a writing theory.

In my case the issue could have stayed within the boundaries of practice and self-reflection were it not for two factors. One was the fact that I had started to teach text analysis, dramaturgy and, later on, acting and thus felt compelled to clarify that particular aspect of the relation between text and performance. A second factor was that I considered that I had been taught within a particular theory of acting, within the Stanislavskian[4] tradition, which I — like many actors[5] — felt was well suited for

[2] Some of the examples that immediately come to mind are — Shakespeare, Moliere, Fassbinder, John Osborne, Harold Pinter, to name but a few.

[3] Billington discusses the way personal biography influences the narratives, the style of the play, and the construction of characters in 'The actor as writer' (1973, p.160–85)

[4] A caveat: I don't mean that there is a unified Stanislavsky tradition. I have witnessed Stanislavsky based teaching in a number of schools (Institut Franco-Portugais; RADA; Guildhall School of Music and Drama) and I have to say that there seems to be a considerable number of variants on the System, many of which are unfounded. Nevertheless, I believe that there are a number of ideas that make it

most acting situations. In addition to this, I had been a student in a number of drama schools and I believed that Stanislavsky's theory was well disseminated and constituted the core of acting theory in the western world.[6] From this it followed that the *problems of dramatic construction from an acting perspective* could be related to that theory of acting and could for that reason be relevant outside my own experience.

A specific event in my teaching practice came to highlight a related contradiction that is at the heart of this thesis and, considering I am dealing with the way one theory of practice (acting) informs a theory of another practice, it is appropriate to produce an account of that anecdote.

In 2007, while I was teaching an acting module at Escola Superior de Artes e Design (ESAD), in Caldas da Rainha, Portugal, I was prompted to choose a text for the end of year production of the final year's Theatre Course students. ESAD is a small provincial school with few resources, a solid reputation for truantism — of students and teachers alike — and a convoluted agenda of poorly advertised official and non-official events. This is relevant only because this particular lack of coordination of activities dictated that many times a student would abandon an acting exercise to enter into some other activity. This particular group of students was constituted mostly of female students many of which had felt a little frustrated, either because no exercises had been taken consistently to the end, or because they had not been taking part in outside projects. Throughout the course the students had played too many male parts and the failure of that strategy was becoming apparent. I had also to consider the two male students in the group. I couldn't consider plays relying on a female cast like Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936) for that reason and because the amount of editing required risked corrupting the narrative and consequently a sense of wholeness for the characters. In this particular instance

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possible to talk about a Stanislavsky tradition: the idea of realism, the importance of personal experience and memory, close reading, and, most importantly the text analysis processes which I will discuss shortly.

[5] The universality of Stanislavsky technique is one idea that I witnessed in many actors and directors and, confessedly, believed in myself. Hornby produces a very convincing argument against this idea by pointing out the impossibility of harmonizing a concentration on self, defended by some system-based schools, and formal aspects of play, such as prosody, "There is even a cliché, widely heard among benighted actors and directors, that if the emotional values are right, 'the verse will take care of itself.' This is equivalent to an opera singer thinking that if the emotional values are right the music will take care of itself." (1992, p.44–45)

[6] I shall be considering only the European and North American tradition or others that are aligned with that tradition.

(group of actors and expected audience) a male drag needed to be well framed dramatically, at danger of becoming a serious comedic liability. In other words what I was looking for was something that was fairly good in characterization, episodic and suited to a dignified public presentation by a group of students who had felt neglected throughout their final year.

Manfred Karge's monologue *Man to Man* came to be the play chosen. There is a number of reasons why I think this play has been attractive to performers and audiences alike:[7] the play requires very little in the way of set design and lighting effects, making it a very cheap production; it has a rich set of references to a variety of characters, periods and locations, making it ideal for a performer to try eclectic characterization. In addition to this *Man to Man* relies on a highly dramatic plot device that introduces transgender in a justified way — quite apart from the use that transgender has had, in Portuguese society in general, and in show business in particular.[8] This was instrumental for I saw there the opportunity to integrate coherently the two men in the cast.

The plot is based on a real story and tells of a woman, Ella Gericke, who steals her husband's identity in order to survive the difficulties of life in Germany in between Wars. From the end of World War I Ella resorts to male impersonation a number of times: first as a crane operator; second as a guard for the S.S.; and a third time as a farm worker. This is emphasized by the narration of events before and after Ella's transgender episodes which frames the character's trajectory in history and society. The emphasis is put on the historical contingency as well as on the personal

[7] *Man to Man* opened in 1982 in Bochum. The play was adapted to the big screen in 1992, directed by John Maybury, with Tilda Swinton, who had also been in the Royal Court production in 1987. The play has enjoyed considerable success over the years — examples of recent productions are: Teatro da Cornucópia, Lisbon 2009; Théâtre du Point du Jour, Lyon, 2009; The Kelman Group, at the Hipbone Studios, Portland, August 2009; Berliner Ensemble, Berlin, 2008; Industrial Theatre Co. Production, at the Max Mueller Bhavan, in Mumbay, 2006.

[8] Drag in the public sphere is very common in Portugal; this can be seen in carnival parades and privately as well as in the get up of some public figures. In show business too it is very common, the 'revista à Portuguesa', a very popular and characteristic form of review often includes drag. Some recent theatre shows include: *As Vampiras Lésbicas de Sodoma*, by Companhia Teatral do Chiado; *As Malditas*, in-escola productions. In TV too it has been quite successful — one needs only to remember Hermano José's female characters in *Tal Canal*, *Hermanias*; or Nicolau Breynner's in *Eu Show Nico*. In British theatre: *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, *La Cage aux Folles*. The gay rights movement in Portugal is in its infancy — the government elected in 2005 has been trying to pass the gay marriage law with considerable public opposition. The association of homosexuality with drag stereotype is still very common in Portugal and widely used for comic effect, what is puzzling is a contradictory degree of public attention and hatred this stereotype raises.

experience — poverty in the post war period, the hardship of manual work and the self-imposed distance from her social role as a female.

The play is 'written' in 26 sections that mix verse, prose, and quotations from poetry and popular music lyrics. That same mixing pattern can be found in the narrative strategy — which combines storytelling, memory, dream and present action — the logic seems to be that of the composition of the world of the play, more than it is of plot construction. I say 'written' because in the choice of mixing the lyrical and the naturalistic there is no suggestion of what style the performance should aim at. The play is rich in detail and characterization and open to a myriad of staging styles. Further, *Man to Man* is a retrospective monologue, and there is no clear indication of where and when the present of the play is taking place. Ella does say that she is sixty-six years old, and she describes being a teenager in the 1930's which gives some idea of the time span of the play's action, but there is no signalling of the circumstances in which the narrative takes place — the present whereabouts, time and character's motivations. *Man to Man* served a female cast well but could easily incorporate a male actor; its episodic structure allowed for easy editing of scenes and structure. The narrative was also sufficiently elastic to allow for discreet adaptations to the play. By this I mean that it was possible to alter, for example, the order of scenes without losing any sense of character and that, even if some episodes were dropped, it was still possible to have a sense of the universe of the play and the kinds of events there taking place.

Like the students I was teaching, I had experienced the weaknesses of acting courses taught in Portuguese schools, and I was determined to do my best in providing these students a better experience than mine. Considering the particular difficulties the students and the school had, I was planning on using the module to pass on acting working methods. My priority was with very pragmatic principles which could be repeated and in which personal elements and creativity could be incorporated. I planned a rehearsal process based on the exercises I had been taught while an acting student, greatly improved by other exercises I had experienced at workshops, as an MA student at RADA, and in my professional experience in performance, complemented by readings.

Each student was prompted to learn more than their allocated sections of text, so that substitutions could be made swiftly and I knew that until the day of the

presentation quick changes could be made to the structure of the performance without damaging too much the overall effect. My only rule — which was partially pedagogic and partly personal choice — was that there should be minimal changes to the text. The class was not re-writing: had anyone dropped out I might have had to deal with less text and eventually with a change in the order of delivery, but as much as possible there would be no re-writing.

My teaching subjects at ESAD had been Text Analysis, Dramaturgy and now Acting, and I had always tried to find continuity from one subject to the other. I had a heteroclite experience as an actor, as a director, as a writer and, later on, as a teacher, but only very late did I feel that I was beginning to understand the true implications and relations between the different areas. Teaching had been paramount in systematizing a professional experience. I was therefore trying to keep in sight the procedures and conceptualization taught in those subjects for the new methods in acting. It was important to keep in mind the procedure of text divisions in sections and subsections learned in Text Analysis. Likewise, I wanted the students to keep in mind notions of actualization of the text by the performer, which had been discussed in 'dramaturgy'.

Naturally I used what was familiar to me and began attempting to organize the different elements in Stanislavsky's System:[9] work on emotion, connection with memory and creation of the circumstances of the play. I used Benedetti's *Stanislavsky & the Actor* (1998) to help me systematize the different phases of the System in rehearsal so that the students had a tool that they could relate too.

The System approach required that the students create, from the data gathered in their reading, the universe of the play and from that universe the set of circumstances that could lead to someone like Ella Guericke saying what she says, in the order she says it. The text allows many possibilities: Ella could be confiding in a co-worker, late at night, as she left her depressing job in suburbia; she could be talking to the police; she could be merely at home remembering in front of a mirror or talking to an imaginary friend on the phone. The one possibility that better suited the exercise, the one that proved the most dynamic for this group of performers, was to imagine that Ella was facing a trial for benefit theft (by taking her husband's wage

[9] The group of exercises and the work sequence developed by Stanislavsky is generally known as the System. I shall be discussing the System in detail shortly.

and subsidies) and that, in a desperate attempt at justifying herself she would be forced to recall her personal history. The construction of this set of circumstances was what best justified the whole play — it accounted for factual information, as well as the emotional reasons (the dead mother, ranting about immigrants, drinking and smoking, complains over TV sets and other domestic issues); it also resolved the quick changes in tone, for many of those changes could be a response to some aggravation in the jury (e.g.: when Ella confesses to having passed as an S.S. guard in a prison). In fact it didn't even require the actor to imagine verbal replies by Ella's interlocutors — depending on Ella's mental condition she could respond directly to facial expression by people in an imaginary jury. That is: all of the effort for the justification of actions could take place directly in the acting realm — the play could be performed without textual alterations.

The division of the text into a series of related and justified actions that takes into account the strategies of the characters is a central aspect to what is known in Stanislavskian jargon as the Method of Physical Actions. The System is the generic designation of Stanislavsky's theory and principles, while the Method of Physical Actions refers to Stanislavsky's rehearsal method. I should like to point out that I had not been formally taught in this particular aspect of the System but rather that Stanislavsky's techniques and derivatives had been an influence through my training and I had been directly or indirectly drawn towards that technique. I had been using a version of the Method of Physical Actions that was partially learned in drama schools and partially developed in rehearsal — I think that this is the process by which many practitioners became acquainted with the Stanislavsky's theory and it is true — as I suspected — that the System and the Method of Physical Actions was granted validity by a wide dissemination within a certain realm of practice.[10] This will be discussed shortly — what is important for now is that the Method of Physical Actions seemed at the time to have a very robust logic as an explanation of the dramatic text. I was, so to speak, using the Method of Physical Actions as a theory of the dramatic action.

[10] Three American schools have been the most influential in the dissemination of Stanislavsky-based techniques: Neighborhood Playhouse; Actors Studio; Stella Adler Studio. Also, the association of the System in its variations with film actors: Marlon Brando; Al Pacino; Paul Newman; Elizabeth Taylor; Marilyn Monroe; Gary Oldman.

The corollary of all this, in the context of the rehearsals of *Man to Man*, was that it was possible to establish a number of justified actions for the characters that were coherent with the text of *Man to Man*.

However such an approach created a problem — as the rehearsals went along the extent to which a parallel narrative had to be created became evident. The degree to which *Man to Man* is an eventless play was manifest as was the impossibility of deriving all of the actions of the characters from the text. The actions we had identified were not contained in the text of *Man to Man*: they had been added to the text by the actors and the director.

My assumption prior to this realization had been that what differentiated the dramatic text from the literary text was that dramatic text would typically describe the actions of the characters, either directly or by suggestion.[11] *Man to Man* seemed to be a play, the external evidence suggested it was a play (it has been presented as a play in a number of locations, and was written by an experienced actor/playwright)[12] yet the internal mechanics seemed to contradict this fact if one tried to break the text in to actions.

That is: a fundamental contradiction existed if I was to consider acting theory as a model to explain the construction and the organization of the text that is presumably written to be acted. Assuming the reader/actor seeks to read actions in the dramatic text, shouldn't the playwright have created those actions? My experience was leading me to question whether this was really the case. A number of related issues emerged. Was my understanding of the Method of Physical Actions sound and aligned with what other practitioners had been doing? What theories of playwriting were there and how do they explain this relation between action and text? How should I go about this problem?

[11] The direct description of actions is generally provided in stage directions — as in the beginning lines of Shaw's *Mrs. Warren Profession*, which describes Praed's shy demeanor as he arrives at Mrs. Warren's cottage. Implied actions typically will not be indicated in stage directions. In the same act Mrs. Warren suggests to Vivie, her daughter, that she should wear a hat. Later in the text it is revealed that Mrs. Warren and Vivie barely know each other. The hat scene is therefore part of a strategy by which Mrs. Warren is trying to establish a relationship with her daughter.

[12] Karge has had an eclectic career working as an assistant director, director, playwright and actor.

Chapter two: motivated actions in acting theory

The Method of Physical Actions

> Did the Moscow Art Theatre People get their basic technical concept from Aristotle's Poetics? Or was it by mere chance that they used the same word that Aristotle used, as the basis of *his* theory of art? (Fergusson, 1964, *The Notion of "Action"*, p.85–87)

A considerable part of the third chapter of Michael Redgrave's *The Actor's Ways and Means* is dedicated to Stanislavsky's System (1953, p.49–68). Redgrave is in quiet disagreement with Stanislavsky in what concerns the performance of Shakespeare — the kind of subjective performing style of the Stanislavskian school, he insinuates, characteristically produces smaller and less expressive gestures, which might not be adequate for larger spaces and uneducated audiences (Ibid, p.63). What is relevant about Redgrave's analysis is that he never fully rejects Stanislavsky's theory. Redgrave characteristically attributes problems in System acting not to Stanislavsky's theory directly but to an insufficient understanding of those theories.[13] Furthermore, he describes the System as "[…] 'only' a conscious codification of ideas about acting which have always been the property of most good actors of all countries whether they know it or not." (Redgrave, 1953, p.51) while acknowledging the widespread influence of Stanislavsky in acting technique and theory. The number of publications whose subject is either Stanislavsky or whose point of departure is some aspect of Stanislavsky theory is witness to this. This was apparently the case at the date of publication of Redgrave's *The Actor's Ways and Means* as it is today. Recent publications include Zarrilli's (2009) *Psychophysical Acting*, Pitches's (2006) *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting,* and Blair's (2008) *The Actor, Image, and Action*, to name but a few. Redgrave mentions a few authors building on Stanislavsky's System in the late 40's and early 50's: Strasberg's *Introduction to Acting: a handbook of the Stanislavski Method*, published in 1947; Magarshack's

[13] Redgrave seems to be addressing actors that are not familiar with Stanislavsky or young actors "I warned you of the dangers of a brief encounter with Stanislavsky method." (Redgrave, 1953, p.62)

Stanislavski on the Art of the Stage, published in 1950; and Houghton's *Moscow Rehearsals* (n.d.) among others.[14]

Stanislavsky's System is not a finalized theory and method of acting. Though widely recognized as the most influential acting theory and technique in the West a full understanding of Stanislavsky's System[15] has been haunted by a number of difficulties ranging from editorial problems, political exploitation and misinterpretation, to a lack of updated publishing. Throughout his career Stanislavsky attempted an exposition of his reflections on acting in diverse forms. He attempted the writing of a manual, *A Draft Manual*, the novel form, *The Story of a Role* and *The Story of a Production*,[16] until finally he decided for the form by which his three most popular works are known — the journal. What would constitute a single volume was transformed in two books — *An Actor Prepares* was published in the United States in 1936 and in Russia in 1938, and *Building a Character* which appeared in an English version in 1950 and in Russian version in 1953. A later volume *An Actor's Work on a Role* appeared in Russian in 1957 and in English in 1961.[17] What is now known as *An Actor Prepares* concerns chiefly psychological aspects of acting where *Building a Character* emphasizes embodiment. *An Actor's Work on a Role* exemplifies, through production notes, the application of the System and the Method of Physical Actions.

The Moscow Arts Theatre (MAT) was founded in 1898 by Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko[18] as counter force to the prevailing theatrical style in Russia, which reportedly relied on clichés and conventionalized forms.[19] Stanislavsky

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[14] The Method is one of the American variants of the System. The Method was developed and promoted by Lee Strasberg — of all the variants it is the one which gives greatest emphasis to 'affective memory'. The System is sometimes erroneously called the Method. (Benedetti, J., 2000, p.83)

[15] There is no contention regarding the influence and significance of Stanislavsky's System "The first system of actor training in Europe and North America emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century after the Russian actor and director Konstantin Stanislavsky perceived the need to harness the actor's creativity, inspiration and talent through the introduction of disciplined techniques." (Hodges, A. 2010, loc. 353–55)."From its inception in the Group Theatre in the 1930s and extending into late twentieth century, Method acting has been the most popular yet controversial form of actor training in America. Its principal teachers were Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner, but Uta Hagen, Robert Lewis", Paul Mann, and Sonia Moore have also influenced it."(Krasner, 2000, p.6)

[16] (Stanislavsky, 2010, p.xv)

[17] (Benedetti, 1998, p.viii)

[18] (Gray, 1964, p.22)

[19] "The kind of acting for which he [Stanislavsky] had only contempt consisted of familiar stereotypes; the player observed experienced actors and copied their manner and gestures. In spite of a

developed his theory as an actor and director at the MAT and associated studios. Though facing resistance from the actors, the System was adopted as the official technique of the MAT in 1911.[20]

From as early as 1906 actors who had worked with Stanislavsky at the MAT had been travelling to the West and an interest in Russian actors and techniques had been growing: Alla Nazinova had settled in New York in 1906;[21] Gordon Craig had been in St. Petersburg in 1911; [22] a Moscow Art Theatre was established in Prague in 1919; [23] Stanislavsky himself travelled to the United States with the Moscow Art Theatre, in 1923;[24] Ouspenskaia left the MAT during the American tour and established herself as a teacher;[25] Boleslavsky, who had been taught an early form of the system, had been living, publishing and teaching in the USA since 1922.[26] In addition to this a number of schools had started to appear in the US in which some form of the System was being taught — the most important of these schools were the Laboratory Theatre, founded in 1924, the Neighborhood Playhouse, founded in 1915,[27] and the Group Theatre, founded in 1931.[28] It was from this generation of Russian émigrés that American actors and directors received the System but it was the American actors and directors — Elia Kazan, Stella Adler, Harold Clurman, Sanford Meisner, Marlon Brando, among others — who came to establish the popularity of Stanislavsky based theory and technique.

The interpretation of Stanislavsky's theory and technique was not consensual — variations existed in consequence of the time gap in the publication of *An Actor Prepares* and *Building a Character*. A tension arose between what can be called a psychoanalytical understanding of the System, mostly championed by Strasberg[29]

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career devoted to the mere collection of clichés (in Russia, *shtamp*), such an actor had the effrontery to regard himself as a 'craftsman'."(Hobgod, 1973, p.148)

[20] (Gray, 1964, p.25)

[21] (Ibid, p.24)

[22] (Ibid, p.25)

[23] (Ibid, p.26)

[24] (Ibid, p.28)

[25] (Ibid, p.29)

[26] (Ibid, p.27)

[27] (Krasner, 2000, p.285)

[28] (Gray, 1964, pp.33)

[29] Strasberg is said to have misunderstood Stanislavsky putting an excessive emphasis on emotion memory "Thus, although Strasberg's affective memory techniques can be traced to Stanislavsky, they had radically changed. There was a shift in emphasis from the play (whether as written or on stage) to the actor's personal life, with a zeroing in on specific incidents. This shift may be related to Strasberg's lack of experience in the theatre itself." (Hornby, 1992, p.182)

and identified with the Actor's Studio, and an 'action based' understanding, closer to Stanislavsky original teachings, championed by Stella Adler and Robert Lewis. Stella Adler had travelled to Paris in 1934, where she spent a month working with Stanislavsky.[30] Adler returned to New York bringing with her a chart of the System — one of the earlier schematizations of the System, later reproduced in Robert Lewis' *Method or Madness*, published in 1958. The System in its variants made its way into acting schools and practice by a combination of theatre work, teaching and publication.

Stanislavsky's language and writing style contributed to these variations. Not only did he rewrite substantially but was also faced with the problem of establishing a vocabulary for concepts that had never been tried and Stanislavsky himself used different terms to designate similar concepts. Elizabeth Hapgood, Stanislavsky's, first translator, attempted a simplification of nomenclature to English by using 'units' to designate division of the text in sections regardless of the size; and 'superobjective', 'objectives' and 'objective' to designate character's aims on different scales.[31] This seems to reflect the concern of practitioners such as Alfreds (2007) and Levin and Levin (1992) who use similar strategies, putting the emphasis on the applicability of the concepts.

Stanislavsky's work is generally described as covering two fields — the general preparation of the actor and the rehearsal process.[32] This division is already present in *An Actor Prepares*, and *Building a Character*, and in *An Actor's Work on a Role*. The first two books, initially meant to form a unit, would deal with the preparation of the actor and the third was supposed to demonstrate through examples the rehearsal process. The System is the generic term given to Stanislavsky's theory; the Method of Physical Actions is the specific term used to describe the rehearsal process.[33] Only the latter is relevant to this thesis but it is important to contextualize the Method of Physical Actions within the System because the System provides the

[30] (Gray, 1964, p.34)
[31] (Benedetti, 2000, p.83)
[32] "Sharon Carnicke identifies two key strands of Stanislavsky's training here: the actor's work on the self and the actor's work on the role." (Hodges, 2010, loc. 400–401)
[33] Stanislavsky later developed other methods to use in rehearsal, such as 'active analysis'. Hodges (2010, p.6–7) describes The Method of Physical Actions as a part of the rehearsal process. She does acknowledge that all of Stanislavsky's methods share the same ideas: the belief in the connection between body and mind; the need to make action present. The Method of Physical Actions is the most visible of the applications of these principles.

theoretical basis of the Method of Physical Actions. I shall be describing that method by reference to Stanislavsky's writings in parallel with the writings of other authors as a means to show how its principles came to be applied and understood.

The first and foremost aim of the System is the creation of the circumstances that render the performance lively. Stanislavsky sought to understand why certain actor's performances were clichéd, repetitive and lifeless, while other actors were able to deliver performances that felt natural, improvised and responsive.[34] Stanislavsky himself had felt that the quality of his performance was erratic and he wanted to be able to codify the rules of 'creativity' in to a system. Stanislavsky called 'creativity' to a state of natural responsiveness of the actor to the stimuli — a state in which the actor rather than repeating a given routine is actively engaged in the situation responding to the moment to moment stimuli. An actor using his 'creativity' in a play would be 'experiencing' the role.[35]

To address this problem Stanislavsky created a number of strategies designed to develop availability in the body and mind, relaxation, concentration, voice work; and two mental tactics to help the actor place himself in imaginary circumstances — the 'magic if'[36] and 'affective cognition'. The 'magic if' operates by having the actors ask mentally what their actions would be 'if' they were under the same circumstances as the character. The efficiency of the 'magic if' results from removing the pressure of accepting an imaginary circumstance as real by stating the hypothetical nature of the dramatic situation. 'Affective cognition' requires the use of personal memories as a form of achieving credible emotions. Importantly, the memories evoked are not necessarily the emotions the character is supposed to feel. Such an approach would present two problems: first that characters and actors would necessarily be similar; second, that an actor overwhelmed by emotion would lose the

[34] "He was struck by the contrasts between the ease and relaxation of the great actors, both Russian and foreign, which he saw at the imperial Maly Theatre and his own clumsy efforts." (Benedetti, 1998, p. xviii)

[35] "The Russian word carries many different nuances, amongst them 'to experience', 'to feel', 'to become aware', 'to go through', 'to live', 'to live through', etc. (Carnicke 2008:132–33)." (Hodges, 2010, p.8)

[36] "The secret of "if", as a stimulus, lies in the fact that it doesn't speak about actual facts, of what is, but of what might be […] "if" […] This word is not a statement, it's a question to be answered." (Stanislavsky, 2010, p.51–1)

control of his technique on stage.[37] Stanislavsky meant the use of 'affective cognition' as one more aid in the process of 'experiencing' the role and not an aim in itself — any kind of mental exercise that made the actor available to 'experiencing' was desirable as long as the actor kept control of his presence on stage. The emotions evoked by the actor are, therefore, loosely connected with the emotions of the character — they are useful as long as they help the actor achieve the desired expression. Voice, relaxation, exercise, the 'magic if' and 'emotional cognition' are all forms of preparation of the actor, not part of the rehearsal process — they are linked to the rehearsal process in that they emerge from an attempt to find a solution for the same problem and that they presuppose a similar understanding of what a drama is.

Stanislavsky believed that the mind had direct effects on the body and that the body had an effect on the mind.[38] The consequence of this is that what happens in one's mind can be made apparent in the body. What a character thinks or feels can be manifest in his physical actions. Stanislavsky distinguishes between 'action' and 'activity'. An 'activity' is an action that requires no particular willingness — such as eating or dressing. In the context of the Method of Physical Actions an 'action' is the expression of the motives of the character, "[…] the technique relies principally on the following ideas: justifying every word of the text, where justification comes from motivation, which in turn leads to actions, and objectives." (Krasner, 2000, p.4) An action is therefore a composite of mental, emotional and physical aspects. 'Actions' don't necessarily imply physical movement — a dialogue may be an action if it is the means by which the characters are trying a strategy to fulfil some want — 'actions' in the Method of Physical Actions always imply a strategy.[39] What the character wants can be objectively unimportant and he might be unsuccessful in his strategy,

[37] This had been a common subject in acting theory since Diderot's *Paradox of the Actor*, "It was Diderot's materialist analysis of the acting of his time which laid bare an essential paradox: that while the actor appeared to be experiencing 'real' feelings, the opposite was more probably true." (Hodges, 2010, loc.384–85)

[38] "The first, most pervasive of these is Stanislavsky's holistic belief that mind, body and spirit represent a psychophysical continuum. He rejects the Western conception that divides mind from body, taking his cue from French psychologist Théodule Ribot, who believed that emotion never exists without physical consequence." (Hodges, 2010, p. 7)

[39] The centrality of actions as tactics is the connecting idea in different interpretations of the Method of Physical Action. "Theatre is the art of action. Actions are tactics." (Alfreds, 2007, p.347);"Listen everybody. The next time the person who comes in has to have a reason to come for coming in." (Longwell, Meisner, and Pollack, 1987, p.57); "Everything we do in the theatre is action. That's what acting means. So there is nothing more important we can learn."(Adler, 2000, p.53)

but it is the connection between what the characters wants, his strategy, and what he does to achieve his want that is essentially dramatic.

In the Method of Physical Actions plays are not a continuity of the emotions of the characters but the sequence of the actions of the characters. In rehearsal rather than approaching the availability required to evoke the emotions of the characters by calling emotions directly, Stanislavsky suggested that the circumstances in which such emotions occur should be evoked[40] — the idea being that an actor who has improved his availability through training should respond in the moment to the fictional stimuli. The effort of the actors should not be concentrated on the emotions of the character but on the actions that eventually lead to such emotions.[41] What is necessary is that the actor knows who the character is, what the circumstances in which he is placed are, his objectives, and his actions. The Method of Physical Actions is a means of achieving the expression of the totality of human actions, mental and physical, by concentrating primarily on what the characters do.

What the character wants will encounter some opposition. In Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* (1882) Dr. Stockman is barred from spreading the information about the contamination of the waters of the municipal baths by his own brother, the Mayor. Characters and the net of relationships between them are revealed by their opposition. This opposition is known in acting jargon as an 'obstacle'.[42] Under the System a play is therefore "[…] a continuous process of struggle between the characters to achieve their objectives." (Levin and Levin 1992, p.15).

A great deal of the action must thus be a conflict[43] between the characters. Levin and Levin are adamant in that the conflict must be led by one character[44] or group of characters representing a force or faction. They also think that there are

[40] Stanislavsky never denied or condoned the direct evocation of emotions as a method.
[41] "The mistake most actors make is that they think not about action but the result. They bypass the action and go straight for the result." (Stanislavsky, 2010, p.144)
[42] "Life, people, circumstances and we ourselves endlessly set up a whole series of obstacles one after the other and we fight our way through them, as through bushes." (Stanislavsky, 2010, p.143)
[43] "Any confrontation, by its very nature assumes a point of discord over which argument begins and develops. […] Accordingly, the essence of the conflict is determined by the difference of opinions about the characters. " (Levin and Levin 1992, p.26)
[44] "To determine the conflict we must first identify the leading character." (Levin and Levin 1992, p.19).

only two possible conflict structures,[45] one in which the leading part imposes his view on others, and another in which the leading part states the view of the opposing side. This is similar to Gustav Freytag's view in his *Technique of the Drama*, a mid nineteenth century playwriting treatise. I am not discussing this aspect of Freytag's theory now, but merely signposting one aspect of acting theory that has an unexpectedly direct similarity to playwriting theory. This is also relevant because it points at a conception of drama as a concentrated form — a personalized struggle, involving few factions, conveyed in two possible conflict structures is also suggestive of another common precept in poetics: unity of action. Levin and Levin are not implying that the totality of the play must concern only one action, two factions, and a conflict, but rather that the plays are analysed so as to make clear the central action in each relevant stage of the main action. Such stages must "[…] represent logically complete units of the play. Each contains one conflict, with one leading character, which has only one action." (Levin and Levin 1992, p.28) The idea that the action of plays is constituted of smaller action units that might have different characters and objectives is fundamental to the Method of Physical Actions.

The initial stage of rehearsal demands careful reading of the play. The actor will try to infer from the reading the social status, the profession, the family as well as the initial predicament of the character in the play. The actors will also try to fill in the information about the immediate past of the character (just before the play starts) and the immediate future of the character (straight after the end of the play) — regardless of the direct inclusion of these in the text[46] — the 'given circumstances' in System jargon.[47]

Together with the definition of the 'given circumstances' the actor should define a provisional idea of the overall aims of the character — what Stanislavsky calls 'superobjective' or 'supertask'. Benedetti defines the 'superobjective' as "[…] what the play is about. What is its subject, its theme?" (1998, p.6), thus suggesting that the 'superobjective' is a thematic key for the interpretation of the play.

[45] "[…] only two types of relation are possible between the parties involved in a conflict. In one case the leading character imposes his opinion of himself on the other party. In the other case the leading character states his view of the other party." (Levin and Levin 1992, p.27)
[46] (Benedetti, 1998, p.6)
[47] "Given circumstances include the story of the play, the facts, the events, epoch, time, and place of action, supplemented by our imagination."(Levin and Levin 1992, p.17)

Practitioners such as Levin and Levin give a more pragmatic sense to the 'superobjective':[48]

> Stanislavsky pointed out that every character in a play has a certain overall objective, or main desire, which determines his behavior throughout the play and imparts an integrated inner meaning to all his words, conflicts and actions, Stanislavsky called this desire the *superobjective* of the character. (Levin and Levin 1992, p.161)

Stanislavsky's understanding of 'superobjective' seems to have comprehended both meanings: the theme of the play and the life aim of the character.[49] 'Superobjectives' are not circumscribed by the time span of the play, they belong to the character as a coherent entity. This is consistent with Stanislavsky holistic view of the character and the emphasis put on the creation of the world of the play.

Because the dramatic text is understood as a sequence of actions of the characters, the actor must break the text into smaller sections.[50] This so that the action is approached in manageable size units and also because the structure of each character's strategy changes as the play moves forward — the character is forced to reassess and adapt his strategy as he goes through newer obstacles. In Sophocles' *King Oedipus* (429 B.C.),[51] Oedipus' initial objective is the discovery of the cause of the plague that has fallen upon Thebes. To achieve this he sends his brother-in-law, Creon, to Apollo's oracle — this is his strategy — but, in the face of new information brought by Creon, Oedipus' strategy changes and he must now find the murderer of King Laius. Oedipus' obstacles are not persons but the difficulty of getting the information required — Teiresias resists telling him he is the cause of the plague and the shepherd tries to avoid giving him the confirmation of his true identity.

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[48] Alfreds is even more radical, "Most comprehensive of all in the hierarchy of objectives, super-objectives are characters' life wants, their overarching drive through life." (2007, p.59)

[49] Stanislavsky's style is rich in metaphor and figures. He says that "'Everything that happens in a play, all its individual Tasks, major or minor, all the actor's creative ideas and actions, which are analogous to the role, strive to fulfill the play's Supertask. [superobjective]'" (2010, p.307) suggesting that 'superobjectives' are life aims of the character; but also "'All his life, Dostoyvesky looked for God and the Devil in people. That drove him to write the *Brother Karamazov*. That is why the search for God is the Supertask in this work.'" (2010, p.307) suggesting that 'superobjectives' are thematic.

[50] "In order to reveal the conflicting relationships between the characters of a play, it must be subdivided into a series of successive events." (Levin and Levin 1992, p.29)

[51] For classical plays when date of publication is not available I shall be indicating date of first performance, if known.

There seems to be no formal limitation as to the size and number of sections.[52] Benedetti's account of the Method of Physical Actions suggests a first division of the play's into its major parts, followed by a further division into medium and minor parts ' (Benedetti, 2000, p.83). The sections are not formal units: they are logical steps in the path of the character. Actions can be found only in the smaller sections.[53] The medium and large sized sections constitute 'the action' (the story or plot) of the play. There are objectives and strategies in the large and medium size sections but no 'actions' (what the character does). The character will fulfil a number of 'actions' — the sequence of which constitutes the 'action' of the play. This is why some translations use 'action' to mean a 'sequence of actions' (the play or a large section) and 'tasks' to refer to each of the individual 'actions', contributing to the overall objective.

In *An Enemy of the People* Dr. Stockmann wants to protect the population from the health risks caused by the construction of the town's municipal baths. In order to do this Dr. Stockmann sends water samples to a laboratory, arranges with editor of the local newspaper the publication of an article about the contamination of the waters, and talks to the population at a town meeting. According to the Method of Physical Actions an actor cannot play 'wanting to protect the population', but he can play all of the actions the character would perform in order to protect the population. Talking to the newspaper director is one of the 'actions' of the play, wanting to 'protect the population from health risks' is an objective.

Having decided on what the actions of the character are, the actor produces a 'score of actions'. "The path we take, artistically, is like a railway line that is divided into large, medium-size and small stages and half stages, that is tasks." (Stanislavsky, 2009, p.21) It is this mental score of actions, containing objectives, obstacles, and strategies, that the actor plays, not the play-text or the emotions of the character or a conventionalized representation of the story of the play. What the actor does in

[52] "Sectioning is an intuitive process. Different actors working in the same text might arrive to similar results but there is no right way of dividing a play. The rule is to produce a division of the play that makes sense to the actor […] Just ask yourself 'What is the essential thing in the play?' and then start to recall the main stages, without going into detail." (Stanislavsky, 2010, p.141)

[53] Some authors call the smaller sections 'bits'. "The process of identifying actions begins with breaking the plays in to segments, what Stanislavsky calls 'bits' […] Each bit embodies a single action and begins whenever the action of the scene shifts, not with the playwrights division of the play." (Sharon, 2010, loc. 980)

performance is to paraphrase in action the circumstances of the character. This is why the memorization of the text is not advised in the first stages — only when the actor has fully embodied the actions of the character will he use the text.[54]

The 'score of actions' of the character must then be assessed against the larger backdrop — each of actions of the character might be coherent in themselves but they must also be coherent as a whole. This is what Stanislavsky calls 'through-action' (Benedetti, 1998, p.8). The actor makes sure that all actions in the sequence are part of the same coherent strategy.[55] 'Through-action' is the largest section — it represents the totality of the action within the play.

Typically a character will lie or fail to say exactly what his objective is. Whatever goes on in the mind of the character that is implied but not directly conveyed is 'subtext'. Because the 'subtext' is also what the character does it must emerge with the creation of the 'score of actions'. If a character decides to hide information as a part of a strategy then his 'score of actions' will include 'withholding information' as one of his actions.

The 'super-objective' is in continuous development — unlike the smaller sections, the medium size sections, and the 'through-action' — because the creation of the intimate reality of the character is also in continuous development in the mind of the actor. The actor is not fully aware of his character's potential when first reading the play, and he is likely to improve on his reading of the character as the rehearsal process progresses. For this reason the actor must reassess the 'superobjective' as he finalizes the scoring of the play and the definition of the 'through-action'.[56]

The 'magic if', 'affective cognition', relaxation and concentration will all play a part in the process. The actor will adapt the array of System techniques as a means to help him place himself in the imaginary circumstances of the character.

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[54] "Now you don't gabble your lines, you use your words actively to fulfill the basic task of the script. That is why you were given it. 'Now think carefully and tell me: do you maintain that if you begin by learning the words by heart, as most people in the theatre do you could achieve what you did, using my methods?'" (Stanislavsky, 2009, p.20)

[55] "This [through-action] is the character's main objective through the story (play) and links all that character's scenes and behavior with dramatic logic. […] *It is the character's essential plot-drive through the play.*" (Alfreds, 2007, p.57)

[56] Benedetti referring to the last stages of rehearsal "[...] the company have to verify whether the supertask [superobjective] they provisionally defined is correct in the light of their deeper knowledge of the play. If it is not, they change it." (1998, p.11)

It is only after the stage of analysing and scoring the action, which takes a substantial part of rehearsal, is completed, that the actor and director will engage in external characterization and blocking. In these later stages the creative team tries to organize the performance. They will be concerned with the rhythm and the tempo of the play:

> Tempo, as in music, denotes the speed of an action or a feeling — fast, slow, medium. Rhythm, internally indicates the intensity with which the emotion is experienced: externally it indicates the pattern of gestures moves and actions. (Benedetti, 2000, p.50)

Stanislavsky was aware that the strict obedience of the play to the rules of action, though dramatically adequate in the way it was experienced by the actor, could in performance be too slow or too fast for the audience. 'Tempo' and 'rhythm' addressed this problem by reminding the actor to remain attentive to the audience's pace.

In spite of the emphasis put on the clarification of actions gleaned from the text, the Method of Physical Actions is not a deskbound reading system. In the early and middle stages of rehearsal the text is clarified through movement — actors improvise the content of the text. I have spoken about the use of paraphrase and it is at these stages that it is used. Ideally when the actor starts using the text he will use it as if it was a paraphrase. The text should fulfil perfectly the needs of the character.

I began this chapter by referring to Michael Redgrave's commentary to Stanislavsky's theory in *The Actor's Ways and Means*. It was my intention to establish the relevance of the Method of Physical Actions for practitioners in general, and I thought the testimony of a well-known actor writing in the mid-twentieth century would be a good illustration of both the significance of the method and the time span of its influence in practice. Redgrave, Levin and Levin, Hodges, and Alfred all seem to have accepted the significance of both the System and the Method of Physical Actions as a theory, and in their practice. So too the prevalence of the System in schools and practice in the western world, as described by Krasner (2000), Gray (1964), and Hodges (2010), suggests a wide dissemination of its principles. Redgrave's initial statement on the intuitiveness of the Method of

Physical Actions is also an indication of the internal logic of that method. In my experience, both in rehearsal and in teaching, I found that an incomplete knowledge of the method would nevertheless lead to a practice similar to that of those who had learned the system fully. In this chapter I have tried to convey the internal logic of the Method of Physical Actions.

I mentioned earlier how I learned the Method of Physical Actions through a mix of classes, in rehearsal and through my own teaching. This in itself was neither the guarantee of the validity of my own understanding of the Method of Physical Actions or of its significance to others. The recognition of the dissemination and logic of the Method of Physical Actions is relevant to this thesis because it confers universality on what was initially only a set of personal assumptions.

The Method of Physical Actions can be described in four discrete principles: plays are understood as the struggle of one or more characters towards a goal; the actions of the characters are the product of psychological motivations; the characters actively start or take part in a number of actions in order to try to fulfil their goal; each character faces opposition to his objectives.

The clarification of the basic principles of the Method of Physical Actions reinforced my interest in this problem. To what extent had the idea of characters acting according to motivations been considered in playwriting theory? If it had been discussed before how should I go about it and what sort of inquiry would this be?

Chapter three: approach

Methodology

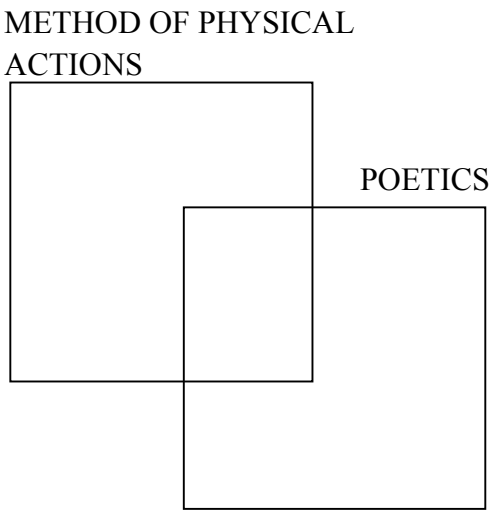
> The aim of philosophical analysis, as in any serious theoretical study, is to get a theoretical account of the problem that is at the same time true, explanatory and general. (Searle, 1999, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, p.161)

I began the first chapter, Introduction to problem, with a reference to the general field of inquiry: the creation of the dramatic text. I have moved on to speak about acting theory and how I was confronted with the problem of attempting the application in rehearsal of a given theory to a given text. I suggested that if actors had to understand dramatic texts then there was a sense in which the theory of acting should explain the creation of the text too. That is the idea that there is a 'specialism' shared by readers and writers of drama.

In the previous chapter I described what the Method of Physical Actions is and how it has been understood and applied by practitioners. My subject, however, is not acting theory — it is a theory of playwriting as seen from the perspective of an acting theory. By using the Method of Physical Actions as a theory of playwriting I am working on the assumption that the essence of playwriting is the creation of the fictional actions of the characters.

The generic designation for a theory of 'making'[57] is 'poetics'.[58] This was the title for Aristotle's foundational text and has been used since to designate treatises on the theory and technique of 'making' literature. I shall be using this term rather than playwriting treatises, playwriting manuals or any other such designation. My field of study situates itself within poetics — the 'poetics' of drama specifically. The field of research can be represented as the intersection of poetics with the Method of Physical Actions:

[57] The original meaning of 'poesis' is 'making'. 'Poetics' can designate any kind of artistic making. I shall refer in more detail to the etymology and history of 'poetics' in the chapter dedicated to Aristotle's *Poetics*.
[58] I shall use 'poetics' strictly in this sense and never to designate some form of lyricism.



Paul H. Fry, professor of English Literature at Yale University, defines theory thus:

> Theory is very often a purely speculative undertaking. It's an hypothesis about something, the exact nature of which one needn't necessarily have in view. It's a supposition that whatever the object of theory might be, theory itself must — owing to whatever intellectual constraints one can imagine — be of such and such a form. (*Introduction to Theory of Literature with Professor Paul H. Fry*, 2009).

There are two aspects in Fry's definition that are of relevance to this thesis. The first is the clarification of its object, the second concerns method.

Poetics vary in their approach to how drama is written. Some poetics are more technical than others — technical poetics will typically establish specific morphological traits necessary to a given paradigm of play. D'Aubignac's *La Pratique du Théâtre* (1715) is one such example — it provides advice on the number of acts, the number of lines per act and the kind of verse adequate for tragedy. Other poetics, such as Brunetiere's *The Law of the Drama* (1914) are philosophical — those will be more concerned with abstract concepts, with the establishing of single overarching principles for a given typology of play. Both the 'technical' and the 'philosophical' poetics will have an underlying theoretical basis; the difference is that philosophical poetics see theory as the object of their study where technical poetics tend to be pragmatic.

A theory is "[…] a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, esp. one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained." (*Oxford Dictionaries*, 2010) — it is this aspect of poetics that is discussed in this thesis. The object of this thesis is theory — specifically the theory of playwriting — there is no ambition to set the basis of prescriptive poetics. This is significant to me because it epitomizes the way by which I came about this problem and the way I am going about it. That is, I departed from a problem in practice, in order to systematize a theoretical problem, but I am not returning to practical application.[59]

I have been using the word 'philosophy' and I should explain why I have used it and in what sense it is relevant to this thesis. It must be said firstly that I am never using philosophy in the historical sense — to designate or establish a link with the classical philosophical currents. I am using 'philosophy', in an equally current sense, to designate "The study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge or experience […]" (*Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2010) — in this case a philosophy of drama.

There is a sense in which philosophy and theory are similar — they both tend to be abstract, they ask fundamental questions and they aim at building systems[60] — but theory diverges from philosophy in the sense that it specifically attempts to build systems or suppositions about something where philosophy seeks to have an understanding of the nature of a given subject. All poetics are philosophy in the sense that they aim at an understanding of the essential nature of drama. All poetics are theory in the sense that they try to establish systems or suppositions that are applicable to drama. I reiterate: the objects of analysis in this thesis are theories of playwriting (poetics); the perspective is that of the philosophy of drama — it

[59] This could also be described as the opposition between methodology and theory. Theory tends to be non-applied. I am avoiding the use of the word 'methodology' for reasons of clarity: this chapter concerns the methodology of the thesis (the principles that inform the research method), not playwriting methodologies (the principles that inform playwriting method).

[60] "Now theory resembles philosophy perhaps in this: that it asks fundamental questions and also at times builds systems. That is to say, theory has certain ambitions to a totalization of what can be thought that resembles or rivals philosophy." (*Introduction to Theory of Literature with Professor Paul H. Fry*, 2009).

proposes to study such systems and suppositions, as a search for the essential nature of drama.[61]

The philosopher John R. Searle has provided a description of the three basic features of philosophic investigation. Searle is writing within the context of the mind/brain [62] problem and positions himself as a philosopher in relation to experimental science. There is no quantitative science in opposition to which poetics needs to specify its position but there is much in my approach that is illuminated by Searle's definition. The first feature concerns method:

> First as we have just seen in our contrast between philosophy and science, much of philosophy is concerned with questions that we do not yet have an agreed-on method of answering. (Searle, 1999, p.158)

I do have a methodology, in the sense that I am able to provide a rationale of the 'kinds' of processes and the frames implied by my research — my position as practitioner/thinker, level of abstraction, delimitation of subject — but I have no method in the sense of having a pre-existing set of analysis procedures that can be applied to a given phenomenon. I have one initial hypothesis about what constitutes the essential nature of dramatic writing. I will study poetic treatises systematically and compare them to my initial premise, but I have no specific analysis procedure for the poetics. This is relevant because it may allow a change in the reading strategy halfway through the process. It is paramount that the method is kept fluid and changeable because I have yet no detailed idea on what kind of argument is contained in the poetics.

> A second feature of philosophical questions is that they tend to be what I call 'framework' questions. That is they tend to deal with the intellectual framework of our lives rather than

[61] A philosophy of playwriting, building from the two previous definitions of 'theory' and 'philosophy', can be described as: the study of the suppositions or systems, typically of an abstract nature that attempt the explanation of playwriting.

[62] One of the issues discussed in *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World*, (Searle, 1999) is the ontology of consciousness. Searle asserts that consciousness is ontologically subjective but epistemologically objective. Searle's point is the substantiation of scientific study of mental phenomena. Discoveries in neuroscience have in some way validated the view that the mind is generated in the brain. I think Searle is making clear the distinction between the investigation of quantitative phenomena, such as the way the brain operates and matters of philosophy, which questions the nature of the representation of the world in the mind.

> the specific structures within the frameworks. (Searle, 1999, p.159)

This too seems applicable to this thesis. I am not investigating the particular effect of one phenomena over another — for example the effect of the *Cid* controversy [63] over Corneille's last version of that play in a chain of historically determined causes — but rather I am concerned with what the framework (the nature of drama) might be and how it might affect the way we read the *Cid*.

"A third feature of philosophical investigation is that they tend to be, in broad sense about conceptual issues." (Ibid, p.159) I am not interested only in a re-evaluation of definitions but in that at the heart of the problem are representations of things — that is concepts: my own concepts and the way those concepts relate to pre-existing ones. It strikes me that often an argument of this nature is about finding out what 'universally' valid coherent concept can emerge from within the discussion.

I began this chapter with a quotation from *Introduction to Theory of Literature with Professor Paul H. Fry* (2009) because it emphasizes the speculative nature of theoretical inquiry — the need to establish conjectural models. The central conjecture in this thesis regards the essential nature of playwriting and therefore of drama. There are two other ancillary conjectures that are necessary for the advancement of the thesis — the first is the equivalence of Method of Physical Actions and a theory of actions and the second an assumed relationship between reader and writer.

I have said that my broader concern is the usefulness of acting theory as a poetics of drama, and I have moved on to consider only one particular aspect of one theory of acting — the Method of Physical Actions, but I have not explained why this should be so or how this particular theory frames itself among acting theories in general. This choice was based on the assumption that that method is not only equivalent to a theory of actions but on the assumption that drama is the representation of actions. It is paramount to follow this particular perspective for reasons of delimitation. I am working on the hypothesis that drama as 'design of

[63] After the first performed and much acclaimed version of the *Cid* in 1636, Corneille was under heavy fire from the Académie Françoise. The dispute that followed involving a number of response pamphlets was known later as the Cid Controversy. Corneille though resisting the criticism did publish a new and revised version of the play in 1661. An account of this incident and it consequences is given in **Appendix 2 — the search for Aristotle**.

actions' reaches a point of clarity in the nineteenth century. Stanislavsky is one of the voices of the realism/naturalism movement, and his work is concomitant with developments in Europe, by dramatists such as Emile Augier, Henrik Ibsen and Bernard Shaw, that gave voice to emerging social groups. To me, this is suggestive of a relation between the acts of men against social forces and the acts of characters against forces of varied nature — that is a theory of psychological drives. Stanislavsky did not read Freud [64] and he argued that the connotations of words like 'intuition' or 'subconscious' were close to everyday usage. He had, however, been influenced by psychologists — Carl Lange, Théodule Ribot, Ivan Pavlov — at a moment when the concepts and the jargon of psychology were entering the public sphere. 'Motivation', in its psychological sense, as it is understood by Stanislavsky and followers, seems to be a nineteenth century invention but is it that elements of 'motivated action' already occur in pre nineteenth century treatises and drama?

It is paramount that it is understood that drama as the design of motivated actions is a tentative definition — my focus of interest is the definition of drama as the creation of sequences of actions, and I am proposing to use the Method of Physical Actions to define what action is in the dramatic context. This starting point in a theory that presupposes motivations is a product of my own social and historical condition. I have said that this thesis departs from practice in order to systematize a theoretical question. My universe of practice is contemporary — it assumes contextual psychological knowledge and a sense of what a mental life is and how it affects the actions of a character.

A second conjecture has to do with an assumed relationship between reader and writer. I have suggested elsewhere that there should be some identification but this needn't necessarily be the case. It is a logical assumption that plays are written with the idea of performance in mind. I don't mean that plays are exclusively written to be acted,[65] but that playwriting implies some knowledge, however small or conceptual, of what a play in performance entails. Adapted texts too may have been

[64] "Later, Stanislavsky shifted his approach and staunchly rejected the imposition of an alien language on his performers but the same emotional probing — by what might be called the director-analyst — is evident in Boleslawsky's writing and reaches its apogee in the Method of Lee Strasberg. Without knowing it, for Stanislavsky knew nothing of Freud's work, he was setting a precedent for the psychoanalytical interpretation of his system in America." (Pitches, 2009, p.94.)

[65] 'Closet drama' is one such case of plays written exclusively for reading or publication: Milton's *Samson Agonists*; Goethe's *Faust*; Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*.

written in total unawareness of the final mode of presentation, but again this is partly accounted for by the idea of adaptation requiring editing and sometimes additions. One can see the way this becomes an even more convoluted problem for I have suggested that to interpret the text (*Man to Man*) according to Stanislavsky implies a substantial addition — the creation by the actor of the supposedly implicit circumstances. The problem might be of the degree of change rather than of definition. I am not presenting a counter-argument here, but merely pointing out that the question of the actor's reading mode is relevant and that a position in relation to it, however tentative, is necessary.

The acknowledgement of these conjectural aspects is, incidentally, a reminder of the need to keep in sight two related great fields of knowledge: literary theory and dramaturgy. Any question on the nature of the dramatic text is a question for literary theory too. The status of drama as a literary genre has had great currency[66] — for technical and historical reasons. Plays have survived mostly because they were preserved in writing and for social reasons — the value of playwriting (and playwrights alike) has been sometimes affirmed by its literariness.[67] Whatever reason one chooses, the ambiguous status of the play both as an object in performance and as literary object is unavoidable — so much so that the question bleeds into the realm of the definition of what constitutes truly the nature of dramatic writing, and defining dramatic writing is asking whether it is the same as literary writing. One is left, by implication, with the essential questions of literary theory.

I have suggested that an assumption of the reading mode of the actor is necessary and this too is related to literary theory. Historically the object of literary theory has moved along the axis author-text-reader. The program of reception theory in its variations has been to describe a text by the set of operations performed by the reader in interaction with the text.

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[66] This is visible from the genesis of poetics that tend to treat dramatic as a literary genre. This the case with most of the foundational texts. Dante's *Epistle to Can Grand*e is one extreme example of the porosity of criteria. In it Dante asserts that the *Divine Comedy* is a comedy because it ends well and is spoken in vernacular. The analysis of drama in modern literary theory is also recurrent: William Empson in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (2004) treats some of Shakespeare's plays; Northrop Fry in *Anatomy of Criticism* (2000) attempts to harmonize different theories that comprise non-dramatic and dramatic theories.

[67] This is more evident in pre-prose drama. Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comédi*a*s en este Tiempo* is prolific in reverential reference to classical and neoclassical authors. According to Juana de José Prades, in *Conclusiones*, this is part of a strategy to induce the academy to validate his *comédias*, which were considered popular entertainment. The point is that the strategy of validation intersects with an understanding of the literary cannon. (Vega, 1971)

> Iser's main concern has been more on the reading process than on historical reception. Rejecting the New Criticism preoccupation with interpretation and meaning, he argues that any reading is only 'one of the possible realizations of the text' and that meanings 'are a product of a rather difficult interaction between text and reader and not qualities hidden in the text'. (Newton, 1992, p.78)

American reader-response theory goes even further in its interest in the reader. Stanley Fish argued that texts are brought in to existence by a number of 'interpretative strategies' derived from 'interpretative communities'.[68]

I have suggested, earlier, that there are principles of dramatic construction that are shared by the playwright and the actor — in fact the validity of what I am attempting relies on that identification — I have called these 'specialist readers' and 'specialist writers'. If this is true there is an obvious link between reader-response theory and drama and in this sense too I am touching literary theory.

I shall not be using the term 'dramaturgy' because the field of dramaturgy is largely covered by the use of the term 'poetic'. 'Literary theory' covers the larger field of literary production as a whole, 'poetics' cover the larger field of the theory of making; 'dramaturgy', in its contemporary sense, covers the larger field of the construction of life events, from text to production. They overlap.

It is necessary that I acknowledge dramaturgy as a related field because in its contemporary sense dramaturgy designates the articulation of agency[69] in the creative process. If the perspective of the actor/reader is considered in the production of the text, by assuming a 'specialism' in writing/reading then the part of the actor in the construction of the text is dramaturgy. All considerations of literary theory and of poetics in relation to acting are, in a sense, dramaturgy.

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[68] (Newton, 1992, P.78)

[69] The term dramaturgy is under great scrutiny and contention. 'Articulation of agency' isn't detailed but if understood within the theatre production context, covers the distinct areas dramaturgy encompasses. "To summarize, one of the two common senses of the word *dramaturgy*, relates to the internal structures of the play text and is concerned with the arrangement of formal elements by the playwright — plot, construction of narrative, character, time-frame and stage action. Conversely, dramaturgy can refer to external elements relating to staging, the overall artistic concept behind staging, the politics of performance and the calculated manipulation of audience response (hence the association with deceit). This second sense marks interpretation of the text by persons like those now known as directors, the underlying reading and manipulation of a text into multidimensional theatre." (Luckhurst, 2008, p.10–11)

Claim, hypothesis, question

I have defined the object of this thesis (poetics); I have defined a perspective (that of a philosophy of drama), and I have established initial conjectures that seem for the moment necessary (Method of Physical Actions as a theory of dramatic action, conceptual parallel between the writing mode and the reading mode). I have also acknowledged the relevance of two disciplines that deal with similar problems (literary theory and dramaturgy).

In view of what I have already argued I want to make the following initial claim: *Because of the precision with which it synthesizes the essential mechanics of the dramatic text for actors, the Method of Physical Actions synthesizes the essential mechanics of playwriting too. A poetics of drama may be defined by reference to the Method of Physical Actions as the design of motivated actions.*

If my claim is true — if the Method of Physical Actions does express an essential aspect of the mechanics of playwriting — then it would be interesting to know if elements of the Method of Physical Actions have been anticipated in playwriting theory. It is an hypothesis that *the existing poetics of drama already contain some elements of the Method of Physical Actions*.

This is a likelier result for modern poetics, written after the appearance of psychology, and a less likely result in the case of earlier poetics. In this thesis I propose to look at historically relevant playwriting treatises in search of how and when such elements might have occurred.

My research question is this: *are elements of a theory of motivated actions as suggested in the Method of Physical Actions to be found in the history of the poetics of drama?*

Choice of texts and approach

The methodological aspects to which I have been referring are technical — they concern the type of discussion, the necessary elements for the research to unfold, and the logical articulation of its parts. This thesis relates aspects of two disciplines:

playwriting theory and acting theory. Generally a methodology should deal also with the school of thought the research is inscribed in. The reference to theory of literature and dramaturgy attempts to position the discussion within other relevant disciplinary fields but it does not state a position in relation to the research.[70]

The researcher is not necessarily aware of what school of thought his research might fit in at the beginning of the process. It is acknowledged that research methodologies in the arts and humanities can be adapted in response to developing research findings.[71]

I have referred to this before, in connection to work methods in philosophical research, and I am reiterating it now because it is not just the analysis method that must remain fluid. In the present case the framework and positioning in relation to the problem must also be kept open.

This is important because a clear position at the point of departure would be of consequence in the choice of texts. Should I be adopting a Marxist perspective and I would have to consider the writings of Georgi V. Plekhanov and Alexander Korneichuk, which I don't. This is a consequence of the practical origin of the problem this thesis addresses. As a practitioner and a teacher I always felt the Method of Physical Actions was an adequate explanation of the mechanics of drama, but it was never necessary to clarify a position towards texts and drama.

The point of departure of this thesis is 'essentialist' — it is assumed that Stanislavski's analysis is correct: there is one central aspect of drama and that this aspect is the sequencing of actions. It is also advanced as an initial conjecture that the 'actions' are 'motivated actions'. The clarification of the validity of this assumption will be attempted by the study of existing poetics. The nature of the argument dictates the choice of texts to follow the historical development of poetics. I know I

[70] In the videocast available through Brunel University's 'Research Skills Online' Kathrin Rowen, a researcher in Victorian Literature at the University of Liverpool is advised by her supervisor on the importance of defining her position in the investigation. The supervisor thinks Kathrin is taking the perspective of new historicism, "You need to recognise that all researchers work inevitably from a particular perspective and this something that new historicism acknowledges, both the historically constructed perspective of you as a researcher in the present day and the perspectives of those thinkers in the 1880s and 1890s that you are exploring now, and the difficulty in drawing those two together." (Brunel Graduate School, 2011b)

[71] "Some research projects in the arts require different research methodologies. Some of these may not emerge until you are knee deep in the project." (Brunel Graduate School, 2011a). This is best exemplified by research that documents process. One case in point is John Freeman's *Tracing the Footprints, Documenting the Process of Performance* (2003), which follows and documents critically the creative process.

must start with Aristotle's *Poetics* and I am assuming this will be a crucial text in my study for its influence in subsequent poetics.

I shall be analysing exclusively poetics of drama and on occasions I will be making reference to theatre plays as illustration. When I use the term drama I am referring to a kind of texts that have certain characteristics: texts based on human interaction, dialogic usually but not always through words; texts that presuppose notions of public presentation; texts that presuppose enactment of human experience, texts that presuppose the existence of characters. I am building loosely on Esslin's definition: "Drama simulates, enacts or re-enacts events that have, or may be imagined to have happened in the 'real' world or in an imagined world." (Esslin, 1988, p.24) I am referring to a canon of theatrical texts that covers a fairly long period extending from classical Greece to today, and includes, as Esslin suggests, recorded or broadcasted drama as well as conventional presentations:

> Where previously, stage drama, live theatre, was the only method for the communication of dramatic performance, today dramatic performance can reach its audiences in a multitude of ways: through the cinema, television videotape, radio, cassette recording. (Esslin, 1996, p.13)

The poetics discussed in this thesis concern what could be called 'conventional' drama.[72] This is paramount for this thesis because it circumscribes the poetics I shall be analyzing. I am not analyzing poetics that deal with post-dramatic theatre, performance, or indeed any other kind of live presentation — these are outside the scope of this thesis.

These two aspects: the 'essentialist' nature of the problem and circumscription of the poetics of 'drama' draw up the boundaries of the poetics to be considered. Historically, the earliest is Aristotle's and the latest will be a late nineteenth century poetics. This limit will not apply to the choice of play-texts, which might include later documents as long as they fall in the tentative definition

[72] Esslin recognizes the difficulty in producing an all inclusive definition of 'drama' "Perhaps one should approach the definition of drama from that angle: there is no drama without actors, whether they are present in flesh and blood, or projected shadows upon a screen, or puppets. 'Enacted fiction' might be a short and pithy definition of drama, except that it would exclude documentary drama, which is enacted reality. Perhaps an art form based on 'mimetic action' would fit the bill? But then there are abstract ballets or, indeed cartoon films, which while still action are not, strictly speaking, mimetic. Are they still drama? Yes, in one sense; no, in another." (Esslin, 1996, p.11)

presented above. It follows from the 'essentialist' nature of the search that each poetics will be considered as a whole. In poetics, action cannot be discussed in isolation because other theoretical aspects might affect the concept of action. If an author gives preponderance to the lyrical elements of discourse he is necessarily challenging what a character can say or do. This is a likely result considering the great emphasis put on aspects such as 'conduct', or the 'lyrical' in seventeenth century neoclassical theatre and continuing in eighteenth century theatre.

What is therefore anticipated is a systematic study of poetic treatises, from an 'essentialist' perspective, as a means to bring to surface the concept of 'motivated action'. The information detailed in two appendices, **chronological description of poetic treatises presented in schematic form** and **the search for Aristotle**, guided the choice of texts to be analysed in this thesis. I have already alluded to these two documents in the **Introduction** when I explained the genesis and structure of this thesis. The former is a possible rendering of the evolution of poetics and was useful as a means to keep visible the larger historical frame. The latter, because it addresses the uses of what was later considered the classical canon, was useful as a means to identify the crucial moments in the development of poetic treatises and therefore the periods and treatises that had to be approached: the classical; the renaissance; the seventeenth century neoclassical; eighteenth century, and nineteenth century. The themes developed in medieval poetics are retrieved in the early renaissance and reoccur in neoclassical poetics. They are nevertheless enumerated in **chronological description of poetic treatises presented in schematic form**.

Chapter four: classical poetics — foundations

Aristotle's *Poetics*

> For instance, premising that the words 'poesis', 'poetes', mean originally 'making' and 'maker', one might translate the first paragraph of the *Poetics* thus: "Making: kinds of making: function of each, and how the Myths are to be put together if the Making is to go right". (Murray, 1920, 'Introduction'. In Aristotle, *Poetics*, loc. 33–44)

Aristotle's *Poetics* is divided in three main sections. The first section, an introduction, from chapters 1 to 5, consists of a general definition of poetry as *mimesis* (1), followed by the rules for the categorization of the different species of poetry (1, 2 and 3) and by an account of the developments of poetry rooted in history and 'psychology' (in 4 and 5).[73] The second section, chapters 6 to 21, is dedicated to the study of tragedy. It begins with its definition in chapter 6 and moves forward specifying different components or aspects of tragedy (chapters 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 21) as well as principles of genre coherence and the prerequisites for excellence (chapters 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18). Chapters 12 and 20 are taken by some authors[74] to be interpolations but are nevertheless included in most translations. The third section (chapter 22 to the end), discusses epic (chapters 23 and 24), general critical problems (chapter 25), and closes comparing the relative merits of epic and tragedy (chapter 26). The above description is not exhaustive — it is presented merely as an indication of the structure of the *Poetics* in its common printed presentation.

Aristotle is working at a considerable level of abstraction. In the context of this thesis and considering the influence and importance of the *Poetics* in later treatises it is significant to try to establish clearly the concepts Aristotle is creating to understand how they develop later. I shall look for the clearest usages of the terms whenever this is possible without reducing the complexity of the text. It is very different to say that "that which reveals moral choice" (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, p.53) is a component of the "mimesis of an action" (Ibid, p.49) or

[73] 'Psychology' here used very parsimoniously to mean something rooted in human motivations.
[74] Pereira, in the preface to Valente's translation of the Poetics refers to the supposedly interpolated chapters of the poetics. (Aristotle, 2001, p. 21, 27)

to say, as I shall do, that 'the actions and speech that reveal the moral inclinations of the character are an element of fiction'.

In some instances I provide romanized transliterations of ancient Greek words. I do so only for words that are transliterated in English translations of the *Poetics*. Words like *pathos* (suffering), *muthos* (plot) or *dianoia* (thought) will be indicated, but not the Greek words for 'unity', 'transformation' or 'rhythm': these are seldom provided in modern translations. Greek terms will be used only on the first occurrence of a concept with the exception of *ethos*, which is used throughout the text to clarify the distinction between a 'character in a play' and 'moral character' (*ethos*).

I have no knowledge of ancient Greek — the romanized transliterations will be provided only as a means to indicate a semantic field.

The first of the difficulties with the *Poetics* is the re-semanticization of terms like 'poem' and 'poetry'. 'Poetry' originally means what is made and *poesis* the making.[75] It is only because lyric poetry, in its modern sense, came to be the activity in which the virtuosity of making is most likely to be expressed that the poem became associated with some form of lyric poetry.[76] It is not absolutely clear to which kinds of 'making' Aristotle is referring, though he certainly means artistic 'making'.[77] The *Poetics* makes reference to painting and music composition but there is no treatment of these subjects *per se*, just a sense that those activities and also tragedy, epic and comedy, can be grouped under the same conceptual umbrella — that of representational or mimetic arts.[78] The concept, *mimesis*, is used extensively in the *Poetics* but Aristotle does not provide a definition.[79]

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[75] Slightly different renderings of this, though pointing in the same direction, "[…] the word *poētikēs* in Greek means things that are made or crafted." (Richter, 2007 p.57) or "[…] the word 'poesis', 'poetes' mean originally 'making' and 'maker' […]" (Aristotle, 1920, loc. 27–44)

[76] Paul H. Fry makes precisely this point, though speaking specifically of the New Criticism, "Now why focus on the "poem"? Notice that we never hear about literature. […] That's why the poem, the lyric poem, is privileged among the forms of literary discourse in the New Criticism. All literature is by implication a "poem," (laughs) but the poem is the privileged site of analysis whereby this broader statement can be made to seem reasonable, hence the emphasis on the poem." (*Introduction to Theory of Literature with Professor Paul H. Fry*, 2009b)

[77] In the *Poetics* Aristotle is concerned only with artistic 'making'. He does not exclude other kinds of 'making', but he does not include them either.

[78] "If we seek to clarify what is entailed by Aristotle's attempt to construct a stable framework for the understanding of Greek poetry, at least three essential elements in his perspective can be isolated. The first is the placing of poetry, alongside the visual arts, music and dancing, within the general category of artistic mimesis or representation" (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, p.7)

[79] Translators tend to use either 'imitation' (Malcolm Heath) or 'representation' (N.G.L. Hammond) or even a combination of both (Stephen Halliwell). 'Representation' has been used as an alternative to

Poetry is one of the many human activities that imply *mimesis*. Artistic activities like painting and also non-artistic activities like the imitation of animal noises[80] and children's games[81] all imply *mimesis*. Painting and image making will produce *mimesis* in colors or forms, where poets will imitate in rhythm, language and harmony (prosody, text and music). According to Aristotle a capacity to perceive and create likeness is a natural and necessary part of the process of learning.[82] Aristotle's contention is that human beings derive pleasure from imitation — this emerges from the pleasure of identifying similarities between the imitated thing and the imitation. So it seems that what is implied by the concept of *mimesis* is some capacity for perceiving and producing 'likenesses'.

But the 'likeness' that Aristotle is referring to is not a straightforward similarity. The objects of imitation as well as the imitations themselves can be varied: melody and rhythm can be 'likenesses', or 'imitations', of emotions and of qualities of character;[83] the objects of imitation can be actions — just like it happens with tragedy, which is the imitation of a particular type of human action.[84]

More importantly the object of imitation can be fictitious. Tragedy is the imitation of human actions but those actions need not be real "[…] it is not the function of the poet to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability and necessity." (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, p.59) It is worth remembering that Greek tragedy relied on ancient myth. What was at stake was the poet's capacity to recreate existing stories, not his

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imitation because it illustrates well the possibility of 'imitating' imaginary objects, but it fails to capture one important aspect of *mimesis* — the idea of likeness. Maps are representations of places but they have no likeness to places (Heath, 1996, p.xiii).

[80] "Just as people (some by formal skills others by knack) use colors and shapes to render mimetic images of many things, while other again use the voice, so too all the poetic arts mentioned use produce mimesis in rhythm, language, and melody […]" (Ibid, p.29)

[81] "For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood to engage in mimesis (indeed this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earlier understanding); and equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects." (Ibid, p.37)

[82] "Without ever offering a definition of the term (a perhaps sagacious reticence), Aristotle employs mimesis as a supple concept of the human propensity to explore understanding of the world — above all, of human experience itself — through fictive representation and imaginative 'enactment' of experience." (Ibid, p.8)

[83] "Now in rhythm and in tunes there is the closest resemblance to the real natures of anger and gentleness, also of courage and self control, and of the opposites of these, indeed of all the other kinds of character; and the fact that hearing such sounds does indeed cause changes in our soul is an indication of this." (Aristotle, 1992, p.465)

[84] In chapter 6 Aristotle will define precisely the characteristics of this action: 'elevated', 'complete' and of 'magnitude'. But also an action that evokes a specific response in the audience: 'fear and pity'. (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.47). This idea will be discussed later on.

capacity to invent new plots. This is key to understand both the idea of poetry as 'making' and the idea of poetry being a form of 'imitation'. Professor Gilbert Murray puts it thus:

> If we wonder why Aristotle, and Plato before him, should lay such stress on the theory that art is imitation, it is a help to realize that common language called it 'making', and it was clearly not 'making' in the ordinary sense. The poet who was a 'maker' of a Fall of Troy, clearly did not make the real Fall of Troy. He made an imitation Fall of Troy. (Aristotle, 1920, loc. 51–59)

The particular kinds of imitation discussed in the *Poetics* (tragedy, epic and comedy), Aristotle's emphasis on narrative, and his insistence on principles of coherence yields an interesting conclusion — that the concept of poetry as imitation is similar to 'fiction'.[85] This is not a perfect definition if we consider all of the specificity of *mimesis* in isolation (*mimesis* can be oblique — rhythm can imitate emotions)[86] but it is consistent if the poetics is considered on the whole. A small, but significant, part of the *Poetics* discusses epic poetry and there is internal and external evidence that a second volume of poetics dealt with comedy but this has not survived.[87] The *Poetics* is, therefore, better understood as a treatise on fiction subordinate to a general theory of art and inscribed in a wider understanding of human nature.

The establishment of poetry as a kind of 'mimesis' is the starting point of the *Poetics* (it is literally stated in the first pages). *Mimesis* is a general principle of artistic production and, consequently, not exclusive to theatrical performance. The idea of poetry being the imitation of human action is something Aristotle will reiterate throughout the *Poetics*. This in itself approximates the Method of Physical Actions and the *Poetics* in the sense that it establishes a common basis for drama: human action. It is not yet clear whether or to what extent these actions have some kind of motivation. I need to understand first how the other elements of Aristotle's

[85] "Aristotle's concept of poetry as imitation is therefore consistent with (although not identical to) that of fiction." (Aristotle, 1996b, loc.175–87). I quote Heath but both Jonathan Barnes and David S. Margoliouth state the same.
[86] "[...] rhythm on its own, without melody, is used by the art of the dancers (since they too, through rhythms, translated in to movements create mimesis of characters, emotions and actions)[...]"(Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.31)
[87] The existence of a second treatise on comedy is mentioned in most introductions. Maria Helena Rocha Pereira dedicates a section of the introduction to Valente's translation of the *Poetics,* (Aristóteles, 2007, p.7–8)

theory might affect the way Aristotle theorizes about action and in what sense that affects subsequent poetics.

A 'poem' in the context of the *Poetics* is a 'fictional work' — typically one that has survived in the written form. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are poems, as are Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and the tragedies of Aeschylus'. This concept of poetry as fiction is vital since it removes the difficulty of understanding Aristotle's classification system with reference to a vague concept — the poem — etymologically kin to the modern lyrical form.

Considering *mimesis* is not exclusive to theatre what else is there that is a necessary condition to define a drama? What are the criteria by which poetry can be classified and how essential are these criteria in Aristotle's theory? This is the problem Aristotle approaches next. His definition came to have a foundational importance in the establishment of literary theory and, consequently, in the theory of drama. Do any of these criteria facilitate the appearance of, or show elements of, a theory of motivated actions such as the Method of Physical Actions? I have said earlier that this thesis was concerned with an 'essentialist' definition of drama. To what extent do Aristotle's criteria constitute such a definition?

Aristotle suggests three criteria: the 'medium', the 'object', and the 'mode'. 'Mode' refers simply to the narrative mode or the enacted mode. This will serve as the basis for distinguishing between epic and tragic in that the first mixes narration and 'enactment', and the second is merely 'enactment'.[88] Aristotle is not saying that tragedies (and comedies) need to be staged to be tragedies. Rather, he is saying exactly the opposite[89]— he thinks that the audience should be moved by the telling of the events in the same way it is moved by the performance:

> For the plot should be so structured that, even without seeing it performed, the person who hears the events that occur, experiences horror and pity at what comes about (as one would feel when hearing the plot of *Oedipus*). (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, p.75)

[88] "For in the same media one can represent the same objects by combining narrative with direct personation, as Homer does; *or* in an invariable narrative voice; *or* by direct enactment of all roles." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, P.35)

[89] "Besides, tragedy achieves its effects even without actors' movements, just like epic; reading makes its qualities clear." (Ibid, p.139)

Aristotle clearly states that the plot is the soul of tragedy and that the poet is the inventor of plots.[90] By opposing " […] invariable narrative voice […]" to "[…] direct enactment of all roles […]" (Ibid, p.35) Aristotle seems to be using 'enactment' to designate staging. This creates a problem: how can enactment be a criterion for a distinction between tragedy and epic if tragedy does not need to be performed? There are a few things worth saying about this seeming contradiction.[91]

It is a known fact that Plato condemned theatre and that the *Poetics* was written as a response to his views. This condemnation can be found in Books II, III and X of the *Republic* where Plato attempts an outline of the principles of the ideal city. It is in the consideration of the education of the guardians that Plato comes to the idea that poetry, dramatic poetry in particular, can prove a bad influence.[92] Part of Plato's attack concerned the performance of tragedies and the recitation of epic. Recitation was an important part of the education of a schoolboy in Plato's time — this involved the acting out of parts and there was risk, according to Plato, of the students becoming infected with the character traits.[93] The list of undesirable effects produced in performance is long and consists of several kinds of offences, from merely mimicking characters that are 'not worth', "We will not allow them to take the parts of women, young or old (for they are men), nor to represent them abusing their men […]"(Plato, 2007, p.90) to the misrepresentation of gods.[94]

By placing the emphasis on character Plato turns *mimesis* into an instrumental aspect of poetry rather than an independent one. Plato considered emotion as an undesirable aspect of the ideal city; he thought the valid form of *mimesis* was the

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[90] "It is clear from this point, then, that the poet should be more a maker of plots than of verses, in so far as he is a poet by virtue of mimesis, and his mimesis is of actions." (Ibid, p.61)

[91] This contradiction is easily explained and I will deal with it shortly. It is worth acknowledging the contradiction because it elucidates an aspect of Aristotle's argument — his opposition to Plato, particularly in what concerns Aristotle's belief in the autonomous state of poetry.

[92] "Shall we therefore readily allow our children listen to any stories made by anyone, and to make opinions that are for the most part opposite of those we think they should have when they grow up." (Plato,2003 p.69)

[93] (Plato, 2007, p.349–53)

[94] The arguments presented by Plato in *The Republic*, appear in books II, III and X. the argument is rather extensive — so I am producing a very synthetic summary. The translation used was Desmond Lee's (Plato, 2007). It goes as follows: 1 —The arts have the power to infect and influence human beings. 2 —What is captivating in an artistic object is mostly the irrational aspects of the human mind which are contrary to the dignity and composure required in human life and conduct. 3 —Both poets and actors are responsible for showing behavior that is not proper for a man. 4 —There are many faults in the poets (noticeably in Homer) in that they wrongly portrayed the nature of gods and heroes. 5 — Artists are a third degree removed from reality — they copy the appearance objects that are already copies of idealized objects and so they are never capable of showing the real world as it really is.

lifelike *mimesis* of perfect, exemplary objects. Dramatic poetry had not only depicted imperfect characters but it had also failed in that it was attempting depictions[95] of what was already an imperfect image of the ideal world. Aristotle, in contrast with Plato, considered imitation as autonomous from the imitated thing. He believed that *mimesis* in itself was natural to man and that the *mimesis* of ugly things could be pleasurable. Unlike Plato he believed dramatic poetry could be of great value to society for it helped men to 'confront'[96] the undesirable emotions of fear and pity. In his attack Plato mixes the criticism of poets and the criticism of actors, and this is why it was so important for Aristotle to guarantee that a defense of poetry would not be taken for a defense of the spectacle.[97]

In chapter 18 Aristotle brings forward a few recommendations for the construction of plots.[98] The author should: test the text in speech; imagine the action; and act out the plot.[99] What this suggests is that the principles of enactment must be present in the plot regardless of the play being staged (enacted) or not — the play must contain fictional characters in action, using speech, in a fictional space in front of an audience. Staging the play is not the distinctive element of tragedy in its final form, but the construction of the plot through enacted action is.

Tragedy is not about things which in reality do exist but about those which could exist: "[…] it is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability and necessity." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, P.59). By 'necessity' and 'probability' Aristotle means that the events in the play (the actions) should occur inevitably

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[95] "'The worst fault possible,' I replied, 'especially if the fiction is an ugly one.' 'And what is that?' 'Misrepresenting the nature of the gods and heroes, like a portrait painter whose pictures bear no resemblance to their originals.'" (Plato, 2005, p.69); "'So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature a third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative artists.'"(Ibid, p.339)

[96] I am using the word 'confront' for now. I will be dealing with catharsis shortly.

[97] Also, in chapter 19, when discussing diction Aristotle makes it very clear the distinction between the delivery of the text and the construction of the text itself again emphasizing the construction of the text over the performance as a defining trait. Barbara Gernez analyses several aspects of the *Poetics* under this light. Accordingly Aristotle's strategy against Plato is the 'eviction of the spectacular'. (Aristote, 2002, p. XVII–XVIII)

[98] Here is one aspect of the *Poetics* normally not acknowledged. These are the only admittedly prescriptive lines in the *Poetics*.

[99] "One should construct plots and work them out in diction, with the material as much as possible in the mind's eye. In this way, by seeing things most vividly as if present at the actual events, one will discover what is appropriate and not miss contradictions. […] so far as possible one should also work out the plot in gestures […]" (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.87)

(necessarily) and in a logical and credible manner (be probable).[100] The "things that might occur" are not inescapably fictitious. What matters is that the actions imitated appear probable and necessary to the audience.

A part of Aristotle's argument is therefore instrumental — it puts the emphasis on the validation of the text of tragedy, by itself, as an instrument to show its independence from performance.[101] Another part of the argument is 'essentialist' — it puts the emphasis on the internal logic of the plot as its central element. The robustness of the poet's invention (in composing a plot) seems to be one of the essential aspects of Aristotle's theory. The question then is — what kind of invention? What kind of actions and characters are imitated in the poem? Are there specific themes for tragedy?

The objects of imitation (characters and actions) can be either elevated or base — this is what is at the root of the distinction between comedy and tragedy — tragedy deals with elevated subjects and comedy with the lower. The concept of elevated or base characters has been differently interpreted. Throughout the middle ages and Renaissance this was taken to mean characters of high social standing but some authors believe it refers to moral elevation.[102] There seems to be a contradiction in Aristotle's concept of character. In chapter 2 Aristotle states the need for the moral elevation of characters, "This very distinction separates tragedy from comedy: the latter tends to represent people inferior, the former superior, to existing humans." (Ibid, P.35); in chapter 15 he affirms in relation to tragedy, that "As regards characters, four things should be aimed at — first and foremost, that they be good." (Ibid, P.79); and in chapter 6 he implies character elevation when stating that "Tragedy then is mimesis of an action that is elevated […]" (Ibid, p.47) How can this be harmonized with the statement in chapter 15 that says that characters should be like us (humans) — "The third aim is likeness […]" (Ibid, p.79) — and how can this be harmonized with the need to evoke pity, by a process of

[100] It is not even a matter of corresponding to any aspect of the real world for Aristotle will admit of plots that deal with impossibilities as long as they seem probable and unveil in a necessary way. "Things probable though impossible should be preferred to the possible but implausible." (Ibid, p.125)
[101] (Aristote, 2002, p.XVII, XVIII)
[102] "Thus the 'nobility' possessed by the tragic character is distinctly more moral than social or political." (Marvin Carlson, 1993, p.20)

comparison and identification with the pitied?[103] There are a number of explanations to this apparent contradiction.

The first thing to be said is factual. Greek tragedy does not focus on characters of low social status. It is also a fact that *spoudaios*, which is used in chapters 2 and 6, often translated as 'admirable', 'serious' or 'elevated', can be used in relation both to social status and to moral qualities.[104]

A second aspect is that Aristotle cannot be referring to superhuman moral goodness. The special pleasure of tragedy requires that the characters fall from happiness to adversity through some kind of error. The Greek word for error, *hamartia*,[105] is used by Aristotle to designate a tragic mistake very generically[106] — it is an indication of something that can be an unintended mistake, and certainly one that has no necessary moral defect as a cause. Tragedy is supposed to evoke fear and pity as is stated in chapter 6.[107] Fear is evoked because the audience is faced with the terrible destiny of the character. Pity is evoked because the character is undeserving.[108]

Aristotle lists the possible situations and the effect they might produce in the audience: the fall to disgrace of exceedingly virtuous characters might provoke not fear and pity but 'repugnance'; the fall to adversity of a wicked person could arouse some 'fellow feeling' but not fear and pity either; the rise to happiness of a depraved character is considered the least tragic of all. So is, by implication, the rise to happiness of an extremely virtuous person:[109]

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[103] "[…](pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves)[…]" (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, P.71)

[104] "Like many terms of commendation and disparagement in Greek *spoudaios* and its opposite, embrace social class as well as moral qualities."(Aristotle, 1996b, loc.657–73)

[105] Rocha Pereira (Aristóteles, 2007, p.23–6) discusses the etymology of *hamartia* — the word is taken to mean a flaw, or mistake that can be performed in ignorance of its consequences, and which does not subvert the moral integrity of the character.

[106] "Rather, in any case, than a precise formula for quintessential tragic causality, *hamartia* can best be understood as designating a whole area of possibilities, an area unified by a pattern of the causal yet unintended implication of tragedy's characters in the pitiable and terrible transformation of their own lives." (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005, p.17)

[107] Chapter's 6 definition of tragedy is discussed later.

[108] "Nor, again, should tragedy show the very wicked person falling from prosperity to adversity: such a pattern might arouse fellow-feeling, but not pity or fear, since the one is felt for the undeserving victim the other for one like ourselves (pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves); so the outcome will be neither pitiable nor fearful." (Ibid, p.71)

[109] (Aristotles, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.69–71)

> This leaves, then, the person in-between these cases. Such a person is someone not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error […] (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005, p.71) [110]

The question is not whether the tragic hero is a person of some social standing or not — which he must be, but whether that person, regardless of his social position, is possessed of some moral standing (elevated). The answer seems to be that he must be: not exceedingly virtuous — for he should be capable of human mistakes in order to evoke fear and pity — but nevertheless someone with moral principles with which the audience should identify.

A third related aspect is referred to by Malcolm Heath (Aristotle, 1996) — the need to beautify the characters. Towards the end of chapter 15 Aristotle suggests that poets should follow the example of painters — they should "[…] render personal appearance and produce likenesses, yet enhance personal beauty." (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005, p.83) But this, though of consequence for the characters, is a consideration on the beautification of the whole play. The point seems to be this: characters must be of high social standing; they must be engaged in exceptional activities, as befits their presumed social position; their presentation must be aesthetically pleasing, so they will speak in verse and be accompanied by music; yet they must be similar to their audiences, so they are humanized by having a moral or character flaw.

Only elevated actions can be allowed in tragedy. These either involve great deeds, such as the opposition between human and divine rule, as it happens in Sophocles' *Antigone* (c.442 B.C.), or they result in great human suffering, as in Euripides' *Medea*.

Rhythm, language, and melody are, for Aristotle, each a 'medium' for imitation. Language and melody have clear equivalents in modern language. Melody is sometimes translated as 'music'. Language, which is often translated as 'diction', needs no translation — it covers exactly what the modern term covers: spoken and a

[110] The line follows with a mention to the sources for narratives of tragedies as well as a reassertion of the social status of the tragic hero "[…] and one belonging to the class of those who enjoy great renown and prosperity, such as Oedipus and Thyestes, and eminent men from such lineages." (Aristotles, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.71)

written language. Rhythm is a cryptic concept[111] — or at least one for which a modern equivalent is not direct. It appears to be some element that can be shared by speech, music, and dance, but distinct from them. When associated with language, rhythm can be taken to be the prosody, but it is not clear what it means in dance.

It is from this basic categorization of poetry through mode, object and medium that Aristotle departs to produce his famous definition of tragedy in chapter 6,

> Tragedy then is mimesis of an action that is elevated, complete [whole] and of magnitude [size]; in language embellished by distinctive forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions. (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005, p.47)

Elevation and *mimesis* have already been discussed. I have also spoken of 'pity and fear' though the subject will return briefly when I discuss 'catharsis'. So it remains 'magnitude' (size), 'wholeness', 'embellishments' and 'catharsis'.

A tragedy should have a size such that it is graspable by perception.[112] It can neither be so long that memory cannot take hold of the sequence of events neither can it be so short that the kinds of events specific to tragedy — transformations from adversity to happiness or happiness to adversity — do not occur.[113] This is what Aristotle means by 'magnitude'. The idea of a transformation in the life of the character is not a mere possibility — it is essential to the definition of tragedy.

By 'whole' Aristotle means that an action must have a beginning, middle and end.[114] This seems like a trivial statement if not understood in relation to Aristotle's concerns with plot. By stating that what is at the beginning needs to be followed by

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[111] Barbara Gernez provides a rather circular explanation "Dance imitates characters in that it represents rhythms if it is admitted that rhythms can imitate characters — as was admitted by Aristotle and other philosophers in antiquity with no contention (cf. les *Politiques* VIII, 5–7). Because character is "the place" where emotion and actions begin, they can be imitated in rhythm from within that same origin." [my translation] (Aristote, 2002, p.4–5)

[112] Aristotle uses an example from biology to illustrate this point, "[…] there could not be a beautiful animal which was either miniscule (as contemplation of it occurring in an almost imperceptible moment, has no distinctness) or gigantic (as contemplation of it has no cohesion, but those who contemplate it lose a sense of unity and wholeness), say an animal a thousand miles long." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.57)

[113] "To state the definition plainly: the size which permits a transformation to occur, in a probable or necessary sequence of events, from adversity to prosperity, or prosperity to adversity, is a sufficient limit of magnitude." (Ibid, 2005, P.57)

[114] "Well-constructed plots, therefore, should neither begin or end at an arbitrary point, but should make use of the patterns stated" (Ibid, 2005, P.55)

something, that what is in the middle is preceded by something and followed by something, and that what is in the end is preceded by something but has nothing after it, Aristotle is putting the emphasis on the self-containment of the plot and on connectedness. The actions of characters must therefore be consequential. What happens in the beginning must have an effect on what happens in the middle and what happens in the middle must affect how the play ends. Antigone in Sophocles' *Antigone* is imprisoned by Creon for having buried her brother Polyneices against the laws of Thebes. Antigone hangs herself as a consequence of Creon's punishment. Haemon, Creon's son to whom Antigone is betrothed, tries to kill Creon and, failing to do so, commits suicide. The same will happen to Eurydice, Creon's wife, upon learning of Haemon's death. The circumstances necessary for the play to unfold are introduced in the beginning and they are taken to the end in a causal chain of events (connectedness) that effectively closes the play (self-containment). The plot is self-contained (whole) because the information necessary to begin the action is given at the start of the play and no actions necessarily occur after the last scene. What is necessary for Oedipus to initiate his investigation, in Sophocle's *Oedipus*, is the plague at Thebes. The audience knows that by the end of the play Oedipus will perambulate blind through Greece with his two daughters, but no direct significant action is expected at the end of the play that relates to its central theme — the unveiling of Oedipus' identity. Of course this is only partially valid for Greek tragedy. Greek playwrights presented their plays in cycles of four plays: three tragedies and a satyr play. The three tragedies were devoted to one theme and plays were a recreation of the great mythical themes known to every Greek citizen.

Accordingly the tragedy must have 'unity'. This has been taken to imply the anchoring of the plot around just one character but it means in fact the subordination of characters and events to one action:

> Just as, therefore, in other mimetic arts a unitary mimesis has a unitary object, so too the plot, since it is mimesis of an action, should be of a unitary and whole action; and the component events should be so structured that if any is displaced or removed, the sense of the whole is disturbed and dislocated […] (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.59)

The ‘unity of action’ is a logical derivation from ‘wholeness’. The ‘unity of action’ is an element of the structural coherence of the plot because it stresses the relation of the parts. The different actions have to be connected to each other and to the whole.

By ‘embellishments in their distinctive sections’ Aristotle means the effects referred to as mediums, namely: the spoken parts, the songs, but also the different kinds of metric that can be used in tragedy. Aristotle argues in the final chapter of the *Poetics* that one of the advantages of tragedy is that it can mix different kinds of metre.[115]

Pity and fear seem to be the kinds of emotions that are proper to tragedy. In what concerns these emotions and catharsis Aristotle is inaugurating a discussion on reception. Whatever the theory of catharsis adopted, one thing seems to be clear, that what tragedy aims for is to produce in the spectator some kind of emotional response. This thesis discusses problems of construction of the dramatic text — specifically the hypothesis that dramas are the design of sequences of psychologically motivated actions. The discussion of catharsis as an effect produced in the audience, is not directly relevant to this thesis — it might be indirectly relevant if it imposes specific kinds of characters or actions that might or might not imply motivation. The discussion of catharsis is also relevant because of its omnipresence and centrality in the history of poetic treatises.[116]

There are four main theories that try to explain catharsis: the medical, (purgation); the educational (purification); the internal (character’s); the aesthetic (depuration). The medical view, championed by Jacob Berney, based on Aristotle’s medical writings and “[…] on the *Corpus Hippocraticum* assumes that tragedy operates like a form of therapy […]” (Aristote, 2002, p.119)[117] by purging an excess of emotions. There is one evident problem with this view in that it seems to be saying that only people suffering from some excess of emotions can be recipients of tragedy. The educational view, produced by E. Belfiore, makes use of the medical interpretation too. This view assumes that the proper emotions for tragedy are not

[115] “Add the fact that tragedy possesses all epic resources (it can even use its metre) […]” (Ibid, P.139)
[116] M. H. R. Pereira lists some of the interpretations from Marcus Aurelius, through the renaissance, to Lessing. (Aristoteles, 2007, p.18) Modern introductions tend to produce an account of the existing theories and of translation problems.
[117] My translation

merely fear and pity but further emotions of that kind.[118] Opposite emotions can be inoculated "like a drug with the aim of expelling emotions of the same nature, but of contrary form […]" (Aristote, 2002, p.122)[119] The idea is that of conditioning the audience's emotions to the right balance. A third option, the 'internal', advanced by G.F. Else, tries to place the catharsis within the tragedy — catharsis is then not what happens to the audience but what the characters experience. Finally, there is the aesthetic view of R. Dupont-Roc and J. Lallot: from this perspective, poetic elaboration arrives at aestheticization of the emotions of pity and fear. The spectator is therefore the recipient of those emotions in a pleasurable form.[120]

To say that it is difficult to prove that emotions are purged by the witnessing of tragedy, as is suggested by Berney, is an understatement — how can this be measured or assessed? That all potential spectators of tragedy are emotionally unbalanced is also a problematic assertion. Belfiore's view presents the additional problem of establishing whether Aristotle really meant that not only the emotions of pity and fear were valid for tragedy, and, should there be other emotions, the problem of knowing which ones.

Of the interpretations mentioned above the 'internal' is the most likely to have consequences for the plot, but this view is challenged by the existing tragedies. Agamemnon, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.), might be in fear when he is prompted to walk over the purple carpet but there is no reason why he should feel pity. So too in Aeschylus' *Orestes* (458 B.C.), the character Orestes might feel pity for the death of his father but there is no reason why he should feel fear.

R. Dupont-Roc's and J. Lallot's seems to be the less contentious interpretation of catharsis. In my view it is also the most coherent. To say that watching plays is generally a pleasurable experience — even when the events presented are terrible — seems to be a view corroborated by theatre history.

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[118] This is one of the matters of contention in the translation of the Poetics. Some authors (Butcher) will translate the passage in chapter VI "[…] through fear and pity effecting the purgation of these emotions." (Aristotle, 1911, p.23) Other authors (Halliwell) will translate "[…] through fear and pity accomplishing the purgation of such emotions." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.49) The problem is to know whether there Aristotle admits of more emotions or not.

[119] My translation

[120] Barbara Gernez provides an account of the main currents in the translation of 'catharsis' in the Introduction to her translation of the *Poetics*. I have reproduced here her designations. (Aristote, 2002, p.117–123)

The effect that is predictably produced in the audience has a consequence for the actions of the play. I have spoken about the kinds of actions considered tragic for Aristotle — elevated actions performed by elevated characters — it follows from the need to produce catharsis that those actions must be exceptional too. It is not just that high status characters are faced with far reaching circumstances — Prometheus stealing the fire from the Gods, Oedipus saving the city of Thebes, Agamemnon fighting the Trojan War — but that the characters are put through extreme personal predicament — Prometheus is tied to a rock, having his liver eaten by an eagle; Oedipus is blinded and expelled from the city of Thebes; Agamemnon is killed by his own wife, Clytemnestra.

Authors vary greatly in the importance[121] they ascribe to the 'awesome' (astonishment) [122] and it is mainly because of its later uses that it is relevant to mention it here. This is one of the concepts that neoclassical theories[123] utilise and one that has implications for the narrative for it advocates unexpected changes in the plot.

> Given that the 'mimesis' is not only of a complete action but also of pitiable matters, the latter arrives above all when events occur contrary to expectation yet on account of one another. The awesome will be maintained in this way more than through show of chance […] (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.63)

In the description Aristotle favours the idea of surprise but, in the example that follows, he puts the emphasis on apparent connection between events. [124] 'Astonishment', contrary to 'pity and fear' and 'wholeness', is not a necessary condition for tragedy, but it is one that increases its power. More importantly it reinforces the ideas of 'pity and fear', and of connectedness.

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[121] Heath in the introduction to the *Poetics* considers it an important aspect. Patrice Pavis in *Dictionnaire du Théâtre*, (2006) ignores it.

[122] Heath uses the word 'astonishment' which is clearer. Other common translations are: 'amazement' (E. Sousa), 'wonder' (Ana M. Valente), 'tragic wonder' Butcher, 'surprise' (B. Gernez).

[123] The neoclassicists will translate 'astonishment' as *merveilleux*. This will be a central subject of discussion for French neoclassicism.

[124] "[…] we find the most awesome those which seem to have happened by design (as when Mitys' statue at Argos killed the murder of Mitys, by falling on him as he looked at it: such things seem not to occur randomly)." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.63)

There are six elements to tragedy, organized in terms of their hierarchical importance: plot (*muthos*); character (*ethos*); thought (*dianoia*); language (*lexis*);[125] music (*melopoiía*) and spectacle (*ópsis*). Plot is by far the most important of these elements and the one that has the most subdivisions. It is also the element of tragedy that provides the motto for the ideas of unity, and coherence that cross the whole of the *Poetics*. I shall start with character.

Modern poetics, such as Dunn's *The Dramatic Writer's Companion* (2009) or Field's *Screenplay* (1994) dedicate long chapters to character development. Character is described by such authors as the conjoined physical and psychological attributes of a person. Emphasis is put on the idea that a character is a 'fictional personality'.[126] This might include aspects of the past life of the character, of what happened before the play starts, of speech, and of his relationships. This is close to the 'given circumstances' and the 'superobjective' in the Method of Physical Actions which presuppose, respectively, the knowledge of the circumstances in which the play is set as well as the construction of the overall life conditions of the character. In modern treatises the circumstance of the character is considered significant because it establishes the psychological traits of the character as a relevant cause for action.

In the *Poetics* there are two different character-related concepts: there is 'character' (*ethos*), signifying the 'moral inclinations' of the agent;[127] and there are agents (*pratontes*)[128] performing the action.[129] It is a singularity of English translations that 'character' came to be used to refer, in some instances, both to the agent and to the 'moral character' of the agent. In this thesis I will use the word 'character' to designate the 'agent' in a sense close to the modern (as the totality of elements that compose a fictional agent).[130] In a few instances I will also use 'character (as agent)', or 'agent' for extra-clarity. I will specify when I am referring

[125] In quotes I have tried to refer homogeneously to the same translation of the *Poetics*: I have used Halliwell's throughout. However in the case of 'lexis' I have made an exception to this rule — I used 'language'. Heath uses 'language'; Barbara Gernez 'expression'. I find Haliwell's 'diction' unhelpful.
[126] "One way to conceive of dramatic character is as the representation of an individual person, either real or fictional. Each character has a biography and an array of personal characteristics — physical attributes, mannerisms, desires, objectives, beliefs — that the text defines incompletely and that the actor will elaborate in performance." (*The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance*)
[127] "Characterization appears when, as said earlier, speech or action reveals the nature of moral choice […]" (Aristotle, Longinus, demetrius, 2005, p.79)
[128] Rinehart (2000, p.530) discusses the two terms
[129] "[…] the action is conducted by agents who should have certain qualities in both character and thought […]"(Aristotle, Longinus, demetrius, 2005, p.49)
[130] For the sake of clarity. Most texts quoted on this thesis will be using 'character' in this sense. See footnote 126.

to the 'moral inclinations' of the 'character' by using the word *ethos*, or expressions such as 'moral choice' or 'moral character'.[131]

The *Poetics* does list a number of principles which the character (as agent) of the tragedy should follow but it never includes character (as agent) in its hierarchy of elements. Like plot, character (as agent) should adhere to principles of general coherence. Of goodness (elevation) and likeness (to humans) I have already spoken. Other attributes of characters (as agents) will be 'appropriateness' and 'consistency', by which Aristotle means behavior that corresponds to the type (a slave can't be courageous) and is constant[132] (a prince should behave like a prince throughout):

> With character [agent], precisely as in the structure of events, one should always seek necessity and probability — so that for such a person to say or do things is necessary or probable, and the sequence of events is also necessary and probable. (Ibid, 2005, p.81)

When Aristotle refers to 'thought' he is not speaking of aspects of the character's reason or emotions but of the way they produce rhetorical speech — that is: "proof, refutation, the conveying of emotion […]" (Ibid, p.97) Aristotle dismisses the subject quickly by referring to his *Rhetoric*, where, he claims, those issues are discussed. This in itself reveals the relative unimportance of 'thought', in comparison to action and the character's moral choice (*ethos*). There are a few other aspects of 'thought' that are of interest. First, it is not merely the speech of the character that is at stake but also its importance in rendering the character's behavior convincing — once again aligning principles of one specific element of tragedy with the general need for coherence. Second there is a sense that the totality of the tragedy must be eloquent, both in showing agents expressing proof, refutation and emotion convincingly, and also in the organization of the plot:

> It is clear that the same principle [proof, refutation, the conveying of emotion] should also be used in the handling of events, when one needs to create impressions of what is pitiable, terrible, important or probable — with this difference, that the latter effects must be evident without

[131] Uses will depend on the context – this will be self-evident.
[132] "[…] even if the subject is presented as someone inconsistent, and such character is presupposed, he should still be consistently inconsistent."(Ibid, p.79–81)

> direct statement, while the former must be conveyed by the speaker in and through speech. (Ibid, p.97)

'Language' presents a more complicated problem — Aristotle's definitions of 'language' are seemingly contradictory. In chapter 6 'language' is defined as the "[…] actual composition of the metrical speech […]" (Ibid, p.49) but later in the same chapter Aristotle states "I define 'diction' [language] as expression through choice of words." (Ibid, p.53) In chapters 20 to 22, which are integrally dedicated to 'language' Aristotle includes a grammar, a classification of words and their uses, and a discussion on metaphor.[133] Chapter 21 seeks to define the correct balance of words between rare and sophisticated and the most commonly used — with a view to the creation of artistically balanced work. The field of 'language', then, must necessarily overlap the field of 'thought' since the "choice of words" affects what a character can prove and refute, and the emotions he can convey.

In modern plays a character might be ill-spoken. The erratic rhythm of Willie Loman's speeches in Arthur Miller's *Death of Salesman* (1949) is a symptom of his own view of the world:

> Miller has said of Willie Loman that "he cannot bear reality, and since he can't do much to change it, he keeps changing his ideas of it." […] and that fact does indeed provide, something of the rhythm of his speeches […] (Miller, 1998, loc.193)

Roy Williams' characters rely greatly on language as a means of social and personal characterization. Eliza Doolittle in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912) is socially and psychologically characterized by language. Such wealth in characterization would be impossible in Aristotle's conception of tragedy because for Aristotle language must portray the character 'positively': the character, in agreement with Aristotle's statements in relation to 'thought', must be eloquent.

What Aristotle seems to be saying is that in a tragedy there are agents who perform a number of actions (Oedipus, Agamemnon, Prometheus), that these agents

[133] Barbara Gernez in Aristote (2002, p.125–129) suggests that 'language' can be read keeping in sight the opposition to Plato. In this case language would be merely the choice of words as a means to convey thought (grammar, style) and not the delivery by the actor. This is consistent with the 'eviction of the spectacular' hypothesis mentioned before.

can make good or bad moral choices (*ethos*), and that they will be convincing and articulate in their speeches because what is expected of the poem, and what is expected of the poet, is the mastering of rhetoric and language. Eloquence is an aspect of dramatic construction that is shared by the character, the poem and the poet.

Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981, p. 23–48) convincingly argue that there are aspects of judicial practice in Greek tragedy that are manifest in the use of legal nomenclature, in the fact that some plays take the form of a judgment, and in the preference for themes of bloodshed. Gill mentions the "[…] forensic and judicial quality of much of the dialogue […]" (1986, p.268) emphasizing the idea of 'proof and refutation' in tragic plays.

The parallel with legal discourse reiterates an aspect of tragedy that I have been trying to highlight in this chapter — that eloquence is fundamental to Greek culture. In Aristotle, eloquence is not a manifestation of some psychological attribute of the character (as agent); it is something that is expected in any form of public address, such as speech in a court or in a theatre play.

Ethos, as I have pointed out, is an essential aspect of Aristotle's system. Two other Aristotelian treatises discuss *ethos* at some length: *Ethics*[134] and the *Rhetoric*.

Ethics discusses the condition for the achievement of the ultimate 'good' for human life. This ultimate 'good' is 'flourishing' (*eudaimonia*),[135] by which Aristotle means: a realization of the most characteristic function of humans. For Aristotle a 'flourishing' life consists of the active exercise of 'excellence' (*aretê*).[136] There are two kinds of 'excellence' in *Ethics*: moral excellence and intellectual excellence. For Aristotle intellectual excellence is, in principle, superior to moral excellence because it is in reasoning that man realizes his most characteristic function. All kinds of excellent behavior require the use of intellectual faculties implying, therefore, intellectual excellence. This rational aspect of moral excellence is of the utmost importance because it places the emphasis on deliberation. For Aristotle the tragic agent is characterized by his choices and the effect of tragedy is produced by having

[134] There are two treatises on rhetoric attributed to Aristotle: the *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. The diferences between the two are minor. I am discussing the *Nichomachean Ethics* only, which is generally considered the latest of the two. (Barnes, 2007, p.198)
[135] The most common translation of *eudaimonia* is 'happiness' but I am following Barnes (2000) for the sake of clarity.
[136] The most common translation of *aretê* is 'virtue'. Again I am following Barnes (2000).

characters who are potentially capable of making 'ethical choices' going through some sort of predicament. This is why, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle speaks of *ethos* as that by which the character "[…] reveals the nature of moral choice […]" (Aristotle, Longinus, 2005, p.79). The concept of *ethos* in *Poetics* is consistent with (though not coextensive with) the concept of *ethos* in *Ethics*.

It should be emphasized, however, that there is no moral bias either in the *Poetics* or in *Ethics*. Aristotle is not suggesting — as will be done in later poetics — that characters should present a moral example for audiences, he is merely concerned with *ethos* as the essential element of characterization.

The *Rhetoric* is concerned with the means by which public speech can be made convincing, regardless of subject matter.[137] The means of persuasion for Aristotle are: *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*. *Logos* refers to the qualities of the argument; *pathos* to the arousing of emotions in the audience; and *ethos* to the character of the speaker. It is by establishing the character of the speaker as trustworthy that the public will be persuaded: "Proofs from character are produced, whenever the speech is given in such a way as to render the speaker worthy of credence […]" (Aristotle, 2004, p.74) Furthermore the speaker should be good-willed, virtuous and have common sense.[138] It is, apparently, not a matter, as in *Poetics*, of defining *ethos* as the 'moral inclination' of the agent but of selecting the aspects of *ethos* that can work to the advantage of the speaker. Aristotle is speaking within a very tight frame: the *Rhetoric* aims three kinds of public speech where the trustworthiness of the speaker is essential: deliberative (assemblies), epideictic (praise in funerals and public ceremonies) and judicial (courts).

In spite of the suggestion, in chapters 1.2, and 1.9, of a treatment of specific ethical types from the perspective of the speaker, Aristotle seems to be more interested in discussing the character of the audience. The idea seems to be that the speaker should adapt his delivery to the *ethos* of the audience. Aristotle specifies three kinds of audience *ethos* to which the speaker should adapt. They are 'youth'; 'old age'; and 'prime'. The treatment of these types is commonsensical and short.[139]

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[137] "Let rhetoric be the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits." (Aristotle, 2004, p.74)

[138] "There are three causes of the speakers' themselves being persuasive; for that is the number of sources of proof other than demonstration. They are common sense, virtue and goodwill."(Ibid, p.141)

[139] Both Lawson-Tancred in his commentaries to the translation (Aristotle 2004) and Kennedy (1994) agree the treatment of *ethos* in *Rhetoric* is somewhat disappointing. They point to inconsitencies

The young are defined as rash, ambitious, optimistic, and excessive.[140] Old age is defined as opinionated, sour-tempered and small-minded.[141] Aristotle claims 'prime' is some kind of balanced synthesis of both ages, retaining the energetic virtues of youth and the moderation of old age.[142] In addition to this Aristotle also attempts a description of the influence of social position and power. The treatment is again short and rather commonsensical. So it seems that in *Rhetoric*, the aspect of *ethos* that is emphasized is 'moral choice' — *ethos* is the display of those characteristics of the speaker that show him as someone capable of making good moral choices and therefore as someone trustworthy.

It is worth pointing out that when Aristotle speaks of elements of the tragic poem he is in fact speaking of elements of the construction of the dramatic poem: "[…] when Aristotle comes to enumerate and define the six 'parts' [elements] of tragedy in Chapter six, we have to understand them not as parts of the poem but of the art of composition." (Ricoeur, 1990, p.33). The concepts of *ethos* in the *Ethics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* point not at the construction of unified psychological characters, as would happen in later realistic and naturalistic work, but at the establishment of aspects of human choice — moral choice in particular — as central elements of the dramatic poem. Aristotle had suggested that tragic characters should be 'good' (of elevated status) and like humans (capable of a moral mistake), but these are not indispensable aspects of dramatic construction. What is indispensable for dramatic construction is that 'moral choice' is manifested.

Of the six elements of tragedy advanced by Aristotle 'plot' is promptly acknowledged as the most important. The principles that make plots better or worse take a major part of the poetics[143] and are the central subject in the discussion on tragedy.

There is an important distinction here between plot[144] and myth;[145] Aristotle does not differentiate the two words and he uses myth (*muthos*) throughout. Gilbert

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regarding what is hinted, as a prospective discussion of *ethos*, in the first chapters and the treatment of that concept in later chapters. Furthermore they think the triptic 'youth/old age/prime' is included for reasons of symetry rather than for their logic.

[140] (Aristotle, 2004, p.173)

[141] (Ibid, p.175)

[142] (Ibid, p.176)

[143] Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16 deal directly with plot.

[144] I shall be using 'plot' to refer to events within the play or the design of those events.

Murray believed that Aristotle was using myth to signify both the 'intrigue of the play' and the 'traditional stories' from which plays were taken. Murray's theory is that by the time Aristotle was writing a new style of comedy had developed — a style that, contrary to the plays of the great period of tragedy, allowed for the invention of intrigues.[146] Myth will be the number of stories from tradition from which plots can be extracted. A myth will consist of a number of relevant events for the construction of the play. Those events will not necessarily be contained in the play. Such differentiation between elements of myth contained in the play and elements of myth not contained in the play will be observed in the definition of 'complication' and 'denouement'. This is relevant because by admitting of the exclusion of the 'complication' and of the 'denouement', Aristotle is indirectly stating that they are not essential elements of the play.

By definition all tragedies contain some kind of transformation — this is implied in the definition of tragedy in chapter 6. A tragedy must have 'magnitude' by which it is meant: the enough size for a transformation to occur from prosperity to adversity or from adversity to prosperity.

The 'complication' is the sum of narrative elements in myth that lead to the terrible happenings in the play. Only the events that are necessarily connected to the unfolding of the tragedy up to the moment when the transformation begins are part of the complication. The 'denouement' will consist of all the events from the beginning of the transformation to the end of the tragedy.[147] In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.) the sacrifice of Iphigenia is part of the complication even though the play deals only with the events happening just before the return of Agamemnon to Argos and ending shortly after his killing. The 'denouement' in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* starts when Oedipus is visited by the Corinthian messenger and learns he is not the son of Polybus. From this moment on the testimony of the shepherd will suffice to

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[145] The same Greek word is translated differently as: 'myth' (E. Sousa), 'plot' (S.H. Butcher), 'intrigue' (A. M. Valente).

[146] "For example, as we have noticed above, true Tragedy had always taken its material from the sacred myths, or heroic sagas, which to the classical Greek constituted history. But the new comedy was in the habit of inventing plots. Consequently Aristotle falls into using the word 'mythos' practically in the sense of 'plot', and writing otherwise in a way that is unsuited to the tragedy of the fifth century" (Aristotle, 1920, loc.91)

[147] "Every tragedy has both complication and denouement: the complication comprises events outside the play and often some of those within; the remainder is the denouement." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.91)

establish Oedipus' guilt. One important point raised by Heath[148] is that Aristotle does not claim the 'denouement' to be one specific point — Aristotle speaks of the 'denouement' "[…] as extending from the beginning of the transformation till the end." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.91) thus suggesting that the 'transformation' is an extended process. The question then is to know whether the change of fortune in *Oedipus* occurs within or outside the play. It is a possibility that the change of fortune really is the killing of Laius — it is, after all, on that moment that Oedipus fulfills the Oracle and his luck starts to change.[149] But again, as Heath notes, "[…] if the events of the plot are connected by necessity and probability (in the way Aristotle recommends), then any event we might identify as a change of fortune will be rooted in earlier events that make it inevitable […]"[150]

I consider the second hypothesis unlikely — it seems to go against the round treatment of tragedy that Aristotle advocates[151] — but I find the difficulty in establishing the exact moment for the beginning of the change of fortune revealing. What is most interesting is not to find out where a change of fortune of a given play is, according to Aristotle's view of tragedy. What is interesting is that principles of necessity and probability should make it possible for the change of fortune to occur at different moments. It is because things happen in such a logical way that it becomes difficult to establish initial causes. Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions shares with Aristotle's theory a need to establish probable and necessary causes — a logic of the actions of the play.

If a 'transformation' is an essential aspect of tragedy, the 'reversal' (*peripeteia*) and the 'recognition' (*anagnorisis*) are what is at the basis of the distinctions between kinds of action,[152]

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[148] (University of Leeds 2010)
[149] From prosperity to adversity: considering he partakes of parricide and incest. From adversity to prosperity: considering he goes from runaway to king and from bachelor to married man.
[150] (University of Leeds 2010)
[151] There are other reasons why I believe the first hypothesis. Aristotle seems to advocate the inclusion of climactic moments, unless there is some blatant improbability . Though he digresses to discuss matter of myth, on the whole Aristotle is discussing what happens in plays, not outside. Aristotle is very much aware of the impact the elements of tragedy can have if occurring at the same time, "The finest recognition is that which occurs simultaneously with reversal, as with the one with Oedipus" (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, P.65)
[152] Furthermore, Aristotle produces the following tragedy typologies: 'tragedy of suffering' (*Ajax* and *Ixion*); 'tragedy of character', (*Women of Phtia*, *Peleus*); 'simple tragedy' *Prometheus*, *Daughter of Phorcys*. (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.93)

> I call 'simple' an action which is continuous, in the sense defined,[153] and unitary,[154] but whose transformation lacks reversal and recognition; 'complex', one whose transformation contains recognition or reversal or both. (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.63–5)

'Recognition'[155] is the moment in which the character discovers something he was unaware of — generally someone's identity — is not what he expected. The 'reversal'[156] is the moment when the life of the character changes. 'Reversal' deals with consequence and 'recognition' deals with significance.[157]

'Reversal' means that because things were not what they seemed, the events in the life of the character will be different from what was expected. So the arrival of the messenger who was supposed to bring information about the death of Polybus and therefore establish the king's innocence in *Oedipus*, resulted in exactly the contrary. 'Recognition' means that because things were not what they seemed the acts of the character were different from what he thought. Oedipus thought he had killed a hostile stranger at a crossroads when in fact he had killed his own father.[158]

A third component of plot is 'suffering' (*pathos*), by which is meant "destructive and painful action, such as public deaths, physical agony, woundings, etc."(Ibid, p.67) Like 'reversal' and 'recognition', 'suffering' is not an indispensable element of plot but it is one that seems to occur very frequently both in epic and tragedy. [159]

The cathartic effect will be heightened if the characters are blood related, "[…] cases where the suffering occur within relationships, such as brother and brother, son and father, mother and son, son and mother — when one kills (or is about to kill) the other, or commits some other such deed." (Ibid, p.75)

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[153] This refers to having a beginning, middle and end.
[154] I will discuss 'unity' shortly.
[155] "Recognition, as the very name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge […] involving matter which bear on prosperity or adversity."(Aristotle, Longinus, demetrius, 2005, p.65)
[156] "Reversal is the change to the opposite direction of events [...]"(Ibid, 2005, p.65)
[157] 'Recognition' often involves the discovery of someone's identity. The kind of recognition Aristotle favors, emerges naturally and inevitably, from the events. 'Recognition by token' involves the discovery of fact from an object. 'Recognition by the poet' when the poet conjures a speech such that the recognition takes place. 'Recognition by memory', the hero is suddenly reminded by the effect of (e.g.) music. 'Recognition by inference', Orestes infers he will be sacrificed after the sacrifice of his sister. 'Recognition by inference' a fact or power that is attributable to someone only is witnessed. (Aristotle, Longinus, demetrius, 2005, p.87)
[158] I have reproduced Heath's argument in translation of the *Poetics* (Aristotle, 1996b, loc.400–49)
[159] Medea kills both her sons in Euripides *Medea*, Orestes Kills his father in Aeschylus *Agamemnon*, Jocasta hangs herself in Sophocles' *Oedipus*.

‘Recognitions’ will be more powerful if they happen between long lost relatives and the realization of having caused great suffering to a next of kin will also add to greater effect.

Chapters 20 to 26 of the poetics deal with language, critical problems and the epic. The bulk of the discussion on language (chapters 20 to 22) is broad-spectrum and not relevant for the present discussion — it considers the definition of metaphor, aspects of grammar, and phonetics. The same can be said of chapter 25, which introduces overarching critical objections to poetry — specifically the difference between poetic truth and reality. The definition of epic is obliquely significant for this thesis because some the essential aspects of tragedy are clarified by the definition of epic — particularly those that concern elements shared by both kinds of poem. It is worth enumerating the elements Aristotle considers essential to tragedy so that they can be contrasted to the essential elements in epic.

First and most importantly the main focus of tragic creation is the plot — the creation of the sequence of events in the play. Secondly the subjects imitated have to be of a particular type. They must involve high status characters and the actions will be extraordinary. The events in the play will have terrible personal consequences for the characters and they will often have social consequence too.[160] Thirdly, the tragic character must suffer some kind of transformation. This will typically be a change from happiness to adversity. Fourthly, the creation of the plot has to be such that internal coherence is kept. This means respecting a sense of self-containment in the plot, establishing causes for actions, making sure that action is credible and develops inevitably, and guaranteeing unity of action. ‘Reversals’ and ‘recognitions’ are not essential to tragedy. It is not clear whether the ‘complication’ and ‘denouement’ are essential, but the need for a ‘transformation’ suggests they are.

The problem is that these elements, regardless of how essential they are to the dramatic poem, are also elements of the epic, as is stated in chapters 23 and 24,

[160] The significance of these actions and the status of the characters imposes the use of elevated language. This in itself is not is not a distinguishing trait of tragedy because most Greek poetic forms use heightened language and because tragedy is allowed the mixing of different kinds of metre. “But Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common except metre, so one should call the former a poet, the other a natural scientist.” (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.33) It is relevant to mention it here because of the emphasis put on ‘elevated language’ in the definition in chapter 6.

> As regard narrative mimesis in verse [epic], it is clear that plots, as in tragedy, should be constructed dramatically, that is around a single, whole and complete action, with beginning, middle, and end, so that epic, like a single and whole animal, may produce a pleasure that is proper to it. […] Moreover, epic should encompass the same types as tragedy, namely simple and complex, character-based, rich in suffering; it has the same components, except for lyric poetry and spectacle, for it requires reversals and recognitions, and scenes of suffering, as well as effective thought and diction. (Ibid, p.115–119)

Elevation is not present in this description but Aristotle had already mentioned the elevation (of subject and characters) in epic in chapter 5.[161] In that passage Aristotle makes an additional statement that is of interest, "[…] but they differ in that epic has an unchanging metre and is in narrative mode." (Ibid, p.47). I have said previously that the reason for Aristotle's dismissal of enactment as a distinguishing element of tragedy was part of a response to Plato's attack on tragedy. Aristotle's discussion of the scope of the fictional action in epic, shows that 'enactment' is a much more important aspect of drama than his initial dismissal might suggest:

> But epic has a special scope for substantial extension in size, because tragedy does not allow multiple sections of action to be represented as they occur, but only the one on stage involving the actors […] (Ibid, p.121)

This implies two additional criteria for the distinction between tragedy and epic and, consequently, two more essential aspects to tragedy: extension of the narrative and enactment. The extension of the narrative refers to the number of incidents that can be imitated in a tragedy. Typically a cycle of plays would be presented during one day — this would impose limits on what could be told. It means also that, because characters have to be present on the scene, what happens in a play is shown in sequence — there is no representation of simultaneous actions. Characters might arrive on the scene and provide an account of what has been going on somewhere

[161] "Epic matches tragedy to the extent of being mimesis of elevated matters [...]"(Ibid, p.47)

else, but there is no present representation of past scenes.[162] The tragic poet is bound to create plots that are sequential and focus on a relatively small part of the myth.

I am not claiming, in contradiction to what has been said before, that the staging of plays is necessary in Aristotle's theory but merely emphasizing that 'enactment' — meaning a poem in which characters are shown speaking with their own voices and interacting — is central to distinguish drama from other forms of poetry. In the case of the *Poetics* the importance of enactment and extension reinforce the ideas of necessity and probability.

Throughout this chapter I have essayed an overview of Aristotle's *Poetics*. I progressed slowly in an attempt to trace the essential elements of Aristotle's dramatic theory because I wanted to fathom what in Aristotle's theory could present similarities to the Method of Physical Actions. In addition to this I wanted to have a good understanding of Aristotle's basic theory because of its foundational status for later dramatic theory.

There are two important conclusions to this chapter. The first concerns the aspects of Aristotle's theory that might foreshadow a theory of motivated action. The second concerns the conceptual aspects of *Poetics* that distance it from the idea of motivated actions.

The *Poetics* is an action-centered dramatic theory. It proposes an essential division in construction elements topped by plot design, followed by the definition of the 'moral inclinations of the characters (*ethos*); then by the principles of eloquence (thought), for character and poem; and then by language. Other elements (music and spectacle) are considered less important.

The character as agent (*pratontes*) is defined by his social status in relation to the typology of play (tragedy or comedy) and in relation to the desired effect (catharsis in the case of tragedy). The agent is given little importance (in comparison with *ethos*, 'action', 'language' or 'thought') and is presented in standardized form (elevated or base).

[162] In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the messenger returns to describe how Hippolytus' chariot was overturned by a bull, almost killing him. This scene would have happened, during the third *stasimon*, while the chorus is lamenting Hippolytus' fate.

The ‘transformation’ is also an essential aspect of the cathartic effect. ‘Recognition’, ‘reversal’, ‘suffering’, and ‘astonishment’ are regarded as not essential, but desirable.

The Method of Physical Actions requires coherent action: the actions of the characters must evolve in sequence of causally connected events. Actions will be self-contained: each character will try to accomplish a certain objective or task and the success or failure of the action will initiate the beginning of a new self-contained cycle. The totality of cycles constitutes a larger cycle.

The *Poetics* too suggests causality (necessity), coherence (probability) and self-containment (wholeness). In this respect the two theories show similarities: both theories are based on the idea of human action as the object of drama and they both require internal coherence as manifested in the establishment of causal relations between actions, self-containment and credibility of action.

The two theories differ in the meaning and importance they give to character (as agent). Where the *Poetics* concentrates on ‘unity of action’ – centering on a core narrative theme with little concern for the agent – the Method of Physical Actions concentrates on the idea of the agent as a psychological entity causing the action.

There is no psychological character in Aristotle’s theory because what corresponds to modern concepts of character is, in Aristotle, a conjoined of discreet elements (*ethos*, thought, language) that are shared by the poet, the poem and the character: there is no sense of a unified fictional personality.

Ethos, the second most important element of dramatic construction, refers exclusively to the agent’s ability to make good or bad moral decisions. ‘Thought’ is an aspect common to other written and spoken forms: the epic, the judicial, epideictic — to name a few. The Aristotelian character will use the rhetorical principles described in *Rhetoric* to express his moral choices (*ethos*) in front of an audience. ‘Language’ too will comply with common versification conventions, though allowing for a small amount of variation in the mixing of different metric.

There is no space, in Aristotelian dramatic theory, for the inclusion of character specificity: the character is in action but he is not an independent agent — he is an element of the poem. I mean by this that characters must be acting for a

reason within a causal structure, but they have no consistent psychological reasons for action deeply rooted in their sense of identity. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Clytemnestra wants to kill Agamemnon because he sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia. In Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Mrs. Warren's actions are informed by her social origin and the terrible events in her childhood. In the first case the action is instrumental and in the second case the action is psychological.

Furthermore, tragedies are not free narrative creations of the dramatic poet. Myth is the overarching source from which all poems are derived. For Aristotle dramatic poems are ways of remaking the myth. Classical tragedies do not have characters in the sense of psychologically motivated characters[163] because classical tragedies are essentially poems. The universe of tragic playwrights to which Aristotle is referring is not a universe in which authors create fictional characters which convey their internal experiences but a world where authors reproduce the mythical sources of the poem.

What distances the Method of Physical Actions from Aristotle is a richer understanding of the personal specificity of agents of the action in the latter in opposition to subservience to myth and well known 'poetical forms' in the latter.

[163] The idea of a psychology of Greek tragic characters has been vividly rejected by a number of authors. Jones in *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (1980), Garton in 'Characterization in Greek Tragedy'(1957), and Murray (1916) in 'Plot and Character in Greek Tragedy' are a few examples.

Chapter five: classical poetics — pleasure and instruction

Horace's *Ars Poetica*

> I'll convert this same play from tragedy to comedy, if you like, and never change a line. Do you wish me to do it, or not? But there! How stupid of me! As if I didn't know that you do wish it, when I am a deity. I understand your feeling in the matter perfectly. I shall mix things up: let it be tragi-comedy. Of course it would never do for me to make it a comedy out and out, with kings and gods on the boards. How about it, then? Well, in view of the fact that there is a slave part in it, I shall do just as I said and make it a tragi-comedy. (Plautus, 1916, *Amphitryon, The Comedy of Asses, The Pot of Gold and Other Plays*, loc. 284–303)

The greatest and most enduring contribution of the Roman world to dramatic criticism is Horace's *Ars Poetica* (18 B.C.). Unlike Aristotle's *Poetics* the *Ars Poetica* does not suffer from any of the critical problems the former does[164] — the text itself is established and what is left to discuss are matters of interpretation, sources, date, purpose and influence.[165] It is this latter aspect along with its organization and themes that is of interest to this thesis. Horace was the greatest influence throughout the middle ages,[166] and remained an important source after the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Europe, in the late fifteen century. After Aristotle, Horace is the greatest influence on neoclassical dramatic criticism.[167] The interest in *Ars Poetica* is then double. First to understand what Horace considers essential to drama — he might be concerned with other aspects rather than the

[164] The *Poetics* is only indirectly known. The text has been reconstructed since the Renaissance from a number of sources ranging from the Arabic commentaries of Averroes to recently discovered 13th century Latin versions.

[165] (Carlson, 1993, p.23)

[166] "Taken as a whole, the writings of Cicero provide only scattered, if influential comments. Saintsbury has compared the writings of Cicero to *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, the Roman equivalent of the *Poetics* being instead the *Ars Poetica* of Horace (68–5 B.C.). Certainly the latter is the sole work of the classical period to rival the *Poetics* in its influence on subsequent criticism." (Carlson, 1993, p.23)

[167] "Of the practical value of the work before the Renaissance, it is impossible to know; of its influence since that time, it can only be said that it was as widespread as that of Aristotle. Horace's doctrine of pleasure and profit was to be repeated innumerable times, and is still a criterion of criticism. Mr. Spingarn's statement that "critical activity in nearly all the countries of western Europe seems to have been ushered in by the translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* into the vernacular tongues" is but another proof of the popularity of the work." (Clark, 1965, P.28)

imitation of human actions. Second, what kind of ideas does he produce that are sufficiently robust and important to be taken further?

Horace did not read the *Poetics*[168] and the work bears little resemblance with it — something that makes some of its shared aspects more interesting, in that they can be an indication either of historical indirect transference or merely an instance of co-genesis. The possibility of indirect transference is indicated, particularly in the fact that Horace, like Aristotle, makes drama central to his text and also by the supposed generic organization of the treatise in three parts: style, content, and poet.[169] This tripartite structure is inferred from an historical supposition that suggests Horace might have followed the precepts of one Neoptolemus of Parium,[170] who is known to have used such division, but it is by no means evident upon an initial reading.[171] What is evident in *Ars Poetica* is its epistolary nature.[172] I mean by this the general tone of advice to the willing writer that is woven through the whole work. Horace sees himself as the "[…] grindstone which sharpens steel but itself has no part in the cutting." (Horace, 2005, loc.3970–82) It is worth remembering how distant this is from Aristotle's tone, providing recommendations only very briefly in chapter 17 of the *Poetics*.

Some of these recommendations are parochial: the poet should be careful not to promise too much for it is better to promise little and succeed;[173] he should observe the virtues of moderation and know what is applicable for himself, choosing

[168] "It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence of firsthand knowledge of Aristotle in Horace or in any other Roman author of this period." (Carlson, 1993, p.24)

[169] "Is there, as many have thought, a division between *ars* (1–294) and *artifex* (295–476)? Should we go further and subdivide *ars* into *poema* (style) and *poesis* (content)? Advocates of his idea point out the same three terms were used by Neoptolemus of Parium […]"(Horace, Persius, 2005, loc. 498–510)

[170] "While it has been clearly substantiated that Horace drew upon a non-extant treatise by Neoptolemus of Parium, an Alexandrian critic of uncertain date, the fact that Horace made use of and molded the ideas of his predecessor is important." (Clark, 1965, P.28)

[171] "Here one need only remark that if Horace took over this tripartite scheme (as he may well have done), he so blurred the lines of demarcation that the separate parts were no longer plainly apparent to his readers. And so the scheme as such can hardly have been of central importance." (Horace, Persius, 2005, loc. 498–510)

[172] "The work referred to by Quintilian (VIII. 3. 60) as the Ars Poetica was probably addressed to Lucius Calpurnius Piso (the Pontifex) and his sons in 10 BC." (Ibid, loc. 495–97)

[173] "[...] don't begin in the style of the ancient cyclic poet 'Of Priam's fate I sing and a war that's famed in story.' What can emerge in keeping such a cavernous promise? The mountains will labour and bring to birth a comical mouse." (Ibid, 2005, loc. 3865–77)

subjects that are in his power to complete.[174] Partly because of its epistolary nature, the *Ars Poetica* comes across as a much smaller work in theoretical scope.

Contrary to what happens in other areas of knowledge and experience (Horace exemplifies with lawyers and jurists) the poet must be exceptional, not merely competent.[175] The value of poetry lies on its use in legal inscription, in songs of encouragement, and as the medium of the oracle. It was through poetry that names of great men, and their teachings were preserved.[176] Other recommendations of a similar nature hint at the work process. The poet should look for advice with more experienced writers[177] and he should be willing to accept criticism before making the work public.[178]

The Greek inheritance is acknowledged. Aspiring writers should study the Greek poems[179] as a means to get acquainted with desirable artistic standards and, more interestingly, as a source for their narratives, "You'd be well advised to spin your plays from the song of Troy rather than introduce what no one has said or thought of." (Ibid, loc. 3856–68) Horace's position is one of compliance with tradition[180] — it is not just that, in a tone which evokes his satire (there is a lot commentary on current affairs in the *Ars Poetica*),[181] Horace is criticizing the practice of his contemporaries, but also that he believes the elements in a play should correspond to received models.

Three principles govern Horace's approach to what might be called characterization. The first is a respect for tradition[182] — not only is the prospective

[174] "If your choice of theme is within your scope, you won't have to seek for fluent speech or lucid arrangement." (Ibid, 2005, loc .3811)
[175] "[...] that poets should be average is a privilege never conceded by men, gods or bookshops." (Ibid, loc. 4008–20)
[176] "That is how heavenly bards and their poems came to acquire renown, for their verses sharpened the courage of men to enter battle. Song was the medium of oracles, song showed the way through life."(Ibid, loc.4034)
[177] "When you read a piece to Quintilius he'd say 'Now shouldn't you alter that and that?' […] If, instead of removing a fault you chose to defend it he wouldn't waste another word or lift a finger to stop you loving yourself and your work without a rival." (Ibid, 2005, loc. 4055–66)
[178] "You can always delete what hasn't been published. A word let loose is gone forever." (Ibid, loc. 4033)
[179] "My Roman friends, I urge you. Get hold of your Greek models and study them day and night." (Ibid, loc. 3953–63)
[180] "Writer follow your tradition or at least avoid anomalies." (Ibid, loc.3860)
[181] Horace's *Ars Poetica*, also known as, *Epistle ad Pisones* was suposedly written as a letter of advice on the craft of writing, directed to Pisones and his sons.
[182] Rosado Fernandes in a footnote to Horácio (1984, p.73) says "If the poet is willing to be coherent, he must comply, in what concerns to the creation of characters, to the traditional model, like Achiles and Orestes [...]" My translation.

poet urged to follow the classical narratives but he should also make his characters similar to what are the known qualities of those characters, "[…] If great Achilles figure in the scene make him impatient, fiery, ruthless, keen; […] and test his quarrel by the sword alone." (Ibid, loc.1526) Secondly the poet must be aware of what are the moral duties of character towards his family, his friends, and his country:

> First be clear on what is due to your country and friends; what is involved in loving a parent a brother or a guest; what is the conduct required of a judge or member of senate, what are the duties imposed on a general sent to the front. Then you will give the proper features to every character. (Ibid, loc.3976–86)

Thirdly, characters, attitudes and speech must be drawn from life, "The trained playwright, I say, should turn to life and behavior for dramatic models — and as a source of living speech." (Ibid, loc.3976–86)

Horace is mixing apparently contradictory notions: 'likeness to an idealized and accepted reality', 'appropriateness', and a 'likeness to reality'. This is the origin of the neoclassical notions of 'verisimilitude' and 'decorum'. Horace does not explain how a 'likeness to an idealized and accepted reality'', 'appropriateness' and 'likeness to reality' will be harmonized. One possible answer, aligned with the neoclassical concept of verisimilitude is that what is meant by 'likeness to the real', is not a similarity to the 'real' but rather a similarity to 'truth'. The 'truth' is what is perceived as essentially 'valid' be it by reference to reality or by reference to moral values.[183]

The idea of a character that is morally exemplary is an inheritance of Aristotle's *ethos*. The *Ars Poetica* does not provide a discussion of *ethos*, neither is there such a discussion in rhetorical treatises of the period. The three elements of persuasion (*logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*) do emerge in Cicero's *De Oratore* but comparatively little attention is given to *ethos*. The issue is briefly discussed in Book II, xliii (Cicero, 1968, p.327–329). Cicero seems to be concerned, exclusively, with the conveying of a general sense of goodwill on the person of the speaker: "It is very helpful to display the tokens of good-nature, kindness, calmness, loyalty and a disposition that is pleasing and not grasping or covetous […]" (Cicero, 1968, p.329).

[183] Pavis' generic definition of the verisimilar emphasises the sense of the 'real', "In classical dramaturgy the verisimilar is what appears real to the audience, be it the actions, or the characters, both in the actions and in the way they are performed." (Pavis, 2006, p.406)

Ethos is thus seen as a form of positive reinforcement. There is no attempt of producing a typology, such as the one present in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* of 'old age', 'youth' and 'prime'.

An explanation for the moralizing tendency in *Ars Poetica* and for the reduction of *ethos* to the idea of positive reinforcement of the character (speaker) might be found in the translation of Greek terms to Latin. This is important because it is at the root of the neoclassical concept of *moeurs*. Quintilian, writing more than a century after Horace synthesizes, in *Institutes of Oratory*, the transformation of the Greek concept of *ethos*:

> The other, [means of persuasion] to which they [the Greeks] give the appellation *ethos*, for which, as I consider, the Roman language has no equivalent term, is rendered, however, by *mores*, 'manners'; whence that part of philosophy, which the Greeks call *ēthikē*, is called moralis, 'moral'. (Quintilian, 2010, loc.6332–6335)[184]

The poet must be aware of what is generally morally acceptable, "Moral sense[185] is the fountain and source of proper writing." (Ibid, loc.3976–86) 'Moral sense' is not specific to character but an overarching condition for writing. I mean by this that 'moral sense' is simultaneously a condition of the characters and the narrative, and a condition of the poet. The latter is patent in the plea for humbleness and honesty that is scattered throughout the *Ars Poetica*, [186] the former in the ideas of 'appropriateness' and 'idealized reality'.

Connected to 'moral sense' comes the most famous and most repeated 'teaching' of Horace, "The aim of the poet is either to benefit or to please/ or to say what is both enjoyable and of service." (Ibid, loc. 3987) What is implied by 'benefit' is 'instruction'. 'Pleasure and instruction' are regarded as complementary characteristics of the poem. 'Pleasure' will make the poem attractive and

[184] The translation used (Quintilian, 2010) presents both the Greek word in Greek alphabet and the romanized transliteration. It is not clear if this was already extant in the original text or a translation option. For reasons of uniformity I have kept the romanized transliterations only.
[185] The Latin word is *sapere*. It is sometimes translated as *sabedor* (to be knowledgeable) in (Horácio, 1984, p.101) and *raison* (reason) (Horace, 1967, p.267). The word implies an understanding of moral rules and social expectation.
[186] The moral references are scattered throughout "This was the wisdom of the olden days: to draw the line between sacred and secular, public and private, to bar indiscriminate sex, and establish laws of marriage; to build towns and inscribe legal codes."(Ibid, Loc.4034)

'instruction' will accordingly make the poem pleasurable. It is evident from the emphasis put on morals that the kind of teaching aimed at is moral teaching.

Likeness to reality is one of the means by which the audience can be pleased[187] — there is no explanation of the reasons why this should be pleasurable: no theory equivalent to Aristotle's idea of cognitive pleasure, just the blunt assertion of closeness to reality as a source of pleasure.

There is no further discussion, either, of how 'likeness to reality' relates to 'pleasure' or to 'instruction' or, indeed, how the 'moral sense' tone relates to 'instruction' or to 'pleasure'. One is left to suppose, as the neoclassicists did, that Horace is prescribing certain types of actions and certain types of characters as the object of drama. According to this view, tragedy should portray elevated characters not just because they are part of the definition of tragedy but because art should seek to show good examples rather than bad ones. Aristotle suggested elevated character as a means to produce a given effect (catharsis) specific to tragedy. The neoclassicists, building on contemporary interpretation of Horace and Aristotle, will emphasize the moral aspect of drama.

The idea of a moral play is important because it somewhat determines what the characters can do and the reasons why they do it. Characters that must illustrate a given moral point of view, within set narratives, have limited chances of conveying a sense of autonomous mental life as a cause for action. Conveying a sense of the character's autonomous mental life (an independent will and emotional life) is necessary for a theory of drama as motivated action. In the Method of Physical Actions characters try to achieve personal objectives, coherently justified in their personalities, rather than illustrating assumed moral values.

One striking aspect of Horace's argument is his insistence on the clarity of genres.[188] The three types of drama considered by Horace are tragedy, comedy and the satyr drama. Tragedy deals with grand themes[189] and comedy with the domestic. Neither tragedy nor comedy may make use of the opposite genre's metre. Comedy

[187] "Make sure that fictions designed to amuse are close to reality."(Ibid, loc.3998)
[188] "If, through lack of knowledge or talent, I fail to observe the established genres and styles, then why am I ailed as a poet?" (Ibid, loc. 3838)
[189] "'Likewise Thyestes' banquet is far too grand a tale for verse of an everyday kind which is more akin to the sock." (Ibid, loc. 3838)

uses the iamb for its similarity with everyday speech[190] and tragedy elevated verse and song, inspired by the Greek models; the satyr play, in keeping with the tradition, uses a mixture of styles.[191]

The distinction between narrative and dramatic[192] echoes Aristotle but is done swiftly — it merely distinguishes what is said from what is enacted. It seems to be brought into the discussion not as an initial claim within a system of criteria, as in Aristotle, but rather to introduce formal rules. Horace prescribes four rules that have direct consequence on the kinds of actions portrayed: that terrible and 'incredible' deeds should not take place on stage;[193] that "No play should be longer or shorter than five acts." (Horace, 2005, loc. 3903); that there shouldn't be a *deus ex machina*, unless required by the action of the play;[194] that there should be only three speaking characters;[195] that the chorus should be dealt with as if it were a character, by which Horace means that the chorus must play an active part in the action.[196] The prescription of five acts seems to be related to a desire to establish the right magnitude. By magnitude Aristotle had meant the sufficient time for a transformation to occur. Elsewhere Horace says plays shouldn't be too long at risk of annoying the audience[197] — which is consistent with the idea of poetry being enjoyable. Though recommending the Greek epics as a source Horace is aware of the dangers of including lengthy narrative — he favors immediate action "He always presses on to the outcome and hurries the reader into the middle of things as though they were quite familiar." (Ibid, loc. 3869–81) Regarding the chorus Horace adds

[190] The reference to metres is not very clear in either of the translations used. "The foot was found to fit the sock and the stately buskin because it conveyed the give and take of dialogue […]"(Ibid, loc. 3824) occurs after the reference to the invention of the iamb by Archilochus. So Horace must be referring to the metre he was familiar with.
[191] "If I ever write a satyr drama, my Pisos, I shan't confine my choice to plain and familiar nouns and verbs; nor shall I strive so hard to avoid the verse of tragedy […] I'll aim at a new blend of familiar ingredients." (Ibid loc. 3925)
[192] "An action is Shown on stage or else reported. Things received through the ears stir the emotions more faintly than those received by the eye (a reliable witness) and hence conveyed direct to the watcher." (Ibid, loc. 3898)
[193] "Much of what happens should be taken from view and the retailed by vivid description. The audience must not see Medea slaying her children, or the diabolical Atreus cooking human flesh, or Procne sprouting wings or Cadmus becoming a snake" (Ibid, loc.3896–906)
[194] "Don't let God intervene unless the denouement requires such a solution." (Ibid, loc. 3903)
[195] "[…] nor should a fourth character speak." (Ibid, loc. 3903)
[196] "The chorus should take the role of an actor, discharging its duty with all its energy" (Ibid, loc. 3903)
[197] "Sleep however is bound to creep in on a lengthy work." (Ibid, loc. 4003–13)

that, as a character, it must comply with the same principles of moral adequateness,[198] in accordance to the general rule of 'moral sense'.

The principle of coherence is repeated in a number of variations throughout the *Ars Poetica*. The mixing of fact and fiction is allowed as long as the coherent connection of the parts is preserved.[199] This is the idea with which Horace starts the *Ars Poetica*:

> Suppose a painter decided to set a human head on a horse's neck, and to cover the body with coloured feathers, combining limbs so that the top of a lovely woman came to a horrid end in the tail of a inky fish — when invited to view the piece, my friends, could you stifle your laughter? Well dear Pisos, I hope you'll agree that a book containing fantastic ideas, like those conceived by delirious patients, where top and bottom never combine to form a whole, is exactly like that picture. (Ibid, loc.3779–94)

The emphasis is put on the idea of unity of the whole[200] rather than on the quality of the parts, "Any smith in the area round Aemillius school will render nails in bronze and imitate wavy hair; the final effect eludes him because he does not know how to shape a whole." (Ibid, loc.3804–17) Horace's acceptance of imperfections,[201] his preference for Greek sources and his insistence on the squaring up of beginning, middle and end is also evocative of Aristotle's 'necessity and probability' and of 'unity of action'.

'Pleasure and instruction' are the product of the poem's beauty and of the poets capacity to move the spectator, "Correctness[202] is not enough in a poem; it must be attractive, leading the listener's emotions in whatever way it wishes." (Horace, 2005, loc. 3846–59). Again when Horace speaks of attractiveness he leaves the way open for linking attractiveness with what is expected in accordance to

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[198] "It [the chorus] ought to side with the good and give them friendly advice, control the furious, encourage those who are filled with fear.[…] It ought to preserve secrets, and pray and beseech the gods that good fortune may leave the proud and return to the wretched." (Ibid, loc. 3908–16)

[199] "[…] he invents at will, he mixes fact and fiction, but always so that the middle squares with the start and the end with the middle." (Ibid, loc. 3882)

[200] A few lines later he specifies unity "So make what you like, provided the thing is a unified whole." (Ibid, loc. 3791)

[201] "In a poem with many brilliant features I shan't be offended by a few little blots which a careless pen has allowed to fall or human nature as failed to prevent." (Ibid, loc. 3999–4008)

[202] 'Correcteness' is used in the context of the adequateness of the language of the poem to the genre. C. Smart translates "It is not enough that the poem be beautiful, let it be tender and affecting, and bear away the soul of the auditor whithersoever they please." (Clark, 1965., P.31)

'decorum',[203] and so the character must be in accordance with what is expected of his age group and social class.[204] When discriminating between narration and enactment Horace's concern is its effect on the audience — enactment is the more effective means to stir the emotions.[205] Horace links the emotions of the audience with the emotions of the actor and of the writer: he thinks the author and actor should strive to feel the emotions they are trying to convey. Horace discriminates between three aspects of emotion: the potential for transference, "When a person smiles, people's faces smiles in return; when he weeps, they show concern. Before you can move me to tears, you must grieve yourself." (Ibid, loc. 3843–60), the emotion in the writing "[…] if what you say is out of character, I'll either doze or laugh" (Ibid) and, finally, emotions in the actor: "If what the speaker says is out of tune with his state, the Roman audience, box and pit, will bellow with laughter." (Ibid)

Three more aspects are worth mentioning, particularly because they will be echoed in later theory. One is plasticity in the approach to language which seems a paradox in a treatise that is in many aspects conservative. Horace's observation on language echoes modern linguistics in advocating the moderate creation of new words, derived from Greek.[206] The reason first presented seems to be national pride; he states this has been the right of many Roman playwrights. The most interesting justification, however, is that Horace seems to have an interest in the plasticity of language — he admits the disappearance and reappearance of words, guided solely by usage.[207]

A second aspect is Horace's view of poetry as craft — this too is evocative of modern currents.[208] Poetry is not something altogether dependable on talent — Horace is after all offering guidance — neither is it something wholly dependable on

[203] "Consider now what I, and public too, require if you want people to stay in their seats till curtain falls […]" (Ibid, loc. 3885)
[204] "You must observe the behavior that goes with every age group, taking account of how dispositions change over the years." (Ibid, loc. 3898)
[205] "Things received through the ear stir the emotions more faintly than those received by the eye (a reliable witness) and hence conveyed directly to the watcher" (Ibid, loc. 3908)
[206] "New and freshly created words are also acceptable when channeled from Greek, provided the trickle is small." (Ibid, loc 3816–25)
[207] "Many a word long dead will be born again, and others which now enjoy prestige, will fade if Usage requires it. She controls the laws and rules and standards of language." (Ibid, 2005, loc. 3825–33)
[208] I am thinking of the workshops and publications on screenwriting and playwriting (Mackee, Field, Comparato). I did one of these programs with Stephen Jeffreys at RADA in the year 2000. Todd London, the director of New Dramatist mentions this trend towards the description of playwriting as craft during the 80's in an interview to American Theatre Wing (2007).

learning, but a mix of both.[209] The assertion is both a defense of a craft and a warning, in satirical tone, against those who think they can bypass learning.[210]

A third aspect is the connection with fine arts. Horace is not altogether distant from the idea of poetry as crafted imitation of reality and like Aristotle he produces examples from painting and sculpture. I have shown that Horace prescribed the need to comply with reality but there is also a finer distinction between kinds of painting and, as such, between kinds of poetry[211] — though there is some ambiguity; Horace seems to be using the painting metaphor in a satirical fashion, to illustrate the work of bad poets.[212]

As with Aristotle, no single great idea synthesizes an essence of drama but there is rather a group of related concepts and principles. The essential ideas in *Ars Poetica* seem to be of two kinds — generic overarching concepts and formal rules. The generic overarching concepts *Ars Poetica* has promoted are: the idea of 'pleasure and instruction', 'moral sense', and the need to keep to a purity of genres. The formal rules: the number of acts and of speaking characters, the action of the chorus and the avoidance of the *deus ex machina*. Action is not discussed by Horace, much less any form of motivations for the characters' actions. Neither are the more philosophical aspects of tragedy given any preponderance — probably because the *Ars Poetica* manages to do what Aristotle promised, to discuss the existing dramatic genres.

I have argued that Aristotle's dramatic theory, though centered on the actions of men and establishing principles of coherence and causality for those actions, was still very distant from the Method of Physical Actions in the sense that there was no concept of psychological depth as a cause for action.

Like Aristotle, Horace considers myth the best source for the dramatic poem. He worries also about the principles of internal coherence thus indicating an interest in actions that are causally related. In these two aspects Horace's view is similar to Aristotle's. The emphasis Horace puts on 'moral sense' further amplifies the distance

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[209] "Is it a gift or a craft that makes outstanding poetry? I fail, myself, to see the good either of study without a spark of genius or of untutored talent."(Horace, 2005, loc. 4045–53)
[210] "Is it enough to proclaim 'I am a marvelous poet!'" (Ibid, loc 4045–53)
[211] "A poem is like a picture. One will seem more attractive from close at hand, another is better viewed from a distance." (Ibid, loc. 4007–15)
[212] "This one likes the gloom; this longs for the daylight and knows it has nothing to fear from the critic's searching eye." (Ibid)

between Horace's theory and a theory of motivated action like the Method of Physical Actions. Poems that have to comply to given moral constraints limit the characters in two senses. First because, as moral entity, the poem imposes itself on the character eliminating his singularity. Second because the exemplary nature of moral characters circumscribes the scope of possible characters and possible behaviours consequently reducing the wealth of possible causes for actions. Aristotle's *ethos* and Horace's 'moral character' are related but not equivalent concepts. *Ethos* in the Aristotle's *Poetics* designates moral choice as a means to produce an effect (catharsis); 'moral character' in Horace's *Ars Poetica* designates appropriate moral choices — both attach little importance to the character as agent. In Aristotle *ethos* (the character's moral choice) is the preponderant concept, in Horace the 'morally exemplar character' is more important than 'character as agent'.

It seems there are three great ideas emanating from classical poetics: drama as the coherent imitation of the actions of men; myth as the main source of narrative; morality as a guiding principle. The first of these ideas points towards the Method of Physical Actions, the second and third ideas diverge from it by making character subservient to other elements of the play.

How essential were these ideas to subsequent poetics? Would subsequent poetics have a greater interest in character? Is it that the development of a poetics closer to a theory of motivated actions, such as the Method of Physical Actions, is dependent on a richer understanding of character?

Chapter six: transition poetics

Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo*

> "Your grace has touched on a subject, Señor Canon," said the priest, "that has awakened my long-standing rancor toward the plays that are popular now, one that is equal to my dislike of novels of chivalry; for drama, according to Marcus Tullius Cicero, should be a mirror of human life, an example of customs, and an image of truth, but those that are produced these days are mirrors of nonsense, examples of foolishness, and images of lewdness. For what greater nonsense can there be than for a child to appear in the first scene of the first act in his swaddling clothes, and in the second scene to be a full-grown man with a beard? Or to present to us a valiant old man and a cowardly youth, an eloquent lackey and, a wise page, a king who is a laborer, and a princess who is a scullery maid? And what shall I say about their observance of the time in which the actions take place? I have seen plays in which the first act begins in Europe, the second in Asia, and the third concluded in Africa, and if there were four acts the fourth would have ended in America, making it a play that took place in all four corners of the globe […]" (Cervantes, M. S., 2003, *Don Quixote* p.416)

The beginning and end of *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo*[213] clearly states Lope de Vega's position — he does not see that any classical rules need to be followed. The reason for this is simple: he thinks no writer will have any success writing in such a way because this is not what the public expects and wants.[214] The whole of Lope de Vega's authority lies in experience,

> I cannot call anyone more of a barbarian
> Than I would call myself, for I have produced
> Precepts against the art, and I have followed
> Such practices that would make
> Me an Ignorant in Italy and in France.

[213] All passages are translated by myself from the Spanish 1609 version in *Poesia Lírica* (1935). The 1613 version, published by Clásicos Hispanicos (1971), the online version published by Campus Eugenio Garza Sada (n.d.), Marvin Carlson translation to English (2000), and the Portuguese translation by António L. Ribeiro (1972) were used as control versions.

[214] "Those that follow the precepts of art/ Will die without fame or recognition/Among those who shine less bright/ For custom is stronger than reason." (Vega, 1935, p.150)

> But what can I do? If I have written
> Four hundred and eighty three comedies,
> Counting the one I just came to finish?
> And all my plays, with the exception of six,
> Have sinned greatly against the art. (Vega, 1935, p.158)

It is hardly surprising that Lope de Vega should claim as a working process the intentional rejection of the teaching and influence of Plautus and Terence.[215] Lope de Vega's argument is ambiguous, to say the least — on the one hand he seeks justification for the rejection of their rules through the success of his own plays, and on the other hand, he seems to think little of his audience — the "ignorant crowd", and, should the reader imagine that he might not know the classical precepts, Lope de Vega ensures the reader perceives he is no mere untrained entertainer of crowds, but someone with a deep and lifelong acquaintance with the rules of art. This ambiguity takes the form, then, of a paradoxical praise and attack on the classical and neoclassical authors, namely: Aristotle, Sophocles and Rebortello. What Lope de Vega seems to be trying to establish is this: he knows about the rules of the ancients;[216] if he does not obey the rules it is because his audience requires differently;[217] the taste of the audience is recognizably an uninformed taste;[218] in some aspects the ancients were wrong.[219]

El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en Este Tiempo reveals some subservience to the author's motives but it is in no way a naïf document. I am speaking of coherence of motives and not of structural coherence.[220] This is relevant because

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[215] "When I have a comedia to write,/ I lock away the precepts of art with six keys,/ Out of my studio go Terence and Plautus/ So that they do not speak to me" (Ibid, p.150)
[216] "Not that I ignored the precepts of art,/ I read the books that dealt with this/ In my grammar classes/ even before I reached the age of ten."(Ibid, p.149)
[217] "I write for the art of those/ That wished for the people applause/And since it is the people that pays/ It is fair to write what pleases them." (Ibid, p.150)
[218] "Believe me, it was necessary/ To bring all this to memory/ Since you want me to write/ About the art of writing comedias in Spain/ Where all that is written is against the art;/ And to explain how they are written now/ How different from the ancients and why/ You trusted my experience and not the art/ Because the truth of ignorant crowd/ Contradicts the rules of art." (Ibid, p.152)
[219] "There is no need for rule that says only a day/ Should pass, even though this was Aristotle's advice/ Since we have mixed the sententious tragic tone/ With the humbleness of comedy/ We no longer respect him." (Ibid, p.153–54) and [note how ambiguous the line is] "If you want art, I beg you wise man/ Read doctor Robortello from Udine / And you will hear what he has to say on Aristotle/ And what he says about comedy/ Has spread out over many books,/ And how everything today is in confusion." (Ibid, p.152)
[220] Though there is structural coherence too. Juana de José Prades divides El Arte in three sections: Introduction; Art; New Art. The latter further divided in: preamble; doctrine, epilogue. (Vega, 1971, p.253–4)

there is a temptation to attribute a supremely controlled irony to Lope de Vega.[221] The irony is there but it is betrayed by the contradictory terms which reveal Lope de Vega's desire to show off an acquaintance and respect for classical rules,

> From the beginning the references to the ancient art are too many to be considered just a concession to the gallery of the doctors. Lope feared — and he had reasons to do so — the world of erudite and academic moralists which were on the whole hostile to popular theatre for artistic, ethical and doctrinal reasons. (Vega, 1971 p.255)[222]

The matter then is to know whether Vega is sincere in his contradictory praise and criticism of the ancients and — considering he might not be, to know in what sense his own experience as a writer for the masses influences his own theory of drama.[223] One innovative aspect of *El Arte* is that it clusters the tensions between practice and theory and between erudite and popular that will become one of the defining traits of neoclassicism. In what sense does the practice of Lope de Vega affects his theory? Does a drama so rooted in practice[224] require a theory of what motivates dramatic actions?

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[221] Marvin Carlson's translation eluded this aspect by trying to attribute a sense of irony to the *El Arte* — this is done by translating the arte in regular rhymed couplets. The effect of the rhyme is one of an amusing commentary of someone with perfect control of verse — a sense of ease manifest in the language that necessarily infects the content. The passage quoted in the previous page reads thus in Carlson's translation "Not one of those should any designate/ More barbarous than myself, who dares to state/ Precepts in art's defense, even while knowing/ I don't resist the vulgar current's flowing./ For this England and France call me untaught./ What can I do for I have now begot/ Four hundred and eighty-three dramatic pieces,/ A sum this week this offering increases, And all of this but six I must admit,/ The gravest sin against the art commit./ And yet, at last, I must defend my plays/ While knowing they are flawed in many ways." (Carlson, 2000, p.145)

[222] A number of mistakes betray Vega's willingness to appear as a classicist. He speaks of Plato's Academy — the Academy was Aristotle's, Plato founded the Liceum. He mysteriously addresses *El Arte* to an academy that is not known: "The treatise, Lope tells us, was addressed to the Madrid Academy, a mysterious institution that has defied identification and probably never existed." (Carlson, 2000, p.135)

[223] Spanish theatre of the period — specifically the one generally associated with Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Lope de Rueda — was the product of an association between hospitals that sought to maximize their space and theatre companies who needed performing spaces. This ensured a large audience and established the conditions for the creation of professional companies. This was a singularity, matched only in Elizabethan England. The rise of popular professional theatres is what is at the heart of this tension between the erudite tradition and popular theatre.

[224] Vega like his contemporaries was involved in the day to day running of a theatre "The author not only directed and acted, but ran the whole operation. Only rarely, now a writer, he commissioned and bought plays outright, adapting as he alone saw fit."(Dixon, 2001, p.149)

In spite of his 'jocosity' Lope de Vega reproduces many of the common assumptions of the period. He sees drama, in fact all forms of poetry, as imitations of the actions of men and the portrayal of the times.[225] Though dealing specifically with the genre he helped create, the *comedia*, Vega attempts a distinction between tragedy and comedy, based on the traditional high and low status dichotomy, "it is different only in that/ it [comedy] deals with humble and plebeian actions/ and tragedy with the elevated and royal." (Vega, 1935, p.150) One interesting nuance is that Vega defines tragedy as imitation of history and comedy as imitation of fiction.[226] That tragedy should be taken from history[227] is evocative both of the Aristotelian and of the Horatian categories, here mixed in a rather unique way. Both Horace and Aristotle acknowledge the mythical origin of tragedy, the former as a source from which the tragedy is created, the latter adding to Aristotle his own plea for the return to the Greek models. Horace digressed from Aristotle in that he accepted the mixture of invented plots and mythical source as long as coherence was kept.[228] There is also a certain gravitas associated with tragedy, since the time of Horace, which is suggestive of an intense unity that cannot be broken by the eclectic rhythm of comedy. One striking aspect about this is that Lope de Vega is producing a genre distinction on the basis of the degree of invention. This is relevant to this thesis because the invention of new plots, disregarded by Aristotle[229] and discouraged by Horace, increases the chances of creating singular actions differently motivated by singular characters.

Lope de Vega's argument is not a discussion of Aristotle or Horace but an evocation of classical authority to produce a defense of a genre that is much more eclectic than the classical categories demanded, as is suggested a few lines later,

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[225] "True comedy has its purpose defined/ The same as any other kind of poem or poesis/ It is to imitate the actions of men/ And produce an image of the customs of its time." (Vega, 1935, p.150)
[226] "As subject tragedy uses history/ and comedy must look for fiction" (Ibid,p.152)
[227] In Spanish the term 'historia' has an ambiguous meaning — it means both history and story. The *Diccionario Espasa, Lengua Española*, defines 'history' both as "The science that studies the past of human society" and "Fable, short story, invented narrative". A similar problem occurs in Aristotle — with 'myth', translated by different authors as 'myth', 'story' and 'plot'. (*Diccionario Espasa, Lengua Española*, 1997, p.397)
[228] See footnote 199.
[229] It is true that, in principle, Aristotle admits the creation of new plots — tragedy is not history because tragedy is universal and history is particular. "Consequently poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars." (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, p.59). The existing classical tragedies, however, are based on mythical sources.

when Vega proudly acknowledges the mixing of the genres in the Spanish *comedia*,[230]

> The tragic and the comic mixed,
> And Terence with Seneca,
> Like another Minotaur or Pasiphaë
> One part will be serious and the other light
> And this variety adds much delight
> As can be found in nature. (Ibid, p.153)

In Vega's *El Caballero de Olmedo* (1620) the main character, Don Alonso, is slaughtered by his opponent, Rodrigo. The assassination is foreshadowed throughout the play in Rodrigo's speeches which are somber, pessimistic, evoking the thematic universe of tragedy, but the mechanisms of the intrigue are opposed — there are concealed letters, disguises, failed meetings. In *Peribáñez* (1614) Vega mixes characters of low and high social status. The theme of *Peribáñez* is the right of a peasant to defend the honour of his marriage to a noble woman. When Vega claims the freedom of choice in the themes for the *comedias* he is essentially speaking of the freedom to have noble characters involved in plots that are typically comedic.

Of 'verisimilitude' Lope de Vega merely excludes the impossible from the poem, without further explanation "Avoid impossibilities, the dictum says only the verisimilar should be imitated." (Vega, 1935, p.156) Here 'verisimilitude' remains as a concept but without a clear explanation. Vega's *comedias* are characteristically eclectic — they move from place to place, they incorporate music, as was the custom in the *comedia* tradition, and they suggest, by the proliferation of episodes, the passage of time. Aspects of 'verisimilitude' as they will be discussed by French theory fifty years later as a compulsory synchronization of real and fictional time are simply not a concern for Vega.

The inclusion of the discussion of unities in *El Arte* is an indication of the relevance of Aristotle in critical discourse in Europe, and an indication of what was coming to be dogmatically regarded as the essential aspects of a play.[231]

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[230] "Lope wants to analyze the dramatic substance of the theatre of his time, which was born out of two apparently incompatible genres: tragedy and comedy. This is why the *comedia nueva española* is *tragicomedy*. […] Here can be found another invaluable aspect of the *Arte Nuevo*, the definition of the dramatic genre and intimate nature of the Spanish theatre." (Vega, 1971, p.263)

[231] The impact of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Europe, the unities in particular, is discussed in **Appendix 2 — the search for Aristotle** (page. 251).

The ‘unity of time’ Lope de Vega reduces to the economy principle: to reduce the action to the least time possible,[232] unless the story that is to be told requires it; should there be a great journey within the play this should happen between the acts. The idea that a play should be circumscribed to one revolution of the sun is capitally rejected by Vega and it is referred to more as a means to discard Aristotle in general, of whom he says “[…] we lost respect […]” (Ibid, p.154) rather than enduring any formal discussion. The ‘unity of place’ he simply ignores.

The only ‘unity’ that Vega permits is the ‘unity of action’.[233] Vega worries about the episodic fable and defends subjects that have but one action, “[…] make sure the fable has only one subject/ and that it is in no way episodic [...]” (Ibid, p.153). In referring to characteristics of the fable rather than of the play Lope de Vega is acknowledging a fundamental distinction between the narrative as it exists in myth and the narrative as it comes to be organized by the plot. The mechanics of Vega’s theatre seem to rely on principles of functional coherence — what the audience can reasonably be expected to follow. Likewise characters are supposed to have foreseeable characteristics. They must show constancy of behavior “[…] in no way should characters/ contradict themselves./ I mean, to forget, like Oedipus/ in Sophocles who seems not to remember/ having murdered Laius.” (Ibid, p.156) and they must be appropriate both in action “[…] show affection in lovers […]”, (Ibid, p.156) and in demeanor, “[…] a king must show majesty […]” (Ibid) So, ‘verisimilitude’ for Lope de Vega seems to comprise both the restriction of the narrative to the ‘possible’, the coherence in the behavior of the characters, and a respect for received models.

Of the three elements of the dramatic poem — discourse, pleasurable verse, and music[234] — two (discourse and pleasurable verse) will be related to the principles of coherence in the treatment of character and one will be independent (music). Like all his contemporaries Lope de Vega attributes a special importance to rhetoric: private characters ought to use a simple and unaffected language, different

[232] The shortest time possible for the action,/ unless the poet writes such a story/ in which several years pass. (Vega, 1935, p.154)
[233] The play should also be whole. This is connected with the idea of action not being ‘episodic’ “In no way should it be episodic/ I mean including what is not needed for the main intent/ Such that the whole play falls apart/ If something is taken from it” (Ibid, p.153–4)
[234] “There are three elements/ to any poetic imitation/ discourse, pleasurable verse and music […]” (Ibid, p.150)

from that of the politician which is should be heightened and adorned[235]— or at least a simple language must be reserved for the treatment of the domestic — but equally there are instances within the poem when a character's discourse is allowed wittiness and rhetoric as a mean to convey the truth.[236] This aspect of characterization is complemented by resource to a variety of metres. The most common kind of verse in the *comedia* is the octosyllabic line but Vega suggests a number of variations according to their function "Keep the ten line poem for complaints […] For grave matters use the tercet,/ and the *redondilha* for issues of the heart." (Ibid, p.157). The metre (pleasurable verse) and discourse (more or less rhetorical) must be coherent with the character being portrayed.

There is also a balance between unadorned narrative and the seduction of the audience by the use of literary devices — there is the rhetoric of the character and in addition to this there is also the rhetoric of the play and the rhetoric of the author. I mean by this that character, play, and author must come across as captivating and articulate entities. Characters marvel with their speeches, and they make themselves desirable to the audience by force of speech,

> The scenes should end with epigrams
> With style and elegant verse,
> Such that the audience is left satisfied
> When the character reciting them leaves (Ibid, p.156)

Lope de Vega is very precise in the way he thinks the narrative should be organized within the play; he prescribes three acts,[237] ideally comprising not more than a day and corresponding to specific moments in the development of the action,

> The case should be exposed in the first act,
> There should be an entanglement in the second
> In such a way that to the middle of the third

[235] "Aristides, the rhetorician, has given us the example,/ Comic language must be pure, clear and easy/ It must be of the kind found in common speech/ Different to that used by politicians/ For here abounds heightened and adorned language." (Ibid, p.155)
[236] "Begin with plain language;/ Do not spend any deep thoughts and concepts/ With domestic issues — that will be subject of some of your characters;/ However when a character is asked to give advice/ Or persuade or deter/ There you must use sentences and concepts / Because it is important to convey the truth/ A man will speak in a different style/ From that used in common speech." (Ibid, 1935, p.155)
[237] "The play should be written in prose/ laid down in three acts/ and as much as possible representing/ an unbroken day." (Ibid, p.154)

The resolution is not in view. (Ibid, p.156)

This is complemented also by the idea that the play should be divided in two parts.[238] The main concern is the creation of suspense in the audience. A quick resolution in the last scene is characteristic of the Spanish *comedia*, but the double structure is also evocative of Aristotle's 'complication' and 'denouement'. There is no reason to think there should be a parallel between Greek tragedy and the Spanish *comedia* — the gravitas of tragedy is very distant from the hyper-populated universe of the *comedia* even in plays like *El Cabalero de Olmedo* — except, perhaps, in the idea of entanglement and resolution as the motor of suspense.

The creation of surprises and sustained activity on the stage[239] are the main requirements for a *comedia*. This is achieved by the creation of sudden changes of expectation[240] and identity equivocations.[241] With this in view Vega provides advice on the size of the plays too, pragmatically indicating the number of pages to be filled — four per act for a total of twelve pages per *comedia*.[242] Guidance on magnitude is therefore very pragmatic. The size of the play is such that it allows a number of incidents to happen but not such that it allows a transformation to occur to the character. The theme of most *comedias* is love and honor,[243] and the mechanism surprise and uncertainty.[244] Lope de Vega does not provide any direct reference on

[238] "Split your subject in two/ make sure all his connected from the start/ till the action slows down but don't give away the resolution/ before the last scene;/ the crowd will turn their back if they know the ending." (Ibid, p.155)
[239] "The stage should not be left empty/ often, that will create unrest in the audience/ and the fable will get longer." (Ibid, p.155)
[240] The line is not very clear. Both the Portuguese translation by Antonio Lopes Ribeiro and Marvin Carlson's English translation suggest some kind of deceiving of the expectation as a means to create surprise, or as a means to create the compensatory illusion when what was expected is less powerful than what was initially suggested. The second possibility, however, is incongruent — why should the playwright create the possibility of an exciting development and then deceive the audience. I attempted the following word to word translation "Deceive taste whenever/ something is suggested which is/ distant from what has been promised" (Ibid, p.156)
[241] This line answers partially the question raised in the previous footnote. The *comedia* relies largely on mistaken identity, deception and surprise. "Deceiving with the truth is something that/ has been used to great effect […] Using equivocations and ambiguity/ has been popular too for audiences/ always think they know the truth." (Ibid, p.157)
[242] Each act should be four pages,/ twelve pages will fair exactly/ with the time and patience of the audience." (Ibid, p.157)
[243] "Most of their plays [of the Golden Age authors] are called comedias, and a large proportion are in fact romantic comedies." (Dixon, 2001, p.152)
[244] "[…] and many of their plots have improbable complications. Very often these involve disguises (woman dressing as men especially), or errors based on the premise that scenes are occurring at night which off course are played in broad daylight. Their spectators must have loved such conventions […]" (Ibid, p.152)

characters but it is clear what characters he is thinking about — these are precisely the characters that make possible the love/honor intrigue and they are indirectly referred in *El Arte Nuevo*: the girl, her maid; the boy; his servant; the father or an old man; the king.[245]

Other aspects discussed by Lope de Vega are rhetorical figures and an attempted history of the dramatic form but these are not relevant for the present discussion.

What starts to emerge is a 'treatise' that has little concern for philosophical elaboration — there are no moral considerations on the nature and purpose of the dramatic poem and no attempt at abstract categorization as we saw in Aristotle. Instead Vega's is a pragmatic treatise with a number of practical ideas drawn from experience to which can be added a hidden agenda — the validation of a genre, the *comedia*, in dialogue with a force that is seen as monolithic and conservative but authoritative — the rule of the ancients.

This thesis questions the validity of theorizing drama as the creation of the sequences of motivated human actions. The Method of Physical Actions is used as a model of motivated actions because of its dissemination and wide acceptance in practice. An answer to the question is attempted by the systematic study of the poetics of drama in search of an essential definition that comprehends in part or in its totality the idea of drama as a design of motivated human actions.

I have already suggested that in Aristotle the representation of human motivation is challenged by an underdeveloped theory of character, hostage to the unavoidable recourse to mythical source. I have also argued that the moral and didactic function of drama in Horace's theory imposes restrictions on the kinds of actions and characters allowed in plays and consequently on the gamut of motivations for actions.

Up until now it seems that many aspects are shared by poetics and the Method of Physical Actions — namely, the centrality of action, coherence, causality, division of the action in sections. What sets poetics and the Method of Physical Actions apart is a greater concern with character development in the latter, and the

[245] "If the king Speaks, he should have/ royal gravitas; if the old man speaks/ He should be modest […] Lovers should be affectionate, […] Ladies should never dishonour their names;/ […] The servant should not make use of elevated language." (Vega, 1935, p.156)

interference of external elements in the development of a theory of character in the former.

Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias*, seems, on a first approach, to have none of these constraints. *El Arte* seems to propose a greater freedom in the development of the characters than did the *Poetics* and the *Ars Poetica*. This is manifest in the apparent freedom in the use of different metres, in the use of simple and unaffected language for low status characters, in allowing invented plots, in the apparent interest in contemporary subjects, and in the insistence on the coherence of behavior of the characters. It should be noted, however, that when speaking about *comedia* what is being discussed is still a highly regulated form of theatre. It made no sense in the seventeenth century to speak of drama outside the verse form. The apparent freedom in choice of metre and recourse to everyday speech were circumscribed by existing canonical verse forms. Characters were still bound to finish speeches with epigrams and the *comedias* were presented in afternoon cycles interspersed with musical performances and farces or *intermezzos* that conditioned the content of the plays.

More importantly the *comedia* responded to the tastes of a popular audiences eager to watch the standard romantic plot. It is not surprising then that Vega should suggest the type of characters needed for a comedy. The girl and her maid, the boy and his servant, the father or an old man, and the king were what was needed to create a *comedia* and a *comedia* shouldn't distance itself much from that paradigm.

Where the characters in Aristotle and Horace had been defined by their social status or by some generic quality,[246] in Lope de Vega a specific set of characters is suggested that facilitates the kind of intrigue favoured.

El Arte is, then, a treatise that points in two opposed directions. By enlarging the verse range, by mixing characters and plots, by allowing invented plots, by the concern with narrative coherence and by an interest in contemporary world Lope de Vega opens the path for the creation of richer and more diverse characters that might facilitate the building of psychological motivation, but this development is effectively forestalled by the recourse to standardized plots and characters.

[246] As is the case with Aristotle, when characters of tragedy are defined as 'superior' or 'good' in *Poetics*, pages 35 and 79, respectively (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005).

In addition to this *El Arte* introduces the question of the emergence of tragicomedy. Tragicomedy was introduced critically by Guarini in his *Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (1599) and it came to be a central question in subsequent theory. Tragicomedy is of interest for this thesis because it is inherently a claim for the dramatist's right to create characters and plots that deviate from the classical standard.

El Arte brings to the discussion a further aspect — it highlights a tension that had not existed before in critical literature — the tension between plot and character — and by doing so it attributes a greater importance to character than earlier poetics.

Chapter seven: reassessment of methodology

Methodology — schools of thought

> Yet character is probably the most difficult aspect of the art of fiction to discuss in technical terms. (Lodge, 1992, *The Art of Fiction*, p.67)

In **Choice of texts and approach** I referred to the difficulty of establishing the school of thought in which this research is situated. I had by then defined the kind of discussion I was aiming at (in philosophy of drama), the basic elements necessary for the investigation (working conjectures), and the articulation of its parts (how a study in poetics addresses a problem of the philosophy of drama). I suggested that the placement of this research in a school of thought was something to be clarified as I moved forward and not something I could define at start.

I began the chapter on the Method of Physical Actions with an epigraph, taken from Fergusson's article The Notion of "Action" (1964). I chose Fergusson's quote because by force of the author's personal experience, it illustrates well the problem this thesis seeks to address. Fergusson had been an assistant director to Richard Boleslavsky at the Laboratory Theatre, in New York, in addition to his academic career at Harvard and Oxford. Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaia had been teaching at the Laboratory Theatre since the early 1920s — they belonged to the first group of Stanislavsky-trained actors to establish in the West. In The Notion of "Action" Fergusson questions the similarity between the word 'action' as it is used by Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaia and 'action' as it is used by Aristotle. The question asked by Fergusson is very close to the question that guides this thesis, differing in the size, the approach[247] and in the scope of texts analyzed.

One of the early members of the literary committee at the Mali Theatre in Moscow was the critic Alexander Veselovsky who had been working on a system for the study of literature and drama.[248] On the Mali Theatre's literary committee was

[247] The Notion of "Action" concentrates exclusively on Aristotle, and Fergusson does not consider the hypothesis of an historical development of the idea motivated action.

[248] "Around 1906 Veselovsky evolved a poetics of "motifs," in which the literary work is dissected into its smallest irreducible components, and plot is seen as a complex cluster of story-motifs ordered, altered, and rearranged by art; Veselovsky thought shifting motifs correlated with changes in cultural attitudes." (Richter, 2007, p.751)

also Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, a co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre with Stanislavsky. Because of the importance given to plot and a concentration on the artistic object rather than on social or moral context, Veselovsky's system is thought to be a development in the Aristotelian tradition.

Veselovsky was recognizably an influential author to the Russian formalists and, through Dantchenko, a probable[249] influence in the Moscow Art Theatre too. The Russian formalists imported Veselovsky's techniques of thematic analysis and they shared with him an interest in the poetics of creation,

> In effect, the formalists viewed literature as a mode of construction. Poetry was defined by its use of language, fiction as the craft of manipulating story materials by narrative technique. What was not a matter of construction, such as the origins of and the cultural meaning of a literary work, was not specifically literary, and was therefore dismissed as not a true part of poetics. (Richter, 2007, p152)

Russian formalism was suppressed in the USSR, for political reasons, around 1930, but parallel schools had started to emerge in the United Kingdom and the United States.[250] The advocates of New Criticism,[251] like the Russian formalists, rejected social historical and biographical contextualization as a central aspect of literary studies and concentrated on the mechanisms by which a poem produced its effects. A central idea to all formalist schools is the idea that literature is a special kind of language with properties that make it different from common language — the idea that an essential definition of literature is achievable. In this assumption formalist schools evoke Aristotle's system of criteria for the distinction of 'literary' genres.

The Russian formalist school had resorted back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* for the concepts of a dynamic shaping of the raw material of language into a form,

> Jakobson's idea made it possible to drop entirely the notion of a separable content and to view poetic form as that which integrates the raw material of language into a shaped structure. Jakobson's sense of form as a dynamic shaping

[249] The link between Veselovsky's ideas, Dantchenko and Stanislavsky is established by Thomas (1999, pxviii–xix)
[250] Russian formalism eventually reached the west through Roman Jakobson and the Prague Linguistic Circle, through Victor Erlich's study of the Russian formalists published in 1955, and through Tzevan Todorov's translations published in 1965. (Richter, 2007, p.750)
[251] Richter (2007, p.749–60) specifies three formalist schools: the Russian Formalists, the New Critics and the Neo Aristotelians (also known as the Chicago School).

> process thus resembles Aristotelian *eidos*; as we shall see, it has more in common with the neo-Aristotelians' notions of form than that of the New Critics […] (Richter, 2007, p.752)

The neo-Aristotelians acknowledged Aristotle's influence from these notions of dynamic shaping and expanded the systematic approach of the *Poetics*. Aristotle had established criteria for the classification of genres — focusing on catharsis as the specific effect of tragedy. The neo-Aristotelians, Crane[252] in particular, wanted to apply a similar model to other literary genres; they wanted to know which other powers the "[…] different structures of plot, character, thought, language and technique were designed to serve." (Richter, 2007, p.760)

It is not the object of this thesis to discuss in detail the specifics of formalist schools. But it is relevant to acknowledge aspects of its inheritance that are relevant for its methodology, namely: the centrality of plot as a unifying concept, the concentration on text in detriment to the study of the author's biography and period, a preference for close reading, an association with Aristotle's theories, an interest in essential definitions.

This thesis questions the centrality of action (plot) as an essential definition of drama. It claims that the mode of construction of drama consists in the organization and sequencing of motivated actions performed by fictional characters. Its perspective is panoramic — it attempts an evaluation of the presence of similar dramatic theories in poetics since Aristotle.

As a thesis on poetics it is concerned with the essential mechanisms of construction rather than the social, cultural or moral context.

Close reading is both the process of analysis and a working conjecture. It is an analytical process because the method used to analyze poetics is systematic and centered on textual detail. It is a working conjecture because it assumes dramatic texts are systematic and meticulous constructions.

There is a further consequence to the acknowledgement of the Aristotelian inheritance. Lope de Vega concentrates on a new genre, the *comedia*; Horace though dedicating a great part of *Ars Poetica* to tragedy, is, in fact, writing about the dramatic genres as a whole; and of Aristotle only the treatise on tragedy is known.[253]

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[252] Ronald Salmon Crane (1886–1967) is the founder of the neo-Aristotelian School.
[253] In the *Poetics* Aristotle mentions a treatise on comedy but this has never been found.

There is a substantial difference between the number of treatises that deal with tragedy and the treatises that deal with comedy or other genres. The great tradition of poetic treatises to an extent followed Aristotle's *Poetics*, perhaps as result, too, of the status of tragedy as the nobler genre (the genre that portrayed elevated characters and exceptional actions). This will be true for later treatises. The poetics of the *serious* genre as it will be championed in eighteenth century France builds on the tragic tradition in the sense that it claims a tragedy-like grandiosity and significance to bourgeois drama. The treatises that will follow in the discussion will be inscribed in this tradition — they will give preponderance to tragedy as their object of study.

Methodology — action and character

Up until now I have analyzed three poetics: Aristotle's; Horace's; and Lope de Vega's. I have attempted, in each of these treatises, to find elements that substantiated the view that elements of a theory of motivated actions were already being put in place in earlier treatises. There are very few elements in Aristotle's *Poetics* that point in that direction. The overarching importance given to plot somewhat substantiates this (the Method of Physical Actions also gives preponderance to plot), but the similarity between the two theories is thwarted by the relatively small importance attributed to character. Character as 'fictional personality' does not exist for Aristotle. What do exist are attributes of character: the character will make good or bad choices (*ethos*), he will communicate verbally, he will have certain rhetorical skills, and he will be of a certain status.

The plots of Greek tragedy, according to Aristotle, necessarily come from myth. The characters have to be such that they fulfill what is established in the myth. Characters have to conform to the gender, the status and demeanor of the mythical characters. Myths offer one more limitation in that they circumscribe the possible plots to a set number of stories, effectively circumscribing the subject of tragedy.

The 'fictional agent' in tragedy is one more element of the dramatic poem — in parallel with rhetoric or language. In Aristotle's view tragedy is a poem that recreates myths in dramatized form.

One aspect that is common to Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* is the idea that dramas are imitations of the actions of men organized in a coherent way. The idea of coherence, expressed in terms of necessity and probability (verisimilitude) approximates early poetics to the Method of Physical Actions because it seems to be suggesting coherence in the behavior of the fictional agents. In Stanislavsky the character's actions will emerge from a central idea of character, unified by 'through action' and the 'super-objective' — these will attribute psychological coherence to the characters in the sense that they anchor the justification for all of their actions on an underlying super-motive. Because it consists of the overarching life aims of the character, the super-motive is also an expression of the character's identity. This sense of character coherence is scarcely developed in early poetics. What Aristotle and Horace mean is plot verisimilitude, not internal coherence for the character. In Aristotle's theory the fictional agent cannot perform actions which are impossible for his status or power, and he will act according to what is expected of his social status and gender. 'Verisimilitude' implies similitude to an established definition of the 'fictional agent' and of the source narrative (myth).

In Horace, there is, in addition, a much greater emphasis on 'verisimilitude' to moral behavior — plots must be morally exemplar. Many aspects of *Ars Poetica* point towards an interest in a richer definition of character: myths are preponderant as a narrative source but not exclusive, therefore allowing the partial invention of new stories. The plea for observation of life as a source of inspiration is promising too, but all the possible developments in character are compromised by the *Ars Poetica*'s moralistic undertone. Furthermore, the drama should instruct — the character's motivations are restricted by the kind of moral lecturing the play must convey.

There was scarcely any sense of character as a fictional personality motivated to act in Aristotle and there is as little in Horace. What there is in *Ars Poetica* is a number of indications (using life as narrative source; invented plots), which point at a potential within the genres for richer portrayal of character.

In terms of the proximity of his theory to the Method of Physical Actions Lope de Vega is the most promising author of the three studied. This is partly due to Vega daring to push forward a new genre that is by definition free to place the

standard characters in new and invented situations. With this new genre comes a variety of new possibilities for character development. Vega allows the mixing of verse forms as a means to produce life-like characters; the use of simple unadorned language to portray characters of low status; the mixing of tragic and comic characters; the inclusion of contemporary subjects but, as with Aristotle and Horace, these liberal tendencies are counterweighed by other factors.

In the case of Lope de Vega the character typologies are standard — the lovers, the servants, the old man, and the king; and the variations in plot are geared towards the creation of surprises and reversals as a panacea for bored audiences, more than to the development of complex characters.

This analysis of three poetics has highlighted an interesting aspect. A theory such as the Method of Physical Actions presupposes character complexity — the creation of the mental and emotional elements of character that can be coherently regarded as reasons for action. Up until now I have proceeded by identifying elements of poetics that allow the expression of particularities in the characters. Naturally there are no elements of a psychology in early treatises and so I have tried to identify elements that anticipate or disallow the hypothesis of a mental and emotional life in a character. Typically these have been elements that impose constraints to the drama: myth-based plot, myth-based characters, standard use of language, and moral obligations. The development of the idea of motivated action in poetics corresponds necessarily to a development in the treatment of character.

Before I started this study I hypothesized that I would find evidence of a theory of motivated actions from earliest poetics. As I moved through the analysis of Aristotle and Horace I realized there was an insufficient but slowly developing theory of character in early authors. It appeared that there might be a path of chronological development with successive and regular innovations in characterization in subsequent treatises. Lope de Vega pushed me into thinking that characterization elements emerge erratically and not regularly. The development of a theory of character is bounded by their historical context and by contemporary play paradigms.

The analysis of poetics up to Lope de Vega shows a slow and uneven development of the idea of character. Plot no longer holds the central position in poetic theory. What comes in its place is a negotiation between plot and character.

Chapter eight: the neoclassical poetics

D'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* and Corneille's *Les Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique*

> And to come to our age, what need have we today to purge terror and pity with tragic sights, since we have the precepts of our most holy religion, which teaches us with the word of the gospel? Hence these horrible and savage spectacles are superfluous, nor does it seem to me that today we should introduce a tragic action for any other reason than to get delight from it. (Guarini, 1599, 'Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry'. In *Theatre Theory Theatre*, p.133)

D'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* (1657) emerges as the culmination of neoclassical theory, towards the end of a complex debate involving playwrights, critics and politicians. Unlike Horace and Lope de Vega, d'Aubignac attempts a grand theory, in the sense that he tries to contextualize his views on drama within an historical perspective. Art is seen as one more incarnation of the power of great nations. *The Whole Art of the Stage* presents spectacles, games and diversions as a form of cultural colonialism — part of an imperialist expansion strategy — designed to show off the happiness of invading nations, and sometimes as mere show of power. This is hardly surprising considering *The Whole Art of the Stage* was written by suggestion of Cardinal Richelieu,[254] in an attempt to produce an authoritative and official theory of drama. Theatre is in addition valued for its didactic functions. It can instill sentiments of courage in citizens who have never faced times of war; it can provide general moral examples; [255] and it can be of use as a moral prophylactic — keeping idle people busy.

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[254] It is not clear whether *La Pratique du Thêàtre* was written by appointment of Richelieu or if it was merely something that was spontaneously written by d'Aubignac. The Introduction to the English translation suggests there was a commission "[…] much cherished by Cardinal Richelieu, that great mecenas of ingenious men, and by him for his deserts made abbot of Aubignac & designed overseer or super-intendant general of the theatres in France, if the project of restoring them to their ancient glory (of which you'll see an abstract at the end of the book) had gone on, and not been interrupted by the cardinal's death." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.1)

[255] "One of the chiefest, and indeed the most indispensible rule of dramatic poems, is, that in them virtues always ought to be rewarded, or at least commended, in spite of all the injuries of fortune; and that likewise vices be always punished, or at least detested with horror, though they triumph upon the stage for that time." (Ibid, p.5)

D'Aubignac's self-proclaimed aim is to make the methods of poets known, rather than to be teaching those who already know by practice. His intentions are not simply didactic, in the sense of using theatre as a means to teach something about a subject, but to provide a better understanding[256] of the medium, in particular of the processes and excellence of the ancients, who d'Aubignac thinks have not been sufficiently appreciated.

He establishes an important division between what he calls the 'theory of the stage'[257] and what he calls the 'practice and application'[258] of the maxims of dramatic art. D'Aubignac's 'practice and application' is distinguished from a 'theory of the stage' in that it is concerned with the down to earth aspects of play construction. A 'practice and application' is compared to the way a building is put together and the 'theory of the stage' with the architectural plan,[259]

> Thus architecture teacheth the beauty and symmetry of buildings, their noble proportions, and all the rest of their magnificent appearance, but does not descend to express a thousand necessary contrivances, of which the master of the house is to take care, when he puts his hand to the Work. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.18)

D'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* contains much philosophical reflection but he claims his focus is the practical element — the ancients, d'Aubignac says, in spite of their superior knowledge,[260] had not left much information on the practicalities of play construction, "[…] how to prepare the Incidents, to unite times and places; the continuity of the theatral action, […] and a thousand other particulars, of which there

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[256] "[…] so I think we shall feel so much the more admiration and joy in the representation of theatral diversions, if by the knowledge of the rules of the art we are able to penetrate all the beauties of them, and to consider what meditations, pains, and study they have cost to be brought to that perfection." (Ibid, p.15)

[257] "The same thing has happened to the stage. There has been ample treatises of dramatic poems, the original of them, their progress, definition, species, the unity of action, measure of time, the beauty of their contrivance, the thoughts, manners, language, which is fittest for them, and many other such matters, but only in general; and that I call the theory of the stage" (Ibid, p.18)

[258] "[…] all I have seen yet that concerns the stage, contains only the general maxims of dramatic poetry, which is properly the theory of the art; but as for the practice and application of those instructions, I never met with anything of that kind hitherto…"(Ibid, p.17)

[259] D'Aubignac makes an analogy with lute playing too. The general rules (equivalent to a theory) are: "[…] number of strings and touches, the manner of making accords, the measures, passages, quavers […]"; the execution (application), "[…] the nicest ways of touching strings, the changing of measures, the graceful way to give a good motion […]" (Ibid, p.18)

[260] "[…] it must be set down for a maxime out of contest, that 'tis impossible to understand dramatic poetry without the help of the ancients, and a thorough meditation upon their works." (Ibid, p.19)

is nothing left in antiquity" (Ibid p.18-9) The separation between the practical (practice and application) and the philosophical (theory of the stage) of poetics is one original aspect of d'Aubignac's theory.

The rediscovery of classical treatises and their validity is at the centre of French neoclassical theory. Aristotle's *Poetics* was disseminated in Europe via the Arabic translation of the philosopher Averroes, then through the Latin and vernacular translations produced by Italian writers during the fifteenth and sixteenth century[261] and, finally, by the French critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.[262] D'Aubignac can be classified as a conservative critic. Like most neoclassical critics he anchors his theory in the canonical authors — Aristotle and Horace, but also their interpreters: Scaliger, Rebortello, and Castelvetro.

A fierce debate on the rules of tragedy took place, in 1636, after the production of Corneille's *Cid*.[263] *The Whole Art of the Stage* appears in 1657 as an authoritative response to the dramaturgical contention that had reached its heights with the production of the *Cid*. The status of *The Whole Art of the Stage* as an exemplar of neoclassical conservative thought[264] is one reason why its study is relevant for this thesis. What kind of developments will neoclassical theory bring to character? What aspects might there be in neoclassical theory that impact on character's motivations? To what extent might the separation between practical and theoretical aspects influence characterization?

For the analysis of *The Whole Art of the Stage* I have used the English translation of 1684[265] alongside the 1715 French edition for verification purposes. The English translation has two advantages over the French edition: it is chronologically closer to the original 1657 publication; it highlights the complexities of neoclassical theory, for example with the use of double terms (*vraisemblable*

[261] In 1258 Hermannus Alemannus translates to Latin Averroes' Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Poetics.* This version is published in 1481. Giorgio Valla's 1498 publication of a Latin version of the *Poetics* inaugurates its entrance in Europe. Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e esposta*, 1570 is one of the first versions in vernacular.
[262] The 'aristotelian unities' and other Aristotle-related neoclassical concepts are discussed in **Appendix 2 — The search for Aristotle** (page. 251).
[263] An account of the 'Cid controversy' is provided in **Appendix 2 — the search for Aristotle**.
[264] The influence and relevance of *The Whole Art of the Stage* as example of a synthesis of neoclassical thought is acknowledged by Gerould (2000, p.146), Carlson (1993, p.99) and Barrett (1965, p.92).
[265] There is no reference to the name of the English translator.

translated as 'probability and decency'; *moeurs* translated as 'custom and manners').[266]

Being a canonical critic D'Aubignac is concerned with the opposition to the 'rules of the ancients'. For the neoclassical, what is implied by the canonical rules is a respect for the unity of action, of time and of place; the alignment of tragic heroes and narratives to known paradigms (high and low status, good or bad ending); and the promotion of moral values.

There are, according to d'Aubignac, five common negative arguments against these rules.[267] The discussion of these arguments begins *The Whole Art of the Stage*. The first argument states the irrationality of the rules and their unjustified imposition as dogma. The second argument seeks to invalidate any claim to reason in the ancients by stating that the ancients had violated the rules themselves. The third argument claims the existence of unsuccessful ancient plays as proof of the inefficiency of the rules. The fourth argument claims the existence of successful modern irregular plays, again as proof of the inefficiency of rules.[268] The fifth argument, the most important, specifically addresses the unities of time and place — it states that

> […] if these rigorous Maxims [unities of time and place] should be followed, we should very often lose the greatest beauty of all true stories. Their incidents having most commonly happened at different times, and in different places. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.22)

I have been suggesting that one way in which poetic treatises moved towards a definition of drama as motivated actions was by allowing characters and narratives to move beyond the traditional paradigms — exactly what the opponents of ancient rule, against whom d'Aubignac is arguing, seem to be doing. For that reason it is important to understand d'Aubignac's counter-arguments, how he thinks ancient rules serves the construction of plays, and to what extent they are compulsory.

The 'rules of the ancients', d'Aubignac argues, are not challenged by the rationality argument because they are a development of the 'natural judgement of

[266] I will discuss the translation of *moeurs* shortly.
[267] D'Aubignac is not referring to any author specifically, he is abstractly answering what he considers the most urging allegations produced against the canon.
[268] (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.22)

mankind': a synthesis of what has been attempted successfully and what is rationally justified.[269] Only what is reasonable is accepted as a theme and only what develops reasonably within the play is depicted.

D'Aubignac claims that if there were exceptions to the rules — as was claimed by the second argument — then such exceptions should in some way be justified by robust internal logic or by valid external reasons:

> I must not omit, for the glory of the ancients, that if they have sometimes violated the art of dramatic poems, they have done it for some more powerful and inducing reason, than all the Interest of the play could amount to. As for example, *Euripides,* in the *Suppliants,* has preferr'd the glory of his country to that of his art, of which I have spoken elsewhere. (Ibid, p.24)

The supposed lack of success of classical plays on the French stage — the third argument — d'Aubignac attributes to a necessary difference in subjects and to translation, "[…] the subject, and not the want of art, has been the cause of it; and sometimes likewise the changes made by the translators." (Ibid, p.24)

In what follows — the fourth argument — d'Aubignac essays a truly speculative explanation of the effects of plays in audiences. He claims that only the 'regular'[270] elements of plays have had the acceptance of the public. He provides no explanation of why he thinks those were the most appreciated moments or how he assessed the audience's interest in particular parts of the play. He could have been referring to commentaries by other playwrights and critics,

> To destroy the 4th objection, we need only to remember, that those plays of ours, which took with the people, and with the court, were not lik'd in all their parts; but only in those things which were reasonable, and in which they were conformable to the rules[…] (Ibid, p.24–5)

[269] "As to the first objection; I answer, that the rules of the stage are not founded upon authority, but upon reason; they are not so much settled by example, as by the natural judgment of mankind; and if we call them the rules and the art of the ancients, 'tis only because they have practiced them with great regularity, and much to their glory […] "(Ibid, p.22)

[270] 'Regular' is used throughout neoclassicism to designate plays that obey the rules — namely the rule of the three unities; 'verisimilitude'; 'decorum'.

The regularity of French neoclassical tragedy is founded, amongst other principles, on ideas of necessary inclusion of the 'verisimilar', the 'unities' but also of the 'marvelous', and 'suffering'. Throughout neoclassicism there is an oscillation between moral verisimilitude, what is true to decorum (*bienséance*), and verisimilitude to the real. Furthermore, there is, in some authors, a very clear notion that morally imperfect characters may be necessary for the intrigue.[271] One of the difficulties of regular tragedy is the maintenance of engaging intrigues, with respect both to the formal rules of presentation (unities, number of acts, etc) and the morally acceptable. In answering the fifth negative argument d'Aubignac leans towards both the regular drama and to a drama with a moral function. The fifth negative argument had suggested that adherence to the rules would imply a rejection of "[…] the greatest beauty of all true stories […]" (Ibid, p.22). D'Aubignac rejects this by arguing that notable incidents in history are included, by a process of adaptation and selection which takes into consideration probability and moral example:

> […] they [the ancients] furnish us with inventions, how so to adjust the circumstances of the action, time, and place, as not to go against all probable appearance [verisimilitude], and yet not to represent them always as they are in story, but such as they ought to be […] (Ibid, p.25–6)

The opponents of the rules think that moral verisimilitude reduces the number of possible narratives. D'Aubignac claims all stories can be morally treated.

In chapter V, book one, d'Aubignac suggests a possible means by which the prospective playwright might learn.[272] He prescribes the study of the Greek poets, of Aristotle, Horace, and of all their commentators — Castelvetro, Hensius, Vossius and Scaliger. D'Aubignac is replicating Horace's plea for a return to the ancient writers for teaching and, more importantly, he is pointing in the direction of traditional narratives.

The most important aspect of d'Aubignac's discussion of the five negative arguments is the centralization of the discussion around plot and character. What is being proposed by opponents of rules is the possibility of depicting irregular plots

[271] I will refer to this aspect later on in connection to Corneille's *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique*.
[272] (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.26–33)

and irregular characters. Lope de Vega had suggested the same by championing a new genre, the *comedia*, and many other authors had been trying to establish tragicomedy as a legitimate genre.[273] It was this interest in extra-canonical drama — I claimed — that brought *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias* closer to a theory of motivated actions by allowing variety in character and in plot and it is these aspects that d'Aubignac seems to disallow.

Other than their canonical status, the unities were appreciated for promoting a closeness to reality. This was in agreement with the generic sense of 'verisimilitude'. The conveying of something that appears 'credible' to the spectator.

There are however further complexities to the concept of 'verisimilitude' as truth to reality. It is worth remembering that there are no stories based in reality in neoclassical theatre — the sources remain historical,[274] mythical, and sometimes imagined. When d'Aubignac speaks of 'verisimilitude' he means, in addition to 'credible', a narrative that might be true to an historical character or to an historical account[275] — a believable rendition of a *known* character or story.

In addition to this, verisimilitude implies compliance to decorum and aesthetic improvement. D'Aubignac resorts to a comparison with painting as a means to explain how the dramatic poet should search for 'verisimilitude',

> For example, if he [the painter] will draw *Mary Magdelen* in her penitent retirement, he will not omit any of the most important parts of her story, because if he should do otherwise, they that should see it would hardly know it. He must place her in a decent posture, else she will be a disagreeable[276] object. He will not draw her prostrate and groveling with her face upon the ground, because that would hide the finest part of her, but rather he must set her upon her knees. He ought not to cover her all over with a cilice, or

[273] Tirso de Molina and Loped Rueda are a case in point, but also, in Italy, Guarini who wrote the first tragicomedy in history, *Il Pastor Fido*.
[274] 'Histoire' has a double meaning in French: history' and 'story'. 'Histoire' must be understood very generically as 'source'. The capitalized H has no significance here.
[275] "But when he considers in his play the true story of it, or that which is suppos'd to be so, he must particularly have a care to observe the rules of probability in everything, and to make all the intrigues, actions, words, as if they had in reality come to pass; he must give fit thoughts and designs, according to the persons that are employed, he must unite the times with places, and the beginning with the consequences; and in a word, he follows the nature of things so, as not to contradict neither the state, nor the order, nor the effects, nor the property of them; and indeed has no other guide but probability and decency, and rejects all that has not that character upon it." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.38)
[276] The French word is 'dégoût' (disgust). In this context it suggests moral disapproval.

> haircloth, but leave her half naked, that the charm of her beauty may appear the more. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.36–7)

The argument presents some parallels to Aristotle — the use of fine arts as metaphor for drama; the assumption that art, through imitating reality, is a contrivance that is convincingly like reality;[277] the use of existing sources[278] and the need for beautification. It differs from Aristotle in the emphasis given to moral example. The moral aspect is implied by the notion of art as a means of providing good example. 'Agreeable' defines both what is beautiful and what is moral.[279] There is, so to say, a tension between what needs to be beautified and attractive, what is credible and what the examples of good conduct are. 'Verisimilitude' attempts an harmonization of three apparently contradictory concepts: similarity to the real, morality and aesthetic improvement.

Most importantly d'Aubignac reiterates the need to render the painted object, and therefore plays, identifiable — Mary Magdelen must be so clothed and in such posture that she becomes immediately recognizable. It is not just that plays are derived from an accepted source but that this source is identifiable.

Horace insisted on moral teaching as a basic asset of drama. I have argued that the moralization of plots imposed limitations on the development of character. D'Aubignac's theory, by imposing compliance with conventional representation of known characters and stories, seems to imply similar constraints.

One unusual aspect of d'Aubignac's theory is the apparent blending of the functions of the playwright with those of the actor — through a treatise on the art of writing d'Aubignac provides an insight into acting:

> He [the playwright] must contrive everything as if there were no spectators; that is, all the persons in the play are to act and speak as if they were truly (for example) a king, and not *Mondoroy* or *Bellerose;*[280] as if they really were in the palace of *Horatius* in *Rome,* and not at *Paris* in the *Hotel de*

[277] But also "[…] so that though he be the Author, yet he must write the whole with such Art, that it may not so much as appear that it was by him Invented." (Ibid, p.35)
[278] In the case of tragedies the source is myth. In the case of the example produced by d'Aubignac it is the history of Christian saints.
[279] "[…] observing to hide nothing that ought to be known and please, and to show nothing that ought to be hid, and may offend; and in fine, he shall try all means to gain the esteem and admiration of the Audience." (Ibid, p.38)
[280] Two well known actors of the period.

> *Bourgogne;* and as if nobody saw them, or heard them, but those who are acting with them upon the stage. (Ibid, p.37)

The statement has more than a stylistic affinity with the 'fourth wall'.[281] D'Aubignac seems to be trying to establish the verisimilar conditions for the occurrence of the events within the play. With "he must contrive", d'Aubignac implies that to make the actions credible requires the construction of a convincing fictional world, such that the actors can build a credible performance from it. The information that must be conveyed to the audience, and whatever actions characters might perform on stage must have some justification arising from those characters, as if they were real characters, in real life, independent of the audience. D'Aubignac proceeds:

> But he does not make these recitals or spectacles only because the spectators ought to know or see. How then? Why he must find in the action, which is consider'd as true, some motive, colour, or apparent reason, for which it may appear that these shows or recitals did probably happen, and ought to come to pass; and I may say that the greatest art of the stage consists in finding out these motives or colours. (Ibid, p.39)

Stanislavsky's 'given circumstances' presuppose the establishment of the circumstance and conditions of the character in any given scene. These circumstances might include: general information on the character, what has happened just before the scene started, and, most importantly, the reasons for the presence of the character in any scene — the character enters the scene with an objective and a strategy. The actor places himself in the imaginary circumstances of the character by studying the 'given circumstances' and by executing the actions the character would execute to achieve his objective. D'Aubignac's insistence on lifelikeness and his plea for the creation of the world of the play are evocative of 'given circumstances'.

Most of chapter seven, book one, of *The Whole Art of the Stage* is dedicated to an attempted history of dramatic genres that is not relevant for the present study. A

[281] The term 'fourth wall' is used modernly to describe realist plays in which actors are apparently unaware of the public. It suggests a transparent wall dividing audience and stage. David Krasner speaks of the fourth wall in the context of Method acting "This idea of the 'fourth wall' unfortunately tends to create, for some, the notion that the audience is to be ignored. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, electric lighting changed the relationship between actor and audience. Audiences sat silently in the dark pretending to observe life through the fourth wall." (Moston, 2000, p.142)

few linked definitions are, however, worth mentioning. The first is the definition of 'truth of the theatral action' in opposition to 'representation'. 'Truth of theatral action' is all that is contained in the text — "[..] the whole story of the play […]" (Ibid, p.43), and 'representation' all that is external to the text but necessary to the performance — "[…] the players, the scenes, the music, the spectators, and a great many other things […]" (Ibid, p.43). Further, the distinction between 'true action' and the 'representation' provides the grounds for a rule, "I say then that one ought never to mingle together what concerns the representation of a play, with the true action of the story represented." (Ibid, p.45)

'Unity of action' as it was described by Aristotle had already imposed integrity of plot by establishing a central narrative line to which all other narratives should be subsidiary. By establishing the need to have characters performing as if they lived in the real world, by isolating the universe of play from the universe of performance, and by suggesting there should be a "motive, colour, or apparent reason" for the actions, D'Aubignac is taking 'unity of action' further — he is claiming absolute integrity of the world of the play in addition to absolute integrity of plot.

There is one further consequence to this. D'Aubignac defines epic as that in which "[…] the poet speaks alone, the persons that he produces all uttering themselves by his mouth […]" (Ibid, p.52) and drama that in which "[…] the poet is silent, and none but the persons introduced by him, do speak […]" (Ibid, p.52). The play is a self-enclosed universe in which characters act and speak. The natural way to convey information in play is through dialogue and action. From this it follows that plays should be written so that all that is necessary for the understanding of the play is deduced from the development of the story without recourse to description. Further, stage directions are impurities, acts need not be marked, and there is no need either for characters to say their names:

> But I say more than all this, a play ought to be made with so much art, and the actors are to speak so, that it shall not be necessary to mark the distinction of the acts, nor scenes, nor so much as to put the names of those that speak, and to prove what I say, we need only to consider, that when an actor comes upon the stage, the poet does not come to tell

> his name, it must be known by himself, or some other of the actors […] (Ibid, p.53-4)

All necessary information should emerge organically from within the dialogue and action.

I have suggested earlier that one of the ways by which I was looking for indications of the appearance of elements of a theory of motivated action in poetics was by concentrating on the way theory enforced (or not) restrictions on the subjects of plays. I have claimed that whenever a treatise presupposed strongly delimited subjects, there were fewer grounds for establishing a theory of motivated actions. The uses and limitations of 'subject' are what next concerns d'Aubignac.

'Subject' is an inaccurate word in this context because it suggests a freedom in the choice of themes that did not exist in neoclassical theatre. What d'Aubignac means by 'subject' is in fact 'source' — the narrative materials in history, myth or religion from which a play can be created. The question for the neoclassical critic is not the ways by which a plot can be invented — the question is to know which sources can be used and to what extent they might be altered. This implies a work sequence in which raw materials are transformed into a play by the application of the rules of dramatic creation. There is an implicit understanding that the source is neither a comedy, nor a tragedy, nor a lyrical poem. It is up to the poet to create comedies or tragedies from the raw material in the source. [282]

For d'Aubignac the source must be altered in order for a dramatic effect to be achieved. The treatment of 'subjects' must follow general principles of proportion,[283] there should be variation (if the subject is too static a plot must be contrived); and the final result should be morally acceptable. The poet recreates what should have happened and not what happened — here taking the double sense of 'verisimilitude'

[282] "[…] that part of a *drama,* which the ancients call'd the *fable;* we, the story or romance; and I in this place, the subject: I will only say that for subjects merely invented, and of which one may as well make a tragedy as a comedy […]" (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.62)

[283] "If I am ask'd, what is the measure of employing those things? I shall answer, 'tis every ones natural judgment; and it may happen that a *drama* may be so luckily contriv'd, that the preparation of the Incidents, and the variety of the passions, shall correct the defect of the abundance of them […]"(Ibid, p.65)

(credible and true to moral).[284] It is not the case that the poet is free to alter the truth but that he must adapt the source to the rules of the art.[285]

The different kinds of subjects are three, admittedly acknowledging but not commenting on the Aristotelian division between complex and simple plots.[286] They are 'subjects of intrigue', characterized by a wealth of events, incidents and fast changes in the plot happening from scene to scene; 'subjects of passion', characterized by the portrayal of violent, extraordinary actions and great feeling; and the 'mixed subjects'. Each of these kinds of subject produces a specific reaction in the audience. The 'mixed subject' is the most versatile, according to d'Aubignac, since it is capable of allying a sense of surprise with great passions.[287]

This division is what is at the heart of one important neoclassical distinction. 'Subjects of intrigue' are typically the subjects of comedy, 'subjects of passion' are the subjects of tragedy, and the 'mixed subjects' are the subjects of the pastoral play (these are to d'Aubignac the three main paradigms). This is an important distinction because it foreshadows an important neoclassical nuance — the association of comedy with action and intrigue, and the association of tragedy with intense feeling.

D'Aubignac also touches one of the cornerstones of neoclassical doctrine and one of the instances in which digression from the classical rules is accepted. Whatever the playwright produces he must respect the *moeurs*:[288]

> We are not to forget here (and I think it one of the best observations that I have made upon this subject) that if the subject is not conformable to the customs and manners

[284] As it happens before d'Aubignac's claims to morality are composite. In this particular case the failure of Corneille's *Theodora* is attributed to its theme — prostitution. D'Aubignac makes repeated reference to decency and moral example.

[285] "For as the dramatic poet does not much mind the time, because he is no chronologist; no more does he, nor the epic poet, much mind the true story, because they are no historians; they take out of story so much as serves their turn, and change the rest; not expecting that anybody should be so ridiculous as to come to the theatres to be instructed in the truth of History." (Ibid, p.65)

[286] Complex plots have reversal and recognition, simple plots don't, as stated by Aristotle in chapter 10 of the Poetics.

[287] A few lines earlier d'Aubignac had defined the criteria for the choice of subject in similar lines. "The way therefore of choosing a subject, is to consider whether it be founded upon one of these three things; either upon noble passions, as *Mariamne* and the *Cid;* or upon an intricate and pleasing plot, as *Cleomedon,* or the *Disguis'd Prince;* or upon some extraordinary spectacle and show, as *Cyminda,* or the *Two Victims* […]*"* (Ibid, p.66)

[288] *Moeurs* is the term used in the French. As it happened with the 'vraisemblable' the English translator chose a composite term to render the complexity of *moeurs*, 'custom' and 'manners'. This translation is slightly equivocal because it suggests 'etiquette'. *Moeurs* has strong ethical implications 'Conduct' is a better modern alternative.

> [*moeurs*], as well as opinions of the spectators, it will never take, what pains soever the poet himself take, and whatsoever ornaments he employs to set his play off. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.69)

The characteristic of neoclassicism is not blind allegiance to the classical ideals but a mix of technical reverence with a sense of moral superiority. Greek tragedy dealt with infanticide, incest, and fratricide all of which were examples of unacceptable customs and manners for seventeenth century European morals. The neoclassical critic had difficulty in harmonizing a sense of awe for the Greek playwrights with the immorality of their themes. D'Aubignac's claim of moral specificity for each audience[289] does away with the problem of having to admit the inadequacy of the themes of Greek tragedy.

The problem then is to know what the criteria should be for the choice of subject. 'Truth', d'Aubignac argues, is not the subject of theatre — many terrible truths have happened that are too horrible to be the subject of a play, neither is it the 'possible' because what is possible may not necessarily be of interest.[290] The subject of theatre is the 'verisimilar'.[291]

In d'Aubignac 'truth to reality' has several senses. I have already mentioned one meaning of 'truth to reality' concerning the treatment of sources (truth to source), and I mentioned briefly the moral aspects and the relation of 'verisimilar' to reality. I want to specify further the relation of the 'verisimilar' to the real. The 'verisimilar' does not obey the rules of reality — it is not a matter of copying what can happen as it happens. It is reality that is, by chance, verisimilar, because the verisimilar is logically and ethically robust:

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[289] "Seventeenth-century poeticians admitted that the subjects of Greek tragedy were inappropriate for French audiences. There were at least two, related reasons for the difference in taste: the contrast between democratic and monarchical societies and differences in the type of audience emotion desired." (Lyons, 1995, p. 1135–1147)

[290] "'Tis possible that a man may dye suddenly, and that happens often; but that poet would be strangely laugh'd at, who to rid the stage of a troublesome rival, should make him dye of an apoplexy, as of a common disease; and it would need exceeding ingenious and artful preparations." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.75)

[291] D'Aubignac proposes not to deal with the traditional categories of 'extraordinary verisimilitude' and 'ordinary verisimilitude' because this has been already extensively discussed by other authors. Corneille will define 'extraordinary verismilitude' and 'ordinary versimilitude' as unusual actions and common or expected actions, respectively.

> The real is particular, defective in comparison with its paradigm, and lacking general validity. The verisimilar is ontologically and ideologically universal and, as a consequence, logically and morally exemplar. (Rohou, 2009, P.114)

In this sense 'verisimilitude' is idealized lifelikeness.

It is worth summarizing these three connected central aspects of neoclassical thought. *Vraisemblable* (verisimilar) is the central conceptual structure that guides all creation; *bienséance* (decorum) is the sense of what is socially acceptable; *moeurs* (manners)[292] refers to the character's ability to act ethically. *Moeurs*, though a possible rendering of the Greek *ethos*, is part of the complex system of verisimilitude. D'Aubignac makes no attempt to establish a hierarchy of dramatic elements, as in Aristotle, nor is there a preponderance of the *moeurs* over other aspects of the definition of character.

'Verisimilitude' will require adequateness of character traits and circumstance. Characters must speak according to social status, in relation to the space they are in. Earlier I have referred to the way d'Aubignac establishes absolute integrity of the world of the play and I have claimed that this integrity had a resemblance to the 'given circumstances' in Stanislavsky's System. The adequateness of character is an Aristotelian idea.[293] The insistence on reasons for actions linked with time, space and personal characteristics are an original aspect of the *Whole Art of the Stage*. D'Aubignac specifically mentions the "circumstances" and the "time" of the action:

> There is no action of human life so perfectly single, as not to be accompanied by many little circumstances, which do make it up; as are the time, the place, the person, the dignity, the designs, the means, and the reasons of the action. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.76)

[292] Or 'conduct' as I have suggested before. 'Verisimilar', 'decorum' and 'conduct' are so closely connected that they are sometimes used as synonyms.
[293] In Chapter 15 of the *Poetics*.

The only unity consensually attributed to Aristotle today is the unity of action.[294] D'Aubignac goes back to his fine art analogy to exemplify the need for 'unity of action':

> 'Tis certain, that the stage is but a picture or image of human life; and as a picture cannot show us at the same time two originals, and be an accomplished picture: It is likewise impossible that two actions, I mean principal ones, should be represented reasonably by one play. (Ibid, p.81)

'Unity of action' comes justified by the audience's capacity to apprehend a number of significant events. D'Aubignac does not mean that there should be no other actions in the play, he means there should be a hierarchy of actions — one main action to which all the others are connected by principles of necessity. Events taking place over a large period or in very different territories would extend far beyond what is acceptable for a theatrical representation thus forcing the playwright to superimpose episodes,[295] which, again, would hinder the reception of the play and offend the 'verisimilar'. The poet must therefore choose well each episode so that much of what happens before or after can be implied by the sequence of events. Any chosen event must have great dramatic potential and be so positioned in the narrative that it becomes possible to create new events from it:[296]

> Our poet therefore, amidst this vast extent, shall pitch upon someone remarkable action; and as one may say, a point of story, notable by the happiness or misfortune of some illustrious person, in which point he may comprehend, as circumstances, all the rest of the story, and by representing one chief part make the whole known by some sleight to the

[294] The reference to a unity of place in Aristotle's *Poetics* is not acknowledged in modern criticism. The unity of time is contested. Halliwell, Heath, Butcher (in fact all translators) agree that there is no certainty about what Aristotle meant when he mentions a 'revolution of the sun' as the time necessary for a tragedy — it s not clear whether Aristotle meant the fictional time or performance time.

[295] "[…] he cannot comprehend in it a whole history, or the life of an *hero,* because he would be necessitated to represent an infinite number of events, and employ a vast number of actors, and mingle so many things, that he would make up a work of perfect confusion, and would be forced in most places to offend against 'probability and decency' [verisimilitude], and to go beyond the time and extent, ordinarily allowed to dramatic poems; or if he would keep within the limits of the rules of his art, he would be forced to hasten all the incidents, and as it were heap them one upon another." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.83)

[296] A story that starts at the moment of the death of the main character will make further developments impossible.

> spectators, without multiplying the principal action. (Ibid, p.85–6)

In theatre as in life, d'Aubignac says, a central action is composed, preceded and followed by lesser actions. In chapter 3 of book II d'Aubignac suggests that all actions are connected to one central action in a structure of subordination:

> And indeed there is no one action of life so single, but it was preceded, accompanied, and followed by many others, all which do compose it, and give it its being: therefore the painter must, whether he will or no, draw these subordinate actions, or else his principal one is imperfect. (Ibid, p.85)

This is in appearance a description of 'unity of action' but it adds an important nuance. Aristotle, Horace and Vega suggested that other story lines might be a part of the same theme. What d'Aubignac seems to be saying is that one action is constituted of several smaller events. In the Method of Physical Actions actions are, in principle, infinitely divisible — the same main action is composed of several smaller scale events that are structurally similar to the central action. The objective of the character is fulfilled (or not) through a number of smaller actions implying specific objectives.

One consequence of the 'unity of action', as defined by d'Aubignac, is that action must evolve continuously at risk of losing narrative cohesion.[297] The hero of the play need not be necessarily the main character — the main character is he who sets the action in motion,[298] and the hero is some important or notable figure. Since there is a unity of action which requires the action of all characters to be unbroken, that initial motion must create in the audience a sense that the character's actions are underway, even if they are not on stage:

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[297] "That from the opening of the stage, to the very closing of the catastrophe, from the first actor, that appears upon the scene, to the last that goes off; the principal persons of the play must be always in action; and the theatre must carry continually, and without any interruption the face of some designs, expectations, passions, troubles, disquiets, and other such like agitations, which may keep the spectators in a belief, that the action of the theatre is not ceased, but still going on." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.89)

[298] "But when we say, that the chief persons in the play are always to be in action, we do not mean by that, the hero or heroine of the play, for they often act the least, and yet suffer the most in the whole business; for in regard to the continuity of the action, the principal actors are those who carry on the intrigue or business of the play, it may be a slave, a waiting woman, a cheat, or some such person" (Ibid, p.91)

> 'Tis for this that the best dramatic poets always use to make their actors say, where they are going, and what is their design, when they go off of the stage, that one may know, that they are not idle while they are absent, but are acting something of their part, though one sees them not. (Ibid, p.90-91)

D'Aubignac cared to define rules in which all actions evolve from the same narrative core and this is reinforced by the imposition of continuity of action.

The ancients were never worried with the problem of justifying absent action. D'Aubignac argues that the ancients could, so to say, solve the problem of absent action by simulating the passage of time with the chorus. The continuity of action is therefore seen, partly, as a consequence of the loss of the chorus. There are modern examples of plays with continuous action,[299] Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men* (1954), O'Neill's *Long day Journey into Night* (1956), or Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf* (1962). This is sometimes referred to as a 'closed space-time'[300] structure. What d'Aubignac does is to highlight the technical difficulty of establishing continuous action when there are no formal interruptions to the narrative.

D'Aubignac is thus faced with the problem of justifying double plots.[301] Double plots, he says, had been used in some French plays, in classical comedy, and, very rarely, in tragedy.[302] By double plot d'Aubignac means the development of two simultaneous lines of action. In the beginning of the *Cid* (1636) the Infanta is shown confiding her love for Don Rodrigue to Leonor. The confession starts a new line of action — a double plot.[303] The treatment of double plot is in fact an extension of d'Aubignac's treatment of 'unity of action' — there is no allowance for the development of a second equally important line of action, so the second plot must comply with the rules of subsidiary unified action. The characters in the second plot

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[299] But also in film the *plan-séquence* seems to have had much appeal. Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), Mike Figgis' *Time Code* (2000), and Alexander Sukurov's *Russian Ark* (2002).

[300] I have encountered this designation in Stephen Jeffreys' master class at RADA, Advances in Scriptwriting, in the year 2000. The term is also used by Pfister in *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (1988), p .249.

[301] He refers to double plot as subject with 'two walks' or 'episode'.

[302] "*Aristotle* makes no mention of it, and I know no example of it, except some will say that the *Orestes* of *Euripides* is of this kind, because there are two marriages concluded in the catastrophe" (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.94)

[303] The multiplicity of plots was one of the aspects criticized in the *Cid*, specifically in the actions concerning the Infanta.

must have some concrete interest in the main plot — the actions of all the characters must be of consequence for the lives of the heroes.[304] The whole of the play must follow the principle of integrity — that is, the play should be unintelligible if the second plot is removed.[305] Further, the passions of the second plot must emerge out of the events in the main plot and it is the catastrophe of the first that produces the catastrophe of the second.

There is one rule which confers a distinction between second plot and the idea of subsidiary action: the second plot should not have the same subject as the main plot.[306] The second plot is therefore not subsidiary action, in the sense that it is not a stage in the main action, but should contribute to the development of the main action. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) the death of Tybalt happens as a consequence of Romeo's refusal to take part in a duel. It is the death of Tybalt that causes the expulsion of Romeo. The duel scene is part of a secondary plot that contributes to the main plot.

The difference between subsidiary action and secondary plot is relevant for this thesis because it highlights a limitation to the attempted parallel between the Method of Physical Actions and poetics. Poetics necessarily deal with structures where there are several characters involved, each of which will perform actions. The Method of Physical Actions deals only with the actions of one character at a time. There is a sense in which the Method of Physical Actions cannot express the larger structure of the play.

'Unity of place' follows the same principles applied to unity of action and is the most regulated of the unities for d'Aubignac. The fact that 'unity of place' had never been suggested by Aristotle, together with the supposed conformity to it in most ancient tragedies, is used by d'Aubignac as an indication of its logical robustness.[307] D'Aubignac's interpretation of the rule is simple and all its applications logically derived. The set should represent a single space throughout.

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[304] "'tis necessary that the person engaged in the episode, be not only concern'd in the success of the affairs of the stage; but besides, the adventures of the hero or heroine ought to be of that concern to the persons of the episode" (Ibid, p.95)

[305] "That these episodes, or second stories be so incorporated into the chief subject, that they cannot be separated from it, without spoiling the whole play" (Ibid, p.95)

[306] "That the second story must not be equal in its subject, nor in its necessity, to that which is the foundation of the play, but it must be subordinate to it, and so depend upon it, that the events of the principal subject cause the passions of the episode" (Ibid, p.96)

[307] "Aristotle has said nothing of it, and I believe he omitted it, because that this rule was in his time too well known" (Ibid, p.98)

There is no verisimilar justification for radical changes of set if a unified single action is represented.[308] If any different spaces are shown they should be logically integrated in the initial space:

> So for example, he might feign a palace upon the sea side, forsaken, and left to be inhabited by poor fishermen; a prince landing, or being cast away there, might adorn it with all the rich furniture fit for it; after this by some accident it might be set on fire; and then behind it the sea might appear, upon which one might represent a sea fight; so that in all the five changes of the stage, the unity of place would still be ingeniously preserved. (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.101)

The integrity of spaces must be absolute. This means that the spaces chosen must be such that realistic entrances or exits are depicted or suggested[309] and that the distances suggested by the development of the actions can reasonably fit in the imagined space. Accordingly a character cannot leave the stage for a long trip and return in the same act. This has enormous impact in the kinds of plots — "[…] the *proscenium,* or floor of the stage, can represent nothing but some open place of an ordinary extent, where those, that are represented by the actors, might naturally be in the truth of the action" (Ibid, p.106) — that is the action must take place in a town.

The time allowed for a performance follows similar norms to the use of spaces. Time, action and place are interconnected. If a play takes place in a continuous space, and if the action is continuous, then time will be close to continuous too.[310]

D'Aubignac does not say exactly what the duration of the action of a tragedy should be. The ideal duration of tragedy had been discussed by several authors with reference to Aristotle as being either: a day; twenty four hours; or the time from

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[308] "[…] after the poet has order'd his subject according to the rules we have given, or it may be better, which his own Industry and study may furnish him with; he must reflect, that the best part of it must be represented by actors, which must be upon a stage fix'd and determinated; for to make his actors appear in different places, would render his play ridiculous, by the want of probability, which is to be the foundation of it." (Ibid, p.97)

[309] "[…] it must besides be a place suppos'd open in the reality, as it appears in the representation; for since the actors are suppos'd to go and come from one end of it to the other, there cannot be any solid body between, to hinder either their sight or motion" (Ibid, p.102)

[310] "But besides, the action of the stage is to be continued, and not interrupted or broken. Now that could not be in a play of twenty four hours; nature could not, without some rest, endure so long an action; since all that men can commonly do, is to be in action for the day time." (Ibid, p.116)

sunrise to sunset. D'Aubignac tends towards the last hypothesis, setting as a limit, established by the experience of the ancients:

> After all, we can never better understand *Aristotle,* than by those three excellent tragic poets, whom he always proposes for examples, who have regularly observed, not to give above 12 hours to their plays: and I do not think, that there are any of their works which do comprehend the whole space between the rising and setting of the sun. (Ibid, p.116)

The concentration of time and place has an obvious consequence — it forces the action of plays to start close to the catastrophe. If the catastrophe takes place in the third act then the first act must take place a maximum of twelve hours before that, "The choice being thus made, the next slight is, to open your stage, as near, as tis possible, to the catastrophe" (Ibid, p.118). The emphasis is on swiftness and necessity in the preparation of the action: events happen close to the dramatic apex, they generate other events that will inexorably take to the catastrophe. D'Aubignac says it is not that the catastrophe is predictable — it is that it cannot be avoided.[311] As in Aristotle, events must happen necessarily and probably (verisimilarly).

There is one aspect in which the Method of Physical Actions comes close to d'Aubignac's insistence on continuity and the inexorability of the catastrophe. 'Through action' and the 'superobjective' emphasize an internal sense of the continuity of the action. There is an 'imagined' continuous line in the life of the character (superobjective) and an 'imagined' continuous line for the action of the play (through action).

In Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1867) the 'through action' is the avoidance of social compromise that runs from Peer Gynt's abduction of Solveig, to his rejection of the Troll's society and then to his fraudulent activities of the coast of Morocco. Peer Gynt's 'superobjective' could be the anchoring of Peer Gynt's avoidance of compromise in his relation to his alcoholic father and in his family's poverty stricken past.

[311] "But the main thing to be remembered, is, that all that is said or done as a preparative or seed for things to come, must have so apparent a reason, and so powerful a colour to be said and done in that place, that it may seem to have been introduc'd only for that, and that it never give a hint to prevent those Incidents, which it is to prepare." (Ibid, p.129)

Many actors and directors working in the Method of Physical Action will not agree with my example and will define Peer Gynt's 'superobjective' and 'through action' differently. My point is not to discuss a specific interpretation of a text but merely to point out that 'through action' and the 'superobjective' (in the Method of Physical Actions) fulfil a similar function to 'unity of action' (in poetics).

D'Aubignac is using 'catastrophe' in its original sense, which is somewhat different from the modern usage.[312] He means by 'catastrophe' the end or resolution of a play, "[…] a sudden change of the first dispositions of the stage, and the return of events, which change all the appearances of the former intrigues, quite contrary to the expectation of the audience." (Ibid, p.131) The word needs to be freed of its connotation of terrible and pitiful events because d'Aubignac's definition of tragedy is not dependent on the kind of ending — there are in fact, for the neoclassical paradigm, tragedies with happy endings. 'Catastrophe' is a term applicable to comedy too. What defines 'catastrophe' for d'Aubignac is this: it is final, it happens towards the end of the play; it is inexorable;[313] necessary and probable events lead to it; it finishes the play conclusively so that the audience is left satisfied.[314]

The consequence of this is that genres cannot be classified by reference to catastrophe. The definition of 'tragicomedy' as tragedy with a happy ending makes no sense for d'Aubignac:

> I shall not absolutely fall out with this name [tragicomedy], but I shall show that it is at least superfluous, since the word tragedy signifies as well those plays that end in joy, as those that end in blood; provided still the adventures be of illustrious persons. (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.145)

D'Aubignac classifies the dramatic genres in accordance with the kinds of people and actions the dramatic poem imitates. The stage being "[…] a sensible and moving Image of all humane life […]"(Ibid, p.140) portrays either: great people, aristocracy, the court; the gentry in cities, or the countryside folk. These characters correspond to

[312] Catastrophe, (from the Greek *Katastrophê,* dénouement) is the last of the four parts that constitute Greek tragedy. This dramaturgical concept designates the moment the action comes to an end [...]" (Pavis, 2006, p.43)

[313] " […] 'tis the center of the poem, therefore all the other parts, like lines, cannot be drawn straight to any other point." (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.132)

[314] "The last rule is, that the *catastrophe* do entirely finish the *dramatic* poem, that is, that there be nothing left of what the spectators ought to know" (Ibid, p.133)

the three genres: tragedy, comedy and pastoral, respectively. Of the actions of tragedy[315] I have spoken — the actions imitated in comedy are "[…] Debaucheries of young people, with the tricks and acts of slaves and courtesans, full of railleries and jests, and ending in marriages, or some other pleasant adventure of common life […]" (Ibid, p.141) Further, the style of comedy must be "[…] low and mean […]" (Ibid, p.141) passion must be "[…] short, and without violence […]" (Ibid, p.141) and there should be no 'marvelous'.

The 'marvelous' is an important notion for neoclassicism — it had been referred to in Aristotle's *Poetics* as 'astonishment' and it refers to those exceptional actions in human life that are nevertheless in the domain of the real.[316] The important cleavage is then between extraordinary, intense and far-reaching events lived by important people — tragedy; opposed to petty, unimportant, short lived, convoluted incidents in the life of common folk — comedy.

In its origins 'pastoral' could still be divided between 'eclogue' and 'satirical tragedy', the first being a shorter version made to be recited by a man alone or a small group, and the second a stage version of the pastoral. They were similar in subject matter — both mixed the serious and the pleasant. In common they had also some characters: satyrs and heroes but the 'eclogue' tended to restrict itself to the rural universe. D'Aubignac argues that neoclassical 'satirical tragedy' is born out of the fusion of the ancient 'eclogues' with 'satirical tragedy' and the Roman mimes and interludes:

> These three sorts of poems are not now upon the stage, in the same manner as they were anciently; for to begin with *pastorals,* they are now a dramatic poem, according to the rules of all other *drama*'s, composed of five acts, and many agreeable events and intrigues, but all regarding a country life; so that we have borrowed the matter of the *eclogues* from the ancients, and applied it to the rules of *satirical tragedy.* (Ibid, p.143)

[315] The definition d'Aubignac attributes to Theophrastus is revealing of the neoclassical view of tragedy: "The state of heroic fortune." (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.140)
[316] There are fluctuations in the meaning of the 'marvelous', but I believe this is a fair definition. Jean Rohou adds "The critics retrieve this extreme category under the name of the 'marvelous'. It is what overtakes the soul with astonishment and pleasure". (Rohou, 2009, P.119)

The classification of genres is a lesser part of the argument. D'Aubignac's mainly asserts the uselessness of 'tragicomedy' as a designation for tragedies with happy catastrophes — a further highlighting of the definition of tragedy by its elevated subject, rather than by its end.[317]

In the context of this thesis I have been arguing that the excessive regulation of dramatic paradigms reduces the capacity to introduce variation in plot and in character. Such variations, I have been claiming, enable the creation of richer characters, opening the ground to a theory of motivated action.

D'Aubignac's argument is apparently a defense of canonical genres against the attack of tragicomedy but it is, in fact, much more. The rejection of the 'tragicomedy' designation does not imply the restriction of plot types to classical paradigms. D'Aubignac does not oppose variations in plot.

The neoclassicists had an interest in classification and regulation, but regulative activity was also accompanied by an interest in understanding the essence of each genre. D'Aubignac's theory of genres emphasizes the consequences of the fertility of theoretical discussion in the period. The discussion is so rich that it inevitably brings complexity to the conception of plots and character.

Aristotle had divided the tragedy into four quantitative parts: prologue; chorus; episode; and exodus. D'Aubignac contests this classification by discussing the logic of each conceptual division in relation to the whole. This is particularly relevant in discussing the prologue and the episode. D'Aubignac refers back to etymology and history as a means to illustrate his point.

A distinction between the prologues of comedies and the prologues of tragedies is made. Comedies have three kinds of prologues: prologues made for the interest of the poet; prologues made for the interest of the actors; and prologues made for the interest of the play, mixed with the interests of poets and actors.[318] The

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[317] "[…] let us not therefore affirm any longer, that this word Tragicomedy was us'd by the Ancients in our sense; for *Plautus* is the only one that has it, and that in a quite different sense from ours, who by that word do mean *a Dramatic Poem, of which the Subject is Heroic, and the End or Catastrophe happy;* and that indeed is a noble and agreeable sort of Tragedy much us'd by the Ancients." (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.149)

[318] "The first sort was of those which were made for the Interest of the Poet, either in answering the Invectives of his Adversaries, or in expounding his Proceeding in the Play. Many of this kind are to be found in *Plautus* and *Terence,* particularly in the last […] There were other *Prologues* that regarded the Interest of the *Comedians,* either to obtain the Judges or the Peoples Favour, or to bespeak their Attention. Such is that of the *Pseudolus* of *Plautus,* and some others. There are some likewise which make a Mixture of the Subject of the Play, with the Poets or Comedians Interest; and this was indeed

prologues introduce information which is not relevant to the development of the narrative, and they are delivered in a different mode — the actor breaks the mode of representation to address the audience directly. In all respects they break the integrity of the representation. The prologues of comedies are therefore external to the play.

In tragedy d'Aubignac defines three kinds of prologues: those which convey some relevant information happening prior to the beginning of the play; introductions to the text; and those in which some present or future information is conveyed. In the first case the prologue becomes external to the play because of the mode of delivery.[319] They are also undesirable "[…] because those things which precede the beginning of the Play, ought to be dexterously told in the Play, in different parts of it; and this *Aeschylus* and *Sophocles* always observe." (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.103-4) The two final kinds of prologue analyzed by d'Aubignac are defined by their position rather than their nature — Aristotle defined the prologue as that which comes before the first entrance of the chorus. Of these, there are prologues which contain information related to the play but not necessary to the unfolding of the tragedy,[320] and prologues in which the information is necessary for the tragedy.[321] The former are not integral to the play — they can be ignored without damaging the tragedy. The latter are in fact integral parts of the action of the play and, as such, they should be called episodes:

> My conclusion then is, that which is properly prologue, cannot be reckoned a part of the play; and that which is a part of the play can no more be named a prologue, than the other *episodes* that compose the play. (Ibid, p.106)

There are further consequences to this. The chorus, according to d'Aubignac, is the central element from which tragedy evolves. D'Aubignac does not claim greater

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the most ordinary one with *Plautus,* as appears in his *Captives,* his *Paenulus,* and his *Menechmes.*" (Ibid, p.102)

[319] "But it cannot be said, that these *Prologues* make a part of the *Tragedy;* first, because they are Discourses made to the Spectators, and by consequent, faulty, by mingling the Representation with the Theatral Action" (Ibid, p.103)

[320] "One of them did use to contain in three or four scenes made before the coming on of the *chorus,* some things which concern'd the theatral action, but which in truth were not necessary parts of the poem. We have two examples of this in the *Phoenicians,* and in the *Medaea* of *Euripides."* (Ibid, p.105)

[321] "The other sort of *prologue* plac'd before the *chorus,* contain'd not only such things as regarded the poem, but such also as were proper, and incorporated with its subject, making a true part of it […]" (Ibid, p.106)

significance for the chorus in contemporary drama, he merely acknowledges its importance in the origins of theatre.

The disappearance of the chorus is historically explained by the gradual affirmation of the characters in action as the central element in drama. Chorus is therefore paired with neoclassical musical interludes[322] as a form of act division. The exodus is treated symmetrically to the prologue — if nothing happens which reasonably needs to be explained by speeches external to the play then the exodus should be transformed into action. According to his view the prologue and exodus are the first and last acts of a tragedy. The quantitative parts are therefore: 'acts' and 'intervals' "[…] I therefore think that a dramatick poem can be properly said to have but two parts of quantity, to wit, *five acts subdivided into scenes, without any limited number;* and the *four intervals* of those acts." (Ibid, p.109)

The chorus was not used in neoclassical drama. D'Aubignac is not averse to its use — in fact he thinks that the disappearance of the chorus is but an historical contingency. D'Aubignac's perspective on the chorus is similar to Horace' — the chorus should be handled like a character, of which the presence can be plausibly justified, "The *chorus* is a troop of actors, representing the assembly or body of those persons who either were present, or probably might be so, upon that place or scene where the action is supposed to be transacted." (Ibid, p.109) Not only must the chorus have its presence justified but it must interfere with the affairs in the represented action.

Indirectly the chorus corroborates the rule of three unities. The unities of time and place entail a difficulty in moving a character very far geographically or temporally in the imagined circumstances of the representation. The basis for this is the idea that the audience would find it somewhat incongruous that a character should, for example, be in Spain in the first act and in France in the second. The acceptance of similar leaps for a large group is, d'Aubignac claims, even more problematic.[323] Finally, d'Aubignac claims the chorus to be the origin of another neoclassical rule which says that horrible deeds should not take place on stage, "The ancient poets seldom make any of their actors die upon the stage, because it was not

[322] "[…] for since the *Episode* contain'd all that was between the ancient *chorus*'s, and that our music with which we begin and end our plays is to us in the place of the ancient *chorus*'s […]" (Ibid p.109)
[323] "Moreover, we may here conclude, that the *chorus* oblig'd the poet insensibly to a necessity of keeping the unity of the scene; for since it was regularly to stay from the beginning of the *drama* to the end, without going out, 'tis most undoubted, that the place could not change […]" (Ibid, p.129)

probable, that so many persons as composed the *chorus,* should see such a thing done, and not endeavor to hinder it." (Ibid, p.128) What emerges from this treatment of the chorus is again confirmation of the neoclassical focus on action.

As an introduction to the structure and construction of episodes d'Aubignac begins by providing the historical background of tragedy. As with other authors I shall not discuss historical matters in detail. The one idea that is important to retain from the historical overview is that for d'Aubignac the 'episode' emerges as an element external to the core of the religious musical praises to Bachus that, he believes, are the origin of tragedy:[324]

> Tragedy at first was nothing but an hymn of the pagan religion, danc'd and sung by chorus's of music, I easily found the solution of all my difficulties; for 'tis most certain, that in that time, and for almost six hundred years after tragedy was represented only by the chorus, as Laertius has it, and had no actors, as Athenaeus truly affirms. (Ibid, p.112)

To an extent d'Aubignac's history of the development of drama implies a distancing from the original tragic paradigm, which would have had little action and would have consisted mostly of choruses. D'Aubignac calls that element which consists of the arrangement of the actions of the characters in a play an 'episode', "It being then agreed, that the *episodes* contain all that is between the *choruses,* that is to say, five acts, distinguished by five concerts of music […]" (Ibid, p.116). D'Aubignac is not saying that 'episode' and 'act' are synonyms.[325] What he is saying is that both designate forms of organization of the plot and that they obey the same rules of construction. An act is a kind of episode: the 'episode' is a generic designation that serves a number of forms; an 'act' is a specific designation for theatre.

The historical origin of 'acts' and 'episodes' is relevant for this thesis because it emphasizes once more the significance of action for d'Aubignac's dramatic theory. More importantly it opens the way for the discussion of the processes by which episodes can be created.

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[324] "Now it happening that by little and little the subjects that the poets took to praise *Bacchus,* being exhausted, they were forced to add little Stories or fables, which they handled merrily at first, in honour of *Bacchus."* (Ibid, p.110)

[325] D'Aubignac uses act, episode and play interchangeably, therefore suggesting transversal principles.

With the discussion of the work process d'Aubignac enters a truly prescriptive part in the *Whole Art of the Stage*. This takes the form of a number of recommendations which consider the use of subjects (source), the duration of the play, and the work process.

The most important recommendation concerns the ideal work sequence. This part is important because it specifies the amount of invention the poet is allowed, because it discriminates stages in the transformation of the source, and because it reiterates the need to establish the coherence of the world of the play.

The source will consist of a narrative containing a number of characters and events. D'Aubignac had already implied a sense of dramatic urgency when he referred to the proximity of the beginning of the action to the catastrophe.

The poet must therefore choose a moment within the narrative source which has some potential for development, by placing characters in situations that imply some tension or require some kind of resolution[326] — this is what is relevant to the choice of subject. D'Aubignac then specifies three stages in the process of organization of the source:

> After this, he must consider that which *Aristotle* says of *episodes;* for the dramatic poem has three things differing from each other, which are the *constitution of the fable or story, the composition of the tragedy,* which is properly, the disposing of the acts and scenes, and the *versification* or poetry. The constitution of the fable is the invention and order of the subject, whether from story, or received fables, or the imagination of the poet. (Ibid, p.75)

D'Aubignac is admitting that the 'constitution of the fable' can be an act of creation as is implied by 'the invention or ordering'. Apparently, this is contradictory to the definition of 'fable' as 'source'. 'Sources' are pre-existing materials taken from myth, history or religion used as the basis for the creation of the play. 'Sources' are in principle not alterable.

I have pointed out in the chapter dedicated to Aristotle the difficulty of attributing a fixed meaning to the word 'myth'. In the *Poetics* the problem, it seems, is due to the fact that Aristotle uses the word both as 'story originating in ancient

[326] "*Corneille* does so in his *Horatius;* he begins his Story just after the Truce agreed upon by both Armies, and the Combat of the three against three resolv'd upon for the decision of the Cause; then he furnishes his Stage with those passions which he draws from *Sabina*'s Marriage." (Ibid, p.76)

myth' and as the 'story of the play'. D'Aubignac seems to have been faced with a similar (but not equivalent) problem. When he uses the word 'fable' in isolation he means the foundational source from myth, history or religion (the pre-existing narrative elements). When he uses the expression 'constitution of the fable' he means the re-arrangement of the pre-existing narrative elements. The 'constitution of the fable' is an intermediate stage between the choice of the source and the construction of the plot. The creation and arrangement of the acts and scenes (the construction of the plot) is the 'composition of tragedy',[327] and 'versification', the last stage of the process, consists of the writing of the text.

The 'constitution of the fable' highlights a relevant aspect of d'Aubignac's theory. The existence of source material and the sequencing of acts and scenes are not sufficient for the creation of a play. The action of Sophocles' *Oedipus* is structured around a concentrated sequence of events concerning the discovery of the identity of the murder of Laius. The play takes place in front of Oedipus' palace at Thebes in an indefinite, but very short, time interval. This unfolding investigation is only possible because a number of events in the personal history of Oedipus are presupposed in the play. Those presupposed events include the abandonment of Oedipus, as a baby, in Mount Cythaeron, the pronouncement of the oracle at Delphi, and the killing of Laius. None of those events is shown in the play. The basic facts of Oedipus' story were taken from a variety of mythological sources but the arrangement of the story of Oedipus from birth to the beginning of the action of the play is Sophocles'. Those events are what d'Aubignac calls the 'constitution of the fable'. The action in *Oedipus*, from Oedipus' first address to the people of Thebes, outside the palace to the blinding, constitute the 'composition of the tragedy'. D'Aubignac is saying that the poet must create a coherent fictional world before he structures the acts and scenes.

The work process is therefore constituted of four stages: choice of subject, creation of the world of the play ('constitution of fable'), creation and arrangement of acts and scenes ('composition of the tragedy'), and writing up (versification).

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[327] "*The composition of the tragedy* is the disposition of the acts and scenes, that is, of the *episodes,* which are to be added to the constitution of the fable, to give it its just proportion, in which often consists the greatest beauty of the poem, as it is the greatest art of the poet; for the same subject, that is, the same constitution of fable, without altering the fund or the events, may have a disposition of acts and scenes so differing, that is, the *episodes* so diversely ordered, that there may be a very good, and a very bad tragedy made of it." (Ibid, p.76)

Unlike Aristotle, who stated that the actions happening outside the play were not subject to the same principles of construction,[328] d'Aubignac requires absolute consistency of the world of the play. All imagined events taking place before or after the play must respect the rules of art:

> I cannot consent that the poet should suppose any incidents against probability in those adventures which precede the action represented, because that they being a foundation for things which happen afterwards upon the stage, it breaks all the chain of events, it being against all order that a thing probable should be built upon an improbable one; and the poet is less to be excused in this, than in any thing; for the incidents which are before the opening of the stage, are in his power, whereas often in the sequel of the play the events constrain each other, and take away some of the author's liberty. (Ibid, p.76)

I have referred before to d'Aubignac's concern with the creation of the world of the play. I have compared d'Aubignac's plea for the creation of a self-sufficient autonomous universe — in which characters lived as if in the real world — to Stanislavsky's 'given circumstances'. The 'constitution of the fable' corroborates this idea. D'Aubignac is concerned with much more than the net of immediate events that support the action of the play, he requires that the remote events (not seen in the play) be consistent too.

The 'superobjective' is not equivalent to the 'constitution of the fable' because the 'superobjective' is the manifestation of some overarching life motivation of the character and the 'constitution of the fable' is the net of remote foundational events. But the 'constitution of the fable' is evocative of the 'superobjective' in the sense that it encompasses the larger scale of the dramatic structure.

D'Aubignac does not provide a definition of act. He seems to think that this is self-evident. The idea of five acts is imported from Horace but it takes a new function in neoclassicism as a control mechanism for the audience[329] by providing short musical interludes. D'Aubignac knows there was no act division in Greek tragedy but he claims that the natural number of acts (episodes) — if the prologue

[328] D'Aubignac is thinking of chapter 15 of the *Poetics* "There should be nothing irrational in the events; if there is, it should lie outside the play, as with Sophocle's *Oedipus*." (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p81)

[329] "This in it self may be true; but experience teaches, that mankind has not attention enough to support the reading of one entire play, without interruption: for even one act too long is a most insupportable trouble […]" (Ibid, p.82)

and exodus of the best Greek tragedies is counted — is five.[330] Acts are also a mechanism used to preserve unity. D'Aubignac had suggested that all that cannot be verisimilarly shown should be moved to intervals, "In a word, the most general precept is so to cast your subject, as to throw between the acts all that can be troublesome to the poet, or disagreeable to the spectators." (Ibid, p.79) More importantly the act division is instrumental in making complex narratives possible — I mean by this narratives which might involve breaks in continuity. D'Aubignac is aware of the impossibility of representing all that is happening in real time:

> Sometimes the beauty of an action lies in its beginning only, and then you must show the first strokes and preparations of it, and finish it in the intervals, and behind the stage: so we see that *Eteocles* and *Polinices* dispute their pretensions before their mother; but they do not fight and kill one another before her. (Ibid, p.79,80)

Following a short diversion through the etymology of 'scene' d'Aubignac provides his own definition, "[…] it signifies that part of an act which brings any change upon the stage, by the change of actors." (Ibid, p.87) There are reasons for the introduction of this definition. At least in one aspect the 'scene' is opposed to the 'act' — where the 'act' is a separate entity with specific rules that make it so,[331] the 'scenes' must be linked. D'Aubignac calls these links 'unions' and they can be of four kinds: 'union of time', the entrance of a character should follow quickly after another one leaves; 'union of search', a character comes in to look for another character; 'union of noise', a character comes in because he heard some noise; 'union of presence', patterns of entrance and/or exit.[332] The scene links are a formal imposition. They seem to be aimed at a sense of rhythm in the performance more than they concern the logic of the actions.

One consequence of the requirement of absolute verisimilitude is that it renders monologue difficult to justify dramatically. This is because a monologue

[330] As a result of the need to provide clear act divisions it is also desirable that the actor that closes an act should not start the following one. "That which I have said before, that the same actor ought not to finish one act, and begin the next, in strict regularity is true, because that the actor that goes off, is suppos'd to do it upon some important business, which requires some reasonable time, for the execution of it;" (Ibid, p.79,80)
[331] I mean the need to have a different actor starting each act.
[332] (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.89,90)

implies a disregard for whoever happens to be in the same fictional space. The rule is then to find the adequate circumstances of time, place and action which would make it likely for a character to deliver a monologue:

> […] to make them [monologues] so, as not to chock the probability of the circumstances of time & place: For example; It would be absurd to put a *monologue* in the mouth of a general of an army, who should be in the middle of a town just stormed by his army. (Ibid, p.59)

Likewise the actor should not merely inform the audience of a given fact — this would create the impression that the playwright is trying to convey some important information plainly. So again some justified emotion on the circumstances of the action should be found — "[…] something in the truth of the action that may be colourable to make him speak in that manner." (Ibid, p.58) Furthermore, he should speak in low volume, "[…] because it is not probable that a man by himself should speak so loud as players must do to be heard by the audience." (Ibid, p.58)

Much more difficult to justify, then, is the 'aside'. That characters should break the theatrical convention and speak to the audience as if they were not seen or heard by other characters is unacceptable to d'Aubignac:

> […] that an Actor shall speak loud enough to be heard by the audience, and yet not be over-heard by another actor who stands by him; and that which is worse is, that to feign he does not hear him, he is forced to make twenty ridiculous *grimaces*. (Ibid, p.61)

D'Aubignac's answer to the aside problem is then to make it disappear by making it possible. This implies making it very short,[333] being acknowledged, and being justified by the characters' circumstances.[334] That is: having the character 'realistically' go through a sudden exclamation that is perceived by his interlocutor.

[333] "[…] the best of all is an *a parte* [aside] of one word, because even in the nature of things, one word may slip from us […]" (Ibid, p.62)
[334] "For example; If a lover be to make a complaint in some solitary place, where another Lady comes to look something she has lost, I think the lover ought to be in some great ecstasy of grief to give the lady time to speak…" (Ibid, p.63)

'Stanzas' are interferences of the literary in the dramatic. Their interest is that they are a specific aspect of the literary form in neoclassical drama which, unlike the monologue and the aside, can be regarded as exclusively dramatic:

> In classical dramaturgy the stanza (in France, mostly between 1630 and 1660) are verses organized in regular strophes, characterized by constant rhythm and rhyme patterns. […] Stanzas are very demanding from the point of view of prosody, semantics and consonance. […] Their originality lies in the fact that stanzas are poems within the poem, and on the lyrical emphasis. Its dramatic function cannot be underestimated: they are the thoughts of a character that produces stanzas — his actions and decisions are determined by the rhetorical mechanism of the text. (Pavis, 2006, p. 338)[335]

This is why the stanza needs to be a more extreme exercise than the monologue — the stanza needs to fulfill one more condition: it needs to respect a given lyrical form and this in turn means it needs to be an utterance produced under special circumstances, "[…] the actor should have been away over an interval between acts, the least, so that one can imagine that being away he might have been busy pondering his happiness or unhappiness, thus composing some beautiful verses." (D'Aubignac, 1715, p.241) [336]

In short, d'Aubignac is rejecting all that contradicts the idea of characters in a tightly-built verisimilar situation. This is consistent with the principles I have been enumerating up to this moment. D'Aubignac's preference for the "[…] disposition of the acts and scenes […]", which he considered "[…] the greatest art of the poet […]" to other aspects such as the versification or the choice of subject,[337] suggests an understanding of action as the central element of drama. His interest in the establishment of the circumstances of the action, his plea for the creation of the world of the play and his insistence on the justification of the actions of the character seem to point in the direction of a theory of motivated actions.

There are two aspects of d'Aubignac's theory that stop short of becoming a theory of motivated actions. The first is that a theory of motivated actions

[335] [my translation],
[336] My translation from the 1715 French version. The 1684 English version does not translate the chapter on stance. Probably a late addition.
[337] Both quotes in (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.76)

presupposes that for each of the character's actions there is a strategy; the second is that, contrary to what seemed to be the case up to this moment, the most important element in d'Aubignac's theory is not action but discourse.

In the Method of Physical Actions the breaking down of actions into sub-actions presupposes adaptive sub-objectives. The character will have a main objective in the play, but this objective will not be accomplished if he does not fulfill a number of intermediate tasks. In order to fulfill his objectives and tasks the character will develop strategies. At each stage the character will encounter obstacles that he might or might not overcome and he will have to adapt his strategies to the changing circumstances. The action consists of the interplay of objectives with obstacles and, consequently, of the sequential application of strategies.

D'Aubignac's theory emphasizes the contextual aspects of plot: it establishes the circumstances of the action, it requires verisimilar reasons for actions, and it even mentions the emotions and motivations of characters,[338] but it does not see characters as agents applying a strategy to fulfill a given objective.

'Discourse' is, for d'Aubignac, a generic category that encompasses all the possible forms of verbal expression of the character. In agreement with what has been stated before d'Aubignac sees 'discourse' as a consequence of action, "[…] all discourses upon the stage are but the accessories of action, though the whole play in its representation consists in discourses." (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.11) D'Aubignac means by 'accessories of action' speeches that express some action of the spirit. A 'discourse' is the action of a character when placed in a given circumstance, "So we see that the narration of the death of *Hyppolitus* in *Seneca,* is rather the action of a man frightened by the monster that he saw come out of the sea, and at the sad adventure which befell *Hyppolitus."* (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.11)

The way in which an effect is produced in the spectator is through 'discourses'. It is not the representation of actions that moves the spectator but the production of suitable 'discourses':

> Thus he [the playwright] seeks always to make love, joy, hatred, grief, and the rest of our passions speak upon the

[338] "[...] some motive, colour, or apparent reason, for which it may appear that these shows or recitals did probably happen […]" (D'Aubignac, 1684a, p.39) D'Aubignac uses 'colour' to designate the emotions of the character.

> stage; and yet if we examine rightly this poem, the best part of the actions are but in the imagination of the spectator, to whom the poet by his art makes them as it were visible, though there be nothing sensible but the discourses. (Ibid, p.11)

This is coherent with the conception of comedy and tragedy as opposed genres — tragedy as the genre in which greater weight is put on the expression of great emotions, and comedy as the genre in which the greater emphasis is put on the construction of the incidents, "And indeed all the discourses of tragedy ought to be as the actions of those that appear upon the stage; for there to speak is to act […]"(Ibid, p.10–11)

In tragedy — the genre which most concerns the neoclassicists — what matters is effectively not what the character does but how well the 'discourses' express the character's predicament.

The third component of tragedy in Aristotle's *Poetics* was 'thought', by which Aristotle meant a capacity to persuade or demonstrate.[339] For Aristotle the character had a certain rhetorical ability, paired with the rhetorical qualities of the poem. D'Aubignac reverts to a similar idea. The dramatic poem and the character must be eloquent because they must eloquently portray emotional states.[340] In this respect d'Aubignac is similar to Aristotle — he seems to be saying the lyrical qualities of the poem are more important than the characters within.

D'Aubignac defines four possible types of discourse: narrations, deliberations, didactic discourses and pathetic discourses.

'Narration' refers simply to the parts of the action that must be told and d'Aubignac divides them into present and past,[341] meaning that they refer to events taking place either in the world of the play while the play is running or before the play starts. Narrations can be continuous or broken.[342] There can also be plain or

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[339] (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005, p.53)

[340] "[…] dramatic poetry is a kind of quintessence of all the precepts of eloquence that are found in authors […]" (D'Aubignac, 1684b, p.25)

[341] "These narrations which happen in a dramatic poem, do generally regard two sorts of things; either those which have happened before the opening of the Stage […]; or else they regard those things which happen off of the scene in the contexture of the theatral action […]" (Ibid, p.15)

[342] "[…] these narrations may be made in two manners; either all of a piece, where a story is told that is to give a foundation to all the plot of the play; […] Or else, these narrations are made by piece-meals, according as the poet thinks fit to hide or discover any part of his subject, to frame the different acts…" (Ibid, p.20)

pathetic narrations:[343] plain narrations are merely descriptive and pathetic narrations are emotionally charged.

'Deliberations' are moments in which the character reveals interior conflict. Considering the neoclassical centering of dramatic action on state issues,[344] deliberations become particularly relevant. The examples[345] provided by d'Aubignac are exclusively of this kind: "I only speak then of those deliberations which are made designedly, and are representations of the like consults made in courts upon some important affair." (Ibid, p.28)

D'Aubignac defines 'didactic discourses'[346] as instructive and truthful observations on the world. It is relevant to say they are observations because they cover a vast range from descriptions of the natural world[347] to moral maxims[348] — d'Aubignac is dealing mostly with the latter. In their nature 'didactic discourses' are contrary to drama — they are aimed at providing examples when the drama is aimed at exciting the passions.[349] This does not mean that d'Aubignac is unfavourable to a theatre for instruction,[350] it means simply that the ways by which the audience may be instructed must be dramatic — by way of demonstrative action:

> […] the action of the stage is so judiciously managed, that it shows the force of virtue triumphing in the midst of

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[343] "Narrations may besides be considered as simply and plainly telling the tale, or as exaggerating pathetically the circumstances of the adventure." (Ibid, p.21)

[344] Corneille's *Cid*, *Horace* (1640), Scudery's *La Mort de César* (1636), Racine's *Bérénice* (1670), *Phèdre* (1677) — are examples of plays dealing with state affairs.

[345] "We have two examples remarkable in *Corneille,* that in the play called *Cinna,* where *Augustus* deliberates whether he shall leave the empire or no; and the other in a play called *The Death of Pompey*, where King *Ptolomeus* deliberates what he shall do with so great a man, newly arrived in his Country […]" (Ibid, p.28)

[346] "I understand then by didactic discourses those maxims and general propositions which contain known truths, and are only apply'd in the play, according as the subject will allow, tending more to instruct the audience in the rules of morality, than to explain any part of the Intrigue a foot." (Ibid, p.32)

[347] "I call those physical or natural, which make a deduction or description of the nature, qualities, or effects of any thing without distinction, whether it be in the rank of natural or supernatural things; or of the number of artificial compounds." (Ibid, p.32)

[348] "Under the notion of moral discourses, I comprehend all those instructions which contain any maxim of religion, or politics, or economics, or that any ways regard humane life." (Ibid, p.32)

[349] "To come after this to my observations, we must lay it down as a maxim, that all these didactic discourses are of their own nature unfit for the stage, because they are cold, and without motion, being general things which only tend to Instruct the mind, but not to move the heart […]" (Ibid, p.32–3)

[350] Here it is vehemently restated, "'Tis thus principally that the stage ought to be instructive to the public by the knowledge of things represented; and I have always observ'd, that it is not agreeable to the audience, that a man who swerves from the way of virtue, should be set right, and repent, by the strength of precepts and sentences: We rather desire it should be by some adventure that presses him, and forces him to take up reasonable and virtuous sentiments." (Ibid, p.36

> persecutions, after which it is often happily rewarded; but if it is totally overwhelmed by them, it remains glorious even in its death. (Ibid, p.36)

By 'pathetic discourse' (passionate speeches) d'Aubignac means "[…] the passions, as they are placed in discourse" (Ibid, p.40). I have spoken about how d'Aubignac saw action as the creation of the ideal conditions for discourse: this is what he had in mind. 'Pathetic discourses' are, for d'Aubignac, the true essence of tragedy. Action is recognizably the element shared by all dramatic genres but the evocation of the great emotions of men is what is specific to tragedy.

The rules for the creation of 'pathetic discourses' are aligned with the general principles of dramatic creation. The cause of the 'pathetic discourse' must be true "[…] not only by the actor who speaks (who would be ridiculous to make a great discourse of grief or joy for a thing he should know to be false) but also by the spectators […]"(Ibid, p.40) The discourse must be 'necessary', by which d'Aubignac seems to be saying that it should be anticipated:[351]

> That a husband should be grieved for the loss of his wife, is so natural, that we need not be brought to the stage to see examples of it; but that *Herode* should first condemn his wife in a transport of rage, in spite of all the tender thoughts inspired by his love; it excites our curiosity to know what his thoughts are after such an action. (Ibid, p.43)

I have already referred to how 'verisimilarity' sought to harmonize the credible and the morally exemplar and this is valid for 'pathetic discourses' too. 'Pathetic discourses' will comprehend two scales of events: domestic, which will concern interpersonal affairs, and stately, which will concern politics and governance. For both, the character must have "sensible motives":[352] a sense of what a character could logically and morally expect.[353] One aspect of dissent from the ancients was political — the French considered their monarchy superior to Athenian democracy and so they necessarily rejected the kinds of themes present in Greek tragedy.

[351] (Ibid, p.43)
[352] (Ibid, p.43)
[353] "[…] a rival having sought his mistress only for her fortune, and not out of any inclination from his heart, should not complain of having lost her, it would produce no effect in the minds of the audience, his lamentations having no ground in nature or reason." (Ibid, p.44)

Accordingly the kind of emotions present in neoclassical tragedy should harmonise with the higher sense of justice of the French:

> For example, if an actor should express great affliction for not having been able to execute a conspiracy against a good prince, or some great piece of treachery against his country, he would be looked upon as a wicked, and not an unhappy person, and all that he could say would but increase the people's aversion to him […] (Ibid, p.44)

It was not only a matter of giving people moral instruction, as d'Aubignac suggests in the beginning of the *Whole Art of the Stage*, but a matter of keeping people interested. The audience, d'Aubignac claimed, would not be interested in immoral characters.

The object of d'Aubignac's discussion is initially the drama (all dramatic genres). When he speaks of pathetic discourses he is speaking specifically of tragedy. This is the reason why there is an apparent contradiction between d'Aubignac's initial emphasis on action and his later emphasis on pathetic discourse. D'Aubignac is not claiming tragedy as the most dramatic of the genres he is merely stating that tragedy is characterized by powerful emotional discourses. The action and the justification of the actions is still a major aspect of d'Aubignac's theoretical edifice, but, in tragedy, it is in discourse that the circumstances of action are manifest. Tragedy, in opposition to comedy or the pastoral, shares with lyrical poetry an interest in the power of the word and the construction of the text,

> […] if poetry is the kingdom of figures, the stage is its throne, from whence it conveys by appearances well managed by him that speaks, sentiments into the soul of the hearers, which are not really in his. (Ibid, p.51)

The establishment of rules for pathetic discourse closes the discussion of aspects of *The Whole Art of the Stage* which might have any bearing on this thesis. The final chapters of *The Whole Art of the Stage* are a project for the reestablishment of the French stage that discusses managerial and material aspects of production.

The Whole Art of the Stage is arguably the most important neoclassical treatise for its extension, dissemination and official recognition. Many other treatises had been produced in the mid 17th century, particularly in the aftermath of the 'Cid

'controversy'. La Mesnardiere's *La Poetique*, published in 1639, is an example of a moralistic Christian poetics;[354] Chapelain's *Les Sentiments de l'Academie Françoise sur la tragicomedy du Cid*, published in 1637, is an example of a specific response to the '*Cid* controversy'. *The Whole Art of the Stage*, in spite of its ambition to be a universal treatise, is still an answer to that controversy.

It is not important to discuss the 'Cid controversy' here. It matters only to recall that it consists of a heated discussion of Corneille's play, the *Cid,* after its performance in 1637; that this discussion took the form of a number of accusations and responses involving playwrights and critics; and that it was a humiliating affair for Corneille.[355]

Corneille took a much more liberal approach towards the definition of character and the use of sources, and he produced his own answer to what he considered the opinions of speculative critics such as d'Aubignac.[356] This response, called *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique*, was published in 1660 as preface to Corneille's complete works and constitutes an enunciation of poetic principles. The *Trois Discours* digresses from canonical neoclassical poetics in a few aspects which are relevant to this discussion.

Corneille significantly grounds his authority in experience — a poetics cannot be built by reference to ancient texts exclusively, it must explain contemporary production as well.[357] Like Lope de Vega, Corneille interprets audience reaction as a valid indication of what competent poetic models should be, though giving much more importance to classical authority than Lope had done. Corneille deliberately eschews a dialogue with his contemporaries to enter into what is, in appearance, a direct dialogue with Aristotle's *Poetics*.

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[354] (Dawson, 1954, p.132–140)

[355] I produce a detailed account of this controversy in **Appendix 2 — the search for Aristotle**, page 251.

[356] "The letter addressed by Corneille to l'abbé de Pure, on the 25th of August 1660, indicates that the playwright regarded the work of d'Aubignac as a challenge: to oppose the theoretical edifice of a "speculative" who dared to call his treatise *applied*, it mattered to produce a real applied poetics." (Corneille, 1999, p.19)

[357] "[...] their lectures [of the philosophers and grammarians] can make us knowledgeable, but it won't give us the lights to succeed. I shall try some of my opinions based on my fifty years of experience for the stage [...]" (Ibid, p.65)

Corneille's first assertion is that the sole aim of poetry is pleasure.[358] This comes as a strange claim considering what follows — the definition of the four 'aims' of the dramatic poem as: maxims;[359] representation of virtue and vice; poetic justice; catharsis. Maxims and 'poetic justice' are treated in orthodox neoclassical terms — 'poetic justice' is defined as the punishment of the vicious and the rewarding of virtue. Maxims, Corneille claims, must be included in the poem in a necessary way, as a result of the logical unfolding of an action — very much as had been held by d'Aubignac.[360] 'Pleasure and instruction' have been championed by many authors since Horace as the aim of dramatic poem. It is upon this idea of a connection between moral instruction and pleasure that Corneille is building his theory. What is specific to Corneille is that he sees the moral instructions and the technical instructions (poetics) as distinct aspects of the poem that need to be conceptually separated,

> [...] Because of this interest in the virtuous we were pushed in to finishing the poem in this way — punishing the vicious actions and rewarding the virtuous, which is not a precept of art but a practice we have adapted. (Corneille, 1999, p.70)

Up until *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique* moral instruction had been accepted uncritically as part of the technique of dramatic composition. The technique of the dramatic composition had been held as the means by which the poem was made pleasurable. For Corneille dramatic poems necessarily contain moral example but the pleasure of tragedy is created by the mastering of the technique of tragedy, independently of the moral teaching.

Building on Aristotle and his commentators, Corneille produces a definition of the components[361] of tragedy, in a hierarchy of importance from the most

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[358] This is justified by reference to Aristotle in the first lines, "Though it was stated by Aristotle that aim of tragedy is pleasure, and that indeed most dramatic poems do, I want to say that many a poems have not done so." (Ibid, p.63)

[359] What d'Aubignac had called 'didactic discourses'.

[360] "The first consists of general *sententia* [maxims] that can be scattered more or less everywhere in the poem; though they should be used parsimoniously, never in general speeches or to close to each other, and above all not by a passionate man [...]" (Ibid, p.66–7) The second: "In state deliberations, when an important man is questioned by a king, provides grave explanations, there is the place to extend a sentential [maxims], but alas, they should be reduced from thesis to hypothesis [...]" (Ibid, p.66–7)

[361] They are sometimes referred to as integral parts. I have kept the same designation used in the chapter on Aristotle.

technical to the non-technical (from the poetic to the spectacular): subject, conduct (*moeurs*), feelings, diction, music and spectacle.[362] These are the standard definitions the neoclassicists had inferred from Aristotle. 'Character' in Aristotle had been classified as being: good, convenient, similar and like.[363] 'Convenient' and 'similar' are presented by Corneille rather traditionally as synonyms of 'appropriate' and 'constant'. It is essentially 'good' and 'like' that are of interest to Corneille, because these two aspects will have implications on the kinds of character allowed in plays and on impact on the audience.

'Good' had generally been interpreted by neoclassical critics as 'virtuous', in line with the moralizing reading of Aristotle. It is in opposition to this that Corneille advances an alternative interpretation.[364] Unlike his contemporaries Corneille does not consider the moral virtue of the hero a distinctive aspect of tragedy, "[...] if I am allowed some conjecturing, then I believe Aristotle meant the elevated character of habits that can be both virtuous or criminal." (Ibid, p.78).

I have spoken earlier of the difficulty neoclassicists had in creating interesting plots that were at the same time morally exemplar. The compulsion to always portray characters that were morally good greatly limited the plots. Neoclassicism had rejected the representation of the Greek myths because their actions were considered immoral. Corneille argues that moral example can subsist even if immoral characters are portrayed. This is why Corneille separated technique and morals — so that non-virtuous characters could be introduced in plays. To Corneille characters like Medea (who kills her own children), or Oedipus (who kills his own father), were acceptable. The neoclassical understanding of character is much richer than Aristotle's. There is no sense of one aspect of character (*ethos*) prevailing over every other attribute. All aspects related to the moral constitution of the character are determined by the *vraisemblable/biensèances/moeurs* triangle. Corneille is using the hierarchy of the components of tragedy to do away with the idea of the *moeurs*. He is in fact saying that the *moeurs* have no place in the poetics (technique) of drama.

'Likeness' is understood by Corneille rather traditionally. It fulfills a clear function — the emotion of the audience relies on the identification with the

[362] In Aristotle's *Poetics*: plot; the moral inclinations of the character (*ethos*); thought; language; music; spectacle.
[363] This is Corneille's description in page 78 (1999).
[364] "I cannot understand how the idea of 'goodness' was understood as 'virtuous' [...]" and he goes over a few examples, quoting Horace. (Ibid, p.78)

character. The audience is supposed to feel pity for a similar person, and fear for a comparable destiny.[365] The character must in some way be 'like' the spectator.

Corneille identifies 'pity' in classical drama and in his own plays but he does not think fear occurs in every play. He fails to understand in what sense the audience may fear a similar destiny to that of Rodrigue in the *Cid*.[366]

I have suggested earlier that the imposition of moral example was a way in which the critics had limited a richer understanding of character and, as a consequence, a richer relation between the definition of the character, their motivations and their actions. Corneille still sees drama as moral example but he believes that moral example can be evoked by a combination of the totality of the plot and by the interaction of characters rather than by morally exemplar characters alone.

Tragedy and comedy are distinguished in Corneille by the nature of the action. The actions of tragedy are elevated: state affairs, revenge; or ambition.[367] Comedies deal mainly with love intrigues.

The kinds of actions must, in agreement with neoclassical thought, respect the unities.[368] Corneille's definition of 'unity of action' is orthodox — the subordination of actions to one main line of narrative, as for d'Aubignac,[369] but Corneille adds two new kinds of unity to the definition of tragedy and comedy — 'unity of peril' and

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[365] "Pity for the unhappiness in which those like us have fallen takes us to fear a similar destiny for ourselves; such fear will take us to desire an avoidance of that fear; and that desire to purge, moderate, rectify, or even eradicate in us the passions responsible, before our eyes, for the unhappiness of those we pity, for that common and indubitable reasoning that says that to avoid the effect one must remove the cause." (Ibid, p.96)

[366] Catharsis is not relevant for this discussion. What is implied by Corneille's discussion of pity and fear is a rejection of catharsis as it had been defined by neoclassicists with reference to Aristotle. "But I know not if [pity] can produce such [fear] or if it [the bad luck that causes their unhappiness] purges anything, I fear Aristotle's reasoning on this particular point is but a beautiful idea, which has no effect in reality. I am referring to those that watched the play [the *Cid*]: they can look into their own hearts, question all that they love in the theatre, to know if they were taken to that conscious fear, and if it has in any way rectified any of their passions." (Ibid, p.46)

[367] "As soon as we have on stage a simple love intrigue involving royalty, in which neither the characters nor the state are in danger, then I don't think that in spite of the characters being illustruos the action is not so as to call it a tragedy. Its dignity requires some great state matter, or some passion nobler or more masculine than love, such as revenge or ambition and offer fears greater than the loss of a lover." (Ibid, p.72)

[368] "[...] to find the specific pleasure of poetry, and give it to audience, one must follow the rules." (Ibid, p.63)

[369] "Secondly, unity of action does not mean that tragedy should only show one action on stage. The chosen action must have a beginning, a middle and an end; and those parts too are actions add up to the main action, but they can in addition contain other action in the same relation of subordination." (Ibid, p.133)

‘unity of intrigue’ respectively. Tragedy is defined by the kinds of danger the actions entail — what Corneille calls ‘unity of peril’:

> [...] if there is no life threatening danger, state loss, or banishment, then I think the poem can't be classified higher than comedy; but in order to answer to the status of characters of whose action are represented I must add the epithet of 'heroic'. (Ibid, p.73)

For comedy Corneille advances a similar concept, “[…] unity of intrigue, or obstacles to the intentions of the first characters” (Ibid, p.133). ‘Unity of action’ is therefore closely related to the idea of opposition to the characters’ intentions.

I have spoken previously about the neoclassical belief that comedy was the territory of intrigue and tragedy the territory of pathetic discourse (passionate speech). Opposition to the character’s intents is directly manifest in comedy as ‘obstacle’ and in tragedy as ‘peril’. ‘Obstacles’ and ‘perils’ are similar notions in that they imply a reassessment of the character’s position in the play. ‘Obstacles’ will lead to new actions; ‘perils’ will call for the verbal expression of the emotional tension of the character. Both will imply a reaction (either in action or in emotional response) and in both cases the character is faced with some kind of obstacle.

The actor working under the Method of Physical Actions will be familiar with ‘obstacles’. Within this method the character is not only working towards a determinate end but he will see his action frustrated by opposing forces. These will be obstacles of varied nature: other characters; social forces; personal limitations; natural forces. The kind of obstacle with which the character is faced is not relevant, what is relevant is that the character is taken to reinvent his strategy. This is exactly the sense Corneille is giving to ‘peril’ and ‘obstacle’:

> Several perils and several obstacles may coexist in the same tragedy or comedy, as long as such perils and obstacles are the cause of one another. The end of a peril is not the end of the action, because one peril will attract another. Likewise the overcoming of an obstacle will not send the actors to rest — an obstacle will interweave into another. (Ibid, p.133)

Corneille defines ‘verisimilar’ as “[…] something which is manifestly possible within the principles of decorum and which is not manifestly true or manifestly

false." (Ibid, P.124) He defines four kinds of verisimilar: the 'general verisimilar' what is reasonably expectable from any king or prince (in behaviour); the 'particular verisimilar', this is what can be attributed to a particular king or prince (known historical or mythical characters);[370] the 'ordinary verisimilar', a common or expected action; the 'extraordinary verisimilar', unusual actions of the sort that can be found in bloody tragedies.[371]

D'Aubignac and the conservative critics had rejected extreme plots (such as *Medea* or *Oedipus*). Corneille is opposing this idea. He is once again referring back to his practice to say that what is of significance for the audiences is what is convincing — to conclude that something which has a supposed origin in history[372] is convincing. One of the accusations against the *Cid* was precisely the amorality of the characters — Chimène in particular who is supposed to marry the killer of her own father. Corneille seems to be affirming the value of history (assuming the *Cid* is historically based) over verisimilitude:

> It is not verisimilar that Medea should kill her own children, that Clytmenestra assassinates her husband, or that Orestes stabs his mother: but history tells it, and the representation of those great crimes meets no incredulity. (Ibid, p.P.64)

Contrary to d'Aubignac who had used the 'verisimilar' as a logically robust superlative principle of ideal likeness to the sources and to reality with moral implications, Corneille uses the 'verisimilar' as a category of the 'credible'. Corneille sees in the real — what is accepted as having been real or what originated in myth — the ultimate form of the credible.[373] What matters for Corneille is the possibility of conjugating the different kinds of verisimilar (to history, to morals) with the 'credible' in view, and not a strict obedience to an abstract verisimilar. For this reason Corneille thinks the greatest kinds of subject are the ones that mix history and invention. The supreme poetic exercise is to make historical events emerge from invented actions.

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[370] (Ibid, p.P.125)
[371] (Ibid, p.P.127)
[372] As in d'Aubignac 'history' may refer to any source: historical; mythical or religious.
[373] "The real is but a guarantee of verisimilitude for the unusual subjects. The organizing element of fiction is the credible. Considering great subjects go beyond the ordinary verisimilar, they need some form of validation, at risk of being rejected by the public for being incredible. From this point of view, truth — history — constitutes a superior form of authenticity." (Ibid, p.51)

The most striking aspect of 17th century French poetics is the concomitant appearance of regulative activity and theoretical speculation. The three poetic treatises I mentioned were published between 1635 and 1657 by official appointment of Cardinal Richelieu[374] and the period is marked by a general consensus in what concerns morals and the significance of Aristotle teachings. There is a strong moral bias manifest in character (through *moeurs*); in the plots of plays; and in verisimilitude to morals.

The regulative and moralistic tendencies are counterbalanced by the outcomes of the unparalleled theoretical sophistication of dramaturgical discussion. D'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* and Corneille's *Trois Discours* are a good example of these contradictory tendencies.

Earlier, I suggested that complex theories of character remained undeveloped in the poetics of drama because of excessive regulation and moral impositions. This was the case in Aristotle with the recreation of myth and a consequent inattention to character, in Horace with the imposition of moral teaching, and in Lope de Vega by recourse to stock characters. I have also argued that these same treatises hinted at aspects of motivation in character by trying to bring about new paradigms of play outside the tragedy/comedy dichotomy, and by establishing principles of coherence in plot and character.

D'Aubignac enlarged this latter field. His development of the unities of action, space and time imposes the creation of the circumstances of the characters immediately before the play takes place evoking the Method of Physical Actions and the creation of 'given circumstances'.

In addition to this d'Aubignac developed a 'middle instance' between the narrative source and the play that he called 'constitution of the fable'. This 'middle instance' effectively constitutes the totality of the 'world of the play'. Throughout neoclassicism, authors had insisted on absolute coherence of the plot. The creation of the 'constitution of the fable' requires, in addition, absolute coherence inside and beyond the 'world of the play'. Playwrights are asked to build tightly justified sequences of actions that extend to the immediate and remote pasts of the characters.

[374] Chapelain's *Les Sentiments de l'Academie Françoise sur la tragicomedy du* Cid; La Mesnardière's *La Poetique*; and d'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage*

This absolute coherence (of plot and fictional world) evokes the creation of 'superobjectives', and 'through-action' as defined in the Method of Physical Actions.

Corneille makes even more daring claims. He opens the field to new and more extreme narratives by rejecting the imposition of an abstract and moralistic 'verisimilar'. He frees the main characters from having to be a moral example.

Most importantly he creates two new unities: 'unity of intrigue' and 'unity of peril'. These two unities describe the fine texture of theatrical action in a similar way to the 'objectives' and 'obstacles' in the Method of Physical Actions. 'Perils' and 'intrigue' interweave in a sequence of obstacles the character needs to overcome. In tragedy the character reacts by producing passionate discourses, in comedy by redirecting his actions.

Together, *The Whole Art of the Stage* and *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique* open the field for the construction of complex fictional universes. They are still bound by moralistic forces and by the period's dichotomy between the two major genres, tragedy and comedy. In spite of their interest in the action of the characters, neoclassical poetics regard the prevalence of action as the territory of comedy. Tragedy is still characterized by the power of text. The action that justifies such texts must be created according to the rules but what really defines tragedy is the power of speech. In the years that follow poetics will try to merge the two genres.

Chapter nine: eighteenth century poetics

Diderot's *Entretien sur le Fils Naturel* and *De la Poesie Dramatique*

> At first sight the eighteenth century appears to be the least interesting and significant period of theatre history since the middle ages. Some histories of the theatre simply omit it, while others treat it as some kind of connecting corridor from the splendours of the Renaissance to the innovation of the nineteenth century. (Holland and Patterson, 2001, 'Eighteenth-Century Theatre'. In *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*, p.255)

The original early Greek dramatic genres were tragedy, the satyr play and comedy.[375] These genres were defined initially by the kinds of character, language and by their ending. There is only one surviving satyr play: Euripides' *Cyclops*[376] (c.408 B.C.) Satyr plays are said to incorporate elements of tragedy and of comedy — they are based on myth, there is a chorus — but they seem to have been much shorter, and the treatment of the themes lighter.[377] They evoke a rural atmosphere and are typically set amongst satyrs. It is not clear to what extent the subsequent genres — the pastoral play and the tragicomedy — are indebted to satyr drama. Tragicomedy, as championed by Guarini,[378] is a rural drama that mixes elements of tragedy and comedy in order to create a new genre,

> But to conclude once and for all that which was my first intention to show, I say that to a question on the end of tragicomedy I shall answer that it is to imitate with the resources of the stage an action that is feigned and in which are mingled all the tragic and comic parts that can coexist in verisimilitude and decorum, properly arranged in a single

[375] Satyr plays were presented with tragedies, during the *agon*, the theatrical competition in honor of Dionysus.
[376] There are extracts also of Sophocles *Trackers*. (Easterling, 1999, p.44)
[377] Haigh describes *Cyclops* thus "The play has no direct parallel in modern literature. The combination of lively and serious incident recalls, it is true, the mixed character of Elizabethan drama; and the vein of fancy has much in common with the pastoral plays of the Italians, and the romantic comedies of Shakespeare. But the extravagant license of the satyrs is a unique and peculiar feature which differentiates the Cyclops from all other existing dramas, and places it in a class by itself as a solitary relic of remote antiquity." (Haigh, 1986, p.316–17)
[378] Guarini wrote what is presumably the first tragicomedy, *Il Pastor Fido*. He produced, in addition, an articulate defense of tragicomedy in *Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry*.

> dramatic form, with the end of purging with pleasure the sadness of the hearers. (Guarini, 1599, p.133–4)

What is clear is that the satyr play, the pastoral, and tragicomedy share some of the following characteristics, if not all: the setting of the action in the rural world; the mixing of characters of different status; and the possibility of having happy endings for what were traditionally tragic themes. As has been discussed in the chapter dedicated to d'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage*, the issue of the correct definition of genres and the changes allowed within those genres, was central to dramatic theory. D'Aubignac, and indeed other neoclassical writers, had fiercely refused the need for the 'tragicomedy' designation in favor of a more flexible view of tragedy. D'Aubignac's definition considered exclusively the status of the character and the kinds of events in the play and not the unfortunate ending — what mattered for that author was the 'state of heroic fortune'. Corneille added to the idea of flexible ending for tragedy a new unity — the 'unity of peril', that would shape the kinds of plots allowed, but not the kinds of endings.

What I am trying to say is that independently of what is accepted as the true genesis of the genres and regardless of which particular theory one might agree with, what seems unquestionable is that there has always been a discussion around 'intermediate genres'.[379] I am not saying genres were not defined in practice; I am saying that in theory there was an ongoing discussion outside the stronger tragedy versus comedy opposition and, indeed, a will to validate intermediate genres.

Earlier I have argued that the existence of intermediate genres was an important step in the creation of new plots — the playwright, working outside the common mythical sources and allowed to mix characters and endings would, in principle, be able to create increasingly complex characters. I have argued, also, that this increasing complexity was a step in the establishment of a relationship between the character's actions and their motivations.

As with the tragicomedy, the pastoral and the satyr play, Diderot's plays came to challenge traditional genre definitions. In spite of the apparent weakness of eighteenth century drama, when compared to the ancient Greek or the Elizabethan

[379] I am using the expression 'intermediate genre' in a self explanatory way. Diderot himself uses the expression intermediate "[…] and there is between tragedy and comedy an intermediate genre […]", (Diderot, 1875, p.145)

output, it can be argued that it is in fact in this period that modern drama emerges. I am not in any sense claiming this as an original thought: the idea that Beaumarchais and Diderot are the creators of bourgeois drama is consensual.[380] What I am trying to do is to frame Diderot within the larger picture of the 'intermediate genre' discussion. It is important to understand how bourgeois drama is defined by his champions, in what sense it builds on any of the preceding theories, and to what extent it produces new elements for a theory of motivated actions.

Bourgeois drama (or 'serious drama') is clearly placed outside the boundaries of the two traditional categories and this is one of the reasons why Diderot's plays and essays are interesting for this thesis.

Another reason is that Diderot thought there was a need for a specific poetics of the bourgeois drama[381] — and he consistently tried to synthesize and note down his ideas about the new genre by a mix of theory and practical demonstration.

I have concentrated on two of his plays *Le Fils Naturel* (1757) and *Le Pere de Famille* (1758), and the accompanying theoretical work *Entretien sur le Fils Naturel* and *De la Poesie Dramatique*. *Le Fils Naturel* was the first of the plays to be published. It was accompanied by the *Entretien sur le Fils Naturel*,[382] an essay in which Diderot attempted a poetics of the 'serious drama'. *Le Pere de Famille* was published with the complementary essay, *De la Poesie*, which explained the construction of the play and supplemented the *Entretien*. The two essays are deliberately designed as elements of the same theory. Both plays attempt to illustrate the full scope of that theory. For these reasons I have discussed both treatises, *Entretien sur le Fils Naturel* and *De la Poesie Dramatique*, as a single poetics. I have also referred heavily to the plays.

There are some unusual elements in *Entretien sur Le Fils Naturel* that need to be explained. The *Entretien* is a discussion between Diderot himself, and Dorval, the (imagined) author of *Le Fils Naturel*. Dorval is also the main character in *Le Fils Naturel* and the facts that are the basis for that play are presented in *Entretien* as real events having taken place in the life of Dorval. This is important because it puts Dorval in a triple condition: he lived the events; he organised and transformed the

[380] Beaumarchais' theory is derived from Diderot's, and his two comedies, *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, are considered fine examples of serious comedy. (Clark, 1965, p.252)
[381] "There are hundreds of poetics for the comic genre and for the tragic genre. The serious genre has its own poetics too […]" (Diderot, 1875, p.137)
[382] I will sometimes refer to the *Entretien sur le Fils Naturel* as *Entretien.*

events according to the rules of art; he discusses the rules of art. Diderot appears as 'Moi' (myself). The *Entretien* is therefore a discussion between Diderot (as Dorval) and Diderot (as Moi).

De la Poesie is presented in a mixed style integrating reported speech, dialogue quotes and opinion. *Entretien* is presented almost exclusively in dialogue. There is a tradition of philosophical essays presented in dialogical form which Diderot might have felt inclined to follow.[383] It is therefore not surprising that the *Entretien* and *De la Poesie* resort so heavily to dialogue.

Diderot survived well as a philosopher but his plays are hardly performed today. Bourgeois drama cannot be said to have had enduring social significance by force of its themes. It is precisely the themes of eighteenth century bourgeois drama that make it difficult to stage today. In *Pere de Famille* a young well-to-do man, falls in love with a poor girl. Throughout the play this is shown as an objectively unacceptable union and it is only through the discovery that she was the lost child of an upper-class family that a marriage becomes acceptable. The overarching theme is the conduct of the son towards paternal authority. *In Fils Naturel* the theme is honourable conduct too. The play concerns the behaviour of Dorval, a young man that falls in love with Rosalie, the fiancée of his best friend, Clairville. Dorval's love is reciprocated and he is shown resisting his feelings with stoic determination. In both plays the resolution is given by quick identity reversal — there is no need to convey psychological consistency: in *Fils Naturel*, Rosalie is shown to be the sister of Dorval in a final recognition scene; in *Pere de Famille* the acceptance of Sophie as a socially acceptable person is abrupt too. The themes of the plays are outmoded and there are quick changes in the action that are reminiscent of neoclassical or Elizabethan plays. In style the plays are modern — as scene II, of *Le Fils Naturel* shows. The scene is between Dorval and his valet, Charles, as Dorval announces his intention to leave the house of his friend Clairville:

> Act I, Scene II
>
> [Charles thinks his master is asking for his hat and sword.
> He brings them and puts them on a sofa.]

[383] Plato's *Republic*, Cicero's *On the Orator* (55 B.C.) and, in France, *Dialogue des Morts* (1683) by Fenélon and Fontanelle.

> Charles: Do you need anything else sir?
>
> Dorval: Get the carriage and the horses ready.
>
> Charles: What, sir… are we leaving?
>
> Dorval: Straight away. [He is collecting papers and books, so as to pack them.]
>
> Charles: But sir, everyone else is sleeping.
>
> Dorval: I shall see no one.
>
> Charles: What!
>
> Dorval: We must.
>
> Charles: But sir.
>
> Dorval: [Turning towards Charles, sad and overwhelmed.] So it is! Charles.
>
> Charles: Having been so welcomed in this house. Cherished by everyone and now leaving without a word. I must protest sir…
>
> Dorval: I understand everything Charles, but I must leave.[384] (Diderot, 1875, p.24–5)

The style is evocative of modern writing. Not only is the dialogue written in prose but its rhythm is quick and emulates domestic conversation,[385] very diverse from the 'deliberations', the monologues, the 'pathetic discourses' championed by d'Aubignac. For Diderot verse plays were ill suited for the new genre. Verse was instrumental for the space of Greek tragedy, for musical accompaniment, for neoclassical French tragedy, with its emphasis on text and declamation,[386] but it was not suited for the theatre Diderot wanted to implement. Regular comedy had dealt

[384] My translation.
[385] Clearly Diderot thought prose was going to be the next big thing. "The English have the prose tragedies, *The London Merchant* and the *Gamester*. Shakespeare tragedies are half written in prose half in verse. The first poet that made us laugh with prose invented comedy in prose. The first poet to make us cry with prose will have introduced prose tragedy." (Diderot, 1875, p.120)
[386] "Isn't it likely that the great number of spectators, above which the voice of the actor had to be heard in spite of the excited muttering, forced the elevation of the voice, the separation of the syllables, the holding of pronunciation, and versification useful?" (Ibid, p.123)

with vice and ridicule, regular tragedy staged the unhappiness of great men[387] — there remained a space for the domestic:

> I think that those actions being the most common in life, and the genre that imitates such actions should be the most useful and the most disseminated. I would call that genre the 'serious genre'. Once this new genre is established, there will be no circumstances in society, no important actions in life, that we cannot relate to the dramatic system. (Ibid, p.135)

Diderot wanted to portray the intermediate reality: the life of common men. Lope de Vega and the neoclassicists had tried to establish forms of tragicomedy (the *comedia* and tragedies with a happy ending); Guarini had created a tragicomedy, *Il Pastor Fido* (1595), and consistently theorized about tragicomedy, but they had all relied on existing character paradigms. Diderot was the first author to attempt a redefinition of genres by the creation of new characters. The portrayal of reality — of the reality Diderot came to think represented the intermediate universe, included any kind of character, men of any social background,[388] "Philosopher, merchant, politician, citizen, judge […]" as well as all degrees of kinship "[…] brother, sister, husband […]" (Ibid, p.151)

Fils Naturel and the *Pere de Famille* are described by Diderot as examples of tendencies within 'serious drama'. *Le fils Naturel* was classified by Diderot as a 'domestic tragedy' and *Le Pere de Famille* as a 'serious comedy',

> With *Fils Naturel* I tried to produce the idea of a drama somewhere in between tragedy and comedy. With the present play, *Le Pere de Famille*, something between the serious genre of the *Fils Naturel* and comedy. (Diderot, 1758, p.4)

Diderot does not provide an explanation on why *Le Pere de Famille* should be considered a comedy and *Le Fils Naturel* a tragedy. The explanation for this is probably in the fact that *Fils Naturel* moves inexorably towards irresolution: by the end of the play when Dorval and Rosalie discover they are brother and sister they are

[387] "The object of tragedy [regular tragedy] is public catastrophe & the unhappiness of great men." (Diderot, 1758, p.4)
[388] "Each of us has his own position in society; but we are concerned with men of all social positions." (Diderot, 1875, p.151)

forced to accept that the order of their love is familial rather than romantic. In *Pere de Famille* the discovery that Sophie is of good extraction makes her marriage to Saint-Albin possible.

It is worth remembering that the word 'tragedy' (and to an extent 'comedy') is now mostly associated with the Greek, the Elizabethans, and with French neoclassical tragedy. Apart from the vernacular use of 'tragedy' to designate terrible events in the life of a person or persons it is rare to find 'tragedy' used in the sense Diderot was giving to the word. Up to the eighteenth century there wasn't a variety of dramatic genres to choose from, to the extent that 'tragedy' meant also 'play' — though, of course, the standard for a dramatic work would be the tragic or the comic play. This is even more so in the abstract and aseptic conceptual environment of a discussion on poetics. It is not surprising that all plays called 'serious' would have tragedy and comedy as their yardstick.

Diderot's initial classification scheme of dramatic genres uses the traditional definitions and includes the proposed intermediate genres: (gay) comedy, serious comedy, (domestic) tragedy and (regular) tragedy. The different paradigms are characterized by their subjects: the subject of (gay) comedy is "[…] vice and ridicule […]" (Ibid, p.4), the subject of serious comedy is "[…] virtue and the duties of men […]" (Ibid), the subject of (domestic) tragedy is "[…] domestic unhappiness […]" (Ibid) and the subject of (regular) tragedy is "[…] public catastrophe & the unhappiness of great men." (Ibid)

Diderot is not pointing towards one single classification as Lope de Vega did with the *comedia*, or Guarini with tragicomedy, he is pointing at a much larger universe of possibilities within the intermediate genre. Diderot's sub-categories within the 'serious genre' allow, in principle, an infinite variety of characters and plots.

I have argued, in relation to Aristotle, that Greek tragedy was the poetic representation of myth in a dramatic form. From this perspective the character is an agent taking part in a number of events described in the myth. I have also argued that modern theories and techniques such as the Method of Physical Actions tend to see characters as independent fictional personalities causing events to happen. The Method of Physical Actions is in opposition to Aristotle's *Poetics* in the sense that it sees character, rather than plot (myth), as the force of drama. Plot is still a central

aspect of the Method of Physical Actions but it is subservient to the definition of character.

An important aspect of neoclassical discussions was the degree of freedom allowed to the writer — in particular with the use of sources (from myth, history, religion or imagination). This is an important aspect of the development of poetics because by allowing the mixing of imagined events mixed with the source, playwrights could break free from the impositions of the source.

Some neoclassical writers, such as d'Aubignac, rejected classical Greek myths because of their 'immorality'. They used the 'verisimilar' with its moral and philosophical nuances as means to impose moralistic constraints to plot and character. D'Aubignac substituted the impositions of the mythical sources with moral obligations. Others authors, like Corneille, were concerned exclusively with the creation of effective plots. For Corneille, moral example was still an important aspect of artistic production but it was not a technical aspect of drama — the poet was free to use immoral characters in his plays and Corneille valued highly the poet's ability to mix source and invention.

The discussion of what can and what should not be invented is important to Diderot for three reasons: it justifies the invention of the 'serious genre'; it validates the creative process of the 'serious genre'; and it places the 'serious genre' within the panorama of poetic production.

The 'verisimilar', as a philosophical category, has little importance to Diderot — he is merely concerned with the ways invention and history are mixed with no loss of credibility. Diderot uses a number of related words to specify degrees of the 'credible': 'true', 'verisimilar', and 'possible'. Events can only be more or less credible and it is according to this classification that sources can be the basis of drama. Diderot defines the 'marvelous' as that which is "naturally rare" and 'miraculous' as that which is "naturally impossible."[389] The 'marvelous' is acceptable in drama, the 'miraculous' is not. The marvelous is acceptable in tragedy if it exists in the source but it cannot be used in comedy, because comedy is the territory of invented intrigue and not the territory of extraordinary action. The comic poet must be more skilled in the creation of the intrigue.[390]

[389] (Diderot, 1758, p.49)
[390] "From which it must be concluded that the comic poet is the poet by excellence." (Ibid, p.46)

The function of the poet[391] is to take hold of the 'extraordinary' and the 'marvelous' and create similar material. According to Diderot, there are multiple examples of the extraordinary in nature. When the poet creates events he must emulate the laws of nature. Such laws are not visible in nature but in art the poet must make sure they are operating, "[…] the chaining of effects may be found in nature, such that the causes are not known to us; the march of drama, in opposition, is never obscure […]" (Diderot, 1758, p.46).

There are according to Diderot three orders of narrative: "History [source] where the fact is presented as having taken place. Tragedy, when the poet adds whatever he thinks might increase interest. Comedy, in which the poet creates all." (Ibid) Tragedy is made verisimilar (credible) because, as a composed genre, it borrows credibility from the historical part of the narrative.[392] This is why tragedy is allowed great and extraordinary events.[393]

Diderot's initial classification of genres considered only tragedy, the serious genre, and comedy. Diderot now adds two more genres, stretching the limits of the 'credible' in both extremes — the 'burlesque' and the 'marvelous'. These are generic genres, not dramatic genres. The final form of Diderot's scheme is this: "[…] the burlesque genre […] the comic genre […] the 'serious genre' [domestic tragedy and serious comedy] […] the tragic genre […] the marvelous genre." (Diderot, 1875, p.135)

I have suggested that Diderot was trying to validate the existence of the 'serious genre' by placing it in the larger panorama of poetic production. It is noticeable where the serious genre stays in relation to the system of verisimilitude — in the middle: the closest to nature — close to real life.[394]

The opposition between intrigue and text is present in Diderot in a similar way to its appearance in neoclassicism. Comedy is the territory of intrigue and tragedy the territory of passionate discourse. The complexity of actions is proportional to the genre: "Farce will not withstand too much action and incidents

[391] The poet generically, not the the dramatic poet.
[392] "The things he invents [the tragic poet] receive verisimilitude by those things that are given to him." (Ibid, p.50)
[393] "Remember that the marvelous needs to be toned down by a plethora of common incidents; that will salvage the scene and control it." (Ibid p.63)
[394] "The subject must be important; the plot, simple, domestic, and close to real life." (Diderot, 1875, p.137)

[…] Comedy needs less, serious comedy even less, and tragedy requires almost nothing." (Diderot, 1758, p.25) In the relation between invention and source, the 'serious genre' seems to be the one requiring skills from both genres: "There are more complexities to domestic tragedy than to the other genres because domestic tragedy has to produce the effect of heroic tragedy and still have an invented plan, like comedy." (Ibid, p.55) The serious genre is validated in its process.

The 'effect of heroic tragedy' calls to mind the neoclassical 'heroic fortune', the portrayal of extraordinary events in the life of great people, intense passion and verbal acrobatics. I have said Diderot intended to portray the bourgeois, I have also said that verse was rejected in favour of prose. There remained, from tragedy, extraordinary events and intense passions. This is precisely what the 'serious genre' is all about: the portrayal of intense moments in the life of common men, evoking intense passions by a mix of intrigue and discourse.

The discussion of exceptional circumstances is important for Diderot because the extraordinary circumstances will highlight the moral aspect of serious drama. *Pere de Famille* and *Le Fils Naturel* are essentially moralistic plays — they seek to assert the value of moral obligations within the family and society. Bourgeois drama must "[…] inspire in man a love of virtue and a fear of vice." (Diderot, 1875, p.149) The characters in *Pere de Famille* and in *Le Fils Naturel* are supposed to endure moral and social tests and it is by their predicament that bourgeois morals are glorified.

I have referred to a few aspects in which Diderot acknowledges and agrees with the neoclassical tradition — the moral function of art, the opposition discourse/intrigue — and in what concerns the unities Diderot again keeps with tradition. As with the 'verisimilar', Diderot does not spend much time discussing these concepts on a philosophical basis. Diderot's mission is the advancement of a new dramatic genre, not a return to the discussion of what is fundamentally theatrical. He accepts the unities while acknowledging the difficulty of implementing them:

> If the facts taking place had lasted for 15 days do you think the play should have the same duration? […] What about if the play had taken place in several rooms in the house, should

> I set it in the same space? The laws of the unities are not easy. But they are sensible. (Ibid, p.87)

Pere de Famille starts at dawn. No indication is given about the passage of time but the sequence of scenes suggests continuous action. The fact that the action starts so early accommodates the gradual entrance of characters and prepares the audience for the recognition scene — the arrival of Sophie's father. In *Fils Naturel* the time frame is even less clear; stage directions in act I say merely that the action starts in the morning. Again, there is a sense of continuity without reference to time. The stratagem is similar to Corneille's suggestion of an indefinite space.

Diderot seems to be more rigorous with the unity of space.[395] In alignment with d'Aubignac, there is a sense that the action needs to represent a self-enclosed space.[396] Both *Le Pere de Famille* and *Le Fils Naturel* are set in the living rooms of the families.

D'Aubignac hinted a fourth wall. Diderot articulates this idea with even more clarity: "Imagine a wall in front of the stage, separating actors and audience. Let the characters play as if that wall was never lifted." (Diderot, 1758, p.86) From this emerge formal rules — like d'Aubignac, Diderot feels direct address of the audience breaks the theatrical illusion: "Does it seem possible that a character addresses the audience without stopping the action […]?" (Ibid, p.87) Contrary to d'Aubignac, however, Diderot does not impose rules that are external to the narrative. There is no fixed number of appearances for acts, nor must the main character be introduced in the first act (Ibid, p.107) — all needs to be justified by the narrative.

While unity of action is treated in much the same way as it had been previously, Diderot's justifications are everything but original. They can be of limits of perception and narrative: "It is almost impossible to conduct two intrigues at the same time, without one being subsidiary to the other." (Ibid, p.23) They can be aesthetic: "All that is beautiful is one & it is the first incident that gives colour to the rest of the piece." (Ibid, p.90) Or they can be character related: "The stage concerns one unique action, for a small period, during which it is likely for a man to keep his character." (Diderot, 1875, p.156)

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[395] "[…] one cannot be too rigorous with the unity of space." (Ibid, p.88)

[396] D'Aubignac suggested for the fictional time a maximum extension of twelve hours. The spaces had to be such that they could encompass a possible action, preferably in sight, in the twelve hours.

The unities had been a formal device by which neoclassicism had promoted the idea of off-stage action — D'Aubignac in particular with the idea of 'constitution of the fable'. In *De La Poesie* and in *Entretien* Diderot shows much less concern with the creation of the 'world of the play' than d'Aubignac had shown. Diderot's concern with the unities is very formal. He prefers a set in which the action takes place just as in reality, shielded by an invisible fourth wall but there is no attempt at defining absolute coherence of the fictional world. Diderot seems to be concerned with the effect of the play and with instrumental action (the actions necessary for the unfolding of the story), but not with the remote actions of the characters as suggested by d'Aubignac.

Most of what Diderot argues for is either in agreement or in conflict with the neoclassical frame of mind. I am not saying bourgeois drama emerges as a counter force — this would imply some sort of ideological engagement by Diderot of which I am not aware. I am saying that the technical details of drama construction stand in some relation to the poetics and practice of the antecedent period. Some of the most interesting contributions of Diderot appear in opposition to the period's practice. This is true of the 'tableau' and the 'pantomime'.[397] Both the 'pantomime' and the 'tableau' have supporting theory — but they also have an artistic expression, in stage directions — they are part of the technique for the writing of a play. They are, in addition, an original aspect of Diderot's theory that has elements of an action-based definition of theatre.

Diderot provides rather extensive stage directions, mostly concerning the performance of the actors. There are two aspects worth mentioning about these. First, there are the detailed descriptions in a markedly sentimental style:

> (Clairville leaves Rosalie. He is close to madness. He moves up and down, he stops. He sighs in pain and rage. He leans against a sofa, his elbows on the back of a sofa his hands on his head, his fists on his eyes.) […] (He tries to speak, despair makes him unintelligible; he moves about agitated and repeats in different ways all kinds of violent declamation.) […] (He throws himself on a sofa. He remains for a moment then he says in a quiet tone.) (Ibid, p.51)

[397] Here pantomime refers exclusively to unspoken action.

Diderot did not expect the actors to follow his indications rigorously; rather he expected to be able to provide, in the text of the play, through description, an effective rendition of the states and feelings of the characters.[398] Diderot was well aware of the impact of the actors' performance. Indeed he imagined the inclusion of improvisation in his pieces, "What I see is that there are moments that must be left to the actor — it is up to him to get rid of the written scene, to repeat some words, to go back to certain ideas, to remove some, to add others." (Ibid, p.105) In *Entretien,* Dorval goes to the extent of admitting a scene might be composed by an actor, "The following day he [one of the actors] came to the rehearsal room with the scene you have watched, as it is, word by word." (Ibid, p.100) This is corroborated by Diderot's lengthy description of the actor's resources, in which he lists examples of vocal effects that are only possible through a great performance.[399] There is for Diderot an effective and passionate way of performing that is in opposition to the verbose tradition of French theatre.[400]

The second interesting aspect about Diderot's stage directions concerns Diderot's multi-disciplinary view of dramatic writing. For Diderot the text of the play should incorporate dialogue and some description of visual representation — that is, some notation of the character's behaviour. For Diderot theatre is not just about the word but also about what the audience sees, and about the actions of the characters, to the effect that what Diderot calls 'pantomime' becomes a defining trait of drama,

> I have said elsewhere that pantomime is a portion of the drama; that the author should take pantomime seriously; that, if he is not aquainted with pantomime, he will not be able to start, conduct, or end a truthful scene; that gesture must sometimes take the place of discourse. I must add that there are whole scenes in which it is infinitely more natural to

[398] The writing down of pantomime was also a means to prove the superior imagination of the poet, should the actor fail to deliver a passionate performance, "The poets is saying, compare this performance [proposed written pantomime] with that of the actors and make your judgment." (Diderot, 1758, p.175)

[399] "What is it that affect us in the show of a man taken by great passion? His speeches? Sometimes. But what moves us is always the crying, the inability to articulate, the broken voice, uncontrolled monosyllables that, some murmur from deep down in the throat. […] The voice, the tone, gesture, action, all that belongs to the actor; this is what touches the audience. It is the more visible in shows of great passion." (Diderot, 1875,p.105–6)

[400] "What is opposed to the real voice of passion is the 'tirade'. Nothing is so applauded and nothing is of such bad taste." (Ibid,p.106)

> move than it is to speak; and I shall prove it. (Diderot, 1758,p.158)

Pantomime is sometimes background gesture — what secondary characters may be doing in a scene,[401] or action that does need need words.[402] More importantly pantomime is seen as an element in dialogue, "In that case [Harpagon in Moliere's *The Miser*] the dialogue is established between discourse and gesture" (Ibid, p.160) The most interesting aspect of pantomime is that it establishes dialogue as being not merely textual. This is a bold statement considering French theatre had traditionally given privilege to discourse.

Theories based on the idea of motivated actions, like the Method of Physical Actions, assume that what an actor does on stage is the representation of the actions of a character. Rather than saying a text, the actor plays the sequence of actions ('score of actions') of the character. The character tries to fulfil a certain objective and his attempt will, more often than not, imply talking. It is a fact that most plays are presented in the dialogical form, but this is not the defining trait of drama for the Method of Physical Actions. The defining trait is the sequence of actions performed with an objective. In this sense, Diderot's pantomime evokes the Method of Physical Actions. There is no formulation of a connection between the motivations and the actions of the characters, but there is the inclusion of elements of a non-dialogical interaction in the drama.

In addition to the pantomime Diderot developed the concept of tableau. The tableau is defined as "A truthfull and natural rendition of characters on stage done in such away that it resembles a painting." (Diderot, 1875, p.94) The pantomime was a means by which the author could exert some control over the performance making it realistic (intense) "All that takes place in the real world has a place on stage too." (Diderot, 1758, p.158) The tableau sought to produce pleasing images on stage:

> Should you follow the routine of the painter, and he will make of your drama the same he makes of his drama. Are there any beautiful areas in the painting, your drama will have beautiful moments. The painting must be beautiful in all

[401] "What must one of the old men be doing while the other is speaking to his son, telling him he is disinherited by his father; that all possession will be given to his daughter?" (Diderot, 1758, p.160)
[402] "[…] two men, regardless of their relationship, waiting for a third that comes to give them some information: what would they say? Nothing." (Ibid,p.159)

> its extension and your drama will be beautiful in all its duration. (Ibid, p.85)

What this suggests is a similarity between the working process in painting and playwriting. This is possible because Diderot sees art in general as imitation[403] and because he believes playwrights should aspire to a kind of pictorial perfection in depiction.[404]

There is an additional aspect to the tableau and the pantomime. Diderot is contrasting tableau and pantomime with two previous textual and dramatic categories: the 'coup de theatre'[405] and the 'tirade', respectively. The 'tirade' had become popular in the neoclassical period, keen on textual categories. A 'tirade' is a long speech by a character, with an autonomous rhetorical organisation, presented as poem.[406] Diderot defined 'coup de théâtre' as "An unpredictable incident in the action that changes the state of the characters." (Diderot, 1875, p.94) This is, on a first approach, contradictory. The 'coup de théâtre' is a narrative device, and the tableau seems to be a compositional device. It is easy to see in what sense the 'tirade' made gesture (pantomime) unimportant by dominating the representation of the actor, but there is no reason why sudden changes in the state of character (coup de thèâtre) should be in opposition to stage composition (tableau). This suggests a further dimension to the tableau — that by suggesting the particular situations of the characters it must be dramatically meaningful. Diderot seems to be favouring the careful representation of situation on stage over the creation of gratuitous surprises.

This is relevant in the sense that it corroborates the idea of a drama which is independent from the textual categories of neoclassicism. I have already mentioned how pantomime includes the consideration of the extra-textual elements of drama — the tableau reiterates this idea. For Diderot the 'serious genre' is not defined by the use of passionate discourses but by the creation of dramatic situations conveyed by image (the tableau).

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[403] In *Entretien* the narrator mentioning Dorval "After some discussion on the actions of life, and their imitation in theatre[…]" (Diderot, 1875, p.134)
[404] "[…] dramatic painting must be more rigorous and more real than any other kind of painting." (Diderot, 1758, p.149)
[405] "Dorval; stopped for a moment and then he said: 'I much prefer the tableaux — where there are few, where they produce a guaranteed and pleasing effect — to have those forced 'coups de théâtre', based on such singular suppositions, that to one natural situation there is a thousand that is of bad taste.'" (Diderot, 1875, p.94)
[406] (Pavis, 2006, pag.383)

There is, in addition, a vague afinity between the tableau and the 'given circumstances', in the sense that the tableau seeks to quickly familiarize the audience with the circumstance of the character. I say 'vague' because the tableau seems to rely on standard definitions of character rather than on particularized ones, "Holding the image of Christ from her bedside between her arms; she kisses it, her eyes full of tears; the tears falling over the crucified God. That is the tableau of a pious woman." (Ibid, p.117) The 'given circumstances' in the Method of Physical Actions are highly particularized definitions of the circumstances of the character.

I have spoken about how Diderot felt the need to produce accurate descriptions of the character's actions with pantomimes. I have also explained how Diderot used the tableau to make the dramatic situation explicit. Together with the use of prose this seems to suggest Diderot was moving towards a more dramatic kind of theatre. What I mean by this is that it seems that he might have been moving from the notion that theatre is textual (pathetic discourse), to the dramatic (specific characters in action). This is not what Diderot was trying to do. It is clear from the examples of pantomime provided that Diderot privileges the description of the character's feelings over the use of pantomime as unspoken action. This is palpable in the sentimentality of Diderot's descriptions. Diderot does include elements of the description of actions in his theory but it is the visual that takes the lead.

Diderot is not talking about what a scene does to the characters, or what a character does in a scene, but of how the playwright should express the emotion of the character in compelling images.[407] Diderot is not comparing neoclassical wordiness with characters in action, he is replacing wordiness with images of characters in action. A visual conception of theatre is one of his innovations — the example Diderot advances illustrates this well:

> A charming tableau opens the scene: a room, of which only the walls are visible. Upstage a table, a light and, on top of it,

[407] "[…] if the disorder of his action & of his speech increases; if the Eumenides taking hold and torment him; If he throws himself on the floor; if Pilade helps him stand, supports him and cleans his face & his mouth; if the wretched son of Clytmenestra remains for a moment in a state of agony & death; if finally, opening his eyelids, like a man emerging from profound lethargy […]"(Diderot, 1758, p.164)

> a water jug and some bread: all that is allowed to a virtuous woman by a jealous and suspicious husband. (Ibid, p.119) [408]

One aspect that unequivocally approximates Diderot to the Method of Physical Actions is 'contrast'. Diderot uses the word 'contrast' to speak of oppositions. There are three kinds of 'contrast': in style; character to situation; character to character. By contrast in style Diderot means forced oppositions in expression, "If you want to drain the genius and spirit of a musical piece; add some contrast & you'll have a piece alternating between hard and soft, low and the high pitched." (Diderot, 1758, p.93) What Diderot is establishing is a unity of style, guaranteeing that within the style chosen the play has unified dynamics. By 'character to situation contrast' Diderot means that the situations in which the characters are placed are naturally adverse: "Alceste falls in love with a *coquette*, Harpagon with a poor girl." (Diderot, 1758, p.92) There is no opposition from characters — it is some moral, social, or physical element that opposes the character. In 'character to character contrast' a situation must be created, such that the achievement of the objectives of one character are opposed to the achievement of the objectives of another:

> Situations must be intense; that they be opposed to characters; oppose interests to interests. That a character cannot reach for his objective without interfering with the objective of another character & that all characters be involved in the same happening have different aims. (Ibid, p.91–2)

Corneille had specified a 'unity of peril' and a 'unity of intrigue' and he described, in connection with these two unities, the existence of 'obstacles'. In Corneille's theory the character strives to overcome a given obstacle and is immediately faced with another obstacle. Diderot clearly names the second element in the character's struggle, 'objectives', and he identifies the opposition between diverging aims by the characters as an element of dramatic construction.

'Objectives' and 'obstacles' are central elements for the Method of Physical Actions. The actor working under that method studies the play as a sequence of interconnected objectives that are readjusted as new obstacles are presented to the

[408] Diderot is describing the opening scene of *Sylvia*, also known as *Le Jaloux*, attributed to Paul Landois.

character.[409] Furthermore, 'contrast' preempts something that will become very popular in acting theory and in writing theory later on — 'conflict'.[410]

The formal parts of the play are given a very brief definition and one that is worth mentioning. Diderot defines 'acts' as a portion of the total action of a drama, enclosing several incidents. 'Scenes' are used in *Pere de Famille* and in *Le Fils Naturel* to mark entrances and exits of characters. For Diderot acts are parts of the drama (Ibid, p.106) and scenes are parts of the act (Ibid, p.106). Furthermore, Diderot suggests titles should be attributed to each act, "If the acts are well divided by the poet it will be possible to give each a title […]." (Ibid, p.117)[411] The division of the play into sections with titles has been a common process in rehearsal and a process that I have used in teaching students text analysis. I know also that other directors use this process in the initial stages of rehearsal. The Bush Theatre's director, Josie Rourke, mentioned the same process in a recent conversation.[412] With the Method of Physical Actions in particular there is the need to break the action down into manageable sections which express the characters' strategies at any given time. This is what is sought in text analysis using the Method of Physical Actions too. What Diderot is in fact suggesting is slightly different because Diderot suggested the attribution of titles concerns only acts, and not any further subdivisions. Titles are not indicative of increasingly complex narrative units but rather they are thematic divisions, evocative of the formal division of known prose;

> […] in the epic poem we say, the Descent to Hell, Gloomy Play, counting the weapons, the coming of darkness; in drama

[409] Uta Hagen dedicates a chapter to 'obstacle', she opposes obstacle to objective "What's in the way of what I want? Who's against me? What's against me? Pose these question against your character objectives, and against your immediate objectives in the beats of the scenes." (Hagen, 2008, loc. 2335–47)

[410] The idea of conflict has become a lingua franca in poetics — it is first articulated by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, "In contrast with the chorus, the second fundamental feature of dramatic composition is that of the individuals who act in conflict with each other." (Hegel, 2000, p.318) For Hegel the conflict of two equally just forces prompted social and historical harmonization — it was a form of historical advancement. Shaw, Archer, Brunetière and many other authors produced personal interpretations of conflict. For Shaw social conflict was an elemental force of realistic drama; Archer sought to substitute the word 'conflict' by 'crisis' in an attempt to make it more encompassing but he, in fact, means conflict of varied order. By far the most interesting example is that of Brunetiere. In *The Law of the Drama* (1894) the clash between will and obstacles is taken to be the central mechanism of drama.

[411] (Diderot, 1758, p.117)

[412] From an Informal conversation with Josie Rourke at the Bush Theatre on the September 24th, 2010.

> we would say the act of suspicion, the act of rage, that of recognition or sacrifice. (Diderot, 1758, p.117)

It is clear that Diderot is pointing to an important action in the act, but not to the character's actions and certainly not with the degree of specific reference required in a Method of Physical Actions' style of analysis. Diderot's title attribution hints at the analytical division of the Method of Physical Actions in form but is still very distant from it in its function. What the attribution of titles shows is the extent to which authors were still attached to the understanding of a play as a literary artifact.

I have said before that the historical development of elements preceding a theory of motivated actions such as the Method of Physical Actions was erratic. The neoclassical critics were exceptional in this. Building on classical ideas of 'unity', 'necessity', the 'verisimilar' and myth they meticulously prompted the concept of a hyper-coherent fictional world. The greatest innovation of neoclassicism, in the context of this thesis, is d'Aubignac's 'constitution of the fable', because of its close resemblance to the 'given circumstances' and to the 'superobjective'. Corneille's 'unity of peril' and 'unity of intrigue' are also important ideas for this thesis, in the sense that they introduce the kind of plot division that would later characterize text analysis in the Method of Physical Action. Diderot seems to have been much less sophisticated in both respects.

Where Diderot innovates is in the defence of the 'serious genre'. Diderot produces the first truly revolutionary theory of drama since Aristotle and Horace. The neoclassicists had tried to improve the existing paradigms but they were strongly bound to classical definitions. The previous attempts at establishing an intermediate genre had restricted themselves to mixing existing elements: the status of the characters, the settings, the kinds of endings. Diderot is the first author to attempt boldly a definition of an intermediate genre that does not rely on the previous elements. He marks the moment in which classicism is abandoned.

In one aspect, though, Diderot was trapped in neoclassicism — he was still attached to a moral conception of the character. Diderot's theory is still distant from a theory of motivated actions, such as the Method of Physical Actions, because he thinks the moral sphere should over-ride the definition of character. Like the neoclassical, Diderot is not speaking about individuals in the modern sense — he is

speaking of the demonstration of a moral conduct in dramatized form. This is championed in Diderot's essays and demonstrated in his plays.

The discussion of Diderot's theory highlighted, in addition, a central tension between character and plot. If there is anything constant in the historical development of poetics it seems to be the progressive valorization of the character, in parallel with the reassessment of the function of plot.

In what ways will the nineteenth century keep or change Diderot's contributions? Will they promote the idea of dramas as a moral vehicle? How important will character be in subsequent poetics?

Chapter ten: nineteenth century poetics

Freytag's *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art*

> MISS JULIE. Exactly! He kept it — All this came to my father's notice, but he was unable to open proceedings, repay his wife's lover, or prove that the money was his wife's. — He was on the verge of shooting himself. — They said he tried but failed. But he got back on his feet, and my mother was forced to pay for her actions. Just imagine what those five years were like for me. I loved my father, but sided with my mother, because I didn't know the real circumstances. She taught me how to hate men — I am sure you've heard how she hated men — and I swore to her I'd never be a slave to any men. (Strindberg, 1998, *Miss Julie and Other Plays*, p.94–5)

Gustav Freytag's *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* (1896)[413] must be understood in the context of the development of German drama of the previous century. The three German authors to whom Freytag refers consistently throughout *The Technique* as exemplars are Goethe, Schiller and Lessing.

One chapter of *The Technique* is dedicated to the analysis of Greek tragedy. That chapter has two functions: one is the contextualization of German theatre within the larger frame of the world's theatrical production; the other is the illustration of the fundamental changes in modern theatre in opposition to ancient theatre. Another author to whom consistent reference is made in *The Technique* is Shakespeare, about whom Freytag talks reverentially, as one of the greatest exponents of drama. Shakespeare had been greatly admired by the German authors of the previous century, and Freytag hails Shakespeare as the initiator of German drama.[414] French authors are very seldom referred to in *The Technique*.

[413] Freytag's The Technique of Drama: an Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art was published in Germany in 1863. I am referring here to the date of the first English translation.
[414] "He [Shakespeare] created the drama of the Germanic races." (Freytag, 1896, p.7)

In his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*[415] (1759) Lessing reacted against the excessive weight of French neoclassical rules in Germany. Lessing is a seminal voice in the appearance of national dramaturgies in Europe. While a dramaturg at the national theatre in Hamburg Lessing argued for the emergence of a truly Germanic theatre through attempting a change in repertory, through his own plays and by redirecting critical focus to non-French authors — namely to Shakespeare. It is in the context of the rise of national dramaturgies in Europe that Freytag appears. The association of Shakespeare with German theatre and the flouting of French criticism is everything but innocent.

Throughout this thesis a link between classical and innovating authors has become apparent through the reassessment of the ways by which concepts such as 'verisimilitude', 'necessity', 'plot', 'myth' and 'character' were transformed. This reassessment was greatly promoted by the French authors. Freytag and the Germans seem to want to break away with the French tradition.

Still, many aspects of neoclassical thought remain in discussion either because they are inherent to theory or because they remained as an unavoidable critical residue of the previous ages. One such aspect is the use of sources. I have used the word 'sources' before to signify the multiplicity of narrative materials from which plays can be created (history, myth, fable, religion, imagination). This use of 'source' is adequate for the analysis of *The Technique* too. The sources of dramatic writing are for Freytag varied — they can be taken from history, from news, and from real life episodes.[416]

Freytag tries to produce an account of the process by which a source becomes a play. His account is not watertight because Freytag is trying to describe the poet's creative mental process.[417] What seems to be central to Freytag is the 'idea', but the 'idea' is not what stands in the beginning of the process, as the word suggests, rather it is something that stands in the middle. What can be described are stages in the process, but these stages are sometimes repeated or inverted in their order. The

[415] I am using the Portuguese translation by Manuela Nunes, (Lessing, 2005).
[416] "The material which is transformed through the dramatic idea, is either invented by the poet specially for his drama, or is an incident related, from the which that surround him, or an account which history offers, or the contents of tradition, or a novel or a narrative poem." (Freytag, 1896, p.14)
[417] This is noticeable, for example, in the beginning of chapter I, in which Freytag tries to convey the process of creation "First appear single movements; internal conflicts and personal resolution, a deed fraught with consequence, the collision of two characters […]" (Ibid, p.9)

structure Freytag seems to be proposing is this: there is a source that excites the imagination of the poet, "In the soul of the poet, the drama gradually takes shape out of the crude material furnished by the account of some striking event." (Freytag, 1896, p.9) The initial source undergoes a process of transformation in the mind of the author, this transformation obeys his mental organization and it must obey rules of dramatic coherence.[418] Already at this stage, the resulting product need not bear any relationship to the source — it has become the 'dramatic idea': "Through this remodeling, an occurrence in real life becomes a dramatic idea. From this time forward, the real occurrence is unessential to the poet." (Ibid, p.11) What Freytag means by 'dramatic idea' is, therefore, the first process of transformation of a source that is previous to any dramatic structuring or planning — the moment in which an idea with dramatic potential emerges in the mind of the poet. The reason why Freytag puts so much emphasis on the 'dramatic idea' is that, though not the beginning of the process, the 'dramatic idea' represents the moment of the birth of the play. The initial source is an undirected brute fact — it is only when the poet has pondered upon the initial events that it acquires dramatic potential. It is from the 'idea' that the playwright can start creating a play, "The new unit which thus arises is the *Idea* of the Drama." (Ibid, p.9) The 'idea' is therefore a mental construction that guides the creative process — the central unitary narrative core that organizes the play.

I have referred to the work stages in d'Aubignac — in particular in what concerns the 'constitution of the fable'. I have argued that the 'constitution of the fable' was an important aspect of d'Aubignac's theory because it hinted at the creation of the world of the play in a similar way to what was suggested by the Method of Physical Actions. The 'constitution of the fable' was simultaneously a stage in the development of the play and an element of the narrative construction. Freytag's 'idea of the drama' seems to be merely a stage in the development of the play. The 'constitution of the fable' contained off stage action and narrative construction relevant to the play. The 'idea of the drama' creates momentum and

[418] "This transformation goes on to such an extent that the main element, vividly perceived, and comprehended in its entrancing, soul stirring or terrifying significance, is separated from all that casually accompanies it, and with a single supplementary, invented elements, is brought into a unifying relation of cause and effect." (Ibid, p.9)

impels the creative process but there is no immediate concern with the creation of the fictional world.

I have also suggested that the addition of new sources (new narratives) was an important step in the creation of character specific stories and therefore a development in character too. Greeks allowed only mythical sources, the neoclassicists discussed the use of historical sources and the integration of imagined and historical actions in the plot. Freytag seems to accept all kinds of sources.

Character (elevated or base) was one of the components of drama that had remained unaltered in its typology from the classical period to the neoclassical period. I have argued that Diderot's poetics was the first modern poetics because it breaks apart with precedent definition of character. I need now to go back to the classical and neoclassical components in order to explain an aspect in which *The Technique* diverges radically from preceding poetics.

Freytag defines action as "[…] an event or occurrence, arranged according to a controlling idea, and having its meaning made apparent by the characters." (Ibid, p.27) The 'controlling idea' is the 'idea of the drama' — the central organizing narrative core. 'Events' or 'occurrences' are evidently events in the life of the characters. Freytag is therefore using 'action' in the traditional sense as a synonym for 'plot', "This course of events, when it is arranged according to the demands of dramatic art, is called the action." (Ibid, p.22)

In Aristotle's hierarchy of dramatic components[419] *ethos* (moral inclinations) was given second place and 'language' (discourse) third. Other than these there were 'thought', and the less important 'music' and 'spectacle'. The typology of the drama varied according to the kinds of characters, the actions, the ending and the language. Tragedies typically dealt with elevated actions and high rank characters, and comedy with base actions and characters of low condition. For Aristotle, the poet was 'the inventor of plots'.[420] The tragic poet was therefore the inventor of elevated actions.

In chapter 6 Aristotle refers to the agent of the action "Since tragedy is mimesis of an action and the action is conducted by agents who should have certain

[419] "Tragedy as whole, therefore, must have six components, which give it its qualities — namely plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and lyric poetry." (Aristotle, 2005, p.49) This is the enumeration of the components. Aristotle later defines each, organizing them in a hierarchy. In that final arrangement 'lyric poetry' is the fifth component, and 'spectacle' the last.

[420] "It is clear from this point, then, that the poet should be more a maker of plots than of verses, in so far as he is a poet by virtue of mimesis, and his mimesis is of actions." (Aristotle, 2005, p.61)

qualities in both character [*ethos*] and thought […]" (Aristotle, 2005, p.49). 'Thought' in the context of the *Poetics* means rhetoric, the ability to defend a certain argument.[421] This difference between 'character' as 'moral choice' and 'character' as 'fictional agent' is easily overlooked in the English translations; the same word is used for the two concepts. It is essential to remember that Aristotle never spoke of characters in the modern sense. Aristotle argues that what is of greatest importance for a good tragedy is that it has an action (plot), that the agents of that action make moral choices (*ethos*),[422] that the agents speak (language) and that they speak with a certain rhetorical ability (thought). In addition to this there might be songs (music) and visual elements (spectacle). When Aristotle speaks of 'actions' he implies that they are executed by agents of certain rank but he is not implying a personality — by which I mean: a sense of the mental and emotional foundational traits of a person, perceived as a result of personal past experience and context, with direct consequences on that person's motivations and actions.[423]

At this point it is imperative to make one further distinction. The actions (and agents) are the subject of the poet — what he imitates. The language and the actions (plot) are what the poet creates. What I mean by this is that the poet will typically imitate a certain kind of action, base or elevated (and, consequently, an agent, similarly base or elevated). What the poet provides as a play is composed of words and the organization of fictional events. It is important to remove one ambiguity of the terms 'action' and 'plot'. Actions (plot) are both the object the poet imitates and what the poet creates because the original source (myth, history) is already an action (plot) and because what the poet creates is another action (plot).

The three pivotal points of classical drama poetics are (in Aristotle's own ordering): action (implying base or elevated agents), *ethos* (moral choice) and language (verbal expression). This distinction was, to an extent, kept throughout neoclassicism. D'Aubignac, Chapelain, Corneille used 'action', 'language' and the typologies of character (base or elevated) as central elements, but where Aristotle gave emphasis to 'action' and 'moral choice', neoclassical theoreticians gave greater emphasis to the proportionality of 'action' and 'language'. The genres were not

[421] "[…] and 'thought' to cover the parts in which through speech, they [the agents] demonstrate something or declare their views." (Aristotle, 2005, p.49)
[422] "'Character' [*ethos*] is that which reveals moral choice […]" (Aristotle, 2005, p.53)
[423] See footnote 126.

distinguished just by ‘actions’ (implying base or elevated characters), *ethos* and ‘language’ but also for the prevalence of ‘language’ over ‘action’ or vice versa. Comedy was typically the territory of ‘action’ and tragedy the territory of exceptional language (pathetic discourse).[424] For the neoclassicists, the great invention of the tragedian — that which gave the greater qualities to the poem — was ‘discourse’.[425] For the neoclassicists, dramatic invention was centered on the ‘action’/’language’ axis, ‘language’ being the heavier extremity of the axis in the case of tragedy. There was a shift from the classical emphasis on ‘action’ to a new emphasis on ‘language’. ‘Language’, in the case of the neoclassical, meant the lyrical quality of the character’s speech. The neoclassicists enriched the possibilities of character development by emphasizing plot coherence and the world of the play but they frustrated that development by privileging the lyrical aspects over every other element of drama.

In Diderot the idea of the ‘action’/’language’ axis is kept. Diderot believed that one of the great assets of the ‘serious genre’ was the fact that it was somewhere in the middle of the ‘action’/’language’ axis — the ‘serious genre’ should provide great intrigues and passionate speeches.[426] Where Diderot innovates is that he eschews the traditional high/low status genre definition. Diderot did so by expanding the typologies of ‘character’. It was no longer the characters of comedy or of tragedy that the playwright should imitate, but new characters, taken from reality.

Freytag does not consider ‘action’ or ‘discourse’ dramatic: “An ‘action’, in itself, is not dramatic. Passionate feeling, in itself, is not dramatic.” (Freytag, 1896, p.27) By stating this, Freytag contests the traditional division between ‘action’ and ‘language’. He dismisses ‘passionate discourse’ and ‘action' altogether as being eminently lyric or epic: “The exposition of passionate emotions as such, is in the province of the lyric poet; the depicting of thrilling events is the task of the epic poet.” (Ibid, p.19) What Freytag means by dramatic is something else:

> Not the presentation of a passion for itself, but of a passion which leads to action is the business of dramatic art; not the

[424] I refer to this in page 139–40.
[425] “ […] dramatic poetry is a kind of quintessence of all the precepts of eloquence that are found in authors […]” (D’Aubignac, 1684a, p P.25)
[426] (Diderot, 1758, p.55)

> presentation of an event for itself, but for its effect on a human soul is the dramatist's mission. (Ibid, p.27)

What makes an action dramatic is therefore the connection of the action with the passions of the individual — 'mental process' is the "[…] prerogative and requisite of the drama […]" (Ibid, p.23) What the poet imitates is the dynamic relation between 'action' and 'mental process': "But the characters which are brought forward by poetry and her accessory arts, can evince their inner life only as participants in an event or occurrence […]" (Ibid, p.22). Freytag does not separate the agent of the action and the action — he assumes the inner life of the character as a cause of actions. This is a radical change in a theory which had until now been concerned with the discussion and organization of the components of drama as they had been established by Aristotle. It shares with the Method of Physical Actions the assumption that human actions are a product of the mental life of the characters. Furthermore, the character's mental processes and action are directed towards something. The action is seen as the struggle of an agent towards an objective: "[…] the accomplishment of a deed and its reaction on the soul, movement and counter-movement, strife and counter-strife […]" (Ibid,p.104).

From this emerge the two basic directions in which the articulation of mental process and action can take place. Either mental processes have a consequence in the world, or the world causes mental processes:[427]

> In an action, through characters, by means of words, tones, gestures, the drama presents those soul-processes which man experiences from the flashing up of an idea, to passionate desire and to a deed, as well as those inward emotions which are excited by his own deeds and those of others. (Ibid, p.104)

[427] Freytag calls 'mental process' a number of mental events — the following lists some of the processes referred by Freytag and it emphasizes the two basic directions "The dramatic includes those emotions of the soul which steel themselves to will, and to do, and those emotions of the soul which are aroused by a deed or course of action; also the inner processes which man experiences from the first glow of perception to passionate desire and action, as well as the influences which one's own and others' deeds exert upon the soul; also the rushing forth of will power from the depths of man's soul toward the external world, and the influx of fashioning influences from the outer world into man's inmost being; also the coming into being of a deed, and its consequences on the human soul." (Freytag, 1896, p.19)

The bipartite view of the basic dramatic modes will have a consequence in character and in the structure of plays. It will dictate two basic dramatic typologies: ascending and descending; it will also make outwardly characters more adequate to drama. I will refer to these aspects shortly. Before that I need to discuss Freytag's treatment of 'unity'. 'Unity' is a requirement that will apply to both the ascending and descending typologies and to character and it is necessary to discuss it first.

There is no return to the three unities in Freytag, just the simple assertion of 'unity'.[428] Freytag covers under the conceptual umbrella of 'unity' three interconnected elements that had been treated as distinct in classical and neoclassical theories. First, that the play must be self-sufficient: it must have a beginning, middle and an end.[429] The beginning must provide the sufficient information and impetus/cause for the events that follow. This is what Freytag calls the 'groundwork' — the setting up of the conditions necessary for the beginning of the narrative. Significantly these include: 'character' and 'action' in the present of the narrative as well as the past conditions.[430] Likewise, the end of the play must conclusively terminate all conflicts. It must be such that it appears intelligible and inevitable to the audience.[431] Aristotle had spoken about beginning middle and end as the criteria for 'wholeness'. Freytag's terms are close to Aristotle's in the sense that he too sees beginning, middle and the end as requisite of the narrative.

Second, the play must unfold through a logical sequence of interconnected events. The middle section of the play must unfold logically from the beginning premise, through a number of developments, up to the final resolution of the play. His description implies a causal relationship in the sequencing of events:

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[428] "The action of the serious drama must possess the following qualities: must present complete unity." (Ibid p.27)

[429] Aristotle's definition of wholeness was probably related to his observations on biology "[…] beauty consists in magnitude and order, which s why there could not be a beautiful animal which was either miniscule (as contemplation of it, occurring in an almost imperceptible moment, has no distincteness) or gigantic (as contemplation of it has no cohesion, but those who contemplate it lose a sense of unity and wholeness), say an animal a thousand miles long." (Aristotle, Longinus e Demetrius, 2005, p.57)

[430] "These indispensable presupposed circumstances must be so far presented to the hearer, in the opening scenes, that he may first survey the groundwork of the piece, not in detail, indeed lest the field of action itself, be limited; then immediately, time, people, place, establishment of suitable relations between the chief persons who appear, and the unavoidable threads which come together with these, from whatever has been left outside the action." (Freytag, 1896, p.27)

[431] "The end of the action must, also, appear as the intelligible and inevitable result of the entire course of the action, the conjunction of forces; and right here, the inherent necessity must be keenly felt; the close must, however, represent the complete termination of the strife and excited conflicts." (Ibid, p.29)

> Within these limits, [beginning and end] the action must move forward with uniform consistency. This internal consistency is produced by representing an event which follows another, as an effect of which that other is the evident cause. (Ibid, p.29)

Freytag calls this 'causative connection' but this is in fact equivalent to what had been designated since Aristotle as 'necessity'.[432] Narrative — its source being historical, mythical or imagined — is not by itself sufficient for Freytag.[433] The simple concatenation of events might produce an interesting historical account but it will not be effective as a play: "Historical material offers the greatest and most beautiful opportunities; but it is very difficult to combine it into a good action." (Ibid, p.43) 'Causative connection' is therefore part of the creative act. This in itself is not new — many authors had emphasized 'necessity' as a desirable asset of plays. What is original about Freytag is the emphasis on 'causative connection' as the distinctive characteristic of drama — presumably the one characteristic that distinguishes drama from other forms of poetry:

> This binding together of incidents by the free creation of a causative connection, is the distinguishing characteristic of this species of art. Through this linking together of incidents, dramatic idealization is effected. (Ibid, p.29–30)

Third, the play must respect the 'unity of action'. The idea that the 'unity of action' is kept by centering the story on one character solely is an old idea refuted both by classical and neoclassical critics. Freytag follows the tradition. He is aware of the need for double plots and subordinate actions, as well as embellishments — all of them requiring action centered on more than one character. Not only might the double plot be needed to enhance the narrative, providing a second line of action that

[432] Aristotle spoke of 'necessity'. The neoclassical critics gave more importance to the verisimilar but considered that events should emerge from the previous ones. Diderot speaks of the chaining of events.

[433] "It still frequently happens that a poet undertakes to present the life of an heroic prince, as he is at variance with his vassals, as he wages war with his neighbors and the church, and is again reconciled to them, and as he finally perishes in one of these conflicts; the poet distributes the principal moving forces of the historical life among the five acts and three hours of the acting play, makes in speech and response an exposition of political interests and party standpoints, interweaves well or ill a love episode, and thinks to have changed the historical picture into a poetic one. He is positively a weak-hearted destroyer of history, and no priest of his proud goddess." (Ibid, p.37)

complements the main line, but it is also of assistance in Freytag's idea of the struggle of hero — it is through the presentation of opposing characters, often introduced by a subordinate action, that the struggle of the hero is made visible:

> […] the action of the piece may be of such a nature as to require for its illumination and completion a subordinate action, which through the exposition of concurrent or opposing relations brings into greater prominence the chief persons, with what they do and what they suffer. (Ibid, p.43)

An example of this is the marriage arrangement between the Capulets and Paris, in Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, which provides the background situation against which the two lovers must take action. The action of the play, though including a number of subordinate actions, is centered around a single theme.

There might be accessory actions too, used as an embellishment.[434] Freytag calls these 'episodes'. They will portray a character or provide the mood of a scene, but they are not essential to the unfolding of the intrigue, "Mercutio, with his Queen Mab, and the jests of the nurse, the interviews of Hamlet with the players and courtiers, as well as the grave-digger scene, are such examples as recur in almost all his [Shakespeare's] plays." (Ibid, p.48) In Freytag's theory, 'wholeness' (self-sufficiency), 'necessity' (causal connection) and 'unity of action' (unity of theme) are aspects of what he calls 'unity'.

Other than the need for the sequence of actions to form a whole and be linked by 'causative connection' the actions of the drama must be 'probable':

> In dramatic poetry, this transformation of reality with poetic truth is effected thus: the essential parts, bound together and unified by some causative connection, and all the accessory inventions, are conceived as probable and credible motives of the represented events. (Ibid, p.49)

Freytag is not interested in producing a discussion on the exact nature of the 'verisimilar' — his use of the 'probable and credible' in substitution is witness to

[434] "While at the beginning they enter into the roles of the chief persons to delineate these in their idiosyncracies, they are allowed in the last part as enlargements of those new roles which afford lesser aids to the movement of the action; in each place, however, they must be felt to be advantageous additions." (Ibid, p.47)

this. 'Probable and credible' is used very pragmatically to mean what a given audience might reasonably believe. In what concerns German drama contemporary to Freytag this excludes, as general rule, plays set in very far away lands, people of different races, forbidden languages, and magical elements: "Still more he will avoid presenting such strange people as stand entirely outside the great forward movements of civilization." (Ibid, p.54) Magical or supernatural elements are acceptable in some plots.[435] The dagger in *Macbeth* (c.1603), and the somnambulism of lady Macbeth are examples.

I have spoken about how Freytag moved away from the 'text'/'action' axis of neoclassicism into the idea of the dramatic being the manifestation of the mental process in an action. In what concerns 'unity' Freytag's theory is classical: he suggests that the narrative should be self-sufficient (whole); that it should center on a single theme (unity of action), and he keeps to causality (necessity) as an essential aspect of drama — though giving it a centrality that is unparalleled to his predecessors.

There is one aspect in which Freytag radically diverges from his predecessors — he attributes greater importance to the hero in the delineation of the action in the German drama than earlier critics. This is partly due to the great transformations in the presentation of plays from classical Greece to Freytag's period. According to Freytag the abandonment of masks was an important step in the delineation of richer characters,

> […] as the delineation of the characters and their representation by actors [in German theatre] have received a finer finish than what was possible in the Greek masque tragedy, so will the character of the hero exert greater influence on the structure of the action […] (Ibid, p.42)

Most of the heroes mentioned by Freytag are not common men — Wallenstein, in Schiller's *Wallenstein Trilogy* (1799) is an important general in the army of Ferdinand II; so too the Prince in Kleist's *Prince of Homburg* (c.1809) is an aristocrat and a military officer; Emilia Galotti, in Lessing's homonymous play,

[435] "Dreams, portents, prophesyings, ghost-seers, the intrusion of the spirit world upon human life, everything for which there may be supposed to be a certain susceptibility in the soul of the hearer, the poet may employ as a matter of course for the occasional strengthening of his effects." (Ibid, p.58)

comes from the bourgeoisie, but it is the sexual advances of Gonzaga, prince of Guastalla, which prompt the action. Freytag's definition of drama as the manifestation of the human will in action necessarily leads to the idea that characters with greater willpower are more dramatic. This poses a problem. I have suggested earlier that the rise of the middle class character with Diderot was an important step in the development of independent characters. Freytag's choice of superheroes of the will seems to be a step back in the direction of a standard tragic type of characters — the general; the prince.

The *Technique of the Drama* was firstly published in Germany in 1863, and in England in 1896, well after the invention of Diderot's 'serious drama' and shortly before the affirmation of the realistic drama of Ibsen, Shaw, and Hauptmann — all of which would bring forth middle class characters.

There is nothing surprising in Freytag's choice of character examples; they were the heroes of the theatre Freytag had witnessed in the plays of the German classics and in Shakespeare. Contrary to what his examples might suggest, Freytag, in theory, does not reject middle class drama; he does specify actions that are not easily attributable to middle class types. He presents a few reasons why characters must be of a certain status.

The first reason concerns the kinds of actions and subjects. The action, Freytag says "[…] must possess importance and magnitude." (Ibid, p.61) By 'importance' Freytag means that the actions must be of consequence to the character: "The struggles of individual men must affect their inmost life […]" (Ibid, p.61). This is in agreement with Freytag's definition of drama as the representation of mental processes that are either the cause or the result of an action.[436] By magnitude Freytag means that the action must be universally meaningful. The social class of the character is not significant[437] as long as his struggle has a superior purpose.[438]

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[436] " […] those emotions of the soul which steel themselves to will, and to do, and those emotions of the soul which are aroused by a deed or course of action […]"(Freytag, 1896, p.19).

[437] "The life of the private citizen has also been for centuries freeing itself from the external restraint of restricting traditions, has been gaining nobility and spiritual freedom, and become full of contradictions and conflicts. In any realm of reality, where worldly aims and movements resulting from the civilization of the times have penetrated, a tragic hero may be generated and developed in its atmosphere." (Ibid p.63)

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Trivial and domestic subjects are rejected because they are bound to have little effect on an individual and because they lack universality — the action must exceed the "[…] measure of the average man." and be universally recognized.[439] Accordingly, the character must be adequate to the task. Wallenstein can plot to betray the emperor Ferdinand II, because he is a character of great power and might.[440]

Freytag's formulation of drama as mental process and as a struggle implies a preference for characters that, in addition to being powerful, are outspoken:

> […] the importance and greatness of the conflict can be made impressive only by endowing the hero with the capability of expressing his inmost thought and feeling in a magnificent manner, with a certain luxuriance of language […] (Freytag, 1896, p.64)

The second reason why characters must be of a certain status is that a particular kind of moral action must be perpetrated by characters of some importance. The grounds for this lie more in the rejection of the pettiness of character than in their morality:

> He who from desire for gain, robs, steals, murders, counterfeits; who from cowardice, acts dishonorably; who through stupidity, short-sightedness, frivolity, and thoughtlessness, becomes smaller and weaker his relations demand, — he is not at all suitable for hero of a serious play. (Ibid, p.65)

The expression of an inner struggle that is of universal significance requires powerful and articulate language. Characters of lower status are, then, pragmatically (but not theoretically) excluded. To Freytag, eloquent and strong willed agents will more likely be found in higher status characters.

Throughout *The Technique* Freytag attempts a theory of the development of drama. Greek drama is described as a development of the Greek chorus and modern

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from the civilization of the times have penetrated, a tragic hero may be generated and developed in its atmosphere." (Ibid,p.64)

[439] "[…] the object of the struggle must, according to universal apprehension, be a noble one, the treatment dignified" (Ibid, p.61).

[440] "If the action is constructed in conformity with the stated law, and the characters are inadequate to the demands thus created, or if the characters evince strong passion and extreme agitation, while these elements are wanting to the action, the incongruity is painfully apparent to the spectator." (Ibid, p.62)

German drama as a development of the epic.[441] According to Freytag the dramatic capacity is not universal — it is rather a capacity that emerges as a result of some intellectual sophistication in the history of peoples:

> This [the ability to create actions] is first possible when the people have reached a certain degree of development, when men have become accustomed to observe themselves and others critically under the impulse to a deed, when speech has acquired a high degree of flexibility and a clever dialect […] (Ibid, p.24)

This development of a social faculty for drama has a moral aspect too. A degree of intellectual sophistication is to be expected in what concerns the morals of the character and of the play, particularly in tragedy. Freytag will later define the tragic as "[…] the quality which the poet's moral theory of life deposits in the piece; and the poet should be, through moral influences, a fashioner of his time." (Ibid, p.61) Whatever Freytag argues for, the idea of having the opinions of the audience as a benchmark for all aspects of creation is reiterated. This will have important consequences for the drama — the actions of the play must have some degree of poetic justice: "From what has been said, it follows that tragedy must forego grounding its movement on motives which the judgment of the spectator will condemn as lamentable, common, or unintelligible." (Ibid, p.65) For Freytag there is no conflict in showing terrible deeds, or immoral action as long as the poet takes care to show these under the light of a common morality.

The idea that drama must be eloquent evokes Aristotle. The idea of a drama that must be eloquent and moral evokes neoclassical theory. Freytag seems to have broken apart with the tradition by eschewing the action language axis that had operated up to Diderot. Paradoxically he seems to be closer to neoclassicism through a regained interest in language and morality.

I have spoken about how erratic the development of a theory that allowed improvements in the definition of character has been. I suggested that some of the impediments to the development of a rich theory of character were standard roles and

[441] This is an old idea, originating in the neoclassical period and repeated in subsequent theory "For the last hundred years or more tragedy has been understood as an outgrowth of rites celebrated annual at the Festival of Dionysus. Those rites have been investigated both in their relation to the god Dionysus and in their relation to the primitive religion of the Greeks." (Schechner, 2006, loc. 140)

the compulsion to convey moral ideas with drama. Freytag's theory is very close to the Method of Physical Actions because it is the first theory that establishes a link between the character's inner qualities and his actions.

One thing that is becoming clear as I move through Freytag's argument is the degree of semantic freedom he allows. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the use of the word 'tragic'. There are at least two different usages for the word in the *Technique*, both diverging from previous authors' usages. By 'tragic' Freytag means the ethical world view of the poet: "The tragic should be an ethical force with which the poet has to fill his action and his characters […]" (Ibid, p.84). Freytag had referred to the dramatic ability being a product of social and cultural development and so too, personally, the poet must be a man of some intellectual and ethical sophistication to create works in which such sophistication is manifest.[442]

A second sense in which Freytag uses 'tragic' is to designate specific dramatic 'effects'. Freytag groups under 'effects': 'reversal', 'recognition' and 'catharsis' — the latter designating what Freytag calls a "physiological signification" and the two former a "technical denotation" (Ibid, p.138). Aristotle had called 'recognition', 'reversal', 'suffering' and 'awesome' together the 'components' (of plot). Catharsis was not included in any specific group or category by Aristotle but it was described as an effect on the audience.

The 'awesome' is not discussed as an effect for obvious reasons. The German tradition to which Freytag is referring no longer deals with extraordinary events in the sense of the classical tragedians — there are no acts of cannibalism, parricide or incest.[443] 'Suffering' is included in Freytag's theory but it is not grouped under any designation — the catastrophe of tragedy[444] will imply the worst possible end for the hero: "[...] it is not old tradition but inherent necessity, that the poet shall make the ruin of that life impressive" (Ibid, p.138) — suffering naturally fits with the catastrophe of the play.

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[442] "He must develop in himself a capable and worthy manhood, then go with glad heart to a subject which offers strong characters in great conflict, and leave to others the high-sounding words, guilt and purification, refining and elevating. […] What is, in truth, dramatic will have an earnest tragic effect in a strongly moving action if it was a man who wrote it; if not, then assuredly not." (Freytag, 1896, p.85–86)

[443] Though a case could be made for Shakespearean tragedy.

[444] As in the neoclassical period, Freytag uses 'catastrophe' to designate the final scenes or the resolution of a play.

'Recognitions' are of little significance for Freytag. They were easily applicable to Greek tragedy where historically, Freytag argues, the separation of families was very common,[445] but have little currency in his account of German drama. Love scenes to a degree substitute 'recognitions' — it is in love scenes that the emotion of the reunion can take place.[446]

'Reversals' are called by Freytag a 'tragic force'. This is not immediately evident in the reading — it is only after a long discussion that Freytag gives the reader a clear explanation of what he really means.[447] By 'tragic force' Freytag seems to refer to a number of possible dramatic effects that involve some kind of sudden causally justified change in the action, but he never discusses at length any other forms of 'tragic force', only the 'reversal':

> When at a certain point in the action, there enters suddenly, unexpectedly, in contrast with what has preceded, something sad, sombre, frightful, that we yet immediately feel has proceeded from the original course of events, and is perfectly intelligible from the presuppositions of the play, this new element is a tragic force or motive. (Ibid, p.94–95)

Freytag's understanding of catharsis is aesthetic. He describes catharsis as a kind of purification, an elevation achieved by the influence of beauty and perfect reason. An effect produced "[…] by a union of pain, horror, and pleasure, with a great, sustained effort of the fancy and the judgment, and through the perfect satisfying of our demands for a rational consistency […]" (Ibid, p.88–89). This is somewhat similar to the understanding of R. Dupont-Roc and J. Lallot, for whom catharsis operates a depuration of the emotions of fear and pity, the audience being the recipient of aestheticized forms of those emotions.[448]

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[445] "Almost every [ancient Greek] collection of stories, contains children who did not know their parents, husbands and wives, who after long separation come together […]" (Ibid, p.102).
[446] "And since the Greek stage did not know our love scenes, they occupied a similar position [that is the recognition]" (Ibid, p.102).
[447] Revolution (*Peripeteia*) [reversal], is the name given by the Greeks to that tragic force which by the sudden intrusion of an event, unforeseen and overwhelming but already grounded in the plan of the action, impels the volition of the hero, and with it the action itself in a direction entirely different from that of the beginning. (Ibid, p.101)
[448] I discuss this in pages 61 to 63.

It is evident that in spite of Freytag's additions (centrality of causality, struggle of the will), and in spite of his unique use of terminology he remains to a great extent faithful to Aristotle's components of plot.

Freytag's bipartite structure — the will acting upon the external world or the external world acting upon the will — must be present in all dramas. A play either starts with the hero being prompted to act by external forces and then acting upon the world by his own volition or it starts with the hero deciding to act and then being confronted with external forces. There are thus two opposing tendencies in a play,

> The structure of the drama must show these two contrasted elements of the dramatic joined in a unity, efflux and influx of will-power, the accomplishment of a deed and its reaction on the soul, movement and counter-movement, strife and counter-strife, rising and sinking, binding and loosing. (Ibid, p.104)

These two action directions are joined in the middle by a 'climax'. Freytag defines the 'climax' as the " [...] a place in the piece where the results of the rising movement come out strong and decisively […]"(Ibid, p.128). The 'climax' isn't necessarily the most intense moment — a 'tragic force' moment (reversal) can be equally intense — it is a moment that has been prepared by the actions that precede it. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, scenes 2 and 3, are an example of what Freytag means by 'climax'. Romeo has unwillingly killed Tybalt in a fight, and the Prince has banished him. It is the moment in which, after the build-up of the love affair, both lovers realize with the greatest intensity the impossibility of their love: "This middle, the climax of the play, is the most important place of the structure; the action rises to this; the action falls away from this" (Ibid, p.105).

There are therefore two dramatic arrangements in Freytag. In the first arrangement, it is by the action of the character that the action is pushed forward "[…] the character of the first part is determined by the depth of the hero's exacting claims; the second by the counter-claims which the violently disturbed surroundings put forward" (Ibid, p.107). The second part of the action concerns the reaction to the initial movement. All Shakespearean tragedies, with the exception of *Lear* and *Othello* are of this type. It is by the force of his own ambition and that of Lady Macbeth, that Macbeth is prompted to kill Duncan and order the death of Banquo

and Fleance. The second part of *Macbeth* is the plotting and actions of Macduff and Malcolm against Macbeth, up to his assassination. The second dramatic arrangement

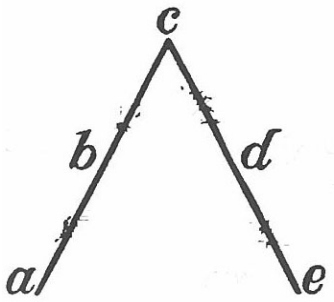
> […] represents the hero at the beginning, in comparative quiet, among conditions of life which suggest the influence of some external forces upon his mind. These forces, adverse influences, work with increased activity so long in the hero's soul, that at the climax, they have brought him into ominous embarrassment, from which, under a stress of passion, desire, activity, he plunges downward to the catastrophe. (Ibid, p.107)

The second arrangement shows the hero being directed rather than directing the action. The examples given by Freytag are *King Oedipus*, *Othello*, *Lear*, *Emilia Galotti*, *Clavigo*, *Love and Intrigue*. It is easy to see why Emilia Gallotti is directed by the circumstance: she is after all the victim of the Prince, and it is in reaction to his actions that Odoardo and Emilia act. Oedipus is never shown in comparative stillness but discovering Laius' murderer is first imposed on him as the only solution for the plague that fell upon Thebes.

Of the two kinds of plot, Freytag gives preference to the first for the simple reason that it is consistent with his understanding of drama as manifestation of will power. The second kind of tragic plot does not show "[…] the hero as an active, aggressive nature, but as a receptive, suffering person, who is too much compelled by the counter-play, which strikes him from without." (Ibid, p.107–108)

Freytag's most well-known, and most popular,[449] contribution to the history of poetics is the result of his bipartite analysis of drama. Freytag is to my knowledge the first author to draw a dramatic curve. The curve has one ascending line, consisting of (A), 'introduction' and (B), the 'rise of the action'; the 'climax' (C); the descending line, consisting of the 'fall' (D) and the 'catastrophe' (E). This came to be known as 'Freytag's triangle' or 'Freytag's Pyramyd':

[449] The *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art*, is frequently mentioned in drama theory and criticism — Marvin Carlsson's *Theories of the Theatre* (1993), Barrett H. Clark's *European Theories of the Drama* (1965), to name but a few.



Freytag, Gustav, *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art*, S. C. Griggs & Company, Chicago, 1896, p.115

It is from this basic structure that Freytag develops his 'five parts and three crises' (effects)[450] scheme. To his basic scheme Freytag adds three effects: the 'exciting moment', between introduction and rise; the 'tragic force', between climax and fall; the 'force of last suspense' between the fall and the catastrophe. Freytag does not imply by his enumeration of parts that all tragedies should have such parts and crises. In fact a good number of the plays that he suggests as best example do not follow this form.

Of the 'tragic force' and the 'climax' I have already spoken. The theatre of Freytag's time found it unnecessary to introduce the prologue, in the Roman fashion, as a separate part.[451] As much as possible, Freytag argues, all information necessary for the development of the play should be given in the action.[452] What is important then for the 'introduction' is to convey, within the action, the mood, the initial conditions of the play, and the beginning of the rise: "[…] the construction of a regular introduction is as follows: a clearly defining keynote, a finished scene, a short transition into the first moment of the excited action." (Ibid, p.121)

The 'excited action' is all of the action from the 'exciting force' to the 'climax'. The 'exciting force'[453] is the initial action that sets the whole play in

[450] Freytag calls them either 'effects' or 'crisis'. It is important to keep both designations in mind. 'Effects' because Freytag will include among these the 'tragic force' (peripety). 'Crisis' because subsequent authors will use this designation.
[451] Such as is the case of Plautus's *Amphitryon* (c.190 B.C.).
[452] "In Shakespeare, as with us, the introduction has come back again into the right place; it is filled with dramatic movement, and has become an organic part of the dramatic structure." (Freytag, 1896, p.116)
[453] Freytag calls it 'inciting moment' too, which I think describes better the function of that 'effect'.

movement, "The beginning of the excited action (complication)[454] occurs at a point where, in the soul of the hero, there arises a feeling or volition [the exciting force] which becomes the occasion of what follows […]" (Ibid, p.121). In *Richard III* it is presented along with the exposition; Richard's plan is the 'exciting force' that will prompt the play forward. In *Romeo and Juliet* it is Romeo's decision to go to the ball. In *Emilia Galotti* (1772) it is the news of Emilia's impending marriage that prompts Odoardo to action.[455]

Freytag uses several words to designate 'rising moment': 'excited action', 'rising moment' and 'rise'. It is clear from the sequence of parts and effects enumerated that the 'rising moment' is the 'complication'.

Freytag says surprisingly little about the 'rising moment'. Rather than defining it he seems to be concerned with the enumerating of the kinds of 'rising action' that are not eligible for drama. Freytag had distinguished as the most important aspect of drama the connection between the mind and action. The best themes for dramas are themes in which the struggle of the will can be made visible. Historical dramas are therefor deemed less adequate because of their actions — they tend to concentrate on battles and trials which are, according to Freytag, notoriously difficult to transform in intelligible representations of mental processes.[456] The life of artists presents the similar problem, for their concentration on lonely suffering, which is difficult to express in interaction.[457]

Freytag does not explain clearly what the 'fall' is. [458] It is not possible to state as clearly as with the 'rise' that the 'fall' corresponds to an Aristotelian component. The obvious candidate would be the 'denouement'. According to Aristotle tragedies will have 'complication' and 'denouement'. The 'complication' is all that happens up to the moment of 'transformation'. 'Denouement' is all that takes place from the beginning of the transformation to the end of the tragedy. 'Transformation' implies a change from prosperity to adversity or from adversity to prosperity.

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[454] In this particular instance Freytag includes in parenthesis the Aristotelian equivalent. The 'excited action' corresponds to Aristotle's 'complication'. In Aristotle the complication is all that goes from the beginning of the tragedy to the transformation.
[455] (Ibid, p.121–122)
[456] "And the scenes in which this round of worldly purposes is specially active, state trials, addresses, battles, are for reasons not the part most conveniently put on the stage." (Ibid, p.121–122)
[457] "An entirely unfavorable field for dramatic material is the inward struggles which the inventor, the artist, the thinker has to suffer with himself and with his time." (Ibid, p.68)
[458] Freytag calls it 'fall' or 'return'. Again an example of a term that will be used by other authors at a later date.

Freytag speaks of 'climax', not of 'transformation'. The 'climax' tends to be concentrated on one scene the 'transformation' is often an extended process. According to Aristotle it is possible to create a tragedy without 'recognition' or a 'reversal' but all tragedies must have a transformation.[459] Likewise the climax is obligatory for Freytag.

The fact remains that Freytag's 'rise', 'climax' and 'fall' are similar to Aristotle's 'complication', 'transformation' and 'denouement' respectively. It is also worth noting that the characters chosen by Freytag as example are radically transformed. Wallenstein goes from successful general to murdered traitor; Emilia Galotti starts as a bride and is killed; Macbeth starts as a general and ends dead.

Rather than taking the action directly to its 'catastrophe' the poet will sometimes create an effect. This is what Freytag calls the 'force of the final suspense'. This will either be a foreshadowing of the catastrophe or a moment of relief in which the audience is led to believe in a different outcome.[460] Typically the catastrophe is hinted at: [461] "[…] Cæsar's ghost appears to Brutus; for this reason, Edmund tells the soldier he must in certain circumstances slay Lear and Cordelia […]" (Freytag, 1896, p.135). The forms of relief may be implied by previous circumstances, as when "[…] Macbeth is still invulnerable from any man born of a woman, even when Burnam wood is approaching his castle […]" (Ibid, p.136), or they may be short scenes, as when "Brutus must explain that he considers it cowardly to kill one's self; the dying Edmund must revoke the command to kill Lear […]" (Ibid, p.136).

'Catastrophe' in Freytag is equivalent to the 'exodus' in ancient Greek tragedy — the final scenes. The 'catastrophe' must be manifest in a great deed, and the best tragedies will show the hero's complete ruin. The poet should not "[…] allow himself tender-heartedness, to spare the life of his hero on the stage" (Ibid, p.137). A principle of economy applies to the 'catastrophe':

> […] the poet must deny himself broad elaboration of scenes; must keep what he presents dramatically brief, simple, free of

[459] See page 59.
[460] "[...] slight suspense; a slight hindrance, a distant possibility of a happy release is thrown in the way, of the already indicated direction of the end." (Ibid, p.136)
[461] "[...] it is necessary in good time to prepare the mind of the audience for the catastrophe […]"(Ibid, p.135)

> ornament; must give in diction and action, the best and most impressive; must confine the scenes with their indispensable connections within a small body, with quick, pulsating life; must avoid, so long as the action is in progress, new or difficult stage-effects, especially the effects of masses. (Ibid, p.139–140)

Freytags's final structure, from beginning to end, is this: 'introduction', 'exciting force', 'rising moment', 'climax', 'tragic force', 'fall', 'the force of the final suspense' and 'catastrophe'.

The most common division of a play is either in five or three parts. Freytag's structuring of parts comprehends both the three and the five parts model. Aristotle's 'beginning, middle and end' scheme is similar to Freytag's pyramidal structure (upward movement, climax and downward movement). The five parts (introduction; rising moment; climax; fall; catastrophe) are equivalent to the five acts proposed by Horace.[462] The effects suggested by Freytag are narrative functions. They trigger the action, as it happens with the 'exciting force'; they re-orient the action as it happens with the 'tragic force'; or they have an effect over the expected outcome, as happens with the 'force of the final suspense'. Furthermore, the 'tragic force' is similar to the 'reversal'.

The Method of Physical Actions is a character-based acting theory. It assumes that characters have complex mental lives and motivations that generate actions. I have until now argued that in poetics the imposition of stock characters, standard plots and rigid morals would inhibit the development of independent characters with particularized motivations. I suggested this was an element that distanced the poetics of drama from the Method of Physical Actions. I have also suggested that a number of developments in the play's genres (creation of the 'tragicomedy' and the 'serious drama') and in the characters (appearance of middle class character) would in principle allow richer characterization.

There seems to be a contradiction in Freytag's theory. *The Technique* moves away from classical theory by making character, rather than plot, the central aspect of drama (differently from Aristotle, Horace and d'Aubignac). In parallel it seems to move back towards classical theory by retrieving the classical three or five part

[462] Horace does not specify the nature or composition of each part.

narrative scheme as well as its components (similarly to Aristotle, Horace and d'Aubignac).

There is an explanation for this. Freytag's theory is not a true return to classical theory because the definitions suggested by Freytag are removed from the actual narratives. Classical and neoclassical authors were concerned with the way the myths were transformed. Diderot wanted to portray particular characters and find a place for domestic narratives. Freytag does not suggest a return to a genre or the use of mythical sources. Freytag is concerned with curves and forces that abstractly represent narrative structures. In this sense Freytag's *Technique* is a true 'philosophy of drama' because it tries to understand the theoretical basis of dramatic writing,[463] rather than any particular model.

Furthermore, Freytag makes a distinction between one particular aspect that characterizes drama (will in action) and aspects of the construction of drama (five parts and three crises structure). I have suggested in the chapter dedicated to d'Aubignac that there were aspects of poetics that could never be expressed by the Method of Physical Actions, because poetic theories deal with the larger structure of the play and the Method of Physical Actions deals with the smaller structure of character. Freytag highlights a similar problem.

Freytag's theory is very close to the Method of Physical Actions in the way it sees character. This proximity is not challenged by his interest in existing narrative structures. The structuring of the play (five parts, three crises) and the understanding of the central dramatic principle (will in action) are distinct aspects of a theory. The Method of Physical Actions seems to describe well one aspect of poetics — relation of character with action, but it cannot describe the totality of poetic theory. Freytag's drama theory seems to be able to comprehend most aspects of the Method of Physical Actions.

A further aspect in which Freytag's theory comes close to the Method of Physical Actions is scene and act division. Freytag discriminates between two common uses for the word 'scene' — the 'director's scene' and the 'poet's scene'. The 'director's scene' is "[…] the stage-room itself, then the part of the action which is presented without change of scenery." (Freytag, 1896, p.212) The poet's scene is

[463] As suggested by the definition taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010) presented in **Methodology**, p.37.

"[…] the union of several dramatic moments which forms a part of the action, carried on by the same chief person […]" (Ibid, p.212). The 'director's scene' and the 'poet's scene' do not necessarily correspond: "Since a change of scenery is not always necessary or desirable at the exit of a leading character, the scene of the poet and the scene of the director do not always exactly coincide." (Ibid, p.212)

For the director, the concept of scene relates to technical aspects of the staging; it concerns actions on stage separated by changes of scenery or people.

For the poet, the finalized scenes are dramatic narrative sections composed of smaller narrative dramatic sections (moments or movements). What matters about those 'movements' is that they form logical and poetical units, that they emerge in the poem by necessity and they stand as discrete sections.[464] For the poet it is unimportant whether the divisions are called scenes, or acts — it is their function as discrete developments in the action that matters. They are not formal parts, they are sections of the narrative.

The audience is then prompted to follow the play by sustaining their interest: a problem is advanced in the beginning of the action; each section (be it act or scene) brings some resolution for the first problem but advances a new one. The spectator will be in a state of permanent expectation. Every smaller structure reproduces the principles of the greater structure. The organization of the play is 'fractal':

> Like the act, every single scene, transition scene as well as finished scene, must have an order of parts, which is adapted to express its import with the highest effect. An exciting force must introduce the elaborate scene, the spiritual processes in it must be represented with profusion, in effective progression, and the results of the same be indicated by telling strokes after its catastrophe, toward which it sweeps forward, richly elaborated; the conclusion must come, brief, and rapid; for once its purpose attained, the tension slackened, then every useless word is too much. (Ibid, p.213–214)

In the Method of Physical Actions the action is divided in sections and subsections that contribute to the forwarding of the action. The 'score of actions' is the

[464] "Such a passage includes as much of a monologue, of dialogue, of the entrance and exit of persons as is needed to represent a connected series of poetic images and ideas, which somewhat sharply divides itself from what precedes and what follows." (Freytag, 1896, p.211)

sequencing of those sections and subsections. As in Freytag's description, each section and subsection in the Method of Physical Actions will have an autonomous structure. The character will be moved by an objective and he will perform a certain action in order to achieve that objective. This action might be successful or unsuccessful and the character will re-orient his actions according to his failure or success.

I have said earlier that Freytag had moved away from the language/action axis of the neoclassicists and of Diderot. What this means is that what the characters say is important mainly for the way it shows the character's will in action. Dialogue is, for Freytag, the means by which the action moves forward, not a balance between text and action. There is nothing of the traditional rhetorical characteristics of dialogue in Freytag:

> The most important part of an action has its place in the dialogue scenes, […] The contents of these scenes, — something set forth, something set forth against it, perception against perception, emotion against emotion, volition against volition […] (Ibid, p.221)

It is not exactly true to say there was dialogue in Greek tragedy because the components of tragic dialogue were much closer to the components of other kinds of organized expression ('literature') — oratory, lyrical, epic. The second, third and fourth components of tragedy were, according to Aristotle: *ethos* (moral choice), thought (rhetoric) and language (verbal expression). The dialogue was put in place in order to fulfill a given organization of the myth. In the case of tragedy the myth was organized in the dramatic form but it still kept oratory, lyrical poetry and the epic as a referent. The agent performing a representation of a given myth should reveal in his discourse his moral choice, should do so with adequate verbal power and beauty, and should be rhetorically persuasive too. There was a sense in which the dramatic poem was independent of the characters — the poem would be a competent verbal construction fulfilling the necessary poetic categories that are not character dependent: thought (rhetoric) and language (verbal expression). Both rhetoric and language were shared by many areas. The neoclassicists inherited rhetoric and diction and added to them the idea that what made the poem good was that at a given moment of the action the character would be able to express with great power and

beauty all his suffering — 'pathetic discourse'. D'Aubignac went to the extent of establishing the poet's eloquence as the quintessence of dramatic writing.[465] The 'pathetic discourse' approximated the poem from the character in the sense that a specific kind of suffering, for a specific kind of character was at the centre at poetic activity. Freytag rejects the idea of rhetorical dialogue: "The arguments of the hero and his adversary are not, as in Greek tragedy, rhetorical word contests; but they grow out of the character of spirit of the person contending […]" (Ibid, p.222).

This is a major distinction. It is no longer what the character says that matters, it is what the character wants — independently of how it is expressed. Drama for Freytag is about what happens in the mind of the characters.

As the mechanism used to advance the action, dialogue must be structured as a consequence of past actions and of past dialogue — it must be structured as a cause of future actions and future dialogue too. One natural consequence of this is that all that implies less or no interaction is deemed unnecessary:

> Monologues have a likeness to the ancient pathos-scene; but with the numerous opportunities which our stage offers for characters to expose their inner lives, and with the changed purpose of dramatic effects through the actor's art, they are no necessary additions to the modern drama. (Ibid, p.219)

Freytag rejects all that does not imply agents acting with intent. 'Pathetic discourses', 'deliberations' and 'stanzas' are all considered non-dramatic by Freytag. He acknowledges and seems to accept the popularity of elements of the drama that are less dramatic or non-dramatic. He rates Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' soliloquy very poorly, [466] but acknowledges its power and popularity.

The great development of the theatre, from ancient Greek theatre to 19th century German drama, lies, according to Freytag, in the richer characterization of the hero in modern drama:

> […] it has been the task of the new drama, by means of the poetic and histrionic arts to represent upon the stage the

[465] See footnote 340.
[466] "The second celebrated soliloquy 'To be or not to be,' is a profound revelation of Hamlet's soul, but no advance at all for the action, as it introduces no new volition of the hero; through the exposition of the inner struggle, it only explains his dilatoriness." (Freytag, 1896, p.219–220)

> appearance of an individual life, even to illusion, the delineation of character has won a significance for the art […] (Ibid, p.246)

Contrary to Greek drama in which the enactment of myth required no particular connection between the hero's personality and his actions, the modern hero according to Freytag is conceived as an individual:

> The poet's characterization rests on the old peculiarity of man, to perceive in every living being a complete personality, in which a soul like that of the observer's is supposed as animating principle; and beyond this, what is peculiar to this being, what is characteristic of it, is received as affording enjoyment. (Ibid, p.247)

Freytag does not explain exactly what he means by 'personality'. He states three aspects that are of interest for a possible definition of what he might mean by 'personality'. The first aspect in the recognition of single traits, what is peculiar to one person as opposed to what is a trait common to all men. The second aspect is an interest in the totality of the character's circumstance — Freytag attempts a justification of Richard III's main traits by reference to his past and physical appearance: "Richard is the son of a wild time full of terror. Where duty passed for naught, and ambition ventured everything. The incongruity between an iron spirit and a deformed body, became for him the foundation of a cold misanthropy" (Ibid, p.310). The construction of the life of the character outside the realm of the fictional action is seen as a German development:

> What is German is the fullness, and affectionate fervor which forms every single figure carefully, accurately, according to the needs of each individual masterpiece of art, but considers the entire life of the figure, lying outside of the piece, and seeks to seize upon its peculiarity. (Ibid, p.254–255)

I began this chapter with an epigraph taken from Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888). In that extract Miss Julie attempts to justify her present actions with her relation to her father as a child. Miss Julie — like Andrey in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1900) and Mrs. Warren in Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893) — belongs to a generation

of characters for whom the past became an important element of their personal constitution.

The actions of these characters were no longer, as had previously been understood, the necessary actions for a plot to unfold or the representation of a known myth but the logical actions that necessarily emerged from a coherent fictional personality. This personality consisted of the biography, the beliefs, the personal characteristics, the desires, mannerisms and objectives of that character.[467]

There were, of course, descriptions of the past in many plays. In Aeschylus' *Agammenon* prologue, the Watchman feeds the audience the basic circumstances of the tragedy — the ten year wait for the return of Agamemnon. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero explains to his daughter, Miranda, the circumstances of his deposition in a lengthy recollection speech. But the descriptions of the past in those plays are instrumental — they either provide the basic background for the action or they work as a direct cause for the actions of the character: they do not attempt the construction of the hero's personality as an important determinant asset.

The idea that a character is a complex mental entity, generating action and plot, is central to the Method of Physical Actions. In poetics the development of the character as personality was slow. It was the neoclassical critics who became interested in the past through their promotion of the coherence of the fictional world. Diderot was the author who made the stories of particular men important by moving away from the standard character and plot paradigms. Freytag establishes the creation of the personality of the character as a major aspect of dramatic creation — he is the first author to establish a link between the character's personality and his actions. In this sense Freytag's is the first modern poetics.

Freytag's *Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* is the last poetics I will be analysing. It epitomizes most aspects of modern poetics. Its most important elements are the establishment of the 'character's will' as a central element of poetics and the development of a strong relation between the personality of the character and his action — it is the first true theory of motivated actions in poetics. One element only remains from ancient poetics — a concern with the moralizing function of drama.

[467] As defined in the *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance*. See footnote 126.

Furthermore, the *Technique* highlights a fundamental limitation of the Method of Physical Actions — its inability to describe aspects of poetics that are not directly concerned with character.

Chapter eleven: conclusion

The historical overview

This thesis begins with a reference to my own experience as a teacher, as an actor and as a playwright. In **Introduction to the problem** I explain my sense of puzzlement as I tried to apply Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions to Manfred Karge's play *Man to Man* while directing a group of students in a final year production.

The basic premise of the Method of Physical Actions states that the dramatic text is defined by the sequencing of the character's actions contained in the text of the play. These actions must be directly described or indirectly suggested in the dialogue, and they should appear to emerge from the character's motivations.

Building on the Method of Physical Actions, I had hypothesised that if the sequencing of actions explained well the construction of the dramatic text for the actor then there was a sense in which it should explain the construction of the dramatic text for the playwright too.

Man to Man challenged that hypothesis because there was no apparent indication of the actions of the characters in the text. The application of the Method of Physical Actions to Karge's play implied the addition of actions that were not provided by the author.

In **Methodology** I specified my field of interest. I was not concerned with the application of the Method of Physical Actions to rehearsal but with the conceptual value of the Method of Physical Actions as a theoretical model for a theory of playwriting.

I knew that action had been an important aspect of playwriting theory since Aristotle but not whether early theories had defined action as the result of character's motivations or not. I was interested in the ways critical thought had used 'action' as an essential aspect of drama.

This defined my approach, which came to be a study of an historical selection of theories of playwriting (poetics), in search of elements of a theory of motivated actions similar to the Method of Physical Actions. I studied seven treatises that epitomise the critical thinking of their periods. I decided to study each treatise in its totality because I predicted that many apparently unrelated elements could

foreshadow some aspect of a theory of motivated actions. The systematic unveiling of elements of a proto-theory of motivated actions in poetic treatises is the most visible result of this study. Such elements emerged organically as I moved forward in my analysis. It is worth looking back to produce an overview of their development.

In Aristotle's *Poetics* epic and tragedy are recreations of myths. This recreation is made with recourse to elevated language and rhetorical speech. Typically myths recreated in tragedy and epic poetry portray high status characters involved in extraordinary actions.

The status of the characters, their language and their eloquence seem, on a first approach, to be a defining aspect of tragic characters, but they are in fact general aspects of the poetic creation. This view is in opposition to the Method of Physical Actions in which characters are seen as highly individualized entities engaged in actions originating in their mental life.

There are no characters in the sense of a 'fictional personality' in classical tragedy. Classical tragic characters are mythical figures defined by their elevated status as part of a dramatic poem. What is central in classical poetics is myth not character. Classical playwrights are the creators of dramatic poems that retell mythic stories and not the creators of fictional personalities engaged in actions.

A few aspects of the *Poetics* suggest elements of a proto-theory of mental motivations. The insistence on principles of necessity and probability share with the Method of Physical Actions a concern with the justification of the actions of the characters, but for Aristotle this justification is instrumental and not psychological. A murder might be followed by revenge, but there is no sense of the overall personality of the character as a cause for action.

One relevant aspect of Aristotle's *Poetics* is the laying down of a hierarchy of dramatic components discussed in subsequent treatises. These components have changed their names throughout history, but the concepts have remained very similar. I have already been using some of these terms but it is worth setting down a final comprehensive list of equivalents to be used in the present overview.

The play will typically be derived from myth, history, religion or imagination. This narrative is called in the *Poetics* a 'myth' and in neoclassicism a 'fable' or 'history'. I have called this a 'source'.

An agent will carry out the action of the play. Aristotle does not include the agent in his hierarchy of the six elements of tragedy. What is relevant for Aristotle is a sense of the 'moral choices of the agent' — the *ethos*. In English translations of the *Poetics*, *ethos* is often translated as 'character'. Freytag calls the 'moral inclinations' of the agent 'moral fibre' which seems to express well the overall sense of the agent's moral character. 'Moral fibre' can be used to explain the variants of the original use of moral character — it expresses well the original sense of 'moral choice' (*ethos*), as it is used in the *Poetics*, and the subsequent neoclassical ideas of moral example and 'conduct' (*moeurs*).

In this thesis I have been using 'fictional agent' to refer to the agent carrying out the actions. The distinction between 'character' as 'fictional agent' and 'character' as 'moral fibre' is vital for the study of poetics.

Typically the dramatic poem will be eloquently written. In English translations of the *Poetics* the term used is 'thought' or 'reasoning'.[468] Often this will appear to be the product of the rhetorical ability of the 'fictional agent' but it may refer also to the totality of the rhetorical qualities of the poem or to the skill of the poet. The neoclassicists and Freytag use 'eloquence' which seems to convey this general sense.

'Language' and 'diction' are the terms generally used to convey all aspects of the linguistic qualities of a poem. They cover versification, the speeches of the 'fictional agents', the poet's style. Gerald Else's translation of the *Poetics* (Aristotle, 1970) proposes a much clearer designation, 'verbal expression'.

The internal coherence of the play also concerns Aristotle and subsequent theorists — both in the development of plot and in the characterization of the 'agent'. The term most popularly used has been 'verisimilitude'. The concept suffered a number of fluctuations in its meaning, most notably during the neoclassical period, but it essentially means 'probability'.

Actions in a drama must seem to emerge inevitably — one action leading to the following one. This is what Aristotle called 'necessity'. I followed the tendency of later poetics calling it 'causality'.

[468] 'Reasoning' in Heath's translation (Aristotle, 1996); 'thought' in Halliwell's (Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius, 2005) and in Buthcher's (Aristotle, 1911)

Aristotle also proposed that plays should have a main theme to which all actions of the play should be subservient. This is generally known as 'unity of action', which is a clear term.

'Source', 'fictional agent', 'moral fibre', 'eloquence', 'verbal expression', 'probability', 'causality', and 'unity of action' are the eight major concepts needed to understand the development of poetics.

The most characteristic aspect of Horace's *Ars Poetica* is the institutionalization of moral teaching as the aim of the dramatic poem. Horace's theory in spite of its cautious acceptance of invented plots suggests even fewer parallels with a theory of motivated actions. 'Fictional agents' are not in any sense a representation of a psychological identity. There are moral conventions, external to the fictional world, which must be represented in the play in spite of being adequate to the 'agent' or not.

It is the ideas of 'unity of action', later complemented by 'unity of place' and 'unity of time', the idea of moral teaching, and the basic distinction between the tragic and the comic genres which persist through the middle ages and the Renaissance.

The appearance of tragicomedy is key to the development of a richer concept of 'fictional agent'. Intermediate genres like the tragicomedy had been around since the time of the great tragic cycles in the form of satyr plays. Lope de Vega's *El Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias en este Tiempo* is one of the first articulate defences of an intermediate genre. Lope de Vega proposes a great number of innovations which suggest greater freedom in the design of 'fictional agents', but this possibility is thwarted by the highly standardised nature of the *comedia*. Vega's interest in finding inspiration in real life characters and his interest in mixing the plots of comedies and tragedies would, in principle, allow the creation of individualised 'fictional agents' with individualised motivations, but this is only apparent. A theory like the Method of Physical Actions presupposes mental complexity. Vega's 'fictional agents' are in fact standard characters taken from the *comedia* tradition.

The most spectacular move towards a theory of motivated actions in poetics occurs in the neoclassical period. D'Aubignac's *The Whole Art of the Stage* provides direct equivalents to some concepts in the Method of Physical Actions. D'Aubignac requires absolute coherence of the fictional world. He calls this principle of

coherence ‘the constitution of the fable’. As in the Method of Physical Actions, coherence extends far beyond the visible action of the play into the character’s past and helps to establish a sense of the agent’s overall motivations and of his present circumstances. These overall motivations are similar to what Stanislavsky calls the ‘superobjective’. The careful definition of the current circumstances of the ‘fictional agent’ is similar to what Stanislavsky calls the ‘given circumstances’.

Corneille’s *Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique* adds to neoclassical theory the idea of obstacle. Corneille’s creation of ‘unity of peril’ and ‘unity of intrigue’ as distinguishing aspects of tragedy and comedy implies the opposition to the agent’s intents, evoking the idea of ‘objectives’ and ‘obstacles’ in the Method of Physical Actions.

Neoclassical theory stops short from being a theory of motivated actions for a number of reasons. First, because it lacks one fundamental aspect of the Method of Physical Actions: the idea that the path of the character throughout the play implies adaptive strategies. Second, because ‘moral fibre’ still takes precedence over ‘fictional agent’ — the plays of the French 17th century still portray the ‘fictional agent’ as a manifestation of socially accepted moral values rather than independently motivated characters. Third, because the creation of the plot was not the essential element of neoclassical theory. The neoclassicists believed the most important aspect of tragedy was ‘pathetic discourse’ — the ‘verbal expression’ of the suffering of the character in lyrical form.

Diderot, though less concerned with the creation of the fictional world, brings in a few elements that move his theory closer to the Method of Physical Actions — namely the ‘pantomime’ and the ‘objectives and obstacles’. The ‘pantomime’ evokes the Method of Physical Actions because it moves away from a definition of drama relying exclusively on text. It was no longer how the character verbalised suffering but how he might express it in action. The ‘objectives and obstacles’ are presented by Diderot in an almost identical way to the ‘objectives and obstacles’ in the Method of Physical Actions. Diderot conceives of ‘fictional agents’ working towards a goal and seeing their efforts frustrated by ‘obstacles’.

Previous authors had tried to create intermediate genres by putting comic characters in tragic plots, tragic characters in comic plots, or mixing tragic and comic

characters. Diderot is the first author to propose a genre based on new characters and plots — the 'serious drama'.

In certain aspects Diderot remains trapped in neoclassical theory. He still sees drama as a balance between action and 'verbal expression' and he considers moral example the central element of dramatic creation. Moral example is still of great importance when discussing Diderot because it conditions the design of 'fictional agents'. In *Pere de Famille* and in *Le Fils Naturel* the examples of good 'moral fibre' are far more important than the creation of the motivations of the 'fictional agents'.

Freytag's *The Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* radically breaks away with previous definitions in the sense that he puts the mental life of the 'fictional agent' at the centre of dramatic invention. Not only is Freytag pushing forward the idea of a mental life, but he clearly indicates mental life as the cause of action. Furthermore, the 'fictional agent' is conceived as a fictional personality with emotional responses and a past. He rejects the lyric categories of the past (pathetic discourse) and plot in favour of the 'connection between mind and action' as the essence of dramatic creation.

The development of the idea of motivated actions in dramatic writing occurs in parallel with the growing importance of character as psychological entity. Freytag's is the first modern poetics in the sense that he fully acknowledges the creation of the mental life of the character as an aspect of poetics.

Claim, hypothesis, question

In **Chapter three: approach**, I claimed that *because of the precision with which it synthesizes the essential mechanics of the dramatic text for actors, the Method of Physical Actions was also a synthesis of the essential mechanics of playwriting.* I further claimed that a *poetics of drama could be defined by reference to the Method of Physical Actions as the design of motivated actions.*

I suggested that because of the coherence with which the Method of Physical Actions explained the mechanics of the dramatic text it was a possibility that the authors of playwriting treatises would have produced similar theories. I suggested as

a hypothesis that elements of the Method of Physical Actions could have appeared in earlier poetics of drama.

I attempted the verification of my claim and hypothesis by a systematic study of poetic treatises, in search of theories which suggest, in critical thinking, an awareness of the importance of human motives for drama.

The 'systematic study of poetic treatises in search of theories which suggest that there was an awareness of the importance of human motives in critical thought' does not unequivocally demonstrate that *the Method of Physical Actions is a synthesis of the essential mechanics of playwriting*. It is not possible to state the truth or falsity of the claim. What this study demonstrates is that, historically, the theory of playwriting has given preponderance to action (plot). It demonstrates also that elements of a psychological construction of character started to emerge in seventeenth century theory, and that the recognition of the psychology of characters as a cause for action gained great importance in the nineteenth century.

The hypothesis is only partially confirmed. The Method of Physical Actions does seem to share with later poetics a number of elements — the idea that the fictional world must be coherent; the idea that characters have a mental life; the idea that the action evolves in stages; the idea that the will of the character is a cause for action. But there is no historical evidence showing that the idea of 'motivated actions' has had validity before the seventeenth century.

My research question was this: *are elements of a theory of motivated actions as suggested in the Method of Physical Actions to be found in the history of the poetics of drama?* The study shows that a will for a richer portrayal of characters started emerging around the sixteenth and seventeenth century; that an interest in the construction of the fictional world that evokes the working methods in the Method of Physical Actions was fully developed in the seventeenth century. It shows also that nineteenth century treatises such as Freytag's incorporate the most important concept of the Method of Physical Action — the idea that the actions of the characters are the product of their mental life.

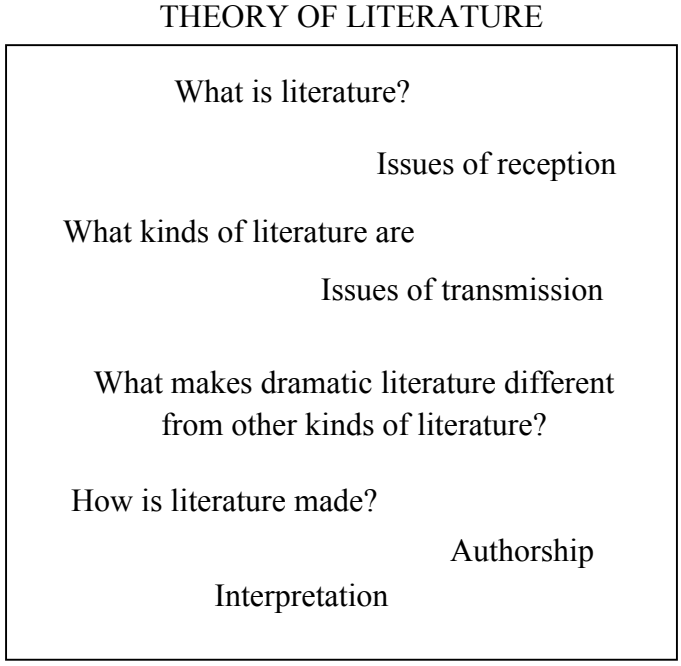
One of the central aspects of my research is the realisation of the basic division between character-related aspects and structural aspects of poetics. I first identified this divide when I realised that there were limitations to what the Method of Physical Actions could describe. Poetics are, in principle, a vaster area containing

structure, character interaction, narrative, and considerations on the philosophy of drama. The Method of Physical Actions is mostly circumscribed to character. This aspect is important because it addresses one of my initial queries — to know if the Method of Physical Actions could serve as a model for playwriting theory. What the Method of Physical Actions does well is to explain this one central mechanism in the progress of the dramatic action as it is described in late poetics. It is however, insufficient as a theory of playwriting because it fails to describe the larger structure of the dramatic narrative.

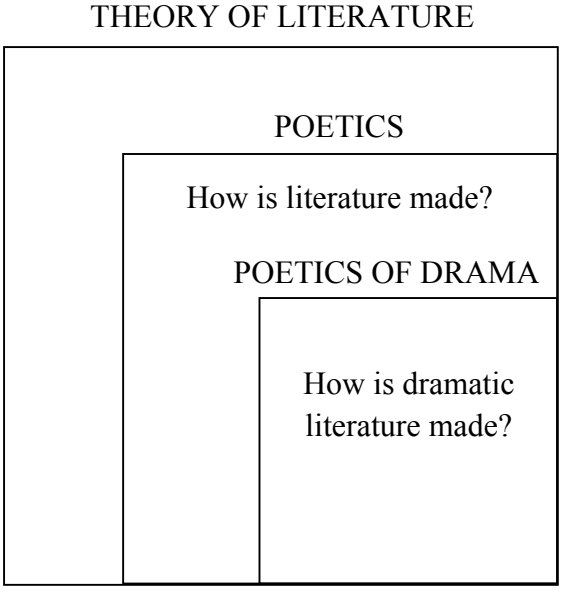
Theory of literature, dramaturgy, poetics and acting theory

In **Methodology** I framed this research within the wider panorama of related theoretical disciplines. I have spoken about the theory of literature, dramaturgy, poetics, and acting theory. I should like to discuss now how those areas are connected and to what extent this research suggests a new perspective over those connections.

I suggested that a study of the theories of poetics was linked to the theory of literature because of dramatic literature's historical inscription in the field literary studies. There is a vast number of issues inscribed in literary theory: the reception of texts, the production of texts, issues of authorship, transmission, interpretation and history. 'Theory of literature' is an overarching term that covers an equally vast number of phenomena that relate, in one way or another, to the definition of what literature is and the classification of its genres:

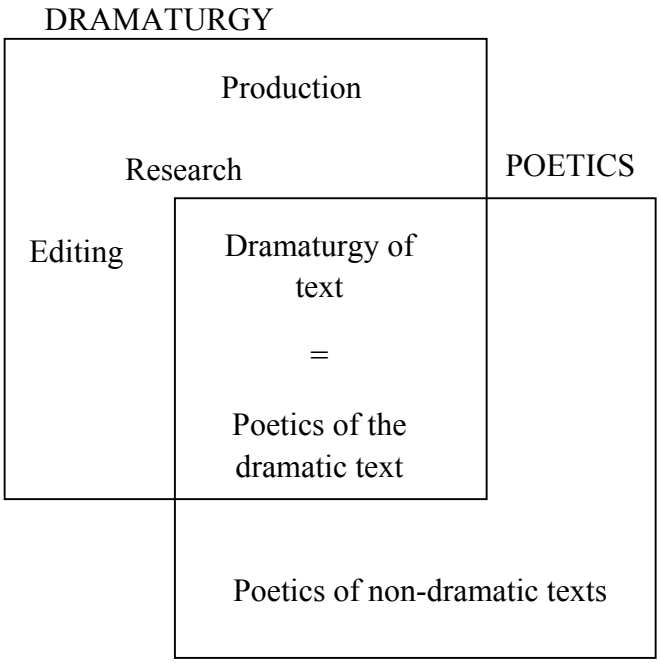


'Poetics' represents the part of the theory of literature that deals with the 'making' of texts. The theory of the production of the dramatic text is contained within theory of literature because of the double status of plays as literary and performable pieces. Amongst the theories of making literature there are theories that deal exclusively with the making of dramatic literature — they are 'poetics of drama':



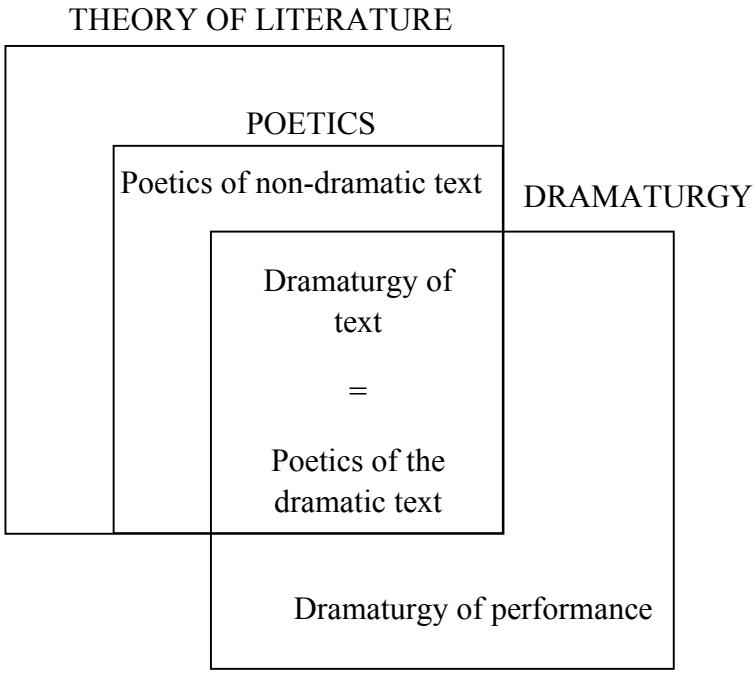
I suggested that this research was connected to 'dramaturgy' because of its concentration on the essential aspects of playwriting. 'Dramaturgy', today, is a large area of activity that might contain aspects of the creation of texts and aspects of the preparation of shows. 'Dramaturgy' might be concerned with programming, the preparation of notes for rehearsal, the structure of the performance, or the creation of the text. In **Methodology** I proposed a definition of dramaturgy as the articulation of creative agency in theatrical production.[469]

There are two main areas in 'dramaturgy'. There is a 'dramaturgy of text', which concerns essentially the creation of dramatic texts, and there is a 'dramaturgy of performance' that concerns the preparation of the theatrical production. 'Dramaturgy of performance' comprehends, among others aspects: rehearsal procedures, research, editing, and reading sessions. 'Dramaturgy of text' is essentially the same as a 'poetics of the dramatic text':



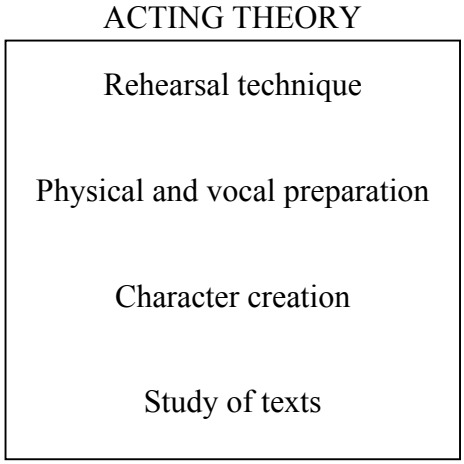
The three areas, 'theory of literature', 'poetics of the dramatic text' and 'dramaturgy' are related thus:

[469] See page 37–44.



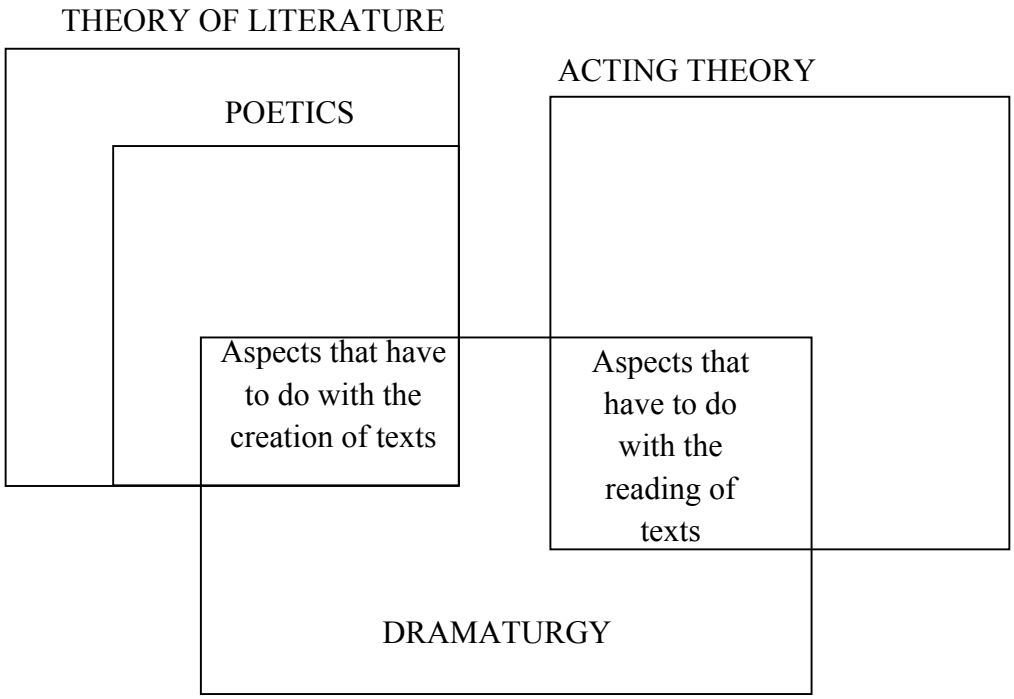
There is a principle of exclusion here. The 'dramaturgy of performance' never overlaps with the fields of 'theory of literature' or the field of 'poetics' because it is concerned exclusively with aspects of production.

'Acting theory' and technique deals with aspects of the physical and vocal preparation of actors and with aspects of rehearsal. Acting theory concerns aspects of physical and vocal preparation, character creation, interpretation, and reading:

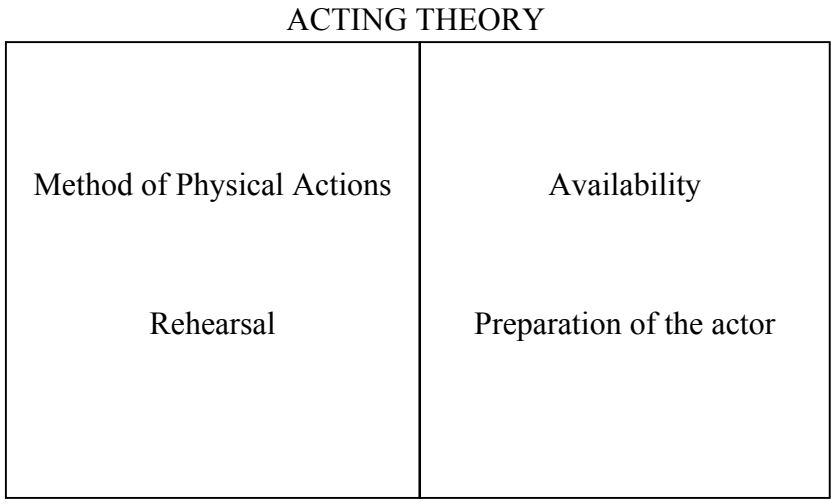


In appearance, 'poetics' and 'acting theory' never overlap. Yet dramaturgy bridges the two because it comprehends both the creation of a dramatic text and the reading

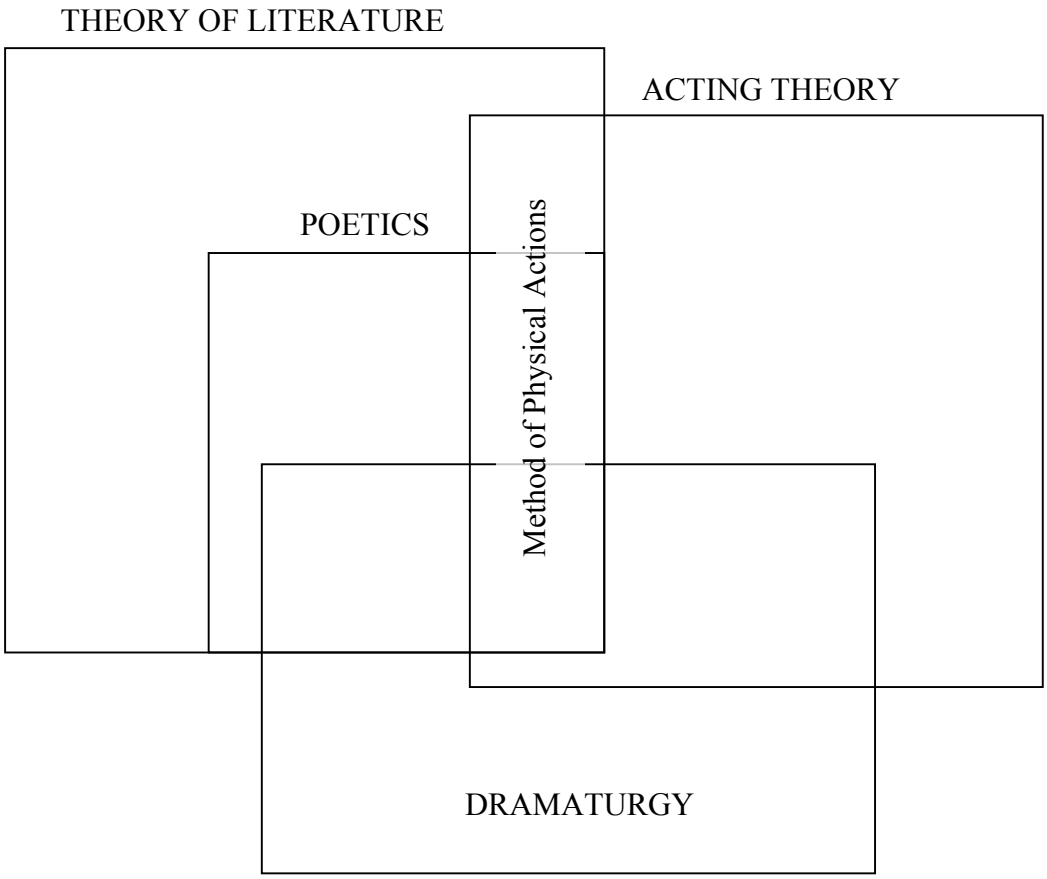
of a dramatic text. The ‘dramaturgy of performance’ includes aspects of the reading and preparation of rehearsals that are shared with ‘acting theory’. ‘Dramaturgy of text’ is, as I have suggested, the same as ‘poetics of the dramatic text’:



Stanislavsky produces a further distinction in acting theory. For Stanislavsky, acting theory consists in two main areas: the ‘preparation of the actor’; and the ‘preparation of the show’. The preparation of the actor concerns all aspects of voice training, bodywork, imagination exercises, theatrical games — it is about the ‘availability’ of the actor. The ‘preparation of the show’ requires a rehearsal method — in the case of Stanislavsky this is the Method of Physical Actions. One important aspect of the Method of Physical Actions is that it is essentially a reading technique. The actor is required to read the text in search of justified and motivated actions:



'Poetics of drama' shares with 'dramaturgy' the need to have an understanding of the structure of the dramatic text. 'Dramaturgy' shares with Stanislavsky's 'acting theory' the need to have text analysis procedures (the Method of Physical Actions) that presuppose an understanding of the structure of the dramatic text. This pushes acting theory closer to 'poetics' and to the 'theory of literature':



For this thesis I have departed from the idea that what is essential to dramatic creation is the sequencing of motivated actions. Nineteenth century poetics suggest a greater proximity between 'acting theory' and 'poetics' through the idea that plays are the creation of the sequence of motivated actions of the characters. Coincidently the research shows an unexpected connection between two apparently unrelated aspects — 'theory of literature' and 'acting theory'.

Contribution to knowledge

There are six aspects in which I think this thesis produces a contribution to knowledge. The first and most evident contribution is the unveiling of the path of the historical development of the theory of playwriting. Clark (1965), Gerould (2000) and Carlson (1983) discuss critical theory in general and cover to a large extent the treatises I have discussed. What this thesis does that is, to my knowledge, original is concentrate specifically on how the idea of motivated action emerged in playwriting treatises. The historical overview shows, in addition, to what extent the development of complex characters with rich mental lives has been significant to theatre history.

A second related contribution has to do with the link between motivated actions and character. The idea that characters are causes for actions is fairly evident today but the realization of the concomitant appearance of psychologically defined characters and motivated actions is new.

The reassessment of the importance of the 'intermediate genre' is, I believe, a third innovative point about this thesis. Theatre history has remained hostage to the tragedy-comedy dichotomy. These are the two foundational genres and the ones generally used to describe the historical development of plays, but there is an alternative account of theatre history as the struggle for the affirmation of intermediate genres starting with satyr plays and ending with modern drama. The chapter on Diderot highlights the path of development of the 'intermediate genre'.

The fourth and most important point of this thesis' contribution to knowledge is the establishment of conceptual links between seventeenth century poetics and Stanislavsky's theory. The extent to which neoclassicism was concerned with aspects

of the construction of the fictional world, in a way that so closely resembles the 'given circumstances', 'superobjectives' and 'through-action' is something that I have never seen described. In neoclassicism I expected to find a monolithic theory and not a rich and varied theory which foreshadowed aspects of twentieth century acting theory.

The connection between theory of literature, dramaturgy and acting theory, that I have illustrated above, was an attempt to reassess the position of poetics and acting theory in the wider frame of related academic disciplines. It is also a contribution to knowledge in the sense that it suggests connections that had not yet been proposed.

The list of concepts at the beginning of this conclusion, in **historical overview**, is a lesser contribution to knowledge but still one that is worth mentioning. Theatre dictionaries such as Pavis's *Dictionnaire du Thèâtre* (2006) provide much more extensive definitions of similar concepts and terms. What this thesis does that is original is to produce a contextualized account of variations in the concepts centred exclusively on poetics.

Continuing research

A number of possible topics for continuing research have emerged as I moved towards the conclusion of this thesis. Some of these topics are directly related to the subject of this study, others are a product of indirect reading. The first concerns the history of poetics, the second concerns a possible link between poetics and psychology, the third concerns acting theory. They are in an embryonic stage.

On the history of poetics

When I first approached poetics I had a fairly good idea of what kinds of poetics existed and their major organization in periods. What came as a surprise was the vast number of existing treatises. In recent years many of those treatises have been made available in *facsimiles* and in other formats over the internet.

Typically poetics display great variation in the treatment of concepts from period to period or in different translations. A sense of the historical development of poetics is essential for the understanding of those variations. A person studying poetics will be faced with versions of documents, translations and commentaries, but it is unlikely that he will have a sense of the geographical and historical distribution of poetics.

What I felt was missing as I studied poetics was some form of centralization of resources that takes into account the location of primary sources and the distribution of subsequent versions. I have no knowledge of any university department dedicated to the organization of a directory of primary sources for drama, and much less one dedicated exclusively to the organization of information on the poetics of drama.

Psychology and poetics

One of the areas of indirect reading that has fascinated me the most while preparing this thesis has been the psychology of emotion — neo-Darwinist theories in particular. I first started studying the psychology of emotion in the preparatory stages of my thesis because I imagined that I could find information there that could be linked to acting theories. I quickly discovered there was no relevant material for my thesis in that area, but I remained nevertheless interested in neo-Darwinist psychology theories. The neo-Darwinist perspective argues that emotions and facial expressions are universal assets of all humans independent of the level of knowledge, geographical location, age, gender, or upbringing.

Many authors, throughout the twentieth century, have proposed universal theories — the linguist Noam Chomsky investigated the existence of a universal grammar, the psychologist Paul Ekman proved the universality of human expression, and the anthropologist Joseph Campbell suggested the idea of the universal myth. Some of these theories suggested the existence of shared narratives too. Vladimir Propp in *The Morphology of the Folk Tale* (2000) suggests the existence of a common structure of functions in a selected number of Russian folk-tales.

Outside the academic world the theories that propose universal narratives are very common — Christopher Vogler's *The Writers Journey* (2007) and Georges Polti's *Les Trente-six Situation Dramatiques* (1912) are examples.

The study of poetics to an extent points in the direction of universal narratives too. There is in poetics a major classification centred on the division between tragedy and comedy and a number of variations around that central classification.

The existence of universal theories such as Ekman's, Chomsky's, and Propp's suggests the 'existence' of a predisposition in the constitution of the brain — be it for language, for facial expression, or for given narratives. Propp found in the Russian folktale the expression of a fixed narrative structure. To what extent might the recurrence of genre classifications in poetics be the expression of some fixed structure too?

Acting theory

John Searle has been an important influence on the writing of this thesis. I have used Searle's characterization of philosophical investigation to clarify aspects of this thesis methodology and I remain an avid reader of his books on social philosophy and the philosophy of mind.

In Minds, Brains and Science (1984) Searle proposes a theory of human action that is surprisingly similar to Stanislavsky's. Searle's theory, like Stanislavsky's, is a theory of mental causation. It suggests that there are intentional states (motivations) in the mind that cause actions in the world. In addition to this Searle discriminates between 'premeditated actions' and 'spontaneous actions'. 'Spontaneous actions' are still 'intentional actions' but they are not the product of prior reflection. A person might be involved in a spontaneous conversation without reflecting on what is going to be said next.

Furthermore, Searle introduces the notion of a network of intentional states and a network of capacities as a condition to explain human behaviour. The network of intentional states is similar to the sequencing of motivations in Stanislavsky

theory. The network of capacities represents the beliefs, practices and other non-intentional stances.

It is not the objective here to establish similarities and differences between Stanislavsky and Searle. Stanislavsky is a practice-based and practice-oriented theory. Searle's is a complex theory that attempts to bridge between aspects of social philosophy, neurology and the philosophy of the mind. Searle's theory incorporates a hundred years more of investigation in psychology.

Considering Stanislavsky and Searle share a belief in the mental component of human action — what aspects of Searle's theory might be exported to acting theory? What uses might the idea of a network of non-intentional states have in the acting realm? To what extent might the discrimination between premeditated and spontaneous action be incorporated by an acting technique?

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Appendix 1 — chronological description of poetic treatises presented in schematic form

Book, article, treatise	Date	Author	Short description
The Poetics	360–322 B.C.	Aristotle	A theory of drama as mimetic art. Sets the criteria for the classification of genres based on the kind of actions and characters. Catharsis as the aim of tragedy. Establishes the first formal rules of tragedy.
The Art of Poetry	24–20 B.C.	Horace	Aim of drama is pleasure and instruction. Establishes the number of acts and the function of the chorus. A concern with the aesthetic whole.
On comedy and Tragedy	4th century A.D.	Donatus	Comedy is educative. The elements of comedy are speech and action. Discusses costume and set design and acknowledges the part of composers.
Poetics (translation and commentary to Averröes' translation and commentary of Aristotle)	1256 (published in 1481)	Hermannus Alemannus	Suggests that moral teaching should be the aim of poetry. Tragedy arouses the animal passions. The three parts of tragedy: arousal of passions; directness (praiseworthy actions); indirectness (non praiseworthy actions). Being an Arabic version it is a rather bizarre form of the poetics with no understanding of the stage aspects implied.
Aristotle's Poetics (translation)	1278 (published only in the 20th century)	William of Moerbeke	A more accurate translation of Aristotle to which no great attention was devoted in the period.
Epistle to Can Grande	1318, aprox	Dante	Classification of *Divine Comedy*, as comedy, because it ends well and is written in Italian (rather than Latin).
Aristotle's Poetics (Latin translation)	1498	Valla	Marks the beginning of the rediscovery of Aristotle in Italy and Europe

Poetics	1529 (the date is not consensual)	Trissino	First book dates from (probably) 1429 last books dates from 1563. A translation of Aristotle's Poetics on the manner of Rebortello.
Poetics	1536	Daniello	Tragedy should show the change in the fortune of wicked men. Chorus must take the side of the good. Impossible or cruel deeds shouldn't happen on stage. 5 acts. No more than two speaking characters on stage. No 'deus ex-machina'. Supposedly inspired by the Latin tradition and by Donato.
Preface to a translation of Sophocles' Electra	1537	Le Baïf	Defines tragedy as a morality in which there are calamities.
In Librum Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Explicationes	1548	Robortello	Didactic interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* unifying the Horatian pleasure and Aristotle's *mimesis*. *Mimesis* is pleasurable. Two kinds of imitation: that of the poet; that of the actors. The imitation of men of virtue incites virtuosity in the audience. Verisimilitude will move the audience and provide moral improvement. Links verisimilar with moral improvement (Aristotle with Horace). Tragedy happens between sunrise and sunset because 'people don't walk and talk at night' (unity of time). Establishes the general tone that will be accepted by later commentaries.
Art of Poetry	1548	Sebillet	The first great French poetic treatise. Mixes morality and tragedy for their subject. Distinguishes pastoral, eclogue and morality.
Aristotle's Poetics (translation to vernacular)	1549	Bernardo Segni	Tragedy is supposed to instruct the masses. 'Verisimilitude' and 'probability' as that which can be accepted by the commoner. Tragedy should imitate the best men and the

			best behavior. Should be credible — a king acts as a king. Follows the line of Robortello emphasizing even further the moral aspect.
Discorso intorno al Comporre delle comedie et le tragedie	1554	Giraldi	Considers Aristotle obscure and thinks the tragedy should take into consideration the time and place where it is being produced. Accepts double plot and tragedy with happy end. Follows Aristotle on other aspects. Moral instruction is the aim. Invented stories are better than history. The author was a practicing playwright. The first progressive poetics allowing some opposition to Aristotle as authority.
L'Art Poetique	1555	Peletier	Translates the Latin 'decorum' as 'bienséance'. Admits of actualization. Dramas in general have 5 acts. Tragedy must have noble characters, and end badly. Comedy portrays commoners and ends happily.
Poetics	1561	Scaliger	Tragedy as imitation of life. Tragedy is characterized by unhappy ending and metric language. Singing and music are excluded. Gives more importance to character than to plot. The aim of poetry is not imitation but instruction. Believed that the audience did not realize the artifice in a poem. Puts the emphasis on the approximation of theatrical events to truth. The French coined the term 'unités scaligériennes'. An independent authoritative view. The first influential critic to rely on reason rather than authority. Influential mainly in Italy but also in France.
The Art of Poetry	1563	Minturno	Adds 'move' to 'instruct and delight'. Genre distinction based on end and social status

			— though allowing for tragedies of happy end. The poet should show what is true in such a way that the audience believes it. Tragedy should happen in one day. The work should have unity.
Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e esposta	1570	Castelvetro	Poetry exists merely for the pleasure of the ignorant crowd. Drama exists only when it is performed not when it is written. Because the audience is unsophisticated there should be an approximation of real and fictional 'time and place'. The terrible deeds should be narrated because the staging might not be verisimilar. Distances himself from Aristotle and all his contemporaries. Liberal Translation of Aristotle to Italian with commentary. Like Scaliger attempts his own independent system.
The Art of Tragedy	1572	De la Taille	Probably influenced by the translation of Castelvetro initiates some ideas that would become canonical. Introduces an Italian idea in France: to search for the rules first in Aristotle and then in Horace. Supremacy of a unified plot. Plays should happen in same day, same place. The useless and unnecessary or not very credible should not be present.
Philosophía Antigua Poética	1595	Alonso López (el 'Pinciano')	A philosophical treatise investigating the causes and nature of poetry. It discusses all kinds of poetry. Produces a theory of genres and a discussion of the fable.
An Apologie for Poetry	1595	Sidney	Comedy is the imitation of common errors. Tragedy teaches the uncertainty of the world. A criticism of English drama.
L'art Poètique	1598	Laudun	Emphasizes de effect and

françois			rejects the rules — namely unity of time and historical truth.
L'art Poètique	1605	Vauquelin	Translates the Latin 'decorum' as 'bienséance'. Tragedy should have: 5 acts. Not more than three characters speaking. Shows only magnificent and grandiose actions.
To the Readers, Dedication of Sejanus, His Fall	1605	Ben Jonson	Announces his intention to translate Horace.
Dedication to Volpone, or the Fox	1609	Ben Jonson	Comedy is instruction.
The New Art of Writing Plays in this Age	1609	Lope de Vega	An ambiguous criticism of classical rules. Lopes argues for the freedom of creation of plots in the Spanish *comedia*. Specifies stock characters.
The Tragoedia Constitutione	1611	Hensius	It is considered a paraphrase of Aristotle. He compares the dramatist to the philosopher. The gentle qualities of man are 'character' and the violent ones are 'emotion'. Draws parallels with oratory.
Tablas Poéticas	1617	Cascales	A discussion of Horace's *The Art of Poetry*
The Orchards of Toledo	1624	Tirso de Molina	Against the classical rules. Molina argues the character needs time to develop thus contesting the unity of time.
Preface to Tyre and Sidon	1628	Ogier	Against the unity of time. Points to exceptions in the classical plays (Sophocles, Terence, Menander). Justifies his rejection of the universality of rules with the different social and historical contexts in which plays are produced.
Preface to Silvanire	1631	Jean Mairet	Comedy portrays commoners, ends well. Tragedy portrays nobles and ends badly. For verisimilitude as elementary rule. Argues for the three unities. Comedy's moral function is to instruct fathers

			and sons in good living.
Opuscules Critiques	1636	Chapelain	Rejects the idea of instruction suggesting instead the idea that theatre should move the spectator. Illusion is achieved by a respect for the rules of unity and decorum.
Discours à Clinton	1637	Anonymous	The object of dramatic poetry is to imitate actions (any). Unities don't apply. Each author has his own rule.
Opinions of the French Academy on the Tragi Comedy "The Cid"	1637	Chapelain	A great champion of rules, though, supposedly, justifying everything with reason rather than with obedience. The aim of drama is to move. It must be the instrument of virtue. Champions 'verisimilitude'. Theatre must be didactic. For regular plays. The marvelous should emerge from the natural and the natural must be true to life - that is 'verisimilar'.
Summary of a Poetic of Drama	(n.d.)	Chapelain	Poetry imitates actions of men. Tragedy imitates noble actions, comedy imitates base actions. Plays should depict what is appropriate. Three unities: 24 hour action, Unity of place and unity of action. The verisimilar moves the mind. Five acts of 5–7 scenes each. No more than 3 characters per scene.
Poetics	1639	La Mesnardière	A catholic poetics. Common people have no role in tragedy. Some flexibility on the 24 hour rule (unity of time). Strong moral emphasis. Verisimilitude having as basis a sense of decorum in the characters. Heroes must be virtuous. Poetic justice required. A commission by Richelieu.
Timber, or Discoveries Made Upon Man and Matter	1641	Ben Jonson	A rejection of Aristotle as the dictator of rules. Jonson mixes Aristotle and Horace. He thinks theatre should delight and instruct.
The Whole Art of	1657	D'Aubignac	Considered the synthesis of

the Stage			neoclassical criticism. Also greatly detailed and sophisticated. Studied by playwrights such as Racine. Plays are to be performed. A writing manual. Rules exist for logical reasons. Verisimilitude emphasized. Actors should behave strictly as the characters. Presaging the 'fourth wall' idea. The strict obedience to rules creates some problems namely in the acceptance of the 'merveilleux' which must be a product of absolute verisimilitude. There are also some oddities resulting from this extreme view. He defends a kind of unity of action that suggests Stanislavsky.
Trois Discours sur le Poème Dramatique	1660	Corneille	Gives preference to the 'necessary' over the 'probable' and, as a result, gives less importance to 'verisimilitude'. Tragedies are defined by the kind of action exclusively not by character or end. Produces a definition of catharsis (later denied). Considers history the best source — which makes the acceptance of the 3 rules difficult to apply. Develops the idea of 'unity of peril' in tragedy and 'unity of intrigue' in comedy. Admits the importance of Aristotle but produces a very personal apologia. Is in dissent from neoclassical thought.
School for Wives Criticized	1663	Molière	Not exactly a poetic or a pseudo-poetic, but a declaration of total independence from the rules presented in dramatic form. Dorante (a character) speaks about the emotions of characters being actions.
Preface to La Thébaïde	1664	Racine	Racine's prefaces seem to be much more directed at

			incidental period stuff though they mention common thematic such as the unities or imitation. Reflection on the importance of love as a motivation in his play.
First Preface to Andromaque	1668	Racine	Defense of the character that is neither too good or too bad.
Preface to Tartuffe	1669	Molière	An attack on the idea of a moral theatre.
First Preface to Britannicus	1679	Racine	Defense of the rules. Unity of action in particular.
Of Ancient and Modern Tragedy	1672	Saint-Evremond	Investigates the applicability of Christian myths. Considers modern times much better for tragedy.
Preface to Bérénice	1674	Racine	Only verisimilitude has the ability to move us. The aim of tragedy is to please and move.
Refléxions Sur la Poetique	1674	Rapin	The last great XVII century commentary on Aristotle. Argues that the theatre should teach good manners to the public by producing something pleasurable. Pleasure results from verisimilitude. Rules are the product of good reasoning. Everything should be subordinate to 'bienséance'. Associates the moral and social beliefs of the audience to 'bienséance'.
The Art of Poetry	1674	Boileau	A verse poetics. To please and move is the aim. Respect for the rules.
Preface to Phaedra	1677	Racine	Condemns Corneille for not following the unities (which he accepts without discussion).
Sur nos Comèdies & De La Comèdie anglaise	1677	Saint-Evremond	Claims no theory can provide rules for all time and for everyone. Tendentiously a moralistic essay. Thinks love could substitute fear and pity. Speaks of suspension of disbelief.
An Essay on Dramatic Poetry	1668	Dryden	A dialogue presented in description. Uses Aristotle to discredit the ancients. Discusses the advantages and

			disadvantages of French and British theatre. Argues for tragicomedy. Proposes unity of design. Considers the rules have narrowed imagination.
On the Sort of Dramatic Poem that is Called a Tragedy	1671	Milton	Departs from the fame of tragedy to say only that he is taking on the Italian and Greek model: fear and pity, verisimilitude, unities.
A Short view of Tragedy, its excellency and Corruption, with some Reflections on Shakespeare and other Practitioners for the Stage	1693	Rymer	Similar to Lope de Vega's El Arte. He advocates the use of the chorus. He gives preponderance to the spectacle over text.
Concerning Humor in Comedy	1696	Congreve	A reflection on humor and its essence. He considers humor an English trait.
A Discourse Upon Comedy in Reference to the English Stage	1703	Farquhar	Against rules. He rejects the authority of Aristotle on the grounds of a lack of experience in playwriting. Argues for the *vox populi* as a measure for the quality of plays.
The Spectator	1711	Addison	Argues for the nobility of tragedy. Considers tragicomedy a monstrosity.
Preface to Herod and Mariamne	1725	Voltaire	In favour of verse. Though a classicist he produces a defense of domestic plays.
The Comic Theatre	1751	Goldoni	Comedy as a vehicle of moral improvement.
Of Tragedy	1757	Hume	Tries to understand the reasons why tragedy might be captivating: novelty, expectation. Tries to find a common generator for pleasure and pain.
Entretien sur le Fils Naturel	1757	Diderot	A defense of the 'serious genre' in dialogical form. Dorval the main character is presented simultaneously as character and critic.
De la Poesie	1758	Diderot	The 'serious genre' — the

Dramatique			theatrical validation of bourgeois themes and characters.
Preface to Shakespeare	1765	Johnson	Suggests Shakespeare is a genre on his own, whose main fault is not showing poetic justice. He believes suspension of disbelief is valid regardless of the respect or not to the unities. Shows an interest in the understanding of the principles of fiction. The audience knows anyway that the stage is a stage. Against the mere concatenation of beautiful speeches.
Essay on the Serious Drama	1767	Beaumarchais	A defense of serious comedy with a moral tone. Acknowledgement of the spectator.
Hamburg Dramaturgy	1769	Lessing	Not a poetics. It produces a critical account of Lessing's activity while consultant and dramaturg at the National Theatre of Hamburg. A defense of German theatre in reaction to the French neoclassical models.
A Essay on the Theatre; or, a Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy	1772	Goldsmith	A criticism of sentimental comedy (French 'heroic comedy').
Preface to the Robbers	1781	Schiller	Seems to be arguing for moral drama. Shows concern that people might interpret The Robbers as an apology of vice.
On Tragic Art	1781	Schiller	Defines tragedy as a coherent series of events in which characters are shown suffering.
Memoirs, Mémoires de M. Goldoni, 1787	1787	Goldoni	Moral correction in comedy. Recognizes the actor as force to be reckoned with.
Useless Memoirs	1796	Gozzi	An attack on Goldoni. Gozzi is also credited as being the first author to advance the idea of a limited number of plots — 36.
Epic and Dramatic Poetry	1797	Goethe	Attempts a distinction between the literary and the dramatic.
Lectures on	1809-11	Schlegel	Encyclopedic volume,

Dramatic Art and Literature			discussing extensively historical and conceptual problems.
Progress of the Drama	1818	Coleridge	Introduces the expression 'suspension of disbelief'. Highlights the combination of several arts in theatre.
The Technique of the Drama: an Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art	1863	Gustav Freytag	A neo-Aristotelian poetics renaming concepts such as the 'reversal' and 'recognition'. It is the first treatise that clearly recognizes human will and character's psychology as the source of action and as the most important aspect of drama.
The Law of the Drama	1894	Brunetière	A short treatise that clearly gives preponderance to action. Identifies the will as the main force behind actions. Defines drama as the representation of a will conscious of itself.
The Art of the Dramatist	1903	Matthews	An attempted distinction between tragedy and comedy.
Playmaking, A Manual of Craftsmanship	1912	Archer	A poetics that tries to retrieve classical components and categories. Opposes Brunetiere's idea of conflict proposing instead 'crisis'.
Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations	1917	Polti	A topical and exhaustive list of all possible dramatic situations, followed by a table of examples.
Dramatic Technique	1919	Baker	An argument for the prevalence of action in drama. Relates rather inconsistently the character and his actions.
Morphology of the Folk Tale	1928	Propp	Not a poetics. Relevant for the theories of a limited number of narratives. A formalist study of the folk tale. It identifies a recurrent number of narrative functions in a selection of folktales.
On Dramatic Method	1931	Granville-Barker	Puts great emphasis on the collaboration of actor and writer. Makes an apology for the creation of the fictional world.
Theory and	1936	Lawson	Building on Brunetière, states

Technique of Playwriting			that the central element of drama is manifestation of the conscious will in social conflict.
The Hero with a Thousand Faces	1949	Campbell	Anthropological study of the mono-myth. The basis for later script writing manuals such as Vogler's *The Writers Journey*.
The Art of Dramatic Writing	1942	Egri	'Character based' poetics focusing on character construction, relationships and conflict.
Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting	1979	Field	Emphasis put on character construction. Field Proposes 'plot-points', moments in which the direction of the actions changes. 'Plot-points' are similar to 'reversals'.
Writing a Play	1988	Gooch	Didactic playwriting manual. Discriminates stages in creation.
The Crafty Art of Playmaking	1988	Ayckbourn	About the production of plays more than about the creation of a text. A section on writing discusses: the initial idea, genres, characters, dialogue, and construction among others
Story	1998	McKee	A screen-writing manual, providing genre classification; dramatic curves. Shows little similarity with playwriting treatises.
The Seven Basic Plots	2004	Booker	Aimed at explaining a universal principle for narrative. Identifies seven basic plot lines that are present in a variety of mediums.
How Plays Work	2009	Edgar	Plot-based theory of drama, evoking aspects of the Method of Physical Actions.
The Dramatic Writer's Companion	2009	Dunne	Puts great emphasis on the creation of characters, establishing the conditions for the creation of the personal universe of the character.

Appendix 2 — the search for Aristotle

> The fear of the crassly infinite, of mere space, of mere matter, touched Averroes for an instant. He looked at the symmetrical garden; he felt aged, useless, unreal. Abulcasim continued: "One afternoon, the Moslem merchants of Sin Kalan took me to a house of painted wood where many people lived. It is impossible to describe the house, which was rather a single room, with row of cabinets or balconies on top of each other. In these cavities there were people who were eating and drinking, and also on a floor, and also on a terrace. The persons on this terrace were playing the drum or the lute, save for fifteen or twenty (with crimson-coloured masks) who were praying singing and conversing. They suffered prison but no one could see the jail; they traveled on horseback, but no one could see the horse; they fought but the swords were of reed, they died and then stood up again."
> "The acts of madmen," said Farach, "exceed the previsions of the sane."
> "These were no madman," Abulcasim had to explain. "They were representing a story, a merchant told me." (Borges, 1970, p.184)

In the 1949 short story *Averroes' Search* the Argentinean writer José Luis Borges (1899–1986) narrates the sense of puzzlement produced in the Arab philosopher Averroes (1126–98) with the description of a theatrical performance. In Borges's story the puzzlement is possible because of a somewhat historical inaccuracy — the long held belief that the main source for the retrieval of Aristotle's (384–322 BC) *Poetics* in Europe was the Averroes' commentary.[470] The point raised by Borges is this: that the men responsible for the translation and dissemination, in Europe, of one of the foundational texts in western culture were Arab philosophers who had no theatrical forms and no specific idioms for describing theatre.

Averroes' version is no longer held as a credible source because it is limited to only a part of the text and because a number of other documents have since come to light which have clarified and improved the knowledge of the *Poetics*[471] — it is,

[470] The Arabic commentary by Averroes is an important source for the rediscovery of Aristotle in Europe — it was translated to Latin in 1256 by Hermannus Alemannus. (Aristoteles, 2007, p.6)
[471] Another Latin version, dating from 1278, was discovered in 1930. There are also a number of versions of the text dated from the 10th to the 15th century. (Aristoteles, 2007, p.6)

nevertheless, evocative of the contingencies involved in transmission and a reminder of the wealth of interpretations of the *Poetics*.

Addressing different readings of the *Poetics* is relevant for a number of reasons. First, because of its status as the foundation of literary theory and, as a consequence, the way it became referential for other theories — there is not, to my knowledge, any other theory to have had such influence in literary and dramaturgic theory.[472] Second, because I am interested in the ways in which other authors have used Aristotle's arguments. The existence of a variety of versions and the extensive quoting of the *Poetics* is suggestive of some degree of instrumentalization of the text. Third, because there is a contradiction between the philosophical dimension of the *Poetics* and its use as a model for playwrights. The duality of dramaturgical treatises is this — that often they aim at the study of the theoretical basis of drama but are taken to be a set of regulations. The *Poetics* is one case in point. It has been taken to be a prescriptive text, but there is in fact little that suggests so in the text.[473] Other poetics such as Horace's *Ars Poetica* or Freytag's *The Technique of the Drama* are, to an extent, pragmatic lectures on the technical aspects of playwriting.

There are two frequent conceptions about the *Poetics* that I want to discuss: one is the association of *mimesis* with 'imitation'; the other, the idea that the *Poetics* is a 'normative' text. I must produce a discussion of such aspects of the readings of the *Poetics*, precisely because of its foundational status. Aristotle will be fundamental to further referencing and as a frame for understanding later poetics.

Contemporary aesthetics are diverse, polymorphic, eclectic, interdisciplinary, and reject the imposition of one system or norm. Normativity entails a static vision of drama that is in disagreement with contemporary practice.[474]

I have used the word 'normativity' because I think that what emerges of the uses of expressions such as 'Aristotelian rule' is a sense of the *Poetics* epitomizing a general idea of norm, rather than a specific set of rules of a given period. *Mimesis* is

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[472] A few examples of the prevalence of Aristotle in criticism can be found in Schechner's *Performance Theory*; Pitches' *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting*; Carlson's *Theories of the Theatre*; Schelegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature;* Nitzshe's *A Origem da Tragédia*; the list is interminable — what is difficult is to find a document on literary criticism or drama that does not refer to or quote Aristotle.

[473] This is discussed in the chapter dedicated to the *Poetics*.

[474] "From the moment when this dramaturgic model was fixed in one canonical form (while the psycho-social analysis of men was being renewed by social sciences) it blocked all formal innovation and all the new forms of understanding reality. It is not surprising that it has been so brutally rejected by new aesthetics:" (Pavis, P., 2006, p.108) The translation is mine.

central to the discussion because a strict reading of *mimesis*, as 'imitation' or 'copy', in appearance implies a restrictive view of the creative act.

'Aristotelian rule' is not a contention of Aristotle. It is a contention of his followers that emerged partly as a result of the maladroit pattern of insertion of the text in Europe.[475] The problem is that, in spite of the numerous introductions to Aristotle that explain the etymology of *mimesis* and the genesis of 'Aristotelian rule', these views travelled through time to the modern world and are still very common. Just as I write these lines I am listening to a conference convened by Nick Mount about Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* where Mount refers to the Aristotelian rule of the three unities (*Nick Mount on Samuel Beckett's* Waiting for Godot, 2009). This appendix will draw on examples of the association of Aristotle with 'normativity' or 'imitation' taken from Brecht, Boal, Zarrili, Paul Allain and Jen Harvie.

My point is not to make a defence of Aristotle but rather to attempt a reading of Aristotle that goes beyond some of the interpretations with which I have been faced in my practice and readings. I think that what can otherwise be seen under a very loose and rich frame is lost if observed from the tighter historical view of neoclassicism. As Martha Nussbaum points out,

> We are so used to thinking of him [Aristotle] as an authority, as you say as the philosopher […] and I think actually this prevents us from seeing that Aristotle really is one of the most flexible and open ended of the philosophers. One who sees philosophy as an ongoing search […]" (Magee, B., Nussbaum, M., 2008)

This is important in the context of this thesis because it facilitates an understanding of the essential aspects of the *Poetics* and consequently of the developments of a dramatic theory in later treatises.

[475] The rule of the three unities was established by the neoclassical critics who inferred from Aristotle's reference to unity of action two other unities: 'unity of time' and 'unity of place'. The Latin version of Giorgio Valla, published in 1498 marks the entrance of Aristotle's *Poetics* in Europe. Many translations and commentaries followed in Italy: Trissino, Daniello, Bernardo Segni, Robortello, Castelvetro. It is Robortello's 1548 version that sets the tone for the discussion in Italy and France. Castelvetro's *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e esposta* is the first important translation to Italian and one where a divide between liberal and conservative readings of the *Poetics* is evident.

Part of the problem is that the *Poetics* was written long after the golden age of Attic tragedy and much longer before modern drama.[476] Regardless of what theory of tragedy one might agree with, it is consensual that what Aristotle was talking about was not performance in the contemporary sense. But how did this link between Aristotle, rules and norm come about? What examples are there of the transformation of the supposed Aristotelian rules in dogma? And what examples are there of the uses of *mimesis* as copy? To what extent can the problems in interpretation of the *Poetics* be identified and what will the impact of that assessment be for the study of subsequent poetics?

Normativity

The '*querelle* du Cid' has been used as an extreme example of a contention on dramaturgic norm, and it is the most achieved historical anecdote on the creation of an association between rules and Aristotle. In itself the *querelle* is not unique: in France there had been the Malherbe (1555–1628)/Desportes (1546–1606) opposition to Régnier (1573–1613), the *procès* Théophile and the '*querelle de lettres de* Balzac'; in England the 'war of the theatres', opposing Ben Jonson (1572–1637) to Thomas Dekker (1572–1632), Middleton (1570–1627) and John Marston (1576–1634). What is exemplary about the '*querelle* du Cid' is the impact it had in France,[477] the involvement of the *Academie Françoise* under the auspices of the Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), and the pervasive use of classical theory as the intellectual foundation on both sides. Corneille explains that:

> The *querelle* du Cid was essential to the establishment of dramaturgical dogma in France at least in two aspects: it gave the champions of rules the opportunity to state the solid foundation and authority of their position, which was from then on rendered incontestable for its association with the Richelieu's Academie; it allowed Corneille to test the radical originality of his theatre and forced him to adopt a vision in

[476] "If we date the *Poetics*, about the year 330 B.C., as seems probable, that is more than two hundred years after the first tragedy of Thespis was produced and more than seventy after the death of the last of the great tragic masters" (Aristotle, 1920, p.12)

[477] Both personally and as a symbol of the imposition of the idea of the literary on theatrical practice, "But the literary problem that had been raised by Scudéry worried him [Corneille] intensely; Chapelain wrote to Guez de Balzac on January, the 15th 1639: 'He [Corneille] talks of nothing but rules and what he could say to the academicians.'" (Corneille, 1970, p.21)

> regard to his plays that was no longer exclusively that of a practitioner. (Corneille, 1999, p.224)[478]

The *querelle* took place throughout the year of 1637, after the opening of Corneille's tragicomedy *Le Cid* and involved the circulation of a number of pamphlets in criticism of the play.[479] The attribution of dates is imprecise and many of those pamphlets were issued anonymously, but the development and themes of the controversy are well known.

The main actors in the *querelle* were: Scudéry (1601–1667), a rival playwright to Corneille (1606–1684) and champion of the controversy; Corneille himself; and the *Academie Françoise*,[480] by the hand of Chapelain (1595–1674). Conversely they were also the authors of the most important surviving documents: Scudéry's detailed critique, *Observations sur* le Cid; a number of replies by Corneille; and the *Sentiments de l'Academie Françoise sur la tragicomedy du* Cid. There are other documents, such as the anonymous *Discours à Clinton,* or A. Balzac's letters to Scudéry[481] that are interesting but unimportant to the general development of the controversy.[482]

The controversy can be précised topically. I shall concentrate on the three main figures implicated in it, though mentioning others, in passing.

It is generally believed that Corneille himself prompted the *querelle* by issuing, in February 1637 a self-praising epistle, *Excuse à Ariste*. In that document Corneille praises his own talent, claims to have no rivals and asserts his precedence over his contemporaries:

> All my success is the product of my own talent
> And I think have no rivals
> I have earned the right to treat everyone as equals.
> (Civardi, J., 2002 p.13)

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[478] My translation

[479] The surviving documents point at different opening dates. Contemporary historians think the play opened on the 7th of January 1637, at the Marais. (Corneille, 1970, p.10)

[480] I have adopted the period's designation for reasons of personal taste. The modern designation is *Academie Française*.

[481] Scudéry's *Observations sur* le Cid was released anonymously. The authorship of the other documents mentioned (*Le Jugement du Cid*; *Discours à Clinton*) is still contested.

[482] Talleman des Reaux, Boileau and Fontanelle suggested that Richelieu himself was the instigator of the querelle in retribution to Corneille's having left the 'societè des cinq auteurs'.

A few pamphlets came out in response to Corneille, both against him and in his favour (by Mairet (1604–1686), Balzac (1597–1654) and Jean Pierre Camus (1584–1652), among others). The most important of the responses to Corneille was Scudéry's *Observations sur le Cid*, in which the author made several important accusations to Corneille. It was Scudéry that established the main themes in the controversy. These were: a range of linguistic and poetic (lyrical) problems, a bad choice of subject, an accusation of plagiarism, incompetent handling of plot construction and, most interestingly, an accusation of disrespect for the rules of the dramatic poem:

> The subject has no value,
> It goes against the rules of the dramatic poem,
> There is no judgment in the way it is conducted,
> Some verses are mean,
> Most of its beauty is taken from somewhere else,
> And so it is wrong to take pleasure from it. (Civardi, J., 2002 p.13)

By June, Corneille issued a *Lettre apologétique* in which he turned accusations on his attacker. Among other arguments Corneille highlighted the lack of legitimacy of Scudéry, who had made his accusations anonymously. It was this allegation that made Scudéry want to appear in public.[483]

In spite of the relatively short duration of the controversy (only three months had elapsed since Corneille's self-praising epistle) Corneille had been much eroded by it and looked forward to its end — the argument had crossed the borders of Paris and there was a sense in which the affair was becoming a social embarrassment.

Right at the beginning of the controversy Scudéry had suggested that the public approval of the *Cid* was a collective mistake. In *Lettre apologétique*, Corneille used his attacker's words both to establish the value of the play for the audience and to attack Scudéry:

> […] from all the dramatic poems that have come to light mine was the only one whose brightness pushed the quill of envy to write. I declare myself quite content

[483] In his *Lettre de M de Scudéry à l'Académie Françoise*, Scudéry says "Sirs, Since Mr. Corneille has unveiled my mask, and he requires that I be known — I am only too accustomed to appear before people of some stand to be trying to hide myself […]" (Corneille, 1970, p.152)

> with all the criticism, since you have admitted yourself that the play *was approved by all the wise men in the court*. This praise with which you start your censure destroys any criticism you may embark upon thereafter. (Corneille, 1970, p.152)

Scudéry could not argue for the failure of *Le Cid* in public presentation since he had himself admitted it had been a success, but he could continue arguing for its failure as a work of art — and he went for the unequivocal proof of that, by inviting the intervention of the *Academie Françoise*, in June 1637.

The *Academie Françoise* had been founded by Cardinal Richelieu just two years before the opening of the *Cid* and its function was to oversee the use of the French language. It is worth remembering a tension under which the Academie existed. Though created by the most powerful figure in the state, the Academie was still establishing its position.[484] This gives some weight to the personal involvement of the Cardinal in the *querelle* and, more importantly, it transforms a simple literary argument in to a possible affair of state.

The *Sentiments de l'Academie Françoise sur la tragicomedy du* Cid, published in December 1637, was the task of yet another playwright, Chapelain. The advantage to Corneille was that personally Chapelain seemed to have an unbiased view towards him; the disadvantage was that Chapelain was, nevertheless, subservient to Richelieu.

The *Sentiments* follows the ideas of Scudéry though having a more positive view of the *Cid*. The argument tends to some circularity which needs to be understood within the neoclassical mind frame. That is, there is a self-referential logic imposed by the obedience to a dogmatic view which depends on 'verisimilitude' — the guiding idea of seventeenth century French criticism. There are variations on the neoclassical concept of 'verisimilitude',[485] in spite of the period's normative tendencies. 'Verisimilitude' implies a likeness to the principles

[484] "The academicians were conscious of the risk involved for the image of the academy in civil society and before the specialists — in spite of the highest protection of Richelieu. The academy's registration documents had been processed in 1635 but accepted only in 1637. The Paris parliament had justly scorned the appearance of a new institution emerging from within Richelieu's absolutist politics." (Civardi, J., 2002, p.14)

[485] "Everything points to the idea that verisimilitude is built as process of abstraction of the imitated reality and as a code of semantic oppositions. That is what explains its historical relativity: truth changes and above all the appearance of things (what is similar) evolves." (Pavis, P., 2006, p.406.)

that order the real but it means also a likeness to principles of morally acceptable behavior.

The source of the *Cid* is *Las Mocedades del Cid* (1605–15), by the Spanish playwright Guillém de Castro (1569–1631). The accusation of plagiarism[486] in the *Cid* was initially advanced by the playwright Mairet (1604–86) in the six strophes published in 1637, "*The author of the real Spanish Cid has a translator in France […] about a man* [Corneille] *who claims vainly: All my success is the product of my own talent.*" (Civardi, J., 2002, p.13)

An allegation of plagiarism was unusual at the time; not only because it was common practice to recreate stories from existing real or fictive plotlines, but because there had been in France a taste for all things Spanish that extended to the plots of many plays. Mairet and Scudéry, as many other French authors, had based plays on Spanish literature.[487]

The criticism of plagiarism in Scudéry's verse, "[…] beauty is taken from somewhere else […]" (Civardi, J., 2002 p.13), brought in a nuance in that it appealed to nationalistic feeling.[488] Scudéry's implication was that, as a copy of a Spanish play, the *Cid* lacked original French ideas, so that if any value existed in it, it wasn't Corneille's, and it was not patriotic. This was a relevant aspect of the controversy considered in *The Sentiments.* Chapelain — though acknowledging the influence of the Spanish play and claiming, at times, the inferiority of the *Cid* in relation to the source — was still sensitive to Corneille's powers of invention:

> Even though we recognize that there are parts that have been imitated and remained below the original & some others merely improved, there are yet others to which new thoughts have been added that bear no relation to the first author. (Civardi, J., 2002, p.15–16)

Other remarks were aimed at strictly dramaturgical aspects. By "[…] the subject has no value" (Civardi, J., 2002, p.16) Scudéry meant that Corneille had not understood

[486] In reference to Scudéry's line "[…] its beauty is taken from somewhere […]" (Civardi, J., 2002 p.13).
[487] Mairet based his *Les galanteries du Duc d'Ossone* on Spanish literature and so did Scudéry with *Amant Libéral*. (Civardi, J., 2002, p.15)
[488] The war with Spain had started in 1635.

the kind of plot required for a tragicomedy.[489] In the *Cid*, Don Rodrigue, the title character, is faced with a dilemma. In order to preserve the honour of his family he is forced to kill the father of Chimène, his wife to be. The assassination of Chimène's father happens in the first act and the plot of the *Cid* concerns the attempts at reconciliation between Don Rodrigue and Chimène. Scudéry thought that the death of Chimène's father in the first act invalidated any further developments in the plot. Typically a number of actions would lead to a dramatic climax in a succession of increasingly complex events (a complication). By placing the death of an important character in the beginning, Scudéry argued, Corneille had destroyed the structure of a consistent complication and a dénouement.

Chapelain did not accept this point. For him there was both complication and dénouement. Chapelain justified this by saying that the contention between the parents of both lovers, and subsequent killing of Chimène's father, was enough to create expectations for the unfolding of the play:

> Chapelain considers that the complication and dénoument are evident in the Cid, for the affair between the parents "puts all of the affair on the brink of ending" (p.362) and the marriage of Chimène is awaited, up till the end of the play. (Civardi, J., 2002, p.17)

What is interesting about this contention, in the context of this thesis, is the way in which complication and dénouement are evoked by Chapelain and Scudéry. Not only are these categories created by Aristotle but they are evoked by both of the parties as dogma. I mentioned earlier a tension between the philosophical elements of poetics and the regulative elements. I claimed that the philosophical elements had in subsequent poetics been understood as regulative. The question was not whether complication and denouement were needed in a play but whether Corneille had been able to create a satisfactory complication and denouement.

A related point is the supposed lack of 'judgment in the way it is conducted'. This point refers specifically to the intrigue and there are two related aspects that

[489] "[…] to surprise the audience is not its aim [tragedy's], for the spectator knows already what should be represented. Such is not the case in tragicomedy, for though this genre wasn't known in antiquity, it is still a mixture of tragedy and comedy and tends towards the latter — if we consider the way it should end. In this kind of poem an entanglement should be created in the first act, keeping the spirit in suspense through to the end of the work." (Corneille, 1999, p.225)

deserve to be mentioned: unnecessary characters and episodes, and the lack of time-depicting tricks. As for the existence of unnecessary characters and episodes, the *Academie* agrees with Scudéry,

> I, 2: Chapelain shares the opinion of Scudéry. He says "all of the episode with the Infanta is condemnable. This character has no use whatsoever — not for the conclusion, not for the breaking up of a marriage & it only depicts the feelings of a princess, a passion that is too young and shows no [good] sense on the side of a princess that falls for a man that has not had the opportunity yet to show his value." (Civardi, J., 2002, p.19)

Corneille included the character of the Infanta as a counterpoint to the character of Don Sancho — the Infanta is in love with Don Rodrigue and Don Sancho with Chimène. The sole function of Don Sancho is to offer himself to fight Don Rodrigue so making it believable, in the fifth act, that Don Rodrigue could have been killed in a duel. It is this that turns a daughter determined to find justice for her father into an inconsolable mourner by the end of the play, and it is this that gives the king leeway to push Chimène in to marrying Don Rodrigue. Don Sancho is then shown by the *Academie* as a character whose actions are interconnected with the flow of the main action, but such is not the case with the Infanta who appears for reasons of symmetry. The existence of characters not necessary for the main plot contradicted two important neoclassical beliefs of Aristotelian origin: unity of action, which required all secondary actions in the play to be subsidiary to one central action; and wholeness, which forbade unnecessary digressions from the central narrative core.

Scudéry also criticized Corneille's inability to produce tricks that could adequately portray the passage of time. If a given number of actions need to happen in a play (Scudéry claims that a tragicomedy must be rich in surprises), then the playwright should be able to portray the idea of time by introducing choruses and intervals.

Most of the episodes contained in the *Cid*, are already present in the original play by Guillém de Castro. The French neoclassical convention for tragedy strictly determines that the fictional time of a play should not exceed twenty four hours, that the action should happen in one place and that there should be only one action. *Las*

Mocedades follows the tradition of Spanish plays of the period — it organizes the actions in days, consisting of several high paced episodes and adventures taking place in multiple sites. The last day happens eighteen months after the first day. Corneille, in order to preserve the unity of time, was forced to compress all of that time and the multiplicity of locations of *Las Mocedades* into one day, in the city of Seville. Scudéry remarked ironically:

> In reality all of the actions performed in the life of the Cid over several years have in this play been forced to fit twenty four hours; so that the characters seem like *Deus ex machina*, dropping out of the sky: in a normal day at the court a governor to the prince of Castile is elected; a combat between Don Dièguе and the Comte is held; another between Rodrigo [490] and the Comte; yet another between Rodrigo and the Moor; one more against don Sanche; a marriage takes place between Rodrigo and Chimène: I'll let you evaluate whether this was a well used day or whether we should accuse the characters of laziness? (Corneille, 1999, p.227)

The issue was, again, Corneille's incapacity in discriminating genres and handling the plot of a tragicomedy. For Scudéry, Corneille had disrespected the rules of the unities, because he had not been able to find an action that organically fit the unities of time and place. Chapelain on the other hand was sympathetic with Corneille's dilemma. For him it was not that Corneille had disrespected the unity of action but that he had respected the unity of time too well. He considered that the compression of too many scenes into twenty-four hours was unhappy — like Scudéry he hints at the problem of genre — but unlike Scudéry he acknowledged that Corneille was merely following a wrong but nevertheless accepted convention: as Civardi notes:

> As to the unity of place, Chapelain hardly considers it, it was normal at the period "it is true that this is a problem that can be identified in most of our plays […]"(Les Sentiments, p.392) and since he decided, though maladroitly, to follow the unity of time he had to keep to the to the unity of place too. (Civardi, 2002, p.20)

[490] Rodrigo (the Cid) in Guillem de Castro's *Las Mocedades del Cid*, becomes Don Rodrigue in Corneille's *Le Cid*.

Much more central to Chapelain is the problem of 'verisimilitude', the respect for the *bienséance*, the *moeurs* and its connection with the overall coherence of the play. According to Pavis, '*bienséance*', generally translated as 'decorum' or 'propriety', implies an adaptation to the taste of the audience and its representation of the real.

> It [*bienséance*] is of Aristotelian origin and it entails conformity to literary convention, morally acceptable characters, the hiding of the less noble aspects of reality, as well as the holding back on the representation of sexuality, death and violence. It imposes coherence to the construction of the fable and events too. (Pavis, P., 2006, p.34)

The *moeurs* are a manifestation of the characters personal conduct in relation to decorum and verisimilitude. They are a development of Aristotle's idea of moral character (*ethos*). I have mentioned Scudéry's concern that a character's traits should be morally exemplar. In neoclassical drama this can be extended to the idea of play design so that there is a verisimilitude of personal traits by way of a respect to decorum (*bienséances*) and an adequate personal conduct (*moeurs*) — verisimilitude in this sense is a kind of coherence of the character's behavior in relation to what is regarded as morally acceptable.[491] It is not surprising then that the *Cid* should be the target of much criticism — in the play Chimène is shown as a dedicated lover to her father's assassin shortly after the murder is consummated. The matter is not so much that she 'should' have, verisimilarly, been affected by the murder but that she should demonstrate compliance to decorum:

> There we see, a woman betraying her nature, speaking of her follies when she should speak of her misfortunes, grieving the loss of a lover when she should think of that of her father, persist in loving the one she should abhor […] (Corneille, 1999, p.226)

What the neoclassicists had done in a variety of ways was to adapt the Aristotelian idea of necessity, verisimilitude and character to their own needs. I have mentioned circularity and it is at this point that the neoclassical argument collides with the several understandings of 'verisimilitude'. The notions of verisimilitude and necessity which were quite broad principles of coherence in Aristotle, were

[491] "[…] 'bienséance' is ethical verisimilitude". (Corneille, 1999, p.226)

transmuted into *vraisemblable*, *bienséanc*e and the *moeurs* which were principles of coherence tempered by notions of moral excellence.

Chapelain's point, though dogmatic, was less moral — he seemed to be more concerned with the internal coherence of the play, which must render the events credible to the spectator. Rather than discussing the morals of the character of Chimène he was concerned that she should appear coherent to the audience in the development of the play. "The good sense of the virtuous character of a girl is not guarded by the poet if she resorts to marry the killer of her father [...](Corneille, 1999, p.230). Chapelain is not as hard with the character of Chimène as Scudéry — he accepts as reasonable that she should remain in love with Rodrigue — but he realizes that to keep her character coherent the play should have a different ending: leaning the play towards tragedy. Chapelain goes as far as to suggest some changes to the play:

> It would have been far more convenient to the *Cid*, that it should be discovered, by the end of the play, that the Count was not Chimene's real father, or that against everyone's opinion he had not died by the hand of Rodrigue; or that the kingdom depended in some way on the marriage of Rodrigue and Chimène […] (Civardi, J., 2002, p.17)

Chapelain's suggested alterations are not the advice of an individual colleague. The *Sentiments de l'Academie Françoise sur la tragicomedy du* Cid are official opinion — aimed at establishing reason within the contention and sanctioned by political power. What is surprising about the *querelle du Cid* in general and the *Sentiments* in particular, is the degree of regulative official interference in the practice of an author.

Imitation

Part of the divergence between Scudéry and Chapelain (in relation to Corneille) was that the latter gave emphasis to the formal aspect and the former to the moral aspect. In his *Lettre sur règle des vingt-quatre heures*, written a few years before the *Cid* controversy, Chapelain exposes thus the fundamentals of a doctrine that seeks to close in the gap between the real and the imitated:

> I am therefore saying that the foundations of imitation in every poem should be to make them so perfect, that no difference between the imitated thing and that which imitates can be perceived. (Corneille, 1999, p.216)

This is the reason neoclassical writers put so much emphasis on the approximation of real time and fictive time (unity of time), as well as on the circumscription of the action of the play to one place (unity of place). Accordingly the quality of the dramatic poem should not be in the writer's power of invention but in his ability to reproduce. This is an idea which has emerged out of the complexities in the interpretation of the word *mimesis* and which had great currency in the period of Corneille, Scudéry and Chapelain. The *Poetics* itself, by considering dramatic poetry along with painting and sculpture, already suggests a likeness between the artistic object and that which is to be 'imitated', but like it happened with the supposedly normative aspects of the *Poetics*, the association of *mimesis* with copy was also, to a great measure, a creation of the followers of Aristotle.

Part of the problem resides in the lack of a consensual modern equivalent for the word *mimesis*. Most translators use either 'imitation' or 'representation' or a combination of the two words.[492] Translators are only too aware of the common assumptions on the word 'imitation' and of the linguistic implications of such translation.[493]

The rise of Stanislavsky-based acting theories might have extended the idea that there are degrees of similarity between real-life people, characters and performers, pushing the notions of likeness further in other artistic fields. The

[492] To give a few examples: Dorsh, Sousa, Vicente and Malcolm Heath use 'imitation'; N.G.L. Hammond uses 'representation'; Halliwell uses both 'representation' and 'imitation' in the same translation. Hammond's concern was with making the text understandable for the general reader, and for this reason he opted for a reorganization of subjects and the simplification of concepts.

[493] This is one of the reasons why I have chosen Halliwell's translation. Rather than choosing one term Halliwell used both 'imitation' and 'representation' where he thinks this will better disclose the original implications. There is a risk in the modernization of expressions in that the ritualistic aspects of Greek tragedy might disappear in favor of a simplified modern 'drama' equivalent. Eudoro de Sousa, tries the possible semantic equivalence rather than the contextual. Sousa uses 'myth' where others place 'plot' or 'action'. The advantage of Sousa's translation is that it keeps in sight the importance the old myths had in the composition of tragedies. The disadvantage is that, in the parts where 'myth' is supposed to mean 'plot', the reading becomes cumbersome.

example of Lee Strasberg who focused on 'affective memory' and the emotion of the actor as a means to reproduce the emotion of the character is a case in point.[494]

It should be clear that I am not contesting the prevalence of the mimetic conception of arts in classical theory.[495] What I am questioning is Aristotle's part in the establishment of that conception. I have previously referred to an interview with Martha Nussbaum by Magee, in which Nussbaum contrasted the orthodox perspective of Aristotle as the "authority" with her own view of Aristotle as a "flexible" and "open ended" philosopher (Magee, Nussbaum, 2008). I am building on Nussbaum's idea.

The most common and most discussed alternative to 'imitation' has been 'representation'. The problem with 'representation', however, is that it does not necessarily imply a 'likeness'. As Heath remarks:

> All translations are, of course, to some extent inadequate, and 'imitation' is by no means perfect; but there are two reason why 'representation' may be particularly unhelpful in this context. First, it fails to capture an essential element in Aristotle's concept of 'mimesis' — that of a similarity that does not rest wholly on convention. For example a symbol on a map may 'represent' an airport, but the representation is purely conventional; the symbol is not a mimesis of an airport. […] Secondly, 'representation' fails to capture the full range of Aristotle's concept. The use of a quasi-technical term of modern aesthetics may tend to obscure the continuity which Aristotle perceives as between *mimêsis* in painting, poetry and music and in other, non-artistic forms of activity […] (Aristotle, 1996 , p.xiii)

This is all the more important as Aristotle identifies in humanity an instinct to produce and appreciate likenesses.[496] For Aristotle the instinct for the creation of

[494] By a mix of misinterpretation of Stanislavsky and by the influence of psychoanalysis in the USA Lee Strasberg gave greater weight to 'affective memory' than what was initially suggested by Stanislavsky. (Hornby, 1992, p.182)

[495] "[...] the mimetic theories of antiquity, focused on the relationship between the outside world and the work of art. These theories posited that that poetry could best be understood as an imitation, a representation, a copy of the physical world." (Richter, 2007, p.2)

[496] "For it is an instinct of human beings from childhood, to engage in mimesis"; "For, if one happens not to have seen the object before, the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis but because of its execution or color, or for some other such reason." (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005 p.37,38)

'likenesses' is rooted in a desire for knowledge that entails the identification of the 'object' with the 'likeness'. He includes in these non-artistic forms several degrees of 'likeness' from children playing, through the mimicry of animal's noises, through to poetry and music. *Mimesis* seems to be an overarching human concept and not a strictly artistic term that classifies the relation of the artistic production and the physical world.

Aristotelian *mimesis* is not circumscribed to existing things — there can be 'likenesses' of non-existent things. The 'likeness' might be of things as they might have happened and not as they did happen, as long as it obeys principles of necessity and probability. Aristotle reiterates this idea by saying that poetry is more elevated than history because it conveys the universal and not the particular.

In artistic production *mimesis* can be oblique. Aristotle states, in chapter I of the *Poetics*, that rhythm (Aristotle is talking of the musical elements in dance) can 'imitate' emotions:

> […] rhythm on its own, without melody, is used by the art of dancers (since they too, through rhythms, translated in to movements create mimesis of characters, emotions and actions) […] (Aristotle, Longinus and Demetrius, 2005, p.31)

It is known that Plato condemned theatre and that the *Poetics* was written as a response to his views. This condemnation can be found in Books II, III and X of the *Republic* where Plato attempts an outline of the principles of the ideal city. In considering the education of the guardians, Plato comes to the idea that poetry — dramatic poetry in particular — can prove a bad influence.[497] Dramatic poetry not only depicted imperfect characters, but it also failed in that it was attempting depictions[498] of what was already an imperfect image of the ideal world. Plato considered emotion as an undesirable aspect of the ideal society; he thought the valid form of *mimesis* was the lifelike *mimesis* of perfect, exemplary objects. By placing

[497] "Shall we therefore readily allow our children listen to any stories made by anyone, and to make opinions that are for the most part opposite of those we think they should have when they grow up." (Plato, 2003 p.69)

[498] "'The worst fault possible,' I replied, 'especially if the fiction is an ugly one.' 'And what is that?' 'Misrepresenting the nature of the gods and heroes, like a portrait painter whose pictures bear no resemblance to their originals.'" (Plato, 2003, p.69); "'So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature a third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative artists.'" (Plato, 2003, p.339)

the emphasis on example, Plato turns *mimesis* into an instrumental aspect of for the education of the guardians rather than an independent activity.

Aristotle, in contrast with Plato, considered imitation as autonomous from the imitated thing. He believed there was an art of producing poetry that was not subsidiary to the display of good examples. Furthermore, he thought that dramatic poetry could be of great value to society for it helped men through the catharsis of undesirable emotions of fear and pity.[499]

Aristotle's notion of the superiority of poetry, in that it deals with universal ideas, as opposed to history, which deals with real figures and events, also illustrates the degree of autonomy of the poem from the object of *mimesis*:

> The difference between the historian and the poet is not that between using verse or prose; Herodotus' work could be versified and would be just as much a kind of history in verse. No, the difference is this: that one relates to actual events the other the kinds of things that might occur. Consequently poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history [...] (Aristotle, 2005, p.59)

Poems are not exclusively reproducing reality — poetry understands the principles of reality in order to produce objects that synthesize the logic of reality. The poet, like the philosopher, actively understands the world — but he creates something that is autonomous from the world.

Rather than using the Greek word *mimesis* Horace used the Latin word *imitatio* thus inaugurating a linguistic precedent. This is all the more evident if we consider Horace's emphasis on ideas of 'pleasure' and 'instruction'. The *Ars Poetica* was one of the most influential treatises in medieval and renaissance Europe[500] — Latin poetics treatises circulated in Europe before Aristotle's *Poetics* and the idea that theatre should 'instruct' and 'please' is a common asset of a number of medieval and early renaissance writers. And so it is that the copy of the virtuous as form of instruction reinforces one the idea of imitation.

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[499] Catharsis is not central to my discussion. I am referring to catharsis only as a means to illustrate the variety of functions attributed by Aristotle to dramatic poetry. Catharsis is treated briefly in the chapter dedicated to Aristotle's *Poetics*.

[500] "[…] the sole work of the classical period to rival the *Poetics* in its influence and subsequent criticism." (Carlson, 1993, p23)

One consequence of the above is that the reception of the *Poetics* text is marked by an exaggeration in positions that has diminished a contextualized and encompassing appreciation of that document. Tierno's *Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters*, Syd Field's *Screenplay*, or Lajos Egri's *The Art of Dramatic Writing* regard the *Poetics* as a timeless document capable of seamlessly explaining modern drama.

Within specialized literature examples can be found where the *Poetics* is used to convey generalized ideas on imitation and Aristotelian rule,

> Unlike early Western theories of acting, such as Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is mainly concerned with theories of mimesis and representation, and therefore pays no attention to issues of embodiment, training or technique[…] (Zarrilli, 2002, p.86)

Zarrilli is talking from a very specific point of view — arguing in favour of acting theories and techniques adapted to the contemporary world. Zarrilli did not want to restrict the meanings of *mimesis* and he pairs 'representation' with *mimesis*, which broadens the field of imitation, but he freely associates Aristotle and *mimesis* with acting technique. In fact, Aristotle's only references to acting are aligned with his contemporaries and predecessors — there is clear reference to the vanity of actors and to the temptations to respond to the audience's poor taste but there is no mention that I know of about how actors should be trained.[501]

Paul Allain and Jen Harvie, in the chapter dedicated to naturalism and realism, in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* suggest that:

> What is important is that realism and naturalism are both founded on the premise that art should hold up a mirror to nature, a once revolutionary concept. This demands a mimetic mode of representation, drawing in part on the logic of narrative structures and staging implied by Aristotle's unities of time, space and action. (Allain, and Harvie, 2006, P.178)

[501] "[…] tragedy's capacity is independent of performance and actor […]" (Aristotle, 2005, p.55) and "People say that the latter is addressed to decent spectators who have no need of gestures, but tragedy to crude spectators; if then tragedy is vulgar, it will evidently be inferior. Now, in the first place, this charge applies not to poetry but to acting, since one can overdo visual signs both in an epic, like Sosistratus, and in singing display, as Mnasitheus." (Aristotle, 2005, p.137)

Allain and Harvie are establishing a link between narrative structures and mimetic art as mirror, and so promoting the idea of Aristotelian rule as a form of realist depiction aligned with what has been the common interpretation of Aristotle by playwrights and critics. The reference to the unities of time, space and action is, I believe, a reference to the neoclassical 'rule of the three unities' but Allain and Harvie's phrasing suggests this was a rule established by Aristotle himself.

Until now I have been trying to emphasize the idea that there is an established historical association between Aristotle, 'normativity' and 'imitation'. I have pointed out some relevant examples and I have tried to trace back the origins of those associations to neoclassicism. I have done so because I wanted to clarify the extent to which Aristotle's theories had been used and what was specific for other treatises. This thesis discusses poetic treatises and it is important that specific aspects of each period are understood by reference to the ideas which precede them.

There are however other examples of the association of Aristotle to norm and *mimesis* that are more interesting for their influence and for the consistency of the argument presented in favour of those views. These examples are particularly interesting because they gave a strong significance to terms that became well disseminated in theatrical practice and theory: non-Aristotelian and Aristotelian. I am referring to Brecht (1898–1956) and Boal (1931–2009) respectively.