

## 1

---



---

**INTRODUCTION**

“Theory” is now the usual term for the kind of texts included in this volume though it was not used in this way by any of the authors included here. For the Greeks, who coined the word, it had the sense that it retains of contemplation, of viewing not doing. “Theory” has, in fact, a common etymological root, signifying “see,” with the word “theatre.” From this it might be surmised that both theory and theatre are modes of contemplation and that theorizing about theatre is thus a distinctly introverted activity. But the theatre is *in* the world as well as a place for observing it; drama never represents the world with complete objectivity and the spectators are never wholly detached observers. Nor, for that matter, has the theory of drama been uninvolved with its practice – on the contrary. So it is fitting that, far from being purely contemplative, the most renowned and influential work of dramatic theory, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, is concerned with the *making* of tragedy, not just with its appreciation, and with drama as something *done* and experienced, as well as something contemplated.

Sometimes dramatic theory is dismissed as useless, but it is precisely when it tries to be practically useful that it becomes most contentious. One scenario goes something like this:

PRACTICE (aggressively): What *use* are you?

THEORY (cunningly): Perhaps to consider what use *you* are. (After a moment’s silence.) But, tell me, do you know what you’re doing?

PRACTICE (insolently): Possibly not, but it works!

In a more civil encounter Practice asks, “Can you tell me how this was done?” Theory, flattered, attempts an explanation and, yielding to temptation, goes on to offer some general rules, which Practice joyfully breaks.

Scientific theories have sometimes been tailored to prevailing moral, political, or religious codes but the historical tendency has been for experimental science to expose contradictions between nature’s laws and current understandings of them, or by practical applications to validate existing theories. Since the arts are entirely human productions, theories about them cannot be objectively tested and are therefore more liable to be

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 2 Sources of dramatic theory

subsumed under the prevailing orthodoxies. Theologies have often attempted to govern the arts and supply their theory for them and some influential present-day artistic theories have been derived from Marxism. The theory that, to the exclusion of all others and of theoretical discourse itself, attempts to deliver the arts from such subordination holds that artistic works themselves wholly and solely embody whatever principles inform them. Plato seems to be aware of the invincibility of this position when he rules out of order any defense of poetry in the form itself of poetry (Pl/31). Other theories, recognizing that such a claim to full autonomy for the arts would involve theoretical self-contradiction, have acknowledged varying degrees of dependence of larger philosophical or ideological constructs, and have concerned themselves with the defense or elucidation of particular works or with such key issues in the understanding of a specific art as its origins, its present function, the aesthetic principles by which it may be appreciated or judged, and the precepts to be followed in its production. Such theoretical statements have appeared in a variety of forms, from extensive and comprehensive commentaries to short prefaces. Not surprisingly, dramatic theory has often been presented in dialogue form.

Since dramatic theories of the past are the products of their time and place, they are sometimes considered as essentially historical documents. But the history of dramatic theory does not recount a continuous development: many new starts are made in ignorance of what has gone before and certain issues recur so often as to suggest that they are always relevant, despite the particularity of the social and intellectual contexts in which they arise. Some of these recurrent issues are: what it means to represent or imitate something dramatically; how written texts are related to live performances; by what means, in what ways, and to what ends spectators may be affected; how the various contributory arts such as poetry, dance, painting, and music may or should be combined in the theatre; to what degree the actor may be an artistic medium for some other artist such as a playwright or director, or be an interpreter of a role, or be a primary creator; and what constitutes or legitimizes certain dramatic genres and how they are to be distinguished and used.

The intellectual method of treating such theoretical questions as historical ones is comparatively recent. One of its founders was A. W. Schlegel, whose influential *Lectures on Dramatic Poetry* were published in 1812. Up to that time, the interest in theories of the past was almost invariably in their contemporary aesthetic applications. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Art of Poetry* were treated as active elements in the thought of the times and were often distorted, consciously and otherwise, in the process. In our own century, many once-influential theories have been relegated to history or simply forgotten, but the *Poetics* has been redeployed, both positively and, in some

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

highly significant instances, with a sharp antagonism.<sup>1</sup> Brecht's quarrel with Aristotle, for instance, was an important element in the shaping of his own theory, his plays, and his productions.

By contrast with the modern tendency towards historicism, many commentators in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were intent on making Aristotle and Horace, even when they took them as "guides not commanders" (Jn/193), as thoroughly prescriptive (and so as useful) as possible. Whatever else may be said about it, this approach did, at least, try to keep theory in contact with practice. Nor was it an out-and-out abuse of the ancients, for Aristotle is prescriptive in a rather complex way and Horace is clearly so. Stephen Halliwell observes an "affinity between the *Poetics* and various Greek *technai* or didactic manuals which were produced in a variety of fields, perhaps above all in rhetoric, but also in more practical crafts such as painting or sculpture" (1986, 37). But Halliwell insists on "the difference between theoretical and practical prescription, and that the *Poetics* is essentially an exercise in the former not the latter" (p.38). The way in which his interesting argument first posits a distinction between theory and prescription and then gingerly merges them in "theoretical . . . prescription" is an illustration of how suspect prescriptiveness has become in modern times.

Theory remote from practice is also suspect, and it was particularly so in 1938, when R. G. Collingwood's *The Principles of Art* appeared. Collingwood, who took up many of the classical issues, was much less worried about being prescriptive than about being "academic." He insisted that he did "not think of aesthetic theory as an attempt to investigate and expound eternal verities concerning the nature of an eternal object called Art, but as an attempt to reach, by thinking, the solution of certain problems arising out of the situation in which artists find themselves here and now." His book, he said, was intended, primarily, to be of "use" to artists (p.vi).

In distancing himself from "academic philosophers" (such as himself) and ranging himself with "poets, painters, and sculptors" (whose "often chaotic" attempts at aesthetic theory were a motive for his own), Collingwood was assuming a rather paradoxical, but by no means unprecedented, role. It may be extravagant to imagine (as the nineteenth-century scholar Teichmüller did) that aspiring Athenian dramatists went to hear Aristotle to learn more about their craft, but it is possible that Aristotle, like Collingwood and many other theorists, wanted to be of some use to makers of plays. His Renaissance commentators certainly did. Robortello and Castelvetro, for example, interpret the *Poetics* very differently but they share with each other and with their contemporaries the assumption that

<sup>1</sup> As for instance by Francis Fergusson in his *The Idea of a Theater* ([1949] 1968) and the "Chicago School" (for which see Crane 1952) in a positive way, and by Antonin Artaud in *The Theater and its Double* (1958) and Augusto Boal in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1976) negatively.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 4 Sources of dramatic theory

sound theory is a prerequisite of good practice.

The combination of understanding and practical skill was called “art,” in a sense that survives today in “the art of medicine” or “state of the art.” And the term “art” was also applied to a literary form (related to the modern “guide,” “handbook” or “manual”) modeled on Horace’s so-called *Art of Poetry*.<sup>2</sup> Lope de Vega treated this form with an interesting ambivalence. His *New Art of Making Comedies* undermines the very idea of an “art” that lays down guidelines for the dramatist. He may, indeed, be intimating that “art” is an indefinite but quintessential quality, using the word somewhat in the modern way for certain painted, sculptured, or written works. “Art” in this modern, honorific sense does not usually include ceramics, quilts, chairs, or textbooks, for the production of which some “craft” is required or for which a practical use is intended, and is distinguished from “science” (such as medicine), which is based largely on a body of transmissible knowledge and definite principles.

Lope de Vega’s brief theoretical statement is imbued with irony and with an overriding confidence in his achievements, whether they were those of an artist or a crafty entertainer. For Corneille, however, the question of “art” was a vexatious one. He insisted (Cn/235) that the object of drama was pleasure but that “to find this appropriate pleasure and to give it to the audience one must follow the precepts of art and please in accordance to them. It is axiomatic that there are precepts, since there is an art; but it is not established what the precepts are.” He formulated the precepts by correlating his own plays with received theory, occasionally finding shortcomings in the plays and frequently finding reason in the plays to qualify the theory.

Corneille’s antagonist the abbé d’Aubignac called his own attempt at prescriptive theory a “pratique” (which an anonymous English translator rendered as “whole art” (Db/220)); in the eighteenth century, Lessing gave the title “dramaturgy” to the series of essays that he had begun with the practical objective of hammering out, in a theatrical context, principles of performance; and, in this century, Brecht chose the crusty Greek word *organon*, meaning – much like “pratique” – an “instrument” for doing something. These titles indicate their authors’ ambitions to produce something equivalent to an “art” in the Renaissance sense: a theory of the subject with explicit practical applications.

The works just mentioned are devoted specifically to drama, written and performed, but many of the most comprehensive treatments of drama in the sixteenth century appear as parts of general theories of poetry, or “poetics,” in which dramatic poetry is traditionally accorded most attention. Some of these, such as Castelvetro’s, are in the form of expositions of

<sup>2</sup> The work had acquired the non-authorial cognomen *Ars Poetica* by the time of Quintilian (35–96 A.D.), who refers to it as such.

the (original) *Poetics* that offer to interpret, to complete, to update, and even to correct Aristotle's thought and thus to achieve the status of independent theories; others, such as Scaliger's *Poetices libri septem* are presented as intrinsically independent. As pertaining to drama, the concept of a "poetics," and the word itself, were formerly less awkward than they have since become.<sup>3</sup> Tragedies and comedies were classified as poems, prose drama was widely regarded as an anomaly (Gd/123), and playwrights were called "poets." It was not until the later seventeenth century that the distinction between poet and playwright was regularly made. This verbal distinction not only separates writers of plays from writers in general but also confirms (rather paradoxically) the separation of the writers from the other artists (or "wrights") who contribute to the making of plays.

It should be noted that "poetry" in these earlier contexts does not necessarily exclude theatrical expression: the poet who writes for the theatre is commonly supposed to exercise at least some command of the non-verbal arts of the stage. But the supremacy of the script – the dramatic poem – is assumed by almost all the theorists represented in this volume and, if they address the matter at all, they are mostly vague about the relation between the non-verbal elements of performance and the text. This has since become a prominent issue, as is indicated by the common usage, in English, that distinguishes "drama" (meaning written texts) from "theatre" (implying performance). Considering the root meaning of "drama" as something *done*, this usage is rather inappropriate but what is much more important is that this semantic division of "drama" and "theatre" obscures the basic question of how the semiotics of theatre (which includes non-verbal "languages" of the staging, as well as the words) and its phenomenology (which includes the delivery of the text) may be related.

Castelvetro's clear recognition of a non-verbal language of the theatre is one of several new departures in his theory. It comes about as his ingenious resolution of a difficulty passed down from antiquity concerning the difference between recitation and impersonation. Aristotle, like Plato before him, had distinguished between the narrative (*diegetic*) and dramatic (*mimetic*) modes. Given that the poet speaks in his own voice in the narrative mode, is the dramatic mode to be understood as consisting of speeches assigned to *characters* and delivered by the poet (or rhapsode), or as implying the use of *actors who impersonate* the characters on a stage? The Greek description of the single narrative voice Castelvetro accepts, but the corresponding description of the dramatic, he says, requires a subdivision. To discourse in the form of dialogue he assigns the term "similitudinary" and to drama for performance the term "dramatic." The difference

<sup>3</sup> Currently, the term "poetics" is used very elastically: it may refer to the aims of a poet's practice, or to its effects, or be a general theory of literature. Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose* (1977) may be said to be an anti-Scaligerian title.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 6 Sources of dramatic theory

between them, he says, is that “similitudinary” dialogue is like narrative in being a representation of words and things by means of words alone, while the “dramatic” is a representation of words and things by means of both words and things (Cv/132). This distinction is the theoretical basis for Castelvetro’s insistence on performance as essential to the dramatic genre. Many important corollaries follow from it and though some of these (notably the idea of a required “unity of place”) found an all-too-ready acceptance, the fundamental premise was virtually ignored.

Castelvetro’s idea of a non-verbal dramatic *language* of things is naturalistic to the limited extent that he envisages the representing things as belonging to the same order as the things represented, whenever that can be done: hats by hats, swords by swords, and men by men. But Castelvetro is not interested solely in the *meaning* of theatrical representations. On the contrary, he de-emphasizes the importance of meaning in drama in favor of the sensuous gratification it can afford (Cv/132).

Shakespeare seems to have had much less confidence than Castelvetro in the representation of things by things. The Chorus in his *Henry V*, forestalling criticism, asks the audience to compensate imaginatively for the inadequacy of both the verbal and the material parts of the representation, but the two kinds of imperfection are differentiated. The admission that “four or five most vile and ragged foils, / Right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous,” are a paltry attempt to represent the battle of Agincourt, indicates a real material limitation (Jn/199). But the supposed verbal inadequacy is transcended even in the very admission of it: “Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them / Printing their proud hoofs i’ th’ receiving earth.” We do not, in fact, get mere talk but the lively verbal image of horses. Similar imagery is called upon to present, verbally, the shipping, the battlefields, and the crowds to the mind’s eye. With a disarming affectation of modesty, Shakespeare dexterously uses the medium that lies within his control – the words – to compensate for the material deficiencies of the presentation. He seems to share with Scaliger the conviction that, even in drama, “words serve as signs for reality” (Sg/106) and he goes as far as any playwright in meeting Scaliger’s demand that “all of the playwright’s ideas about the setting, or about the movements, costumes, and gestures of the characters, that are necessary for understanding the story, must be expressed in the lines that are spoken” (Scaliger/Padelford 1905, 117).

Unlike d’Aubignac, who follows him in insisting on the self-containment of the dialogue (Db/224) Scaliger intends to preserve the integrity of the dramatic poem as a literary artefact independent of whatever non-literary means of expression might also be employed. This is in keeping with his insistence on versification, rather than imitation, as the primary and defining characteristic of dramatic (and other) poetry (Sg/108). On this fundamental issue he dissents from Aristotle and precisely and deliberately

does what Aristotle is often said to have done: he privileges the written text.

Aristotle's own position is more complex and difficult to interpret. His ranking of "spectacle" as the least important of the six parts of tragedy, with the explanation that it cannot be of the essence since tragedy can be effective in reading, has earned him much opprobrium, particularly in the present century. He stands accused of the original sin of separating text from performance and subordinating the latter (Halliwell 1986, 337ff.). But it should be noted that what Aristotle here called "reading" we would call recitation, and that, though the Greeks read play texts, it was only after printing became common that solitary readers with ideal theatres in their heads became a considerable "audience," and a phenomenon to be reckoned with (as it is by Ben Jonson (Jn/192)). Nor is it entirely clear what Aristotle means by "spectacle": whether the whole *mise-en-scène* or only the masks and costumes of the actors – perhaps Copeau's bare stage, on which no clutter of objects was allowed to distract the audience from the concreteness of the verbal presentation,<sup>4</sup> would have seemed to him an absence of spectacle. It is also significant that Aristotle puts the development of tragedy in a theatrical setting, describes a dramatic structure that implies performance and insists that the poet keep the theatre firmly in mind. Nevertheless, Aristotle does, apparently, regard the mature tragic genre (but not necessarily, it should be remembered, comedy or other kinds of drama) as *literature* for the theatre.

According to Aristotle the tragic essence is embodied in a certain kind of imitation of an action of a certain kind, which produces certain effects, notably *catharsis*: "by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions" is a conventionally worded translation of the formulation in the *Poetics* (Dorsch 1965, 39). In Gerald Else's translation, however, this becomes "through a course of pity and fear completing the purification of tragic acts which have those emotional characteristics" (Aristotle/Else 1967, 25). The interpretation involved in this rendering is dubious and it can be aligned with the many interpretations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that locate the pity and fear in the tragic action rather than in the spectators. Scaliger, Castelvetro, and many others after them regard the "purgation" as a *rational* response to the tragic *example* of the potential consequences of these emotions. Analysis is certainly made simpler in this way, though it may be quite wide of the mark: the emotional element can be readily discussed since it supposedly lies in the tragic action itself and the spectators' response, being a rational one, can also be predicted or deduced. This way of interpreting (or perverting) the *Poetics* makes it seem more compatible with a long tradition of didactic theory, and with the almost universally accepted Horatian maxim that the function of drama is to teach and delight (Hr/74:344).

<sup>4</sup> See Copeau 1923.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 8 Sources of dramatic theory

Among those interpreters who have assumed the reality of a cathartic effect on the spectators there have been major differences. Some have supposed that the spectators feel the pity and fear so intensely that these emotions are evacuated as though by medicinal purgative; some that the specified emotions are purified and remain active in that form as an effect of the tragedy; and some that the tragedy acts as a homeopathic remedy, operating on the spectators like small doses of poison, or the experience of battle on soldiers, leaving them less vulnerable to the enfeebling emotions of pity and fear. In our time, Augusto Boal has adopted the medicinal theory but sees in its operation a means of oppression, a sublimation of the spectators' potential for political action.

Aristotle holds that the cathartic effects of tragedy are produced by the choice of an appropriate subject and, even more emphatically, by its treatment, especially in terms of such structural features as the integrity of the plot and the organization of its incidents in keeping with probability, the changes of fortune visited upon the protagonist, and the uses of reversal and recognition. These will affect the spectators in vital ways, but just how the tragic imitation is supposed to satisfy the spectators' sense of reality or belief – whether, for instance, as an illusion of actuality or as a consciously ritualized enactment – is not made clear in the *Poetics*.

The theorists and commentators of the sixteenth century and later foregrounded this question, partly displacing the Aristotelian criterion of *probability* (within the plot) with complex notions about *credibility*. So d'Aubignac declares that "Considering the action as real, [the playwright] must look for a motive or a plausible reason, which is called a pretext [*couleur*], for these narrations and these spectacles really to have happened in this way. I dare say that the greatest art in writing for the theatre lies in finding all these pretexts" (Db/223). This credibility stems from the choice of subject and from its treatment but is not necessarily, or usually, confined to a likeness to ordinary reality. It can come also from the poet's ability to represent ideal worlds in such a way that they too are believable; for imitation includes the representation of things that do not exist "as if they did, and in the manner they might and ought to exist" (Sg/100).

The credibility of imitations is usually referred to as "verisimilitude," a term that has a range of meanings, even in single texts. Verisimilitude may consist in a successful copying of actuality, in a credible presentation of ideality, or in making a particular representation conform with what is supposed to be typical of the class. Horace's much-quoted advice on characterization is to this end: that young men should be presented in the rashness of their youth, old men as dithering and greedy, and so on (Hr/69:176–78). In this way verisimilitude is achieved with, and by means of, decorum. The playwright, says Torres Naharro, should exercise a decorum that is like the command of a ship: servants will not be made to speak and act like masters (Nh/113). The spectators find such characters



credible because they are drawn according to their expectations and these same expectations are thereby strengthened with respect to drama and – very significantly – to real life as well. By making the ought-to-be look lifelike (and therefore possible) drama brings the ought-to-be closer to realization in actuality. Plays written and performed on this understanding, and the judgments of them, tend to conform, of course, with the dominant ideology of their time.

“History” (inclusive of myth) is frequently thought of as a requirement for tragedy and an enabling factor for verisimilitude. By using one kind of truth (such as the names of historical personages and the outlines of known episodes) another, ideal, kind is made credible. Corneille, however, ingeniously argues for the use of history as a means by which the constraints of verisimilitude may be transcended. The marvelous is by definition unlikely but it becomes credible when it can be said to have happened. Moreover, it is more interesting to the audience to be presented with marvels that are thus made credible than with what is credible merely because it is likely (Cn/236). Castelvetro regarded this blending of historical truth and invention in dramatic plots as more difficult than sheer invention, since the poet had to fill in the details of a received story instead of being free to invent details and story together (Cv/137).

Verisimilitude (with its range of meanings) is thought to stem not only from the choice of subject matter (whether historical or otherwise) and from the treatment of the subject with decorum, but also from dramatic structure. George Whetstone scorns the typical English dramatist for failure in all three areas: for grounding “his work on impossibilities” such as monsters; for making “a clown companion with a king” and the “gross indecorum” of using “one order of speech for all persons”; and for inventing plots so loose that they allow for infant characters to grow into men (Wh/166). He does not refer to the “unities” or “rules” as such, but he is making the assumption, common in his time, that in order to achieve verisimilitude it is necessary to adhere to the unities of action, time, and place. If, for example, unity of action is not preserved and the dramatist relies instead on the unity deriving from concentration on an individual character, then the spectators will be confronted with the incredible spectacle of that character going from youth to old age in the space of two hours or so. This would also be a violation of the supposed “unity of time,” which theoretically restricts the temporal scope of the action to a maximum of one day, and aims for a minimum disparity between stage time and real time. Again, such a plot would probably involve the need to make the stage represent many different places, with a consequent strain on the credulity of the spectators for whom it is supposedly easier to think of the stage as one location only (Sy/180).

Verisimilitude was the main but not the only argument advanced in favor of the unities. Another source of the neo-classical attachment to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-32694-0 - Sources of Dramatic Theory, 1: Plato to Congreve

Edited by Michael J. Sidnell

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 10 Sources of dramatic theory

them was their supposed provenance from the *Poetics*. Aristotle does, indeed, insist on unity of action (Ar/42), but the idea of a unity of time had its very insecure basis in Aristotle's remark (Ar/41) about tragedy taking place within a revolution of the sun, and, as to unity of place, it was Castelvetro's strict logic about stage illusion that implanted it as a "rule" (Cv/132). Overall the doctrine was riddled with misunderstandings and plain errors and was the occasion of disputes as unproductive as they were tortuous. But one reason for not dismissing the whole discussion of the unities as the product of barren scholasticism is that, right up to the present, dramatic structure has often tended towards just such a concentration of fictional time and space as adherence to the unities produced. Another is that since drama is a medium that combines sequentiality (as in music and speech) with juxtaposition (as in painting or sculpture), the coordination of the temporal and the spatial elements is critical. In the eighteenth century, the question of the differentiations between, or fusions of, the various arts on the basis of their representations of time and space became a central one in the new science of aesthetics but by this time the "rules" were already falling into disrepute and the obvious connection between the new aesthetics and the old precepts was never made.

The doctrine of the unities was foisted on Aristotle by the theorists of the sixteenth century as they tried to formulate their own structural principles. Their basic concept of genre, however, was a genuine inheritance from antiquity and one that has survived (vestigially, at least) up to the present. From the *Poetics* came paradigms in which the structural and attitudinal distinctions between tragedy and comedy corresponded with predispositions of the respectively tragic and comic playwrights and certain effects on the spectators. Furthermore, in Aristotle, these two genres appeared to be ultimately attributable to the basic possibilities of human existence itself, which is experienced or perceived as tragic or comic (Ar/39).<sup>5</sup>

The absence in the *Poetics* of a theory of comedy parallel with that of tragedy was not an insuperable obstacle to the generic duality. The deficiency was (and still is) commonly attributed to the loss of a second book of the *Poetics* and, beginning with Robertello's in 1548, a series of attempts to reconstruct the hypothetical work have been made.<sup>6</sup> Other definitions of comedy – notably the one attributed to Cicero by Donatus

<sup>5</sup> In his *On Comedy* (1548) Robertello writes: "Aristotle seems to intimate that both simultaneously arose from nature itself. For he states that since some men were *semnoteroi*, that is rather august and serious, and others *eutelesteroi*, that is light and playful, the former wrote serious productions, that latter light and amusing works and thus two kinds of poetry arose, one serious, the other jesting. That such was the case he proves with an example from Homer, in whom may be seen both natures, the light and the serious." (Translation by C. J. McDonough.)

<sup>6</sup> The most recent work in this vein is Richard Janko's *Aristotle on Comedy* (1986). (In Umberto Eco's entertaining fiction, *The Name of the Rose* [1983] a copy of Aristotle's work on comedy is deliberately suppressed by reactionary clerics, rediscovered, and destroyed.)