Didaskalia is an electronic journal dedicated to the study of all aspects of ancient Greek and Roman performance

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Euripides' *ION*

Directed by Rachel Herzog
April 2–4, 2015
Barnard/Columbia Ancient Drama Group
Minor Latham Playhouse
New York, New York

Reviewed by **Talia Varonos-Pavlopoulos**
The Nightingale-Bamford School

Since 1977 the students of the Barnard/Columbia Ancient Drama Group have been producing Ancient Greek and Roman plays in their original language, presenting students with a rare opportunity to temporarily resurrect a dead language and participate in the timeless process of storytelling while offering audiences the experience of seeing some of the greatest works of Ancient Western Drama in the original. Every year since the birth of this Barnard tradition, directors and actors have faced the unique challenge of

performing these plays, far removed from their original chronological, cultural, and geographical contexts, in the original language, while still telling a story that is meani ngful to a modern audience. This year's production of Euripides'

Ion, directed by Rachel Herzog (Barnard College '15), overcomes this challenge by infusing the ancient with the modern and, like E uripides himself, succeeds in reshaping and retelling a myth from a fresh perspective.

Euripides' *Ion*, often characterized as a tragicomedy because of its comic moments and happy ending, tells the story of the reunion of the Athenian queen Creusa with her son, Ion. The tragedy explores the trauma of rape, memory, and the effects of divine actions on mortals. Taking the standard story of the rape and impregnation of Creusa by Apollo, Euripides focuses the narrative on Creusa[1] by telling the story through her voice and from her perspective.[2] The memory of the rape and the child that Creusa believes she left for dead haunts her and, while left hidden, binds her in a repetitive loop. Thus, by having Creusa tell her story – no fewer than four times during the play – Euripides not only exposes the trauma she has suffered and the human cost of Apollo's assault, but also presents the process of remembering and the action of storytelling as a process of rehabilitation.

In the Barnard/Columbia Ancient Drama Group's production of the *Ion*, the focus of the play was trauma and repetition. The issue and consequences of trauma were

Image 14: Elizabeth Heintges as Creusa, Victoria Schimdt-Scheuber as Athena, and Caleb Simone as Ion. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 1: Eli Aizikowitz as Hermes and Chloe Hawkey as choral dance soloist. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 2: Eli Aizikowitz as Hermes. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

brought to life through the personae of Creusa, Ion, and the chorus, while the theme of repetition was present in almost every aspect of the play – choreography, music, and staging. The repetitive sequences in the music, the repetitively looped choreography, and the fusion of modern and ancient elements all functioned to remind us not only of the repetitive nature of memory but also that the very act of performing a play or relaying a story or even narrating a memory is a form of repetition and that, with each telling, the play, the story and the memory change.

The set design was minimal. The stage was subtly whitewashed. Chairs, two of white metal and four of dark wood, were arranged in a variety of configurations throughout the performance, defining the shape of the stage and how the actors interacted with the space, and they were used by the chorus as they witnessed the action of the play. A large, glossy, wooden chest, representing the altar and divinity of Apollo, was downstage right, and the musicians (Samuel Humphreys, composer and piano, and Isadora Ruyter-Harcourt, violin) occupied the opposite corner, downstage left. While the white bareness of the stage could

have set a sterile, monochrome tone, it worked brilliantly with the lighting (Elizabeth Schweitzer, Barnard College '18), which was as colorful and expressive as an artist's palette, chromatically reflecting a theme or mood in the script and music.

The play began with Hermes (Eli Aizikowitz, Columbia University GS '17) in hot pursuit of the dance soloist from the chorus (Chloe Hawkey, Barnard College '16). They ran through and around a clump of chairs and, with harmonious synchrony, leapt and turned in the air. Hawkey fell, her body spilling onto the stage before the chest, and Aizikowitz landed on his feet next to her. He arranged himself in a chair and watched as she repeated the fall. It was only after Hawkey had taken her place in a corner that Aizikowitz took the stage and began the prologue. **[Image 1]** Expertly straddling the generic divide of tragedy and comedy, Aizikowitz alternated between pathos and humor, bending the Greek to his will. His hand trembled as he describes Creusa abandoning the new-born Ion in the cave, he impishly sprang onto the chest to ventriloquize Apollo's request that he deliver the baby to his temple in Delphi, and he playfully mimicked Ion piously sweeping when he announces the young man's entrance. **[Image 2]**

In scene one, Ion (Caleb Simone, Columbia University, GSAS) entered the stage barefoot, singing a monody, a standard element of Euripidean tragedy. Although almost every play of Euripides features a monody or a duet between actors, such passages are usually performed by female characters in a state of great emotional turmoil.[3] Ion's monody is one of only three instances in which male characters perform a monody in Euripides—the others are the barbarian king in *Hecuba* (1056–82) and the Phrygian eunuch in

Image 3: Caleb Simone as Ion and Eli Aizikowitz as Hermes. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 4: Chorus from right to left: Verity Walsh, Anna Conser, Elizabeth McNamara, and Lina Nania. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 5: Chorus, clockwise: Lina Nania, Chloe Hawkey, Elizabeth McNamara, Verity Walsh, and Nathan Levine. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Orestes (1369–1502)—and in all three instances the male figures occupy a marginal social position or liminal place in the mythical world. By introducing Ion in this manner, Euripides not only underlines his liminal nature as the semi-divine, bastard son of Creusa and servant to Apollo but, with the help of music, he also presents the simple action of cleaning as dramatically interesting.

Rather than shying away from the challenge of staging the monody, Herzog took it on to admirable effect. The music, composed by Samuel Humphreys, adhered to the Greek meter and had a fittingly Apollonian tone. Simone tunefully described his surroundings and daily custodial duties, and he praised the god in perhaps one of the stage's first cleaning songs. On the one hand, Herzog's staging and Simone's execution of the song functioned to present Ion's task of caring for Apollo's temple as an act of devotion, worship and deepest reverence, thus elevating it from the quotidian to the ritualistic. On the other hand, it also cleverly acknowledged other characters of the stage and screen who sing and whistle while they work, particularly at the moment when Simone paused from his sweeping at the top of a crescendo and, with arms spread in a welcoming, round arc, raised his face and voice to the sun. **[Image 3]**

After Simone's exit, Hawkey led the rest of the chorus (Anna Conser, Columbia Univeristy GSAS, Elizabeth McNamara, High School Student, Lina Nania, Hunter College '15, Nathan Levine, Columbia College '17, and Verity Walsh, Columbia College '15) onto the stage in the *parodos*. They were costumed in cobalt skirts and corduroy pants with pleats that recall fluted columns, simultaneously underlining their integral role in the architecture of tragedy and its origins in choral dance. Singing in unison, the chorus marveled at the wonders of Delphi. Herzog's decision to have the chorus sing in unison, rather than simply chanting or singing individually, was a brave one. The chorus is one of the most challenging elements of Greek tragedy to direct and perform, and despite its lack of the ancient chorus's months of intensive training in song and dance,[4] Herzog's chorus expressively moved and sang as one, vividly reflecting the mood and emotion of the odes. Its effectiveness was especially pronounced in stasimon three, in which, praying for the success of their mistress's plan, the chorus moved from sinister swirling of their fingers in poison to joyful, whirling dancing, and, finally, to the rejection and condemnation of Apollo's treatment of Creusa and Ion. **[Image 4, Image 5,** and **Image 6]**

Image 6: Clockwise: Chloe Hawkey, Elizabeth McNamara, Lina Nania, Anna Conser, Verity Walsh, and Nathan Levine. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 7: Yujhan Claros as Xuthos and Caleb Simone as Ion. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 9: Elizabeth Heintges as Creusa. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 10: Center: Kay Gabriel as messenger. Chorus from right to left: Anna Conser, Verity Walsh, Chloe Hawkey, Elizabeth McNamara, and Lina Nania. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

In scene two, Xuthos (Yujhán Claros, Columbia University GSAS) returned from the oracle and tirelessly tried to convince Ion that he is his father in what became a comic recognition scene and an easy audience favorite. Claros's Xuthos was so overwhelmed at having his long-lost wish to become a father fulfilled that he unquestioningly and immediately accepted the fact, declared it to Ion, and bestowed his paternal affection on the young man. Simone, skeptical and concerned about the stranger's behavior, loudly threatened to shoot him. In a moment of comic melodrama, Claros falls to his knees and, spreading his arms wide to expose his vulnerable chest, responded with genuine paternal pathos, κτεῖνε καὶ πίμπρη: πατρὸς γάρ, ἢν κτάνῃς, ἔσῃ φονεύς, "kill me but if you do, you will be the murderer of your father". **[Image 7]** After Simone finally conceded, the scene continued with an investigation into the identity of Ion's mother. The dialogue that followed between Xuthos and Ion was the comic gem of the play, containing Claros's sheepishly legato yet matter-of-fact narration of the fateful night of delightful Bacchic worship, Βακχίου πρὸς ἡδοναῖς, that led him to the bed of a maenad.

Image 11: Caleb Simone as Ion and Simone Oppen as the prophetess. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 12: Elizabeth Heintges as Creusa and Caleb Simone as Ion. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

Image 13: Elizabeth Heintges as Creusa and Caleb Simone as Ion. (photo: Joseph Henry Ritter)

As light-hearted and humorous as the father-son recognition may have been, scene three was heart-wrenching. Creusa (Elizabeth Heintges, Columbia University GSAS) entered the scene with a faithful, old servant (Vikram Kumar, Columbia College '15) who had accompanied her to Delphi. Kumar's aged servant had all the hallmarks of an old man—cantankerous voice, worry lines, and uncertain step—while Heintges's Creusa was beautiful in her hopefulness for a child that would be the salvation not only of her line but also of her personal tragedy. They entered the stage clasping arms, eager to learn of the oracle Xuthos received from Apollo. A chorus woman (McNamara), aware of what the oracle had foretold, informed Creusa that she would never have children of her own and that Apollo had given Ion to Xuthos, to be his son. Heintges masterfully expressed Creusa's overwhelming grief, speaking over and through the conversation between Kumar and McNamara. **[Image 8]** Inconsolable and with nothing else left to lose, Creusa recounted the story of her rape in the second lyric monody of the play, a medium that allowed her to express a range of emotions and communicate the violence, trauma, guilt and shame she has experienced. **[Image 9]** Heintges sang beautifully while the music, with its worrying tempo and the hurrying undercurrent of the violin, created an atmosphere of anxious dread. Kneeling next to the wooden chest representing Apollo's altar, Heintges drew tears of shock and empathy by describing herself calling for her mother during the rape. She did not merely sing ὦ μάτερ ("O mother!") but shrieked it, bringing that moment of hurt and helplessness to the present and making the scream, once lost in the depths of the cave, audible for the first time.

In scene four the chorus arranged their chairs into a semicircle, creating a space that recalled a circular *orchestra* and the choral dancing in stasimon three. The messenger (Kay Gabriel, Princeton GSAS), one of

Creusa's maidservants, entered arrayed in a glossy, inky-blue dress, with a film of beige draped over and around her. Gabriel's costume echoed those of the chorus, marking her as another indispensable element of tragedy. In an exquisitely descriptive rendering of the Greek, Gabriel's messenger relayed the setting of the banquet in a detailed lento and the events that led to the discovery of the crime in a vivid allegro. **[Image 10]** One of the most moving parts of the speech occured when Gabriel described the dove that drank the poisoned wine from Ion's cup. On bent knee, she cupped her hands and tilted her head back to mimic the doves drinking the wine and then crumpled onto the stage.

Scene five opened with urgency and panic. Heintges entered pursued by Ion, and the stage turned a painful yellow. In a panic, one of the chorus women (Walsh) led her to take refuge at the altar of Apollo, as Simone, transformed from the young man unwilling to kill even a bird into a man seeking blood and revenge, entered screaming and hurling chairs in his wake. Catastrophe, however, was prevented by the arrival of the prophetess (Simone Oppen, Columbia University GSAS). Oppen's prophetess was a liminal figure, bridging the divide between human and divine and, as a result, not truly belonging to either world. Her voice was ethereal, metrical, and soothing, almost as if she were prophesying rather than merely speaking. After staying Ion's rage and presenting him with the basket in which she had found him **[Image 11]**, Oppen exited. She slowly but determinedly walked backwards to have one last long look before turning away, visually communicating the pain and longing that she cannot express in words.

The recognition scene that follows was truly heartwarming. **[Image 12]** Glowing light cast mother and son in golden hues as Heintges and Simone sat on the floor in a filial embrace and joined their voices in song, rejoicing in their reunion. **[Image 13]** But the joy and delight was drained from Heintges face when, mirroring the scene with Xuthos, Ion asked about his father. Still singing, now with pleading urgency, she begged to be allowed to tell him later, but finally explained, cloaking the horror of her rape in music. Although Ion pitied his mother for her pain, he questioned the veracity of her story. The blinding epiphany of Athena (Victoria Schimdt-Scheuber, CU GSAS), the *deus ex machina*, brought Ion's doubts and the play to an end. Accompanied by Aizikowitz, Schimdt-Scheuber entered the theatre though the main doors, which were flung open for her thundering, luminous entrance. In a fittingly austere and condescending tone, Schimdt-Scheuber congratulated Apollo on how well he had brought all these things to pass and directed Creusa not to spread the story of her rape if she wished her son to prosper. **[Image 14]** The play ended with Hawkey repeating the fall she had at the beginning of the play, but this time only once. As she lay on the stage, she hesitatingly looked up at Aizikowitz, who opened the lid of the chest, directing her to climb in. Hawkey complied and the lights fell just as the lid closed, confining and immobilizing the female figure, silencing the story, and ending the play.

Herzog ended the play with ambiguity, with a discreet question mark rather than a full stop. Hawkey's fall at the end could not help but loop the audience back to the beginning and raise the question of whether the play would re-start if she ever escaped from the chest and even delicately alludes to the fact that what we had just witnessed was indeed a re-start, a re-play, a repetition.

The Barnard/Columbia Drama Group presented a provocative and meaningful production of Euripides' *Ion*, which both entertained and intellectually engaged its audience. Not unlike Euripides' original, this production of the *Ion* was conscious of its role in the creation of myth and art while being aware that the past cannot be abandoned or ignored in the present. In presenting the story of *Ion*, the members of the Barnard/Columbia Drama Group relayed the story of Creusa and Ion and, by emphasizing the theme of repetition, revealed that the very nature of story-telling, play writing, and performing is a reiteration of the past.

notes

[1] As noted by Herzog in her director's note, stories of the rape of mortal women by gods abound—even

Ion points to their frequency in his sermon to Apollo (Ion: 442–447). But little thought is given to these women apart from the births of the semi-divine offspring.

[2] It is important to underline that while "no female voice has survived to give us a hint of her experience in her own words . . . the portraits of women in drama may have reflected real social and historical issues, even if in a somewhat indirect fashion" (Fantham et al. Women in the Classical World: Image and Text. New York: Oxford University Press 1994: 70).

[3] Storey, Ian and Arlene Allan. A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama. Malden: Blackwell Publishing: 2005.

[4] Taplin, Oliver. Greek Tragedy in Action. London: Routledge: 1978, 2003.

Antigona

Directed by Martín Santangelo
July 13-August 15, 2015
West Park Presbyterian Church (165 W. 86th Street)
New York, New York

Reviewed by **Michael Goyette**
Brooklyn College

"Vamos a cantar y bailar antes que empieza la tragedia!" ("Let us sing and dance in the face of tragedy!") Thus intones a member of the chorus in the opening scene of *Antigona*, proclaiming the spirit of this flamenco interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. A complex amalgam of music, song, and dance, flamenco is an art form that cannot easily be pinned down, and the same is true of this unique performance, which could be described as a dance play, musical theatre, or some combination of the two. Directed and produced by Martín Santangelo, *Antigona* was performed in Spanish (with English supertitles) by the world-renowned Noche Flamenca touring company at West Park Presbyterian Church from July 13 to August 15, 2015 (note: Noche Flamenca will return for a second run of *Antigona* there from December 11, 2015 through January 23, 2016).

*Soledad Barrio as Antigone
(photo: Zarmik Moqtaderi)*

Flamenco may seem a surprising medium for Greek tragedy, and I am not aware of any other performance that has attempted to integrate these seemingly disparate modes of creative expression. [1] A multicultural art form that evolved in the Andalusia region of Spain in the 15th–17th centuries, flamenco was partly born out of the repression and expulsion of such groups as the Jews, Arabs, and Romani. It thus wields sufficient pathos and historical weight to channel the anguish of Greek tragedy. Sophocles' *Antigone*, with its themes of tyranny, loss of life, passion, female empowerment, and the strength and division of family, is particularly apt for such an interpretation.

*Soledad Barrio as Antigone
(photo: Zarmik Moqtaderi)*

According to the program notes, the idea for this production came to Santangelo in 2010, when a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, was suspended for his efforts to honor those opponents of the Franco regime who were buried in mass graves. For Santangelo, Garzón's effort to allow their families to give them proper burial evoked Sophocles' play and suggested its persistent relevance. *Antigona* was developed in the years that followed, and it premiered in October 2014 at the University of Washington in Seattle, following a two-week residency Santangelo completed there.

West Park Presbyterian Church might seem a curious venue for such a show (I cannot but note the peculiar feeling of watching a Greek tragedy from a church pew), but it effectively accommodates the performance's captivating barrage of sights and sounds. The questions that the performance raises about

fairness, integrity, and human dignity also seem in keeping with the Church's avowed mission "to serve as an incubator for social justice and progressive activism."[2]

Over the past few decades, *Antigone* has surely been one of the most frequently performed Greek tragedies,[3] especially when one factors in high school and college productions. But it would be wrong simply to call *Antigona* a performance or even a "version" of Sophocles' famous play. With fifteen "scenes" (as outlined in the program notes) and a cast that incorporates Polyneices, Eteocles, Oedipus, and Jocasta as characters, it is in fact significantly broader in narrative scope than the Sophoclean tragedy. It dramatizes events that occur near the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*, including Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-blinding, as well as the combat between Polyneices and Eteocles that is related in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. For spectators unfamiliar with the mythological background of the play, these scenes helpfully contextualize the events that later transpire among Antigona, Ismene, Creon, and Haemon. Some of the transitions between scenes, however, are a bit abrupt or obscure, forming a loose collection of vignettes through which the narrative moves in a sometimes-meandering path.

The cast numbers fifteen, including eight chorus members, five of whom also take on the role of a character. They are accompanied by a band of four talented musicians (two acoustic guitarists, one electric guitarist/bass player, and one percussionist), all of whom remain on stage throughout the performance. Whereas both the actors and chorus members wore masks in the time of Sophocles, in this performance masks are donned by the chorus members and by the musicians, but not by the actors. A bit strangely, they wear the masks on the side or even on the back of their heads. It is clear that the director is utilizing the masks to toy with the conventions of ancient Greek drama, but the purpose of these particular effects remains opaque for this reviewer.

There is no doubt that the star of the performance is Soledad Barrio, who plays Antigona and exhibits her talents as a world-renowned flamenco dancer. She conveys the passion of the character with the technical prowess and sheer intensity of her dance, physically embodying the theme of female empowerment that is central both to Sophocles' play[4] and to the art of flamenco itself. In comparison with the highly energetic dancing of Antigona, Ismene's choreography is—while still undeniably skillful—generally more restrained. This difference in dynamics effectively contrasts the daring and rebellion of the former character with the tentative and obsequious nature of the latter.

The performance opens with all of the cast members and musicians on stage, seated in chairs that form a semicircle. Perched above them is the prophet Tiresias (Pepito Jiménez), who leads the ensemble in a prayer asking Zeus to lift the curse from the royal family of Thebes. The actual altar of the church serves as his divinatory altar—a fortuitous convergence of performance space and dramatic space. Wearing all-black clothing, a stately beard, and dark sunglasses, this Tiresias is an imposing presence. He cries out in the flamenco singing style known as cante jondo, or "deep song"—a form of incantation closely related to the woeful chanting of the Sephardic Jews exiled from Andalusia. This mode of expression suits the tortured clairvoyance of an ancient Greek prophet, and his magnificent delivery of the cante is simultaneously enrapturing and foreboding.

Following Tiresias' prognosticatory wailing, Ismene addresses the audience, introducing herself and other members of her family while also giving some important background information. For a few lines, she suddenly and inexplicably breaks out into English, joking at one point that she is "bilingual"—then only to continue in Spanish for the rest of the play. Both the abruptness of this linguistic modulation and the briefness of the English interlude are startling, and I wondered exactly what it is meant to achieve. Furthermore, Ismene's few lines of English are spoken in a stereotypical "Valley girl" accent; she states, for example, that her family is afflicted by "like a super-evil curse". While these speech idiosyncrasies may serve to characterize her as less mature than her sister Antigone, this shtick digresses from the overall tone of the performance, veering toward the realm of farce.

As Ismene relates the family's calamitous history, Jocasta makes her brief appearance as a character and acts out her suicide; Oedipus then seizes her "hairpins" (two chopsticks lodged in a bun of hair) and mimes blinding himself in a rather melodramatic gesture. The family then suffers further bloodshed in the dramatized battle between Polyneices and Eteocles. A stare-down anticipates their duel: intersecting spotlights beam upon each character, and an electric guitar blares a moody, operatic rock solo—a sonically dazzling departure from traditional flamenco music. Despite all of this build-up, the battle itself is a bit anticlimactic. As the brothers finally engage in hand-to-hand combat, a strobe light starts to flash and the actors move their bodies and limbs so as to produce a slow-motion effect, which saps the scene of some of its intensity and impact. While the rest of the performance exudes a highly visceral passion and vivacity, the choreography of this important moment is relatively languorous.

More effective is the chorus' chanted demand for "Sangre! Sangre!" ("Blood! Blood!") in the lead-up to both Oedipus' self-blinding and the dramatized battle between Polyneices and Eteocles. The repetition of this savage refrain emphasizes the inescapable cycle of strife and killing that is perpetuated through multiple generations of this tortured family. The motif of blood is also accentuated by the wine-colored dress that Antigone wears in most scenes of the performance. This striking garment evokes both the family's unending cycle of bloodshed and the passionate nature of the character herself.

After the mutual slaughter of the brothers, Creon is inaugurated as the new king of Thebes. This elaborate scene assembles most of the cast members, many of them playing kazoos to announce and celebrate his coronation. The buzzing of these puerile instruments seems to herald a reign of folly, but Creon and his acolytes march in superciliously unaware. The kazoo is not a musical instrument typically associated with flamenco, but its use in this scene is a clever touch, signaling the absurdity of Creon's tyranny.

The prime example of Creon's despotism is, of course, his inflexible refusal to allow the body of Polyneices to be buried. Before Antigona defiantly sneaks in to bury him, Polyneices' body sits exposed onstage for some time—first, the actual body of the actor, and then, following a change of scene, a mutilated figure made of papier mâché or a similar material. When the remnants of the body are finally absent from the stage, much time has passed. For those familiar with the inspiration behind this production, it is impossible not to think of Franco's fallen enemies, long denied the dignity of proper burial.

Refusing to accept this treatment of her brother, Antigona dances passionately around his body in a seeming attempt to conjure him back to life. In this spectacle, as in other scenes, music, song, and dance combine to produce a shamanistic effect. Like Antigone herself, the art of flamenco seems capable of blurring the boundaries of life and death—indeed, to summon up the spirits of the dead.[5] Threatened by this power and by Antigona's insubordination, Creon sentences her to death.

Before dying, she experiences a brief moment of happiness with Haemon. This is a significant though not-unwelcome departure from Sophocles' text, in which these two characters never appear together.[6] Haemon expresses his love for Antigona, and they share a joyful dance. This affords a moment of respite from the otherwise gloomy events of the performance, and even brings a fleeting smile to Antigona's face. It also affords a moment to shine for Haemon (Juan Ogaglia), who clearly proves to be one of the most outstanding dancers in the cast. Here and in other scenes, the role of Haemon is elevated to one of greater importance than in most productions of *Antigone*.

A somber mood quickly returns after the dance of Haemon and Antigona. Having been sentenced to death by Creon and still stricken with great pain on behalf of Polyneices and the rest of her family, Antigona chooses to commit suicide. In one of the most dramaturgically creative moments of the show, Antigona lies on top of a long white cloth laid across the stage, while her brothers—or rather the dead

shades of her brothers—pull one end of the cloth, literally dragging her toward death. This striking and memorable image, laden with symbolism, portrays the brothers as chthonic forces that share responsibility for her end. It is thus not only the intransigence of Creon but also the unresolved fraternal discord that kills Antigona, far more explicitly than in Sophocles' play.

The extended length of cloth also evokes the image of the thread of Fate, as if Antigona is being processed to her inevitable doom. Even more morbidly, the cloth may suggest the noose with which she is about to hang herself. Finally, it resembles a long, trailing bridal veil—a reminder of the living marriage from which Antigona is being drawn, and of the "marriage" to death toward which she is instead being taken.[7]

The suicides of Antigona, Haemon, and Eurydice are acted out in rapid succession, with intervals of mere seconds between them, producing an impression of near simultaneity. As usual in Greek tragedy, Sophocles does not portray these deaths onstage but has them related by a messenger. In Sophocles' play the messenger first reports the death of Haemon (v. 1175) to the coryphaeus. Having overheard parts of this speech, Eurydice enters and fearfully asks the messenger to clarify (vv. 1183–1191); the messenger then explains that Haemon has killed himself after seeing Antigone hanging (v. 1221). Creon enters and the messenger leaves, only to reappear shortly thereafter and report that Eurydice has just killed herself as well. In *Antigona* the narrative is even more compressed, to both positive and negative effect. On the one hand, this approach is successful in illustrating the chain of causation and familial consequences that are set in motion by Creon's decree (even though the order of the deaths does not correspond to their order in Sophocles). At the same time, the abruptness of the suicides in *Antigona* lessens the impact of each individual death.

Like Sophocles' play, *Antigona* concludes with Creon repenting his stubbornness and holding himself responsible for the deaths, and finally with the chorus professing the dangers of hubristic pride. The performance as a whole is satisfying, especially in its musical elements (the guitar work is particularly majestic) and choreography, most notably the dancing of Soledad Barrio and Juan Ogaglia. The performance departs from the narrative structure of Sophocles' play frequently and significantly, but it never professes to follow Sophocles line for line, and most of the departures are rewarding and thought provoking, especially when showcasing elements of flamenco.

While there are a few moments in which the performance wavers in tone and intention, *Antigona* is largely successful in bringing a fresh and innovative approach to a Greek tragedy that has often been performed, adapted, and reinterpreted. In the end, I was left with the impression that flamenco is well suited to the presentation of Greek tragedy—unsurprisingly, if we consider flamenco's mournfulness and aggression, its complex combination of music, dance, and other performative elements, and its use of deeply probing poetry driven by existential suffering: all qualities associated with Greek tragedy. I commend Martín Santangelo for perceiving the kinship of these art forms, and for having the creative vision to bring them together in a compelling union.

Of all the extant Greek tragedies, *Antigone* may be the one most suited to marriage with flamenco. Its themes of dictatorship, repression, loss, family, passion, and female empowerment all deeply resonate with the roots and spirit of the Spanish art form. None of these themes is unique to *Antigone*, however, and it is tempting to propose other ancient plays for flamenco interpretation. One enticing possibility is Euripides' *Medea*, which—like *Antigone*—has a passionate female lead who acts in defiance of a haughty and powerful man. *Medea* also deals with issues of multiculturalism, a matter germane to the very foundations of flamenco.

notes

[1] Searching through the annals of Didaskalia, I found an original performance entitled The World

Mysteries: Mysteries of Eleusis (conceived, written, and directed by Vasilios Calitsis; co-written by Tasos Roussos) which incorporated a single flamenco dancer in its cast. This performance dramatized elements of the Eleusinian Mysteries and related mythology, and was performed at The Brooklyn Academy of Music in October 1998. See: http://www.didaskalia.net/reviews/1998_10_16_01.html.

[2] See http://www.westparkpresbyterian.org/author/editor. Accessed August 30, 2015.

[3] Close to the time this article was published, another interpretation of Antigone, based upon a translation by Anne Carson, was being performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (September 24–October 4, 2015).

[4] As Creon states in reference to Antigone's dissentious demeanor in Sophocles' play, ἣ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀνήρ, αὕτη δ' ἀνήρ (Now I am not a man, but she is a man. v. 484). Note: when quoting the Greek, this article follows the Oxford Classical Text edited by A.C. Pearson (1924). The translations are my own.

[5] In the Introduction to his translation of the play, Richard Emil Braun observes that Creon condemns Antigone to a "living death," effectively making her an intermediary between the worlds of the living and the dead (Braun, Sophocles: Antigone, Oxford and New York, 1973, p. 14, see also 11–13). Antigone directly acknowledges this liminal aspect of her situation: "ἰὼ δύστανος, βροτοῖς / οὔτε ⟨νεκρὸς⟩ νεκροῖσιν / μέτοικος, οὐ ζῶσιν οὐ θανοῦσιν" (Oh wretched me, I am a corpse among people—not among the dead—a metic not among the living, not among the dead. vv. 850–852).

[6] In fact, in Sophocles' play it is very possible that the actor playing Haemon also played the role of Antigone (otherwise, the actor playing Haemon would have also played the role of Ismene). On this point, see Antigone, trans. William Blake Tyrell and Larry J. Bennett, p. 63 n. 81.

[7] In Sophocles' play, Antigone speaks of her own death as if she is undertaking a marriage to Hades, e.g., καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν οὕτω λαβὼν / ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε του γάμου / μέρος λαχοῦσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφῆς… (And now, taking me by the hands he leads me away, unbedded, unwed, without obtaining a portion from the marriage and without a child to rear…, vv. 916–918; see also 1240–1241).

The Masks of *Nō* and Tragedy: Their Expressivity and Theatrical and Social Functions

Gary Mathews
North Carolina State University

The formal similarities between Japanese *nō* drama and Greek tragedy—richly decorative costumes and finely crafted masks; minimal sets and props; formal speech augmented by music, song, and dance; the presence of a chorus—have long attracted the attention of classics scholars. But the differences between the two art forms far outweigh the similarities, and are of much greater consequence.[1] I believe we o ught to begin giving *nō* more of its due by taking these differences into account. At the same time, reflection on *nō*'s differences from tragedy, and on their causes, can shed new light on important aspects of tragedy, even some quite familiar ones. In this article I will focus on the masks used in the two forms of drama, arguing that differences in their expressivity reflect major differences in both their theatrical and their broader social functions.[2]

For tragedy, I will refer primarily to the well-known depictions of masks on the Pronomos vase. This large krater in Naples, dated to the end of the fifth century, is our most informative piece of visual evidence for a variety of aspects of tragedy and satyr play, especially costume and mask. The vase depicts masks of four leading figures—apparently characters in a satyr play, though it is generally agreed that tragedy used the same type of masks and costumes.[3] From left to right, the vase shows masks for a long-haired and bearded (i.e., mature) man, a young woman, Herakles, and Papposilenos.[4]

We are much better informed about *nō* masks, which are extant and remain in theatrical use. I will refer to three *nō* masks that correspond roughly in character type to the first three masks shown on the Pronomos vase:[5] Heita, used for male aristocrats or successful warriors, to whom the bearded man on the vase may be likened; Ko-omote, used for beautiful young women; and Chujo, used for warriors in roles calling for some degree of mental anguish, analogous to some of Herakles' manifestations. (While the Herakles mask on the Pronomos vase is similar in expression to that of the man on the left, it seems to show slightly more furrowing of the brows and cheeks, consistent with the image of Herakles as a heroic sufferer).

Although I have selected these six examples of masks for comparative reference, I will not for the most part be making specific observations about any of the suggested pairings. My discussion is meant to be general with regard to the characteristics of nō and tragic masks, not particular as to the features of masks representing young women, adult men, etc. But I thought considering masks representing similar kinds of characters side by side would be useful, to show that the differences in expressivity between nō and tragic masks are not accidental due to a random choice of examples but pertain across the repertoire of mask types of each theatre.

Inward Versus Outward Expressivity

While tragic masks were like *nō* masks in being carefully crafted and in carrying

Heita Mask
*made by Hideta Kitazawa
(photo: Sohta Kitazawa)*

Ko-omote Mask
*made by Hideta Kitazawa
(photo: Sohta Kitazawa)*

Chujo Mask *made by Hideta Kitazawa
(photo: Sohta Kitazawa)*

enormous expressive potential,[6] their expressivity was mainly projected outwards, whereas that of *nō* masks is directed inwards. This fundamental difference has large consequences for the different theatrical purposes the two kinds of masks serve, and by extension for the different functions of *nō* and tragic performance in their social contexts. I will take up these different functions and purposes below, after describing the expressive orientation of *nō* and tragic masks more closely from the examples under consideration.

For all their beauty and artistic refinement, *nō* masks may at first sight seem remarkably unprepossessing. While they are essentially naturalistic in appearance rather than distorted or excessively stylized,[7] they exhibit a relative lack of (at least obvious) animation. This understated quality is due to an ambivalence of expression in all of the mask features. The eyes in a *nō* mask typically resist any definite impression of

focus: one eye, usually the right, looks slightly downward, while the other looks more forward. This asymmetry has been explained by one *nō* mask maker as indicating the

Video: Clip from *Seven Against Thebes*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN5do_2_uVc

unenlightened condition (in Buddhist terms) of a typical character on entering the stage and that character's enlightened state on exiting; see Coldiron (2004: 148), and cf. Udaka (2010: 154).8 (All entrances and exits of characters in *nō* are from stage right, so that on entering the right eye is visible to the audience, and on exiting, the left.) The eyes also tend to show very small sclerae, giving them an often semi-closed appearance that increases the sense of their not having a very pronounced outward look. The ambivalent mood expressed by the eyes' asymmetry is further conveyed by a similar asymmetry in the mouth, which typically turns slightly downward on the right side and upward on the left, suggesting sadness and cheerfulness respectively, as might befit an unenlightened versus enlightened condition; see Coldiron (2004: 148), and cf. Udaka (2010: 154).

This sense of inwardness is furthered by the softness and subtlety with which the mask features are carved and painted, even on masks representing powerful and active male characters such as the Heita and Chujo. Slight indentations catch the light in different ways that can suggest a variety of moods beyond simple joy and sadness; see Coldiron (2004: 146). The fact that these variations are so understated as to elude conscious notice makes them all the more effective in directing the viewer's attention inwards. The masks' paint gives only slight suggestions of hair, eyebrows, and moustaches. (For the most part *nō* uses wigs for head hair in place of hair integrated with the mask). There is some animation in the brows of the male masks, but they also provide the top frame of the eye cavities, and thus emphasize the ambiguity and inwardness of the mask's expressivity. The power of the *nō* mask overall lies in its suggestiveness, hinting at the inner world of the character behind it.[9]

It is not the case that all *nō* masks are equally inward looking. The young woman mask, for example, is more so than the masks for the male characters. And between the latter, the anguished warrior is perhaps more expressive than his successful counterpart.1[0] Here we glimpse the broad range of subjects and character types (and therefore expressive modes) in the *nō* repertoire—probably much broader than in tragedy. In modern times the repertoire has been organized into five categories, somewhat analogous to the generic distinctions between tragedy, satyr play and comedy (New as well as Old) within Greek drama. These categories comprise plays about gods, warriors, women, deranged characters (often but not exclusively female), and demons.[11] The plays about gods are generally auspicious, and while the demons of the last category can be scary and threatening, their force is usually quelled by an appeal to protective deities. In neither case is the inner life of the god or demon usually of particular importance.[12] What matters is that the strength of the supernatural being is brought forth, and accordingly their masks have a

more outward focus than those for characters in the other categories.

 The focus turns more to characters' inner lives in the middle three categories, above all in the third and fourth, for it is the plays about women, who are usually dealing with acute suffering and loss (most often of a lover or child), that are the most profoundly introspective in the *nō* repertoire. Plays about defeated warriors can often touch deeply on the inner feelings of the main character as well. When people speak of what is definitive of *nō*, it is usually the plays in the second through fourth categories that they have in mind. These also are the plays that bring *nō* closest to tragedy.

Recent work on tragic masks, including both close study of depictions in vase paintings and sculpture and practical experiments with reconstructions, as well as application of scientific research in such varied fields as cognition and acoustics, has in my view definitively established that the masks were not only highly expressive but also, like *nō* masks, capable of suggesting multiple changes of expression during performance.[13] But no scholar, to my knowledge, has yet explored the nature of this expressivity beyond noting that it was a powerful vehicle for conveying emotion. In particular, no one has called attention to its outwardness, a quality that perhaps only becomes conspicuous when compared with the inward expressivity of such masks as those used in *nō*.

The Pronomos vase is especially valuable for assessing the expressivity of tragic masks because of the directness and clarity with which it shows them in relation to the actors' heads, allowing us to determine in some measure both how realistic and how expressive the masks were made to look in relation to the human face. But in making this assessment we need to take up an often-overlooked question: how accurate is vase painters' rendering of masks? Does it show how they looked outside of their theatrical use (held in the hand, as on the Pronomos vase, or lying on the ground, as on other vases) or how they appeared to spectators during a performance? The faces and postures of the "living" actors are clearly not presented in an entirely realistic manner, but rendered in the restrained, idealizing mode common to all late-fifth-century art. We can expect no greater realism in the treatment of masks.[14] Further, here as on other vases, the distinction between mask and face is somewhat obscured by the process Pickard-Cambridge calls "melting" (1968: 187), in which the faces of actors take on the attributes of the masks beside them. But on the Pronomos vase, at least, there are clear and substantial differences between the actors' faces and their masks to afford us a reasonably accurate measure of the realism and expressivity of the latter.[15]

The Pronomos masks are most immediately striking for their naturalism, a quality they share with *nō* masks (at least those for human characters rather than demons and gods). While they look like different "persons" from the actors, they appear no less realistically human (again, within the conventions of the medium). As has been noted by others, they are far from displaying the distorted and exaggerated features of tragic masks from the later Classical and Hellenistic periods.[16] But on closer examination, it is their *heightened* realism that impresses the viewer—not exaggeration or distortion, but a kind of animation that conveys the effect of life or of activity. In comparison with the understated *nō* masks, they "stand out."

This effect is due in the first instance to the masks' being made to look more expressive than the faces of the actors.[17] More particularly, it comes from the strong outward orientation of their expressivity. Unlike *nō* masks, which show varying degrees of inwardness and outwardness, all of the masks on the Pronomos vase are equally outward looking (though the face of the young woman mask is hard to read, having largely worn away).[18] When the Herakles actor and mask are seen in close-up ([Pronomos vase detail](#)), the outward orientation is evident in the higher curve of the brows on the mask, the more open eyes and mouth, the greater roundness of the face, including a prominent nose, and the fuller head and facial hair, particularly where it stands out from the temples.[19] The outward animation of the masks is seen most vividly in the eyes. As Wiles (2007: 31) observes, "The Herakles mask peers anxiously upwards

with pupils upturned, and the mask of Silenus likewise squints quizzically at the actor who holds the mask." The faces of these masks seem to be looking out at something, drawing the viewer's attention to the act of expression directed at the object of each mask's gaze.[20]

Still, there is the question of whether these features of the masks bear witness to their actual appearance or to their theatrical effect, a crucial distinction. Wiles (2007: 31) comments that the white paint applied to the masks, as seen in relation to the actors' faces rendered in the natural terracotta of red-figure vases, attracts the viewer's gaze and "evokes the power of masks in the theatre." Is it possible that the added paint enhances their actual appearance, making them stand out on the vase so as to evoke their theatrical impact ("actual" and "theatrical" meaning here as represented within the fictive world of the vase painting)? And might this evoking of theatrical effect extend to other features of the masks? Definitive answers would depend on being able to observe the masks during an actual performance of ancient tragedy. From my viewing of modern original-practices performances, I believe that the Pronomos vase painter depicted the masks primarily as they appeared on their own, outside of their theatrical use, while also introducing something of their effect in performance. The 2012 original-practices production of *Seven Against Thebes* in the outdoor Greek Theatre at Randolph College used helmet masks made of stiffened linen, the material probably used in ancient masks. These masks were slightly larger than life, so as to fit over the head, with comparably outsized though fundamentally naturalistic features. I was seated midway up the amphitheater, about 60 feet from the center of the orchestra. When my concentration was most focused on a speaking character, my perception of the mask dissolved, and I seemed to be looking at the character's "own" face. The following video excerpt from this performance should convey something of this "reality effect," especially if the viewer has been prompted to look for it.

After some moments, as my concentration wavered and the fact of the mask reasserted itself, the effect I had just witnessed seemed uncanny. There is no question but that the slightly outsized but still naturalistic features of the mask had caused it. When I had occasion to look at the masks more closely, during a workshop after the performance, they showed an obviously "bigger than life" heightening of outward expression. But at a distance and during the performance, where the words and acting brought them to life, they were convincingly "real." Sitting motionless on tables, they seemed to lack vitality, despite the heightened realism of their expressions. It was under the conditions of performance that they seemed both more mutedly realistic and more alive.[21]

This experience suggests that the effect of ancient tragic masks in performance was strikingly realistic, but that its realism depended on a certain heightening of the realistic features of the mask itself, for better projection in the theatre. If this was the case, the Pronomos painter seems to have depicted the masks largely as they would have looked when not in theatrical use, their realism heightened by the application of white paint and enhancement of the eyes and other features. At the same time he suggested something of the expressive aliveness they would take on in performance.[22] Either way, the expressivity of the mask is directed distinctly outward.

Theatrical and Social Functions of the *Nō* Mask

Why should the *nō* mask be predominantly characterized by inward and the tragic mask by outward expressivity? How is the difference related to the theatrical purposes and social functions of each art form? *Nō* is deeply concerned with the inner life of characters, directing every resource of the theatre towards engagement with it. The inward focus of the mask works in concert with the other aspects of *nō* performance to bring the audience into the characters' inner world. Since there is usually only one leading role (called the *shite*, "doer"), *nō* tends to focus more on a single figure than on interaction between characters. The *shite*'s appearance is typically motivated by the interest taken in the character's story by a secondary actor (the *waki*, "bystander, witness"), who often does little more than evoke the *shite* and serve as interlocutor. There is seldom much of a plot in the Aristotelian sense.[23] In those *nō* plays

most concerned with "story," notably the definitive plays of the second through fourth categories, the events have usually happened in the distant past—indeed, in a former lifetime of the *shite*. In such cases the *shite* is a spirit suffering from continued attachment to the world of the living, reflecting the fundamental view of the human condition in medieval Japanese Buddhism. The spirit recounts key events of his or her life, culminating in an intense encounter with the factors contributing to attachment, an encounter that can allow for insight and, sometimes, actual enlightenment. This process involves a distillation of the character's psychological state to its essence, and its theatrical power lies in the audience's being drawn gradually into an intense identification with that state.[4]

Key to this identification is the evocation of a sense, not merely cognitive but experiential, and shared by audience and actor, that the *shite* has actually "become" the spirit of the character. This criterion for successful performance was laid down by the most influential figure in the history of *nō*, the playwright, actor and theoretician Zeami (1363–1443), who along with his father Kannami (1333–1384) was responsible for transforming a rustic entertainment into the highly sophisticated art form that *nō* has substantially remained to this day (albeit with significant further refinement, particularly during the Edo period, 1615–1868). Zeami speaks of the actor's becoming the character in a number of places. For example, "'First become the thing' refers to the various types of dramatic imitation in *nō*" (*A Mirror to the Flower*, in Hare 2008: 100). The actor must create a sense that the character he is playing, or rather the spirit of that character, is a living presence. Zeami does not flinch from acknowledging the profundity of this transformation well as its difficulty for the actor: "It is . . . extraordinarily difficult to assume the role of a woman when you have the body of a man; that being the case, it is in adopting the model 'with intent as Substance, cast force aside' that you find expressive effect so that both mind and body are transformed. . . . But in contrast, if without any such consideration, you merely try to mimic a woman, that will never be commensurate with your intent in the Woman's Mode. Mimicking a woman is not being a woman. It is only in mastering how to effect the subject in a woman's role that you are commensurate with your intent as a woman" (*Pick Up a Jewel and Take the Flower in Hand*, in Hare 2008: 219). By "effect the subject" Zeami means to "become" that subject for the audience.

For the actor to succeed in this task, the audience must play its own part in response, and the demands Zeami places on it are as exacting as those on the actor: "Forget about whether or not it succeeds and watch the performance. Forget about the performance and watch the actor. Forget about the actor and watch the mind. Forget about the mind and know the performance" (*A Mirror to the Flower*, in Hare 2008: 119). This sequence of audience mentalities indicates that the performance goal is a quasi-mystical immersion of the audience in the inner life and experience, indeed the mind, of the *shite* (that is, the character), an immersion that becomes tantamount to the totality of the performance itself.

This performance ideal still guides the art of *nō* actors and the spectatorship of *nō* audiences today. And the mask, with its powerfully expressive inward orientation, is a key element in its realization. Interestingly, the *nō* mask has always been thought actually to contain the spirit of its character, put into the inert wood by the skill of the mask maker.[5] Thus the mask is a key element in the actor's "becoming" the character, not just on an external mimetic level but by animating the spirit within the mask. When asked what is most important about the mask for the *nō* performer, one actor answered: "The eyes and mouth. With a good *nō* mask, her (his) eyes are watching me with deep emotion and her mouth starts to talk to me saying something about her story" (Kinue Oshima, quoted by Kitazawa 2015b). Indeed, audiences are often moved to tears by the impact of a mask (always, of course, in conjunction with the other elements of an effective performance). Masks are treated with the utmost reverence, as though they contained a living being. Normally they are stored in silk bags inside lacquer boxes and are brought out only for performances. Even when merely exhibited for display, then they are meant to be handled at all times with similar care. Before putting on a mask the actor bows prayerfully to it to beckon the spirit within to come to life during the performance. It requires considerable skill on the part of the actor to

bring the mask to life on stage and animate its full expressive potential. Since the features of the mask are subtle, a slight tilt or turn of the head can make a big difference in the impression the mask makes, and overacting can be as detrimental to the effect as underacting. In turn, the audience must exert the utmost concentration, since the mask features do not "leap out" and carry the expressive weight by themselves, but depend on a suitably attentive audience.[26]

Evoking a powerful emotional identification with the inner life of characters is thus a primary aim of the *nō* theatre, and the inward expressivity of the mask plays a key role in the process. But what larger social purposes might this theatrical aim serve? First, immersion in the world of suffering characters can help promote the Buddhist values that have been a central teaching in Japanese society since their introduction in the sixth century. Buddhism enjoins compassion for all sentient beings, which are by definition suffering from attachment, the key problem regularly faced by characters in *nō*.[27] But this engagement with the inner life of others is an element not only of Buddhism, but also of Confucianism, whose place in Japanese society is less familiar.[28]

Much like compassion in Buddhist practice, sensitivity to the inner life of others is the foundation of Confucian social relations, though in Confucianism this sensitivity is directed toward one's roles and obligations in practical interaction with others rather than toward universal feelings of concern. Nevertheless, the same immersion in the inner world and feelings of characters that inspires Buddhist compassion can also promote Confucian empathy. Zeami's writings contain many indications that he recognized his art as serving this Confucian social goal. In the first of his treatises, *Transmitting the Flower through Effects and Attitudes*, he states the purpose not only of *nō* but of all performing arts: "The performing arts generally exist to mollify people's hearts and create excitement in the high and low; they are the foundation for long-term prosperity and increase" (Hare 2008: 55). The verb "mollify," *yawarageru*, contains the root *yawa*, which is one reading of the character *wa* (和), meaning "peace" or "harmony." The idea expressed by this character is a core Confucian concept. The basic text of Confucianism, the *Analects*, states, "Of the things brought about by the rites (*li*, 禮), harmony [*hé*, 和 = Japanese *wa*] is the most valuable" (*Analects* I.12; Lau 1979: 61). As Lau (1979: 20) explains, "The rites were a body of rules governing action in every aspect of life." But as with any formal and general prescriptions for interpersonal behavior, people had to cultivate sensitivity to the wants of others to put the rites into practice. Such sensitivity was expressed by the all-embracing ethical concept of *ren* (仁), often translated "benevolence." In turn, *shu* (恕), which may be translated "deference," was a central component of *ren*. As Confucius explains, "A benevolent man helps others to take their stand in so far as he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in so far as he himself wishes to get there. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand [*shu*] can be called the method of benevolence [*ren*]" (*Analects* VI.30; Lau 1979: 85). For one to "take his stand" means to take his part in society, and as Confucius says elsewhere, it is on the rites that one takes one's stand (*Analects* VIII.8). To "take as analogy what is near at hand," as *shu* is translated here, is to use one's self-understanding as a guide to determining what others want or do not want and acting in accord with that determination to promote harmonious relations with them. This has served as the basis of social life not only in China but throughout East Asia to the present. But self-understanding is just the starting point. It must be constantly applied to understanding of the actual feelings and wants of others.

The performing arts have always had a place in Confucianism as a means of fostering such self-understanding and empathy for others. Zeami highlights this Confucian purpose for *nō* in the following anecdote about the relations between the shogun Yoshimitsu Ashikaga[29] and one of his mistresses, Lady Takahashi, in *Talks on Sarugaku*, a collection of his thoughts about his art from late in his career compiled (with commentary) by his son Motoyoshi:

If one has to place this art [*nō*] in the category of etiquette [*rei*] or music [*gaku*], it belongs to music. It has

to soften [*nikko to nasubeshi*; *nikko = wa*] the relations between the human beings. Nevertheless, if one does not know the secrets of the human heart, one will come to a standstill in one's career. A sweetheart of Rokuon'in [Yoshimitsu], Lady Takahashi (she was a prostitute of Higashi no toi), knew all the secrets of the human heart and pleased him especially [*gyoi yoku*, lit., "his mood toward her was good"], so she ended her days without falling into disfavour. She watched his mood, and when she had to press wine upon him, she pressed him, and when she had to refrain him from drinking, she refrained him, and thus she took very good care of him, and succeeded in life . . . . Zeshi [Zeami] too is praised by everybody for the fact that he is above all an expert in things like that. (trans. de Poorter 1986: 129)

The character translated "etiquette" here, *rei* (礼), is the Japanized form of the Chinese *li*, "rites." Together, "the rites and music" (*li-yüeh*, 禮樂) constituted another important Confucian concept in China. *Yüeh* refers to "music" broadly defined, including performance of sung poetry and musical drama. Confucius saw the "sentimental education" accruing from *yüeh* as vital to the ethical development of the individual. In particular, he believed the shared experience of rhythmic text and musical harmony inculcated social values and gave practical instruction in living together. It was thus, in effect, an important and prototypical enactment of *li*. The conceptual pair *li-yüeh* was carried over into Japan as *rei-gaku* (礼). When Zeami places *nō* under the category of music, it is not to denigrate *nō* as mere entertainment, but to stress its role in fostering the empathy that is crucial to effective performance of the rites. He takes the harmonious relations between Yoshimitsu and Lady Takahashi as an emblem of such performance. Zeami regards Lady Takahashi as an image of himself, an actor before his audience. But she can also be taken as representing the audience, and Yoshimitsu the actor who has secrets to which the audience must be alert, to whose moods they must be responsive. As Zeami says elsewhere of actor and audience, "The actor who understands how to arouse the interest of his audience should have an advantage in performance. A member of the audience, moreover, who watches the performance with discernment vis-à-vis the actor's mind is one who knows performance" (*A Mirror to the Flower*, in Hare 2008: 119). It is creating this intense reciprocity between the minds of actor and audience for the sake of fostering Confucian empathy that Zeami sees as his art's very reason for being. And the mask with its inwardly directed expressivity is one of *nō*'s most effective means for bringing about this meeting of minds.

Theatrical and Social Functions of the Tragic Mask

As we have seen, the immersion of the audience in the inner life of characters can be the vehicle for strong emotional impact in the *nō* theatre. That tragedy too could pack a strong emotional punch is a point that does not need to be belabored. Tragedy's emotive potential has been recognized as one of its most significant features by critics and theatregoers from Plato and Aristotle to the present. Whether the emotions aroused by tragedy served a cathartic or other function, individual or collective, is perhaps less important in the present regard than the sheer fact of the power of the mask, along with tragedy's other theatrical resources, to express those emotions.[30] The masks of tragedy can hardly have failed to contribute to its emotional impact, as we see from the strong expressivity of the masks shown in vase painting, on the Pronomos vase above all. But how the expressivity of the tragic mask was related to the particular emotional aims of tragedy has not received attention. These aims would seem to have been quite opposed to those of *nō*. It is widely though not universally agreed that tragedy was not concerned with calling attention to the inner life and feelings of characters, even when they were undergoing the strongest emotions, but rather with showing characters outwardly expressing those emotions in the dramatic situation that had occasioned them. Special attention to the inner life of others is probably a cultural habit, and the culture of ancient Greece was not that of medieval or modern Japan. According to Aristotle, pity involves concern that the pain we see another suffering might imminently afflict us too; it does not include concern for what is going on within the world of the sufferer.[31] We can thus understand the outward orientation of the tragic mask as serving to amplify the external expression of emotion rather

than draw the audience's attention toward the inner experience of a character.[32]

All aspects of *nō* performance—movement, vocalization, music, and staging in general—serve to draw the audience away from its immediate reality into another world. In this respect too tragic performance would seem to have been fundamentally opposed to *nō*, since the goal of tragedy was to bring characters from the world of heroic and divine myth to life concretely in the here and now of the theatrical performance, not to draw the audience into another world evoked more by imagination than by the details of the scene before them. Whereas the *nō* actor "becomes" the spirit of a character, the tragic actor "becomes" the character's manifest appearance. This aspect of tragedy, again, has not been neglected; see, e.g., Wiles (2007: 31), but its meaning for the conventions of tragic performance, including the role of the mask, has not been fully explored.[33] For characters to come to life in the here and now requires a high degree of theatrical realism. I believe the outward orientation of the tragic mask functioned along with its basically naturalistic appearance to achieve this realism. In the vastness of the Theatre of Dionysus, the mask had to employ what I have called the heightened realism of the masks shown on the Pronomos vase. Again, the 2012 Randolph College outdoor production of *Seven Against Thebes* provided a useful test. Its masks' "realistic effect at a distance" brought the characters to life in the present.

Just as the drawing of the *nō* audience into the inner world of characters has served larger social goals in Japan, so did the bringing of the divine and human figures of myth into realistic presence before the audience of tragedy serve further social purposes in Classical Athens. As Wiles (2007: 247) says of "the famous heroic deeds" of the Athenians' ancestors (and, I would add, those of other figures of myth), "their details need constantly and creatively to be re-evaluated." The place of this re-evaluation in Athenian life is, again, well recognized, having been the subject of one of the most important trends in the study of tragedy over the past thirty to forty years, initiated by the groundbreaking article of Vernant (1988, first published 1972) and followed up by Goldhill (1990) and Ober and Strauss (1990), among others. This line of inquiry sees tragedy as putting the heroic characters under the scrutiny of the polis, or reciprocally (in Goldhill's view) as placing the polis itself under examination in the light of the mythic past, applying in either case the new modes of thought and discourse that the tragic theatre shared not only with the other venues of formal public debate—the law courts and political assemblies—but also with such genres as history and sophistic argument.

While this attention to the contemporary social or, more broadly, "mental context" (Vernant 1988: 30) of tragedy has produced fascinating results from its focus on dramatic situations shaped to test characters against fifth-century civic norms, there has been much less investigation of how the conventions of staging may have helped fulfill this purpose. The outwardly directed, highly expressive mask will have made the heroic figure more visible as an agent of action and thus as an object of critical attention. All genres of discourse in the fifth-century polis shared a concern with the causes and consequences of human action, always with a view to success in future endeavors and to judgment (practical or theoretical) of the actions in question.[34] Under "human action" must be included both speech and physical action, which were distinctively combined by theatre.

What did the mask contribute to this combination? There has been much disagreement over the relative importance of the verbal and the visual on the tragic stage. Wiles (2007: 249–51) justly criticizes the "mainstream current in late twentieth-century thought," represented by Vernant, Goldhill, and others, for a reductive logocentrism when applied to tragedy. As Wiles observes, this focus on the word "interprets all human thought and communication in terms of language" (251). In arguing instead for "the autonomy of visual experience" (251), Wiles at times seems to overemphasize the visual. It seems to me best, however, to regard tragedy as a unity of the visual and the verbal, and Wiles himself rights the balance when he notes that the mask effects a fusion of sight and language: "the mask foregrounded language, and language in turn helped the audience project expression onto the mask/face" (Wiles 2007: 277).[35]

This gets to the heart of the function of the mask in tragic performance, and I would add that the mask foregrounds language by projecting an outward expression that grounds the source of the language in the presence of the tragic figure. As Rehm (1992: 40–41) puts it, "The wide-eyed gaze of the tragic mask does not scatter or divide, but focuses and encompasses, compelling the attention of the entire theatre. Paradoxically, by forcing its gaze out, the tragic mask draws the audience in, for each spectator projects his or her imagination onto its surface." In fact this is not a paradox, and the phrase "draws the audience in" risks suggesting an untragic attention to the inner world of the characters. Rather, the mask's outward gaze attracts the audience's attention to its surface, inviting them, as Rehm correctly observes, to project their imagination onto it. Rehm further recognizes the central place of language within this visual field: "The large, open mouth of the tragic mask emphasized the spoken words, as if they provided the essence of character and the key to action" (41). But the mouth need not have been particularly large to create this effect, and does not seem to have been so throughout the fifth century, to judge from the evidence; certainly it was not distorted grotesquely as it later was.[36] The focalizing effect of the mask on dramatic speech derived from the look of the mask as a whole, not just the mouth (which after all did not move). The audience imaginatively projected expression onto the mask, that is, onto the face of the character, because the mask itself focused attention on the character as the source of words betokening a particular expressive stance. In turn, the character's physical presence was augmented by the sound of the words emanating from the outwardly expressive mask. Since this interplay of word and gesture must be fully clear and open to allow for critical scrutiny of the character, it was important that the mask be outwardly expressive. The meaning of the character's action was etched more deeply in the audience's mind as the visual and verbal worked together to express it. Most recent discussions of audience projection onto the tragic mask speak only of emotional expression. Meineck (2011: 140) is typical: the mask established a "reciprocal gaze between spectator and performer, one in which emotional states could be easily communicated," creating "feelings of empathy with the masked fictional character" (140). But the mask helped establish not just the emotional presence of a character but also what I would call his or her "subject position" within the dramatic action, a positioning that was crucial to the audience's critical scrutiny of that action.

One last point concerns the fact that dramatic action is not static, but mobile and interactive, so that a mask must be capable of evoking changes of expression, including the reactions of one character to another, as the drama unfolds. The long-influential view of Pickard-Cambridge (1968: 173–74) that the "unchanging expression of the mask" rendered it an actual hindrance to expression, has been replaced more recently by the recognition that a well-made mask worn by a skilled actor can become a strong and versatile expressive vehicle, as the *nō* mask attests. In the words of Rehm (1992: 41), "a theatre audience revises and reconstrues a mask's physiognomy, when the circumstances, attitudes, and emotions of the character change . . . . The convention of masked acting brings [the audience's] imagination into play, as the spectators fill out the fixed visage of a tragic character caught in radically changing situations."[37]

In this respect too tragedy is very different from *nō*. Since much of *nō* is focused on the inner life of characters, pointed dramatic interaction is relatively infrequent, and often understated when it occurs. As the *nō* audience is highly sensitized to subtlety and understatement, a slight turn of one actor toward another is often sufficient to animate an interaction. Thus the *nō* mask need not direct the audience's attention to the key steps of a dramatic interaction, though its expressivity is flexible enough to do so when needed. But the tragic stage had other needs. The outward expressivity of the tragic mask surely helped the audience follow the changing relations between characters, down to minute provocations and reactions in stichomythia. The above-quoted observation of Wiles (2007: 31) about the gazes of the Herakles and Papposilenos masks on the Pronomos vase (one "peer[ing] anxiously upwards," the other "squint[ing] quizzically at the actor who holds the mask") is pertinent here. The tragic mask would have seemed outwardly expressive towards other characters as well as toward the audience.[38] (Indeed, this is one place where I think the painter has introduced an aspect of the appearance of masks in performance.

It is unlikely that masks would have been made with the pronounced upward or sideways slant of both eyes seen on the vase, as the pupils would need to be placed more neutrally to suggest a greater range of gaze in the theatre.) The audience could imagine the eyes looking one way or another, as prompted by the dramatic situation,[39] and the outward expressivity of the mask would have helped clarify the interactions between characters.[40] Since the action to be scrutinized by the city was always, more precisely, an *interaction* between characters, the capability of the tragic mask to help crystallize this interaction in the audience's visual and verbal fields would have been one of its most important attributes.

notes

A version of this paper was delivered as "The Masks of Tragedy and the Masks of Noh" at the Ancient Drama in Performance II conference at the Center for Ancient Drama at Randolph College on October 7, 2012.

[1] Peter Lamarque issued some years ago a salutary warning against pressing the similarities between nō and tragedy beyond the "superficial" (1989: 158-59).

[2] Masks are arguably the best place to start, as they are perhaps the most crucial component in determining the nature of character and action in performance. As Coldiron (2004: 139) remarks of nō, "More than any other factor, it is the mask which has the greatest influence upon the interpretation of [a] play and all the elements of performance." With regard to tragedy, Marshall (2007) comments, "The mask is, in many ways, the defining element in Athenian stagecraft and performance."

[3] On the continuity of costume and mask between tragedy and satyr play, see Pickard-Cambridge (1968: 180). Griffith (2010: 52) makes a strong case that the Pronomos vase "should be viewed as a celebration of tragic-satyric drama as a unit." Similarly, Wyles (2010: 241 with n. 33) suggests that the vase celebrates a complete tetralogy rather than just its satyr play.

[4] The identities of Herakles and Papposilenos are obvious from both mask and costume (besides the fact that the name of the former is inscribed on the vase), but the man and young woman are not clearly idnetified. Since the presence of a tiara on the young woman mask indicates an oriental setting, the figures have most often been taken to be Laomedon and Hesione, and the story of the play to concern Herakles' rescue of the Trojan princess; see Pickard-Cambridge (1968: 187). Alternatively, Simon (1982: 19) makes a case for King Iardanos of Lydia and his daughter Omphale. More recently, Wyles (2010: 243) has raised serious questions as to whether the man's costume designates him too as an oriental, as has usually been supposed. For her suggestion that the vase represents the entirety of a tragic-satyric production, so that the characters could be from different plays, see n. 3 above.

[5] I leave Papposilenos aside, even though his mask appears to conform to the same conventions as the masks for the tragic characters. It would be interesting to compare it to a nō mask for a similar kind of character. There are in fact bumptious and rascally demons, goblins, and the like who appear in some nō plays and whose masks might fit the purpose.

[6] Tragic masks, most likely made of stiffened linen, probably could not have been as finely made as nō masks, which are carved from exceptionally hard, treated hinoki cypress wood, precisely chiseled, and painted with many layers of lacquer; they can indeed be considered museum-quality works of art. Still, the level of craftsmanship of tragic masks must have been very high if they were to be worn along with the sumptuous costumes also depicted on vases.

[7] Nō is sometimes thought to be far removed in every respect from any naturalistic modes of presentation,

but Nearman (1984: 21) usefully cautions against taking nō out of its context in Japanese theatre history, where "medieval Nō clearly represents a major advance toward greater theatrical realism. Its stage characters and the masks used to reproduce their countenances move away from the stock types of earlier Japanese theatre toward more individualized and carefully delineated ones."

[8] This asymmetry actually seems to be interpretable in different ways for different masks, each characterized by slight variations in the degree and angle of the asymmetry. For example, mask maker Hideta Kitazawa (2015a) explains that the mask for Fudō Myōō, a Buddhist protective deity, has one eye looking up and the other down to indicate that the god sees everything at all times. Kitazawa (2015b) says that he spends more than a day just on carving the eyes when making a mask, "altering them a little at a time, searching for just the right size and angle."

[9] Suggestiveness rather than directness is a well-known attribute of Japanese aesthetics in every medium: poetry, theatre, painting, ceramics, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and so on. This quality is due in part to the abstraction sometimes regarded as the hallmark of Japanese aesthetics (particularly as influenced by Zen), but Japanese arts actually combine naturalism and abstraction. Naturalism grounds the subject of a poem, painting, or play in the present world we live in, while abstraction sketches an open space for meaning or significance to be filled in, drawing us further into this world or even beyond into a deeper world of truth. Both naturalism and abstraction are essential to this process.

[10] On all the masks, the open mouths with prominent teeth may seem to direct expression outward in the form of speech, but on a closer look the mouths and teeth are seen to convey characteristic delicacy on the part of the female mask and strength on the part of the male, rather than to show mouths in the act of speaking.

[11] For more detail about these categories as well as further introductory information about types of nō plays, see the "Introducing the World of Noh: Composition of Noh" page at The-Noh.com (2015).

[12] An exception is found in some of the more popular fifth-category plays where the demon is the spirit of a woman who has been wronged and seeks vengeance. This spirit appears in human form in a first act, wearing a non-demonic mask evoking her inner turmoil as she relives the misfortunes that have caused her transformation into a demon.

[13] See especially Vovolis and Zamboulakis (2007), Vovolis (2009), and Meineck (2011). As Meineck sums up the results of his studies: "Taken together, a close examination of the iconographic evidence from the fifth century, the application of cognitive studies and recent neuroscientific research, and the results of performance-based experiments, should lay to rest the notion that the Greek tragic mask displayed a fixed, neutral, idealized, or unchanging expression" (150).

[14] On the idealizing tendency of late fifth-century art in relation to tragic masks, see Wiles (2007: 66, 70). On the stylistic correspondence between theatrical masks and contemporaneous painting and sculpture, see Simon (1982:10-11).

[15] The most noticeable sign of melting is probably in the eyes, which look like normal human eyes within the conventions of vase painting, whereas the mask might be expected to have openings larger and in other ways distinct from the pupils. But small, round pupils, which, in conjunction with large sclerae, make the eyes look much like actual eyes from a distance, may be a characteristic of the tragic mask. The experiments with masks by Vovolis (2009) in conjunction with his study of the masks shown in vase paintings and sculpture have led him to conclude that the eye openings of tragic masks were small and round (32-3). It might seem that the restrictions to sight caused by such small eye openings would hinder an actor's movement and detract from performance, but in fact actors trained in mask work can adapt well

to such limited vision. Nō actors are the most obvious case in point. Vovolis (2009: 60-1) reports that he expressly sought out nō masks in order to study the function of their small eyeholes. On the naturalistic appearance of the eyes on tragic masks, cf. Meineck (2011: 120). For a briefer account of Vovolis's findings, see Vovolis and Zamboulakis (2007).

[16] Wyles (2011: 8, 13), echoing Pickard-Cambridge (1968: 192-93), affirms the basically naturalistic look of the tragic mask in the Classical period, noting that this naturalism is "a challenge to modern preconceptions which expect the gaping mouth, wide eyes, and horrified expression often associated with tragedy" (8). Wyles (2010: 248-49) argues that the similarity of Herakles' breastplate on the Pronomos vase to a fourth-century BC bronze muscle cuirass found at Ruvo in South Italy indicates that both the breastplate and the costumes shown on the vase generally are rendered to look much as they would in actuality. Wyles doesn't mention the masks specifically, but it seems they should be included as part of the costumes.

[17] Cf. Wiles (2007: 31; cf. 70, 247), who points out that the animation of the masks in relation to the actors' faces (including those of the chorus as well as the leads) makes them seem to be coming to life. This one impressive piece of evidence seems to me to tell strongly against the view of Halliwell (1993: 203-9) that "clear facial expression of any kind" was absent from the tragic mask (203, emphasis in original). In fact, it is the faces of the actors in relation to the masks that seem lacking in expression.

[18] This is a good place to acknowledge that the expressivity of tragic masks (unlike that of nō masks, which have been made according to exact traditional standards since at least the fifteenth century) may have changed somewhat over the course of the fifth century BC in the direction of both greater naturalism and more pronounced expressivity; see Vovolis (2009: 33). If so, the change would seem gradual, and I don't think it alters the basic picture of the outwardly expressive mask for the fifth century overall. Johnson (1992: 22-3, 26-8) argues for an overall similarity in expressivity between nō and tragic masks, illustrating her point with a photograph of a female nō mask (type unidentified; it appears to be Ko-omote) and one of the well-known painting of a female tragic mask on an oinochoe found in the Athenian agora and dating from about 470 BC (Agora Excavations Inv. No. P 11810). At first glance, the masks in the photographs do look strikingly similar. On closer inspection, it is clear that the paint on the oinochoe mask has suffered considerable wear and damage, most crucially in the eyeballs; cf. Talcott (1939: 269-70). This makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the mask's expression. But regardless of the original detailing of the eyeballs, the shape of the eyes and eyebrows on this mask seems to me to show essentially the same kind of open-eyed, outward expressivity as we see in the masks on the Pronomos vase.

[19] All of these details seem to me to contradict the argument of Monaghan (2007) that the tragic mask was "featureless" or "non-inscribed." Monaghan ostensibly means that the mask does not inscribe character, but his argument goes further than this, insisting that the mask is visually "inexpressive," and (citing Aristotle's "infamous comments in Poetics VI.19 about the relative unimportance of opsis") that tragedy in general was "not visually (as opposed to aurally and experientially) striking" (emphasis in original). But the evidence of the Pronomos vase seems to me rather to indicate quite the opposite about the mask (and hence tragedy as a whole).

[20] On this aspect of the Herakles mask gaze, see too Meineck (2011: 130). The mouths of the masks, interestingly, are not particularly wide-open as though in the act of speaking out. But they are open, in contrast to the mouths of the actors, who are nevertheless posed in relation to each other as though they might be in conversation. The mask mouths do give the impression that speech is an important part, while only one part, of the tragic character's role. Listening was certainly another. As Halliwell (1993: 207 n. 39) notes, keeping silent was often a significant part of a tragic role. The mask no doubt needed to be able to "play" the parts both of speaking and of listening, as well as many others.

[21] Meineck (2011: 132-4) reports on several studies in facial recognition demonstrating various ways the human brain processes visual information about a face. Two findings in particular are striking and pertinent: first, how little information of any kind (fragmentary, distorted, etc.) is needed to fill out a complete facial image, and second, how strong is the tendency to normalize whatever information is available. These aspects of my own cognitive processing may explain how I "normalized" the Randolph College masks so as indeed to "naturalize" them.

[22] Griffith (2010: 58-9) finds that the figures on Side A of the Pronomos vase (the theatrical scene) are animated by the flow of energy coming from the group of composer, musicians and dancing choreut at the center of the lower register. Since the figures are largely posed in a non-theatrical manner, this animation is another way the painter has fused (in varying degrees) their ordinary and theatrical appearance.

[23] Smethurst (2013) argues that there is a significant history of nō plays containing features closely paralleling those tragedies with the kind of plot favored by Aristotle, especially Oedipus Tyrannus and Iphigeneia in Tauris. But it is questionable whether there was ever a high proportion of such plays in the nō repertoire; the evidence is scanty and inconclusive. Whatever the number of such plays, the several examples Smethurst takes up do not seem to me to bear more than a superficial resemblance to the tragedies she compares them to; see my review, Mathews (2014). Most importantly, even where such plays feature some plot development with dramatic interaction between characters, the conventions of nō performance make what is foregrounded for the audience's attention very different from what tragedy foregrounds. In particular, the dramatic interaction does not shift the focus to outward expression, but still keeps it on the inner world of the characters.

[24] Lamarque (1989) offers an excellent description of this process of distilling the inner world of a character to an "abstracted or 'pure' emotion" (166). Besides the insistent focus on the shite, the musical and choral accompaniment contribute to the process of emotional distillation by slowly building in intensity over the course of a play according the rhythmic principle jo-ha-kyū (slow introduction, break into a quicker tempo, quick conclusion). A full account of how this principle is realized in the musical and choral accompaniment, which can have a mesmerizing effect in performance, lies beyond the scope of this article.

[25] One is reminded of the uncanny powers attributed to smiths and other craftspeople in much of the pre-modern world, reflected in the divine smith Hephaestus and such creations of his as the servant automata described in Iliad 18.417-21.

[26] Oswald Sickert in a letter of 1916 from Japan notes how the "mixture of vacancy and realism" in nō masks, while unaffecting when he saw them hung up by themselves, became powerfully expressive in performance: "I'd swear that at the right moments the mask is affected, its expression intensifies, it lives" (quoted by Waley 1921: 308).

[27] The word "compassion" can be taken literally here, as the goal is for the audience to take part in the inner life of the shite as intensely as possible. This is not to say that watching a nō performance is a religious act, whether today or in the time of Zeami, when plays were presented at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, but also at private residences and in large subscription performances open to the general public. But the world of the plays is imbued with Buddhist ideas and practices, and to enter that world is to be affected by them for the while.

[28] For a fuller treatment of the Confucian aspects of nō according to Zeami, see Mathews (2013).

[29] Yoshimitsu (r. 1368-94) was Zeami's patron and thus responsible for fostering the development of nō

into a refined art form under Zeami's hand.

[30] Wiles (2007: 245) stresses the role of the mask as bringing characters to life in emotionally powerful situations for the sake of collective emotion, with the purpose of promoting social cohesion in the Athenian democracy. See too Seaford (1994: 137–42). Such cohesion may sound like Confucian harmony, but its mechanism and purpose are quite different, as I hope will be clear from my discussion of nō and Confucianism above.

[31] Indeed, Aristotle's definition of pity actually contains his definition of fear, namely the pain felt at the prospect of seeing oneself suffering imminent harm (Rhetoric 2.5, 8). It is no accident that pity and fear are so closely linked in the Poetics. Lada (1993: 109), discussing what she calls "empathetic understanding" in tragedy, cites Rhetoric 3.7.4 (συνομοιοπαθεῖ ὁ ἀκούων ἀεὶ τῷ παθητικῶς λέγοντι, lit. "the listener always feels the same emotions together with the one who speaks with emotion") as a description of such understanding. However, the process Aristotle describes need not include actual empathy with the inner world of the speaker; the audience can share the speaker's emotions independently of any engagement with the speaker's experience of them. Variations on the word "empathy" are often used to describe the audience's experience of the emotions expressed by tragic characters—cf. Meineck (2011: 140)—but I am not sure this is the right word. Certainly it does not mean the same thing as what I mean by Confucian "empathy." Perhaps I should call the latter by its Chinese name, shu (恕), "deference." In Japan, the word shu has been replaced by omoiyari (思い遣り), variously translated as "empathy, consideration, identification with others."

[32] Taplin (1978: 14) recognized this quality of the tragic mask some years ago: "[It] must direct attention, not to the unexpressed thought inside, but to the distant, heroic figure whose constant ethos it portrays. The mask will present a person in a role rather than the changing aspects of a fleeting personality. This ties in with the way that passion and suffering are not introvertedly wrung out through tiny, intimate gestures and facial movements, but are put directly before the audience's sympathetic concentration. The characters may still weep and even refer to facial expressions; but the emotions of Greek tragedy are presented openly in word and action, they are not left to be inferred or guessed at. The mask is in keeping with this broad explicitness." I would add that inferring emotion points rather in the direction of nō, with the modification that it is not a process of inference or guesswork in that case, but direct imaginative absorption into the inner life of the character.

[33] Lada (1993: 123) has some suggestive remarks in this regard about how the classical dramatic character was at the same time both distant and close to the spectator, and notes that the mask played a crucial role in this paradox, but does not elaborate.

[34] For a detailed example of this concern as shared between tragedy and the law courts see Wohl (2010), who also cites (34 n. 2) a number of other recent studies that have explored the "mutual interaction" between the courts and the theatre. Wohl (64 with n. 56) especially emphasizes the potential of tragedy to educate citizens to be more sympathetic and equitable judges. It is pertinent that nō plays are typically not concerned with causes but rather with consequences and how they are dealt with. Consequences in human life are regularly seen in the light of Buddhist beliefs about impermanence and karmic retribution, with individuals implicated (as "sinners") primarily in their attachment to things that lack permanence. The answer to this human condition is release from attachment. The opening words of the thirteenth-century Tales of the Heike (a source of warrior stories in nō comparable to the Iliad and the epic cycle as a source for tragedy) speak of the chiming of the temple bell of the Gion monastery in India, a reminder of impermanence as the cause of all suffering. In contrast, the opening of Thucydides' history states the goal of identifying clear, immediate causes of human events (echoing the question of what caused the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon at the beginning of the Iliad). For a translation of a representative group of nō plays, see Tyler (1992); for a translation of the Tales of the Heike, see Watson (2006).

[35] On this function of the mask, see too Vovolis and Zamboulakis (2007) and, more extensively, Vovolis (2009: 136–41).

[36] The visual evidence suggests that the mouth opening of the tragic mask was relatively small in the earlier and mid–fifth century, paralleling developments in the other visual arts, but grew larger by the end of the century, departing from the prevailing visual style of that time and reflecting an increased emphasis on pathos in the theatre. See the discussion of Simon (1982: 10–11).

[37] On this important point about the mask, see also Walton (1991: ch. 7; 1996: ch. 4); Johnson (1992); Marshall (1999: 189); Vovolis and Zamboulakis (2007); Vovolis (2009: 136–41); Meineck (2011: 124–34, 147–50).

[38] Meineck (2011: 140–1) argues that actors probably faced the audience rather than each other, for both visibility and audibility, and therefore that the mask gaze would have been directed at the audience and not the other actors. But I don't see why the acting needed to be so completely frontal. Meineck himself allows up to three–quarter turns from the front as possible, albeit with diminished audibility (as well as visibility). Further, as the seating was semicircular, the actors could not play frontally to more than a portion of the audience at one time. I think rather that the blocking of movement must have been carefully coordinated with speech to allow visibly direct contact between actors without undue loss of audibility, perhaps privileging the seats in the center in any tradeoffs.

[39] I suspect that there may have been some noticeable asymmetry in the look of the two eyes of a mask to make them seem to be glancing, and that the glance would have been seen as tending in a particular direction depending on the position and movement of the actor's head. But such asymmetry would surely not have diffused the general outward orientation of the mask's expressivity, at least not enough to turn it inward as happens with the eyes of the nō mask.

[40] The experiments conducted by Vovolis (2009: 60–1, 67, 121–4) have led him to conclude that small eye openings in masks concentrate an actor's attention, in particular forcing an emphasis on listening to the other actors. It seems to me that such attention directed toward other actors necessarily animates the interactions between them. Thus the outward expressivity of the tragic mask can only have increased the vividness of these interactions.

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Stink Foot: Review and Interview

Adapted and directed by Jeff James
18 November - 13 December, 2014
The Yard
Queen's Yard, Hackney Wick, London

Review and interview by **Julie Ackroyd**
Open University

How do you convey the physical suffering of a man with a putrid foot, whose smell is so gut-wrenchingly foul that his shipmates abandon him on an uninhabited island? Jeff James, who has adapted and directed *Philoctetes* in London, has come up with a superb way of conveying this premise in a very accessible manner to a modern audience. In his production, Philoctetes' bound leg oozes treacle. This may seem an unorthodox way of representing his affliction, but it really does work. The sweet and slightly sickly smell of the treacle permeates the performance space, and the smeared footprints it leaves behind show clearly that Philoctetes cannot outrun his fate. This trail of sticky, dark evidence interacts with both Neoptolemus and Odysseus as they invade Lemnos, Philoctetes' island. They tread in it, slip on it and track it across the industrial surface of the staging area. Later in the play, when Philoctetes is experiencing indescribable pain from his suppurating wound, the audience is personally bound up in his suffering as Odysseus throws treacle bombs at Philoctetes, which explode in a violent splash of stickiness. The result is that both Daniel Millar, who plays the title role, and unfortunate front-row members of the audience are hit by the unwelcome splatter. A large plastic sheet is given as

Daniel Millar as Philoctetes and Joshua Miles as Neo. Photo: Bronwen Sharp

Daniel Millar as Philoctetes. Photo: Bronwen Sharp

protection to those occupants of the front row, showing that the director and his production team have intended this effect. The unpleasantness of the situation is shared in a physical way with the rest of the audience as they are exposed to ear-splitting feedback, initiated by Odysseus, from the loudspeaker system. These wince-inducing moments are short lived but serve to make the audience share very personally in the suffering of Philoctetes. The review of the production by *The Stage*, the professional paper for theatrical personnel in the UK, has stated that 'The treacle-filled set is somewhat gimmicky', but while there were gimmicky aspects of the production, this application of treacle was definitely not one of them. At this stage the audience begins to empathise with the sufferings of Philoctetes and appreciate his dilemma in confronting the choices he needs to make in order to be cured.

The adaptation and casting of the piece indicate a chamber-play approach to the text. Jeff James, who reworked the play, has used the 1890 translation by R. C. Jebb as his base text. He also acknowledges that he has been influenced and inspired by the work of others such as Seamus Heaney, David Greene and Hugh Lloyd-Jones. What comes through very clearly in this version are the moral choices which an individual has to make in a difficult situation. Neoptolemus, here played by Joshua Miles, seems to be an innocent abroad, ripe for manipulation by Odysseus. He is sometimes swayed by Odysseus, yet still

manages to hold on to his humanity and moral judgement by acknowledging that his choice to deceive Philoctetes is wrong and must be amended. The initial stance of Neoptolemus—that he cannot take the magic bow from Philoctetes, even if this action ends the Trojan War—is aggressively challenged by Odysseus, who will not let the younger man's better instincts prevail. Odysseus in this adaptation is not the amusing wily trickster we see in other works. Here he is a bully who will not accept any challenge to his leadership. I say 'he', although in this version Odysseus is played by Rosie Thomson, and is addressed as 'ma'am' by Neoptolemus. This casting makes little other reference to the gender of the performer, who is costumed in the same-style Nike boxing shorts which Neoptolemus and Philoctetes wear. This uniformity of dress evokes 'team Greek'. Throughout the play Odysseus acts as ringmaster, managing the lighting, sound, water and treacle within the boundaries of the staging area. In some cases his activity is a little intrusive: the constant changes of lighting (Odysseus plugs and unplugs industrial lights around the acting space) seem unnecessary and at times inappropriate. The lighting works best when it allows the audience to focus on the one-to-one discussions between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes as they make their peace over Neoptolemus' confiscation of the bow and his decision to return it. At this point a single light on the stage in front of the figures creates a giant shadow behind them which throws their body language into sharp focus.

The sound decision to omit the chorus enabled the audience to focus entirely on the three characters of Philoctetes, Neoptolemus and Odysseus. Many of the Choral segments essential for plot development were re-written and allocated to Odysseus, who also takes on the role of the Merchant and Hercules. These multiple roles clarified the trickster nature of Odysseus, making more apparent his active attempts to dupe Philoctetes and manipulate his actions to ensure that his bow, essential for the Greeks' conquest of Troy, was sent there with or without its owner. In the opening of the play Odysseus assumes the bored tone of a tour guide introducing Neoptolemus to the island of Lemnos and its inhabitant, thus quickly informing the audience about the characters and the backstory to coming events. When Philoctetes and Neoptolemus first meet, the former seems to have lost the ability to verbalise when faced with another human being after ten years of isolation. His guttural attempts at speech are tortured and halting, obviously costing him much effort. As he gains familiarity with Neoptolemus his verbalising becomes quicker to the point of garrulity at times, his words falling over each other to come out.

Philoctetes has not often been produced by professional theatre companies in the UK. According to the records held by the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* (1990) by Seamus Heaney seems to be the most popular version, having been performed in 1991, 1996, 1999 and 2003. Then all goes quiet. The adaptor's decision to replace the original title with a more accessible, Anglicised one is understandable. There is little point in alienating the ticket-buying public with a title they may be hesitant to pronounce. Here the choice of *Stink Foot* clearly encapsulates the central motif of this staging.

Interview with Jeff James about *Stink Foot*:

Jeff James, the director and adaptor of Stink Foot, studied for a B.A. in English at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he was awarded a double first. His previous work includes time as a staff/assistant director at the National Theatre, Young Vic, Residenztheater Munich, Minerva Chichester, The Globe, Trafalgar Studios, and West Yorkshire Playhouse. In addition to Stink Foot he has directed One for the Road / Victoria Station at the Young Vic and the Print Room and Swan Song at the Print Room. Our discussion about Stink Foot is reproduced in full below. In it he outlines his choices in adapting the play's text as well as the images he brought into its staging.

INTERVIEW

Julie Ackroyd: The treacle motif worked really well to show the audience that Philoctetes is never free of the puss in his foot. The gluey footprints worked to demonstrate that the stink literally follows him, and the treacle bombs worked a treat as they made the audience recoil from him. How did you come up with this idea and why do you think it works?

Jeff James: One of the challenges that Alex Lowde (designer) and I first saw in the show is the rotting foot – its horror is so extreme in Sophocles' description, and we knew to deliver the play we had to find an exciting form to express it. At a very early stage (before we'd decided we wanted to stage the play, but were exploring it in workshop), Alex found two references that we both really liked. One was the Richard Wilson installation 20:50, where oil fills an entire room. This piece is much calmer than our aesthetic, but I liked the way black gunk had taken over an entire space. The other reference was a photograph of Stuart Brisley's 1975 action 'Moments of Decision/Indecision', where the artist is in a room full of black and white paint, and tries to climb the wall. The figure is covered in black paint, and the paint is smeared up the wall. These two images led us to think about what black gunk could be used in production, and we decided to use treacle. Maybe one could find a complex metaphor about the sugar industry and islands and colonialism, but when we thought of it it was just a dark viscous material. What I discovered when exploring this further in workshop was that the treacle not only expressed the disgusting nature of the foot, but also showed very clearly the moral corruption of Neoptolemus, which for me is at the heart of the play. Neo starts the play ethically clean, but gets progressively muckier as his moral choices become murkier. He tries to atone for what he has done at the end of the play, but I don't think redemption is possible for him. What the audience in Athens would have known, which I guess most of my audience don't notice, is that this is the war criminal who is this offstage menace in the Trojan Women, and is the 'painted tyrant' Pyrrhus who murders Priam in the player king's speech in Hamlet. Conveying to our audience the outrageous nature of Neoptolemus' crime was important to me, and the treacle helps this.

Julie Ackroyd: I can't ever recall seeing the play being performed professionally over the last twenty years in London. Why do you think that might be? Is it a difficult text for the audience or difficult for the actors? Why did you select it? How did you come across it?

Jeff James: I came across it when I was studying English at university. I went to Cambridge, and there's this compulsory and scary exam on 'Tragedy' where you have to compare the Greek tragedies to Shakespeare and others. I thought Philoctetes was really interesting, and kept thinking about it. A couple of years ago I was thinking what play to do next, and couldn't stop thinking about it. I resisted it, because I thought it was really tough, but in the end I decided I had to do it. I think one of the reasons the play is rarely done is that it's dramaturgically very difficult. The merchant scene seems to me a particularly difficult scene – I've interpreted it that the merchant (obviously Odysseus in my version) comes in because Neoptolemus is having a wobble, and (s)he decides to intervene to put him back on track. I know this isn't the only way of reading it, but that was a way I made sense of it. I think the play seduces you with questions of detail, and it's hard to keep coming back to the simplicity of the main story – three people on an island who want to go in different directions. It's easy to get lost once Neoptolemus starts lying about being in Troy – we don't quite have time to clock that this is not the truth, and it's not really an important lie – the real point is that he is (supposedly) Odysseus's enemy, and it's hard to keep focussed on this.

Julie Ackroyd: You used Jebb's translation, yet your version is very different from his – Jebb never used 'fuck' for a start... Were you deliberately challenging Jebb and those polite translations? What do you feel the use of colloquial language adds to the performance?

Jeff James: If I'd had the money, I would have commissioned a literal translation from which to work. I didn't, so I used Jebb's as a basis for my version as it's not in copyright. I've pretty much changed every word, so I don't think there's much of Jebb's tone or style in there, although my play follows his line for

line, pretty much. Hercules actually speaks Jebb's text at the end of the play – I was interested in the *deus ex machina* being a different form. I haven't deliberately tried to challenge other translations, but I wanted my version to get to what I thought I could see at the heart of the play. I didn't want to write in verse as this seemed too polite, and I was interested to see if I could realise the play in colloquial language. I wanted to make the play immediate to an audience now, and to avoid it feeling like a museum piece or like something you had to have a particular kind of education to understand. I think there's a received way of staging Greek tragedy in this country, that for me doesn't allow those plays to be as exciting as I find them on the page. I don't use the word 'fuck' to shock, more because it's a central word in my everyday vocabulary.

Julie Ackroyd: You cast Odysseus as a woman. Do you feel that adds a different dynamic to the relationship between the characters which might be absent if the casting was all male?

Jeff James: It's partly a political decision, in that I really like lots of plays that were written a long time ago. If one directs a lot of these plays, you end up with a very great gender imbalance as the canon obviously tends to have more parts for men: that's part of our inheritance of thousands upon thousands of years of oppression of women. I don't want my plays always to have more men than women, so I'm keen to find ways of casting in other ways. I think it works really well having Odysseus as woman, because there's this erotic subtext in the Neoptolemus/Philoctetes relationship, and I think in our contemporary understanding (or at least my take on it), it's easier for her to have this slightly ironic relationship to it than if she was a man. Women are powerful in our society, and I think that makes the role make sense as a woman.

Julie Ackroyd: Your Odysseus does very little to ingratiate herself with the audience. Was this a deliberate ploy? If so why? Odysseus is often seen as being wily and just a little bit funny...

Jeff James: I'm equally sympathetic and unsympathetic to all three characters. I think what's exciting about her is that she's very powerful (particularly in our production, where she controls all the light and sound) but she's powerless in the only thing that matters – confronting Philoctetes.

Julie Ackroyd: Is Neo a character to be cheered on, since he has such a well-defined idea of right and wrong? Or is he really just that little bit simple?

Jeff James: I don't think he's unintelligent – he's a person who, like lots of people, formed a view of the world while growing up that is challenged when he lives in the real world.

Julie Ackroyd: When Philoctetes has his pain episode you made the audience share it with him by creating feedback on the loud speakers. Where did this idea come from and what has the audience reaction been to it?

Jeff James: It's part of Odysseus' control of the production – sometimes the audience put their fingers in their ears, but I don't think anyone's actually complained about it. I wanted the pain to be part of what Odysseus does to Philoctetes, so it made sense for her to use the theatrical tools at her disposal.

Julie Ackroyd: The venue appears to have a really young audience base who seemed very into the play – it can be a gamble working in a fringe venue. What has this venue brought to the play which a larger venue wouldn't have?

Jeff James: I love the mix of classical and contemporary in the venue – a Greek amphitheatre built in the middle of a modern warehouse. That seemed to fit very well with the piece. The Yard is a space where one can experiment and the audience support that – this show was certainly an experiment for me.

Bacchae

Adapted and directed by Chris Vervain
5 - 11 March 2015 Theatro Technis
26 Camden Road, London

Review by **Julie Ackroyd**
Open University

The director of *Bacchae* is Chris Vervain, an artist and theatre practitioner who specialises in productions which utilise masked performance. Her work is informed by research initially undertaken whilst she was working on her PhD (completed in 2008) at Holloway College, part of the University of London in the UK. Her previous fully staged, masked presentations have included Sophocles' *Antigone* in 2011, Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* in 2012 and Euripides' *The Women of Troy* in 2014.

Vervain's skill lies in serving as a very confident facilitator among musicians, choreographer, actors and audience. Presenting a performance in mask, with fully integrated and meaningful movement, is a daunting challenge for many modern actors unless they have attended a specialised theatre school with training in physical theatre and mask work. In most theatre training, mask work is an ancillary skill for a niche

The Chorus of Bacchants dance.

market which the majority of actors will never be called on to use. As a result, bringing a full cast up to speed in the technique and ensuring that the chorus works as a co-ordinated whole is often beyond many companies' abilities. The cast of Vervain's *Bacchae* is an exception that has created a compelling and eminently watchable performance. In order to present *Bacchae,* Vervain deliberately issued an open casting call for young, professionally trained actors of similar physical build and athleticism. When asked about the importance of casting, she has said that 'the right kind of performer' is essential in order to make the most accessible kind of production. 'In build they can't be too well filled out or we find ourselves in the world of comedy'. On the other hand, 'variation in height does not matter in the chorus and is rather pleasing and useful – the shorter people can stand towards the front – so we are less in danger of losing some of the choral masked faces'. However, 'for the main roles it is a different matter; certain roles demand height, e.g. a short Dionysus towered over by a tall Pentheus would be incongruous and would take the audience's attention away from the important themes of the action.' Here it is paramount to avoid straining the belief of the audience. The mask demands a lot of initial concentration from an audience, who are generally unfamiliar with the presentational tropes which it involves. The rest of the experience must be made as accessible as possible. In using mask Vervain believes that 'the audience can experience a very different art form than they are used to, stimulating them on many different levels at once. There is nothing quite like the magic of mask in this context and you have to be there in person to really appreciate it!'

The fact that the full production was in rehearsal for only three and a half weeks before the performance opened in front of a paying audience is staggering. Its success in drilling fourteen people who have never worked together as a masked ensemble into a team functioning at such a high standard is a great compliment to the working methods of the director and the rest of the creative crew. By comparison,

Peter Hall's version of Tony Harrison's *Oresteia* at the National Theatre in London had four months of rehearsal whilst the *Oedipus* plays had ten weeks… (1981 and 1996 respectively). In selecting her actors Vervain has deliberately cast 'talented people' with 'little or no previous mask experience, but their expertise in theatrical communication, both naturalistic and stylised, means that in rehearsal they quickly see how mask performance technically works'. She adds that it is essential to choose actors who have 'intelligence and the ability to learn quickly!' Vervain actually avoids working with those who have specialised in mask training, since they 'tend to come with preconceptions on how mask should be approached and employed which may impede the homogenous development of the company. Moreover mask work in the West today often focuses on improvisation and comedy and there is the idea around that mask and the complex text are not compatible, also that it is half masks that speak whilst masks that cover the whole face are silent. This is of course nonsense when you consider the practice of the ancient theatre. For Greek tragedy I have found my own way of employing mask, using some of the insights of masking coming out of the schools following the work of Copeau, but discarding others.'

Vervain constructs the full-face masks she uses, modelling them on images from vase and archaeological sources. They in no way impede the delivery of the lines, which are enunciated clearly by a cast who obviously have a strong textual training. Even when the chorus are delivering the lines in unison the meaning is never lost or subsumed by the accompanying music, a beautifully sparse composition by Penelope Anne Shipley. In most of the play it takes the form of three voices creating a strange and exotic harmony which splits and then re-joins to give a dissonant and eerie texture to the proceedings. Shipley is joined in the singing by Anita Creed and Katie Arnstein, who all balance each other out and give a very pleasing turn to the score. An occasional instrumental underscoring of the singing, provided by flute, tambourine and drum, adds sharpness and imposes an inescapable beat on the music when it is needed to keep the chorus together during crucial parts of the dialogue, as well as punctuating such scenes as the collapse of Pentheus' palace. The whole soundscape is highly effective. Vervain and Shipley have worked together before, and the availability of a musical director throughout the whole rehearsal period has resulted in a fully integrated score. Vervain adds that their close collaboration made it possible to introduce suitable 'musical themes as we went along [through the rehearsal process], adjusting them and writing new material as necessary.' Shipley also helped guide the daily work of the cast by taking on the additional role of Assistant Director. In this capacity she led the 'daily vocal and physical warm ups' which are essential for putting the cast in the right frame of mind for work. Her active knowledge of the strengths of the cast and chorus seems to have informed the score.

The choreography, by Jemma Gould, is well calibrated to the emotions raised by the music. Her movement pattern is initially based on strong diagonals. The chorus create undulating chains of movement across the performance space, then settle into tableaus where the sameness of the masks is offset by the differences in their resting posture. The simple tilt of a head combined with a still body indicates that each Bacchant is listening attentively as the speaker from the chorus relates the narrative. The size of the performance space makes the movements of the chorus work best when there are no more than seven onstage. Early in the play twelve chorus members are present, creating a slight feeling of visual congestion as they dance. There were a couple of small collisions between masked Bacchants, a side effect of very complex patterns which relied on the perfect placement of each individual. (I was assured that these mishaps only occurred on the night I attended.) Such errors are forgivable; anyone who has experimented with mask work will agree that the difficulties of choreographed movement are magnified by limited vision and restricted space. According to Vervain, the visual problems are also 'exacerbated many times over once stage lighting comes into play'. Obviously a performance in daylight in a larger outdoor *orchêstra* would help to iron out these difficulties and the choreography would definitely transfer to that kind of space with no loss of meaning. The initial brief from director to choreographer was to have an 'energetic' Choral Entry Dance, an intention wholly fulfilled by the entry of the full chorus of twelve carrying *thyrsi*. (Two separate chorus members who took possession of the

rear *skênê* later delivered the choral dialogue.) In rehearsal the creative team's approach to integrating the music and dance 'followed a sort of an iterative path, from movement to text to dance to mask to speaking and dancing in mask. Thus Jemma [Gould] started by introducing typical poses and moves indicated by the ancient images – a sort of movement vocabulary underpinning much of her specific choreography. We used this introduction as a group bonding exercise for the whole cast, including our two male actors who weren't in the chorus. They both subsequently found this vocabulary useful in that it informed some of their own movement choices.'

Vervain brings up the point that 'Mask highlights the physical aspects of the performance', necessitating the integration of a suitable movement vocabulary into the production. The form 'requires performers to move with the grace and awareness of "natural dancers"; that is, they must carry within them an innate understanding of the language of bodily expression – which, incidentally, is the starting point for what we call "physical theatre". They also need extraordinary stamina – performing in mask is exhausting!' I can vouch for mask's demands on the performer, having participated in some of Vervain's masked workshops in the past. Without peripheral vision, the constant need to gauge distance and to be aware of the movement of other cast members is tiring, as is the heat within the masks. These challenging conditions demand actors who have a generosity of spirit and can 'accept direction' as well 'as work well in ensemble'. Vervain fosters this ensemble feeling by ensuring that 'the cast is present every working day, either "on stage" or otherwise participating by observing and helping each other realise their roles. It is very much a group activity with many of the cast doubling, performing the minor roles or attendants as well as being in the chorus and playing or understudying the main parts.' This is the first time that Vervain and Gould have worked together, and the partnership has been successful. Gould, a professional dancer and choreographer, has independently studied the movement and poses depicted in Greek images of dance and combat. She has accomplished the sometimes-conflicting tasks of drilling the chorus in their moves and performing as one of them.

The selection of appropriate performance text and the difficulties the choice can cause in performance is a major consideration when planning a production. Vervain has chosen the version of the play by Philip Vellacott (second edition, 1973), 'a translation that stays as close as possible to the to the original Greek—speech by speech, image by image, in as much as we can actually recover it—but that also conveys a sense of the poetic nature of the drama.' As Vervain also points out, 'many performable translations are clearly made with the unmasked theatre in mind', and a text has to be selected carefully, for 'there are a lot of turgid scholarly ones around' which do not lend themselves to a satisfying dramatic experience for the audience or give a structure performable by an actor. If the right script is used, 'Mask actually helps bring such a text to life and enables a variety of performance styles to be practiced.' The mask frees the performer from 'the overtly literal interpretation of the theatre of Naturalism. Mask lends itself to a more universal portrayal whilst still conveying the pathos of the tragic theme'.

The *Bacchae*'s central conflict between Pentheus and Dionysus is triggered when the god arrives in Thebes to tell the House of Cadmus that the gods must be reverently honoured. Will Bryant, as the doomed Pentheus, conveys an initial arrogance as he clicks his fingers to attendants and visitors alike in order to get the reactions and actions he desires. Early in the play he is too preoccupied by his own agenda to notice that the chorus are stalking him in a very predatory manner, focusing on his movements with intensity. This is a strong visual foreshadowing for those familiar with the story, who know that he will later be torn limb from limb on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron. A subtlety in Bryant's portrayal which would be lost in a larger acting space is his use of breath to punctuate his dialogue. His Pentheus hyperventilates during moments of decision and stress, an effect made audible by his mask. When Pentheus is faced with Dionysus, played by Alexander Pett, both use poses and body language as weapons in a duel over status. Dionysus appears ungodlike only when he is arrested and slides into a parody of his previously controlling character by allowing himself to be shepherded by a guard with a

self-important, swaggering walk. This comedic guard, Rowan Winter, is soon ushered off by Pentheus, who wishes to interrogate Dionysus himself. Dionysus the god reasserts himself when alone with Pentheus and, with the help of a change in the lighting to a seductive red, easily persuades Pentheus to dress as a Bacchant and see the women's rites on the mountain. The costumes, designed by Chris Vervain and made by Linda Kerr and Freida Bier, are unisex belted or fitted tunics for the chorus and main characters. As a consequence, Pentheus' change from male ruler's garb to a Bacchant's costume is more a matter of colour and drape than a strong shift of sex identity; his bewitched and dreamlike state is conveyed mostly by body language. Thus a potentially difficult moment for a modern audience—when Pentheus arrives in women's garb—is less about awkward cross dressing than about his motivations. It also indicates that his new manner, while provoked by Dionysus, was already latent in Pentheus' personality. As he assumes the poses of his female relatives (now Bacchants), his feminised body language does raise a laugh from the audience, making him appear out of control and rather ridiculous in contrast with his earlier imperious bearing. This lightness of touch is continued by Alyssa Burnett as the Messenger who delivers the chilling news of Pentheus' death. She describes his dismemberment without sensationalism, but with a thoughtful and measured delivery that allows the audience to absorb the narrative leading up to the harrowing climax.

Other cast members also deserve a mention. Joanna Howden as Tiresias uses body language to convey the seer's age, humanizing her character with the small touches of clawed hands, gnarled toes, and a wandering, tottering walk that indicate an old body riddled with arthritis. The proud old man is never cowed, even when Pentheus tries to browbeat him. Also noteworthy is the final appearance of Dionysus, when Alexander Pett, who has portrayed the character throughout the performance, is joined by Will Bryant and Alyssa Burnett to create a trinity—a frightening, black-garbed, three-headed, six-armed Dionysus who is featureless and wreathed in ivy. This god is implacable as he names the current and future punishment for members of the House of Cadmus. In this pronouncement there is no room for sympathy for the family, or any tinge of satisfaction with the rites the women of the city have selflessly performed for him.

The whole performance was well judged, audible and peppered with nuances which made the evening eminently watchable both for those familiar with classical masked Greek plays and for those new to the genre. The changes in pace and delivery by the actors and chorus went well with the musical score and movement. I look forward to seeing future productions from this creative team, who have made a difficult medium accessible, understandable and relevant to a modern audience.

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Roman Comedy in Performance: Using the Videos of the 2012 NEH Summer Institute

by **Timothy J. Moore** (*Washington University in St. Louis*) and **Sharon L. James** (*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*)

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 we co-directed an NEH Summer Institute for College and University Faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill entitled, "Roman Comedy in Performance." As part of their work in the NEH Institute, the 25 NEH Summer Scholars, divided into small groups, produced twenty performances of scenes from seven different plays of Plautus and Terence. All the performances were recorded on videos, which can be found on a dedicated YouTube Channel or via the NEH Summer Institute "Roman Comedy in Performance" Blog. Anyone interested may also purchase all the videos on two DVDs using PayPal. More information on the NEH Summer Institute, including Latin texts and English translations of each of the scenes performed and relevant bibliography, is available at the NEH Summer Institute's web site. See also the special issue of *Classical Journal* dedicated to the Institute (Safran and Fulkerson 2015).

Our hope in organizing the Institute was that the resulting videos would be useful for researchers, students and teachers, directors and performers, and anyone interested in Roman Comedy. Browsing the videos to see what shows up is, we think, a useful endeavor in itself. Nevertheless, the following guide should be helpful for those eager to know which videos would be most helpful for understanding specific aspects of Roman comedy and its performance. After listing the basic features of each performance, we offer suggestions as to which videos best demonstrate features of ancient performance, uses of more modern conventions, and important social issues to which the plays draw attention. We have deliberately kept our own interpretations minimal in what follows. Our purpose is not to tell viewers of the videos what to think, but to lead viewers to the videos they might find most useful for doing their own thinking about the plays.

THE PERFORMANCES

The twenty performances produced at the Institute are as follows:

I. Plautus, *Pseudolus* 133-234: The pimp Ballio demands that his male slaves and then his slave-prostitutes prepare for his birthday celebration. He complains that they are lazy, eat too much, and are immune to beatings (whipwasters, he calls them), then demands that each of them give him a gift, under threat of punishment. As he talks, he is striking about with a whip. Eavesdropping are young Calidorus, in love with one of Ballio's slave-prostitutes, and his clever slave Pseudolus. When Ballio has left the stage, Pseudolus promises to trick the pimp out of the girl and to humiliate him.

Five different versions of this scene were performed at the Institute, each by a different group:[1]

Pseudolus **Group A: In Latin, with ancient-style costumes, an all-male cast (except for mutes), and background music played on a clarinet.**

Performers: Christopher Bungard (Pseudolus), Amy R. Cohen (Aeschrodora), Mark Damen (slave 2), Michael Katchmer (Ballio), V. Sophie Klein (Phoenicium), Erin Moodie (Hedytium), Jeanne Neumann (Xystilis), Anthony Sprinkle (clarinet, playing music composed by T. H. M. Gellar-Goad), Daniel Walin (slave 1), Tarik Wareh (Calidorus).

Pseudolus **Group B: In English, with modern-style costumes, a heavily adapted text emphasizing physical humor, and the half masks and style of** *commedia dell'arte*.**2**
Performers: Amy R. Cohen (slave 3, Candy), Angela Horchem (Ballia), Laura Lippman (Calidorus, Pseudolus), Mike Lippman (slave 2, Randy), and Erin Moodie (slave 1, Dolce)

Pseudolus **Group C: In English, with modern-style costumes, an all-female cast, and a "breakout scene" in which the performers discuss questions raised by the scene and its performance.**
Performers: Amy R. Cohen (Fanny Fun-Bags), Angela Horchem (slave 3), Mimi Kammer (Ballio and herself), V. Sophie Klein (Violet), Erin Moodie (Sweet Tina), Jeanne Neumann (Calidorus and herself), Elizabeth Patterson (slave 1 and herself), Meredith Safran (slave 4 and herself), Nancy Sultan (slave 2, Margreasy), Chris Woodworth (Pseudolus and herself).

Pseudolus **Group D: In English, with ancient-style costumes and some masks, in the style of hip hop, with percussion and recorder accompaniment.**
Performers: Christopher Bungard (percussion), Steve Earnest (Calidorus), Patrick Gray (Ballio), Jim Hanson (slave 3, Hotlipsia), V. Sophie Klein (slave 2, Phoenicium), Mike Lippman (slave 4, Hotpantsium), Timothy Moore (percussion), Ada Palmer (recorder), Daniel Smith (slave 1, Hottitsilis), Nancy Sultan (Pseudolus).

Pseudolus **Group E: In English, with ancient-style costumes, some half masks as in commedia dell'arte, some full masks, and a slapstick.3**
Performers: Gian Giacomo Colli (slave 2, Aeschrodora), Seth Jeppesen (Ballio), Kenneth Molloy (Calidorus, slave 3, Phoenicium), Ada Palmer (slave 1, Hedytium), Daniel Smith (Pseudolus, slave 4, Xystilis).

II. Plautus, *Bacchides* **1116-1206:** In the play's final scene, two old men try to storm the home of the prostitutes who have seduced their sons but are themselves seduced by the prostitutes.

One group performed this scene in three different ways, each version with these performers: Patrick Gray (Philoxenus), Jeanne Neumann (*Soror*), Ada Palmer (Bacchis), Daniel Walin (Nicobulus):**4**

In English, with ancient-style costumes and masks created for the NEH Summer Institute.

In English, with ancient-style costumes and masks, spoken.

In English, with ancient-style costumes, without masks, spoken.

III. Plautus, *Casina* **353-423**: An old man desires that his slave, Olympio, marry Casina, the house slave of his wife, Cleostrata, so that the old man himself can rape her. Cleostrata, however, wants Casina to marry another slave, Chalinus. In this scene Cleostrata and the old man have agreed that Olympio and Chalinus will draw lots to see who will get to marry Casina. One group performed this scene in three different ways, each version with these performers: Gian Giacomo Colli (*Senex*), Mike Lippman, (Olympio), Elizabeth Patterson (Chalinus), Nancy Sultan (Cleostrata):[5]

In English, with ancient-style costumes and masks created for the NEH Summer Institute.

In English, with ancient-style costumes and large helmet masks used elsewhere in performances of Greek tragedy.[6]

In English, with modern-style costumes and half masks used elsewhere in performances of *commedia dell'arte*, performed as a scenario to which the actors improvised, as in *commedia dell'arte*.[7]

III. Plautus, *Mercator* **691-802:** The old man Lysimachus has agreed to let his neighbor Demipho hide a prostitute in his house and has hired a cook to provide food for them. Lysimachus' wife, Dorippa, has returned home unexpectedly. Finding the prostitute, she assumes that Lysimachus is keeping the prostitute for himself. The cook makes things even worse for Lysimachus. One group performed this scene in three different ways:[8]

In Latin, in modern costuming: Dorippa is furious, and the cook appears to be deliberately "playing dumb" to aggravate Lysimachus.
Performers: Christopher Bungard (Lysimachus), Steve Earnest (cook's assistant), Daniel Smith (cook), Chris Woodworth (Dorippa).

In English, in modern costuming: Dorippa is furious, and the cook appears to be oblivious.
Performers: Christopher Bungard (Lysimachus), Steve Earnest (cook), Daniel Smith (cook's assistant), Chris Woodworth (Dorippa).

In English, in modern costuming: Dorippa is heartbroken, and the cook appears to be deliberately "playing dumb" to aggravate Lysimachus.
Performers: Christopher Bungard (Lysimachus), Steve Earnest (cook's assistant), Daniel Smith (cook), Chris Woodworth (Dorippa).

IV. Plautus, *Persa* **753–757, 801–858:** The slaves Toxilus and Sagaristio have brought economic ruin on the pimp Dordalus through a deception. Toxilus, Sagaristio, Toxilus' slave girlfriend Lemniselenis (previously owned by Dordalus) and their fellow slave Paegnium ruthlessly mock Dordalus as the play ends. This scene was performed in one version, by Amy R. Cohen (Toxilus), Angela Horchem (Sagaristio), Seth Jeppesen (Paegnium), Mimi Kammer (Lemniselenis), Tony Sprinkle (clarinet, performing music composed by T. H. M. Gellar-Goad), Tarik Wareh (Dordalus):[9]

In Latin, in modern costuming, sung to the unison accompaniment of a clarinet.

V. Plautus, *Truculentus* **775-854:** Diniarchus has impregnated the daughter of Callicles. When the girl and her mother wanted to conceal the birth they gave the baby to one of their slaves, who handed it over to a slave of the prostitute Phronesium. Phronesium has been pretending the baby is hers by one of her lovers, in order to win gifts from him. Callicles has found out about the ruse and brutally interrogates the two slaves, while Diniarchus eavesdrops. One group performed this scene in two different ways:[10]

In Latin, in modern costumes, sung with a repetitive melody to the unison accompaniment of a clarinet, in the style of melodrama.
Performers: Jim Hanson (Diniarchus), Michael Katchmer (Callicles), Laura Lippman (Phronesium's *ancilla*), Mike Lippman (*lorarius* 1), Timothy Moore (*lorarius* 2), Meredith Safran (Callicles' *ancilla*); Tony Sprinkle (clarinet, performing music composed by T. H. M. Gellar-Goad).

In English, in modern costumes, spoken, in the style of melodrama.
Performers: Jim Hanson (Diniarchus), Angela Horchem (piano), Michael Katchmer (Callicles), Laura Lippman (Phronesium's *ancilla*), Mike Lippman (*lorarius* 1), Timothy Moore (*lorarius* 2), Meredith Safran (Callicles' *ancilla*).

VI. Terence, *Eunuchus* **739-816:** The prostitute Thais has used one of her lovers, the braggart soldier Thraso, to obtain custody of the citizen girl Pamphila, who was captured by pirates. Thais wants to return Pamphila to Pamphila's brother, Chremes. Thraso, thinking that Chremes is Thais's lover, comes with his parasite Gnatho and several of his slaves to try to force Thais to give him back Pamphila. One group performed this scene in three different ways:[11]

In Latin, in masks and ancient-style costumes, with elaborate, stylized gestures.
Performers: Christopher Bungard (Simalio), Amy R. Cohen (Pythias), Mark Damen (Thraso), T. H. M. Gellar-Goad (voice of Pythias), Seth Jeppesen (Sanga), V. Sophie Klein (Gnatho), Kenneth Molloy (Chremes), Erin Moodie (Thais), Daniel Smith (Donax), Tarik Wareh (Syriscus).

In English, using Henry Thomas Riley's 19th-century translation, with costumes suggesting a Victorian garden party.
Performers: Christopher Bungard (Simalio), Amy R. Cohen (Pythias), Mark Damen (Thais), Seth Jeppesen (Sanga), V. Sophie Klein (Chremes), Kenneth Molloy (Gnatho), Erin Moodie (Thraso), Daniel Smith (Donax), Tarik Wareh (Syriscus).

In English, in modern costumes: an adaptation in the style of a 21st-century American situation comedy. Performers: Mark Damen (Chremes), Seth Jeppesen (announcer), V. Sophie Klein (Thais), Kenneth Molloy (Officer Thraso), Erin Moodie (Deputy Gnatho).

GLIMPSING FEATURES OF ANCIENT PERFORMANCE

As is the case with any theatrical work, features of performance contribute much to the meaning and effect of Plautus's and Terence's plays. Many aspects of performance in the Roman republic can be captured, even if exact recreation of ancient performance practice is beyond our reach (see Marshall 2006). The NEH Summer Scholars therefore spent a great deal of time studying the conditions of performance in second-century-BCE Rome, and many of the videos are useful tools for those pondering what Roman comedy's original audiences might have experienced.

Language

Five of the performances are in Latin:

The Latin version of *Pseudolus* 133-234 offers viewers the chance to hear some of Plautus' most exuberant Latin. Note such verses as Ballio's string of two-syllable commands to his slaves:

haec, quum ego a foro revortar, facite ut offendam parata,

vorsa sparsa, tersa strata, lautaque unctaque omnia uti sint.

See to it that when I come back from the forum I find all these things done, swept, spread, polished, strewn, washed and anointed (163–4, 4:53 on the video);[12]

the wordplay as Pseudolus and Calidorus respond to Ballio's threats against his slave prostitutes:

CALIDORUS. audin, furcifer quae loquitur? satin magnificus tibi videtur? PSEUDOLUS. pol iste, atque etiam malificus.sed tace atque hanc rem gere.

CALIDORUS. Do you hear what that scoundrel is saying? You think he's boastful enough? PSEUDOLUS. He sure is, and badful too. But be quiet and pay attention to this. (194–195a, 10:38 in the video);

and the over–the–top threats Ballio makes against the prostitutes, including this one:

Aeschrodora, tu quae amicos tibi habes lenonum aemulos lanios, qui, item ut nos iurando, iure malo male quaerunt rem, audi: nisi carnaria tria gravida tegoribus onere uberi hodiemihi erunt, cras te quasi Dircam olim, ut memorant, duo gnati Iovis devinxere ad taurum, item ego te distringam ad carnarium; id   tibi profecto taurus fiet.

Aeschrodora, whose lovers are butchers, who imitate pimps: we make our money with bad oaths, they make theirs with bad soup. Listen up: unless I get three meat racks today, loaded down with big fat hides, tomorrow I'm gonna string you up on a meat rack, just like in the story, when the two sons of Jupiter tied Dirce to a bull: the meat rack's gonna be your bull. (196–201, 10:53 in the video).

The Latin version of Bacchides 1161-1206 offers such gems as the onomatopoetic comparison of the old men to sheep by one of the prostitutes:

pastor harumdormit, quom haec eunt sic a pecu balitantes.

Their shepherd is asleep, while these go off baahing in this way away from the flock (1122–1123, 0:39 in the video);

and Nicobulus' alliterative description of the women:

eunt eccas tandemprobri perlecebrae et persuastrices.

Look at them coming at us, wicked, seductive enchantresses (1166–1167, 5:07 in the video).

The Latin version of *Mercator* 691-802 is the scene in which Latin students and others who know some Latin are likely to "catch" the most words. Particularly effective pedagogically will be the frequent cases of verbal repetition like the following:

LYSIMACHUS. vidistine eam?DORIPPA. vidi. LYS. quoia ea sit rogitas? DOR. resciscam tamen.LYS. vin dicam quoiast? illa— illa edepol— vae mihi!nescio quid dicam. DOR. haeres. LYS. haud vidi magis.

LYS. Oh—you saw her?DOR. I SAW HER! LYS. You want to know whose she is?DOR. You know I'm going to find out!LYS. Do you want me to tell you whose she is? She's—um, um, she's—oh God! I don't know what to stay.DOR. Cat got your tongue?LYS. No!(720–723, 2:14 in the video).

COCUS. nempe uxor rurist tua, quam dudum deixeraste odisse [aeque] atque anguis. LYSIMACHUS. egone istuc dixi tibi?COC. mihi quidem hercle. LYS. ita me amabit Iuppiter,uxor, ut ego illud numquam dixi. DORIPPA. etiam negas?palam istaec fiunt, te me odisse. LYS. quin nego.COC. non, non te odisse aibat sed uxorem suam;et uxorem suam ruri esse aiebat. LYS. haec east.

COOK. No, but your wife is off in the country, the one you said you hate like a snake.LYSIMACHUS. I said that to you?CO. You sure did, to me.LYS. Wife, so may Jupiter love me,I never said that!DORIPPA. You're still denying it? It's becoming public that you hate me.LYS. No, I don't!CO. No no, he didn't say he hated you—it's his wife he hates. And he said she's off in the country.LYS. This is my wife!(760–766, 5:06 in the video)

Toxilus opens the Latin performance of Persa 753–757 and 801–858 with a string of ablative absolutes parodying Roman triumph language:

hostibus victis, civibus salvis, re placida, pacibus perfectis,bello exstincto, re bene gesta, integro exercitu et praesidiis,cum bene nos, Iuppiter, iuvisti, dique alii omnes caelipotentes,eas vobis habeo grates atque ago, quia probe sum ultus meum inimicum.nunc ob eam rem inter participes dividam praedam et participabo.

Enemies: defeated. Citizens: safe. State: at peace. Treaties: completed. War: over! This campaign has come to a successful conclusion, and the army and the garrison are intact. Jupiter, you and all the other gods, masters of the heavens, helped our efforts generously, so I feel grateful to you, and I give you my thanks. I really gave my enemy what he deserved! So I will now divide up my booty and share it with my comrades in arms. (753–757, <u>0:17 in the video</u>)

Space

Ten of the Institute's scenes were performed outdoors in the University of North Carolina's Forest Theater, ten indoors in Gerrard Hall on the same campus. Neither of these spaces recreated the theater space of Plautus and Terence's Rome, but both captured some features of that space.

The Forest Theater mimics a Greek theater: it is an outdoor semicircle of stone seats. Stage and orchestra do not match exactly what is found in most Greek theaters, but there is some playable space between the seating and the raised stage, which is deep and wide with two wings and a back wall with three doors. The Roman theaters of the mid-Republic were different in many ways from what we think of when we envision Greek theaters: they were probably much smaller and consisted usually of temporary stages constructed in front of temple steps or similar locations where spectators could sit.[13] Those theaters were, however, outdoors, like Greek theaters and the Forest Theater. Each performance in the Forest Theater therefore captures an important element of ancient performance, with natural lighting, ambient sound, and limited barriers between actors and spectators.

The width of the stage in the temporary theaters of Plautus and Terence's day probably varied considerably from venue to venue. The NEH Summer Scholars' use of different parts of the Forest Theater's stage is therefore instructive. The <u>Latin</u> *Pseudolus* and the <u>hip-hop</u> *Pseudolus* made use of the full wide stage of the theater. The <u>commedia dell'arte</u> *Pseudolus*, on the other hand, was performed using just a part of the central stage area of the theater; and all versions of *Mercator* and *Bacchides* as well as the <u>slapstick</u> *Pseudolus* were performed on one of the stage's projecting wings. One notes in the two scenes using the full stage the distance between eavesdroppers and those they listen to, and the ability for the performers to introduce grand processions and tableaux. When just two or three actors inhabit the full stage, as in the opening and closing moments of the *Pseudolus* scene, one senses the challenge the actors had in not being swallowed up by their surroundings. The greater intimacy of the scenes performed on only part of the stage is striking. Here eavesdroppers stand close to those they listen to, movement can be equally lively but must be limited in the distance it covers, and the challenge becomes not filling the stage in scenes with few actors but fitting all the performers in comfortably in scenes with four or more on stage. The various Forest Theater scenes taken together are thus "good to think with" for those pondering the kinds of challenges varying spaces would provide to the theatrical troupes who performed Plautus and Terence's plays in Republican Rome.

Gerrard Hall, a large open indoor space, is far removed from the theaters at which Plautus and Terence were first performed. It does, however, share an important feature with the backdrop for Roman comedy: each of the scenes performed in Gerrard Hall used a side of the hall that has two symmetrically placed doors. Performers could thus recreate the street scene in front of two houses that was the standard setting for Roman comedies. In fact, in only two scenes did the NEH Summer Scholars choose to enter through one of the two doors: in both the <u>Latin</u> and <u>English</u> versions of the *Truculentus* scene Callicles leads the slaves he is interrogating and his *lorarii* (henchmen) onto stage from the door on stage left. This is an interesting interpretive choice, as it suggests that Dinarchus' victim, Callicles' daughter, lives in a home across the stage from his paramour, Phronesium.[14]

In the other productions the performers ignored the doors, but the presence of the doors in the backdrop

is nevertheless significant for those who know the play. The *Persa* scene is a party with tables and drinks, a helpful reminder of Roman audiences' comfort in accepting that on-stage events normally held indoors occur outside. As husband, wives, and slaves vie for the possession of Casina in the various versions of the *Casina* scene, they do so in front of her home and the home where the old man will try to rape her; even without an explicit reference to the houses, the presence of the doors is a reminder of what is at stake. Thraso's attempt to keep Thais away from Chremes in *Eunuchus* occurs in front of her home and that of Thais's lover, Phaedria. The doors in the background thus bring irony and humor, as Thraso attempts to thwart an assumed rival right in front of the house of his real rival and the house of a prostitute becomes an impregnable fortress to the soldier and his cronies.

Masks

In nine of the performances some or all of the characters wore masks. Varieties in the types of masks and how they are used shed much light on what masked performance may have been like in Rome and how masks work in general. The masked scenes demonstrate how masks suit large and stylized movements, how they can both support and undermine character attributes suggested by the text, and how different kinds of masks produce markedly different effects.

Adam M. Dill created a set of papier-machè masks for the NEH Summer Scholars to use. Dill did not try to recreate ancient masks with precision, but he studied the visual and literary evidence for masks and made masks reminiscent of those, representing thirteen different stock comic types: two old men, an old woman, a young lover, a pimp, a clever slave, four other slaves, and three *meretrices* ranging from grasping to innocent. The masks of the Latin version of *Eunuchus* lent themselves well to the scene's heavily stylized performance with marked frontality. The masks also showed how mask styles can contribute to characterization but do not determine character in themselves. Thais wore a *meretrix* mask that lacked both the worldly features of the "grasping *meretrix*" mask and the innocence of the "pseudo-*meretrix*" mask. Her mask thus helped the audience appreciate that she transcends the stereotypes usually associated with prostitutes in Roman comedy. Gnatho's mask was intended as a pimp's mask, but with his large ears, raised eyebrows, and pointy chin, it fit well the sleaziness of this parasite. Thraso's mask, uncannily reminiscent of Richard Nixon, was designed as a slave's mask, but it nevertheless suited the soldier's bluster well.

Thraso's mask also had a raised eyebrow on its left side, a lower eyebrow on the right. This design was inspired by a description of such a mask by Quintilian (11.3.74). Conspicuously asymmetrical masks were worn not only by Thraso and Sanga in this scene, but also by "slave 3" (the one playing percussion on the blue bucket) and "slave 4" (playing the tambourine) in the hip-hop *Pseudolus*, and by Olympio in one of the *Casina* scenes. Viewers will want to decide for themselves if, as Quintilian claims, the actor wearing such a mask shows different moods by turning one side of the mask or the other towards the audience.

One version of the Institute's *Casina* scene used Dill's masks. Here one notes how masks can both reinforce character and produce irony. The mask of Chalinus, who is virtuously helping his mistress, looks much less sinister than that of Olympio, involved in his master's reprehensible schemes. But the ugliness of the old woman's mask contradicts the character of Cleostrata, who will gain the audience's sympathy as the play proceeds.

In the two versions of *Bacchides* (English and Latin) performed with masks, the difference between the smooth loveliness of the *meretrices*' masks and the grotesqueness of the old men's is striking. One of the most effective ways to appreciate the effect of masks is to watch the English masked version and then the English unmasked version of the same scene from *Bacchides*. The masks do not prevent a rather naturalistic mode of performance on the part of the actors. Their presence in the masked scene nevertheless calls attention to the actors as stock types in a way that is not as evident in the unmasked

scene. Another way of appreciating the difference is to watch the hip-hop *Pseudolus* scene. Here the speaking characters—Ballio, Calidorus, and Pseudolus—are unmasked, but Ballio's largely silent slaves, both male and female, wear masks. On the one hand, the masks help distinguish individuals from types. Yet at the same time, one is struck with the degree to which the masked slaves can show individuality even as they reveal no facial features and speak few or no words.

Four of the scenes used masks other than those made by Dill. For the three scenes using commedia dell'arte masks, see below. The group performing *Casina* showed how different types of masks affect performance by presenting their scene both in Dill's masks (see above) and with much larger masks designed by Amy R. Cohen for performances of Greek tragedy. Ironically, the larger masks, though intended for tragedy, contributed significantly to the humor of the scene in which they were used. For in the small space of Gerrard Hall and in a comic context the exaggerated features of the tragic masks look ridiculous.

Music

In the original performances of Plautus and Terence, actors sang extensive portions of each play to the accompaniment of the two-piped *tibia* (Moore 2012). The NEH Summer Scholars had no *tibiae*, but four of the performances sought to recreate some aspects of republican Roman musical theater.

The group of NEH Summer Scholars performing the final scene of Plautus' *Bacchides* in Latin sang a cappella, using simple melodies created by one of the performers (Ada Palmer), one melody for each type of meter used in the scene. This method of performance, easily recreated in the classroom (cf. Moore 2012/13), allows spectators to appreciate clearly the effects of metrical changes and imitates the close connection between meter and melody that was probably in evidence in the play's original performances.

Three scenes incorporated a clarinet:[15] this modern instrument is in many ways vastly different from the *tibia*, which had not only two pipes but double reeds as opposed to the clarinet's single reed. The clarinet is, however, a woodwind instrument like the *tibia*, so its presence captured something of the Roman experience. The performers of the Latin *Pseudolus* scene spoke their verses while the clarinetist played accompaniment rhythmically independent of what the actors were doing but changing melodic patterns in response to what was happening on stage. The effect was closer to that of modern film music than to Roman theater, but the changing tunes of the clarinet nevertheless recreate an element of what happened on the Roman stage, where meter, and with it melody, changed in response to mood, character, and other factors.

In two scenes the actors sing in unison with the clarinet. Although in republican Rome the *tibicen* probably did not play in unison with the singers, these productions come closest to recreating what probably happened on the Roman stage, where actors and instrumentalist cooperated closely. The most elaborate musical performance in the videos is the ending of Plautus' *Persa*, which features a widely varied melody sung to the unison accompaniment of a clarinet. This scene can give students and others a good idea of just how elaborate the music of Roman comic performance could be. The most jarring scene musically for a modern audience is the Latin *Truculentus*. The scene is entirely in trochaic septenarii, and the singers and clarinetist produce the same melody, with slight variations, as they deliver each of the scene's 80 verses. The result sounds oddly repetitive and exotic to most modern listeners, but our evidence suggests that accompanied stichic scenes may have been performed with just such repetitive melodies (Moore 2012, 141): Roman audiences were more attuned than we are to the slight rhythmic and melodic variations that occur from verse to verse.

Movement

Each of the scenes incorporates gesture and movement. Several provide especially effective suggestions regarding what movement on the Roman stage might have been like. The performers of the Latin *Eunuchus* used elaborate, large and stylized gestures. Most of the other scenes used more naturalistic movement. Our evidence does not allow us to say where Roman comedy lay on this spectrum (cf. Marshall 2006, 167), so it is useful for students and scholars to see both possibilities. Performances such as the Latin *Bacchides* and the masked English *Bacchides* scenes demonstrate the possibility of lively movement and dance in masks and flowing costumes. The rollicking physical humor of the commedia dell'arte *Pseudolus* scene and the aggressive struggles of the three *Casina* scenes raise still more possibilities.The *Persa* scene includes "cinaedic dancing": a kind of lewd dance used by Plautus to underline his most Saturnalian moments, like this one in which slaves humiliate a free person. We have insufficient evidence for the exact movements used in cinaedic dancing, but the NEH Summer Scholars who performed this scene surely have captured its spirit in the slaves' lewd mockery of the pimp Dordalus.

USING MODERN CONVENTIONS

The NEH Summer Scholars, while eager to echo elements of ancient performance, did not intend for their productions to be museum pieces. Each of the scenes employs modern techniques as well, and several of the performing groups made a special point of using conventions drawn from specific modern performance traditions.

Three scenes draw from commedia dell'arte, an appropriate choice, as Roman comedy, especially Plautus, has often been compared to commedia dell'arte in its use of broad farce, stock characters, and apparent—if not actual—improvisation.

The group performing the slapstick *Pseudolus* presented slaves not cowering like those of the Latin *Pseudolus*, but mocking their master Ballio behind his back. The conventions of commedia dell'arte, with its frequent scenarios of servants over masters, were especially suitable for this interpretation of the scene. The slave-prostitutes in the slapstick *Pseudolus* wore ancient-style masks designed by Dill, but all the male characters wore the half masks of commedia dell'arte, provided by Gian Giacomo Colli. And Ballio's slapstick, a prop with a long pedigree in commedia dell'arte, called attention to the frightening nature of Ballio's threats with its loud cracks even as it emphasized that those threats were not real but a theatrical phenomenon.

The performers of the commedia dell'arte *Pseudolus* scene embraced the traditions of commedia dell'arte more thoroughly. All the characters wear the half masks of commedia (made by Angela Horchem); the scene is filled with lively comic movement typical of commedia; and the translation, while not improvised, includes series of jokes reminiscent of commedia's improvised joke scenes.

In performing yet a third masked version of *Casina*, the group performing this scene went a step further. They not only used commedia-style half masks (made by Gian Giacomo Colli) and boisterous movement, but they treated Plautus' text as a scenario, from which they improvised as a commedia dell'arte troupe would.

Other scenes incorporated theatrical conventions developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 19th-century *Eunuchus* used the Victorian translation of Henry Thomas Riley and costuming to suggest a Victorian garden party. We get to see how a Terentian scene might look in the world of Trollope. Mid-twentieth–century melodrama inspired the English *Truculentus* scene. Both diction and gestures are exaggerated, and the NEH Scholars wrote a suspense-filled prologue and epilogue, in which

dark chords from a piano emphasize significant moments. Such overblown performance, almost inevitably laughable in our day, helps reconcile a modern audience to the scene's mixture of serious subject matter and comic context.

The hip-hop *Pseudolus* employs ancient-style costumes but the language and rhythmic patterns of hip hop. Hip hop brings a kind of rhythmic repetition similar in some ways to what we find in the stichic portions of Roman comedy, although, unlike Roman comedy, it relies on a steady "beat." More importantly, hip hop, like Roman comedy, relies on a popular musical style that has not lost its potential for subversion even as it has become part of mainstream culture.

Television inspired two of the NEH Scholars' scenes. One of the English versions of the *Mercator* scene uses costumes modeled on the popular series "Mad Men." The allusion to that series, with its early-1960s gender dynamics, brings extra power to this version, in which Dorippa is mournfully put upon.

The NEH Summer Scholars performing Terence's *Eunuchus* produced an adaptation of the scene as a 21st-century sitcom. The adaptation calls attention to how much has changed in comedy since the second century BCE. Gone are the prostitute (Thais becomes an accountant for an escort service), slave, and parasite characters, and a new set of conventions such as a laugh track and repeated one-liners dominate the performance. The same performance, however, shows how much has remained the same. The sitcom, like its Roman ancestors, relies on stock characters (a "dorky" brother, an arrogant but stupid policeman, and his clueless assistant), and issues of status remain central (here the characters discuss Pamphila's citizenship rather than whether she is slave or freeborn).

SOCIAL ISSUES

Roman comedy is fascinating both for students of ancient Rome and for those who appreciate good drama in part because of its complex response to social issues endemic in Rome and still relevant today, especially those surrounding gender and social class. Gender and class play important roles in each of the scenes performed at the NEH Institute. We point out here some of the scenes where those issues most come to the fore.

Slavery

Slaves are at the heart of all Roman comedies. The final scene of *Persa* shows most clearly how Roman comedy can provide an escape in which slaves can lord it over a free person. At the same time, issues of social status are not simply forgotten: the scene includes a surprising discourse by a slave on the arrogance of freed persons (lines 838ff.: 6:53 ff. in the video). The *Pseudolus* scenes, as we have seen, show varying reactions of slaves to a master's threats, ranging from cowering in the Latin *Pseudolus* to insouciant mockery in the slapstick and commedia dell'arte versions of the same scene.

Roman comedy offers far more than an escape from social hierarchies, however. Reminders of the subservience of slaves are everywhere. Note the slaves of the *Casina* scene in each of its versions, who must obey their master and mistress even as they flaunt their alleged power over each other. Most telling of all for one seeking to appreciate the power of slavery in Roman society is the scene Institute Scholars performed from *Truculentus*. Here two slaves have just come from being tortured. Though one of the slaves does not even belong to the torturer, they continue to be abused throughout the scene. Significantly, the scene is not *about* the torture of the slaves: they are just a means through which the rape and pregnancy of an absent free woman are revealed. Hence the scene's double focus, evident in both the Latin and English versions, on the eavesdropping Diniarchus and Callicles abusing the two slaves. Diniarchus is allegedly at the center of the comic plot, but the treatment of the slaves inevitably draws the attention of a modern spectator.

Gender

The <u>all-female *Pseudolus*</u> performers took on the gender issues of Roman comedy most emphatically. The performance of all the characters by women—in contrast to the all-male casts of republican Rome—brings its own frisson. Taking advantage of this, the performers interrupted their performance midway through Ballio's abuse of his sex slaves with a "break-out scene" in which they discuss the various issues that come with performing Roman comedy (e.g., "Does dolling ourselves up in drag really subvert the normative heterosexual flow of desire in this scene, or are we just creating some kind of spectacle to distract from the totally disturbing nature of the material?").

Each of the other *Pseudolus* scenes likewise provides food for thought about the sexual exploitation of women, both in ancient Rome and today. In the <u>Latin *Pseudolus*</u> the sex slaves are veiled: as they passively endure Ballio's abuse, they cannot even express their reactions through facial expressions or the expressiveness encouraged by masks. Each of the other *Pseudolus* scenes underlines gender differences by contrasting passive female sex slaves with more assertive male slaves. In the <u>hip-hop *Pseudolus*</u> the male slaves take far more musical initiative than do the women. In the <u>slapstick *Pseudolus*</u> the male slaves, in half-masks, mock Ballio behind his back. The female sex slaves, in full masks, are much more active than in any of the other NEH Institute's versions of this scene: they respond with lively gestures and wordless utterings to Ballio's commands and threats. They do not, however, resist him or make fun of him when he is not looking as their male counterparts do.

The Institute's three versions of *Mercator* reveal most clearly how performance can determine how audiences might respond to gender relations in comedies. In <u>one of the English versions</u> of the scene, Dorippa is tearful and in despair. In the <u>other English version</u> and the <u>Latin version</u>, she reverses the power dynamics with an angry rebuke of her husband. Significantly, in neither version does she come off as simply an unsympathetic shrew.

Lording it over her husband in the version where she is angry, Dorippa shows that the inversion of everyday social hierarchies we see in many of Roman comedy's slaves can also apply to its women. Still more powerful inversions of standard gender hierarchy occur in the three *Bacchides* scenes, as two *meretrices* seduce the old men who threaten to beat them, and in the *Eunuchus* scenes, where the *meretrix* Thais looks on as the solder Thraso makes a fool of himself. In the scene performed from *Casina*, however, the inversion has not yet occurred, and Cleostrata, still subservient to her husband, must use her slave against his slave as she tries to counter him.

CONCLUSION

The videos of the NEH Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance thus have much to offer to anyone interested in ancient or modern dramatic performance, Roman comedy, or Roman society. It is hoped that this guide will help readers find scenes that are most useful for their own interests. The videos, however, are rich in more ways than can be expressed here. We encourage readers to peruse the videos to find further insights, and also to do some performing of their own. As these videos show, performance is one of the most effective ways of discovering just what is going on in these delightful yet often enigmatic comedies.

notes

[1] Pseudolus participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[2] The masks were made by Angela Horchem and are used in the commedia dell'arte performances and

education outreach of <u>theater 3</u> in Tucson, Arizona.

[3] Masks provided by Gian Giacomo Colli.

[4] Bacchides participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[5] Casina participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[6] The masks were produced by Amy R. Cohen and are used in the performances of Greek plays she directs regularly at the <u>Center for Ancient Drama</u> at Randolph College.

[7] Masks provided by Gian Giacomo Colli.

[8] Mercator participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[9] Persa participants discuss their work on this video in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[10] Truculentus participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[11] Eunuchus participants discuss their work on these videos in a talkback available on <u>YouTube</u> and collected with talkbacks on all the scenes in Didaskalia<u>, Volume 12, Number 7.</u>

[12] All translations are by one of the authors.

[13] See Marshall 2006, 36–48 and the works cited there.

[14] The text of the play as a whole suggests that if there were just two doors on stage they represented the homes of Phronesium and Strabax. In three scenes—the two versions of Truculentus and the <u>all-female</u> Pseudolus—characters enter or exit through the doors further to the right or left: these are virtually equivalent to the side entrances or exits that occurred frequently in Roman performances.

[15] In each scene the melodies played by the clarinetist and sung by the actors were composed by T. H. M. Gellar-Goad. Scores are available from him upon request (tedgellar@gmail.com).

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Interviews and Reflections on the NEH Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance
or
What We Did at Roman Comedy Camp

by **Mike Lippman** (*The University of Nebraska at Lincoln*) and **Amy R. Cohen** (*Randolph College*)

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 we were participants in the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance, directed by Timothy J. Moore and Sharon L. James. The program brought together scholars and performers from a variety of fields and backgrounds to learn about the comedy of Plautus and Terence. Moore and James arranged for many experts in the field to visit and teach us over the course of the four weeks, and our task was to synthesize what we learned into performances of seven different scenes from the ancient plays, which would be videotaped and made publicly available.[1]

While everyone hoped that the scenes would speak for themselves in the YouTube videos, we realized that we needed to add a commentary. If we are to argue that the stage, for academic purposes, is a research laboratory and that these videos, not necessarily intended to be a works of art on their own terms, are instructive in the classroom, it is important to reveal the intentions behind the choices in order to make them more useful to the student or the researcher wanting to duplicate such processes for themselves. Thus, while everything was fresh in the participants' minds on the last days of the Institute, the two of us set up a series of panel discussions in the style of theater-production talkbacks, which allowed each group to explain the choices that led to their finished scenes and to take questions from the rest of the NEH seminarians. We began with the individual scenes from different plays (each group did numerous performances of the same scene with differing choices in each), and then we had a lengthy open discussion with the entire class about the five different group performances of the same *Pseudolus* scene (Ballio's birthday party 133-234).

We gave very few prompts as interviewers: we let each group say whatever they wanted as part of their self-explanations, and let the other members of the seminar ask the questions. We told them that we wanted to understand their process and whether their perspectives on the scenes changed as they worked on them, but once we set the tone for the Q&A, we didn't even have to ask these questions—the members began to speak unprompted. At points we merely brought things back around to stay on topic or helped to moderate, but, for the most part, these discussions are entirely unscripted and extemporaneous.

The talkbacks below (each arranged next to the scenes the group is discussing) capture what it felt like to be a participant in our discussions, with people from a wide array of backgrounds and approaches to both text and performance. Such conversations took place in the classroom, in the rehearsal space, and at the bar during the evening—and, as Plato has Socrates say,[2] nothing written down can really capture the urgency and the vitality of a live conversation (or performance, for that matter). These videos show how we drew from our experiences in class and rehearsal, how we reacted to each other's ideas, and the thought processes that went into each finished product. What emerges from the seven talkbacks, among many details of process and collaboration, is how important performance of ancient texts is to pedagogical and scholarly endeavors. We hope that they will help with the understanding of the finished scenes preserved in the videos from the Institute.[3]

Bacchides 1116-1206

The *Bacchides* group—Jeanne Neumann, Ada Palmer, Daniel Walin, and Patrick Gray—use their time to talk about music and meter, improvisation, and singing versus speaking. They discuss the challenges of physical comedy, handling characterization, and dealing with uncomfortable female roles in Plautus.

***Bacchides* group talkback.**

Bacchides in sung Latin

Bacchides in spoken English, with masks

Bacchides in spoken English, without masks

Casina 353-423

The *Casina* group—Elizabeth Hall, Mike Lippman, Nancy Sultan, and Gian Giacomo Colli—discuss in detail issues to do with masks: how *commedia* masks (created by Colli), full face masks (created by Adam M. Dill), and helmet masks (created by Amy R. Cohen) affect the practicalities of performance (including questions of sound, limited vision, and fight choreography) and also how each kind of mask prompts different ways of addressing the material of the scene. They also talk about how they dealt with translation of the scene and their various comedy inspirations, including Looney Tunes, *commedia dell'arte*, and improvisation.

***Casina* group talkback.**

Casina in English with institute's masks

Casina in English with helmet masks

Casina in English with *commedia* masks plus improv

Eunuchus 739-816

The *Eunuchus* group brought a theater-history perspective to their scenes and their discussion of their choices. Mark Damen, V. Sophie Klein, Kenneth Molloy, and Erin Moodie address different kinds of comedy and varieties of authenticity. They talk about the practical choices of the production, like props and costumes, and how they adjusted those elements, as well as the level of menace, to each of the types of scene (ancient style, Victorian style, and sitcom style). Many of these issues intertwine with their decisions about translation. The group also handles the question of what it means to present an excerpt from a play rather than the whole play.

Eunuchus group talkback.

Eunuchus in Latin, ancient style

Eunuchus in English, Victorian style

Eunuchus in English, sitcom style

Mercator 691-802

Chris Woodworth, Christopher Bungard, Daniel Smith, and Steve Ernest—the *Mercator* group—also talk about different translations and what makes a translation actable. When they deal with the Latin version of the scene, they address acting in another language and the clues that Latin meter and elision can give for staging. The group discuss how they decided in what order to stage their versions, and how different elements, including props, repetition, and excessiveness, contribute to the comedy in the scene.

Mercator group talkback.

Mercator in Latin with angry Dorippa

Mercator in English with angry Dorippa

Mercator in English with sad Dorippa

Persa 753–757, 801–858

The *Persa* group—Angela Horchem, Seth Jeppesen, Mimi Kammer, Tarik Wareh, and Amy R. Cohen—discuss at length the challenges of learning their scene in sung Latin while wanting to live up to the imperative to stage fully the action-filled scene and to be clear for a non-Latin-speaking audience. They talk about including the accompanying musician in the scene and how that relates to the probable ancient practice with the *tibicen*. They emphasize several critical elements in their process: working with a trusted ensemble, looking to the text for staging guidance, while at the same time relying on the language of physical comedy. The whole group is invested deeply in the value of embodying scholarly questions and sees performance as a scholarly apparatus.

Persa **group talkback.**

Persa in sung Latin

Truculentus 775-854

The importance of a trusted ensemble in collaboration is also a major theme of the *Truculentus* group talkback. Meredith Safran, Laura Lippman, Jim Hanson, and Michael Katchmer also talk about their process of learning the music and the meter for their sung Latin scene and how they found a staging language to embrace the comedy. The group discusses the audience of the videos, how useful they might be in the classroom, and what that meant for their decisions about standards of offensiveness. Unpleasantness in comedy and melodrama are other topics.

Truculentus **group talkback.**

Truculentus melodrama in sung Latin

Truculentus melodrama in spoken English

Pseudolus 133-234

The discussion of our five versions of the same scene from *Pseudolus* naturally ranges far and wide, and the discussion lasts an hour. The entire hour gives a sense of themes and of the cameraderie that emerged from our four weeks of intensive work, but we have linked to specific moments in the video for those who are interested only in particular groups or topics. Each group first talks about their basic concepts and how they put those ideas into action (Group A, Group B, Group E, Group D, Group C), and then the discussion of the entire group opens up to talk about how to deal with the menace of the scene, what the text doesn't tell you, working as a collaborative team, issues of translation, translation into hip-hop with a Shakespeare vibe, playing an all-male scene, the process of devising and scribing, the grounding of characters in the Latin version, how Group C's break-out scene functioned as a parabasis, whether the group concepts would work for the play as a whole, and how the music was created.

Pseudolus **talkback with all participants.**

Pseudolus Group A in spoken Latin, all male, accompanied

Pseudolus Group B in spoken English, *commedia* style

Pseudolus Group C in spoken English, all women, with break-out scene

Pseudolus Group D in English, through rap, with accompaniment

Pseudolus Group E in spoken English, with *commedia* masks and slapstick

notes

[1] The Institute website has more details of the entire program, and Moore and James discuss using the videos in Didaskalia Volume 12, Number 6.

[2] Phaedrus 275d–276a.

[3] Each group also kept a blog, available on the NEH Institute website, where the group's process can also be found in a day–to–day fashion. When direct links to each blog are available, we will add the links above with each group's talkback.

Oedipus the King

Directed by Amy R. Cohen
October 10-12, 2014
2500 Rivermont Avenue
Lynchburg, Virgina

Reviewed by **Cristina Pérez Díaz**
City University of New York

There are infinite ways to approach the revival of an ancient drama. Two challenges in particular confront modern productions of Greek tragedy: the chorus and masks. A recent staging of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King (OT)* made full use of both. It was directed by Amy Cohen and produced by the Center for Ancient Drama (CAD) on the beautiful campus of Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia. I had the opportunity to see the show in the context of the Third Biennial Conference "Ancient Drama in Performance" on October 12, 2014. In this note, I focus on the bold and compelling decision to keep the masks and the tragic chorus, with all their oddity.

Daisy Howard as Teiresias. Photo by Mirah Sager.

The masks were made out of linen, crafted by the director and the actors using the innovative technology of 3D printing, and were truly beautiful pieces of work, enjoyable in and of themselves. After years of research on the ancient craft of the mask, Cohen conceived the clever idea of printing three-dimensional models of the actors' heads, in order to create lifelike masks. The result was impressive. These masks contributed greatly to the distancing effect of the play. Distance is, in fact, an essential attribute of masks, but those crafted and used by the performers of this production had two distancing effects, in my opinion: on the one hand, they looked very much like the masks we see depicted in ancient vases and Roman mosaics, thus transporting us to a distant aesthetic place; on the other hand, they were painted with light but bright colors and, together with the vivid colors of the costumes, they contrasted with the density—perhaps even obscurity—of the events and with the often heavily pathetic lines of the characters. In this way, the visual aspect of the production did not add horror to an already painful plot (*mythos*). On the contrary, it allowed the audience to focus on the words and the utterance of the text, while looking at images in motion that were aesthetically pleasing.

Now I shift my attention to the chorus. It was composed of nine members (eight college students and one recent graduate) who danced the choral songs to live music composed for the occasion. The masks allowed this young chorus to represent a group diverse in age and gender. Faithful to the Greek text, the chorus remained on stage during the entire play, speaking with the characters in the episodes and breaking into song and dance between scenes (stasima). In this sense, the revival did not try to "modernize" the original version or to make it "easier" for the members of the audience to relate to a form of theatre that, at least in its formal conventions, is remote from our sensibilities. Instead, it made the effort to explore the possibilities of the ancient form.

The chorus of a Greek tragedy is indeed strange, a collectivity that expresses a single voice, a sort of character that does not really take an active role in the events. But is nevertheless pervasive and serves as an interlocutor for the characters, a witness and companion amidst the unhappy circumstances. What is more, at other times it has the poetic freedom to sing and dance, jumping to general reflections on human

life, as if transported to a dramatic reality somehow different from that of the action of the plot (*mythos*), or at least parallel to it. For all of these reasons, the chorus is perhaps the most challenging component of ancient tragedy for a contemporary spectator or reader. It asks us to accept premises that are rather difficult for us (the unity of voice, for instance) and that the rest of the play does not ask us to accept (the occasional detachment from the plot, for instance, is not shared by any other character).

It is thus understandable that recent adaptations tend to "modernize" the original chorus, if keeping it at all, in order to make the play "speak" to the contemporary world—where such an entity is certainly foraneous. But, precisely because of that, the decision to keep the chorus exactly as it appears in the original text—singing and dancing, and speaking with a single voice to the characters—can feel today more experimental and risky than conservative. Especially for those of us in the audience who are particularly interested in ancient drama, the challenging decision to keep the chorus *as such* is commendable. When well used, as in this case, the disturbing presence of the odd entity which the chorus represents for a contemporary spectator can provide the play with a rather enjoyable distance. In this staging of *OT*, the choral songs and dances were soft and graceful, serving as a counterpoint to the dramatic upheavals. As the truth of Oedipus' misfortune unfolded through the plot, these interludes balanced the emotions of the audience. Their interruptions also helped to provide a well-known story with the tension necessary to keep the audience interested, featuring lovely original music and choreography that the audience could not anticipate at all, since these aspects of tragedy are not transmitted in the Sophoclean manuscripts, but particular to each production of the play.

I make a short excursus here to give my interpretation of the Greek chorus, in order to contextualize my special appreciation of its use in this performance of *OT*. According to Aristotle's well-known lines in the *Poetics* (1456a 24–26), "the chorus should be treated as one of the actors; it should be a part of the whole and should participate, not as in Euripides but as in Sophocles." It is not clear how Aristotle understands this "participation" (μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι).[1] This is certainly not the place to discuss such a complicated subject, but I would like to use instead some narratological concepts, which seem to me to capture well the complex reality of the chorus.[2] The chorus has a double temporal and spatial reality, both diegetic (on the level of the events the characters are experiencing) and extradiegetic (on a different level from the events advancing the plot).[3] The reality of the chorus is diegetic when the chorus shares the same spatial and temporal reality with the rest of the characters and its action is part of the plot, as in the dialogues that take place in the episodes; its reality is extradiegetic when its action is not properly in the chain of events of the plot but has its own spatial and temporal reality, as in the choral songs. This double reality is an advantage that the characters do not enjoy unless they break the fourth wall and address the audience directly, but this does not happen in tragedy. The chorus, however, without breaking the fourth wall, is able to pause the diegetic movement of the plot in the *parodos*, *stasima*, and *exodos* (entrance, choral songs between episodes, and final exit). The chorus of *OT* is particularly concerned with prayers and laments. Thus in the choral songs it is concerned with particular speech acts that are complete in and of themselves.[4] Not only is the time of these speech acts somehow different from that of the plot, but their space is also different, transformed by the act of singing and dancing. In fact, the ancient theatre made this spatial difference conspicuous by situating the chorus in a separate part of the stage, the orchestra. But this sort of disruption does not break the fourth wall: the spectator is not taken out of the fictional world of the play and driven back to his own historical present. On the contrary, a different level of fictionality is added; we are forced to accept that within the fictional world of the play there is both the diegetic spatio-temporality of the characters and the extradiegetic reality of the chorus. This extradiegetic reality is the moment of intensified lament, of reflexive doubt, of the delaying in thoughts, of the pondering of the emotions; it is the moment / space where the action can find more density. Because it uses music and song, the density of the *pathos* encompasses the audience, even if the fourth wall is not broken. In fact, even without the resource of metatheatricality, the moment of music and dance somehow brings the audience to the "same" time and space as the chorus.

In the CAD's production of *OT*, I found myself enjoying in particular the extradiegetic interventions of the chorus. The motives of dance and song are integrating rather than distancing. It was in these moments of prayer and lament that I, as a member of the audience, felt closer to the time and space of the play. I was in fact sharing the moment of the songs, in the very space of the theater, extradiegetically shared by chorus and audience. I was part of a feast that elevated songs for the diegetic events, releasing in a communal way the *pathos* for the misfortunes of the characters. In a time when metatheatricality and irony are pervasive in the theatre, even in contemporary revivals of Greek tragedy, and amid the pervasive current fear of slipping back into all-too-metaphysical extradiegetic narratives, it is refreshing to encounter a staging that fully embraces the challenge of the Greek chorus. With their masks, their costumes, and their truly youthful enthusiasm, this chorus brought to the production a certain lightness and joy, even in a story that is terrifying and uncanny. They set aside any aim at realism, but also escaped the already-anticipated metatheatricality of much contemporary drama. Instead, they allowed us to enjoy without pain, but also without irony, the performance of a text that has never stopped moving us deeply.

notes

[1] The first stasimon (151–215) of Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus definitely seems alien to the events taking place in the episodes. The content of the song repeats information that we already have, and in this way it does not move the action forward in any sense, but provides density to the pathos of what has recently been said by the characters. The way in which it is delivered, namely by singing and dancing, is completely different from the delivery of the dialogues. Thus it is not the content of the song which makes it different, but its delivery. Accordingly, to say that the chorus "participates" in the plot at all times is, at the least, ambiguous. In what I briefly propose here, the choral songs "participate" extradiegetically in the plot.

[2] Paul Ricouer (1983), Temps et récit. Tome I: La configuration dans le récit de fiction, in the chapter "La mise en intrigue. Une lecture de la poétique d'Aristote," has argued for the possibility of understanding both epic and drama as "narration," if narration is defined by what Aristotle called "mythos," or disposition of the events (cf. 62–65). For a defense of the applicability of narratological categories to the analysis of drama, see Peter Huhn and Roy Sommer (2009) "Narration in Poetry and Drama" in Huhn et al. (2009), Handbook of Narratology, 238 ff.; and Ansgar Nunning and Roy Sommer (2008) "Diegetic and Mimetic Narrativity: Some further Steps towards a Transgeneric Narratology of Drama" in Pier John et al (2009), Theorizing Narrative. Irene de Jong (1991), Narrative in Drama: The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-Speech, has used narratology to interpret messenger speeches in Greek tragedy.

[3] I am borrowing these concepts as used by Gerard Genette (1983) in his seminal Nouveau discours du récit.

[4] I refer to Austin's (1969) famous analysis of speech acts in his Speech Acts: An essay in the Philosophy of language.

The 51st Season of Classical Plays at Syracuse's Greek Theatre:Aeschylus's *The Suppliants*, Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and Seneca's *Medea*

May 5 to June 28, 2015
L Ciclo di Spettacoli Classici
Teatro Greco di SiracusaSyracuse, Italy

Reviewed by **Caterina Barone**
University of Padova

Discussing the present with words from the past, in a theatre rich in ancient memories: this is what The National Institute of Ancient Drama (Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico – INDA) stands for and what it has traditionally done since its inception. The theme chosen for the 51st season of Classical Plays (onstage at the Greek Theatre from May 5 to June 28, 2015) is the sea: a particularly meaningful choice at a time when the Mediterranean is a focus of socio-political turmoil.

Aeschylus's *The Suppliants*, Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis* and Seneca's *Medea*, the three plays chosen for 2015, indeed share a common horizon: the sea, which broadens geographical and

cultural borders while at the same time bringing destabilisation and conflicts. This thematic link is rendered visually explicit by the sandy expanse covering the orchestra and functioning as a base for the three different stage settings. The set of *The Suppliants* is characterised by nine stylised Cycladic idols, standing erect on their pedestals in front of the monumental gate to the city of Argos. In *Iphigena in Aulis*, three black hulls pulled up on shore and two golden

figureheads abandoned on the sand suggest the unnerving wait of the Greek army on the beach at Aulis. In *Medea* a telescopic cylinder (a home-lair) near a labyrinth of grey bulkheads creates a wasteland-atmosphere, a metaphor for the ethical and emotional desertification of human relationships.

This season of plays, suggested by Superintendent Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi and by the recently nominated Board of Directors and Managing Director Walter Pagliaro, has set a new course for the INDA and led to unprecedented choices that confirm the role of the institute in promoting research and experimentation in the classic theatre. Three directors who had never worked in Syracuse were chosen: Moni Ovadia, Federico Tiezzi and Paolo Magelli. *The Suppliants* had not been staged in Syracuse since 1982 and *Iphigenia in Aulis* not since 1974, while *Medea* marks the debut of Senecan tragedy on the slopes of the Temenite hill. Moreover, for the first time ever, the 2015 production featured a text translated into a dialect: Moni Ovadia, director of the Aeschylean play, presented a free rendering into

Lucia Lavia as Iphigenia in Iphigenia in Aulis. Photo by Franca Centaro

Choir of Danaids in Aeschylus's The Suppliants. Photo by Maria Pia Ballarino

Valentina Banci as Medea and Filipp Dini as Jason in Medea. Photo by Maurizio Zivillica

Sicilian.

Ovadia created a staging with strong ideologico-political connotations, and himself acted the role of king Pelasgus, provident host to the Danaids as they flee a forced marriage to their Egyptian cousins.

Ovadia's text and interpretation rest upon three focal issues: gender-based violence, the welcome given to foreign immigrants who ask for hospitality and protection, and the democratic framework of the Rechtsstaat and of the just exercise of power.

To support the ideas he dearly wishes to promote, Ovadia did not hesitate to put aside Guido Paduano's accurate and sensitive translation, launching instead into a radical rewriting of the play. He intervened not only with the introduction of Sicilian dialect and modern Greek, but also by cutting and expanding the text in order to stress the elements of the original play that seem functional to his view of current events. These practices may seem atypical of INDA's tradition, and may attract criticism from those who believe in the untouchability of classical texts, but they resulted in a coherent show that was able to withstand the contextual test of the Greek theatre in Syracuse. It must however be remarked that Aeschylus's tragedy in itself is rich and deep enough to make Ovadia's display of ideological emphasis seem redundant.

The play opens with an expository prologue, providing the audience with the mythic coordinates of previous events. These are narrated by a *cantastoria,* with the recognizable style of "cuntu", the typical narration-form of the Sicilian tradition, strongly rhymed and with a rhythmical percussive beat. The role is played by singer-songwriter Mario Incudine, who together with composer and singer Pippo Kaballà collaborated with Ovadia in staging the adaptation of the play. Incudine was also in charge of the music, played live by four instrumentalists (clarinet, accordion, guitar and drums). The resulting sound-texture is pervasive and captivating, turning the show into an epic *cantata* and propelling the movements of the Chorus (led with physical and interpretive vigour by Donatella Finocchiaro). The melting-pot of races and cultures typical of the *The Suppliants*, with its juxtaposition of the Greek and the African world, is effectively expressed by a multifarious score with musical influences from different backgrounds, unified by their common origin in the Mediterranean area.

A similar approach was chosen in designing costumes: the women and their father Danaus (Angelo Tosto) are dressed in colourful ethnic clothes; the Egyptians wear drab menacing attire; Pelasgus is dressed in clothes inspired by classical antiquity, with azure tones and decorations reminiscent of Greek temple architecture.

The men escorting the king stand out from the rest of the cast: they are wrapped in white costumes suggesting biohazard suits, maybe with the intent of stressing the mistrust and the initial defensive attitude exhibited by the people of Argos when dealing with the foreign women.

Federico Tiezzi chose a philologically faithful approach to Euripides's text (translated by Giulio Guidorizzi with a language that is both agile and attentive to semantic nuances) for *Iphigenia in Aulis*: the director opts for an array of suggestions that start from the classic myth and reach all the way to bourgeois tragedy.

Iphigenia in Aulis, with its alternation of contrasting tones, does not lend itself to simple approaches in direction, shifting as it does from the tragic element of the virgin sacrifice to the complex figure of Clytemnestra and the moving loyalty of the elderly attendant. An additional challenge is giving a credible shape to a Chorus that is only superficially participating in the action. One must moreover consider the difficulty of rendering the protagonist herself, with her swift transformation from a frail maiden afraid of dying to a heroine sworn to sacrifice her own life: an apparently unjustified change in

her mental and emotional state that Aristotle stigmatised in his *Poetics* (1454a 31–33) as an expression of a tragic character lacking coherence.

Tiezzi worked by way of compartmentalisation, characterising in a heterogeneous manner the different components and phases in the drama.

The direction and costuming of the long initial part of the tragedy are inspired by the classical world: the Greek soldiers wear armour and bear spears and shields according to traditional iconography, as does Achilles; Agamemnon and Menelaus are burdened, symbolically, by black cloaks embellished with silver decorations.

In this context, the women of the Chorus make an unsettling entrance in their colourful clothes, perhaps suggestive, like the rakes they later use to trace wavy lines on the sand, of Russian or Balkan peasants.

But from this possible allusion to a contemporary theatre of war involving Slavic ethnicities, the play moves towards oriental references in its concluding part, as the very same women then wear bright orange saris (suggesting the vexed condition of women in India, or perhaps evoking, by means of the chosen colour, the idea of Buddhist monks and their aspiration to peace?); in the final scene, after the sacrifice, their veils are replaced by deer-antlered headgear.

Clytemnestra and Iphigenia instead wear Alexander McQueen's haute couture, thereby creating a further visual dissonance in the scene where the bitter confrontation between the queen and Agamemnon takes place, as they face each other in a flaming enclosure: this is an arena for family conflicts, anticipating with original insight the lacerating conflicts portrayed by Ibsen and Strindberg.

The interpretive line chosen for all actors is unitary, so as to leave no room for any of the possible pathetic implications, and to render in a credible manner the behavioural meanderings of the characters: from Agamemnon's painful uncertainty (played by Sebastiano Lo Monaco, moderate and touching in his performance), to Menelaus (Francesco Colella) and his cruel and egoistical disdainfulness, to Achilles (Raffaele Esposito) with his comical machismo, and the elderly attendant (Gianni Salvo) showing signs of authentic affection. Elena Ghiaurov's Clytemnestra is effective in manifesting the abyss of hate agape within her, while Lucia Lavia plays Iphigenia in an exemplary manner, managing to portray naive enthusiasm, dismay, and finally heroic determination, without imperfections and with believable changefulness. In the finale, a black figure wielding a dagger ends Iphigenia's existential journey in a snapshot reminiscent of sadly familiar images of current fierceness: the director entrusts the narration to the two coryphaeae (Francesca Ciocchetti and Deborah Zuin), who commiserate with Clytemnestra as they hang garlands around her neck in an atmosphere of sympathy that does not, however, duly take into account the doubts expressed by the queen regarding the true fate of her daughter.

For Seneca's *Medea*, Paolo Magelli aims with both stylistic and conceptual coherence at a modern but not banally modernised rendition, setting the play in the decadent zeitgeist of the early 1900's, as if to stress an ethical crisis that is overwhelming society as a whole, as well as individuals. After having removed from the protagonist any link to the orphic connotations of Seneca's sorceress, Magelli focuses on the enormity of the violence that Jason and Corinth's inhabitants, led by a cynical Creon, perpetrate against Medea: a woman regarded with disfavour because she is a foreigner and rendered vulnerable because of her repudiation by a man for whom she has sacrificed her homeland and her family of origin.

To emphasize Giusto Piccone's pithy and visionary translation, in which the director introduced lexical grafts that create fractures and linguistic deviations, Magelli inserted verses from Euripides's *Medea* into the text, and added to the finale extracts from Heiner Müller's twentieth-century rendition of the tragedy, in which the interplay of passions reaches into the deepest abysses of human suffering. The result is a

zoom-in perspective, which, albeit not rigorously faithful to Seneca's work, preserves its force and shattering power.

Medea, as played by Valentina Banci, is a woman in love who still hopes to win back her man and offers herself to him, body and soul, attempting one last seduction. The pain of betrayal thrusts her into a vortex of unstoppably progressive madness, as revealed by her feverish movements and her gait of small and convulsive steps. Her new family, built on the ashes of her father's, is undone by her own hand: all that is left of the happy past are the children's toys, kept in an old chest.

The men and women of the Chorus, dressed in clothes reminiscent of Pirandello's atmospheres, with an allusion to the dynamics of a hostile and conditioning society, marginalise Medea from the very beginning: they deride her and mistreat her, siding with Creon, played by a merciless and scornful Daniele Griggio.

Their gestures appear at times elegant and fluid, at times exaggerated, accompanied by Arturo Annecchino's music, which blends the fascinations of tango with techno roughness and electro sounds.

Not even Jason (Filippo Dini, who struggles to play the role convincingly because of the excessive shouting) shows Medea any compassion: he rejects her with cruelty and roughness, and is devoid of the vulnerable traits he has in Seneca's work. Medea receives her only emotional support from the elderly nurse (Francesca Benedetti), but it is insufficient to treat the wounds of a soul tormented by betrayal and marginalisation.

The tragic epilogue is expanded by Medea's monologue: she has by now fallen prey to delirium and hallucinations, and she is subjected to yet another act of contempt by the women of the Chorus, who pour buckets of sand on her in a supreme gesture of annihilation.

Fat Man

Directed by Alex Swift
January 28 – February 15 2015
Move to Stand
The Vault Festival, London

Orpheus

Directed by Alexander Scott
20-24 October 2015
Little Bulb Theatre
The Everyman, Liverpool

Review by **Stephe Harrop**
Liverpool Hope University

It's a bleak night in February, and the vaults below Waterloo station are the Underworld. We hurry out of the pelting rain, down a flight of concrete steps, along a tunnel lined with graffiti, and find ourselves in a series of gloomy chambers, the atmosphere thick with brick dust and chilled sweat. Here in Move to Stand's *Fat Man*, Orpheus is replaying his love life as a stand-up set before an audience of the gods, who're getting their kicks from his misery. The gods are us: "Zeus" over there, "Hades" and "Persephone" the couple just in front of me, and "the Fates" lurking at the back. I'm "Cupid", hailed with strained bonhomie ("you little shit") as the initiator of the whole catastrophe, having indiscriminately showered love darts down on Oxford Street, where (on the top deck of a London bus) Orpheus met Eurydice.

Martin Bonger as Orpheus looks like an overgrown cherub gone to seed, with a drooping mop of sun-kissed curls and a tangle of dark belly hair peeping through his over-stretched shirt front. He's told this tale many times before, approaching the mic with self-pitying complaint, but also with rekindling desire. For this Orpheus is an instinctive showman, as unable to resist the exhibitionist replaying of his doomed love-affair as he is to eat a doughnut without licking his lips. With mic instead of lyre in hand, this Orpheus can summon up lost times and loves, conjuring laughter out of the dark.

This is a show which pretends to be a stand-up gig, but isn't really. Bonger tells a cute, observational tale of boy-meets-girl, and brings a delicately balanced aggression/charm to bantering exchanges with his audience. But we're all being set up for a bigger, darker joke. After all, no-one really believes that the stand-up comic is making up all of his material as he goes along, that each apparent ad lib is really the result of on-the-spot inspiration. Stand-up comedy thrives on the illusion of spontaneity; the performer's skilfully disguised repetition of old material. And so it is with *Fat Man*. As the show progresses, the false assumption of spontaneity epitomised in the stand-up's trade becomes key to understanding this Orpheus.

Fat Man uses the faked spontaneity of the stand-up's art to expose a fundamental tension between that which changes (the comic's informal interactions with each audience) and that which can't: Orpheus' failure to alter the mythic "fact" of Eurydice's premature death. Bonger accosts his audience with a geniality so false it almost rings true: "How y'all doing? Y'all know me, I'm Orpheus...". As he chats to a shy "Persephone", who's made the mistake of sitting with her boyfriend in the front row, elements of the real (her smile, her hair style, her cardigan) get fluently incorporated into the show's script, making the encounter seem fresh and unpremeditated. But as the stand-up's story of disastrous romance progresses,

so the familiar end-point of this mythic narrative begins to assert its presence, curdling the playful atmosphere of the show's early stages. This stand-up can fake spontaneity all he likes, but he can't escape the fixed denouement of his endlessly repeated comic set.

And we gods may not be altogether to blame. Orpheus begins by railing against his audience for forcing him to re-perform his cabaret of misery, but his skill and pleasure in telling his own tale soon complicate matters. As Orpheus journeys deeper into his self-drawn, rose-tinted past, his delight in his own creation betrays his persistent conviction that (despite all the evidence) going back is still possible. After all, Eurydice does live, a little, in Orpheus' mimicry of her London accent, her terrible singing—but only for as long as the stand-up set lasts. And so *Fat Man*'s Orpheus ends up relentlessly circling his own misery, insisting (with epic self-deception) that that lost time and love might still be redeemed through the exercise of art. Orpheus' stand-up routine is comic precisely because of its obsessive re-assertion of grief, desire, and inadequacy. But this is a comedy balancing precariously on the edge of self-indulgence, and the grotesque. Just as this Orpheus is physically bloated from the self-inflicted penance of attempting to eat a doughnut without licking his lips, so he is progressively revealed to be hooked on the repetitious emotional gratifications of his autobiographical act.

Orpheus pauses between set-pieces to cross the stage and pour himself a drink. Every time, he tips up the waiting carafe and drains it. Every time he returns it's full again. This minor enchantment is attributed to the presence of "Zeus", but the magic-trick prop reveals a lot about the stand-up's own brand of theatrical illusion, and its dangers. The bottomless vessel might be symbolic of Orpheus' grief: self-renewing, unfinishable business. Yet the trick is also a piece of "stage business", designed to astonish and entertain. This is an effect which relies upon surprise. The first time, it's funny. But the second time, the third, and the fourth? Just as the trick wears out its welcome, so the stand-up's sorrow, endlessly re-performed, risks becoming the stale and insubstantial stuff of showbiz.

At the close of his set, Orpheus begs the gods for one more chance to re-run his failed redemption of his beloved, and through a beautifully simple trick of the light, Eurydice appears. But, rejecting the anticipated romance of this moment, she greets her would-be rescuer as "Orpheus, you dick". Eurydice is tired of her former lover's self-regarding theatrical angst. She wants out of the ever-repeating loop of his re-performed sorrow. Her demand, though, is paradoxically framed. Does Eurydice speak in the fictional present, or is her plea, long ago ignored, even now resounding thorough the echo chamber of Orpheus' obsessive re-performance? Maybe this is the first and final time this scene is played. Maybe Orpheus will break out of his endless loop of self-gratifying grief. But there's another show scheduled for tomorrow, and by the end of the gig Orpheus' trick box of doughnuts has been mysteriously replenished. Like Ovid's Orpheus, perpetually looking back, still singing his dirge for Eurydice after his own dismemberment, this stand-up doesn't seem likely to relinquish either his centre-stage mic or his crowd-pleasing shtick of perpetual heartbreak anytime soon. This show is destined to go on. And on. Orpheus' attempts to regain his love vainly seek to undo the petty mortalities and minor metamorphoses of time, experience, and loss. And the familiar, false spontaneity of the stand-up act allows the show's makers to interrogate, with fierce emotional intelligence, the desire to repeat—and the impossibility of ever regaining—the ephemeral lived (and lost) moment.

And now half a year has passed, and it's a wide-skied, ink-blue October evening, the leaves pale gold and shaken by wind off the Irish Sea. A different night, a different city, a different Orpheus, the myth this time as idiosyncratically re-interpreted by Little Bulb Theatre. This young devising company is a ferociously talented musical ensemble with a penchant for oddball character comedy, and a generous desire to make their audiences happy. Our hostess for the evening is Yvette Pépin (Eugénie Pastor), a gawky, imperious chanteuse (all elbows and toothy smile), her powerful singing punctuated with a

rolling French "r" you could use to slice week-old baguette. Think Joyce Grenfell channelling Edith Piaf. Yvette is mistress of a cabaret which tonight presents the woeful tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, the myth re-set to the mingled strains of Debussy and Monteverdi, Bach and Fauré. And in the coveted role of Eurydice—"half woman, half tree"—she has (of course) cast herself.

Opposite her, legendary guitarist Django Reinhardt (Dominic Conway) will play Orpheus, an enterprise which calls for much mock-epic gathering of his "tragic forces", and for the wide-eyed, mute intensity of a Rudolf Valentino (or a Charlie Chaplin). In this (to quote the programme notes) "lovingly fictionalising" portrait of the great guitarist, Reinhardt is a sublime musician, but a lousy actor; this Orpheus' grief is a silent-movie paroxysm, his longing a myopic gaze of half-focused melancholy spilling languidly from kohl-lined eyes. Falling into extravagant arabesques of overacted misery, he's oblivious to the much-enduring scene-shifter who places a stool, just so, where the great artiste's posterior will come to rest (before deftly finishing the picture with table, red-and-white checked cloth, and a glass of wine). Django's Orpheus has a knack for striking the right romantic poses, but his enraptured glance is more likely to stray to his gilded guitar (Hermes' gift after his lyre is lifted by a Parisian thief) than to Yvette's garlanded and gambolling Eurydice. Even in the show's poster—another loving pastiche, with Tudor Humphries channelling Belle Époque Parisian style—he (sharply suited, instrument in hand) turns a sardonic eye towards his audience, while she (wrapped in whorls of Art Nouveau hair and classical draperies, entangled deeply within the image's multiple frames) can only gaze mistily at him.

In fact, throughout this show it's often the female characters who bear the myth's weight of loss and longing. In the final tableau of the cabaret's play-within-a-play we see a veiled nursing sister, turning back, still smitten, to watch the corpse of her musical idol being borne away. In a show-stopping, heart-stilling cameo, Tom Penn's Persephone unleashes a honeyed howl of rage for a life stolen, a grief past healing. And inevitably, Yvette loves Django. Her vivid, unlovely face is a St. Vitus' dance of hope, doubt, and longing as she watches him play. With habitual anxiety she reaches up to pat her hair as he gazes intently—straight past her. In this *Orpheus*, it's the cabaret's own absurd and undesired Eurydice who understands that love, unrequited, can pave a path to hell. Her solo numbers, "Hymne à l'Amour" and "Mon Dieu" (poured out with throbbing, nasal intensity), are paeans to the compulsive, obsessive love which consumes her, bestowing upon this ludicrous would-be heroine a forlorn touch of grandeur. (Instantly undercut with a return to the comic: "Thank you, Charles" she growls soulfully to her pianist, "I needed that", as if he'd handed her a clean hanky.) Framed in this way, the tale of Orpheus—ardent and heroic rescuer, fallible (in the company's reading of Ovid) only in loving too impatiently—becomes Yvette's own piece of fervently metatheatrical wish-fulfilment.

2.5

This is another show which fuses an ancient love story with a shrewd eye for the follies of artists who masquerade as mythic figures, flirting with sublimity onstage while serenely screwing up their real lives and overlooking offered loves. But Little Bulb's *Orpheus* inhabits a more benevolent play-world than *Fat Man*, in which Django and Yvette can be blissfully reunited, post-mortem, in a red-curtained afterlife that morphs into a post-show hot-jazz session. In this Orpheus, high-energy conviviality and ensemble music-making will always win out over tragedy, the company cheerfully abandoning the impassioned pretence of classical grief for the more convivial shared pleasures of performance, right here and right now.

Euripides' *Medea*

translated by Diane Arnson Svarlien
Directed by Laura Lippman

The Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Reviewed by **Amy R. Cohen**
Center for Ancient Drama, Randolph College

Laura Lippman's *Medea* profoundly evoked the foreignness and aloneness of Medea in Corinth by setting her and the play in a suburban McMansion milieu where her South-by-Southwest sensibilities clashed with the pastel and florals of her neighbors. It seemed that boho Medea had tried valiantly to fit in with the country club set that Jason so admires: the house was well-kept, the garden furniture was sociably set with refreshing water to offer visitors, and Medea clearly had a friendly relationship with the neighbor ladies who came to

Figure 1: Thomas Boyle as Jason, Kirstie Smith, Hunter McDonald, Candace Nelson, Lynn Twarowski, and Julia Utter as the Chorus and Jesse Debolt as Medea. (photo: Doug Smith)

see her. But their mildly colored spring dresses, ballet flats, and identical high pony tails clashed wildly with Medea's jeans, black multi-buckled boots, and spiky buzz cut, the effect of all of which was heightened by her dangly multiple necklaces and a cropped kimono shrug in deep red and gold **(figure 1)** . She belonged in a different world, no matter how much the Chorus might sympathize with her at times. The fact that things were amiss here was underscored and symbolized by the dead ivy attached to the walls of the house.

As the lights went down in the black-box theatre, Aretha Franklin's "I Never Loved A Man" set the tone of passionate disappointment, and Otis Rush's "I Can't Quit You Baby" turned that feeling towards despair and destruction. Both songs come from a blues tradition that is as alien to the white suburbia of the production as Medea was to Corinth. The playing space was rectangular, with audience along the two long sides and back. The other end of the quasi-runway set-up was dominated by the windowed double door of an upscale house. Its number—431—was a generous nod to those who could congratulate themselves on knowing the play's original performance date, but it also signaled the ordinariness of a house with a number on a street somewhere, even if we were meant to imagine that street as a very nice one. In the semi-elliptical arched window above the doors was a stained-glass sunrise, calling to mind the relationship with Helios that Medea had brought to the family **(figure 1)** . When we hear Medea inside, before we see her, she's amplified from the heavens—another early suggestion of divinity.

Figure 2

Figure 3

The set design was minimal. The stage was subtly whitewashed. The buildup to Medea's entrance was anxious, with worried music and a worried Chorus. The five women of the Chorus—Kirstie Smith, Hunter McDonald, Candace Nelson, Lynn Twarowski, and Julia Utter—sometimes spoke together and sometimes as individuals, but they were unified by their costumes and by the striking movement choreographed by Kayla Klammer. That movement ranged from fluid and reassuring to frantic and frightening. The Chorus did not sing, but they did add some music, often accompanying shared lines and individual speeches with unison humming. All of these elements combined to give the chorus a clear and consistent identity as women of the community whose sympathies and reactions mattered **(figure 2)** . When Medea first addressed them, individually, each signaled her assent by a simple but strong movement that was then echoed by the next woman. The choreography and staging of each song were handled according to sense—a "confusion of rivers run backwards," for instance, had the chorus confused and running around—but somehow the

interpretations were never over-literal.

The children (Eliza Bohart and Belle Rangel) and their world were quietly ever-present: their toys were left untidy in the yard for them to play with at any time. And they often did come to play, building with blocks and using chalk to express, on the ground, their feelings about their too-absent father: "I love you daddy." Lippman, though, wasn't just looking for excuses to give the kids more stage time. The imperative to focus on children, to cater to their needs, to shape the household around them, is a defining feature of the housewife suburbia that the Chorus represented, and the children's quiet presence underfoot for much of the play kept that ideal before us as a measure of Medea. Two particular moments with the children show Lippman's clever and subtle underscoring of the text with her staging. The children were happily setting up a cityscape with their blocks when the pedagogue came on to explain to the nurse what was happening with Jason. Just when the Nurse (Brenna Hill) said "we are destroyed," the children smashed the city with their Godzilla toy **(figure 3)** . Later, an avuncular Aegeus (Will Voelker) showed up with a monster remote-control truck for the kids, who played with it

immediately. The Chorus helped the children with the toy, momentarily becoming neighbor moms looking after the kids

next door. This addition of the children to the Aegeus scene underlined his desire for children, and highlighted the upper-middle-class world that Medea can't succeed in joining.
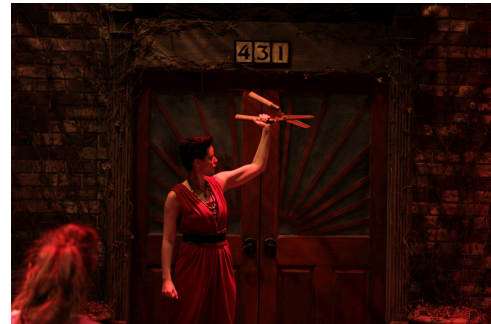

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Smug Jason (Thomas Boyle) in robin's-egg blue was carelessly representative of that world, and he was helpless to foresee or prevent the disaster upon him. Lippman staged Jason's isolation against the joined feminine forces of Medea and the Chorus **(figure 1)** , a choice that had the welcome effect of showing us a world in which Medea and the neighbor ladies could be a united force, even though that world is never quite reachable.

The production could have taken more advantage of the close proximity of the audience by making the actors speak to it directly. The intimacy of the space would have lent itself to implicating the audience more as witnesses of and neighborly participants in the action. Diane Arnson Svarlien's fine translation would have bridged that gap ably.

Figure 8

Still, over and over again, Lippman made magnificent use of the words, the space, and her actors to tell the story of Medea's triumph. During Jason's first scene, Medea dominated the area in front of the doors and protected the entrance to the house. There was never any question of his belonging to that house or gaining entrance. Again, when Medea made Aegeus swear to give her sanctuary in the future, she stood in a position of power, physically dominating the acquiescing Aegeus and making clear that she was in control of her fate **(figure 4)** .

Figure 9

Credit goes to Jesse Debolt, who consistently brought depth and power to the role of Medea. Her small moments were detailed and clear, as when she sat at the door waiting for the Messenger (Trey Martinez) and then leaned in with a smirk to hear of her triumph **(figure 5)** . And her large gestures were just as effective: Debolt's heroic stance as she told us "This is the way to win a glorious reputation" underscored Medea's understanding of herself within the heroic imperative that insists that a man treat "friends with kindness, and come down hard on the heads of my enemies."

In the moment of decision, Medea, with "Arm yourself, my heart," was briefly in physical formation with the anxious chorus. But then she broke away, finally and utterly, from any possibility of conformity, and with "Take up the sword," she grabbed the hedge trimmers that had been visible from the beginning of the play, thrust into the planter of dead ivy, a latent threat **(figure 6)** .

The children's death, when it finally came, was horrifying. We heard their indoor protestations in the same other-worldly amplification that Medea got offstage. They died in silhouette against the double doors of #431, smearing the frosted glass with blood, leaving childish handprints **(figure 7)** . At the end, instead of flying Medea away in a chariot of the Sun, Lippman had her appear triumphant in front of the headlights of a fancy pick-up truck, another symbol of suburban values, now taken and co-opted by Medea, holding her dead children by the scruffs like lion cubs **(figure 8)** . The shocking effect was almost other-worldly, as if the shining vehicle were not an out-of-place automobile, but rather an alien ship sent to retrieve its devastated and devastating lost traveler **(figure 9)** .
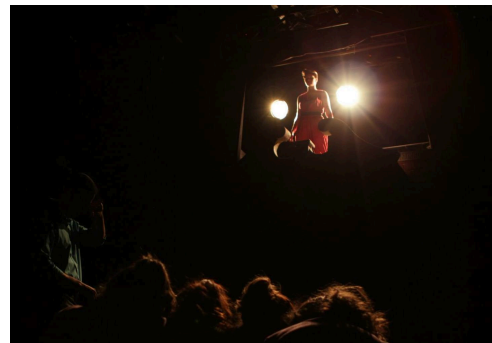
Dictating Parody in Plautus' *Rudens*

Seth Jeppesen
Brigham Young University

Introduction: A Conceptual Tug-of-War

One of the most memorable scenes of Plautus' *Rudens* features a tug-of-war between two slaves, both of whom claim possession of a trunk that has washed up after a storm.[1] It is this scene, rife with the potential for broad physical comedy, that gave the play its name, *The Rope*. In addition to the humor that this scene adds to an already-lively play, the onstage tug-of-war also provides an apt metaphor for the way in which *Rudens* subtly engages with the religious controversy surrounding the proper worship of Venus during the mid-180s BCE.[2] The proposed construction of a second temple to Venus Erycina by Licinus in 184, this time preserving the exotic and erotic elements of the original cult on Sicily, created friction with the previously established Roman worship of Venus as a chaste and matronal protector figure.[3] A conceptual tug-of-war is waged throughout *Rudens* concerning the female protagonists, Palaestra and Ampelisca, and whether they are to be seen as adherents of the traditional cults of Venus at Rome or of the new daughter cult of Venus Erycina, which maintained the original Sicilian cult's connection to prostitution.[4] This conflict is reflected in the ambiguous and liminal status of Paleastra as a *pseudohetaera* who appears to invite the sexual attention of the male characters but whose actual identity as a lost and soon-to-be-recognized citizen daughter militates against such a stereotyped categorization.

A crucial moment in this underlying conflict comes near the end of the play in a scene of ritual dictation in which the slave Gripus and the pimp Labrax parody the prayers in Roman religious ceremonies. The parodic oath in this scene, sworn to Venus, links the play not only with its immediate performance context as part of a religious festival but also to the ongoing controversy at Rome surrounding the worship of Venus. Within the play, this scene and the resultant defeat of the pimp Labrax seem to tip the scale in favor of the traditional worship of Venus at Rome, until Daemones redeems Labrax by inviting him to the wedding feast, thus balancing the debate and leaving to the audience the question of how best to worship Venus. The scene of prayer between Gripus and Labrax parodies religious dictations that would have taken place at the festival at which the play was performed, thus illustrating a connection between the content of Roman comedy and the religious festivals at which these plays were presented. An analysis of this parodic dictation scene, its function within the play, and its connection to religious debates outside the play demonstrates the value of searching for links between the content of Roman comedy and its performance context.

In the following essay, I will begin with a theoretical discussion of how embodied and enacted parody can link a performance to its immediate cultural milieu. I will then contextualize the dictation scene in question by briefly examining how the worship of Venus relates to the religious material throughout *Rudens*. Finally I will analyze the scene itself, comparing it with other examples of religious dictation in Roman culture, both comic and cultic.

Connecting Content to Context: The Role of Parody

Making connections between the content and the context of Plautine drama has proven to be particularly difficult because of the lack of detailed information on the dates and venues at which each play was performed. Of the twenty-one extant plays, only two include production notes: *Pseudolus* was performed in 191 BCE during the *ludi Megalenses* at the dedication of the Temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine, and *Stichus* was produced in 200 BCE at the *ludi Plebeii*, though the location of this performance within

the city is unknown.[5] This lack of information about the original productions of most of Plautus' comedies has in large part prevented scholars from applying what is known about the possible occasions and sites of dramatic performance in Rome to the interpretation of these plays.[6] As a result, scholars tend to imagine Plautine comedy staged in some nondescript urban setting, in a theater cut free from its temporal and topographical connections. This notion runs contrary to one of the basic tenets of performance criticism, namely, that performances are embodied enactments of texts, restricted by time and space.[7]

One way of overcoming this problem for Plautus is to focus on the religious parodies in his texts. Linda Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with critical distance," a definition that is desirable for both its openness and its adaptability.[8] Much of the theoretical work done on parody during the last century has focused on parody as a process through which one text imitates and comments on another.[9] This approach, however, provides an incomplete understanding of parody in a dramatic context because the audience of a play experiences it as a performance and not as a text.[10] The script is only one aspect of a theatrical performance; the confluence of actors and audience at a defined time and in a defined place is also necessary for a performance to occur. Performed parody is thus limited by the factors of time, place, and physical embodiment in a way that is not true of textual parody. Taking into account these additional factors based on performance, one can modify Hutcheon's definition of parody, which, for the purposes of this article, can now read: *performed* parody is *embodied* and *enacted* repetition with critical difference. In this revised definition of parody as performance, not only would the content of a model be repeated, but also the time and place of the parodic performance would ideally be proximate to the time and place of the model performance.

Proximity between the model and the parody is exactly what one finds in the religious context of Roman theatrical performance. It is well known that theatrical performance at Rome was linked to various religious festivals and other occasions of religious importance, such as elite funerals and triumphal ceremonies, all of which would have featured, in the normal course of events, the general models on which Plautus based his religious parodies.[11] In a broad sense, then, religious parodies in Plautus provide a link between the comic content and the religious context of the plays, though one still comes up against the difficulty of not knowing the specific festivals or venues at which most of the plays were performed. In spite of this challenge, we do have a definite list of possibilities for both occasion and location.[12] Using a bit of speculation about where and when the parodies in a given play might be the most effective, one can postulate that a performance would have been most compelling during a certain year or at a certain festival and venue.[13] This approach is not as tenuous as it initially sounds, because evidence suggests that repeat performances of the plays were common, even during a playwright's lifetime, and that the plays were written to be flexible regarding the venues at which they could be performed.[14] Each of the plays in the Plautine corpus could have been performed at a variety of locations and occasions throughout its Roman afterlife.[15] Emphasis on premiere performances should not eclipse the potential efficacy of a subsequent performance of a play.[16]

Plautus' *Rudens* and the worship of Venus

Scholarly consensus places the premiere of Plautus' *Rudens* sometime in the mid-180s BCE. Whether this dating is accurate or not, one can safely assume, given the accepted date of Plautus' death in 184, that the play was at least in existence at this time, and, even if it had been written earlier, there easily could have been subsequent performances of the play during this decade. The 180s BCE was a turbulent time for Roman religion, with the burning of the books of Numa and the notorious crackdown on the cult of Bacchus.[17] This decade also saw L. Porcius Licinus' vow to build a new temple to Venus Erycina outside the Colline gate in 184 and the dedication of the same temple in 181.[18] This new cult is of particular note, since a cult and temple of Venus Erycina had already existed at Rome since 215 BCE, when the cult was imported by Q. Fabius Maximus in order to expiate the defeat at Lake Trasimene.[19] Some of the more

exotic features of the original Sicilian version of the cult, such as a connection to prostitution and rites involving sacred doves, were suppressed when the cult was initially adopted in 215.[20] The version of the 180s was referred to by Strabo (6.272) as an ἀφίδρυμα, or "daughter cult," which means that it closely replicated the rites of the original cult upon which it was based, including the association with prostitution.[21] Though the sources are somewhat sparse on this point, both Galinsky and Amatucci argue that, given the pre-existence of a cult of Venus Erycina at Rome, there would have been considerable public discussion and debate concerning the adoption of a new version of the cult preceding Licinus' vow of 184.[22] Furthermore, Amatucci directly connects this interest in the cult to the characterization of Palaestra and Ampelisca in *Rudens*, arguing that the two female characters represent divergent approaches to the worship of Venus.[23] Whether or not this was the context in which *Rudens* was initially written and performed, a performance of the play during the mid-180s would definitely have lent itself to a debate about the proper way to worship Venus.

The plot of *Rudens* centers around the rescue, recognition, and marriage of a young Athenian girl named Palaestra, who, along with her fellow-slave Ampelisca, has become the prisoner of the devious pimp Labrax. Although he has accepted a down payment from an Athenian youth named Plesidippus, Labrax devises, along with his friend Charmides, to steal the money and whisk the girls off to Sicily under the cover of night. Arcturus causes a storm to arise and destroy Labrax's ship. The various parties wash ashore near the country villa of Daemones, in the coastal outskirts of Cyrene, which borders on the shrine of Venus. The girls enter the shrine as suppliants, and when Labrax finds out where they are hiding, he commits sacrilege by trying to drive them out of the shrine.[24] Daemones comes to the girls' rescue and protects them from Labrax' depredations. In the meantime one of Daemones' slaves, Gripus, fishes up from amidst the wreckage a trunk which, unbeknownst to him, contains tokens that will reveal Palaestra's true identity. Plesidippus' slave Trachalio recognizes the pimp's luggage and manages to have it taken to Daemones. When the tokens are revealed, Palaestra is proven to be Daemones' long-lost daughter and a marriage is arranged between Palaestra and Plesidippus. In the end the slaves are freed, wealth and status are restored, and the scheming pimp Labrax is even invited by Daemones to attend the marriage feast.

The worship of Venus is quite prominent in *Rudens*, since a shrine and altar to the goddess are depicted onstage, thus allowing the audience to evaluate the attitudes of the various characters toward the goddess, and in turn toward religious observance in general, by their behavior at the shrine. The foregrounding of religious themes begins with a divine prologue delivered by the star Arcturus, who outlines a religious system in which rewards and punishments are meted out by the gods according to the morality of mortal actions, a surprising contrast to the traditional *do ut des* view of Roman religious practice.[25] This system is then immediately put into action as Arcturus explains how he punished Labrax for committing perjury by whipping up a storm in order to destroy his ship and return him to the shrine of Venus for a reckoning.

The question of proper worship of the gods, and especially of Venus, is continued throughout the play in the form of juxtaposed prayers to Venus, all of which build up to Labrax's onstage perjury of his oath to the goddess in the scene of dictation at the climax of the drama.[26] In the sequence of prayers that are uttered in the play, sincere prayers delivered by Palaestra are followed up by parodic imitations spoken by other characters. Palaestra's initial lament and prayer to Venus (185–219, 257–8) are parodied by the chorus of fishermen, who coopt her language for their own ribald performance, which they cap with a prayer to Venus (290–305).[27] Later, Palaestra's prayer as she takes refuge at the altar of Venus (694–701) is immediately parodied by Trachalio in his own prayer to the goddess (702–5), in which he labels Palaestra's behavior as typical of female emotional extravagance and even refers to the girls using the term *concha*, slang for female genitalia.[28]

The parodies within the play, in the form of the juxtaposed prayers, mirror the way in which the religious material throughout *Rudens* parodies Roman prayer language and religious practices external to the play. In these prayers, Palaestra fashions herself and Ampelisca as adherents of the older, matronal cults of Venus, as evinced by the similarity of her diction to standard Roman prayer language. The priestess Ptolemocratia's response to Palaestra's first prayer also emphasizes a connection with the older cults of Venus at Rome when the priestess assures Palaestra that the goddess will give her the aid she requests because she is a "*bonam atque obsequentem deam*" (a benevolent and obedient goddess), 261. This line is certainly a reference to the oldest cult of Venus at Rome, the cult of Venus Obsequens, who, as her epithet indicates, was meant to maintain female sexuality under traditional patriarchal control for the purpose of propagating citizen offspring.[29] On the other hand, the language of the fishermen and Trachalio in their respective prayers is further removed from standard Roman prayer formulae, when compared with the language of Palaestra. Additionally, Trachalio's prayer to Venus depicts the women as adherents of the Sicilian cult of Venus Erycina, connected to prostitution, by his use of the word *concha*, as noted above.[30] By labeling the women with this term, he reduces their identity to an image of their sexual function vis-à-vis the male characters in the play.[31]

In addition to these juxtaposed prayers, there are other scenes in which the male characters in the play treat Palaestra and Ampelisca as sex workers, thus pulling them into the world of the Sicilian cult of Venus, in spite of their self-presentation to the contrary. When Ampelisca is seeking water to prepare a bath for the girls at Venus' shrine, the unruly slave Sceparnio accosts her and makes her promise future sexual favors in return for a pitcher of water (414–39), a promise on which Ampelisca manages to avoid making good.[32] Even Daemones, who will prove to be Palaestra's long-lost father, laments that, with his wife watching, he is unable to make any advances toward the young girls whom he has accepted into his care (892–6).[33] This impulse of the male characters is also evinced in the back story of the plot, as seen in Arcturus' description of how Labrax attempted to whisk the girls away into a life of prostitution. Given the conflict at Rome concerning the worship of Venus in the 180s, it is significant that Labrax's ultimate destination was the island of Sicily, home of the Erycinian cult of Venus. Thus the juxtaposed prayers constitute just one element of the struggle over the identity of Palaestra and Ampelisca. The prayers in the play parody ceremonies that were part of the immediate performance context of the various religious festivals at Rome, while on a deeper level, the tug-of-war over how to view Palaestra and Ampelisca mirrored the debate in Rome during the mid-180s over how best to worship Venus.

Rudens 1333–56: A Parodic Dictation Scene and its Models

It is in the context of this internal and external struggle in *Rudens* regarding the worship of Venus that we come upon the scene of dictation between Gripus and Labrax. This scene provides the clearest connection of the comic content of the play to its general religious context, because the practice of religious dictation portrayed therein matches accounts of the *ludi saeculares* that appear in inscriptions. It is not my argument that this play was performed specifically at the *ludi saeculares*, since these games are rare and none took place during Plautus' active career, but rather that the dictated prayers described in the inscriptions would have been similar in form and procedure, if not in content, to prayers performed at the *ludi* at which *Rudens* was performed.

In the scene in question, Daemones' slave Gripus is lamenting that his master did not allow him to keep the money in Labrax's trunk, which Gripus had found at sea and which contained the tokens that revealed Palaestra's true identity. After Labrax overhears him and identifies himself as the owner, the two haggle over Gripus' finder's fee, finally settling on one talent, with which Gripus hopes to buy his freedom. Gripus then requires Labrax to swear an oath to Venus that he will make good on his promise, and, to ensure that the oath is correct, he dictates the words to Labrax, who evidently does a poor job at repeating them correctly. The text of the scene is as follows:

GRIP: per Venerem hanc iurandum est tibi. LAB: quid iurem? GRIP: quod iubebo.

LAB: praei verbis quiduis. id quod domi est, numquam ulli supplicabo

GRIP: Tene aram hanc. LAB: Teneo. GRIP: Deiera te mi argentum daturum

eodem die, tui uiduli ubi sis potitus. LAB: Fiat.

GRIP: Venus Cyrenensis, testem te testor mihi,

si uidulum illum, quem ego in naui perdidi,

cum auro atque argento saluom inuestigauero

isque in potestatem meam peruenerit,

tum ego huic Gripo, inquito et me tangito —

LAB: Tum ego huic Gripo (dico, Venus, ut tu audias)

talentum argenti magnum continuo dabo.

GRIP: Si fraudassis, dic ut te in quaestu tuo

Venus eradicet, caput atque aetatem tuam.

tecum hoc habeto tamen, ubi iuraueris.

LAB: Illaec aduorsum si quid peccasso, Venus,

ueneror te ut omnes miseri lenones sient.

GRIP: You have to swear an oath to Venus here. LAB: What should I swear? GRIP: What I tell you to.

LAB: Dictate whatever you want. (aside) I've got a whole stockpile of empty words at home.

GRIP: Touch this altar. LAB: I'm touching it. GRIP: Say that you will give the silver to me

on the same day that you get the trunk. LAB: May it be so

GRIP: Cyrenian Venus, I call you as a witness for me,

if that trunk that I lost on the ship,

if I shall find it safe with its gold and silver intact

and if it should come into my possession,

then I to this Gripus – speak up and touch me!

LAB: Then I to this Gripus – I say it so you, Venus, can hear me –

will immediately give a big talent of silver.

GRIP: If you should lie, say that Venus will destroy you,

your business, your person, and your life.

(aside) I hope you get that anyway after you've made your oath.

LAB: If I commit some wrong against these things, Venus,

I pray to you that all pimps might be miserable.

– Rudens, 1334–49

Although the lines of dictation are attributed to Gripus alone, it is clear that in performance Labrax would repeat them. Before the prayer even begins, Labrax uses the phrase *praeire uerbis*, which is the technical term for dictation in Latin and here serves as an embedded stage direction for how the scene should be played.[34] Gripus uses the first person to speak of the loss of the trunk, which makes it clear that he intends for Labrax to repeat the words. Furthermore, Gripus commands Labrax to speak, using the imperatives *deiera* and *inquito*, which are additional embedded stage directions for Labrax. Also, there is a change in meter during the lines of dictation, 1338–56, from iambic septenarii to iambic senarii, indicating that the *tibicen* would have stopped playing music during these lines, as is common for scenes of dictation and reading in Plautus.[35] The music picks up again for the finale of the play, which follows immediately after this scene. Of course, understanding this as a scene of dictation involves a rather fluid concept of what the dramatic texts of Plautus represent. Marshall explains quite well how Plautine scripts often provide outlines for what he terms "elastic scenes" that could be expanded or contracted through improvisation based on the dynamics and needs of the specific performance in question, much like *lazzi* in commedia dell'arte.[36] If we approach this scene from *Rudens* with this frame of mind, there is no problem in labeling it a scene of dictation, even though Labrax's repetition is not written out in the script. In fact, this kind of flexibility between script and performance would allow for much improvisation in the things Gripus might require Labrax to say and do in the dictation and the ways in which Labrax might modify and disobey Gripus' orders, thus producing a dynamic scene bursting with comic potential.

This is not the only scene in Plautine comedy in which a dictated oath is acted out onstage. There is a similar moment at the end of *Miles Gloriosus* in which the old man Periplectomenus and his slaves make the soldier Pyrgopolynices believe he has been caught trying to commit adultery with his neighbor's wife. The cook Cario brandishes a knife (1397) and threatens to castrate the soldier for his crime. When Pyrgopolynices swears by Hercules that he thought she was a widow, Periplectomenus dictates the following oath to him:

PER: iura te non nociturum esse homini de hac re nemini, quod tu hodie hic verberatu's aut quod verberabere, si te salvom hinc amittemus Venerium nepotulum.

Pyr. iuro per Iovem et Mavortem me nociturum neminiquod ego hic hodie vapularim, iureque id factum arbiter;et si intestatus non abeo hinc, bene agitur pro noxia.

PER: quid si non faxis? PYR: ut vivam semper intestabilis.

PER: Swear that you won't harm anyone on account of this business,because today you were beaten here or will be beaten,if we send you away intact, Venus' darling grandson.

PYR: I swear by Jupiter and Mavors that I will harm no onebecause I got a beating here today, and I think that I do this rightly.And if I don't get out of here intestate, then things have gone well in exchange for my crime.

PER: And what if you don't do this? PYR: Then may I always live detestable.

–Miles Gloriosus, 1411–18

In this scene, the soldier's response is actually written out, and not left for improvisation as in *Rudens*, and thus it provides good evidence for the type of embellishments Labrax could have added in his own scene. Here, Pyrgopolynices follows his captor's language closely, but he deviates in order to specify the deities by which the oath is sworn and to add a joke that puns on the double meaning of *testis* in Latin as both witness and testicle. A Roman in the soldier's compromising situation would hope to retain the right to call a witness, as the primary meanings of *intestatus* and *intestabilis* both indicate, but, given Cario's prior threat of castration (1398–9), the additional comic meaning in these lines—that the soldier may be forced to live without his *testes*—is also clear. Another scene of dictation is to be found at *Bacchides* 729–53, but in this scene it is a letter that is being dictated, not an oath. Nevertheless, the meter in this scene changes from accompanied to spoken verse as in the scene from *Rudens*.

Plautus is not unique among comic playwrights in his humorous use of dictation. In fact, dictation scenes such as this are common in comedy, both ancient and modern, and they play well because they allow one actor to parody another while at the same time parodying a recognizable cultural practice.[37] Aristophanes, for example, uses mock religious dictation to great effect in *Lysistrata* (210-237) when the title character dictates the oath of sexual abstinence to her followers, represented by Kalonike, who then repeats the words on behalf of the crowd.[38] This scene is different from the one in *Rudens* in that the repeated lines are actually written out in the text, along with the occasional humorous comment thrown in by Kalonike (e.g., line 216). Like the Plautine example, this scene gains much of its effect by parodying the format of solemn religious oaths, with detailed prohibitions outlined, gods called as witnesses, and a curse pronounced on the participants should they fail to keep their end of the oath.[39]

In the context of the other prayers in *Rudens*, the scene between Gripus and Labrax follows the pattern previously established in the play of a relatively cultic prayer followed by a parodic one, except that in this instance both prayers are delivered nearly simultaneously, as Labrax repeats Gripus' words, likely with humorous variations, in a fashion similar to the scene from *Miles Gloriosus*. The parody in *Rudens* 1334–49 functions on two levels: textual and performative. First, on the textual level, the words that the characters use closely imitate the standard formulae for oaths in Roman religion. On the performative level, the tableau created by the characters reciting an oath in front of the altar of Venus mirrors the standard practice of religious dictation outlined by Pliny and evinced throughout Livy and in the inscriptions describing the celebration of the *Ludi Saeculares*.

On the textual level, the *Rudens* prayer itself is composed of many of the standard elements expected in a cultic Roman prayer. Gripus first invokes the goddess, using a geographical epithet so as to be specific. He then uses the phrase "*testem te testor*," which both fits a commonly used formula for oath taking and provides nice alliteration—a hallmark of both Plautine and ritual language.[40] He then proceeds with a carefully laid-out conditional phrase that states the provisions of the oath, an element that is borrowed from the language of vows.[41] He ends the prayer, as is normal in oaths, by urging Labrax to pronounce a curse upon himself if he does not fulfill his sworn promise.[42]

The language and form of this oath initially seem cultic enough, but upon closer examination humorous aspects of the context and delivery of these lines mark them as parody.[43] At various points during the scene, both Labrax and Gripus break from the formal, pseudo-ritual language to give snarky asides, as when Labrax says that he is speaking for Venus to hear and not Gripus (1343). Halfway through the dictation (1342), Gripus commands Labrax to speak up (*inquito*), suggesting that Labrax may have been mumbling through his lines or offering a comic variation of Gripus' words. Additionally, there is the same potential wordplay in this passage as was seen in the passage from *Miles Gloriosus* with jokes based

on the homonymic relationship between Latin *testis* (witness) and *testis* (testicle). Joshua Katz argues, on mostly linguistic grounds, for a connection between oath-taking in the Greco-Roman world and the touching of one's testicles. The possibility of such a connection does provide comic fodder for a humorous rendition of this scene from *Rudens*, especially in connection to Gripus' command that Labrax touch him in order to specify the recipient of the money in question (1342).[44] Whether or not Katz' argument is correct, Gripus' command to the pimp to touch him while swearing the oath (*me tangito*, 1342) definitely opens the door for humorous stage business that would have undercut any perceived sincerity in the mock-religious performance.

When Gripus directs Labrax to pronounce a curse on himself should he default on his end of the promise, Gripus models a specific and straightforward curse. Labrax, on the other hand, responds with the ridiculously general phrase, "may all pimps be wretched" (*ut omnes miseri lenones sient*), 1349. As in the oath from *Miles Gloriosus*, Labrax ends his parodic version of Gripus' prayer with a joke that in this case is metatheatrical, since pimps are always wretched in comedy, losing money, forfeiting possessions, and receiving physical abuse. As in the previous sets of prayers in *Rudens*, Labrax's version of the prayer would have been a parody of Gripus' version

In addition to parody based on the textual similarities between the dictation scene in Rudens and cultic Roman prayers, there is also parody in this scene based on the visual aspect of the performance. Since it was common in Roman cult to dictate prayers performed in public, and since the *palliata* were performed only on religious occasions that featured such public prayers, the parodic dictation in *Rudens* would have found a ready model of a performed religious dictation at whatever festival at which it happened to be produced. Pliny (HN 28.11) provides a description of how such dictations were regularly performed, explaining that in important public ceremonies, priests commonly dictated to magistrates the words that they should say so as not to get anything wrong, as in the procedure used for the U.S. Presidential Oath of Office:[45]

> videmusque certis precationibus obsecrasse summos magistratus et, ne quod
>
> verborum praetereatur aut praeposterum dicatur, de scripto praeire aliquem
>
> rursusque alium custodem dari qui adtendat, alium vero praeponi qui favere
>
> linguis iubeat, tibicinem canere, ne quid aliud exaudiatur.
>
>
> We see that the highest magistrates pray using exact prayers, and, so that one
>
> word is not omitted or spoken out of order, one person dictates from a written
>
> source, while another is given as a guard to listen carefully and another is
>
> provided to bid people to keep quiet. The piper (tibicen) plays, so that nothing
>
> else is heard.
>
> – Pliny, Historia Naturalis 28.11

Although Pliny is much later than Plautus, he claims that public prayers had been dictated in this fashion at Rome for some 830 years (HN 28.12).[46] If evidence from Livy can be trusted on this account, then Pliny's boast is not too far off. There are nine different passages in Livy that deal specifically with dictation in a variety of rituals, ranging in date from 436 BCE to 172 BCE. These specific passages are chosen because of

their use of the technical *praeire verbis*. Taken together, they show that dictation was used for an array of religious purposes and that the standard format was for a religious official, such as the Pontifex Maximus, to dictate the words of a prayer to a magistrate or someone in a special position of authority. A breakdown of these passages can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 - Passages in Livy Involving Ritual Dictation (based on the use of the phrase *praeire verbis*, vel sim.)

Passage	Year	Person Dictating	Person Dictated to	Notes
4.21.5	436-5 BCE	duumvir	populus Romanus	*obsecratio* dictated to people to avert plague and invasion
8.9.4	340 BCE	M. Valerius (Pontifex)	Decius	Decius performs a *devotio* and sacrifices himself on behalf of his army
9.46.6	304 BCE	Cornelius Barbatus (Pont. Max.)	Gnaeus Flavius (Aedile)	Dedication of Temple of Concord in the Volcanal
10.28.14	295 BCE	Pont. Max.	Publius Decius	Pub. Decius, son of Decius performs a *devotio* and sacrifices himself on behalf of his army
31.9.9	200 BCE	Licinius (Pont. Max.)	Consul	Games vowed in return for a successful outcome in Macedonian war. cf 34.44.6
36.2.3	191 BCE	P. Licinius (Pont. Max.)	Manlius Acilius (Consul)	*Ludi magni* vowed to Jupiter, words of the prayer listed.
39.18.3	186 BCE	sacerdos in the Bacchic cult	initiates of Bacchic Cult	members of the Bacchic cult who swore a dictated oath but did not commit any crimes were released
41.21.11	174 BCE	Q. Marcius Philippus (Pontifex)	Populus Romanus	a *supplicatio* dictated to the people during a severe plague, *feriae* vowed
42.28.9	172 BCE	Lepidus (Pont. Max.)	C. Popilius (Consul)	Games vowed if republic should be safe for ten years cf. 31.5.4

Fortunately, one need not rely only on later literary evidence from Pliny and Livy to establish the antiquity of the practice of religious dictation. The Iguvine Tablets, which date to sometime between the third and first centuries BCE, give a clear example of religious dictation in an augurial ceremony, the content of which Plautus parodies at *Asinaria* 259–61.[47] The ritual described in the Iguvine Tablets involves an augur who dictates to an attendant the list of birds that should be observed during the ritual and the location at which they ought to appear.[48] Plautus borrows language from this ritual in *Asinaria* when Libanus runs through virtually the same list of birds, but in a comic context. Though dictation is not directly involved in Libanus' parody, these lines indicate that Plautus was familiar with the Umbrian ceremony of taking the auspices, with its concomitant reliance on dictation:

> impetritum, inauguratumst: quouis admittunt aues,
>
> picus et cornix ab laeua, coruos, parra ab dextera

consuadent; certum herclest uostram consequi sententiam.

Then it is decided, confirmed by augury. The birds everywhere say so: the

woodpecker and crow on the left, the raven and jay on the right advise it [to the

birds] by Hercules I'll be sure to follow your advice!

– Asinaria 259–61

Poultney dates the tablet in question to the mid-first century BCE, on the basis of the use of the Latin instead of the Etruscan alphabet and references to various sums of money that only make sense after the devaluation of the Roman *as* following the Social War.[49] He does, however, note that this ritual, described in detail in Tablet VIa, is the same ceremony described more perfunctorily in Tablet I, which dates to the mid-third century BCE, when Plautus would presumably have been spending his youth in Umbria. Regardless of the date of the tablet itself, Plautus' reference to the ritual in *Asinaria* proves that he was familiar with it, whether he encountered it as a native of Umbria or whether he witnessed a Romanized version of the same ritual after migrating to the city.[50]

The scene from *Rudens* presents a comic uncrowning of the type of ritualized dictation described in Pliny, Livy, and the Iguvine Tablets. Instead of a priest dictating words to a magistrate in solemn ceremony on behalf of the state, there is a slave dictating an oath to a pimp regarding the acquisition of money from a waterlogged trunk.[51] After he has reclaimed possession of the trunk and subsequently refused to pay Gripus the agreed-upon sum, Labrax draws attention to the parodic discrepancy in this scene by jokingly responding to Gripus' complaints with the line "*tun meo pontifex peiiurio es?*" (What, are you the priest to my perjury?), 1377. Thus, in case the point were lost on the audience, Plautus emphasizes the fact that, in this dictation, Labrax is no magistrate and Gripus is no priest.

It is, however, quite unlikely that the audience would have failed to pick up on this parody. Although the main players in such official religious dictations were usually priests and magistrates, it was also common for at least some portion of the Roman populace to be involved, either as spectators or as participants. For example, when announcements were made advertising upcoming public debates (*contiones*), it was customary for an augur to dictate a prayer to the consul in the presence of a representative portion of the Roman populace as part of the proclamation.[52] Another, less-frequent example, but one that involves the people more directly, was the practice of dictating the words for vows or propitiatory offerings to a representative portion of the plebs gathered in the forum on extreme occasions of war or plague (Livy 4.21.5; 41.21.11).[53] One such instance is recorded by Livy as having taken place in 174 BCE, thus placing the practice in the same general time period as Plautus' career, though this particular instance occurred after his death. This evidence suggests that common members of Plautus' audience, not just magistrates, might at some point have had the opportunity not only to witness but also to participate in a genuine ritual of dictation, playing the part that Labrax parodies in *Rudens*.

Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that religious dictation was an important part of the festivals at which Roman comedy was presented. This means that the audience of *Rudens* could have witnessed an actual ceremony of dictation at some other point during the *ludi* at which the play was produced, an occasion that would have provided a temporally and spatially proximate model on which to base this parodic dictation scene. The evidence comes from an inscription describing the celebration of the *ludi saeculares* of 17 BCE and 204 CE, in which both the textual and the performative aspects of the ritual are expressed. Though these records are much later than Plautus, these games were said to have been based

on earlier iterations that went back at least to 249 BCE.[54] For the games of 17 BCE, the text of the inscription reads:

> Deinde CX matribus familias nuptis, quibus denu[ntiatum erat…M. Agrippa] praeit in
>
> haec verba. Iuno regina, ast quid est qu[o]d meli[us siet p. R Quiritibus…matres familiae]
>
> nuptae genibus nixae te u[ti…maiestatem p. R. Quiritum duelli domique auxis, utique
>
> semper Latinum nomen tueare, incolumitatem] sempiternam victoriam [valetudinem
>
> populo Romano Quiritibus tribuas faveasque populo Romano Quiritibus legionibusque p. R.]
>
> Quiritium remque publi[cam p. R. Quiritium salvam serves, uti sies volens propitia
>
> populo Romano] Quiritibus, XVvir s. f. no[bis…Haec matres familias CX populi
>
> Romani]Quiritium nuptae geni[bus nixae quaesumus precamurque].

> Then [?Marcus Agrippa] dictated to the one hundred and ten married women, mistresses
>
> of households, who had been commanded [to assemble on the Capitoline,] the formula of
>
> the prayer as follows: "Juno Regina. If there is any better fortune [that may attend the
>
> Roman people, the Quirites, we one hundred and ten mistresses of households of the
>
> Roman people, the Quirites,] married women on bended knee, [pray] that you [bring it
>
> about, we beg and beseech that you increase the power] and majesty of the Roman
>
> people, the Quirites [in war and peace; and that the Latins may always be obedient; and
>
> that you may grant] eternal [safety], victory [and health to the Roman people, the Quirites,
>
> and that you may protect the Roman people, the Quirites, and the legions of
>
> the Roman people], the Quirites; and [that you may keep safe and make greater] the state
>
> [of the Roman people, the Quirites; and that you may be favorable and propitious to the Roman people,]
>
> the Quirites, to the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, to us, [to our houses, to our households.
>
> These are the things that we one hundred and ten mistresses of households of
>
> the Roman people, the Quirites], married women on bended knee, [pray, beg and beseech.]'[55]

Despite the lacunose nature of the text, the most important parts for the present study are still clearly legible. The officiator dictated the words of the prayer to the group of matrons just as Gripus dictated the prayer to Labrax (*praeit in haec verba*; cf. *Rudens* 1335: *praei verbis quiduis*). The overly officious language, full of repetitions and clarifications, is similar to the humorous clarification in Gripus' prayer when he

instructs Labrax to speak up and touch him (*inquito et me tangito*, 1342). The presence of an altar for the prayer of the matrons is also made clear a few lines earlier (ILS 5050.119), where it is explained that the prayers to Juno were preceded by a sacrifice to her performed on the Capitoline. Gripus, in his scene, instructs Labrax to hold the altar (*tene aram hanc*, 1336). The language of the prayer from the *ludi saeculares* does not mirror the language of the dictation scene in *Rudens* as closely as it could, because, although dictation is present in both prayers, the two texts ultimately represent two different classes of prayer: an oath (*Rudens*) and a petitionary prayer (*ludi saeculares*).[56] The language in the inscription is, however, similar to the language that Palaestra uses earlier in the play when she prays to Venus at her altar (694–701).[57] The image that Palaestra and Ampelisca presented at the altar would also have been similar to the attitude of the women in this ritual, as both are described as being on bended knee (*genibus nixae*), which was not the standard posture for prayer in Roman religion.[58]

There were no known performances of the *ludi saeculares* during Plautus' active career (the two closest occurrences were in 249 and 146 BCE), but this should not pose an insurmountable obstacle to accepting these inscriptions as evidence in the present discussion. In Livy's account of the first performance of the *ludi Apollinares*, he mentions that a group of matrons offered a solemn prayer as part of the ceremonies (*matronae supplicavere*, 25.12.15), a statement that could be shorthand for the type of ritual described in the inscription of the *ludi saeculares*, especially if one accepts the etymology of the verb *supplicare* as being connected to the idea of bending one's knees.[59] If this were the case, then both groups of matrons, as well as Palaestra and Ampelisca within the play, would appear on their knees (*genibus nixae*). Celia Schultz, in her work on women's participation in Roman religion, notes that such female involvement in state cult was quite normal. Many rites intended to expiate prodigies involved the participation of all adult Romans, both male and female, though often the sources are not explicit about this involvement when they record the observance of such rites.[60] Likewise, sources are not often explicit about the use of dictation in the performance of official prayers, but fortunately the occasional use of the phrase *praeire verbis*, combined with Pliny's description of the constant reliance on this procedure in Roman cult, help us to see these aspects of Roman ceremonies that were doubtless so commonplace to the Romans themselves that they did not require comment. In the inscription of the *ludi saeculares*, dictation is mentioned only for the prayer of the matrons out of the eight prayers described, possibly because they were the only celebrants who were not magistrates, not because this was the only prayer at the ceremony that featured dictation.

By comparing the mock dictation ritual from *Rudens* with evidence from Pliny, Livy, the Iguvine Tablets and the inscriptions detailing the *ludi saeculares*, it becomes apparent that this comic scene is a parody, a repetition with critical distance, not only of the language used in official Roman cult, but also of the embodied performance of various rituals of dictation, some of which would have been performed at the same festival as the play. The inscription from the *ludi saeculares* also speaks to the temporal and spatial proximity of the religious performances to the theatrical performances at the *ludi*. The events of each day of the festival, as outlined in the inscription, begin with sacrifices and prayer, followed by the performance of plays (*ludi scaenici*) in various theaters around the city. The order of events listed for each day indicates the temporal proximity of the plays to the religious rituals – i.e., they were performed on the same day. One further portion of the inscription also hints at the spatial proximity of the theatrical and religious performances. This part reads:

iuxta eum locum, ubi sacrificium erat factum superioribus noctibus et theatrum

positum et scaena, metae positae quadrigaeque sunt missae.

> Next to the place where sacrifice had been made on the previous nights and the
>
> theater and stage had been placed, the turning posts were placed and chariots were
>
> sent forth.
>
> – ILS 5050.153

This passage suggests that the sacrifices took place in roughly the same area where the temporary theater had been set up, which means that the audience could have watched both the religious and the theatrical performances from the same viewing area. Again, this evidence is firmly connected only to the *ludi saeculares*, but if, as is likely, the procedure indicated in the inscription was common to other *ludi*, it does suggest that for the plays of Plautus there was a strong temporal and spatial connection between the comic and religious performances at the festivals.

Conclusions: The Parodic Dictation Scene and the Worship of Venus at Rome

The dictation scene between Gripus and Labrax would have provided an embodied repetition of dictated prayers witnessed by the audience during the same *ludi* at which the play was performed, possibly even from the same viewing area.[61] Nevertheless, this scene is more than just a humorous reflection on Roman religious practices exterior to the play; it is also intimately connected with the play's overall question of how Venus ought to be worshipped. When Labrax violates the oath he has sworn to Gripus, he trespasses against Venus, whose priestess and altar have protected Palaestra and Ampelisca throughout the play. Labrax is punished for this transgression by forfeiting his possession of Palaestra and losing the talent he has sworn to Gripus.[62] In the world of the play, Venus upholds the oath sworn to her, favoring the girls' interests over those of Labrax.[63]

Though the defeat of the pimp seems to tip the scales in favor of the sanitized, state cult of Venus Erycina, Plautus oddly makes Daemones' treatment of Labrax the most benign treatment a pimp receives at the end of any of his plays: a surprise, since Labrax is one of the more brutal characters on the Plautine stage. Not only does Deamones return half of the talent of silver to Labrax; he also invites him to the wedding feast. This somewhat shocking ending, however, makes sense when one considers that it is Plautus' way of maintaining the balance and neutrality with which he has presented the competing attitudes toward Venus throughout the play. When the pimp is defeated and Palaestra's identity is made known, it would seem that the playwright initially favors the Capitoline version of the cult, but then Daemones returns the money to Labrax and invites him to the wedding feast, as though it were a celebration of the *dies lenonum* (day of the pimps), which is what April 24, the day following the celebration of Venus Erycina, came to be known as.[64] Balance between representations of the two cults within the play is restored and Plautus again refers the question to the audience, who is left to decide which version of the cult is preferable.

It may initially seem that in a polytheistic system the decision to worship one aspect of a deity as opposed to another would be a choice with little consequence, but here one must remember the religious climate of the 180s BCE in Rome. The fallout of the Bacchanalian affair proved that for those who chose to worship Bacchus according to the new fashion, such an apparently benign religious preference could have dire consequences. History has since proven that no similar blowback followed the introduction of the Sicilian version of the cult of Venus Erycina, but at the time that *Rudens* was produced, probably shortly before the cult was officially sanctioned by Licinus' vow of 184 BCE, the decision of how to worship Venus was one that could have had grave repercussions. By using parody to remain playfully aloof, Plautus can discuss issues of serious political and religious import and yet avoid aligning himself too vehemently with one side of the debate or the other.

So far, our discussion has focused on the internal function of parody within *Rudens* and how it creates humor and meaning in the play by providing a comic reflection of contemporary debates concerning innovations in the worship of Venus at Rome. Externally, these parodies engage in cultural work by subtly criticizing the practice of adopting foreign cults into the Roman religious system. When importing a new cult, Roman officials had to decide how much of the original rites would remain unchanged and how much would be removed. The two cults of Venus Erycina provide the only example in which two different responses to this question can be analyzed for the same god. For the cult of Venus Erycina of 215 BCE, the one placed on the Capitoline in the heart of the city, many of the identifying traits of the Punic goddess were excised, including the association with prostitution, while the "daughter cult" (ἀφίδρυμα) of 181 BCE based outside of the Colline Gate mirrored as much as possible the practices of the "mother cult" at Eryx in Sicily.[5]

The women in *Rudens* present themselves as representatives of the initial adoption of the cult in 215 BCE, and by extension the practice of sanitizing elements from foreign cults that do not fit within traditional Roman practices. The parodic echoes of the women's prayers to the goddess throughout the play undercut the validity of their position, poking fun at what could be seen as a puritanical or self-righteous strain in Roman religious practices. In the hands of Plautus, however, the other side of the debate does not fare much better. The men in the play continually side with the new "daughter cult" of Venus Erycina and its emphasis on keeping foreign religious practices unchanged, a position best fit for exiles, foreign slaves, and pimps, as indicated by the characters who espouse this version of the cult throughout the play. By mocking both sides of the debate, Plautus avoids saying anything too serious about Roman religious practices, but instead self-consciously points out some of the humorous imperfections in the system of Roman religion and makes them the object of laughter.

In Plautus' *Rudens*, religious parody provides a humorous depiction of a serious debate. The parodic dictation scene between Gripus and Labrax constitutes an important episode in the comic tug-of-war regarding the proper worship of Venus. In the world of comedy that exists during the festival, it is possible to make light of such matters, but, when the stage is taken down, it is up to the audience in the real world to decide what to do about the issue.

notes

[1] This essay is an expanded and revised version of a paper delivered at the Ancient Drama in Performance II conference at Randolph College, Oct. 6 2012. Unless otherwise noted, all texts are taken from the OCT and all translations are my own.

[2] Sedgwick and Amatucci both place Rudens in the 180s BCE. Sedgwick follows Buck's dating, which relies largely on stylistic analysis of the meter, while Amatucci considers the treatment of Venus in the play to be reflective of innovations in the cult of Venus in the 180s. See W. B. Sedgwick, "Plautine Chronology," The American Journal of Philology 70, no. 4 (January 1, 1949): 3793; A. G. Amatucci, "Per la Cronologia del Rudens di Plauto," in Mélanges de Philologie, de Litérature et d'Histoire Anciennes Offerts à J. Marouzeau (Paris, 1948), 1–6; A. G. Amatucci, "L'amicizia di Palestra e il Culto di Venere nel Rudens di Plauto," Giornale Italiano di Filologia 3 (1950): 206–10.

[3] G. Karl Galinsky, "Plautus' 'Poenulus' and the Cult of Venus Erycina," in Hommages à Marcel Renard, ed. Jacqueline Bibauw, vol. 101, Latomus (Brussels, 1969), 358–64; Eric Orlin, "Why a Second Temple for Venus Erycina," ed. Carl Deroux, Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History X (2000): 70–90.

[4] Eleanor Windsor Leach sees Rudens as a reenactment of the mythological birth of Venus, noting themes and imagery in the play that are also present in the cults of Venus Erycina and Venus Verticordia, which were new to Rome during Plautus' day. These similarities are also noted by Amatucci and Galinsky.

Though there were festivals to Venus Erycina and Venus Verticordia at Rome, neither of these festivals involved the presentation of ludi scaenici, which means that Rudens could not have been performed at either of them. Eleanor Winsor Leach, "Plautus' Rudens: Venus Born from a Shell," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 15, no. 5 (January 1, 1974): 925–6; Galinsky, "Plautus' 'Poenulus' and the Cult of Venus Erycina," 360; Amatucci, "L'amicizia di Palestra e il Culto di Venere nel Rudens di Plauto."

[5] These are the only two Plautine comedies for which there are didascaliae, or production notes, and both notices come from the Ambrosian palimpsest (A), as indicated in Lindsay's OCT.

[6] Notable exceptions are Goldberg's discussion of Pseudolus performed in front of the Temple of Magna Mater and Moore's and Marshall's analyses of the choragus speech from Curculio as performed in the forum. See Sander M. Goldberg, "Plautus on the Palatine," The Journal of Roman Studies 88 (January 1, 1998): 1–20; Timothy J. Moore, "Palliata Togata: Plautus, Curculio 462–86," The American Journal of Philology 112, no. 3 (October 1, 1991): 343–62; C. W. Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–43.

[7] Slater emphasizes that audience and actors have an equal share with the author's text in the creation of a play. Alexander explains from a social-science perspective how performances are temporally sequenced and spatially restricted events. See Niall W Slater, Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 4; Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy," in Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 36.

[8] Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms (University of Illinois Press, 2000), 6, 18. Simon Dentith defines parody as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice." Rose says that ancient parody was a device for comic quotation with a change to the original, while she describes the modern concept of parody as "the comic refunctioning of performed linguistic or artistic material." Genette maintains that parody is created when one places base content in a noble context, as opposed to travesty, which is the placing of noble content in base style. Hutcheon's is the best of these definitions because it is the most basic, though in the definitions of Rose and Dentith the core idea of repetition with difference is also to be seen. See Simon Dentith, Parody (London: Routledge, 2000), 9; Margaret A. Rose, Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32, 52; Gérard Genette, Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–22.

[9] See for example the work of the Russian formalists such as Bakhtin, who see parody as the process through which new genres of literature are born: Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody, 25; Rose, Parody, 103 ff. Margaret Rose takes a step toward including performance in her definition by stating that parody is "the comic refunctioning of performed linguistic or artistic material" (emphasis added), but the examples that she provides all come from texts, not performances. Simon Dentith's work on parody is similar in that he refers to parody as a "cultural production or practice," which leaves the door open for talking about performance, but ultimately he does not give any significant examples that are not textual. Linda Hutcheon perhaps comes the closest to including performance in her theory of parody by keeping a very broad definition and including discussions of parody in music and the visual arts, but detailed consideration of parody in theatrical performances is lacking from her analysis. Genette is the most textually based of all, as evinced in his terminology of "hypertext" and "hypotext" to refer to a parody and its model. Ibid., 52; Dentith, Parody, 9; Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody, 6–25; Genette, Palimpsests, 1–22.

[10] Performance is a key component in both Aristotle's and Quintilian's discussions of parody, as also evinced in the etymology of the word itself. In Greek παρῳδία means a song sung (i.e., performed)

alongside another. See Poetics 1448a ff. and Inst. Orat. 9.2.35.

[11] Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy, 16–48; Gesine Manuwald, Roman Republican Theatre (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 41–9.

[12] Plautus' plays could be presented at the ludi Romani, ludi plebeii, ludi Apollinares, or ludi Megalenses, all of which were annual public religious festivals. In addition to these regularly occurring festivals, plays were also performed at one-time events such as elite funerals, triumphal ceremonies, and temple dedications. Since there were no permanent theaters at the time of Plautus, plays were performed in temporary structures, ideally set in front of the temple of the deity to whom the festival or event was dedicated. Locations frequently connected with theatrical performance are the forum, Palatine hill, Circus Maximus and Campus Martius / Circus Flaminius. See Manuwald, Roman Republican Theatre, 41–68; Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy, 17–20, 31–48.

[13] This is very similar to the approach used by both Flower and O'Neill to posit a performance of Amphitruo connected to the triumph of Fulvius Nobilior. See Peter O'Neill, "Triumph Songs, Reversal and Plautus' Amphitruo," Ramus 32, no. 1 (2003): 1–38; Harriet I. Flower, "Fabulae Praetextae in Context: When Were Plays on Contemporary Subjects Performed in Republican Rome?" The Classical Quarterly 45, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 170–90.

[14] The best evidence for revival performances within the playwright's lifetime comes from Bacchides 214–15, in which the wily slave Chrysalus says, "etiam Epidicum, quam ego fabulam aeque ac me ipsum amo / nullam aeque inuitus specto, si agit Pellio (Even Epidicus, a play I love as much as myself, / I watch most unwillingly, if Pellio is playing the lead)." The line would make no sense if plays were performed only once at the debut and there was no opportunity for other actors to play the role later. For flexibility in venue, see Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy, 48.

[15] For the importance of subsequent performances of seminal works of drama, see Jonathan Miller, Subsequent Performances (E. Sifton Books / Viking, 1986).

[16] For a discussion of the political impact of revival performances during the late republic, see Cicero Pro Sestio 118–125 and Philippics 1.36. See also Cornelia C. Coulter, "Marcus Junius Brutus and the 'Brutus' of Accius," The Classical Journal 35, no. 8 (May 1, 1940): 460–70; Manuwald, Roman Republican Theatre, 113.

[17] Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, Religions of Rome: Volume 2: A Sourcebook (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 260–61, 288–91.

[18] Livy 40.34.4

[19] Livy 22.9.10; 23.30.13. See also Eric Orlin, Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire (Oxford University Press, 2010), 74–6; Orlin, "Why a Second Temple for Venus Erycina."

[20] Orlin, Foreign Cults in Rome, 75; Robert Schilling, La Religion Romaine de Vénus, depuis les Origines jusqu'au Temps d'Auguste. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955), 248–54.

[21] Galinsky, "Plautus' 'Poenulus' and the Cult of Venus Erycina," 361; Orlin, "Why a Second Temple for Venus Erycina," 83. A connection to prostitution does not mean that sacred prostitution was practiced at this temple, but rather that the cult itself was associated with the trade. See Stephanie L. Budin, "Sacred Prostitution in the First Person," in Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 77–92; Mary Beard and John Henderson, "With This Body I Thee Worship: Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity," Gender & History 9, no. 3

(1997): 480–503.

22 Galinsky, "Plautus' 'Poenulus' and the Cult of Venus Erycina"; Amatucci, "L'amicizia di Palestra e il Culto di Venere nel Rudens di Plauto"; Amatucci, "Per la Cronologia del Rudens di Plauto."

23 Amatucci argues that Palaestra represents a celeste approach to worshipping Venus, which is in accord with the chaste cults of Venus prior to the 180s, while Ampelisca represents a terrestre approach ("Per la Cronologia del Rudens di Plauto," 210). Leach takes this line of argument even further, arguing that Ampelisca is a foil to Palaestra and is open to the advances of the male characters of the play ("Plautus' Rudens," 924). I, on the other hand, argue that both Palaestra and Ampelisca try to align themselves with the chaste cults of Venus, while the male characters in the play attempt to drag them into the world of the Sicilian cult of Erycina.

24 For the ritual aspects of this scene, see F. S. Naiden, Ancient Supplication (Oxford, 2006), 375–7.

25 Niall W Slater, "The Market in Sooth: Supernatural Discourse in Plautus," in Dramatische Wäldchen: Festschrift für Eckard Lefévre zum 65 Geburtstag, vol. 80, Spudasmata (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2000), 351; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, Continuity and Change in Roman Religion (Oxford University Press, 1979), 39 ff.; W. Jeffrey Tatum, "Religion and Personal Morality in Roman Religion," Syllecta Classica 4 (1993): 13–20.

26 For a full discussion of parody and prayer in Rudens, see Seth A. Jeppesen, "Performing Religious Parody in Plautine Comedy" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013), 154–240.

27 Ibid., 171–84.

28 Ibid., 190–98; Dorota Dutsch, Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: On Echoes and Voices (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 128–40.

29 L. Richardson, A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 409. For Schilling, the epithet obsequens emphasizes Venus' ability to fulfill vows. La Religion Romaine de Vénus, 28–30.

30 This rare word is also used twice in the fishermen's chorus earlier in the play (296, 304). It's primary meaning is "shell," and in the fishermen's chorus it refers mainly to the shellfish that are among the marine creatures hunted by the hungry fishermen (cf. Cic. In Pis. 67; Martial 5.39.10, 7.78.2, 13.7.1; Juv. 3.293; 14.131; Hor. Epodes 2.49; Petron. 119.35.). Yet, given the word's sexualized use later in the play and the prayer to Venus that the fishermen utter during their scene, it is possible that the fishermen could have used gesture or intonation to invoke the inherent double entendre in the word before Trachalio's definite use of the word in its sexual sense. Concha is not included in Adams' list of words that refer to the female genitalia, probably because, according to the TLL, Rudens 704 is the only place where it is used in such a sense. There do, however, appear to be connections between concha and the Greek obscenity κύσθος, which according to Adams may be etymologically related to the more common cunnus in Latin. (J. N. Adams, The Latin Sexual Vocabulary, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, 81). Both κύσθος and concha can be used in a non-vulgar sense to refer to either the murex shell or the scarlet dye taken from it. Relationships between sexual terms in Plautus and the corresponding terms in Greek are seen elsewhere in the play. For example, in Daemones' dream he sees the two girls represented as swallows. The noun hirundo in Latin generally has no sexual valence behind it, but the Greek word from which it derives, χελιδών, does. See Arist. Lys. 770, Adams 82. Leach notes the erotic associations with conchae in art: "Plautus' Rudens," 920–1.

31 Reducing the women to mere conchae in this way recalls one probable etymology of the word scortum

(prostitute) which literally means "skin" or "leather," and could have originally been a slang term for the female pudenda that was then used to refer to prostitutes through a pars pro toto construction (Donatus, ad Ter. Eun. 424). But since scortum also is used to refer to male prostitutes, Adams argues that the term must have arisen from the metaphorical use of the language of leather working to describe sexual intercourse: "Words for 'Prostitute' in Latin," Rheinisches Museum für Philologie 126, no. 3/4 (January 1, 1983): 322–4.

[32] Sceparnio never returns to the stage to collect on his promise, but it is likely that the same actor played Gripus later in the play. See Michael Fontaine, Funny Words in Plautine Comedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 162. When Ampelisca makes her final exit, she uses the same word with which she promised future sexual favors to Sceparnio, voluptas, to refer the joy she gets from seeing Palaestra finally rewarded for her piety. The force of the rejection of the promise to Sceparnio is more pronounced because Gripus is left alone on the stage. See Jeppesen, "Performing Religious Parody in Plautine Comedy," 185–90.

[33] Jeppesen, "Performing Religious Parody in Plautine Comedy," 198–200; Leach, "Plautus' Rudens," 927 ff.

[34] Oxford Latin Dictionary, s.v. praeire. Pliny NH 28.11 gives a description of what a religious dictation would look like.

[35] This is the only scene of religious dictation, but there is a scene in which a letter is dictated in Bacchides. The music stops here as well. In Bacchides and Pseudolus there are examples of scenes in which letters are read, accompanied by similar metrical changes from accompanied meters to spoken diverbia. See Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy, 221–2; Timothy J. Moore, Music in Roman Comedy (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15–6. There is no direct indication that Gripus would somehow produce a written text to read from, as would have been the case in the general model on which the parody was based, according to Pliny, but such a decision would add humor to the scene and immediacy to the parody. Plautus often playfully discusses and depicts ideas connected to the relatively new technologies of reading and writing in Latin. One such moment occurs at the beginning of this scene, when Gripus says he will advertise the find of the trunk in letters one cubit tall (1294–6).

[36] Marshall, The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy, 137, 192–202, 271–3.

[37] For modern examples see Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles (the oath dictated by Hedley Lamar to his band of villains) and The Producers (The oath dictated to Max and Leo by Franz Liebkind). Note how the humor in both dictation scenes depends on certain physical aspects of the performance, such as gestures, not only on the text.

[38] Matthew Dillon, "By Gods, Tongues, and Dogs: The Use of Oaths in Aristophanic Comedy," Greece & Rome, Second Series, 42, no. 2 (October 1, 1995): 137.

[39] These procedural details are very similar to the Roman practice of swearing oaths. See Frances Hickson, Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aneid [sic] of Vergil (B.G. Teubner, 1993), 127–9.

[40] Ibid., 122–3; Kathleen McCarthy, Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 140.

[41] Vows employ conditional phrases that mimic legalistic language stipulating the conditions under which the vows must be fulfilled. Hickson, Roman Prayer Language, 92–3.

[42] Ibid., 127–9.

[43] Ibid., 109–110.

[44] Katz makes many interesting points about the Umbrian word urfeta from the Iguvine Tablets, but he ultimately fails to prove conclusively that this word means testicle, and the only example that he gives of a person swearing an oath while touching human genitals comes from the book of Genesis, where the word in question is usually translated as "thigh," not "loins." Even in this example from Genesis, it appears that the person swearing the oath touches the thigh/loins of the one to whom the oath is sworn, not his own. Joshua T. Katz, "Testimonia Ritus Italici: Male Genitalia, Solemn Declarations, and a New Latin Sound Law," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 98 (January 1, 1998): 183–217.

[45] John Scheid, An Introduction to Roman Religion (Indiana University Press, 2003), 97–8. The person giving the dictation can be a duumvir (Livy 4.21.5), pontifex maximus(Livy 9.46.6; 10.28.14, et al.), one of the lesser pontifices (Livy 8.9.4, Varro 6.61), an augur (Varro 6.95), a sacerdos (Livy 39.18.3–2; CIL XIII1752–4). Other, less-orthodox examples include soldiers dictating the sacramentum (oath of fealty) to one another (Tac. Hist. 1.36), the governor of a province dictating oaths to his subjects (Pliny, Ep. 10.52, 10.96.5), and one example in which the one dictating is simply referred to as a scriba (Val. Max. 4.1.10). The person reciting the dictated formula is often the consul (Livy 31.9.9; 36.2.2–5; 8.8.4; 10.28.14; 42.28.7–9; Varro 6.95), but could also be an aedile (Livy 9.46.6), a group of citizens or soldiers (Livy 4.21.5; Livy 41.21.11; Tac. Hist. 1.36; Pliny, Ep. 10.52, 10.96.5), or individuals performing private religious rituals (Livy 39.18.3–2; CIL XIII 1752–4).

[46] J. A. North explains that rituals and procedures in Roman religion were preserved with a level of punctilious conservatism that is sometimes surprising, as is evinced by similarities between rites described by Cicero and those recorded on the Lapis Niger from the fifth century BCE: "Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion," Papers of the British School at Rome XLIV (1976): 3–4.

[47] Iguvine Tablets VIa 2–18. Poultney notes the similarity to the list of birds in Asinaria and suggests that Plautus was familiar with this ritual from his native region of Umbria, but the fact that Plautus replaces the pica with corva could suggest an adaptation of this ritual specific to the wildlife visible in and around Rome. See Pliny HN 10.78 and James Wilson Poultney, The Bronze Tables of Iguvium (American Philological Association, 1959), 228–9. For the most recent general treatment of the Iguvine Tablets, see: Simone Sisani, Tuta Ikuvina: sviluppo e ideologia della forma urbana a Gubbio (Roma: Quasar, 2001).

[48] Tablet VIa 2–3: "stiplo aseriaia . **parfa** . dersua . **curnaco** dersua (3) **peico** . mersto . peica . merst . a . mersta . auuei . mersta . angla . esona" (Demand that I may observe a **parra** in the west, a **crow** in the west, a **woodpecker** in the east, a **magpie** in the east, in the east birds, in the east divine messengers). The translation is Poultney's.

[49] Poultney, The Bronze Tables of Iguvium, 24.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Occasions for the dictation of official oaths included declarations of war, entrance upon military or civil service, departure from office at the end of the year, and various forms of legal actions. Hickson, Roman Prayer Language, 111–12.

[52] Varro 6.95

[53] The first instance took place in 436–5 BCE, when a duumvir dictated an obsecratio to the people in order to avert plague and invasion. The second recorded instance is in 174 BCE, when the pontifex Q. Marcius Philippus dictated a supplicatio to the people in response to a severe plague, vowing to celebrate feriae if the plague dissipated.

[54] Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, Religions of Rome: Volume 1: A History (Cambridge University

Press, 1998), 71–2, 201–6; Michael C. J. Putnam, Horace's Carmen Saeculare: Ritual Magic and the Poet's Art (Yale University Press, 2001), 52–3. This evidence, however, must be taken with a grain of salt, since Augustus, who organized the games of 17 BCE, was notorious for introducing innovations under the guise of renewing ancient practices that had been forgotten.

[55] ILS 5050.123–131; translation by Beard, North, and Price (vol. II, p 142). The lacunose nature of this portion of the inscription is immediately apparent, but it should not cause too much consternation. The text of this inscription was originally supplemented by Mommsen (Monumenti Antichi I, pp. 618ff., 1892), working from related inscriptions, especially the nearly identical prayer dictated to a similar group of matrons in 204 CE (CIL VI 32329, 10–13). The supplementation has since been corroborated by Pighi (1965) and Beard, North, and Price (1998).

[56] In her taxonomy of Roman prayer, Hickson includes the following types of petitionary prayers: simple petition, vow, oath, and asseveration. In addition to petitions there are also gratulatory prayers (i.e., prayers of thanksgiving); Hickson, Roman Prayer Language.

[57] Rudens 694–701: Venus alma, ambae te obsecramus,/aram amplexantes hanc tuam lacrumantes, genibus nixae,/in custodelam nos tuam ut recipias et tutere;/illos scelestos, qui tuom fecerunt fanum parui,/fac ut ulciscare nosque ut hanc tua pace aram obsidere/patiare: lautae ambae sumus opera Neptuni noctu,/ne indignum id habeas neve idcirco nobis uitio uortas,/si quippiamst, minus quod bene esse lautum tu arbitrare. (Nourishing Venus, we two beseech you,/ embracing this your altar in tears, on bended knee,/ that you receive us into your custody and guard us,/ and those criminals who made light of your shrine,/ make it so that they are punished, and allow us to sit at this your altar/ in peace. We two have been washed this night by the work of Neptune./ Do not consider it unworthy or reckon it a fault of ours, /if in any degree we are less well washed than you think best.)

[58] Celebrants usually prayed standing up with arms stretched upwards. Gérard Freyburger, "La Supplication d'Action de Graces Dans La Religion Romaine Archaique," Latomus 36 (1977): 292.

[59] The two competing etymologies for supplicare are 1) sub – plicare – to fold under (i.e. at the knees) or 2) sub–placare – to thoroughly appease. (See Naiden, Ancient Supplication, 241; Freyburger, "La Supplication d'Action de Graces Dans La Religion Romaine Archaique," 298.) The verb supplicare does not necessarily refer to the ritual known as "supplication" (supplicatio), which involved the citizens' praying in the temples throughout the city in order to give thanks or seek a favor from the gods. Supplicare is often used in prayers to refer to sincere petition. Schultz enumerates four instances in which female participation in the ritual known as the supplicatio is specifically noted: during the third Samnite War in 296, after the defeat at Lake Trasimene in 217, following a victory in 209, and in a special ritual performed by a chosen group of youths in 190. Women also participated in yearly expiatory rites as part of the worship of Juno Regina. See: Celia E. Schultz, Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2006), 29–36.

[60] Schultz, Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic, 29–36.

[61] Though this inscription provides some information that can readily be mapped onto other ludi, such as the proximity of the religious and theatrical performances, other elements of the record seem unique to this instantiation of the Saecular Games, which was part of Augustus' politically charged revival of traditional Roman religion. For instance, the ludi saeculares could be divided into two halves, the nighttime celebrations and the daytime celebrations. At night, sacrifices were made to Dis Pater, Proserpina, and the Fates, after which plays were performed on a temporary stage without attached seating, in the old fashion (5050.90–102). This part of the festivities seems to have taken place on the Campus Martius by the banks of the Tiber, possibly incorporating the partially constructed theater of

Marcellus. See John A. Hanson, Roman Theater Temples, Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology (Literary Licensing, LLC, 1959), 23. In the daytime, sacrifice was made on the Capitoline to Jupiter, Juno, and Ilithyia and plays were performed in both a temporary wooden theater and in the Theater of Pompey (Beard, North, and Price, Religions of Rome Vol. 1, 201–6). Given the order of events in the inscription, the dictated prayer of the matrons most likely happened on the Capitoline following a sacrifice to Juno, after which the crowd moved to the theater to watch the games. The passage that mentions the proximity of the sacrifices to the theater (5050.153–4) seems to refer specifically to the nighttime celebrations, for which there is no explicit mention of dictation. There is in the inscription, however, an account of a sacrifice and prayer to the Fates that would have been performed by Augustus just before the nighttime plays were presented (5050.90–101). If we follow Pliny's logic, this prayer would have been dictated to Augustus by a priest, though on this point the inscription is not explicit. The nighttime celebrations were supposedly more similar to the old-fashioned second-century BCE performances, using a temporary stage without formal seating attached to it. See Manuwald, Roman Republican Theatre, 55–68, esp. 57.

[62] Technically, Labrax has already lost Palaestra before this scene, but given Labrax's repeated acts of sacrilege against Venus throughout the play, the loss of his would-be courtesan represents a monetary punishment for maltreatment of the gods, of the type described by Arcturus in the prologue (20).

[63] Boris Dunsch argues that prayers spoken in earnest by characters in Plautus get answered during the course of the play, as is the case with Dorippa's prayer in Mercator (689–91). This brings up the question of the ontological status of prayers and rituals on the stage: whether they were seen as merely imitative or as an expression of real (echt) requests to and answers from deity. "Religion in der Römischen Komödie : Einige Programmatische Überlegungen," in Römische Religion im Historischen Wandel (Steiner, 2009), 36–43.

[64] Beard, North, and Price, Religions of Rome Vol. 2, 44–5; H. H. Scullard, Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 108.

[65] Strabo (6.272); Orlin, "Why a Second Temple for Venus Erycina," 83.

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