

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

DIDASKALIA Volume 13 (2016–2017)

http://didaskalia.net ISSN 1321-485

About Didaskalia

Didaskalia (διδασκαλία) is the term used since ancient times to describe the work a playwright did to teach his chorus and actors the play. The official records of the dramatic festivals in Athens were the διδασκαλίαι. *Didaskalia* now furthers the scholarship of the ancient performance.

Didaskalia is an English-language, online publication about the performance of Greek and Roman drama, dance, and music. We publish peer-reviewed scholarship on performance and reviews of the professional activity of artists and scholars who work on ancient drama.

We welcome submissions on any aspect of the field. If you would like your work to be reviewed, please write to **editor@didaskalia.net** at least three weeks in advance of the performance date. We also seek interviews with practitioners and opinion pieces. For submission guidelines, go to didaskalia.net.

20	1	6	_ つ	1 1	17	Sta	. 44

Editor-in-Chief: Amy R. Cohen editor@didaskalia.net

+1 434 947-8117

Didaskalia

Randolph College 2500 Rivermont Avenue Lynchburg, VA 24503 USA

Associate Editor: C.W. (Toph) Marshall

Assistant Editor: Jay Kardan assistant-editor@didaskalia.net

Interns: Gabriel Kuhl intern@didaskalia.net

Sophia Dill

Advisory Board

Caterina BaroneOliver TaplinJohn DavidsonPeter TooheyGary DeckerJ. Michael WaltonMark GriffithDavid WilesMary HartPaul Woodruff

Kenneth Reckford

Editorial Board

Dorota Dutsch
Allison Futrell
Peter Meineck
Mary-Kay Gamel
John Given
Mike Lippman
Fiona Macintosh
Willie Major

Paul Menzer
Tim Moore
Nancy Rabinowitz
Brett Rogers
John Starks

Copyright

Readers are permitted to save or print any files from Didaskalia as long as there are no alterations made in those files. Copyright remains with the authors, who are entitled to reprint their work elsewhere if due acknowledgement is made to the earlier publication in *Didaskalia*. Contributors are responsible for getting permission to reproduce any photographs or video they submit and for providing the necessary credits.

Website design © Didaskalia.

Didaskalia is published at Randolph College.

DIDASKALIA VOLUME 13 (2016–2017)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

13.01	Review - Apollonius' Argonautika at Gustavus Adolphus College Eric Dugdale and William Riihiluoma	1
13.02	Review - Sophocles' <i>Philoctetes</i> at Aquila Theatre Tony Tambasco	10
13.03	Review - Trachiniae at Minor Latham Playhouse, New York Claire Catenaccio	14
13.04	Review - Rhesus at Aristotle's Lyceum Scott Andrew Cally	18
13.05	Review - 52nd Season of Classical Plays at the Greek Theatre in Syracuse: Sophocles' <i>Electra</i> , Euripides' <i>Alcestis</i> Caterina Barone	20
13.06	Conversation – A Conversation about <i>Deus Ex Machina</i> at the Long Center for Performing Arts, Austin, Texas Liz Fisher, Robert Matney, Paul Woodruff, Lucia Woodruff	24
13.07	Gamel Panel - Performance, Politics, Pedagogy: a Tribute to Mary-Kay Gamel C.W. Marshall	31
13.08	Gamel Panel - Raising the Stakes: Mary-Kay Gamel and the Academic Stage Amy R. Cohen	34
13.09	Gamel Panel - Navigating Tricky Topics: The Benefits of Performance Pedagogy Christopher Bungard	39
13.10	Gamel Panel - Sophocles after Ferguson: Antigone in St. Louis, 2014 Timothy Moore	49
13.11	Gamel Panel - The Authenticity of Mary-Kay Gamel Ruby Blondell	69
13.12	Review - Two Tragic Worlds of Soldiers: Not Man Apart Physical Theatre Ensemble's <i>Ajax in Iraq</i> Yuko Kurahashi	74
13.13	Imperial Pantomime and Satoshi Miyagi's Medea William A. Johnson	76
13.14	Review - Sophocles' Electra at the Dallas Theater Center Thomas E. Jenkins	91
13.15	Valedictory from the Editor Amy R. Cohen	93

Note

Didaskalia is an online journal. This print representation of Volume 13 is an inadequate approximation of the web publication at didaskalia.net, which includes sound, video, and live hyperlinks.

Imperial Pantomime and Satoshi Miyagi's Medea

William A. Johnson

Duke University

What was it that made imperial pantomime so wildly, enduringly popular? Pantomime under the empire was not, of course, the silent performance that we think of today, but incorporated what seems to us a strange mix. A notoriously effeminate, silent, masked male player (the "pantomime") was at center stage, in some sense "acting" and "dancing" the part, while other players spoke and sang the libretto and played the music, including a strongly percussive beat. In just the last few years our detailed understanding of pantomime has improved enormously. For most of us, that improved understanding arrived in 2007 and 2008, when no less than four book-length treatments, all good in their different ways, created a millennial flood of publications on the subject. 1 Yet even this welcome light on an erstwhile shadowy topic fails to explain entirely the central paradox posed here: what was it about the art form that made it so sensationally attractive, especially given the availability of tragedy, comedy, and mime? The whole doesn't seem to add up to a sort of theater that could mesmerize Augustus and Trajan no less than Caligula and Nero,2 that led to repeated riots by its fans,3 and that swept the eastern Mediterranean by storm as soon as it was allowed to become part of traditional festivals.

In this paper I explore possibilities for an answer to that paradox through cross-cultural comparison, taking as *comparanda* certain aspects of traditional Japanese dance drama as refracted through the lens of an extraordinary contemporary play, Satoshi Miyagi's *Medea*. First, though, we need to get a clear impression of imperial pantomime. In the summary that follows we seek fundamentals, to get a grasp of this popular genre *qua* genre, even while freely conceding that such entertainments were unlikely to have fit always within tight parameters, or to have been static over time.

Imperial pantomime was a type of mimetic dance, that is, *dance that tells a story*. Mimetic dance seems to be quintessentially anthropic, arising broadly and independently over time and place. In the northern Mediterranean,



Figure 7: Medea



Figure 1: Terracotta pantomime mask. Athens. Agora T1818. Roman era.

pantomime-like performances are attested in early Greece long before the Roman empire, 4 as well as in the Etruscan and early Italic tradition, 5 and the word pantomimos appears (in Greek) at least as early as 80 BC.6 But the qui primus story told in the empire isolated the "introducers" (εἰσηγηταί) of pantomime as a pair of Greek entertainers from the east, Bathyllus and Pylades, who were said to have amazed Maecenas and therefore also Augustus at dinner parties, and despite their low rank to have become close associates. 7 This pair went on with the emperor's sanction to formalize their art form, thereby starting

the tradition. Whatever the exact historicity of this founding tale, the critical elements that they "introduced" and which formed the contours for the *idea* of the traditional art8 were as follows:

- 1. *Mythic stories* as the object of the "dance that tells a story without words."
- 2. Traditional movements, poses, and gestures that looked back to the Augustan founding figures, Bathyllus and Pylades, and formed the elements of a formalized training in the art. To become a professional required great athleticism and training from an early age to master moves and poses that can be profitably compared to those of today's top gymnasts (for acrobatic moves) and yogis (for contortionist poses). This requirement distinguished pantomimes from other modes of dance that gifted amateurs could produce. 10 Top pantomimes were

also often distinguished by association with the "house" of one of the founders or other early stars; we know of five Pyladeses down through the third century who took the founder's name and presumably claimed association with that "house" (domus). 11

- 3. A "mimetic" art with a well-defined semiotics that required some familiarity among the audience with the meanings contrived by tradition. 12
- 4. Multiple, elaborate masks. Drama and other traditions made use of masks, of course, but pantomime is strongly associated with the combination of dance and the transmutation that masks help produce. (figure 1) A later writer will describe Pylades' dancing with words like "exalted" and "emotive" but also "many-masked" or "many-charactered" (figure 2).13 The ability of a single dancer to transform himself into multiple characters was essential to how pantomime distinguished itself from other staged dance, such as tragic

choruses. 14 This, too, made the pantomime strictly a professional activity — individuals and amateurs would not have access to these elaborate masks.



Figure 2: Pantomime holding masks. Ivory. Trier. c. 4th century.



Figure 3: Noh mask (Shiro-shakumi 白曲 見, © TOSHIRO MORITA, the-noh.com)

5. Silken robes and scarf. Pantomimes were also famous for their striking ankle-length silk robes and a long flowing scarf used "now to represent a swan's tail, now the locks of Venus, and now a Fury's lash," as Fronto describes it. 15 The distinctive costume was, then, an important additional technique by which the pantomime commanded the stage and was able to represent multiple characters in one person.

6. All male.16 As with tragedy, the maleness seems part and parcel of marking the dance as a professional "high" art, inasmuch as it does not involve "low" females. It also makes the impersonation of the mask and body movements demanding in a particular way and informs the awe-inspiring Protean aspect of the dance:17 how can one dancer play the Minotaur one moment and a frail young Ariadne the next, Ares but also Aphrodite?

the innovations attributed to Pylades was the use of a pipe orchestra and chorus. 18 In later times a fuller ensemble seems usual (see below). This

dovetails with the notion of a fully professional art form, since the coordination of musicians with the dancer's performance suggests a troupe of some sort, 19 and thus a resource not readily accessible to amateurs.

7. Musical and rhythmic accompaniment. One of

Most scholars, understandably, focus on the visual impact of the solo dancer in trying to account for the popularity of the genre, and without question the dancer was the audience's main focus. Earlier generations were prone to likening the pantomime to classical ballet, and one still finds this anachronism creeping into the literature, 20 but specialists now agree that ballet is far off the mark. In a sensitive study of the ancient evidence for the dancer's movements and methods, Ruth Webb sums up the scene in this way:

The dancers' combination of controlled, sinuous movements with bursts of rhythmic energy and dramatic stops, together with the erotic or violent stories they conjured up, mesmerized their spectators and sent them wild with excitement, making the pantomimes' audience more akin to sporting fans than to the audience of modern classical ballet (Webb 2008a, 2).21

Here, however, I want to focus on the other side of the troupe's performance: not the solo dancer, but the supporting players, who provided the narrative, the song, the music, the rhythm. How did the deployment of these supporting players — with the combination of visual and aural elements— help the whole become a mesmerizing performance? Again, Ruth Webb in her study of ancient audience involvement provides a useful starting point by describing how pantomime contrasts with classical ballet:22



Figure 4: Noh Actor (© TOSHIRO MORITA, the-noh.com)



Figure 5: Kabuki actor Ebizo Ichikawa XI



Figure 6: Bunraku performance, National Bunraku Theatre, Osaka, Japan. The puppeteers are the black-hooded figures in the background.

It is true that, like classical ballet, pantomime told a story through the medium of dance and provided a forum for virtuoso dancing. But in contrast to classical ballet, music, rhythm, movement, and meaning worked in unison in the pantomime. The relationships between dance

movement and musical accompaniment is far looser in ballet, where rhythm is far less marked and the dancer's movements do not closely follow the phrasing of the melody. ... I can watch a ballet attentively and still have the mental space for the contemplation of unrelated topics; the same is not true (for me) of a successful performance of flamenco or Egyptian dance, nor was it true, it seems, for the pantomime (Webb 2008a, 90).

(We could also add another important contrast, that ancient pantomime involved use of sudden *static poses*, in combination with traditional gestures, so that the music, libretto and visual tableaux combined to create dramatic tension and to focus audience involvement.)

We do not know where exactly the supporting players to pantomime were stationed. Notionally the focus was on the pantomime actor himself, but the other players were on stage, in full sight of the audience, and close enough that a player could on occasion interact with the dancer.23 The music itself was entirely unlike modern symphonic accompaniment to classical dance. The pantomime actor was said to "show forth the things being sung"24 and these things were sung at times by a chorus of "many" 25 and at other times by a soloist singing or euphoniously narrating what the dancer demonstrated with his movements.26 The chorus, as we expect, sang in unison.27 The instrumental accompaniment was, as mentioned, a band of multiple pipes, including both panpipes and auloi; these carried melody, but the auloi, as we know from other contexts, could also provide rhythm or carry a drone note, and both types of pipes can be notably shrill.28 The strumming of a performance lyre (kithara), which can be loud like a harp, could also be part of the ensemble.29 To all this a strong rhythmic line was provided by cymbals and by the "stampers"—a defining and apparently indispensable aspect of pantomime accompaniment—who kept beat with the scabella (κρούπεζαι in Greek), wooden shoes or sandals with a sole or attached plate made of metal or wood; and there might also be percussionists striking a board with a piece of wood.30 Hostile Christian sources from the third and fourth centuries suggest "an anarchic competition between dancer, narrator, and instrumentalists";31 and Arnobius complains of



Figure 8: Speakers (stills from DVD supplied by the director)



Figure 9: Movers (dancers) Creon and Medea (photo © Mark Webb/The Herald-Dispatch)



Figure 10: Medea Speaker (stills from DVD supplied by the director)

"raising the loud din with the clacking of the *scabella*, rousing another crowd of souls in their wantonness to abandon themselves to bizarre motions, to the dance and singing, and, moreover, to the accompaniment of this clacking, to raise their haunches and hips, floating along with a tremulous motion of the loins." 32 We have the sense, then, of a musical background that can be vigorous, loud, gripping, even overwhelming, something in western audience experience in some ways more akin to a rock concert than to a ballet performance, creating a whole that is without obvious parallel.

That pantomime results from a mix that seems to us culturally without register suggests the possibility of improving our understanding through cross-cultural comparison. Several analogues have been suggested. Ruth Webb has with profit explored comparisons with the mimetic Indian dance forms such as Kathak and Kathakali, 33 and makes scattered comparisons to flamenco and to the traditional dances of Egypt (as we saw in the quotation above). Meanwhile, Japanese dance drama, especially Noh theater, has been studied in some depth for the light it may shed on ancient Greek tragedy,34 but not for its relation to pantomime.

I propose here a brief review of some ways that Japanese dance drama intersects with the sketch of pantomime given above. The argument will not be that pantomime is directly analogous to any one of the Japanese dance

forms; rather, that a combination of Japanese traditional features may prove illuminating. We will come to focus not on a traditional staging, but on a contemporary play that combines in striking ways several elements of traditional Japanese theater. That certain elements of Japanese dance drama have fascinating similarities with imperial pantomime is doubly interesting because there is not the slightest chance of trans-cultural influence.

Noh, the most ancient Japanese theater, has its own founding figures. The inventor figure was the actor Kan'ami, who in the mid-fourteenth century combined a form of traditional theater known as sarugaku, "up to then dominated by mimicry [that is, miming stories], with ... a popular form of dance accompaniment to storytelling, to create totally new kinds of music and movement." 35 Kan'ami performed before the Shogun Yoshimitsu (the emperor's supreme commander and military ruler of Japan), who was so taken that he awarded Kan'ami formal status as "Actor to the

Shogun," thus granting him patronage, public approval, and prestige. Zeami, son and apprentice to the superstar Kan'ami, took over when his father died, and despite his commoner status was said to have become a close associate with the Shogun and other leading aristocrats (this should sound familiar).36 The plots of Noh even today are simple and traditional, some of them written by Zeami himself; the Noh actors are part of, or adopted into, families that claim descent from Zeami or other stars from the medieval beginnings of the art's formalization. Traditionally, the dancers are male. They are mostly masked (figure 3). The masks represent about sixty basic types and portray females, elders, demons, gods, and



Figure 12: Jason (still from DVD supplied by the director)



Video Clip: youtu.be/uAm_0IQPFkw Medea and Jason from Satoshi Miyagi's Medea

ghosts. The masks, interestingly, are deliberately made too small (figure 4), and are conceived not as a stage prop that disguises, but as a kind of actor's sorcery; for the audience to be so uninvolved that they notice the head of the actor visible around the face of the mesmerizing mask is considered a shameful failure on the part of the actor. 37 The actors themselves train as apprentices for years to command the movements and gestures of the formalized dance, which ranges from static poses to exactly controlled

movements to set pieces with names. Movements and gestures are famously slow and formal, with well-defined semiotics, some of which need to be learned by the audience. The elements of music, chant, singing, and rhythm are supplied by players visible at the back and along the side of the stage; the instruments are drums and wooden flute. The chorus of players along the side sings in unison, and, though the main actor usually sings for himself, at times the chorus will sing in the main actor's voice. This has the curious effect of blurring, or even intermingling, the personae of the main actor and the other players (principally the chorus).38 Who "I" am, what "I" feel becomes at times diffuse, embodied in the group rather than in the principal actor at center stage.

Of interest for pantomime in a different way is Kabuki theater. (figure 5) Considerably more comic in plot and feel, Kabuki tends to be loud and boisterous. The music can be vigorous, even noisy, and characteristic features are the use of shrill wooden reed pipes, drums, and a distinctive percussive effect caused by a clapper. A standard part of the performance is the use of acrobatics: players will suddenly perform a standing flip, for example. Like Noh, the actors are apprenticed from an early age, and come from, or are adopted into, various "schools" which are in effect families or houses claiming continual descent from medieval times. 39 Also relevant to pantomime is a third traditional form of Japanese drama, Bunraku, a wondrously effective and sophisticated type of puppet theater (figure 6). Of interest to us will be the way that a half- or two-thirds-life-sized wooden figure (the puppet) is impelled by two kinds of controllers. First are three black-robed puppeteers, who work not with strings but with finely coordinated, choreographed movements to give life to (1) right arm and head, (2) left arm, and (3) legs and feet. It is said that a puppeteer can take years to learn the feet, more to move up to govern the left arm, and yet more to become the lead puppeteer who controls right arm and head. 40 The second kind of controller is the narrator, who is fully visible at the side of the stage, and creates the voices —spoken, chanted, and sung — that drive the play the puppet enacts, able to change his voice seamlessly from one character to the next. The narrating is "extraordinarily virtuosic, drawing on a huge vocal range, dynamics, and power."41 This role too takes years of intense training; among Bunraki narrators the saying goes that "it takes three years to learn to laugh, and eight years to cry." 42

There is more that could be said, but for our purposes it will be most useful now to turn our focus to an amazing contemporary play, Satoshi Miyagi's *Medea*. 43 This is avant garde contemporary theater, not traditional Noh or Kabuki or Bunraku, though it uses actors trained in the traditional arts and incorporates many traditional elements. In <u>figure 7</u>, for example, the star is female, and does not use a mask; the player is, however, trained to suggest the use of a mask through her countenance (as is apparent in the play, and perhaps also discernible in the image here). The play also deploys a signature Miyagi feature, one adapted from Bunraku (with influence from Noh): voice and song come *entirely* from figures on the side —Miyagi terms them the *Speakers*— while at center stage the dancers (in Bunraku, the puppets) have no voice—Miyagi calls these the *Movers*. 44 I had the good fortune of coming to know of Miyagi's *Medea*through a riveting lecture given at Duke in 2011 by Mae Smethurst, who has written seminal works on Noh theater and Greek tragedy; 45 at her suggestion, I subsequently contacted the director Miyagi, who was kind enough to supply me with a DVD of the play along with other materials. 46

Miyagi's piece is structured as a play within a play, in which the members of a 19th-century Japanese men's club receive a translation of Euripides' *Medea* and decide to enact it by reading it aloud performatively—these men then are the Speakers (<u>figure 8</u>)—and by selecting female servants—the Movers (<u>figure 9</u>)— to act out the Euripidean drama through gesture and dance movements. Towards the back of the stage are other servants (the supporting players) who add music and rhythm; the instruments here are flute together with drums and other percussion.47 Costuming for Speakers is dark and unobtrusive (the robes of a judge or professor); but for the Movers at center stage it is exuberantly colorful, with exotic features (the Medea Mover wears the dress of a Korean foreigner underneath her

kimono). The Speakers (including the voice of Medea) are all males; the Movers (including Jason) are all females forced to act the part, roused to movement by the male voices but powerfully embodying the semiotics of the dance. The subject matter is the traditional Euripidean material, emotional and dramatic but, interestingly, not a surprise to the audience: the play as written assumes knowledge of Medea's story. The complex whole is curiously effective. And I mean *curiously* effective, something quite unlike modern western drama, but, I think, deeply illuminating for the way that the side-players—narrators and musicians—interact with the pantomime(s) at center stage to create a compelling whole.

The scene I have selected as an example picks up at the climax to Medea's first great monologue, right after Creon has decreed Medea's exile, in which she steels herself to murder her husband Jason and his wife (lines 395–445 in the Greek original). The man you will see talking (figure 10) is Medea, a gentleman performing the voice of Medea in a bunraku-style chant,48 and the mute dancer49 (figure 11) is Medea too—Medea embodied. The gentlemen as a group chant and thereby act as the chorus — this is the chorus of Corinthian women, you will recall (there are no Movers/dancers for the chorus). At the very end, another figure will appear, and that will be Jason (figure 12)—again, the voice of one of the club's gentlemen, the body that of a mute woman dressed and dancing as a man.

The sample scene (in this <u>video clip</u>) lasts for about 5 minutes. The emotions are raw, the plot well-known to Classicists, but the script is in Japanese, without subtitles. This has its advantages: as with ancient pantomime, the words are secondary. In the clip you will see, in succession:

- 1. Speaking nominally to the chorus, but in fact addressing herself (listen for the Japanese-inflected *MEDEA*), Medea reveals her plan and steels herself to action.
- 2. The Chorus (the "Women of Corinth") laugh and speak of three *adynata*: (a) rivers will flow backwards, (b) faith in the gods will not hold, (c) women will enjoy good repute. The Medea mover dances to the choral lyric.
- 3. At the very end of the clip, we see Jason arrive.

At its core, there are several aspects to the Miyagi play analogous to imperial pantomime, and my hope is that you will have had an "aha!" moment of insight simply from the review of ancient evidence and seeing the performance clip.50 To be clear, let us recap the similarities. (1) A solo dancer (Mover) moves with formal choreography, deliberate bodily phrasing, and controlled hand gestures.51 The goal of the dance is to tell a story, full of contained emotions and potential actions that are gradually allowed to surface, thus "mimetic." (2) Narrative and music come from the side and rear of the stage (Speakers and musicians) in such a way as to suggest that the sound impels the movements of the dancer. (3) The narrative material is traditional and mythical (in this case, serendipitously, from Greek myth). (4) Though the solo dancer does not change parts, she does enact in the dance the shifts in personae that are basic to the Medea character. (5) Flat expression of face and careful tilt of head is suggestive of a mask (or of a puppet), despite the obvious emotion of the scene. (6) The dancer is center stage, wearing a flowing and elaborate costume, 52 while narrator, chorus, and musicians are visually subdued and marginalized. (7) The rhythm of narrator's voice and the strong percussive line is striking and deeply essential to what is being "sung" or "played." At its most furious, the dance is driven by a terrifically involving din. (8) The performance as a whole is simple in its elements, but the combination of elements is complex, emotional, riveting, intense.

At the heart of the combination seems to be the curious divorce of the visual (the dancer) from the auditory (narrator, chorus, musicians). In this sense, the vigorous, loud supporting players — the narrator and music— are central to the effect of the dance in a way that seems rarely imagined by scholars of pantomime. The whole is of course complex, but it is the critical contribution of the

supporting players to the power of the pantomime dance that I hope this particular *comparandum* can help to illuminate.

That result is perhaps enough. But I want to entertain a further hypothesis: that both here and in ancient pantomime an essential part of the effect derives not only from the fascination and wonder provoked by the controlled dynamism of a central star performer alongside the vigorous auditory impulsion of supporting players, but also from the *ecology of displacement and reversal* inherent in this kind of theater, where sight and sound are deliberately set apart. Cassiodorus speaks insightfully of the "clamorous silence" (*silentium clamosum*) characteristic of pantomime,53 and the art form seems to prompt or embody conceptual reversals and displacement along several planes. The dancers "speak" through movement; gender roles routinely reverse in both dancer and narrator but have the feeling of displacement, since we are always aware of the male in the female; the whole, as Lada-Richards puts it, seems a "promiscuous mingling of low and high culture," or, to follow the formulation by Panayotakis, a simultaneous embodiment of "low and high repertory."54 The idea that reversal and displacement are essential to the mimicry of pantomime is reflected in ancient witnesses as well, as we have seen. The comments on pantomime by the late observer Cassiodorus are worth quoting at length:

The pantomime actor derives his name from his many types of imitations. When first he comes on stage, lured by applause, bands of musicians, skilled in various instruments, support him. Then the hand of meanings/emotions expounds the song to the eyes of melody (*tunc illa sensuum manus oculis canorum carmen exponit*) and, by a code of gestures, as if by letters, it instructs the spectator's sight to understand the essence of the story and without writing performs what writing has set forth. One and the same body portrays Hercules and Venus; it displays a woman in a man; you would thereby imagine that in one there were many, so various are his impersonations. 55

In these remarks, you can hear not simply Cassiodorus's admiration for talented performers, but his strong fascination with the theatrical set-up, one that not only allows but promotes or even embodies a long list of essential ironies and paradoxes.

As for Miyagi's play, consider these remarks from theater scholar Mika Eglinton:

[Miyagi's theatrical company] Ku Na'uka's most distinctive feature was the division between "speakers" and "movers," between the aural and the visual, a concept that can be found in traditional Japanese performing arts such as *bunraku* and *n*ō. In practice this meant that the logos and pathos inherent in a character in classic texts from both East and West were divided between two or more actors, and on occasion united again. This division, dislocation, restriction, refinement, and reunion in the relationship between words and bodies created a dissimilation dynamic with the potential to expose metacritical and metatheoretical aspects of the play.56

Again, we hear in the critic's remarks a deep interest in the intellectual as well as emotional effect of the distinctive separation of body and music/voice, but here the focus is not so much on reversal and paradox as on the curious effects of displacement. When we say that the Speaker impels the Mover/dancer, the impulsion is in fact metaphorical; when we feel the voice and body becoming one, this union is also metaphorical. The division itself seems to engender unease about the fragile unity of personhood, and encourages interrogation of how the displaced elements can or should be together—not, for example, just the relation of the Speaker's voice to the body, but the power and control over body and events that the voice carries with it. This is what prompts Eglinton's developmental sequence "division, dislocation, restriction, refinement, and reunion," which he sums up with the phrase "dissimilation dynamic." The displacement serves to stir the emotions, but also suggests schematics and relationships with potential for deeply thoughtful exploration.

I wish to suggest, then, a provisional response to the question with which we began: that part of what is gripping in this type of theater is the combination of emotive *and intellectual* interest that the ecology of displacement and reversal supports, since it is suggestive of a wide sweep of possibilities. The exact themes will depend on the play, but the genre itself brings with it latent possibilities, generally including gender roles, personhood, and the dynamics of relations, but more specifically the power of voice in its inclusion or absence, and the power of gesture and bodily presence, also in inclusion or absence. In short, the forces suggested by the theatrical divorce of body and voice in imperial pantomime57 are topics with emotional, philosophical, and even political resonance that could understandably fascinate intellectualized Roman aristocrats and emperors alongside their less educated peers and *hoi polloi*.

notes

¹ Garelli 2007, Lada-Richards 2007, Hall and Wyles 2008, Webb 2008a.

² See Molloy 1996, 53-65, for a review of the primary evidence for the relationship between emperors and pantomimes; ibid., 49, for explicit quotes on the fascination pantomimes aroused.

³ Jory 1984; but cf. Slater 1994.

⁴ Xenophon, *Symposium* 9.2–7 (dance of Ariadne and Dionysus), *Anthologia Graeca* 11.195 (Dioscorides, 3rd c. BC: dance of the story of the Temenidae).

⁵ Wüst 1949, 844,

⁶ Robert 1930.

⁷ Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.20d-e is the earliest direct attestation of the story, though Tac. *Ann.* 1.54 mentions Bathyllus and Maecenas in passing. For review and discussion of the ancient evidence, see Jory 1981. Pylades' student Hylas also is part of the story as told in Macrobius (*Sat.* I.14.12, 2.7.12-19), who, like Dio Cassius 54.17.5, situates Pylades at Augustus' dinner parties.

⁸ Not, it must be repeated, the invariable practice of the traditional art. I am well aware that the contours of the traditional art were often stretched and even violated in what we can see of actual performances: imperial pantomime as a concept had both a traditional "ideal" and a wide spectrum of actual instantiations. Nonetheless, the sort of muddle that arises from using the term pantomime too loosely can be seen in e.g. Slater 1994, 131ff., which argues that equestrians could be pantomime dancers on the grounds that they performed movements on stage (these could just as well have been spectacles like *venationes*, but even if dance is meant, this could not have been the sort of professional performance that required years of apprenticeship, nor was that true for the case cited by Slater of the equestrian whom Augustus had dance at a festival [Dio Cassius 53.31.3]).

⁹ These made use of the stuff of tragedy, but the stories could also have a lighter tone of pastoral fantasy, very much including matters erotic. Some illustrative examples: Hercules Furens (Macrobius, *Sat.* 2.7.12–16; cf. Lucian, *Salt.* 67), Ares and Aphrodite (Lucian. *Salt.* 63), Daphne and Apollo (Libanius *Or.* 64.67), "Echo, or some Pan or Satyr frolicking with Eros" (Plutarch, *Symp. Quest. Moralia* 711e–f). The possibilities were endless, as the lengthy catalogue at Lucian, *Salt.* 37–61, is meant to demonstrate.

¹⁰ On the selection and early training of pantomimes, the *locus classicus* is Libanius *Or.* 64.103–107. Galen regarded pantomimes as a medical curiosity, so extreme were their acrobatics and consequently so slender, hard, and tough their bodies (*de sanitate tuenda* 2.11, 6.155K). Other ancient evidence for the dancers' athleticism and training is gathered in Molloy 1996, 67–69; for the relation to competitive acrobatic training see Lada–Richards 2007, 31–32.

- ¹¹ Seneca, *Quaest. Nat.* 7.32.3: "The House (*domus*) of Pylades and Bathyllus have continued through a long line of successors. For their arts there are many students and many teachers" (trans. after Corcoran). Inscriptional evidence for such "dynasties" of pantomime actors is collected in Bonaria 1959; for Pylades, see pp. 228, 238–242.
- ¹² Here too the semiotics are highly formalized, suggesting a professional niche for the art form, although this was also surely a semiotics that could be mimicked by amateurs. Interesting tales of the transparency of the meaning of the dance, such as at Lucian, *Salt.* 64 (an aristocrat from Pontos, who wants to bring back a pantomime from Rome to act as interpreter to his barbarian neighbors), are naïve fictions. Webb 2008a, esp. 72–77, offers an excellent discussion of the semiotics.
- ¹³ Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.20e.
- ¹⁴ The Trier ivory (Fig. 2) shows a player holding 3 masks, identifiable as pantomime by the distinctive closed mouth (cf. Fig. 1); Lucian *Salt*. 66 refers to a dancer who lays out 5 masks, one for each act; the detailed story lines of the libretti suggest frequent change of character (e.g., the dance described in Lucian *Salt*. 67, where "we are shown" [δείκνυται] the dancer mimic Athamas, Ino, Thyestes, Aegisthus, and Aerope in a single play). For further evidence and discussion of the use of masks in pantomime role playing, including the probability that one mask could sometimes do double duty, or that the mask could perhaps at times be omitted, see Webb 2008b and 2008a, 79–85; and for an illuminating discussion of the differences between tragic and pantomimic masks, Petrides 2013.
- ¹⁵ Fronto, *de Orationibus* 5; on robe and scarf generally see Wyles 2008. It is not clear that this was a feature claimed to go back to the founders, but the robe and scarf were characteristic costume from at least the second century.
- ¹⁶ In late antiquity, females could be dancers on occasion, and we know of one example from as early as the first century: Starks 2008.
- ¹⁷ For the *topos* that pantomime dancers were able to change to opposite characters quickly and on cue, see Lucian, *Salt*. 19 ("imitating Proteus himself"), 63, 67, Libanius 64.117; cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51.9.
- ¹⁸ Pylades Cilex pantomimus, cum veteres ipsi canerent atque saltarent, primus Romae chorum et fistulam sibi praecinere fecit, Jerome, Chron., ad 22 BC, PL27.553-4. The pipe orchestra was made up of auloi and syrinxes: Macrobius, Sat. 2.7.18, Lucian, Salt. 63, Libanius 64.116. For other instruments, see below.
- ¹⁹ For inscriptional evidence that puts pantomimes and musicians together in a troupe, see Molloy 1996, 79; sometimes, of course, local musicians would be used for a traveling pantomime.
- ²⁰ Lewis and Short define *pantomimus* as "a ballet dancer." For recent examples by prominent scholars in the field, see, e.g., Slater 1994, 120 "[pantomime is] ballet dancing of Greek tragic themes"; Hall 2005, 65, "[in the empire] ballet to choral accompaniment [was called] ancient pantomime"; Hall and Wyles 2008, where the appendix of "Selected Source Texts" repeatedly uses "ballet" for ὄρχησις and its cognates, as happens also in the translations of Lada–Richards 2007 (e.g. p. 50), despite her keen awareness of the differences.
- ²¹ Cf. Anthologia Latina 100: "Declining his masculine breast with a feminine inflection and moulding his pliant torso to suit either sex, the dancer enters the stage and greets the people, promising that words will come forth from his expert hands. For when the sweet chorus pours forth its delightful song, what the singer declaims, the dancer himself confirms with his movements. He fights, he plays, he loves, he revels, he turns round, he stands still, he illuminates the truth, and imbues everything with grace. He has as many

tongues as limbs, so wonderful is the art by which he can make his joints speak although his mouth is silent" (trans. Hall and Wyles 2008, 403).

²² The contrast Webb describes is sometimes called *embodied dance* as opposed to *intellectual dance*.

²³ Such is the implication of the story told at Lucian, *Salt.* 83–84, where the dancer, overcome by playing the part of the mad Ajax, grabs a flute from one of the musicians and strikes the lead "actor" on the head—that is, the soloist singing Odysseus at the time. (There is no need for the textual correction suggested by Harmon 1936 at *Salt.* 84 [παραιστησάμενος for παραστησάμενος], and the interpretation of this passage in Jory 1998 seems to me badly off mark. The punchline to the story is that when asked by supporters to repeat the performance, he stands alongside the Odysseus "actor" and says, with reference to the injury his colleague has just received, "it is enough to have gone mad once." Lucian uses "actor" [ὑποκριτής] for the solo singer also at *Salt.* 68, another passage misinterpreted by Harmon. Some follow Harmon in inferring here a second actor on stage rather than a solo singer, an unnecessary inference, as Jory too saw.) Tatian (quoted below, n. 24) imagines the singers as part of what the audience sees on stage, and that seems generally implicit in our sources.

²⁴ Lucian, *Salt*. 62.

²⁵ Explicit in Tatian (2nd c.) "I have no wish to gape eagerly at the many singers (πολλῶν ἀδόντων, *Or. ad Graecos*, 22)," but implicit in the descriptions in Lucian, Libanius, and elsewhere.

²⁶ Lucian, *Salt*. 68 (ὑποκριτοῦ εὐφωνίαν); *Anthologia Latina* 100 (*cantor resonat*); *Anthologia Graeca* 9.542 (written in praise of a singer whose singing of the libretto matches the pantomime's gestures in its grace).

²⁷ Lucian *Salt*. 63 (τῆ τῶν ἀδόντων εὐφωνίᾳ); cf. 68, 72; *Anthologia Latina* 100 (*chorus dulcis*).

²⁸ For the use of drone and rhythmic counterpoint in the ancient use of such pipes, see West 1994, 103-104.

²⁹ Cf., e.g., Lucian *Salt*. 2, 26.

³⁰ The board is mentioned in two sources from the 4th and 5th centuries: Libanius *Or.* 64.96; Jacob of Sarugh, *Homily* 2 (Hall and Wyles 2008, T41, p. 413). For the *scabellum* /κρούπεζαι, see esp. Lucian *Salt.* 63 and 83 (indicating that there were multiple stampers); Libanius *Or.* 64.95 and 97; and the detailed discussion in Bélis 1988. The passage at *Salt.* 83 speaks of an "iron sandal" which however may be the same as the metal attachment mentioned at Libanius *Or.* 64.97 and Jacob of Sarugh, *Homily 2.* Lada–Richards 2007, 41, points to Arnobius, *adversus nationes* 7.32, for a late mention of yet other percussion (castanets and drums), to which might be added the water organ (*symphonia*) mentioned in the same passage. (Hall 2013, 469–470 [cf. Hall 2008, 27–8], makes much of large theater organs, but aside from the passage in Arnobius, a hostile source enumerating and potentially exaggerating the noise–making devices, the only link to pantomime seems to be the medallion she cites showing a pantomime [identified by the closed–mouth mask] with a portable organ in the background. We agree in any case that the pantomime performance could be "terrifically noisy" [Hall 2008, 27].)

³¹ Hall 2013, 469 (= Hall 2008, 27), citing Novatian, de spectaculis 4.5.

³² Arnobius (early 4th c.) adversus nationes 2.42 (trans. Hall 2013, 468 [= Hall 2008, 26-27]).

³³ Webb 2008a, 74-5, 78-9, 82, 84, 92-3.

³⁴ See esp. Smethurst 1989 and Smethurst 2013.

- 35 Udaka 2010, 151.
- ³⁶ Zeami took the great work of his father and "developed it further, giving Noh the [distinctive] artistic qualities it retains to this day" (Udaka 2010, 151). This is a standard account. As mentioned above (n. 7), Macrobius tells a similar story about Pylades' apprentice Hylas, who came to rival and better him in the art.
- ³⁷ Udaka 2010, 153-4.
- ³⁸ For discussion of this phenomenon, see Smethurst 2013, 13–15; along similar lines, the main Noh actor will at critical moments speak of himself in the third person (see Smethurst 2013, 63–73).
- ³⁹ In March 2016 I had the fortune of witnessing a naming ceremony, in which an actual or adopted son is given one of the ancestral names by acclamation of the guilds and audience. *News from the Kabuki World* (Internet resource) routinely contains notices such as "Nakamura Kankurô VI's two sons, his elder son Namino Naoya and his younger son Namino Noriyuki, will make their debut on stage (*hatsubutai*) in February 2017 at the Kabukiza. They will receive the respective names of Nakamura Kantarô III and Nakamura Chôzaburô II. The first holder of the name Nakamura Chôzaburô was Nakamura Kanzaburô III, who held it between 1673 and 1674."
- ⁴⁰ Cavaye and Griffith 2004, 114: "Traditionally the path to chief puppeteer takes ten years of training as an *ashizukai* [leg handler], followed by another ten years as the *hidarizukai* [left handler]. ... On a more practical level, however, the speed at which one moves through the ranks is determined by the skill of the individual puppeteer."
- ⁴¹ Cavaye and Griffith 2004, 116.
- ⁴² Adachi 1985, 150, quoting the narrator of an Osaka troupe. The full quote is: "In Buraku one is not considered a true performer until one reaches fifty, and not an artist until one reaches sixty. We say it takes three years to learn to laugh, eight years to learn to cry. Well, that's only the beginning." An internet search suggests that this is a common saying.
- ⁴³ The clips are from a 2011 production of the play, kindly supplied to me by the Director on a non-commercial DVD. The play was first performed in 1999, with several subsequent revivals. Miyagi's theatrical company was named Ku Na'uka. I here thank Director Miyagi for his generous help.
- 44 This is sometimes referred to as the "two actors, one role" method.
- 45 Smethurst 1989, Smethurst 2013.
- ⁴⁶ Professor Smethurst is both a Classicist and a Japanologist, fluent in the language and with deep knowledge in this area. Without implying her agreement with my conclusions, I wish here to record my warm thanks to her for help with this project.
- ⁴⁷ The drums are African, and the heavy percussive line is a Miyagi innovation and not a traditional feature (though it does evoke the more frenzied moments in Kabuki); the heavy percussive line does, however, match what we know of imperial pantomime.
- ⁴⁸ Played by Kazunori Abe.
- 49 Played by Micari (she has but the one name).
- ⁵⁰ A few further clips, some with titling, can be found on the internet by searching for Medea+Miyagi. As

stated earlier, the whole of the production is unfortunately not publicly available. At the time of this writing, the trailer from the New York performance was still viewable at http://www.japansociety.org/event_detail?eid=770bc34d. Anan 2006 gives a summary and overview of the play as well as analysis.

⁵¹ A 2008 interviewer wrote, "Though there is no particular form that she practises, Micari draws from the Japanese 'Noh' form that focuses on movement within stillness. While on stage, she sees herself as a 'vessel, like a bamboo connecting heaven and earth'" (anon. 2008). Among the elements of the dance we see in the clip is the use of *ningyö-buri*, a Kabuki technique by which humans imitate the Bunraku puppets. On the term and its use in the play, see Anan 2006, 407.

⁵² On the costume of the pantomime actor (both functionality and "symbolism"), see Wyles 2008.

⁵⁶ Eglinton 2011, from her introductory remarks to an interview with Miyagi in 2006. Some of this seems to come from Miyagi himself. In a 2013 interview, Miyagi said about the separation of Speaker and Mover: "Word and body (Logos and Pathos), which are torn apart on stage, show us to what extent they are vital to each other. One could say that there is a fervent courtship between word and body, and, beyond it, a moment of bliss where these two overcome their alienation and fuse together. Thus, the primitive image of the human being will manifest itself on stage" (Smethurst 2014, 843).

⁵⁷ Some will wish to invoke Lacanian desire: on Lacan and Miyagi, with focus on how "the audience perceives the voice of an actor not directly but as 'absence', as a substitute for a 'real' voice in the Lacanian sense," see Hirata 2010.

bibliography

(anon.). 2008. "Poetry in Motion." The Hindu, December 13, 2008.

Adachi, Barbara C. 1985. *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan's Traditional Puppet Theatre*. New York: Weatherhill.

Anan, Nobuko. 2006. "Medea (review)." Asian Theatre Journal 23: 407-411.

Bélis, Annie. 1988. "Κρούπεζαι, scabellum." Bulletin de correspondance hellénique 112: 323-339.

Bonaria, M. 1959. "Dinastie di pantomimi latini." Maia : rivista di letterature classiche 11: 224-242.

Cavaye, Ronald and Paul Griffith. 2004. "Bunraku," in *A Guide to the Japanese Stage, from traditional to cutting edge*, pp. 99–160. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International.

Eglinton, Mika. 2011. "Ku Na'uka's Hamlet in Tokyo: An Interview with Miyagi Satoshi." *Asian Theatre Journal* 28: 234-243.

Garelli, Marie-Hélène. 2007. *Danser le mythe : la pantomime et sa réception dans la culture antique*. Leuven: Peeters.

Hall, Edith. 2005. "Aeschylus' Clytemnestra versus her Senecan tradition." In Agamemnon in Performance

⁵³ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51.8.

⁵⁴ Lada-Richards 2008, 287; Panayotakis 2008, 190.

⁵⁵ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51.9 (translation after S. J. B. Barnish).

458 BC to AD 2004, ed. Fiona Macintosh, 53-75. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2008. "Introduction: Pantomime, A Lost Chord of Ancient Culture." In <i>New Directions in Ancient Pantomime</i> , edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 1-40.
2013. "Pantomime: Visualising Myth in the Roman Empire." In <i>Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre</i> , edited by G. W. M. Harrison and V. J. Liapis, 451-473.
, and Rosie Wyles, eds. 2008. <i>New Directions in Ancient Pantomime</i> . Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
Harmon, A. M. 1936. <i>Lucian, V / with an engl. transl. by Harmon A. M.</i> London: Heinemann.
Harrison, George William Mallory, and Vayos J. Liapis, eds. 2013. <i>Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre.</i> Leiden: Brill.
Hirata, Eiichiro. 2010. "The Absence of Voices in the Theatre Space: Ku Nauka's Production of Medea." <i>Critical Studies</i> 33: 117-129.
Jory, E. J. 1981. "The Literary Evidence for the Beginning of Imperial Pantomime." <i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London</i> 28: 147–161.
1984. "The Early Pantomine Riots." In <i>Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning</i> , edited by A. Moffatt, 57-66. Australian Assoc. for Byz. Stud.
1998. "The Pantomime Assistants." In <i>Ancient History in a Modern University</i> . Ancient history documentary research centre, Macquarie University.
Lada-Richards, Ismene. 2007. Silent eloquence: Lucian and Pantomime Dancing. London: Duckworth.
2008. "Was Pantomime 'good to think with' in the Ancient World?" In <i>New Directions in Ancient Pantomime</i> , edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 285-313.
Molloy, Margaret E. 1996. <i>Libanius and the Dancers</i> , <i>Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien, Bd.</i> 31. Hildesheim; New York: Olms-Weidmann.
Panayotakis, Costas. 2008. "Virgil on the Popular Stage." In <i>New Directions in Ancient Pantomime</i> , edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 185–197.
Petrides, Antonis K. 2013. "Lucian's 'On dance' and the Poetics of the Pantomime Mask." In <i>Performance in Greek and Roman theatre</i> , edited by G. W. M. Harrison and V. J. Liapis, 433-450.
Robert, L. 1930. "Pantomimen im griechischen Orient." <i>Hermes</i> 65: 106-122.
Slater, William J. 1994. "Pantomime Riots." <i>Classical antiquity</i> 13: 120-144.
Smethurst, Mae J. 1989. <i>The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami: a comparative study of Greek tragedy and nō</i> . Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
2013. Dramatic Action in Greek tragedy and Noh: reading with and beyond Aristotle. Lanham: Lexington Books.
2014. "Interview with Miyagi Satoshi." <i>PMLA</i> 129 (4): 843–846.

Starks, John H. Jr. 2008. "Pantomime Actresses in Latin Inscriptions." In *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 110-145.

Udaka, Michishige. 2010. *The Secrets of Noh Masks*. Edited by Shuichi Yamagata. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International.

Webb, Ruth. 2008a. *Demons and Dancers: performance in late antiquity*. Cambridge (Mass.); London: Harvard University Pr.

_____. "Inside the Mask: Pantomime from the Performers' Perspective." In *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 43-60.

West, M. L. 1994. Ancient Greek Music. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wüst, Ernst 1949. "Pantomimus." RE 18.3: 833-869.

Wyles, Rosie. 2008. "The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime." In *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, edited by Edith Hall and Rosie Wyles, 61–86.