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SOME FIFTH-CENTURY MASKING CONVENTIONS

By C. W. MARSHALL

Does it matter that all fifth-century staged performance was masked? Modern discussions of fifth-century drama focus almost exclusively on the words of the text, for that is what survives to us,¹ and there is a sound methodology in this, since in a theatre that held over 15,000 people aural appreciation was central. I wish to isolate the amount of information that was communicated to the audience by masks, and so discover what then can be incorporated into modern studies of ancient staging, and in particular to determine what visual details existed for the ancient audience to help them understand 'character'.² Direct evidence is slight, and this must remain a brief overview.³ Nevertheless, reasonable deductions from the plays allow for a clear appreciation of what was the essential information conveyed by fifth-century masks.

First, fundamentally, what is a mask and what does it do? The Greek word *prosôpon* can be used for 'face' or 'mask', two concepts that in Greek thought are not easy to separate (the word literally means 'that which is in front of the eyes'). I want to begin by making eight claims about all Greek masks, the first four of which are meant to be uncontroversial.

1. Masks 'are better spoken of as headpieces, since they combined the functions of mask and wig', says Sommerstein.⁴ They covered the whole head, with openings only at the eyes and mouth.⁵ The effect of this is described by Harrison and Rehm;⁶ there are some later indications (such as Cicero, *de Oratore* 2.46. 193) that it may have been possible for some of the audience to see the eyes and mouth beneath the mask.⁷
2. Masks were made of thin stuccoed linen, which makes them similar to, but sturdier than, modern papier maché masks.⁸ Construction and maintenance seems to have been the responsibility of the *skeuopoios* ('properties manager?'; cf. *Knights* 232). When not worn, there was a small loop at the crown of the head by which to hold the mask, which is evident in fifth-century vase painting.⁹

3. 'Aristotle's actor is an actor-mask', says Jones.¹⁰ The Classical process of acting (*hypokrisis* or *mimêsis*) necessarily combined human voice, posture, and movement (all of which could be included under the term *schêma*) with an inanimate mask. When properly combined a mask will seem to become an animate face, capable of representing multiple expressions.¹¹ With institutionalized role-sharing, there is no absolute 1:1 correspondence between actor and mask. Jones's sense that an actor temporarily 'becomes' the god – or the character being played – is not tenable.¹²
4. Masks were used neither because of a need to assist projection,¹³ nor to 'provide effective disguise, [so] only a small number of virtuoso performers is needed to provide the cast of a whole play'.¹⁴ Disguising the actors is not a credible aim when they are being evaluated by judges,¹⁵ and masks if anything hindered projection somewhat. Shakespeare had his actors play multiple roles, of both sexes, without needing masks. What masks did do, however, was provide visual cues about character clearly to the entire audience.

The next four claims are, conceivably, problematic. They are nevertheless corroborated by my experience directing actors wearing masks.

5. Scott McCloud notes what he calls the 'iconic' implications of a simplified face: 'when you look at a photo or a realistic drawing of a face – you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the [mask] – you see yourself.'¹⁶ An audience will identify with masked characters when the mask is simple and unindividuated, and this in turn reduces the importance of facial details and privileges the words.¹⁷ This is a corollary of claim 3 (above), but it is not obvious, and must be kept in mind: simple faces are more personal and meaningful.
6. Masked acting is evident only through externals: there is no Stanislavskian Method at work. An actor puts on a face, and there is no character apart from (beneath) that face: *persona* is *persona*. 'When the character exits, the actor changes his mask and the character ceases to exist', writes Wiles.¹⁸ The audience sees and interprets a character based only on the 'stamp' (*charaktêr*) present on the external face. David Mamet's views on acting reflect a similar principle for a non-masked theatre tradition.¹⁹
7. Nothing certain can be said concerning the origins of the use of masks in Attic theatre.²⁰ What we must assume is that the use of

masks was appropriate in relation to the performance space. Masks provided opportunities for the playwright and actors, and not obstacles. Yoking the use of masks to the venue itself helps to maintain a focus on how the audience perceives the masks, which is more important than how the masks actually looked when we try to understand the plays better. (We must allow for the possibility that had the Greeks used smaller, more intimate performance spaces they might not have created a masked theatre tradition.)

8. This means that a sense of ‘otherness’ is not essential to masked acting:

Mask-wearing was not a self-conscious attempt to alienate the audience or to invoke a magical or ritual past, or to contrast the flux of reality with the false notion of fixed character, as it seems to be for modern theorists and the contemporary avant-garde.²¹

Halliwell appropriately distances the Greek mask from any Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*.²² Masks are not as anti-illusionistic as many would assume, as we should suspect from the assumptions contained in the anecdote about the original impact of the sight of Erinyes masks in *Eumenides*.²³

In this summary, my principal examples will come from Greek theatre after the institution of the actor’s contest at the City Dionysia, c.449 B.C., by when we know actors are being thought of independent of their characters.²⁴ This therefore includes all the extant works of Euripides and Sophocles, and Aristophanes, and none of Aeschylus (who will be used to provide supplementary examples when it is relevant to the argument).²⁵

Given these eight postulates, it becomes clear that the essential information conveyed by the tragic mask is surprisingly minimalistic. I contend that the mind of any given audience member isolated only two variables, sex and age.²⁶ Masks could of course be male or female, as MacDowell describes:

An actor wore a white mask to play a woman, a darker mask to play a man. This reflected, or rather exaggerated, the normal conditions of ancient life, in which men were generally sunburnt because they spent so much time out-of-doors whereas women lived mainly indoors. Normally a male mask would also have a beard.²⁷

This is ‘in accordance with the usual conventions of portraiture in art – men’s skin dark, women’s pale’.²⁸ Similarly, there were three age

categories for adults, each of which is a notional generation apart: ‘Characters in tragedy are either young or in the prime of life, or old; and the old are very old indeed . . . there are no subtle gradations of age, and we never, even in the *Oresteia*, see a character growing old.’²⁹ There are therefore six basic mask types:

- i. Old Man (*gerôn*)³⁰ – dark face with white beard and hair; perhaps bald;
- ii. Mature Man (*anêr*) – dark face, dark beard and hair;
- iii. Young Man (*ephêbos*) – dark face, dark hair, no beard;
- iv. Old Woman (*graus*) – pale face, white hair;
- v. Mature Woman (*gunê*) – pale face, dark hair, mature hairstyle;³¹
- vi. Young Woman (*korê*) – pale face, dark hair, youthful hairstyle.

Each of these is easily identifiable, from virtually any distance, because there are only two variables: above all else, clear visual communication over distance seems to be the principal benefit of fifth-century mask-wearing. Halliwell’s objections to this do not hold up to scrutiny; he is right to insist that the head is not significantly larger than life, but he underestimates the importance of clarity, with no extraneous or unimportant detail, for meaningful communication over distance.³²

This is not to say that the audience could not see more detail than this, or that every mask was a perfect replica of one of these types: Pollux’s ancient and Webster’s modern typologies show that more subtle variations did exist.³³ What I am suggesting is that these differences were not theatrically significant, and were used only to distinguish two characters wearing the same mask type in a play, an effect further assisted by costume and body language. As a result, even though masks in Old Comedy may have looked very different from tragic and satyric masks, the information conveyed to the audience need not be any different:³⁴ there are no particular features that the audience needs to see in order to distinguish Dicaeopolis, Philocleon, or Trygaeus, other than that they are old men. At times, as we will see, masks other than these six basic types were used, but when this happened it was always to create a special effect, and responded directly to one of the six basic types. Jones believed ‘the audience could read a few simple, conventional signs determining rank and age and sex’,³⁵ but every variable doubles (at least) the number of basic mask types. It may be that slaves had redder hair³⁶ or wore shorter beards than free men and this was depicted in masks, but slave status would principally be indicated by costume and body language.³⁷ Age and sex alone are important for

masks. (This picture will be made somewhat more complicated with the discussion of wigs, below.)

Clearly, 'mask', 'actor', and 'character' are all related terms but are still separable.³⁸ In examining their interplay, it is possible to identify a number of special effects that were accomplished on the tragic stage. The Rule of Three Actors demonstrates that there were many characters/masks for one actor. We also know that at times there were many actors for one character/mask: though late, Creon in *Oedipus at Colonus* does this,³⁹ and the practice becomes standard in New Comedy. On rare occasions, multiple characters appeared on stage with the same basic mask type: in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the Messenger and the Shepherd are both *gerontes*, and they would be told apart by costume, voice, and body language (and to a much lesser degree, by the existence of small variations in mask appearance). Similarly, in both *Antigone* and Sophocles' *Electra*, there are scenes with a pair of young sisters which would be represented by the same mask type, for they both are *korai*. Again, costume, voice, and bearing are going to be the principal factors for distinguishing the characters, though there may be minor variations in the mask appearance: in *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, for example, it would be natural to follow Homer's lead and make Menelaus blonder than Agamemnon, though both wear masks of *andres*.⁴⁰ Finally, at times many masks were used for one character. The blinding⁴¹ of Oedipus (*Oedipus Tyrannus*),⁴² Polymestor (*Hecuba*), and Polyphemus (*Cyclops*)⁴³ were almost certainly indicated by a second mask, as was the appearance of Helen in mourning, with scratched cheeks (*Helen*).⁴⁴ In these cases, the presence of a second mask is always clearly anticipated in the text, and no audience confusion is possible.

Keeping basic mask types to a minimum also means that certain thematic conflicts in plays are reinforced. In *Hippolytus*, the title character is clearly a young man, and Theseus his father is one generation older, and a mature man. Phaedra, Theseus' wife by remarriage and not Hippolytus' mother, would most naturally be given the *korê* mask. This means that visually, in all versions of the play, her love for Hippolytus is given a visual plausibility because they are of an age. Simple masks in this case create increased complexity for character motivation. Similarly, the appearance of Iole in *Women of Trachis* as a young woman gives an automatic sexual desirability over the mature Deianeira. Deianeira looks at Iole and sees both her former self, and a rival for the affections of Heracles. This visual message is reinforced regularly in the text (e.g. ll.459–67, 536–51). Later, Heracles, a mature

man, notoriously bequeaths Iole to his ephobic son, Hyllus. This is given an uncomfortable air of appropriateness, because it does restore the appearance of generational balance.⁴⁵

The normal way of representing death on the tragic stage did not involve new masks. Since the murder tableaux of the *Oresteia*, any motionless body lying horizontal, especially when it appears on the *ekkyklêma*, was a corpse, whether played by an actor or with the same mask put on a dummy body.⁴⁶ Using separate 'death masks' would only confuse the audience and add to the production budget. This must be so for the *legerdemain* substitution of Ajax's body in *Ajax* to be credible.⁴⁷ There were other ways to represent death however. The *sparagmos* of Pentheus in *Bacchae* is an oft-cited but informative example:

Even Pentheus' mask seems to play a special metatheatrical role in the equally chilling 'unmasking' of the horrible killing. Agave is made to see that the *prosôpon* ('face' or 'mask') that she carries is her own son's severed head, not the lion she has imagined.⁴⁸

The mask that had formerly been animated by the actor now appears a lifeless shell.⁴⁹ Some special instances exist as characters are dying, though, that may have required special masks. In the static art of the fifth century, especially vase-painting, the absence of movement was not available as an indication of death as it was on the stage. Instead, corpses were painted white, like women. There are instances in tragedy where this sort of association could be meaningful. Orestes appears near death in the prologue of *Orestes*. If the young man's mask was not dark but pale or even white, the sickness (*nosos*) brought on by the unseen Erinyes would be manifest to the audience.⁵⁰ Note that this does not require innovation or detailed explanation: Euripides is merely manipulating established symbols used in masking to create new meaning. Similarly, in *Hecuba*, it would be clear that the murdered Polydorus, who speaks the prologue, is a ghost if his mask too were pale, a device that could also have been used for Darius in *Persians*.

Tragic masks could manipulate age categories, and (as we have just seen) special masks could be used to create powerful effects by altering the colour of male masks, making them pale. Aristophanes seems to have used pale masks for effeminates, and it has been suggested that Aeschylus did as well;⁵¹ it seems likely at least that this was a standard later tragic practice. In *Women of Trachis*, Heracles appears as he is dying, and like Orestes the audience may expect him to have a pale mask, even though he is a mature man. But Heracles' biggest fear is that having been defeated by a woman (ll.1062–3) he will appear womanly

(ll.1070–5). The iconography of death and of the feminine here overlap and create a double effect: just as Heracles surely soon will die, so he surely has already become the woman like which he dreads to appear (even though his mask still has his dark beard). If correct, this would further militate against any valorization of Heracles or sense that he might eventually receive an apotheosis.⁵²

What is noticeable is how seldom special masks are in fact required in Sophocles and Euripides. Certainly, from time to time special masks could be produced for special effects, but then it is usually only a manipulation of symbols denoting sex and age. The tragedians in the late fifth century show no indication of making particularly unusual masks either for choruses (like the Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*)⁵³ or for individuals (like the Dog in Aristophanes' *Wasps*). Even in instances where special masks are suggested, I do not see a need to go beyond standard iconography. Portrait-masks make an ideal test case. While there is a strong tradition of anecdotes about portrait-masks in Old Comedy, there is no firm evidence that they were ever used.⁵⁴ With the most famous example, Socrates in the original *Clouds*, an alternate solution presents itself. When the playwright wanted to present the snub-nosed, thick-lipped, bulbous-eyed, ugly, lecherous Socrates – who possessed 'all the features which the Greeks regarded . . . as characteristic of a Silenos' says Dover⁵⁵ – Aristophanes used the traditional snub-nosed, thick-lipped, bulbous-eyed, ugly, lecherous mask – that of a silenus (or papposilenus; both words are used to describe the older version of the mask used by the satyr-chorus, as in *Cyclops*). Surprisingly, Dover does not make this connection, but it is latent in his paper. It would indeed be funny for Aristophanes to present the notoriously ugly philosopher with a mask from satyr drama, and for this to be thought of as a portrait. When both Plato and Xenophon describe Socrates as a silenus (Plato, *Symposium* 215b, *Theaetetus* 143e; Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.19, 5.7), they are both drawing on a well-known Aristophanic joke.⁵⁶ As for other Old Comic 'portraits', again there is no need to go beyond conventional signs established for use in masks. In Eupolis' *Autolycus* Aristophanes may have appeared as a character.⁵⁷ If so, an apparent 'portrait' could be made by representing the most obvious facet of his appearance, and making the young man's mask bald. As with all the special masks we have seen, this adapts one sign (the baldness in the *gerôn* mask) to create a startling and immediately identifiable effect.

Such a portrait of Aristophanes is not as hypothetical as it might first

appear. Its manufacture is easy when we remember that what I have been calling a mask is in fact a mask-wig combination (Sommerstein's 'headpiece'). These two parts were separate, though they created a combined effect.⁵⁸ Most of what I have been discussing has concentrated on the 'face' of the mask. An Aristophanes portrait would use the face of a young man's mask and the bald 'wig' of an old man. Above I suggested that status was not represented by the mask, but rather by *schêma*, the combination of gesture, voice, and body position. In some instances special wigs could be attached to one of the six basic mask types to create special effects. In *Ajax* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis* different hair colours could be used to distinguish the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaus. Similarly, one's status as a mourner or as a captive could easily be represented with a wig of closely cropped hair. This seems likely for the ostentatious mourning display of Sophocles' *Electra*, and for all the captives in *Trojan Women*, where almost every female character would have such close-cropped hair (1.279): Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, the chorus, and any attendants. Against this, the appearance of Helen with a full head of hair would be enough to distinguish her unparalleled beauty (as figured in Greek thought) as well as visually to signify her position of privilege after the sack of Troy. Again, special meaning is created by a manipulation of established symbols used in masks, not with any novel construction.

Straightforward manipulation of the minimalist iconography, then, is sufficient for presenting all that is needed for tragic masks in the second half of the fifth century. Certainly, earlier tragedies had been more experimental, and the tradition was maintained to some degree in Old Comedy. It is even possible some likely stories were avoided as a result: the story of Actaeon, for instance, was certainly known to Euripides,⁵⁹ and it is perhaps surprising that he did not write a tragedy on the subject, especially considering the later invented story that describes Euripides' death, that he too was killed by hunting dogs (*Life of Euripides*, 57–9); it is possible that a horned mask, while acceptable for Io in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, was not tolerable on the later stage.⁶⁰ Certainly, the tradition of animal masks in Old Comedy throughout the fifth century (especially for choruses, but not exclusively: for example I believe two fighting cocks appeared in the original *Clouds*)⁶¹ introduces another category of common masks. Another obvious category of characters that might have appeared wearing special masks is that of the gods; Dearden writes, 'None of the gods . . . appear in the special mask lists, and the evidence of the vases and terracottas confirms that when the gods

appeared on stage they wore ordinary masks and were indistinguishable from the mortals in the play.⁶² This is perhaps credible when the gods appear on the *mêchanê* at the end of a play and there are other indications of their identity, but what of the earlier gods? Iris could wear a *korê* mask and a multi-coloured costume in *Heracles*, and it is possible Lyssa was given an Erinys mask.⁶³ About the divinities' masks in *Hippolytus* or *Trojan Women* nothing can be said, and Dearden's claim is possibly true.

A survey of *Bacchae* clears up some loose ends. We have already noted how this late play is very conscious of its use of masks, clear from the presentation of the death of Pentheus. It also challenges the tendency of not pairing identical mask types in a given scene, and it does so twice. Two *gerontes*, Cadmus and Tiresias, appear together, and they both wear similar Bacchic costumes; the audience has only Tiresias' blindness by which to distinguish the two (but we have seen how blind characters elsewhere have been given special masks). Similarly, Dionysos and Pentheus, both beardless young men, appear together and so both wear effeminate, Bacchic garb. Dodds suggests that the threefold use of *gelôn* and its cognates (ll.380, 439, 1021) suggests 'the actor who played the Stranger [i.e., the disguised Dionysos] no doubt wore a smiling mask throughout'.⁶⁴ This is an intriguing suggestion, and could yield a very disconcerting effect in a tragedy, but it is not self-evidently true. The chief merit of this idea is that no mask type is then doubled: the use of a 'special' here precludes the need to have a different set of masks for gods generally.⁶⁵

Two consequences fall from this. It is possible that a given actor would not typically be asked to wear two masks that are derived from the same basic mask type for different characters. So, if the Cadmus actor also played both Messengers in *Bacchae*, then, since Cadmus is an old man, one Messenger (the herdsman perhaps) will be young, and the other will be mature. Such a principle for role assignment would serve to minimize possible confusion in the audience: in *Helen*, for example, one actor clearly uses five different basic mask types (Teucer, mature man; Doorkeeper, old woman; Theonoe, young woman; Servant, old man; Theoclymenus, young man). For thematic benefits, such a rule could of course be suspended, as it is with the doubling of Ajax and Teucer in *Ajax*.⁶⁶ Secondly, it may explain in part why same-sex pairs in fifth-century plays are often of different generations: Orestes with his Paedagogue in Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides with his (younger) Kinsman in *Thesmophoriazusae* are convenient examples. The rule

might be extended to such pairs as Peisetærus and Euelpides in *Birds*. Further study on both of these issues is possible. Finally, I have said nothing about the economics of mask-making, or for how many productions a given mask might be expected to be used, other than to note that special masks could be commissioned when needed.⁶⁷

After the institution of the actor's competition at the City Dionysia, there is no solid evidence of any tragic masks of real complexity. A minimal set of signs on iconic faces is sufficient to represent virtually all that is required for tragedy, and a clever manipulation of these signs can from time to time be used to create 'special effects'. Occasionally special effects could be achieved not by making a new mask, but merely juxtaposing certain mask-wig combinations (e.g., *Trojan Women*), or by importing a mask from another context (e.g., *Clouds*). Only rarely are details of any complexity introduced to masks, and when they are (e.g., *Helen*), they are clearly anticipated in the text. Vernant reminds us that Dionysos' connection with tragedy is not through a ritual or sacrificial past, but in its very newness, its innovations.⁶⁸ The use of special masks embraces this sense of innovation, and maintains Dionysos' distinction as *der Maskengott*, though perhaps not in its usual sense.⁶⁹ Further, we have seen that minimalist masks can convey more about the psychological aspects of character than the more detailed masks typically suggested, and this is an appropriate development for tragedy in the late fifth century.⁷⁰

NOTES

1. J. R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London and New York, 1994) and David Wiles, *Tragedy in Athens: Performance and Theatrical Meaning* (Cambridge, 1997) are perhaps the first major studies to do otherwise.

2. Simon Goldhill, 'Modern Critical Approaches to Greek Tragedy' in P. E. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1997), 324–47, at 339: 'The convention of masking has been much discussed with regard to what it might imply or deny about characterisation.' Even more remains unexamined, however.

3. Green, op. cit., 77–8: 'We have no written discussion of masks surviving from the fifth century and so attitudes to masks in the early period of theatre can only be guessed at.'

4. Alan H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylean Tragedy*, (Bari, 1996), 41.

5. There is no distinction between masks worn by speaking actors and those that will not speak. All characters are open-mouthed, which is why it is a genuine surprise when Cassandra and Pylades speak in the *Oresteia*. This idea is opposed by J. Michael Walton: 'such non-speaking actors were to all intents and purposes invisible, since they did not wear masks' (*Greek Theatre Practice* [London, revised edition 1991], 146; italics in original). In *Hecuba*, the elderly serving woman returns as an unspeaking character, as does Tecmessa in *Ajax*.

6. Tony Harrison, 'Facing Up to the Muses', *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 85 (1988), 7–29, at 17–22; Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre* (London and New York, 1992), 41.

7. Wiles, *The Masks of Menander: Signs and Meaning in Greek and Roman Performance* (Cambridge, 1991), 142. Claude Calame, 'Vision, Blindness, and Mask: the Radicalization of Emotions

in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*' in M. S. Silk (ed.), *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond* (Oxford, 1996), 17–37, at 26–31, finds considerable significance in the holes in the mask and the senses the openings represent. Richard Buxton, 'What Can You Rely on in *Oedipus Rex*? Response to Calame' in Silk, 38–48, at 38–9, prudently urges caution with this.

8. Cf. T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy*, third edition rev. and enlarged by J. R. Green and A. Seeberg, *BICS Supplement* 50 (London, 1995), vol. 1, 3 for references, to which could be added Plato *Comicus* fr. 151 PCG (142 K) and Suda, s.v. *Thespis* (Walton, op. cit., 33). I disagree with Webster on the fragility of masks: cf. Green, 'Dedications of Masks', *Révue Archéologique* 1982, 237–48 and S. Halliwell, 'The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask', *Drama 2* (= *Intertextualität in der griechisch-römischen Komödie*, ed. Niall W. Slater and Bernhard Zimmermann, Stuttgart, 1993), 195–211, at 202 and n. 22. It is possible but unlikely that cork, leather, and wood were occasionally used. It is very convenient to experiment with stuccoed linen today, because of its cheap availability from medical suppliers (where its intended purpose is making casts).

9. Erika Simon, *The Ancient Theatre* (London and New York, 1982), plates 4.1, 6.1, 9.

10. John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London, 1962), 59.

11. This point is well made by Martha Johnson, 'Reflections of Inner Life: Masks and Masked Acting in Ancient Greek Tragedy and Japanese Noh Drama', *Modern Drama* 35 (1992), 20–34; it is a point missed by Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, second edition revised by John Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968), 149, 171–4 (an important discussion nevertheless), and 190–5. 'It's only when a mask is being worn by a skilled performer that the expression changes' (Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* [London, 1981], 185); 'The first second of wearing is easy; it is as if the mask switches itself on. The difficulty lies in letting it sustain its expression. In the early stages of learning the gaze will soon be lost, the mask betrayed as inanimate by the wearer's desire to make it express something which comes from his or her own experience rather than the characteristics of the mask' (John Rudlin, *Commedia dell'Arte: an Actor's Handbook* [London and New York, 1994], 40); 'The art of the full Mask lies in moving the mask in such a way that the attention is never distracted away from the face, by the body' (Johnstone, op. cit., 196). This emphasis on the presence of an audience is necessary: 'The Masks live in the eye of the beholder, not of the actor' (Rudlin, op. cit., 42); 'a theatre audience revises and reconstructs a mask's physiognomy, when the circumstances, attitudes, and emotions of the character change' (Rehm, op. cit., 41).

12. This is despite what happens to Benin's kings (Jones, op. cit., 45) who are not relevant: not all masking traditions serve similar societal functions. Even in Athens, there are differences between acting and, say, the *archon basileus* 'becoming' Dionysos at the Anthesteria. Examples exist of many masks being given to one character, and of many masks for one actor, each of which demonstrates the impossibility of Jones's claims.

13. This is attested only for Hellenistic acting: Pickard-Cambridge, op. cit., 195–6; Simon, op. cit., 10, plates 2–5; Rehm, op. cit., 154 n. 22.

14. Easterling, 'Form and Performance' in Easterling, op. cit., 151–77, at 153. Cf. Wiles, op. cit., 133; Pickard-Cambridge, op. cit., 138–9. Modern audiences have no difficulties accepting role-sharing, even when the actors remain unmasked (Halliwell, op. cit., 199–200).

15. Cf. Zoja Pavlovskis, 'The Voice of the Actor in Greek Tragedy', *CW* 71 (1977), 123–33. Here notions of 'illusion' and 'disguise' are often unhelpfully confused.

16. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art* (Northampton, Mass., 1993), 36, with a full discussion of iconic faces at 28–37 (and more generally 24–59). McCloud is discussing cartoons, but makes explicit links with masks at 34. In the citation, I have substituted the word 'mask' for McCloud's 'cartoon', but the principle remains the same.

17. Rehm, op. cit., 41. Cf. Halliwell, op. cit., 203 and Oliver Taplin, 'Comedy and the Tragic' in Silk, op. cit., 188–202, at 189: 'The tragic mask is, in fact, rather blank and expressionless, somewhat solemn perhaps, waiting to take its "expression" from the events of the play.'

18. Wiles (n. 1), 169. The offstage decision that motivates Neoptolemus' entry at *Philoctetes* 1222 is the rule-proving exception in this case. That this is a late play (produced in 409) shows the beginning of a development towards a more psychological understanding of character, perhaps triggered by the rise of more literary genres designed for a reading public.

19. *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* (New York, 1997), 9: 'The actor does

not need to “become” the character. The phrase, in fact, has no meaning. There is no character. There are only lines upon a page . . .’

20. Halliwell, op. cit., 199, 201–3.

21. Cf. Rehm, op. cit., 40. In contrast, Green (n. 1), writes ‘I would suspect, however, that the underlying motive for the dedication of the masks in the earliest days of the theatre was a more serious one, to leave behind with the god in his sanctuary the “otherness” created in his honour, and not to take it out into normal society’ (79). This may be, but it is not essential to masked acting, particularly with institutionalized role-sharing.

22. Halliwell, op. cit., 197–9 also rightly downplays many false assumptions about masks and the god Dionysos.

23. Oliver Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: the Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1977), 33–4 blurs the difference between what is actually on stage (which because it is in a theatre will never be fully like life), and how the audience perceives what is on stage (which can be illusionistic – ‘life-like’ – or not). The anecdote is found in the *Life of Aeschylus* [ed. Page], p. 2, lines 10–13, with a translation in Eric Csapo and William J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 260.

24. The importance of this date in the development of Athenian acting is rightly noted by Maarit Kaimio, ‘The Protagonist in Greek Tragedy’, *Arctos* 27 (1993), 18–33.

25. I am glossing over several issues of dating and authenticity that cannot be addressed here (such as with *Prometheus Bound* and *Women of Trachis*). Suffice it to say that I believe the claim to be true as it stands.

26. Halliwell, op. cit., 209 (and cf. 205) also argues for a minimalistic mask, ‘one functioning component of an actor’s appearance’. In contrast Webster, ‘The Poet and the Mask’, *Classical Drama and its Influences* (New York, 1965), 5–13 suggests that in the fifth century individual masks were made for individual characters, and this great diversity only became conventionalized by Hellenistic times (R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome* [Cambridge, 1985], 11). There is a sense in which this remains possible: that masks were made individually but conformed to one of the six types I am about to describe; that individual masks were created according to minimalistic designs. This is not what Webster means, however.

27. Douglas M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens: an Introduction to the Plays* (Oxford, 1994), 258.

28. Sommerstein, op. cit., 47; cf. Laura M. Stone, *Costume in Aristophanic Poetry* (Salem, 1984), 22–7. Sommerstein continues, suggesting how this could be ‘darkened’ in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women*, while still maintaining a light/dark distinction: ‘the swarthy complexions of the Danaids, at once African and unfeminine – and surprisingly appropriate, to these maidens who first reject marriage and then, when compelled to submit, murder their husbands – and the still darker features (cf. *Supp.* 719, 745, 888) of the Egyptian pursuers.’ In practice, ‘dark’ skin could reasonably be a reddish colour, much like the colour of red-figured pottery. Similarly, there is no need to assume any especial paleness in the masks of Sophocles’ Tyro (fr. 648) or Euripides’ Ino (*Wasps* 1413–14).

29. Peter D. Arnott, *The Ancient Greek and Roman Theatre* (New York, 1971), 45.

30. The Greek equivalents given here are to show that the six basic mask types for which I am arguing do map naturally onto the Greek language. In no way am I trying to be prescriptive of the use of the words themselves in the dramatic texts.

31. ‘The Mask Types’ (Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*, third edition rev. and enlarged by Green, *BICS* Supplement 39 [London, 1978], 13–26) does not qualify the difference between (comic) young women and middle-aged women (masks S, SS and T, TT) but the difference illustrated is only the presence of some facial lines and the absence of a part in the hair of the middle-aged masks. In tragedy the difference need not be more than this.

32. Halliwell, op. cit., 200–3. I often remind students that this is a world before corrective lenses, and for many viewing at a distance would be difficult: this is an undervalued reason for the importance of the chorus in fifth-century drama.

33. Cf. Wiles (n. 7), 179. By Hellenistic times there was an increased desire to represent physiognomic factors. While the concept in Greek thought that character is denoted in appearance goes back to Homer (e.g., Thersites in *Iliad* 2), I can see no indications of its influence on fifth-century masking. For Hellenistic interest in physiognomics and masks, cf. Wiles, *ibid.*, Theophrastus, *Characters*, and ps.-Aristotle, *Physiognōmonika*. The minimalist view of masks offered

here is, in fact, latent in Pollux (a scholar from the second century A.D., whose list is available in translation at Csapo and Slater, op. cit., 398–402), in Pickard-Cambridge, op. cit., 193–5, and in Webster (n. 31), 13–26: masks in the more extensive lists are grouped according to categories of age and sex. The reason for the further subdivisions of mask types in all these lists is that it is now the eye of a taxonomist, rather than that of a theatre-goer, that is looking at the masks.

34. Vase-painting suggests ‘tragic masks were used by the principals in the satyr play, which helps to reinforce the belief that the satyr play was primarily self-parody’ (Walton, op. cit., 158), but artistic conventions are not always prescriptive. I believe that there were significant differences between comic and tragic masks, but precisely what these were remains uncertain because each vase-painter had his own iconographic idiom. Taplin’s reflections on the *Choregoi* vase (n. 17, 189–90) might not be quite so straightforward as a result.

35. Jones, op. cit., 45; this is echoed by Taplin (n. 23), 35.

36. Wiles (n. 7), 131.

37. It is worth at least mentioning the effect this has on anonymous characters. When we read a play today, we see lines attributed to ‘Messenger’ or ‘Shepherd’ (or even ‘Chorus’) and we treat them differently than we do those of named characters. With only six basic mask types, audience expectations for every character that comes on stage is at the same high level. Perhaps part of the surprise with Euripides’ *Telephus* in 438 can be explained because costume and body language were not consonant with ‘Telephus’, and there was nothing to individuate the character in the mask. Students and actors react differently to characters if they have to cross out the word ‘Messenger’ in their translations, and call him (or her?) by a real name. Taplin (n. 23), 82 n. 1 makes a similar point about the costumes Messengers wear.

38. One could add ‘script’ as a fourth element. Johnstone, op. cit., 181–2 emphasizes the non-repeatability of performance when mask and text are combined, which provides unexpected corroboration for the single performance of Athenian plays in competition.

39. E. B. Caedel, ‘The Division of Parts among the Actors in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Coloneus*’, *CQ* 35 (1941), 139–47.

40. C. W. Dearden, *The Stage of Aristophanes* (London, 1976), 126 is needlessly concerned with the possibility of two characters wearing the ‘same’ mask type.

41. Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (Berkeley, 1978), 89; Walton, op. cit., 158. Halliwell, op. cit., 206 n. 36 doubts blind masks were used. Other blind masks are suggested for Sophocles’ *Thamyras* and at least one of his plays called *Phineus* (for Phineus and his blinded children). Sophocles acted the lead in *Thamyras* (he played the lyre), so this is an early play, before his retirement from performance (*Life of Sophocles* 4; translation available at Csapo and Slater, op. cit., 225); as such, it likely predates the institution of the actor’s contest c.449. In this early blinding, it remains just possible (in a way that it would not be later, I would contend) that a vertically bisected half-blind, half-sighted mask was used: ‘The story that [Thamyras] has one blue and one black eye was explained by Lessing as deriving from the mask worn by the actor who played the part, which had one blue eye, which he presented to the audience before the blinding, and one black eye, which he presented after it’ (Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Fragments* [Cambridge, Mass., 1996], 102–3); this would be very restrictive for movement, with the audience on three sides of the performance area: nevertheless, from time to time comedy seems to have achieved a similar effect, so it is not impossible.

42. Cf. Calame, op. cit., 26–31 and Buxton, op. cit., 38–9.

43. Richard Seaford describes the same effect being achieved differently in a modern production: ‘In the Oxford production of 1976 . . . the mask was simply turned upside down, so that Pol[yphemus]’ gory mouth became his wounded eye’ (*Euripides: Cyclops* [Oxford, 1984], 220).

44. Cf. C. W. Marshall, ‘Idol Speculation: the Protean Stage of Euripides’ *Helen*’, *Text & Presentation* 16 (1995), 74–9, at 76–7. It seems likely that the chorus of *Libation Bearers* also had gashes on their cheeks (Sommerstein, op. cit., 47; Pickard-Cambridge, op. cit., 192 suggests this for the chorus in Aeschylus’ *Suppliant Women* too). In this same category might also be placed the bruised face of Sophocles’ Tyro (Pickard-Cambridge, op. cit., 195). There is no need to assume any special reddening to explain Silenus in Euripides’ *Cyclops* 228.

45. The only instance where I can see value in having a mask depicting an age category other than the basic three (not counting children, which I am not considering here) is with Jocasta, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Oedipus himself is a mature man (he has been king for about ten years and has children), but his wife is also his mother (‘This woman [*gumē*] is his wife and mother . . . of his

children' says the chorus at l. 928, with ironic caesura). Certainly the old woman mask would be ridiculous in this context (old women are always barren in tragedy, e.g., Creusa in *Ion*, or Hecuba), but a mask that was clearly older would be desirable: might Jocasta be going grey? It is possible that even this is too specific, and that the *gunê* mask would be worn by any character aged, say, 30–50.

46. Walton, op. cit., 189.

47. S. P. Mills, 'The Death of Ajax', *CJ* 76 (1980), 129–35.

48. Peter Burian, 'Myth into *Muthos*: the Shaping of Tragic Plot' in Easterling, op. cit., 178–208, at 198 n. 34. Cf. Taplin (n. 41), 98–100; Rehm, op. cit., 40, Wiles (n. 1), 174.

49. In Euripides' *Andromeda* (and Sophocles' earlier version?; cf. Green [n. 1], 20–2) Medusa's severed head would have appeared as a mask. In Sophocles' *Phineus*, a mask may have been used to represent the decapitated head of Phineus' second wife (fr. 707a; Lloyd-Jones, op. cit., 334–5). In Aeschylus' *Isthmiasae*, a satyr play, satyr-actors, wearing satyr masks, appear on stage holding satyr masks; this must have been a striking effect (cf. Green [n. 1], 45 and 79, Taplin [n. 23], 420–2). Similarly, I am doubtful of the specific description of Taplin's 'Old Man Playing Antigone' (*Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Painting* [Oxford, 1993], 83–8): it is certain that the old man himself is already wearing a (comic) *gerôn* mask. For whatever reason, the man is wearing a dress and (though it is hard to see) carrying a female (*korê*?) mask. Might this rather be the sort of scene one would expect in a play set 'behind' a dramatic festival, such as Aristophanes' *Proagon*?

50. A modern production of *Orestes* (Euripides, *Orestes*, dir. Alexander Gelman, trans. John Peck and Frank Nisetich, prod. and dramaturg James T. Svendsen: the Twenty-Six Classical Greek Theatre Festival of the University of Utah, September 1996) accomplished the same effect by establishing an initial tableau with Orestes' body covered by a white sheet, drawing on modern iconic associations of murder scenes (familiar to the audience from television). When Orestes did eventually stir, the modern audience felt the same surprise that the ancient one would have felt.

51. There is 'possibly a somewhat feminine appearance for the unmanly Aegisthus, who is more than once called a "woman" by enemies' (Sommerstein, op. cit., 47). For Aristophanes, MacDowell, op. cit., 258 and n. 19 lists Agathon in *Thesmophorizusae*, the students in *Clouds*, Chaerephon in *Wasps* 1412–14 (and therefore also in the first production of *Clouds*, if he appeared as a character?). Contrast the woman in *Lysistrata* who tried to tan herself to appear more male (MacDowell, *ibid.*, 304). Similarly, the Relative in *Thesmophorizusae* once shaved is still dark-faced, as he tries to pass as a woman (MacDowell, *ibid.*, 309); this is clearly another instance of a special mask, with a detachable beard (detachable? not necessarily: with a single performance it need only be a beard that can be easily cut during the show; note the presence of stubble in a near-contemporary illustration of the play – cf. Taplin [n. 49], 36–41 and plate 11.4, Eric Csapo, 'A Note on the Würzburg Bell-Crater H5697 ("Telephus Travestitus")', *Phoenix* 40 [1986], 379–92).

52. In this context, it might be possible to make sense of the claim that in *Phaethon* Phaethon's corpse appeared smoking and charred (fr. 78.1 [= line 214]; unfortunately the fragmentary and corrupt nature of the text makes it unclear). While a baroque literal realization of this is not beyond Euripides, I suspect that the claim could have originated in an unusual death mask. Rather than representing the corpse with a white mask, because the youth was consumed by fire it seems plausible that he might be given a specially-created black mask. The body does not, at any rate, need to be kept off stage (cf. C. Collard, 'Phaethon' in Collard, M. J. Cropp, K. H. Lee (edd.), *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays* [Warminster, 1995], 202–3), and this would be sufficient to account for the meaning of the line in production.

53. Taplin (n. 41), 84–5, 127. There is no indication that the material, form, purpose or construction of choral masks differed in any way from that of actor masks.

54. K. J. Dover, 'Portrait-Masks in Aristophanes' in R. E. H. Westerdorp Boerma (ed.), *ΚΩΜΩΙΔΟΤΡΑΓΗΜΑΤΑ: Studia Aristophanea viri Aristophanei W. J. W. Koster in honorem* (Amsterdam, 1967), 16–28.

55. Dover, *ibid.*, 26.

56. This explanation helps clarify the story in Aelian (*Varia Historia* ii. 13) that when foreign audience members at the original production of *Clouds* asked who this Socrates was, the real Socrates (aged 45 in 423) stood silently in answer. The story makes sense whether there is a portrait mask or not (so Dover, *Aristophanes: Clouds* [Oxford, 1968], xxxiii; he acknowledges disagreement about what exactly the point is at xxxiii n. 1), but the opportunity to avoid confusion in the audience is maximized by using an established theatrical mask (the silenus from satyr-drama) in a novel

context (for a character in Old Comedy). The meaning of the mask ('Socrates looks like a silenus') is foregrounded or 'marked' by its context in a way that would not occur either with a tradition of portrait masks or with a standard mature male mask. As for other Old Comic 'portraits', again there is no need to go beyond conventional signs established for use in masks.

57. Cf. fr. 60; Ian C. Storey, 'The War Between the Poets', delivered at *CAMWS* (Omaha, Neb., April 21, 1995).

58. Though I do not agree with every aspect of the reconstruction, the point is made very clear by the computer model available at http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/stagecraft/mask_mm/rotmask1.html [URL is correct as of 10.1.99].

59. E. R. Dodds, *Euripides: Bacchae* (Oxford, 1960), 113–14.

60. Pollux does list Actaeon among his 'special' masks: if it is based in fact (and not an 'educated' guess), it could derive from a Hellenistic tragedy. Similar doubts could be raised about a mask representing 'Euhippe daughter of Cheiron changing into a horse in Euripides' (Csapo and Slater, op. cit., 400). Precise as this entry appears, there is no known play in which these characters occurred.

61. Cf. Csapo, 'Deep Ambivalence: Notes on a Greek Cockfight', *Phoenix* 47 (1993), 1–28, 115–24, esp. 1–8, 120–4, with the extensive bibliography on p. 1.

62. Dearden, op. cit., 125.

63. This is suggested by *Heracles*, 883–4. For what it is worth, Lyssa does appear on Pollux's list of special masks. Based on *Plutus*, 422–4, it is possible Poverty was also given an Erinyes mask (cf. Halliwell, op. cit., 204–5).

64. Dodds, op. cit., 131. The idea has been accepted most recently by Bernard Gredley, 'Comedy and Tragedy – Inevitable Distinction: Response to Taplin' in Silk, op. cit., 203–16, at 203 and 214 n. 2.

65. An alternative is that the character has two masks, one for his incarnation as the 'human' Stranger, and a second for the divine Dionysos, but this seems not to be preferable. However, without a better understanding of how Odysseus was staged in Euripides' *Philoctetes* and Hera in Aeschylus' *Semele*, we cannot be certain (cf. Taplin [n. 23], 428 n. 1).

66. I presume that both characters (like most of the heroes at Troy after the ten-year expedition) are middle-aged men. Even here, this is clearly part of a deliberate effect, for there are three other such characters in the play: Menelaus and Agamemnon (both played by the same actor) and Odysseus.

67. Cf. Walton, op. cit., 70 for a preliminary discussion.

68. J.-P. Vernant, 'The God of Tragic Fiction' in Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1988), 181–8; Halliwell, op. cit., 197.

69. Cf. Rainer Friedrich, 'Everything to Do with Dionysos? Ritualism, the Dionysiac, and the Tragic' in Silk, op. cit., 257–83, at 268–9.

70. Versions of this paper have been delivered to the Department of Classics, Linguistics, and Modern Languages at Concordia University in Montréal, March 1998, and to the Classical Association of Canada, in Ottawa, May 1998. I would like to offer thanks to the audiences of these occasions, to Jim Svendsen and Andrew Sherwood, and to Ian Storey from whose conversations I always leave the richer.