



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

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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.

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DIDASKALIA

VOLUME 12 (2015)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

12.01	Review - Euripides' <i>Ion</i> at Barnard/Columbia	1
	Talia Varonos-Pavlopoulos	
12.02	Review - <i>Antigona</i> at West Park Presbyterian Church	7
	Michael Goyette	
12.03	ADIP- The Masks of <i>Nō</i> and Tragedy: Their Expressivity and Theatrical and Social Functions	12
	Gary Mathews	
12.04	Review and Interview - <i>Stink Foot</i> at The Yard, London	29
	Julie Ackroyd	
12.05	Review - <i>Bacchae</i> at Teatro Technis, London	33
	Julie Ackroyd	
12.06	Roman Comedy in Performance: Using the Videos of the 2012 NEH Summer Institute	37
	Timothy J. Moore and Sharon L. James	
12.07	Interviews and Reflections on the NEH Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance, or What We Did at Roman Comedy Camp	51
	Mike Lippman and Amy R. Cohen	
12.08	Review - <i>Oedipus the King</i> at Randolph College	56
	Cristina Pérez Díaz	
12.09	Review - 51st Season of Classical Plays at the Greek Theatre in Syracuse: Aeschylus's <i>The Suppliants</i>, Euripides's <i>Iphigenia in Aulis</i>, and Seneca's <i>Medea</i>	59
	Caterina Barone	
12.10	Review - <i>Fatman</i> at Move to Stand and <i>Orpheus</i> at Little Bulb Theatre	63
	Stephe Harrop	
12.11	Review - <i>Medea</i> at The Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film	66
	Amy R. Cohen	
12.12	Dictating Parody in Plautus' <i>Rudens</i>	69
	Seth Jeppesen	

Note

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

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

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

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

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

Inward Versus Outward Expressivity

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



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



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



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

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

For all their beauty and artistic refinement, *nō* masks may at first sight seem remarkably unprepossessing. While they are essentially naturalistic in appearance rather than distorted or excessively stylized,⁷ they exhibit a relative lack of (at least obvious) animation. This understated quality is due to an ambivalence of expression in all of the mask features. The eyes in a *nō* mask typically resist any definite impression of focus: one eye, usually the right, looks slightly downward, while the other looks more forward. This asymmetry has been explained by one *nō* mask maker as indicating the

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

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

It is not the case that all *nō* masks are equally inward looking. The young woman mask, for example, is more so than the masks for the male characters. And between the latter, the anguished warrior is perhaps more expressive than his successful counterpart.¹⁰ Here we glimpse the broad range of subjects and character types (and therefore expressive modes) in the *nō* repertoire—probably much broader than in tragedy. In modern times the repertoire has been organized into five categories, somewhat analogous to the generic distinctions between tragedy, satyr play and comedy (New as well as Old) within Greek drama. These categories comprise plays about gods, warriors, women, deranged characters (often but not exclusively female), and demons.¹¹ The plays about gods are generally auspicious, and while the demons of the last category can be scary and threatening, their force is usually quelled by an appeal to protective deities. In neither case is the inner life of the god or demon usually of particular importance.¹² What matters is that the strength of the supernatural being is brought forth, and accordingly their masks have a



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Theatrical and Social Functions of the *Nō* Mask

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

most concerned with “story,” notably the definitive plays of the second through fourth categories, the events have usually happened in the distant past—indeed, in a former lifetime of the *shite*. In such cases the *shite* is a spirit suffering from continued attachment to the world of the living, reflecting the fundamental view of the human condition in medieval Japanese Buddhism. The spirit recounts key events of his or her life, culminating in an intense encounter with the factors contributing to attachment, an encounter that can allow for insight and, sometimes, actual enlightenment. This process involves a distillation of the character’s psychological state to its essence, and its theatrical power lies in the audience’s being drawn gradually into an intense identification with that state.²⁴

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

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

This performance ideal still guides the art of *nō* actors and the spectatorship of *nō* audiences today. And the mask, with its powerfully expressive inward orientation, is a key element in its realization. Interestingly, the *nō* mask has always been thought actually to contain the spirit of its character, put into the inert wood by the skill of the mask maker.²⁵ Thus the mask is a key element in the actor’s “becoming” the character, not just on an external mimetic level but by animating the spirit within the mask. When asked what is most important about the mask for the *nō* performer, one actor answered: “The eyes and mouth. With a good *nō* mask, her (his) eyes are watching me with deep emotion and her mouth starts to talk to me saying something about her story” (Kinue Oshima, quoted by Kitazawa 2015b). Indeed, audiences are often moved to tears by the impact of a mask (always, of course, in conjunction with the other elements of an effective performance). Masks are treated with the utmost reverence, as though they contained a living being. Normally they are stored in silk bags inside lacquer boxes and are brought out only for performances. Even when merely exhibited for display, then they are meant to be handled at all times with similar care. Before putting on a mask the actor bows prayerfully to it to beckon the spirit within to come to life during the performance. It requires considerable skill on the part of the actor to

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

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

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

The performing arts have always had a place in Confucianism as a means of fostering such self-understanding and empathy for others. Zeami highlights this Confucian purpose for *nō* in the following anecdote about the relations between the shogun Yoshimitsu Ashikaga²⁹ and one of his mistresses, Lady Takahashi, in *Talks on Sarugaku*, a collection of his thoughts about his art from late in his career compiled (with commentary) by his son Motoyoshi:

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

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

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

Theatrical and Social Functions of the Tragic Mask

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹ Yoshimitsu (r. 1368–94) was Zeami’s patron and thus responsible for fostering the development of *nō*.

into a refined art form under Zeami's hand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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