Pantomime Dancing and Metamorphosis Literature in Late Antiquity

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My inspiration for this work came from reading Karl Galinsky's *Augustan Culture. An Interpretive Introduction.* and then Jennifer Ingleheart's 'Et mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe. (Tristia 2.51.9) Ovid and the Pantomime,' in Hall and Wyles, *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*. Remembering my undergraduate reading of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* from almost forty years ago I wondered if the nexus between pantomime dancing and metamorphosis tales to be found in these two works might not be an indicator of a wider relationship. I applied for admission to the Ph.D. program at Macquarie University in October 2012 and formally enrolled in April 2013. I was not aware of Ismene Lada-Richards' articles

Mutata corpora: Ovid's Changing Forms and the Metamorphic Bodies of Pantomime Dancing. *Transaction of the American Philological Association,* Volume 143, Number 1*,* Spring 2013 and 'Dancing Trees: Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Imprint of Pantomime Dancing,' *American Journal of Philology*, Volume 137, Number 1, Spring 2016, until they were drawn to my attention after the completion of the first draft of this thesis in August 2016. I have incorporated material from these articles into this draft and while I concede there are elements in the second work that could be seen as pre-empting some of the ideas that underpin my thesis they clearly did not inspire them.

Contents.

ABSTRACT

Almost coincident with the end of the Roman Republic and Augustus' assumption of imperial power, Tragedy, a genre Rome had inherited from Greece and never been entirely successful in adapting to its own ends, disappeared almost entirely from the literary record as a performance genre. Tragedy on stage would henceforth be restricted to the performances of the pantomimes wherein a single dancer would enact all the roles in a given tragedy.

Pantomime along with its more low-brow travelling companion mime, which similarly replaced comedy as a genre, would remain the dominant theatrical performance styles in the Roman and subsequent Byzantine Empires until their banning under Canons 51 and 62 of the Council in Trullo seven hundred years later.

Approximately twenty-five years after the generally accepted date for the introduction of pantomime to the Roman world by the dancers Bathyllus of Alexandria and Pylades of Cilicia, 23/22 BCE, Ovid, drawing upon a long-established Greek tradition would assay the first major account in Latin of the metamorphosis tales that were such a feature of the mythology Rome had inherited from its eastern neighbours. Tales which either involved incidences of metamorphosis or which were, like Ovid's 15 book opus, a compendium of such tales would appear again and again in both languages (but most frequently in Greek) over the next five hundred years – the last major example being the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus written approximately 520CE, coincidentally very close to the point at which Justinian would deliver the first of a series of body-blows to pantomime by withdrawing support for theatre in order to finance his wars of reconquest in Italy.

It is the contention of this thesis that there was what amounts to a symbiotic relationship between pantomime and metamorphosis tales that accounts both for the longevity of each and the temporal parallels between them. Simply put, a great deal of the popularity of the pantomime lay in the extraordinary plasticity of the dancers and their ability to embody thereby the transformations of the famous tales, and by doing so raise the tantalising possibility that the tales could be true.

Despite long-held claims of the Roman 'invention' of the genre, modern scholars are in general agreement that what appeared at the court of Augustus at

the beginning of the generation prior to the commencement of the Common Era, was simply a modification of a long pre-existing Greek practice. With this in mind it is the further contention of this work that pantomime and its retelling of the traditional Greek stories operated in parallel with the display orators of the Second Sophistic as a means by which those who identified themselves as Greek kept their culture and traditions alive during the long centuries of Roman rule.

Introduction.

Chapter One draws upon the work of Richard Buxton, P.M.C. Forbes Irving, Harold Skulsky, Marina Warner, Caroline Walker Bynum, Penelope Murray, Ingvild Saelid Gilhus and others to examine the history of metamorphosis in the literary record and to demonstrate that metamorphosis tales for the Greeks of the Classical and immediate post-Classical periods were far more than the 'picturesque tales', which H.J. Rose would dismiss them as when speaking of Nonnus' take on them in 1940. In fact, drawing upon the philosophers and religious educators Ernan McMullin and Norbet Luyten, it will attempt to demonstrate that metamorphosis tales were for the Greeks a metaphorical shorthand by which they tried to explain the nature of the physical universe and their place within it. Moreover they were something that offered the prospect of bodily renewal after the normal span of corporeal existence.[1] In addition, after their subjugation by Rome, metamorphosis offered an explanation of the situation in which Greeks found themselves and a suggestion and hope that the situation would not be permanent.[2]

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[1] A great deal of the appeal of the Christian message in turning people of the Graeco/Roman world from the worship of the pagan gods, it will be argued lay in its directly addressing this issue.

[2] The concluding chapter to this thesis will draw upon the work of Marina Warner, Richard Buxton and others to demonstrate that metamorphosis as a concept was not limited purely to the pre-Christian world and that Augustine and later Aquinas, attempted to explain the phenomenon then use it as a weapon against the remnants of paganism by characterising it as an illusion wrought by daemonic forces and, ultimately, the Devil himself. Thereafter metamorphosis would always be associated with 'the dark side.' In the Middle Ages it would be manifest in an interest in dopplegangers and werewolves and in the Renaissance in the paintings of proto-Surrealists such as Hieronymous Bosch. As the Age of Exploration took Europeans once more into contact with established pagan societies, particularly in the Americas, they would discover through the writings of Ramon Pane, Peter Martyr de Angleria, and more recently Lafcadio Hearn and Jean Rhys, the world of zombies (or revenants) and shamanism. The Age of Science would lead to a new literary interest resulting from a perversion of that science – prima facie examples being Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* The rise of psychology would lead to an interest in the idea of multiple personalities and an exploration of the daemons that lurk within and to the nightmarish visions of Franz Kafka. Even the late twentieth century's own unique manifestation of metamorphosis – the super hero – can be seen as emanating from the dark side. The Hulk, Spider Man and the X Men mutants, after all, are all tormented beings who long to be free of their alter egos.

The major gap in the literature relating to this topic, it will be argued, lies in the period that is of vital consequence for this study – namely the 2nd to 6th centuries of the Common Era. Richard Buxton, for instance, skirts this period almost entirely with only a cursory nod to Nonnus, while other studies take as their starting point the Middle Ages and the attempts of Christian scholars to accommodate and rework Ovid. Scholars such as Glen Bowersock and Laura Miguelez Cavero who do write extensively about Hellenistic poetry (much of it Egyptian in origin) tend to concentrate on stylistic linkages and place these works under an umbrella of a late flowering (perhaps whimsical in nature) of a general interest in mythology without really addressing how many of the titles we have (admittedly many of them of lost works) refer specifically to metamorphosis. This thesis has attempted to address this by an analysis of the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus that demonstrates that the theme of metamorphosis in this work, indeed the flowering of the cult of Dionysus between the 2nd and 5th centuries CE, were indices of an interest that was far from being purely archaic in nature.

Chapter II draws on the seminal work of Lillian B. Lawler and more recent studies by F.G. Naerebout, S.H. Lonsdale and Yana Zarifi to argue that dance held in Classical Greek society a role in religious, cultural and social life that closely parallels and in a number of important ways complements that of the metamorphosis tales. Although this is *sensu stricto* outside the time frame of this thesis, it is important to establish the importance of dance as a means by which Greeks replicated the cycle of the seasons, trained for war and enacted a myriad of social transactions, as opposed to Rome where, as Cicero famously remarked 'a man only dances if he is drunk or unbalanced mentally',[3] in order to successfully argue that not only was pantomime dancing not a Roman innovation, it never *could* have been.

Chapter III discusses how the various forms of dance examined in Chapter II virtually disappeared from the literary record following pantomime's arrival at Rome. Drawing on the work of Ruth Webb, Edith Hall, Ismene Lada-Richards, Silvia Montiglio and John Jory in particular it will

[3] Cicero, *Pro Murena* 13.7, C. MacDonald (trans) Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass, 1976, 201.

outline the early history and major stylistic features of the genre. Drawing upon these scholars it will examine the idea that pantomime achieved its final modification at Rome. It will further suggest that it is highly unlikely that the two Greek-speaking performers credited with this - the one from Alexandria and the other from Cilicia - made their way to Rome independently of one another and without the necessary performance skills already intact.[4] It will also refer to an inscription[5] from Pompeii, and dated a year or two at the most after pantomime's supposed invention at Rome, listing the performers in a pantomime competition. With one exception the performers are from the Greek-speaking East. Given the years of training Libanius tells us in his famous *Oration* 64 were necessary for a pantomime to undertake before reaching performance standard, the chances of the number of dancers who are recorded in the inscription, being of a standard not only to perform, but to *compete* in public a mere year or two after the genre's 'invention' seem very slim indeed. On the other hand, the fact that the majority of the performers are from the East, presumably having travelled to Pompeii especially to compete, indicates a robust pre-existing tradition among the Greeks.

Over the four succeeding chapters, taking inspiration from the seminal work of Bernhard Zimmermann, who in 1990 demonstrated the ways it could argued Seneca had been influenced, albeit reluctantly, in the writing of his tragedies by the way that theatrical performance in the Roman world had been changed permanently by the advent of pantomime, this thesis will examine four major literary works heavily involving metamorphosis themes. Two of these are from the Roman period and two from the Byzantine and are works that unlike Seneca's tragedies were not designed for dramatic realisation,[6] but

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[4] The lack of a literary record of pantomime in the East prior to the period in question has to be balanced against the lack of almost *any* literary records from the East in this period. It could also be argued that if pantomime dancing was a relatively common phenomenon in the area, as I believe it was, there would be no particular reason for it to feature greatly in the sources. (We must always remember that it was only because of the dancers' involvement with members of the imperial family, beginning with Augustus, that pantomime does provide such a large component of the Roman literary record.)

[5] One of my few uses of epigraphic sources.

[6] It is generally accepted that Seneca's tragedies were not designed for stage performance – moreover that they contain features that would have made them virtually impossible to stage. However most scholars are comfortable with the idea that they were intended for dramatic readings. (See B. Zimmermann, *Seneca und der Pantomime.* (trans) Hall, In Hall and Wyles,

which nonetheless show clear evidence of the influence of pantomime in their writing.

The first of these, perhaps unsurprisingly, is Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* Drawing on the work of Jennifer Ingleheart, Elaine Fantham and others this thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the episodic nature of the work and its fascination with in-between states, that is to say the moment of transition, coupled with the unnatural, theatrical description of the sylvan settings of the majority of his stories, not only makes them ideal for pantomime realisation, but creates the possibility that they were specifically written with such an adaptation in mind.[7]

The second work from the Roman period to be examined is Apuleius' fantasy novel, also entitled *Metamorphoses,* which for the purposes of this thesis will be referred to by its alternative title the *Golden Ass.*

Drawing on John Winkler's ground-breaking work on the concept of Actor/Auctor, it will be argued that Lucius throughout the work is an unwilling participant in a tale, bizarrely enough of his own devising, which draws heavily upon pantomime[8]. Regine May[9] has written extensively about the elements of Plautine comedy she sees as embedded in the work, but less extensively about those of pantomime.[10] A number of the key elements she identifies as disqualifying the pantomimic influences in the work, it will be argued with reference to St. Augustine, were in fact features of the pantomime unique to Carthage where Apuleius grew up and at about the time that he was there.

2008. See also: Alessandra Zanobi, *Seneca's Tragedies and the Aesthetics of Pantomime.* Bloomsbury, London, New York 2014

[7] Little credence can be given to Ovid's rather ingenuous claim in the *Tristia* that he had written nothing for the theatre, given that we know of one tragedy from his pen – the no-longer extant *Medea* – and his subsequent comment that he was aware that sections of his work were being performed on the Roman stage. Given also that work on the *Metamorphoses* was broken off because of his exile, ostensibly because of the offence Augustus had taken to the erotic nature of the *Ars Amatoria*, it makes perfect sense he would write it in a manner that would make it easily adaptable into the emperor's favourite entertainment medium.

[8] Not simply in the spectacle he witnesses at Corinth.

[9] R. May, *Apuleius and Drama. The Ass on Stage,* Oxford Classical Monographs, 2006.

[10] R. May,The Metamorphosis of Pantomime: Apuleius' Judgement of Paris. (Met 10.30-34) in Hall and Wyles (eds) *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, Oxford University Press, 2008, 338-362.

Where the approach to this work differs from that of other scholars is in relationship to the issue of the *Judgement of Paris* pantomime which Lucius witnesses in Corinth,[11] a performance which because of its elaborate *mise-en-scene* and multiple dancers, scholars are generally reduced to describing as a pantomime which is not a pantomime and yet is nothing else!

Drawing upon Stephen J. Harrison and Maaike Zimerman-de Graaf it will be argued that Lucius, particularly in his metamorphosed state as an ass, is a prototype of the incompetent narrator whose eyes frequently deceive him and whose interpretation of what he does see is often ludicrously inaccurate and therefore, given the pantomime dancer's famous ability to evoke through gesture elaborate landscapes and to portray multiple characters, what Lucius actually witnesses is what a single, skilled pantomime wishes him to see.

The third case study is the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus – a work strangely neglected by scholars of the pantomime.[12] This is despite there being, by this writer's count 218 references to dance, nearly all mimetic in nature, in the work and 93 instances of metamorphosis. There is also in this work the most pronounced example of a 'close encounter' between metamorphosis and pantomime when in Book XIX Seilenos engages in a pantomime dance competition with Maron and self-metamorphoses into the river he was dancing in imitation of! This, it will be argued, not only demonstrates that the symbiotic relationship between metamorphosis tales, mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, was self-evident to the ancients themselves, but was still in operation well into the fifth century when Nonnus was writing.

It is not only scholars of pantomime who have neglected Nonnus. There is comparatively little work[13] that has been done on him to date, especially in English. The work published over the past forty years by Professor Vian in France has never been translated into English and the PhD thesis of Laura Miguelez Cavero, perhaps the foremost contemporary scholar of Nonnus, she has informed this writer in personal correspondence, has never

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[11] The first major direct intersection between metamorphosis tales and dancing in the sources.
[12] Ismene Lada-Richards makes a passing reference to a 'forthcoming' study in her 2007 work *Silent Eloquence*, but apart from a passing reference in her 2016 paper (above) I have found nothing in her oeuvre to suggest it was ever published.
[13] Compared, for instance, to the voluminous work that has been done on Ovid or Apuleius.

been translated from the original Spanish and her informative *Poems in Context. Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid,* much like Alan Cameron's earlier work on the subject, Neil Hopkinson's *Greek Poetry in the Imperial Period,* and even to a certain extent Glen Bowersock's *Greek Poetry in the Hellenistic Period* concentrates on stylistic similarities between the group of poets once referred to as 'The School of Nonnus'. In the slender volume produced by the Cambridge Philological Society under the editorship of Neil Hopkinson,[14] there is a good deal of linguistic analysis, comparison between Nonnus and his model Homer and discussion of the assimilation of Dionysus' supposed conquest of India to the Alexander legend,[15] but there is little or no discussion of the significance of dance in the *Dionysiaca*, despite, as this thesis maintains, it being a virtual leitmotif of the work. I have therefore been forced to rely upon my own analysis of these details of the work, rather than responding to, and in a number of important instances countering, the research of others as I was able to do with Ovid and Apuleius.[16]

The final case study is Procopius' *Secret History (Anecdota).* While it may seem strange to be looking for a linkage between metamorphosis tales and pantomime dancing in what is ostensibly a work of history, as Glen Bowersock has demonstrated,[17] the lines between history and fiction in the ancient world were by no means as clearly drawn as we expect them to be in modern times,[18] and Anthony Kaldellis has argued that this is especially true of Procopius.[19]

That the *Secret History* is replete with images and metaphors drawn from the theatre is well-known – the frequent citations of Aristophanes and Aeschylus and the infamous description of Theodora's career as a mime artist

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[14] *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus,* Cambridge Philological Society, 1994.

[15] Which I will discuss in Chapter VIII when I look at the role of pantomime and metamorphosis in the attempts of Greek speakers to maintain their cultural heritage under Roman domination.

[16] The exception to this being the the Brill Companion to Nonnos (2016) which still, unfortunately by and large ignores the significance of dance throughout the work.
G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History. Nero to Julian,* University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London ,1994.
I have myself previously discussed this. See R. Harding; 'The Historian as Dramatist. The Use of Speeches in Thucydides', *Classicum,* April 2011, 8-14.
A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea. Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

being prime examples. Indeed he begins the work with an allegation that Belsarius' wife Antonia was also a mime in her teens – something it will be argued was impossible as she had already been married for at least fifteen years by the time Justin overturned the laws forbidding marriage between members of the upper classes and members of the *infamia* (among whom mime artists were pre-eminent) especially so Justinian could marry Theodora.

What has never previously been recognised to this writer's knowledge, is that there is a moment of metamorphosis in the work which is decidedly pantomimic in its description. This is Justinian's daemonic transformation in his dining hall (stage) in front of an assembly of courtiers and his closest companions (audience) and the way Procopius describes his face as dissolving into a featureless blank that directly parallels the 'featureless' closed-mouth mask of the pantomime. It will be argued that it makes perfect sense for Procopius to use mime, the genre that had replaced comedy, as a metaphor for the activities of the women who used sex as a weapon to wield power in his story, while reserving pantomime, which had replaced tragedy, to describe the inner nature of the deeply despised Justinian.

Chapter VIII will examine the idea that pantomime served as a means by which Greeks maintained their cultural identity under Rome. Scholars such as Simon Goldhill and Tim Whitmarsh[20] have written extensively on the subject of 'Being Greek under Rome.'[21] However, the emphasis in these studies has been upon the epideictic orators of the Second Sophistic and the agonistic festivals cities on the fringe of the Hellenistic world set up in order to be considered a participant in the Greek cultural inheritance.

Once we accept, however, the premise, also central to this thesis, that pantomime was a Greek performance genre telling Greek stories, it becomes possible to see that as Libanius put it, it was because of the dance that:

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[20] T.Whitmarsh, 'Greece is the World – Exile and Identity in The Second Sophistic.' In Goldhill, 2001

[21] The title, in fact of an excellent book on the subject, edited by Goldhill, 2001.

> *"Consequently, a goldsmith now will do not badly in a conversation with a product of the schools about the house of Priam or Laius."*[22]

and that the attacks upon pantomime made by sophists like Aristides, Apuleius and Dio Chrysostom were not simply over competition for performance venues and audience, but the right to be regarded as true custodians of Hellenic culture.

The final chapter will examine the pressure pantomime was subject to leading up to its ultimate banning under Canons 51 and 62 of the Council in Trullo. It will attempt to demonstrate that despite the pressures pantomime would find itself under because of its scandalous influence over members of the imperial household as late as the fourth century and the social upheaval of the theatre riots that followed the merging of the theatre claques and the circus colours, paradoxically, the link between pantomime and pagan mythology, which is argued throughout this work was its greatest source of strength, would ultimately be its undoing.

Prior to taking a tertiary teaching position in the Theatre/Media Department of Charles Sturt University in 2003 I had for twenty four years worked as an actor, writer and producer in television theatre and film. Ruth Webb has cited her own experience as a 'performer and teacher of dance',[23] and F.G. Naerebout[24] his forty year marriage to a ballerina, to justify a number of the conclusions arrived at in their work. With these precedents in mind I have, on occasion, drawn upon my own professional background in the performing arts in the formulation of the ideas contained in this thesis.

The approach for the most part has been to rely on literary sources. While by no means downplaying the work of Louis Robert, Lillian B. Lawler, Paul Veyne, John Jory and others in examining the iconography of ancient dance, I intend to agree with Naerebout[25] - for all that he rather overstates the

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[22] Libanius, *Oration* 64.112.
[23] R. Webb, *Demons and Dancers. Performance in Late Antiquity.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 2008, viii.
[24] F.G. Naerebout, *Attractive Performances. Ancient Greek Dance. Three Preliminary Studies.* J.G. Gieben, Amsterdam, 1997.
[25] See Chapter II.

case – that what we are inevitably presented with is a modern 'interpretation' of what are in a number of cases, far from unambiguous images[26] and my concern in this work is with the social impact of dance – that is to say what the ancients themselves thought. Indeed for the purposes of this thesis there are a number of important respects in which what people thought or believed to have happened is more important than what other evidence suggests might actually have been the case.

I have also as far as possible in my use of the sources tried to identify the reasons behind the attitudes or stances taken by individual writers, for it is undoubtedly true that there is nearly always an agenda at play in ancient sources and that this is particularly true of a topic as controversial as pantomime dancing. I have also as far as possible tried to balance statements in the sources regarding pantomime against statements made elsewhere by the same writer that directly contradict the position for which they are most often cited. For example, two of the most frequently quoted ancient writers on pantomime – Lucian and Libanius – make statements in other works that directly contradict their famous defences of pantomime. In the case of Libanius it seems likely that his attacks on pantomime were written during the reign of the theatre-abjuring Julian and the famous *Oration* 64*, 'On The Dancers'* was likely to have been composed while the theatre-loving Constantius held the imperial power. In the case of the mischievous Lucian the agenda is far less cut, but as Ismene Lada-Richards has observed:

> "We ought not to be surprised if we find one day among the Lucianic corpus a completely different rhetorical construction, an anti-pantomime tirade of the kind launched by Aelius Aristides and rebuffed by Libanius..."[27]

Having launched a satirical attack upon epideictic orators, of whom he was one himself, it may well have been that it suited his puckish sense of humour to defend that which for many of his fellow orators was indefensible.

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[26] That said, I fully concede that, as we shall see when we come to discuss Lucian and Libanius, the literary sources cannot always be taken at face value either.
[27] I. Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence. Lucian and Pantomime Dancing.* Duckworth and Co. London, 2007, 153.

Inconsistencies of this nature are perhaps inevitable. No performance genre in the Western Canon has as long a continuous history or has generated as much controversy as pantomime. No aspect of pagan mythology caused as many problems for the Christian writers of the Middle Ages as metamorphosis. There is clear evidence that the ancients themselves saw them as complementary forces and Rosie Wyles and Laura Miguelez Cavero have indicated to me in personal correspondence that they feel this study will meet a gap in the knowledge.

Chapter 1

"And astonishment took hold of all who were watching." [1]

Metamorphosis in the Ancient World.

> "This obsessive fantasy of transformation read as one sign among many in the preliterate code, no doubt has a good deal to tell us about primeval patterns of belief; and about the hidden grammar of all belief."[2]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role metamorphosis tales played in the lives of the citizens of the Greek, Roman and Byzantine worlds during the period that pantomime dancing flourished and to go some way to addressing the question posited by Richard Buxton in his excellent modern study of the phenomenon of metamorphosis:

> "Did the Greeks take the possibility of metamorphosis 'seriously'? If they did take it seriously, did they do it all the time, or only some of the time, or only in some contexts?"[3]

In view of the fact that Ovid and Apuleius, whose work we will examine in more detail in subsequent chapters, were both Romans – or in the case of Apuleius a Latin-speaking citizen of the Roman Empire – writing for a Latin-speaking audience, this question needs to be extended for the purposes of this thesis to include the Romans[4]. Indeed Nonnus, who this thesis will also

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[1] Homer, *Odyssey* 3.371. E.V. Rieu (trans) D.C.H. Rieu (rev) Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1946, 1991, 36.

[2] H. Skulsky; *Metamorphosis. The Mind in Exile.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.,1981, 1.

[3] R.Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment. Greek Myths of Metamorphosis.* Oxford University Press, 2009, 34.

[4] While a case can be made for arguing that Roman interest in metamorphosis tales was as great as that of the Greeks it was undoubtedly different. Rather than seeing it as process, both real and metaphorical, whereby the changes inherent in nature could be explained, for the Romans it was the grotesque and monstrous results of the changes that piqued their interest. That is not to say, as we shall see when we look at Aeschylus' description of Io's metamorphosed state, that there were not aspects of metamorphosis the Greeks found similarly grotesque. Elaine Fantham, *Ovid's Metamorphoses.* 2004,105. draws our attention to Horace's injunction forbidding tragic playwrights from showing the grotesque or offensive.

examine, although an Egyptian Greek[5] was writing in a world that had been subject to six centuries of Roman rule, four centuries of Christian influence and over a century of Christian dominance, not to mention the influences of Judaism and the myriad of cults for which Egypt had been a staging post.

Nor was Ovid the first Roman to explore the topic. Elaine Fantham draws our attention to the fact that:

> "Cicero had apparently written or translated two short mythological poems of a type fashionable in Hellenistic Alexandria on Glaucus the marine god and on the halcyon birds. Both must have been fantasy tales of metamorphosis, perhaps translations from Nicander's lost poem."[6]

So interest in tales involving metamorphosis cannot be thought of as existing in a hermetically sealed bubble of Greek interest.

Any study of metamorphosis in the ancient world almost inevitably begins with Ovid.

> "The work with which almost all scholars writing about metamorphosis take the subject *really* to begin is Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*"[7]

Leonard Barkan is even more adamant, not to say fulsome, on this score.

> "If we approach metamorphosis historically in the narrow sense, that is chronologically, a single work stands out as clear point of entrance. Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* while not the earliest source nor even the earliest collection of

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The two examples he cites are the metamorphosis of Procne and that of Cadmus into a snake. Generalisations should, of course, be avoided as far as possible, but on the whole we can say that the metamorphosis Buxton maintains inspired *thambos* in the Greeks was regarded by the Romans as repugnant and the products of the process as monstrosities.

[5] Although originally from Panopolis his elaborate descriptions of Beirut in the *Dionysiaca* have led scholars to suggest he must have spent much of his working life there.

[6] E. Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture, From Plautus to Macrobius.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1996/2013, 64.

[7] Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment.* 2009, 6.

> metamorphic tales, is the bible of a tradition – read, reread, translated, illustrated. Moralized. Reborn. Indeed the *Nachleben* of Ovid's poem is the index to a whole segment in the history of culture, a segment with its own rules that spans centuries, nations, religions and artistic media."[8]

I find this approach understandable, as it was the rediscovery of Ovid's great poem in the 12th century that gave modern audiences their first conduit into this aspect of Graeco/Roman myth ,[9] but also counter-productive as it creates the impression that Ovid's version (or rather versions) of these tales is the norm – or worse still the *only* version. The *Metamorphoses* itself needs to be seen as an act of metamorphosis – a reimaging of stories that had been part of the Greek world for at least seven hundred years[10] and if we accept Leonard Barkan's timeline for the end of the retelling of these stories[11], would be part of the fabric of the Graeco-Roman-Byzantine world for another six hundred.[12]

Both Buxton and P.M.C. Forbes-Irving whose *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*[13] is the most detailed account in English of pre-Ovidian metamorphosis history, tend to ignore or understate the philosophical impetus given to the notion of metamorphosis by Aristotle's *Metaphysics.* Caroline Walker Bynum tries to correct this imbalance, but possibly tilts it too far in the opposite direction. Writing of *On Generation and Corruption* she goes so far as to maintain that it possibly represents the major intellectual breakthrough in

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[8] L. Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh. Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism.* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1986, 1.

[9] It is, I think, important to establish that metamorphosis tales need to be seen as an aspect of not only religious belief, but as a means of explaining natural phenomena, rather than the 'fantastic tales' they were glibly dismissed as by a number of scholars in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. Barkan makes the very perceptive point that, "Had not the title already been used Ovid might have called his poem *De Rerum Natura.* Ovid always maintains among his primary purposes a concern with how things came to be and how we are to understand the world that has been given to us." Barkan, *the Gods Made Flesh.* 1986, 27.

[10] An attempted dating of Homer is beyond the remit of this paper, so how long the stories predate Ovid must remain an open question. Suffice it to say there is (see below) a branch of scholarship that attributes Homer with their origin.

[11] See Barkan, *The Gods made Flesh.*1986, 180.

[12] 'Retelling' here is the operative word. It is important to remind ourselves, whether or not we accept the theory that Ovid was adapting these stories as a metaphor for the rule of tyranny and, as we will discuss below, that of Augustus and Livia in particular, he was nonetheless taking stories that had been used to explain the world as the Greeks perceived it and adapting them to the uses of Romans in the first century of the Common Era.

[13] P.M.C. Forbes-Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths.* Oxford Classical Monographs, 1990.

the field prior to Ovid, claiming in fact that Aristotle's fundamental contribution to Western Culture,

> "was to speak of what he called generation and corruption – coming to be and the passing away- as not merely fluctuations of appearance, the adding and subtracting of qualities or 'skins' but the replacement of an existing substance by another."[14]

While we might argue that to describe the concept of generation and corruption as Aristotle's 'fundamental contribution to Western Culture' is to be somewhat dismissive of the remainder of his corpus, there is no doubt that his simple aphorism that marvels are not against nature, 'but against what we know of nature' would be of great use to Medieval thinkers schooled by their times to seek definitive answers to the questions posed by the natural world, and is one of the strongest indicators we have of what will be one of the major propositions of this chapter – that metamorphosis tales were for the ancients not simply tales of the gods and their doings, but a vital tool in attempting to understand the way in which the natural world functioned and their own role within it.

Writing at the start of the 3rd century CE, in *De resurrectione mortuorum* Tertullian would draw upon Aristotle to formulate what was essentially a rejection of the concept of metamorphosis, or at least an attempt to draw a distinction between it and the Christian belief in resurrection.

> *"To Aristotle, a thing that has changed ceases to be what it is and becomes something else."*[15]

Then he goes on a little contradictorily to seem to agree.

> *"To be changed is to exist in a different form."*[16]

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[14] C.W. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity.* Zone Books, New York, 2005, 177.

[15] When we look at the pre-Socratics (below) the concept of the difference between 'change', with its implications of a substratum of the previous entity remaining and 'replacement' becomes of paramount importance. Tertullian here seems to be arguing that change means replacement.

[16] Tertullian, *De ressurectione mortuorum.* In. J.G.P. Borleff (trans and ed), *Tertullian Opera Pt 2. Corpus Christianorium Series Latina*, Turnout, Berpolis, 1954, 1001-4.

We find a similar sentiment being expressed nearly three hundred years later by Boethius.

> *"This means that anything which turns away from goodness ceases to exist, and thus the wicked cease to be what they once were. That they used to be human is shown by the human appearance of their body which still remains."*[17]

As early as the pre-Socratics we find record of scepticism and downright disbelief being evinced as to the literality with which the myths, of which metamorphosis was such an important part, could be regarded. The question of mutability and change, however, was one that exercised them particularly. Empedokles, although sceptical of anything as dramatic and time compacting as metamorphosis, seems to have conceived of what Post-Darwinists might consider a primitive theory of evolution. Unfortunately Empedokles' original text is yet another that has been lost to us and we are reliant on Aetios' rather nightmarish account of his vision of a first incarnation of plants as animals, not quite the single-celled organisms modern science can identify, but composed of separate limbs and stems that sought out their corresponding parts in the second generation 'like creatures in a dream', evolving into the 'whole, natural forms' of present times.[18]

The easy answer to Buxton's question as to how seriously the Greeks took the metamorphosis stories might seem to be therefore – 'not at all, at least for the intellectual elite.' However, writing of Lucian and the 2nd century CE Bracht Branham has said:

> "it is simply not possible to isolate a norm in second century religious beliefs, even among educated Greeks; the evidence is too complex, contradictory, and ` incomplete. But it is not difficult to demonstrate that myths were still taken seriously in educated circles and

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[17] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. V.Watts, (trans and introduction) Penguin Classics, London, 1969, 94.
[18] See: G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven and M. Schofield (eds) *The Presocratic Philosophers; A Critical History with a selection of texts*, 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, 1983, Fr. 442.

> pondered as problems of interpretation to which many different approaches were devised."[19]

The case of Pausanias is instructive. Initially resistant to the value or truth of the mythological tales he eventually came to see them as riddles (*ainigmata)* that had been posed in the past by the wisest men of those times.

> *"In things relating to the divine, I will use the received tradition."*[20]

Earlier in the same book at 8.2.3-4 he justified this by arguing that although the mythological events, particularly those involving metamorphosis, no longer occurred and presumably by some evolutionary process were no longer possible, there had been a time in the past when they actually happened.

Although Pausanias would admit that his was a minority position there is ample evidence that the tales continued to have a metaphorical significance as a way of explaining the processes by which the physical world worked, even for those same intellectual elites. Perhaps the most useful account of the role myth continued to play, given that it comes a little over half-way through the period we are examining, comes in *On the Gods and Ordered Creation*, credited to Sallustius, praetorian prefect of Gaul 361-63 and Consul 363.

After posing the question as to why the ancients made use of myth and arguing that for his contemporaries pondering the questions posed by mythology was a good way of keeping their minds active, he continues:

> *"That myths are divine can be seen by those who used them. Myths have been used by inspired poets, by the best of philosophers, by those who established the mysteries, and by the gods themselves in oracle. But why the myths are divine it is the duty of philosophy to inquire. Since all existing things rejoice in that which is like them and reject*

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[19] R. Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence. Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 1989, 155.
[20] Pausanias, *A Guide to Ancient Greece*, Vol 1 8.8 2-3. P. Levi (trans) Penguin Books, London , 1971.

> *that which is unlike, the stories about the gods ought to be like the gods, so that they may both be worthy of the divine essence and make the gods well-disposed to those who speak of them; which could only be done by means of myths. Now the myths represent the gods themselves and the goodness of the gods – subject always to the distinction of the unspeakable, the revealed and the unrevealed, that which is clear and that which is hidden."*[21]

Metamorphosis itself was long regarded as being the element of the myths that stretched the credulity even of those who regarded myth as having a vital place in their inherited belief systems. Hercalitus and a century or so later Palaephatus[22] attempted to explain the phenomenon away as simple misunderstandings of commonplace events or as arising from metaphors and downright exaggerations.

In the first four decades of the twentieth century a great deal of work was done by German scholars in particular attempting to account for the metamorphosis tales through the aegis of the newly emergent discipline of anthropology. In 1903 M.W. Visser argued for a stage in Greek religion during which in common with a number of ethnic groups from Asia Minor and North Africa, they had worshipped animal gods. Visser's argument, in effect, was that metamorphosis tales were hangovers from this period. Kern further developed the theory in his 1930 essay *Metamorphose in Religion und Dichtung der Antike.* Earlier, in 1902, Weicker had argued more proscriptively that the Greeks believed that birds were the repository of souls, while earlier still Boetticher and Mannhardt had argued that the other major end result of the transformation process to be found in Hesiod and Ovid – trees and plants – harked back to a previous belief in tree gods and dryads.

The French scholar Lafaye writing only two years after Weicker, laid the groundwork for one of the major debates of the twentieth century

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[21] Sallustius, *Four Stages of Greek Religion.* G. Murray (trans) Columbia University Press, New York, 1912, 188-189.
[22] See: Palaephatus, *On Unbelievable Tales.* J. Stern (trans) Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Waucoda Il, 1996.

concerning metamorphosis by arguing that these tales had their beginning in Homer, hedging his bets somewhat by also arguing that the transformation elements of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were some sort of synthesis of pre-existing folk tales.

English-speaking scholars were relative latecomers to the topic. In 1970 G.S Kirk published his seminal and often-cited *Myth: Its meaning in Ancient Greece and other Cultures,*[23] arguing very firmly in favour of a pre-literary tradition of Greek myth upon which the writers known to us were drawing. N.J. Richardson,[24] argued that each myth essentially becomes the invention of the person telling it – and certainly when we come to examine the differences between Ovid and Virgil's treatment of the same material or that between Ovid and Hesiod or Ovid and Nonnus for that matter, it becomes evident that there is no such thing as a standard version of any particular myth and each teller reshapes them according to their own needs in order to create a metaphor for their own their times. In 1981 Harold Skulsky produced *Metamorphosis, The Mind in Exile,* which examines the link between identity and the retention of consciousness. Leonard Barkan's 1986 *Metamorphosis, the Pursuit of Paganism* examines the way in which the pagan and Christian worlds struggled to overcome one another, paradoxically through accommodation.[25] In 1990 P.M.C. Forbes-Irving produced his very detailed and useful sourcebook *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* and in 2009 Richard Buxton his highly readable *Forms of Astonishment, Greek Myths of Metamorphosis,* which despite its title divides its time between a free-ranging account of Greek, Roman, Eastern, Medieval and even Modern tales of metamorphosis and debunking the majority of Forbes-Irving's conclusions. To this list we can add Marina Warner's rather eclectic 2002 *Fantastic Metamorphoses. Other Worlds* and Ingvild Saelid Gilhuis' 2006 *Animals, Gods and Humans,* which despite being a work of Norwegian scholarship was written in English, Caroline Walker Bynum's 2005 *Metamorphosis and*

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[23]Kirk, *Myth:Its meaning in Ancient Greece and Other Cultures.* Cambridge University Press,1970. See especially 244-7.
[24] N.J. Richardson, *Greek Religion.* Oxford University Press, 1985.
[25] A concept Glen Bowersock also addresses, albeit not directly in relation to metamorphosis, in *Hellenism in Late Antiquity.* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1996.

Identity and Penelope Murray's *Bodies in Flux, Ovid's Metamorphoses.*[26] Other works such as Elaine Fantham's *Ovid's Metamorphoses* which look at the phenomenon through a more specific prism – that is to say as they occur in Ovid's masterwork – will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Richardson's argument that each myth is essentially the product of the teller gains force in the case of those tales where a number of scholars have argued[27] that they did not exist in the form they came to us via Ovid prior to the Alexandrian period and are therefore an invention of the Hellenistic poets. Forbes-Irving argues we can best illustrate this by looking at the way in which metamorphosis is portrayed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* In neither of these poems do we find transformations being undertaken by major gods as an act of vengeance, punishment or even pity (albeit often of a fairly dubious kind) as we do in Ovid. The transformations of humans in Homer are carried out by peripheral, non-Olympian gods who are closer to being magicians than true gods – Circe and Proteus – and as it is only himself that Proteus transforms in his attempts to elude Menelaus, technically it isn't a human transformation at all. As Forbes-Irving notes[28] the only transformations undertaken by an Olympian are performed by Zeus himself. They do not involve humans and their purposes are on the one hand portent, as when he turns a snake to stone to prefigure the fall of Troy, and as a warning on the other, as when he turns the Phraecian ship to stone as an admonition against the ferrying of more troops to the battle. The Niobe story is also referenced in the encounter between Achilles and Priam, but it is a story of Medusa-like petrification with no implication of a continuation of sensation.[29]

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[26] P. Murray, 'Bodies in Flux, Ovid's Metamorphoses', in D. Monserrat, *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings. Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity.* Routledge, London and New York, 1998.
[27] See Forbes-Irving , *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths,*1990, 7.
[28] *ibid* 8.
[29] Accounts of Niobe remaining sensate in her petrified state, such as Pausanias' account of the waterfalls falling as tears from the rock face alleged to be her following her petrification, seem to confirm the idea that they were a much later development.

> *"I myself have seen this Niobe when I was climbing up Mount Sipylus. From close up it is a rock or a cliff, which does not offer the visitor the image of a woman either grieving or otherwise, but if you go further off you will seem to see a woman downcast and in tears"*

Forbes-Irving, however, does ignore the transformations of the gods themselves that occur in the *Odyssey.* Athena's disguising herself as Mentor to accompany Pylos in search for his father is an often-cited example – in particular her departure from the shape she has assumed.

> *"So saying, green-eyed Athena went away, likening herself to a vulture and astonishment took hold of all who were looking, and the old man was amazed, as he saw it with his eyes."*[30]

There has been a great deal of scholarly debate over what is being described is a literal transformation or a metaphorical one. There is no need to reprise the arguments here. Generally speaking it can be held that English-speaking scholars such as Lattimore, Shewring, Pollard, Stanford and Buxton opt for the literal and earlier German scholars such as Heyne, Otto and Dirlmeier the metaphorical. The logic of much of the debate seems questionable, however, when one considers it seems fairly unequivocal that she was able to assume the *shape* of Mentor and therefore has undertaken one metamorphosis at least.

Tales involving the transformation of humans by a god either as a punishment or as a means of abetting an escape first appear in poems sometimes attributed to Hesiod such as the *Catalogue of Women* and the *Melampodia*[31] although significantly none at all appear in the *Theogony* or the *Works and Days* which we *can* reliably ascribe to him and where, given the subject matter, we might have expected to find them. So the role so often attributed to Hesiod in the development of this genre may in fact be mistaken or at least overstated.

Other tales from this period are fragmentary in nature, but where they involve metamorphosis they are all punitive stories with the sole exception of

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Pausanias, *A Guide to Ancient Greece.* Vol 1. 1.21.3, P. Levi (trans) Penguin Books London, 1971.

[30] *Odyssey* 3.371.

[31] See, for instance, I. Ziogas, *Ovid and Hesiod. The Metamorphoses of the Catalogue of Women.* Cambridge University Press, 2013 and K. Baisley, 'Tiresias and the Law in Ovid's Metamorphoses,' *Dictynnia* 9, 2010.

the Io myth which appears virtually as a scenario for a satyr play in which she is the plaything of the gods.

It is now generally accepted that metamorphosis tales in the shape we discover them in Ovid came into being approximately a hundred and fifty years earlier in the lost works of two Hellenistic writers – Nicander and Boios. Our conduit to these works is a prose recounting of them by Antonius Liberalis[32] who is generally considered to have lived in the second or third centuries of the Common Era. Of Boios himself we know almost nothing, but there is a general, but not universal, belief among scholars that the Nicander in question is the one listed in the *Suda* as a grammarian, poet and doctor.[33] Books of his that have survived concern topics as divergent as treatises on snakes, cures for poisons, animal husbandry, local geography, and three books about oracles. As Forbes-Irving puts it:

> "But if, as ancient lives suggest, the same writer combined a taste for versifying scientific treatises with an interest in the mythical and magical stories of the *Heteroioumena* this would not be unusual for a Hellenistic poet."[34]

Antonius Liberalis also credits figures as diverse as Theodorus, Partheius, Didymarchus and Antigonus with having written metamorphosis tales, but the details are sketchy.

Perhaps the strongest argument for believing Ovid gained his inspiration from Nicander's lost work comes from the fact that for most part the stories recounted in Liberalis' retelling of Nicander line up with Ovid's versions, although it is possible, albeit less likely, that Liberalis, given Ovid's status within the Latin poetic canon and the iconic status of the *Metamorphoses*, reimagined Nicander's stories to line up with Ovid's version. With no other source for Nicander there is no way for us to be certain.

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[32] See: M. Panathompoulos, *Antonius Liberalis, Les Metamorphoses.* Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1968.

[33] The major difference between Boios and Nicander's description of metamorphosis is that in Nicander the transformations are not carried out by major Olympian gods – they are all carried out by Artemis or by nymphs whereas in Boios it is Zeus or Apollo who are responsible.

[34] Forbes-Irving , *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths,* 1990, 25.

Transformation tales do appear in the fifth century BCE tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Here they serve mainly as a warning against offending the gods and it was the grotesque elements of metamorphosis that appealed to the Athenian dramatists. We have also at least one example from this period of the story being reshaped to fit the drama. In Euripides' *Bacchae,* Cadmus gives an account of Actaeon's transformation as having resulted from his having boasted that he was a better hunter than Artemis, rather than the more common version where he, sometimes inadvertently, sometimes deliberately, spies on Artemis/Diana naked as she bathes. As Forbes-Irving notes:

> "Since this story is told to Pentheus (by Cadmus) to illustrate the moral that one should not insult the gods, it is possible that this motive has been invented to suit the context."[35]

Aeschylus' *Supplicants* provides perhaps the best example surviving to us from the great Greek tragedians of the way in which it is the grotesque nature of metamorphosis that appealed to them. His account of Io would seem to have more in common with modern horror films such as *The Fly* or *Sliver*[36] than the descriptions we find in Ovid.

> *"Men of those days, inhabitants of Egypt, trembled at heart and were pale with horror at a sight so unnatural. They saw a creature at once human and brute, part cow, part woman, and were speechless at the prodigy."*[37]

The most complex example, but also the most subtle – furthermore the one that most closely aligns with the 'type' of metamorphosis explored by Ovid and his successors – occurs in Euripides' *Bacchae.*[38] In the prologue

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[35] Forbes-Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths.* 1990, 18.
[36] Both of which are modern tales of metamorphosis, albeit brought about by the alchemy of science rather than the actions of a god.
[37] Aeschylus, *Promethus and Other Plays.* P.Vellacott (trans) Penguin Classics, London 1961, 71.
[38] In this as in so many aspects of drama we can argue that Euripides was a groundbreaker. It seems hardly coincidental that the list of topics identified by Lucian in the *Dance* as being

Dionysus establishes that he has taken the form of a mortal in order to move freely among the people of Thebes.[39] The assumption of human form is not the only act of metamorphosis undertaken by the god of transformations however. After an earthquake destroys the prison into which Pentheus has cast him, a bull appears in his place. The transformations that follow[40], it can be argued, justify the claim that Euripides' take on metamorphosis changes the concept forever – making it, as we will discuss when we come to Apuleius, a process whereby the inner nature of the being transformed is revealed. In a sense, therefore, the transformations normally seen as punishments such as those visited upon Actaeon or Lycaeon (the prime facie example) can be seen instead as the removal of the layer of humanity the transformed one has betrayed through their behaviour, to make them subject to the natural laws that apply to the beast they have previously hidden beneath that veneer.

"A god's embrace is never fruitless."[41]

It is in Ovid that the self-transformation of gods in order to pursue erotic pleasure first becomes a major motif. It is a major point of departure in fact between Ovid and Nicander that in the former, as might be expected of the author of the *Ars Amatoria*, the amatory and sexual nature of the tales is played up in a way that simply does not happen in the latter. In Ovid metamorphosis as a means of affecting or fleeing from sexual conquest occurs in a level only replicated in Nonnus. The affecting of such conquests is almost exclusively, and perhaps for obvious reasons, a male province.

Francoise Frontisi-Ducroux does not see this as a simple surrender to lust – one of the accusations Christian fathers such as Tertullian and Jacob of Sarugh would hurl at the Olympian gods in denying their entitlement to divine status.

> "The sexual act – envisaged of course from the male point of view – does not consist only of the penetration

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essential for pantomimes to have in their repertoire has a preponderance of titles which correspond directly to the titles of plays by Euripides. (See below Chapter III)

[39] And in case the point was missed by the audience he restates it at the end of the section.

[40] Pentheus' own self-transformation into a maenad and Agave's inability to recognise him as her own son, seeing in his place the beast of prey that arguably replicates his true nature.

[41] Homer, *Odyssey* xi. E.V.Rieu (trans) D.C.H. Rieu (rev) 1946/1991, 177-78.

> of the body of the other person, but also an escape from one's own limits and in the process of mutual linkage, an experiencing of the diversity of living things, even that of the elements."[42]

We will return to that 'escape from one's own limits' during the course of this chapter, for in attempting to answer Richard Buxton's question an argument can be made to suggest that much of the appeal of metamorphosis to pre-Christian Greeks and Romans lay in the possibility it offered of just such a transcendence of corporeal limitations through the link to metempsychosis Ovid offers in the strange and much debated Pythagorean digression that occupies such a large section of Book 15 of the *Metamorphoses.*

Talking of Frontisi-Ducroux's assertion, Buxton argues that metamorphosis can be seen as linked to the male desire to escape the limitations of morality through coitus.[43] He argues that the perfect example of this is in Nonnus' account of Zeus impregnating Semele:

> "In which the supreme poetic coup – the cry 'euhoi' - makes the instant when the father becomes the son he is engendering – momentarily Zeus not only steps out of himself, but into the next generation of gods."[44]

Perhaps another clue to the answer of Buxton's question regarding the extent to which Greeks actually believed in the reality of the metamorphosis stories can be found by examining the role metamorphosis played in Greek religious life. The reawakening of attempts to rationalise pagan mythology in general and Ovid in particular and the attempt to assimilate them into Latin Catholic cosmology that occurred in the High Middle Ages, so well documented by Barkan and Warner in particular, is beyond the scope of this thesis. What is important for our purposes, however, is that this explosion of commentary demonstrates that even seven hundred years after Nonnus,

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[42] F.Frontisi-Ducroux, *L'Homme-cerf et la Femme-araignée,* Paris, 2003, 177.
[43] Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment,* 2007, 161.
[44] *ibid* 161.

metamorphosis tales presented Christian commentators with a challenge that could not be ignored.[45]

It was stated above that English-speaking scholars were late-comers to the subject. An exception to this general proposition was A.B. Cook who was an enthusiastic proponent of a theory popular in the late 19th/early 20th centuries which tried to explain the metamorphosis stories as being linked to pre-existing animal cults. Writing in 1894, he said:

> "I think we may venture of the general statement that within the bounds of Hellenic mythology animal metamorphosis points to preceding animal cult."[46]

The rejection of this proposition is one of the rare points of unanimity between Forbes-Irving and Buxton. To Forbes-Irving's:

> "the worship of particular animals is almost non-existent."[47]

and Buxton's:

> "an enormously influential way of reading the development of Greek religion has been to see it as embodying the triumph of anthropomorphism."[48]

we might add Plutarch's words on the subject.

> *"For the Greeks these matters speak correctly and consider the dove to be the animal sacred to Aphrodite and the snake to Athena. But most of the Egyptians serve and treat these animals as gods."*[49]

Smelik and Hemelrijk[50] support the idea that animal worship was a feature of Egyptian cult practice rather than Greek and suggest that foreigners

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[45] Perhaps the easiest answer to Buxton's question is that the Latin church of the 12th and 13th centuries certainly believed the ancients had taken the stories in deadly earnest.
[46] A.B. Cook, 'Animal Worship in the Mycenean Age,' *JHS* 14, 1894.
[47] Forbes-Irving , *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths,*1990, 42.
[48] Buxton , *Forms of Astonishment,* 2009, 32.
[49] *De Iside et Osiride 7,* in Plutarch, *Moralia,* Vol XII. E. Minar, F. Sandbach and W. Helmbold (trans) Loeb, 1961.
[50] K.A.D. Smelik and E.A. Hemerijk, 'Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?' Opinions on Egyptian animal worship in Antiquity as part of the ancient concept of Egypt, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* 2 17.4, Berlin and New York, 1986.

found this a particularly bizarre facet of Egyptian religious observance. They further argue that this was something that intensified after the Roman conquest when it was felt that the traditional gods had failed in their roles as protectors of Egypt – an idea we will return to in Chapter VIII when we examine the issue of being Greek in a Roman world and note that it was a problem of identity not unique to the Greeks.[51]

Buxton, in the meantime, offers a very good clue to the answer of his own question especially as it applies to the role metamorphosis played in the religious beliefs of Greek and Roman pagans as well as Christians themselves, when he says:

> "A feature of many religious traditions – perhaps all of them, each after its own fashion – is the quest to explore the relationship between unity and plurality, to look for an underlying pattern of sacred explanation which might account for the boundless diversity of the phenomenal world."[52]

The most overt linkage in the Roman period between metamorphosis and religious belief occurs in Apuleius where Lucius' transformation into an ass leads to his transformation from an easy-going libertine into a priest of Isis. Ingvild Saelid Gilhus[53] draws our attention to the parallels between the process Lucius experiences and the scriptures of the emergent religion with which he had to compete.

> *"And the spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophecy and shalt be changed into another man."* 1. Sam 10.6.

1862-64. See also K. Parry, 'Egypt in the Byzantine Imagination: cultural memory and historiography, fourth to ninth centuries', in D Dzino and K. Parry eds. *Byzantium, Its Neighbours and Its Cultures.* Byzantina Australiensia 20. Brisbane 2014, 181-208.

[51] Its importance will also become more obvious when we go on to look at metempsychosis and the issue of whether or not animals could be envisioned as having souls. When the idea of transmission of the soul was opened up to the possibility that this could include movement of a human soul to an animal form – as issue clearly at the heart of metamorphosis – this would become an extremely fraught question not only for Christians who rejected the concept out of hand, but also for pagan philosophers.

[52] Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment,* 2009, 157.

[53] I.S. Gilhus, *Animals Gods and Humans. Changing attitudes to animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian ideas.* Routledge, London and New York, 2006, 83.

> *"And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Rom 12.2.
>
> *"But we all with open face beholding as if in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord."* 2.Cor. 3.18.

The Christian Fathers were not averse to utilising pagan themes for their own ends, either as a means of neutralising them or as a justification for the supernatural events described in scripture.[54] The usage was not always metaphoric. Gregory of Nyssa[55] describes the fall as involving the divine image metamorphosed into a serpent and Origen[56] in the *Homilies on Saint Luke* similarly describes the damned as being metamorphosed.

But there were limits. For a human to be transformed into bestial shape – or worse still metensomatosis which allowed for the possibility of the transmigration of a human soul into the body of an animal – a concept Plato firmly rejected in the *Phaedrus* – aroused Ambrose to scorn. Speaking at his brother's funeral, when presumably the issue of what was to happen to the soul of the recently departed was the subject *du jour,* he was in no two minds as to what *wasn't* going to be its fate.

> *"Those made in the likeness and the image of God cannot be changed into the form of beasts!"*[57]

The issue can be summed up in this quote from the philosopher and religious educator Ernan McMullin:

> "A way of affirming the unity and primacy of substantial form is to say that all 'actuality' and determinancy of of a being resides in *it.* If *it* ceases to be and a new form begins to be, a plausible way of expressing it is to say

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[54] The transformation of water into wine and the miracle of the loaves and the fishes being obvious examples of a previous history of metamorphosis being implicitly drawn upon.
[55] *Canticum canticorum; Patrologia Graeca* 44. Col 868.
[56] *Homilies sur S. Luc.* H Crouzel et al eds Paris, 1962.
[57] *De Fide Ressurectionis. Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose.* H. Crouzel et al. eds, New York, 1953, 256.

> that no actuality, no predictable determinancy survives the change."[58]

What was at stake, therefore, was the whole notion of what constitutes change. For change to indeed be *change* and not simply *replacement* some vestige of the previous entity must adhere to the new – what the pre-Socratics called a 'substratum.'

But how was this to be defined, or even recognised? Norbert Luyten maintains that the overriding problem for the Greek philosophers was thus one of *physis* – the nature of being, rather than the substance of being. Why should it be that reality as they observed it was in a constant state of flux and change? (Indeed the only observable constant in their world was change.) But what did change mean?

> "Wherever they looked they could see transition from one state to another. By a rather unsophisticated, yet penetrating extrapolation, they decided that in a mysterious way *every item in reality is somehow linked to every other, because one changes to the other."* (italics mine)[59]

With remarkable clarity in a work of otherwise philosophical density, Professor Luyten thereby demonstrates that metamorphosis was fundamental to the Greek understanding of how the natural world worked. This of course does not necessarily lift the metamorphosis tales themselves beyond the level of the metaphoric and the issue was further complicated by the pre-Socratic concept we have come to know as Monism.[60]If matter is a universal commodity (water according to Thales, air according to Anaximenes, or fire in the opinion of Heraclitus) then the metamorphosis of such a being as Actaeon or Lucius merely produces a substratum of the being – and, as we shall see, this is certainly as Ovid and Apuleius conceived of their creations.[61]

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[58] E.McMullin, 'Introduction', in E.McMullin (ed) *The Concept of Matter in Greek and Medieval Philosophy.* University of Notre Dame Press, 1965, 8.
[59] N.Luyten, 'Matter as Potency,' *ibid* 103.
[60] See, for instance: Leyewski Czelslaw, 'The Concept of Matter in Pre-Socratic Philosophy,' *ibid* 30.
[61] As we have seen from Pausanias' account, Niobe even though transformed into a seemingly insensate cliff face continues to weep for her fate and that of her children.

However if one adheres to the 'pluralist' approach ascribed to Empedokles and Anaxagoras the pretransformed entity and the end product are virtually unrelated. While we can argue that Ovid and Apuleius are clearly 'monist', by the end of the fifth century Nonnus displays a great deal of ambiguity.[62]

It is in the famous Pythagorean digression of Book 15 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that the clear linkage between metamorphosis and the processes of the natural world is given its most unequivocal expression.

> *"Nothing retains its own form; but Nature, the great renewer, ever makes up forms from other forms. Be sure there's nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form. What we call birth is but a beginning to be other that what one was before; and death is but a cessation of a previous state."*[63]

And:

> *"Our own bodies go through a ceaseless round of change, nor what we have been or are today shall we be tomorrow."*[64]

Skulsky points out that these supposedly Pythagorean ideas can be found in Ovid's Augustan contemporaries such as Sotion and his teacher Sextius. Sotion argued that souls are allotted (as opposed to the Platonic idea (below) of free choice) to the bodies they will inhabit in their next incarnations. More relevantly to the current discussion he also maintained, just as Ovid has Pythagoras declare, that nothing passes out of being and that

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[62] Arguably Nonnus doesn't assume a philosophical position on metamorphosis as such, his attitude being conditioned by the story he wants to tell. Actaeon, for instance, retains consciousness of his former state – the whole point of the Actaeon story after all – as he is ripped apart by his own dogs. Nonnus goes even further than Ovid in this respect, granting Actaeon post-mortem consciousness when he appears to his father in a dream to tell him what has happened. Others such as Seilenos, who self-transforms into a river by dancing it, appear to lose all knowledge of their former self.

[63] Ovid *Metamorphoses* XV. 252, in *Ovid in Six Volumes.* Frank Justus Miller (trans) Loeb, 1916 , Vol II, 383.

[64] *ibid,* XV. 214, 381.

human existence mirrors the movement of the celestial bodies in tracing fixed revolutions.[65]

That these ideas were contemporary and not simply an innovation of Ovid's or even a 'rediscovery' of Pythagoras[66] can be seen in the *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* of Seneca, written twenty to twenty five years after Ovid.

> *"reversals, after all, are the means by which Nature regulates this visible realm of hers: clear skies follow cloudy, after calm comes the storm; the winds take turns to blow; day succeeds night; while part of the heavens is in the ascendant, another is sinking. It is by means of opposites that eternity endures."*[67]

Whether or not retention of 'nature' really qualifies as the preservation of substratum required for it to qualify as change rather than replacement is in a sense debatable. While the metamorphosis of Lycaeon into a ravening wolf or Arachne into a ceaselessly weaving spider carry no implication that an awareness of their previous existence is carried over into their new form, those of Io and Actaeon do.[68] (And, of course, Lucius retains full human consciousness during his time as an ass in Apuleius' tale) If Lycaeon's retention of his savage nature does not count as a substratum, but simply results in two discrete entities with the same nature, the retention of consciousness, memory and the ability to reason as previously exhibited by these other examples surely does.

But we can go further than this. What we find in Ovid is no random allotment of an animal or even vegetative form. The end product of the transformation process is one, or more importantly *the* one which best

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[65] See Skulsky, *Metamorphosis, The Mind in Exile.*1981, 58.
[66] Although, to be fair, Seneca does acknowledge their Pythagorean antecedence himself in *Epistula 108* (below). It is impossible to know however how much he may have been influenced by Ovid in taking this position.
[67] Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic* CVII.
R.Campbell trans Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1969.
[68] It is interesting that all extant versions of the Actaeon story carry with them the defining feature that he retains his human intelligence during his life as a stag – brief as it is – and that he makes a despairing attempt to tell his dogs just who it is they are ripping apart.

represents a continuity of the human characteristics of the one being transformed. As W.S. Gilbert might have put it, the punishment fits the crime.

Joseph B. Solodow goes so far as to argue that this principle is the defining characteristic of metamorphosis.

> "What is metamorphosis? It is a clarification. It is a process by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental are given physical embodiments and are so rendered visible and manifest. Metamorphosis makes plain a person's qualities, yet without passing judgement on them. It is – and this constitutes a central paradox of the poem – a change which preserves, an alteration which maintains identity, a change of form by which content becomes represented in form."[69]

Marina Warner links and contrasts this concept with that experienced in the Christian Eucharist, arguing that the Catholic doctrine,

> "involves a transubstantiation of substance, but not appearance."[70]

as, of course, when bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Pagan metamorphosis is exactly the opposite – the outward, physical appearance is not simply changed, it is transformed utterly so that not one atom of the previous entity remains and yet, perhaps even more miraculously (bread and wine, after all, do have superficial similarities to flesh and blood),

> "the inner spirit remains the same – it inverts the wonder profanely."[71]

By the Middle Ages figures like Gerald of Wales – writing approximately 1170 CE and drawing on Augustine – would try to explain the

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[69] Joseph B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses.* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London ,1988,174.
[70] Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds,* 2002, 39.
[71] *ibid* 39.

apparent metamorphosis experienced in the Eucharist, only to finally drop it into the too-hard basket in his conclusion.

> *"it is to be believed as an indubitable truth that*
> *Almighty God, just as he creates natures, can,*
> *when he wishes, change them into each other*
> *(in se invicem premutare), either transferring one*
> *into the other completely (penitus), as Lot's wife,*
> *looking back against the Lord's command, became*
> *a pillar of salt, or water became wine...*
> *It is not change of appearance only but truly a change*
> *of substance because the appearance or species remains*
> *completely and only the substance is changed.*
> *Comprehending is arduous and very far from human*
> *understanding."*[72]

Metamorphosis therefore was still clearly creating problems for Christians in the High Middle Ages – problems that would be exacerbated soon after by the rediscovery of Ovid's *magnum opus.*

Another way of looking at metamorphosis is to take Marina Warner's approach and see it basically as a story-telling paradigm – one essentially that follows the same principles as those laid out by Joseph Campbell in his seminal *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*[73] and amplified by Christopher Vogler in *The Hero's Journey*[74] where the pattern is a journey to *anagnorisis* (recognition or discovery) and eventually death and rebirth – and thereby the revelation of true character.

> "The traditional storytelling of a hero or heroine who
> journeys through numerous ordeals, through misprisions

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[72] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland.* John J. O'Meara (trans) Penguin Books, Harmondsworth ,1982, 143-5.
[73] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* The New World Library, Novato Ca.,1968.
[74] C. Vogler, *The Hero's Journey. Mythic Structure for Writers.* Michael Wiesse Productions, Studio City Ca., 1998.

> and neglect, finally to arrive at selfhood, follows the pattern of metamorphosis."[75]

This is not to say that metamorphosis as a phenomenon was restricted to the realm of myth and storytelling. It crops up in subjects as diverse as natural history and dream interpretation – for example in the remarkable *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus (2nd century CE). What sets Artemidorus apart from other dream interpreters of his time (of whom it seems there were many) is his attempts to classify and categorise them. Dreams of metamorphosis into animals are frequent in the *Oneirocritica.* Indeed Book 2 Chapter 12 is given over entirely to them. It is here we can see perhaps most clearly how metamorphosis served people of his time as a means of explaining the everyday, for his interpretations of metamorphosis dreams hardly ever evoke mythology.[76]

Perhaps the strongest indicator of how seriously the ancients themselves took the metamorphosis tales is to be found in the reaction of the Christian Fathers.[77] Simply put, the fact that they felt they had to address them

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[75] Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses,* 2002, 85.

[76] One, of the twenty or so listed in 2.12 does, however, directly reference mythology.

> *"A bear signifies a woman. For the authors of the metamorphosis myths say that Callisto, the Arcadian, was changed into this animal."*

But he continues in a totally non-mythological vein typical of the entire book and chapter:

> *"It also portends sickness because of its savage nature and movements and travel, since it has the same name as the ever-moving constellations. On the other hand, it prophecies that a man will linger in the same place for the star always revolves in the same place and does not set."*

The Interpretation of Dreams. Oneirocritica. By Artemidorus, 2.12 . Robert J. White, (trans and commentary) Original Books, Torrance Ca., 1975, 104.

[77] One of the more unusual 'Christian' reactions to this aspect of mythology, or possibly what might be considered to be an adaption of mythology to suit Christian ends, occurs in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus which we will be examining in more detail later in this thesis. Much debate has been entered into by scholars as to whether Nonnus was a pagan who converted to Christianity after writing the *Dionysiaca* prior to going on to write his hexameter paraphrase of the *Gospel of St. John,* perhaps as an act of penance (if indeed he did write the latter work), or whether he was a Christian who happily worked with pagan themes, much in the manner of Gregory of Nazianzus. (Pierre Chuvin, for instance, is one who rejects the latter possibility – see P. Chuvin, 'Local Traditions and Classical Mythology in the Dionysiaca.' in N.Hopkinson (ed) *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus.*Cambridge Philological Society, 1994. Writing in the same volume, however, Glen Bowersock 'Dionysus as an Epic Hero' draws attention to the first proem of the poem where Aion appeals to Zeus to relieve the cares of mankind and Zeus replies:

> "*All in wild jubilation will cry out over the echoing tables with mutual toasts, in honour of Dionysus, protector of the human race. This my son, after struggle on earth… after the Indian war, will be received by the bright heaven to shine beside Zeus."*

Nonnus, *Dionysiaca.* 7.73-105. W.H.D. Rouse (trans) Loeb, 1940.

at all must surely suggest a belief that the faithfull or potential believers took them seriously.[78] What is most remarkable when we examine the Christian responses is how rarely they amount to an outright rejection of the veracity of the accounts themselves. It is surely telling that debate on the truth of the tales is more common among classical pagan thinkers than it is among those one would have believed to have felt themselves licensed to dismiss them out of hand as superstitious fairy tales.[79] The frequency of Christian debate on the subject in which the possible truth of the tales is left an open-ended question and it is the malevolence and impiety of the pagan gods they reveal that is fixated upon, suggest that as late as the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era men of the highest intellectual capacity deemed metamorphosis an actual possibility.

The problem for many early Christian fathers seems, at least in part, that in debunking a written 'history' – and we must always remind ourselves that the mythic tales of the Greeks had that status – tales that were claimed to have been attested by leading citizens of the past – they risked opening their own doctrine with its accounts of miracles beyond the experience of living people[80] to the same scrutiny.

As Bowersock puts it:

> "A Supreme god, in short, will send his son to take away the troubles of mankind, and the son, after travails on earth, will be received in heaven."

While it is normal to regard this as a Christian using pagan themes to Christian ends it, as it seems to me, could be regarded as a pagan reminding Christians that their gospel stories were not entirely original.

[78] Barkan., *The Gods made Flesh.* 1986, 103. puts it this way:

> "To begin with we must understand what sort of process is implied by the very fact that the church fathers were confronting pagan materials at all. The impulse to dismiss the whole mass of pre-Christian civilization is surprisingly rare even among early zealots… Just as the Hebrews in their flight from bondage carried with them the precious Egyptian vases to use in worshipping the true God, so Christians should not hesitate to take advantage of the great pagan philosophers for the help they can give in preaching the gospels."

[79] Perhaps the nub of the problem lies in our modern concept of fairy tales which did not appear till the Middle Ages. As we will see when we look at the response of Lactantius (below) there seems to have been a difficulty for the ancients in conceptualising a separation between fiction and theology. See Bowersock, *Fiction as History,* 1994.

[80] Especially, as Glen Bowersock has discussed, once the process of incorporating the Hebrew Old Testament into the Christian story had been completed. See Bowersock: *Hellenism in Late Antiquity,* 1996.

Just as any study of metamorphosis itself seems inevitably to begin with Ovid, any accounting of the Christian response in the West must perforce begin with St. Augustine. It is this towering intellectual of the 4th and 5th centuries CE who comes closest to an outright statement of non-belief in the metamorphosis tales, but he is trapped in a situation where he knows that a simple statement to this effect will not suffice for people who, as he freely acknowledges, regularly hear of such things happening.

> *"For if I was to say that we should refuse to believe these reports there are men to be found, even today, who will assert they have heard well-attested cases of this sort, or even that they had first-hand experiences of them. In fact when I was in Italy I myself used to hear of such happenings..."*[81]

So he is forced to find a way to rationalise the tales. The at times confusing and contradictory logic he uses is at such odds with his usual clarity of expression that we begin to see the difficulty the subject presented the early Christian fathers in a world where old ideas were dying out far more slowly than they would have wished.

> *"Whoever were the inventors of such tales <u>whether fact or fiction,</u> or facts concerning others and fictitiously attributed to Jove, words fail to express what a low opinion these fable-mongers must have formed of human nature to assume men could endure <u>such lies</u> with patience.*[82] (underlining mine)

In the famous 18.18 of the *City of God* he settles for the explanation that would prove most satisfying to his contemporaries.

> *"Demons do not, of course, create real entities, if they do indeed perform any feats of the kind we are now examining it is merely in respect of appearance that they transform beings created by the true God, to make them seem to be what*

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[81] Augustine, *City of God* 18.18. H. Bettenson (trans) Penguin Classics, London, 1984, 782.
[82] *ibid* 18.13.

> *they are not. And so I should not believe, on any consideration that the body - to say nothing of the soul can be converted into the limbs and features of animals by the craft or power of demons."*[83]

The daemonic explanation of metamorphosis is at the very least extremely clever. The degree of sophistry involved in placing metamorphosis in what Barkan calls 'that special realm where the pagan and Christian traditions intersect' makes it nearly impossible to locate Augustine's true position on the subject. By acknowledging the existence of the ancient gods but relegating them to the status of daemons – something that sits comfortably with the arbitrariness of their behaviour – he creates an argument that is difficult to refute.

An earlier passage from the *City of God,* in the chapter headed *The Most Plausible Reason for the Spread of Pagan Superstition* suggests disbelief in the existence of the pagan gods in any form whatsoever.

> *"The most plausible explanation for all of this is the suggestion that the gods were once human beings who received adulation from men who wished to have them as gods."*[84]

But this is very shortly contradicted by:

> *"This religion, the one true religion had the power to prove that the gods of the nations are unclean demons. These demons seized the chance offered by the souls of the dead, or disguised themselves as creatures of this world in their desire to be reputed gods."*[85]

The idea of a gap between the behaviour of the pagan gods and the Christian vision of divinity being immanent in a just, caring, and above all moral god was one Christian theologians had been drawing upon for more than two hundred years before Augustine came on the scene in the writings of

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[83] *ibid* 18.18
[84] *ibid* 7.13
[85] *ibid* 7.33

Tatian and Tertullian.[86] Arnobius, in the century before Augustine, expressed it without seeming to feel the need to rationalise pagan beliefs that we observed in the latter.

> *"Either they are in truth gods, and they did not do these things which you memorialise: or else if they did those things you say, without any doubt they are not gods."*[87]

For him and Isidore of Seville the issue is quite clear cut. There is no need to try to reinvent the Olympian gods as daemons. They were either gods or they were not – and the exploits attributed to them made it very clear that they were not.

> *"For that reason these are not figurae but in simple truth crimes, hence it was shameful for such individuals to be believed gods when they should not even be considered human beings."*[88]

Augustine's idea of the daemonic origins of the pagan gods did find support however in the *Clementine Homilies* – the provenance of which remains uncertain. Their now generally accepted ascription to the 4th century CE makes them very nearly contemporaneous to Augustine – and if we accept Roberts and Donaldson's belief that they predate 325CE possibly even the inspiration for his contention.

> *"What is most probable is that the gods depicted by the poets were wicked magicians, who, being perverse men, transformed themselves in order to destroy legitimate marriages, disrupt lives, and with*

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[86] Both of who we will examine more fully in Chapter IX on pantomime's fall from grace.
[87] H. Braun, *The World Order of Arnobius based on the first two books of Adverus Nationes*. University of California Library, 2012.
[88] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Spain* 8.11. S.A. Barney et al (trans) Cambridge University Press, 2006.

> *their fame pass for gods in the eyes of ancient men who were completely ignorant of magic."*[89]

Lactantius writing at about the same time as Arnobius and in a vein reminiscent of Clement of Alexandria's famous:

> *"Stop your singing Homer! It teaches adultery. We have refused to lend our ears to fornication."*[90]

takes an approach that seems eminently sensible to a modern reader and places the blame squarely at the feet of those who transmitted the stories in the first place.

> *"The poets, then, have not fabricated the exploits – if they did they were most foolish – but they added a certain colour of poetic fantasy to the deeds. They said these things not to detract but because they desire to embellish their heroes. In this way men are deceived, especially because while they think that these things are feigned by the poets they reverence that of which they are ignorant. They do not know what poetic licence is, to what extent it is permissible to proceed in fictionalising..."*[91]

But even here he is not accusing the poets – who was can see from the quote from Sallustius (above) were often considered to be divinely inspired – of fabricating the metamorphosis stories, merely of embellishing them.

The issue of metamorphosis for the ancients was complicated as we have suggested by the issue of metempsychosis and the associated question of metensomatosis which caused problems for pagans and Christians alike. I would argue that until Christianity offered believers an eternal life through resurrection it was this linking of metamorphosis to metempsychosis that gave

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[89] *The Clementine Homilies and the Apostolic Constitutions. Ante Nicene Christian Library. Translations of the writings of the Fathers down to 325*, V.17. Rev Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds) 2010.
[90] *Clement of Alexandria. The Exhortation to the Greeks. The Rich Man's Salvation. To the Newly Baptised*, Chapter IV. 53f G.W. Butterworth (trans) Loeb 1919, 137.
[91] *Lactantius, The Divine Institutes.*T. MacDonald (trans) Washington, 1964, 48.

the stories their greatest appeal to ancient audiences.[92] The ancient vision, from Homer onwards, of an afterlife spent as Shades in which only Tiresias was granted the retention of consciousness, albeit as much as a punishment as a reward, was bleak to say the least. Metempsychosis, which offered some hope to those who feared death – who feared above all the concept of non-being – had been around since the pre-Socratics. So too metensomatosis the – as it might seem to modern readers, almost Oriental – idea of interspecies transference of souls which, as we have already discussed, outraged Ambrose so much.

It is in Ovid's great poem that the idea is most clearly given philosophical shape – once again in the Pythagorean section of Book XV.

> *"All things are changing, nothing dies. The spirit wanders, comes now here, now there and occupies whatever form it pleases. From beasts it passes to human bodies and from our bodies into beasts, but never perishes."*[93]

This, as we will see below, was in complete contradiction of Plato's assertion in the *Phaedrus* that a human soul can never pass into the body of a beast. Metensomatosis, then while seemingly a sub-clause of metempsychosis is in fact in almost complete opposition to it, for if metempsychosis goes no further than postulating the transference of a soul from one human corporeal form to another and those of beasts to others of their kind,[94]Ovid opens up the possibility of transmigrations that defy these restrictions.

> *"And as the pliant wax is stamped with new designs, does not remain as it was before nor keep the same form long, but is still the selfsame wax, so do I teach that the soul is ever the same, though it passes into ever-changing bodies."*[95]

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[92] We use 'audiences' here to include those who read and those who listened to the stories being read or simply told.
[93] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV,165-8.
[94] See Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans,* 2006, 86.
[95] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XV, 169-73.

Two hundred and fifty years later Plotinus' great pupil Porphry would add support to the idea supposedly advanced by Pythagoras via Ovid that this was one of the reasons we should refrain from the consumption of meat, or support it in the sense that he lets it stand unchallenged.

> *"But fables obscurely signify, that animals have souls similar to ours, when they say that the gods in their anger changed men into brutes and that, when they were so changed afterwards pitied and loved them."*[96]

We have already seen Ambrose's disdain for the idea of the transformation of the soul from animal to human. To Ambrose, as a further example of the Christian position we can add Tertullian's *Treatise on the Soul.*

> *"At this point we must likewise contend against that still more monstrous presumption, that in the course of the transformation beasts pass from human beings and human beings from beasts...*
> *Now our position is this: that the human soul cannot by any means at all be transferred to the beasts, even when they are supposed to originate, according to the philosophers, out of the substances of the elements...*
>
> *Now whatever may be the measure and whatever the mode of the human soul (the question is forced upon us) what will it do in far larger animals, or in very diminutive ones? It needs must be, that every individual body of whatever size is filled up by the soul, and that the soul is entirely covered by the body. How therefore shall a man's soul fill an elephant?"*[97]

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[96] *Porphyry: On Abstinence from killing Animals. 3.16.* G.Clark(trans) *Select Works of Porphyry.* Bloomsbury, 2000, 111.
See also: K. Parry, 'Vegetarianism in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: The transmission of a regimen'. In W. Mayer and S. Trzcionka eds, *Feast, Fast or Famine. Food and Drink in Byzantium.* Byzantina Australiensia 15. (Brisbane, 2005) 171-187.
[97] Tertullian, *A Treatise on the Soul. 32.* New Advent Online. Father's of the Church.

To return once more to Ovid, there was once a tendency among scholars to regard Book XV as a strange and rather random 'tack on', or at best a literary spit in Augustus' face for the assertive:

> *"Wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips, and, if the prophecies of bards have any truth, through all the ages I shall live in fame."*[98]

does have a feeling of supreme defiance about it. More modern scholarship, however tends to see book Book XV and the issue of metempsychosis as being at the heart of the poem.[99] Arguments against this interpretation tend to centre around a desire to find a deeper, more moral purpose to the work – the need to believe that 15 books of the greatest poetry produced in the ancient world *had* to have a deeper moral intent than a simple statement that the soul undergoes endless changes and each new iteration is without purpose or meaning. Such arguments, I would suggest, reflect a modern attitude to literature rather than being a reflection of the world as Ovid's contemporaries saw it. There is evidence to suggest that Greeks in particular did not see reincarnation as being at all random – Plato in particular arguing different points for the idea that humans were able to choose their next life[100] and also a little contradictorily for the idea that the life chosen would reflect the previous one.

Thus in *Phaedo* we have:

> *"At length entering into some animal of a nature congenial to his former life of sensuality or violence he takes on the form of an ass, a wolf or a kite."*[101]

balanced against:

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[98] *Metamorphoses.* XV.876. A statement that is even more emphatic in the Latin original – *vivam* being the last word of the entire poem.

[99] Penelope Murray, for instance maintains that:

> "This emphasis on the immortality of the soul as opposed to the fleeting and transient configurations of the body does confer a kind of unity on the poem.

P.Murray, 'Bodies in Flux, Ovid's Metamorphoses, 1998, 87.

[100] Something we also find in the *Odyssey.*

[101] Plato, *Phaedo* 81d-82a.

> *"And at the end of the first thousand years the good souls both come to draw lots and choose their second life, and they may take any they please."*[102]

Whereas in the *Republic* 620a we have a combination of the two as the warrior Er, brought back from the realm of death describes Orpheus, Thamyrus, Ajax, Agamemnon, Atalanta, Theristes and Odysseus choosing their lots. The first six choose an animal that accorded with their previous natures (rather than being allotted them) whereas Odysseus, weary of his previous life, chooses poignantly to return as an ordinary man.

Against this must be balanced a number of ancient sources which saw reincarnation as being totally random – Pythagoras himself claiming to have been the reincarnated soul of a minor warrior who fell at Troy.[103] It is worth noting that not all Christian writers shared Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus' rejection of the concept. Ingvild Gilhus[104] draws our attention to the *Apocryphon of John*, one of the supposedly Christian texts unearthed at Nag Hammadi, which in fact attempts to address Tertullian's argument over the size of souls and definitive number of souls versus the fact of an ever-increasing population, by claiming souls became smaller and smaller, in effect splitting as they multiplied to meet the needs of the burgeoning human populace.

In the same way it was not only Christians who were uncomfortable with the concept of interspecies transmigration. Orators of the period often referred to as the Second Sophistic (see below Chapter VII) who styled themselves followers of Plato found themselves confronted by the master himself with a problem similar to that presented to Christian fathers towards the end of this period by Origen, and like the Christians they tried to get

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[102] Plato, *Phaedrus* 249b.

[103] Although it wasn't uncommon for the proems of Roman literary works to contain accounts of supernatural events which, upon occasion, the writer himself was supposed to have participated in, the claim reputedly contained in the now only fragmentary proem to Ennius' *Annales* in which he said Homer revealed to him in a dream that he was the reincarnated embodiment of himself, although to a modern mind roughly on a par with middle-aged piano teachers claiming that their own compositions arose from channelling the spirit of Chopin, is another suggestion that major figures in the Roman world may have taken the possibility of metempsychosis seriously.

[104] Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 2006, 89.

around the difficulty by 'reinterpreting' his ideas about interspecies reincarnation.[105] Their arguments often contradicted one another, but the point upon which they were in complete agreement was that as Gilhus puts it, "the animal shape is never an improvement upon the human."[106]

Io, Odysseus' crew, the latter changed by Circe into pigs and then changed back again, and Lucius in *The Golden Ass* represent the only extant examples in the metamorphosis canon of someone who was once human and then an animal being permitted to resume human form. It is important to remember that this could only occur because they had originally been human. In the *Phaedrus* Plato stresses that a soul that had originally been human could undergo this process, but that a soul which begins its existence as an animal can never become human.

> *"The soul of a man passes into the life of a beast, or from the beast returns into a man. But the soul that has never seen the truth will not pass into human form."*[107]

That a bestial soul should have the ability to reason, let alone the innate piety that would lead it to desire to become a human is therefore dismissed out of hand by pagan philosophy. Bizarrely enough the only serious, or seemingly serious, account we have of it happening is in the Fourth century Christian text *The Acts of Philip,* which was not available in its entirety until the Swiss Scholars Francois Bovon and Bertrand Bouvier discovered a complete text in the library of the Xenophontos monastery on Mount Athos in 1974.[108] In it Philip, Bartholomew and Philip's sister Mariamne encounter a leopard and a kid who wish to be baptised and receive communion. Philip sprays them with water (not an actual act of baptism apparently). They raise themselves up on

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[105] Iamblichus in *On the Egyptian Mysteries* (1.8) went so far as outright rejection of the possibility. Sallustius, who we have referenced earlier, could not accept that a rational soul would seek to enter an irrational animal and argued rather convolutedly that these souls remained outside the animal incarnation watching over it as a guardian spirit. (Rather like modern children's book series *The Golden Compass* – only in reverse.) See Gilhus *Animals Gods and Humans,* 2006, 75-80.
[106] *ibid* 79.
[107] Plato, *Phaedrus* 249.
[108] See, Peter H. Desmond, 'Fourth Century Church Tales. Women Priests, Vegetarians and Summer Dresses',*Harvard Magazine* May-June 2000. (Online Edition.)

two legs, assume human form and glorify God. Their bestial souls have presumably been transformed into human. The debate that ensues between Philip and his travelling companions over whether it is appropriate for animals to receive communion is very similar to the one reported by Gerald of Wales in the 12th century, concerning an Irish priest agonising over whether a werewolf could receive supreme unction and eventually referring the matter to Rome for a ruling.[109] Christians it seems were more open to the idea of the soul of an animal being on par with that of a human, but with the possible exception of Origen (below) less receptive to the idea of transmigration of the soul. Socrates, according to Plato at least, as we have seen, although accepting the principle of a one way inter-species transfer (man to beast, but not the other way round) totally rejected the idea of gods demeaning themselves in this way because, of course, in the case of a god it would be a matter of choice, indeed self-activation. Which leads him to outright rejection of metamorphosis of the gods.

> *"But surely God and the things of God are in every way perfect?*
> *Of course they are.*
> *Then he can hardly be compelled by external influences to take many shapes.*
> *He cannot.*
> *But may he not change and transform himself?*
> *Clearly, he said, that must be the case if he is changed at all.*
> *And will he then change himself for the better and fairer, or for the worse and more unsightly?*
> *If he change at all he can only change for the worse, for we cannot suppose him to be deficient either in virtue or beauty.*
> *Very true, Adeimantus; but then, would anyone, God, or man desire to make himself worse?*
> *Impossible.*
> *Then it is impossible that God should ever be willing to*

[109] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Wales.* 85

> *change; being as it is supposed, the fairest and best that is conceivable, every God remains absolutely and forever in his own form.*[110]

We can extend this to observe that one of the dominant motifs of metamorphosis tales, especially as they are portrayed in Ovid is a sense of entrapment – the sense of the soul and the consciousness (by which the soul is made manifest) being trapped in an alien body which we can argue is a metaphor for an alien environment and which as we have seen, was the common experience for so many living in the new paradigm of a centralised imperial system. As Penelope Murray has argued, Ovid by allowing his transformed humans to retain their former consciousness in their bestial, vegetative, or even inorganic forms, is able to 'explore questions about human identity in a peculiarly disturbing way.'[111]What Murray argues in effect is that it is the body that defines human identity.[112] Fränkel, speaking of Io's shook at her bovine reflection staring up at her from the surface of the river[113] suggests that Ovid draws upon and inverts the shock of recognition that is common to all human beings when we catch sight of our own reflection and either realise or remember we are not as we imagine ourselves to be and that our concept of our nature and how that is perceived by others is inextricably bound up with its external manifestation. [114] J-P. Vernant[115] goes a step further in maintaining that there are *two* defining characteristics of human identity – a body and a name. There are two stories in Ovid that perfectly demonstrate this. The first is the moment Io identifies herself to her father by scratching her name into the sandy bank of the river,[116] the second, even more vivid, is when Actaeon tries to scream out his name to his dogs, but deprived of a human voice is unable to do so. Ovid underscores this almost sadistically by elaborately naming and

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[110]Plato, *Republic,* 381.
[111] P.Murray, 'Bodies in Flux, Ovid's Metamorphoses,' 1998, 80.
[112] *ibid* 80.
[113] *"She was afraid of the sound of her voice, and when she saw her gaping jaws and strange horns reflected in the water where she used to play she fled, terrified from herself." Met.* I. 636-41.
[114] H. Fränkel, *Ovid, a poet between two worlds.* U. Of Cal Press, Berkeley CA .1969 ,80.
[115] J-P. Vernant, From Oedipus to Periander, Lameness and Tyranny, Incest in Legend and History, *Arethusa* 15, 1982, 19-38.
[116] That she should scratch the letters I and O into the river bank is doubly ironic when we consider that 'Io" as well as being her name was a standard expression of grief in Greek tragedy and frequently a cry for help.

giving partial genealogies to each of the thirty nine[117] who rip him apart. Actaeon, deprived of his name is less than the dogs who eat him because they at least do have names.

That which gives expression to this aspect of the human condition is, of course, the voice. To the cases of Io and Actaeon where loss of voice is crucial we can add perhaps the cruellest loss of identity of all – that of Echo[118] who not only loses her body, but retains a voice that is not strictly her own as it can only repeat the words of others.

As Aristotle noted:

> *"Nature has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and is used by them to express pain or pleasure... speech on the other hand serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and also what is just and unjust. For the real difference between men and the other animals is that humans alone have perception of good and evil, just and unjust."*[119]

We have discussed how for the Greeks metamorphosis was a means of explaining the constant changes they observed in the natural world. It is arguable that from Ovid onwards – what we can loosely describe the Roman period – metamorphosis came to be used as a metaphor for social and political conditions within the empire. The argument that in the *Metamorphoses* the lustful, at times henpecked, Jove and the shrewish, vindictive Juno are in fact portraits of Ovid's nemeses Augustus and the despised Livia, is well-known and will be touched upon in more detail when we examine the great poem in Chapter IV. Barkan points out that in the last third of the *Metamorphoses* the poem effectively ceases to be about the changes wrought by the gods and becomes about those effected by man. A poem about Greek myths thus becomes a poem about Roman reality – albeit viewed through the prism of

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[117] Forty one if you consider Harpyia's two pups – and even this total does not take into account the others 'too numerous to mention.'
[118] As she is a nymph it is not technically a loss of identity.
[119] *Aristotle, Politics.*1253a . H. Rackham (trans) Loeb, 1932.

Rome's own mythological origins. In the same way we can argue that Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* fits squarely into the paradigm we will discuss in Chapter VIII, that of a Greek – or at least a Greek-speaking Hellenised Egyptian – trying to define his place in a Roman Empire that was imploding at the time he wrote. His description of the assembly of Dionysus' forces for the expedition against the Indians almost directly parallels Homer's account of the Greek forces for the expedition to Troy and the war itself which dominates this massive work is clearly based on the conquests of Alexander.[120]

One of the major subthemes of Ovid's treatment of metamorphosis in particular is that of exogamy – banishment or self-removal from one's homeland never to return.[121] I would suggest this mirrored the experience of anyone seeking to make a name for himself from the second century BCE onwards where migration to a centre such as Rome, Alexandria and ultimately Constantinople became de rigueur. This would become especially true for Greeks who could no longer remain in the city they had either been born in or within a day's travel of. The experience of Greek-speaking intellectuals for a millennium at least was that of living as strangers in a strange land. If we remind ourselves just how many of the mythological tales, in particular, but not exclusively, those involving metamorphosis tell of the hero[122] (and surprisingly often the heroine)[123] travelling vast distances by the standards of antiquity to found cities and dynasties, we can form some idea of the appeal they might hold for those who had abandoned home and family, often forever, for the opportunities the great imperial centres held.

Metamorphosis, then, can be seen as a metaphor not only the political situation in the empire, but for everyday life. Otis goes so far as to say that Ovid's gods are:

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[120] Whether this homage to two of the Greek-speaking world's greatest military adventures can in any way be seen as expressing a hope for a revival of Greek power and influence now that the hub of the empire had moved to Byzantium is problematic, (See Bowersock *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* 1996*)* but the fact that these motifs occur in a work so heavily featuring metamorphosis with its themes of cycles and renewal seems unlikely to have been coincidental.

[121] Which was, ironically enough, Ovid's own experience shortly after the *Metamorphoses* was written.

[122] Cadmus for example.

[123] Europa and Io being prime examples.

> "Quite ordinary men and women of his own time."[124]

To this I would add Elena Theodorakopoulos' observation that:

> "Transformation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* hovers between finality and continuation, reward and punishment, sublime artistry and brutal savagery. Whether we choose to view it as a metaphor for the fluidity of the narrative or for the mutability of the politics of Augustan Rome, or as a paradigm for the creative process, the disturbing fact remains that metamorphosis is what happens to human bodies, because they are human bodies and subject to change."[125]

The salient points in these two quotes are 'men and women of his own time' and 'what happens to human bodies.' For the ancients humanity is tied up in bodily functions that are specific to humans. We have seen that the most important of these is the power of speech. We see in the examples of Io, Actaeon and Lucius in *the Golden Ass,* that the loss of the power of speech is tantamount to the loss of humanity. Gilhus,[126]Bradley and Riddelhough (below) have all described the frequency of stories of human-to-animal metamorphosis with the attendant loss of humanity as a description of life in the Roman Empire. They, along with Murray and Charles Segal[127] are at pains to emphasise that for a human being to be turned into a beast is always a downward step – a 'disgrace' as Gilhus puts it. Many scholars taking this stance have concluded that the real meaning of Ovid's Book XV is the rather sacrilegious prediction for its time that Rome was in decline (despite the surface claim by Ovid that Augustus had saved the Romans) and would eventually pass out of being as all prior empires had done.

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[124] B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1966, 198.
[125] E. Theodorakopoulos, 'Closure and Transformation in Ovid's Metamorphoses.' in *Cambridge Philological Society Supplementary Volume No. 23. 'Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception.* Alessandro Barchiesi, Philip Hardie, Stephen Hinds (eds) Cambridge, 1999, 142.
[126] Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans,* 2006, 85.
[127] Charles Paul Segal, *Landscapes in Ovid's Metamorphoses.* Franz Steiner Verlag GMBA-Wiesbaden, 1969, 285-6.

It should be noted however that not all scholars accept as a default position that human metamorphosis is a retrograde step. Joseph Solodow, for instance, says:

> "Many critics have assumed without hesitation that metamorphosis into an animal is a form of degradation. But Ovid refrains from rankings of every sort and gives no warrant for the belief that the animal kingdom (not to mention the vegetable) is inherently inferior. He attaches no moral connotation to the turning of men into animals. An animal is not a degraded, but a clarified form of man."[128]

I am inclined to disagree however. The reaction of Io's father when he realises he must abandon his search for a human husband for his daughter[129] and find her a bull for a mate instead and the reaction of Macaraeus[130] when he recounts his shame at have been turned into a pig by Circe are two obvious examples where Ovid's 'characters' evince strong feelings on the subject, but perhaps the ultimate word on the subject should come from Ovid himself, rephrasing an idea that goes back at least as far as Plato and Aristotle:

> *"And though all other animals are prone, and their gaze upon the earth, he gave man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven."*[131]

To speech we can add, as a marker of humanity, thought. Io, Actaeon and Lucius, as we have noted are unusual in that they retain their powers of human thought in their metamorphosed form. The inability of animals to reason, as we have seen, was one of the strongest arguments against metensomatosis for Christian and pagan alike. Riddehough goes so far as to claim that for Ovid thought was what separated Greeks and Romans from the barbarians.[132] He also draws an analogy, which on the surface seems quite

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[128] Solodow. *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 1988, 190.
[129] *Met* i.642-667
[130] *Met* xiv. 142-222
[131] *Met* i. 84-87.
[132] G.B. Riddehough, 'Man-into-beast changes in Ovid,' *The Phoenix* 13.4, 1959, 201.

appealing, between Ovid's life in exile from Rome with his description of human metamorphosis into animal form.

> "We imagine him asking whether after all there is so much difference between the *transformati* of legend and the *relegate* of bitter actuality."[133]

Keith Bradley has equated the transformation of Lucius in the *Golden Ass* into the prima facie beast of burden with slavery[134]and this seems a more logical explanation for Ovid's intention in his great poem. Cicero once observed that:

> *"The Tyrant is the worst kind of ruler and the nearest kin to the best."*[135]

and if we remind ourselves that Ovid was writing at a time when imperial rule was still only some thirty years old in Rome and the issue of whether or not it would continue after Augustus' death was still an open question, then the idea that his portrayal of the unpredictability of the gods constitutes a metaphor for the situation confronting the Romans becomes entirely plausible. The anthropomorphism of the Greek and Roman gods and the tales of the doings of the dwellers of Olympus therefore becomes a two-way street. If the gods resemble men then men resemble the gods and the tales become a way of understanding ourselves. Alexander Pope may have argued some sixteen hundred years later:

> *"Presume not God to scan,*
> *The proper study of mankind is man."*

but for the ancients in examining the tales of the gods, the discovery of the nature of their own species is what they sought.

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[133] *bid* 291.

[134] K.Bradley 'Animalizing the slave; The Truth of Fiction,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 40, 2000, 115-6.

[135] Cicero, *De re Publica* 1.33. C.W. Keyes (trans) Loeb, 1928.

CHAPTER II

"Entered Upon by all"; [1] Greece and the Dance.

"If I'm in the mood, I'll play. I'll even sing.
And I'll dance the Zeimbekiko,[2] *the Hassapiko*[3]
the Pentozali[4]*- but I tell you plainly from the*
start, I must be in the mood."[5]

"You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet:
Where has the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave -
Think ye he meant them for a slave?"[6]

"But the things in which we take a perennial
delight are the feast, the lyre, the dance, frequent
changes of clothes, hot baths and our beds."[7]

In 1938 the French philosopher and theatre theoretician Antonin Artaud,[8] in part in an attempt to explain the insanity that had been the Western Front during the First World War and the subsequent rise of Nazism, argued that in the West, at least, culture had ceased to be a 'lived' experience. It had become, in effect, a commodity – something that we put in a box and visit on occasions when we want to feel good about ourselves. Yana Zarifi argues in a similar vein,[9] detailing the multiplicity of purposes and occasions for which

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[1] Libanius, *Oration* 64.19.
[2] Dance of the Zeimbaeck, a coastal tribe from Asia Minor.
[3] Butcher's dance.
[4] Cretan national warrior's dance.
[5] N. Katzantzakis, *Zorba the Greek.* C. Wildman (trans) Faber and Faber, London 1966, 17.
[6] G.G. Byron, *Don Juan, Canto* iii. 86.10. *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1945.
[7] Homer, *The Odyssey.* 8.248. E.V. Rieu (trans) D.C.H. Rieu (rev)1946/1991,100.
[8] A. Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double.* M.C. Richards (trans) Grove Press, New York, 1958.

> "In our post-modern world, the arts are distinct from other areas of significant activity, economic, social, political and religious. Dancing occurs at times and in spaces designed for entertainment. The Ancient Greeks also danced simply for enjoyment (for example the suitors feasting in the house of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*) but frequently not only for enjoyment: they had what might be called a *dance culture,* in which much of their dancing

dance might be employed in Ancient Greek society. For a modern scholar to appreciate fully the significance of dance in antiquity he or she must move beyond the concept of dance purely as a source of enjoyment or entertainment.

It is self-evident that in a chapter of nine thousand words no analysis of the 'nature' of Greek dance in antiquity such as Lillian B. Lawler devoted more than forty years to, is either possible or desirable. Nor is an accounting of the five hundred years of contradictory scholarship on the subject so comprehensively detailed by F.G. Naerebout,[10]nor even an examination of a single facet of Greek Dance such as that undertaken by Steven H. Lonsdale.[11] The purpose of this chapter therefore is simply to give an indication of the central role dance played in everyday Greek life, and to demonstrate that a strongly mimetic element was in many of the Greek dances long before the arrival of pantomime on the Roman stage[12], and to lay the groundwork for the argument that will be developed more fully in Chapter III that although pantomime may have been given its final form in a Roman setting, it drew heavily upon a pre-existing Greek tradition and was seen by Greeks as an essentially Greek art form that fostered Greek culture.

My purpose from the outset in linking the longevity and popularity of pantomime, firstly to an interest in tales involving metamorphosis and secondly to the desire of the Greek-speaking members of the Roman Empire to cling tenaciously to their own culture and to promote their sense of superiority to what had supplanted it, is not the discovery of how things *were*, which underpinned so much of European scholarship of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and led to the rather futile attempts of scholars and

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contributed to processes needed for the coordination, survival, reproduction and prosperity of the community."

Y. Zarifi, 'Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World', in M. MacDonald and J.M. Walton (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre.* Cambridge University Press, 2007, 228.

[10] F.G. Naerebout, *Attractive Performances. Ancient Greek Dance. Three Preliminary Studies.* J.G. Gieben, Amsterdam, 1997.

[11] S.H. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1993. (Although to be accurate Lonsdale's work does not entirely restrict itself to the parameters the title might suggest).

[12] But by no means to the extent claimed by a number of scholars. See, for instance: R.P. Winnington-Ingram in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* Vol 7. MacMillan, London 1980, 660. Or E.Wust, *Realencyopadie col 18.3,* Waldsee, 1949.

practitioners such as Isadora Duncan to attempt to reconstruct Greek dance, but rather how things were *perceived to be* by the ancients themselves.

For that reason by and large I have ignored the substantial dance iconography to be found in statuary, vase and wall paintings and mosaics, the study of which was championed, among others, by scholars such as Lillian B. Lawler and Louis Robert over the first half of the twentieth century and John Jory and Steven H. Lonsdale over the second half.[13] I have instead restricted myself almost entirely to literary sources for my interest, as stated above, is in what ancient commentators believed they were seeing, or had been told others had seen, and what they thought about it.

As Lawler notes[14] in the monograph that was to be the summation of her forty years of research into dance in the ancient world, dance seems to have been a universal feature of human culture since pre-historic times, but it is undoubtedly true that it held a place in the lives of everyday Greeks unrivalled anywhere in Europe and possibly only paralleled in India, parts of South East Asia and among certain African tribes. According to Lucian the Greeks believed that:

> *"Dance came into being contemporaneously with the primal origin of the universe."*[15]

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[13] Naerebout's argument that inferences, indeed conclusions that can be drawn from iconographic sources, no matter how sound the scholarship, must inevitably be the interpretation of a modern viewer greatly overstates the case. (In many cases, he maintains, it is impossible to tell if what is being depicted is dancing or running.) See: Naerebout *Attractive Performances,* 1997,152-158.
For the counter argument see Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 1993, 9-10. in particular:

> "Artistic representations are an important, if difficult, form of evidence for dance. They can reveal aspects of dance not touched on by written sources, and amplify the written testimony."

ibid 9.

> "There are two basic iconographic criteria for identifying human movement as dance, as opposed to random movement. The linkage of figures in a row by arms held at the hand or the wrist invariably indicates a choral dance. This is the vase painter's version of the epic formula *cheir epi karpõi* used to describe choruses. The impression of dancing may also be confirmed by the presence of a musician or instrument elsewhere in the scene."

ibid 10.
[14] L.B. Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece.* Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1964, 11.
[15] Lucian, *Dance* 7. A.M. Harmon (trans) *Lucian* Vol 5, Loeb 1936, 221.

A claim that would be echoed and expanded upon two hundred years later by Libanius:

> *"That it came into being along with this universe of ours, and that it is as old as heaven itself and that the movement of the stars keeping a course which proceeds in a certain harmony and divine law, has long been named dance by the wisest men."*[16]

The idea of a relationship between dance and the celestial bodies was far older than either Lucian or Libanius however. In *Timaeus* 40c Plato speaks of the heavens and their:

> *"Juxtapositions and their approximations, circling as in dance."*[17]

and in *Epinomis* he maintains that the stars move:

> *"Through the figures of the fairest and most glorious of dances."*[18]

while in Euripides' *Ion* 1078-79 we have:

> *"Zeus' starry sky began the dance, and the moon dances."*[19]

In the *Laws* Plato describes dance, at least in theory, [20] as having evolved from the tendency of the young of all species to be constantly restless and given to uproar. The main defining point between the young of humans and those of other species is that instinct rather than rational thought guides the movements of animals, but the gods gave humans a sense of order and harmony so that they might accompany them in the dance. For that reason, dance was seen as an essential element of education.

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[16] Libanius, *Oration* 64.12 *(On the Dancers)* Cited in Margaret E. Molloy; *Libanius and the Dancers.* Olms Weildmann, Hildeschiem, Zurich, New York, 1996.
[17] Plato, *Timaeus (40c).* In R.G. Bury (trans) *Plato, Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Minexenus, Epistles.* Loeb, 1929.
[18] Plato, *Epinomis.* In J. Barnes (trans) *Plato Opera V. Minos, Leges, Epinomis, Epistulae.* Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford, 1922.
[19] Euripides, *Ion.* In P. Vellacott (trans) *Euripides: The Bacchae and other plays.* Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth and London, 1954.
[20] It seems that the gods themselves, inspired by the Muses Polyhymnia and Tersichore, danced from the very beginning.

"One who is not educated in the chorus is uneducated."[21]

It is important to stress here that in Roman cosmology we find no accounts of dance either coming into being with the birth of the universe, nor as the force that brought order from chaos as we do in Lucian and Libanius.[22] The most commonly expressed Roman view of the origins of the *kosmos* was as a development not of the ideas of Plato,[23] but those of his near contemporaries Leucippus and Democritus who saw Earth and the wider universe, not as the product of design, but as the mechanical and random interaction of atoms and whose ideas would find their fullest expression in the works of Lucretius[24]and would be picked up in Virgil's *Eclogues:*

> *"For he sang how, through the vast void, the seed*
> *of earth, and air, and sea, and liquid fire were*
> *gathered together."*[25]

and most famously by Ovid:

> *"The fiery weightless element that forms heaven's vault*
> *leaped up and made place for itself on the topmost height."*[26]

Dance was simply not intrinsic to the Roman psyche the way it was for the Greeks. For Plato a man who was uneducated in choral dance may have been uneducated full stop, but for Cicero:

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[21] Plato, *Laws* 654b. E. Bourdieu (trans) Cambridge Library Collection, 2013.

[22] Even though in Plato there is no direct reference to dance when we examine his account of the creation process in *Timaeus* 30a we find:

> *"A God who took over all that was visible, seeing that it was*
> *not in a state of rest, but in a state of discordant and disorderly*
> *motion, he brought it into order out of disorder."*

And in 30b*:*

> *"To make things good he constructed reason within soul and*
> *soul within body as he constructed the universe… The cosmos*
> *has truly come into being as a living creature endowed with*
> *soul and reason owing to the providence of the god."*

When we remind ourselves that in the *Laws* (cited above) he maintained that the gods gave mankind dance to bring order to unruly and restive bodies, it does not seem too long a bow to assume that the mechanism by which he implies that the gods brought order out of chaos was dance writ large.

[24] See, for instance: E. Fantham, *Ovid's Metamorphoses,* Oxford University Press, 2004, 22.

[25] Virgil, *Eclogues* iv 31-33. H.R. Fairclough (trans) G.P. Goold (rev) Loeb 1919, 1996, 62-63.

[26] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* i. 26-27. F.J. Miller (trans) Loeb 1916, 4-5.

> *"Nobody dances unless he is drunk or unbalanced mentally."*[27]

and while dance seems to have been a facet of Roman cult practices for seven or eight hundred years prior to the Christian era and, as Yvette Hunt[28] notes it remained an important aspect of the rites of the Salian priesthood until the fourth century C.E., being a part of religious rites is a long remove from being a feature of everyday life.

Livy tells us that it was from dance that Roman theatrical entertainment originated:

> *"This was a new departure for a warlike people, whose only exhibitions had been in the circus; but indeed it began in a small way, as most things do, and even so was imported from abroad. Without any singing, without imitating the actions of singers, players who had been brought from Etruria danced to the strains of the flautist and performed not ungraceful evolutions in the Tuscan fashion."*[29]

It is important to note that what he is describing is something being brought into Rome by non-citizens[30] and the comments he goes on to make about 'uncouth verses' and it being taken up by the Roman youth almost directly parallel, as we shall examine in Chapter III, the criticism that would be aimed by the elite at a later generation of Roman youth who became fascinated by the pantomime.

I have stressed the point that dance was not something intrinsic to the Roman way of life – quite the opposite in fact – for in the next chapter when we come to examine the origins of pantomime I want to argue that despite the pantomime-mania that gripped the Roman world it was only ever because of

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[27] Cicero, *Pro Murena* 13.7. C.MacDonald (trans) Loeb 1976, 201.
[28] Y. Hunt, 'Roman Pantomime Libretti and their Greek Themes: The Role of Augustus in the Romanization of the Greek Classics,' in Hall and Wyles, *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008, 172.
[29] Livy, *History of Rome* 7.2. B.O. Foster (trans) Loeb 1924, 361.
[30] And even then under conditions of extremis – the dancers being invited to take part in rites aimed at combating an outbreak of the plague.

its virtue as an entertainment. It never had the wider religious and quasi-religious significance that it had for the Greeks.

Dance appears in the Greek literary record from the very beginning, having a prominent place in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* Perhaps the most remarkable passage concerning dance in either work comes in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad* where Homer undertakes his lengthy description of the armour and shield of Achilles. On the shield alone no fewer than three dance scenes are described as being portrayed in the elaborate engravings that adorn it. The first is a wedding dance (two more wedding dances occur in the *Odyssey.*)

> *"And by the light of the blazing torches they were leading their brides from their rooms through the city, and loud rose the bridal song. And young men were whirling in the dance, and with them flutes and lyres sounded continually: and the women stood, each at their door and marvelled."*[31]

The second of the scenes on the shield is a vintage dance:

> *"And maidens and youths in childish glee were carrying the honey-sweet fruit in wicker baskets. And in their midst a boy made pleasant music with a clear-toned lyre, and sang to it sweetly the Linos song*[32]*with his delicate voice: and they beat the earth in an accompaniment following on with skipping feet and dance and shouting."*[33]

And the third is a wooing dance – in its own way not unlike the dances in the modern world which up until the last forty years or so were one of the principal means by which young people were able to meet potential partners.

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[31] Homer, *Iliad* 18.490-496. A.T. Murray (trans) W.F. Wyatt (rev) Loeb 1925,1999, 323.
[32] For an account of the significance of the *Linos* or *Linus* song see Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek religion*, 1993, 236-238.
[33] Homer, *Iliad*, 18. 567-72.b

> "*There were youths dancing and maidens the price of many cattle, holding their hands on one another's wrists. Of these the maidens were clad in fine linen, while the youths wore well-woven tunics softly glistening with oil; and the maidens had fair chaplets, and the youths had daggers of gold hanging from silver baldrics. Now they would run around with cunning feet very nimbly... and now and again they would run in rows towards each other. And a great company stood around the lovely dance taking joy in it; and two tumblers whirled up and down among them leading the dance.*"[34]

Weddings, harvest festivals, and wooing were three of the main occasions outside of religious rites and, as we shall discuss later, military training for which the Greeks came together to dance. What is perhaps most remarkable about the scenes depicted here is the way in which the poet seems to have forgotten he is describing a series of static images and gives almost filmic accounts of the events being depicted, not the mediated image.

In the *Odyssey,* the eponymous hero meets the Princess Nausicaa because he is awakened by a ball missed by one of her attendants as the princess performs a ball dance with her friends by the banks of a stream. Brought to the palace of her father King Alcinous, Odysseus watches in 'amazement' and we have a fourteen line description of Halius and Laodamus performing the same dance – Sophocles' version of it, we are told, the great poet himself took part in during performances of his *Nausicaa.* At Book 21.428.30 Odysseus echoes Alcinous (cited at the beginning of this chapter) by describing dance as 'the delight of the feast.'

Wedding dances of the sort depicted on the shield of Achilles were one of the main social purposes of dance for the Greeks and they occur in both literal and metaphoric contexts in the *Odyssey.* At 4. 3-4. Telemachus and Peisistratus visit Menelaus in Sparta for news of Odysseus and find a dance under way:

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[34] *ibid* 590-604, 331 and 333.

> *"To celebrate the impending weddings of his son and lovely daughter."*[35]

The more ironic reference to a wedding dance occurs at 23.101-147 when Odysseus having disposed of all of Penelope's suitors instructs his lyre player to:

> *"Strike up lively dance music for us with his clear-toned lyre, so that if the music is heard outside by anyone passing in the road, or by one of our neighbours, they may imagine there is a wedding feast that will prevent the news of the Suitor's death from spreading through the town."*

Wedding dances were thus common in Greek literature. In the fragment that remains of Euripides' *Phaethon* 227-244 the chorus sings a wedding song then moves out of doors to perform the appropriate dance. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1055-57 the chorus dance 'the marriage of Nereus'. An example of a metaphorical wedding dance which is also deeply tragic occurs in *the Trojan Women* 308-340 when the doomed Cassandra tells her mother to 'dance for her wedding' as she performs her own insane parody of a wedding dance. Zarifi[36] has suggested that many of the wedding songs in Greek comedy were probably in the same way accompanied by dance.[37]

Plutarch, *Theseus* 21, tells us that after Theseus rescued his companions from Minos and brought them out of the Labyrinth they visited Delos and he led them in the serpentine dance known as the Crane, in imitation of the winding of their former prison, which is generally considered to be the origin of the conga line dancing of modern times. Perhaps the earliest evocation of dance in mythological times, however, is the riotous and

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[35] *The Odyssey*. 4.3-4.
[36] Zarifi, 'Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World,' *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, 2007, 229.
[37] The dances associated with Greek dramatic performance were of three distinct types, the stately *emmeleia* of tragedy, the comic *kordax* of comedy and the riotous *sikinnis* of satyr plays. Gradually the *kordax* in particular would lose its purely theatrical connotation and come to mean almost any comic dance and could be performed at market fairs, dinners, or perhaps more frequently at drinking parties. Petronius, for instance, has Trimalchio say "No one dances the *kordax* better than Fortunata." Petronius, *Satryicon* 52.

percussive dance of the *Curetes* around the baby Zeus to mask the sounds of his crying and prevent his father Kronos from hearing him. Whether this story is the origin of the Greek belief that dance originated in Crete, or the story is set in Crete because of this belief, is in a sense moot. Dance is generally thought to have been brought to Greece after the collapse of the Minoan civilisation in the Mycenaean period.[38]

The Greek literary record, however, is not restricted to descriptions of mythological accounts of dancing. At least five grammarians or sophists wrote treatises on dancing in the Classical and Post-classical periods. In the case of Lucian and Libanius, who we will discuss in more detail when we come to examine pantomime in the next chapter, they were works fully devoted to dance. In the case of the *Lexicon* of Heyschius and the *Onomasticon* of Pollux they appear to have been mini-treatises contained in a larger, more generalised work. The *Deipnsophists* of Athenaeus is still available to us in its entirety.[39] Athenaeus, although his definitions are occasionally at variance with the fragments we have of Pollux, is extremely detailed. At 14.629 alone he lists twenty seven different types of dance. Interestingly many of them take the names of animals.[40] The general assumption is that the dancers mimicked the characteristics of the particular animal the dance honoured as a way of evoking fertility in domestic animals, success in the hunt or fishing, or in the case of more ferocious creatures, as proof of harm from them.

It was not, however, simply the case that the Greeks imitated animals through their dances. Animals themselves were characterised as dancing. Fawns are described as dancing in Euripides' *Alcestis* (582-585) and dolphins in *Electra* (860) and in a fragment of Pindar (fr70b) Dionysius is said to make whole herds of animals dance. The most famous description of mass animal dancing comes in the *Bacchae* (726-727) when the whole mountainside of wild animals becomes as one with the maenads through their wild orgiastic dance.

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[38] See Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 40.
[39] *Athenaeus, The Learned Banquetters,* S.Douglas Olson trans, Loeb, 2006-2012.
[40] Lawler suggests them to be the antecedents of semi-modern dances such as the fox-trot, turkey-trot and chicken reel.

So important did Lawler regard the animal dances of the Greeks that she devoted an entire chapter[41] and approximately twenty-five pages of a hundred and forty page monograph to them. The popularity, in particular, of bird dances might be attested by the number of comedies given bird titles given that the chorus almost certainly would have danced in imitation of the creature they were portraying. Aristophanes' *Birds* is still well-known, but Crates and Magnes both wrote comedies with the same title. Aristophanes, of course, also wrote one called *Storks* and Cantharus one entitled *Nightingales.* Other Greek comedies we known of taking animal titles are the *Fishes* of Archippas, the *Swine* of Cephisordorus, Aristophanes' *Frogs* and the all-embracing *Wild Beasts* of Crates.[42]

Among the other animals represented by the Greeks through dance were the bear[43] and the lion. Lion dances are among those where Pollux and Athenaeus clash in their definitions. Pollux (4.103) describing it as a terrifying dance (much as we might expect it to be) while Athenaeus (14.629f) lists it along with the *pyrriche* as examples of 'ludicrous' dances. It is difficult to believe that either the *lion* or the military *pyrriche* were intended as comic and he may simply have been describing the state of affairs as it had come to pass by his own time (the second century C.E.)

Heyschius (4.103-4) records a dance called the fox and one of the dancers in the famous Lyoscura Drapery[44] appears to wear a fox mask. Lawler[45] points out that the Thracian word for fox was *bassara* and that female Dionysian dancers in both Greece and Rome were likewise called

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[41] Chapter iv.

[42] There is also from the Roman period record of a dance in honour of Glaucus in which the dancer has his legs wrapped in an artificial fish tail and dances on his knees. At first sight it seems open to question just how "honoured" Glaucus would have felt at such an ungainly spectacle. Greek literature, however, abounds in accounts of the graceful nature of fish dancing (and anyone who has ever stood on a wharf and watched shoals of small fish wheeling in perfect unison can appreciate the idea) so it is entirely possible the knee dance in honour of Glaucus may in fact have been as skillfully executed as, for instance, a modern Russian squat dance. (See Lawler *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964. 65.)

[43] Bear dances were famously performed at Brauron, just outside Athens, to honour Artemis.

[44] This extraordinary marble drapery taken from the gigantic statue of Demeter and Persephone at Lyoscura has rows of figures, half human, half animal. The animals represented are an unequivocal horse, pig and fox, plus a cat that may in fact be a hare, and one that is generally considered to be an ass.
See J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough.* Cambridge University Press 1890 and 2009,339.

[45] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 69.

bassara. To these we can add horse dances[46] (women who danced with especial enthusiasm in Greece would be referred to as *poloi,* 'colts') goat, cow, bull, ram, lizard, and snake dances.

Finally there is no space here to examine the argument the Greek Tragedy and the Dionysian Festival itself arose from *tragikoi choroi* – goat dances. Suffice it to say that it is an etymology that seems to have been accepted by many Greeks themselves and arguments for and against are still raised by scholars in our own time.

Perhaps the most famous dance of the ancient Greeks is the *pyrriche.* Socrates once famously said that the man 'who is best in dance is best in warfare'[47] – one of the rare points of agreement between the Greeks and the Romans on the subject of dance as Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells us of the *Troy Dance*[48] which Zarifi ('Chorus and the Dance in Ancient Creece,' 227.) suggests may have been a form of the *pyrriche.*[49]

Lysias 21.1-4[50] tells us that the *pyrriche* was danced at the Panathenaia Festival in Athens by naked youths who in the course of the dance practiced the proper deployment of shields, side-stepping missiles, rapid backward movement in order, defensive crouches, as well as various attacking movements. It is mentioned in passing by Aristophanes in *Clouds* 988-9 and in a more serious vein by Euripides in his *Andromache* 1135 where he tells how Neoptolemus[51] was able to escape injury from a sustained assault by javelins

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[46] Much like modern equestrian dressage, horses in Greece and Rome are known to have been taught to 'dance' as a dinner party novelty – much in the way that Lucius while still in asinine form in Apuleius' *Golden Ass* is trotted out to perform party tricks for his master's dinner guests.

[47] Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.

[48] Dio Cassius formulaically trots out the same tired sentence concerning youths performing a Troy dance at the ascension of each new emperor. The most likely explanation for this is that one was performed for Commodus, the formal ascension of whom he was likely to have witnessed, and in trying to add authenticity to accounts of his predecessors he simply drew upon what he had seen.

[49] See Cicero *de Or.*3.83 where in a curious contradiction to his previous statement that men only dance when drunk or deranged (above) he says:

> *"For I should assert it to be impossible for him to come up to the mark in point of gesture if he had not had lessons in wrestling and in dancing."*

[50] See Lonsdale *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion,* 1993, 143.

[51] Son of Achilles, also known as Pyrrhus.

and arrows by employing the steps of the dance that would be named for him.[52]

It seems that the *pyrriche,* or at least armed dances of this nature, were common throughout Greece. Plato[53] tells us they were performed at Athens in honour of Athena, at Sparta for the Dioscuri and by the Cretans for Zeus.

Zarifi[54] has suggested youths danced the *pyrriche* naked as a rite of passage to adulthood and warrior status. Girls also danced to mark their ascent to adulthood. They were also known to dance the *pyrriche.* That they danced it as a rite of passage seems unlikely however. Herodotus tells us that:

> *"The Samians improvised a festival (which is in fact still celebrated in the original way), every night during the whole period that the boys remained supplicants they organised dances close to the temple and the dancers - boys and girls – carried cakes made of millet-seed."*[55]

However as observations in Herodotus concerning the customs of non-Athenians are usually made to stress points of divergence from what his audience would regard to be the norm, it seems reasonably safe to assume that this was not a common Greek practice.

Lawler[56]draws our attention to references in Greek literature to the *prylis,* which was an armed funeral dance originating in Crete[57] and goes on to suggest this as a possible origin of the *pyrriche,* arguing that the traditional etymology linking the name of the dance to Pyrrus (Neoptolemus), the son of Achilles, may be too easy. She suggests a possible variation based on the

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[52] Lucian, *Dance 9* also makes this claim.
[53] *Laws* 796b.
[54] Zarifi, 'Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World', *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre,* 2007, 229.
[55] Herodotus, *The Histories* 3.48. A De Selincourt and J. Marincola (trans) Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth ,1958 , 191.
[56] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 41.
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> "Its purpose seems to have been to endeavour mystically to infuse life again into the dead man by a display of physical activity and at the same time to frighten off evil spirits."

Greek word *pyr* arising from the comparison of flames and leaping dancers as they danced in full armour around the funeral pyre of Achilles.[58]

Eventually the *pyrriche* would become debased. By Roman times professional dancing girls with helmets, spears and shields would perform burlesque, often highly sexualised, versions of it. According to Athenaeus even elephants were taught to perform it – a clear example of the fact that the Romans did not always take from Greek culture the spirit of its original purpose and that this was especially true of the dance.

Athenaeus 14.629c in fact refers to the *pyrriche* in the plural, maintaining that there were multiple versions of it.

> *"By no means of music and the care of their bodies they acquired courage, and to master movement under arms they exercise to the accompaniment of songs; thus there came into being the so-called pyrriches and all that kind of dancing: the names for them are numerous, as for instance, orsites and epikreios in Crete. Then there is apokinos, as it is called, which is mentioned by Cratinus in Nemesis, Cephisodorus in Amazons, Aristophanes in the Centaur, and several other writers, and which was later called makismos. Even women danced it in many instances, and they were called Maktrisrai, as I know."*

He goes on at 14.629d to list nine more versions of the *pyrriche* including, strangely enough, the *emmeleia* of tragedy and the *kordax* of comedy. Lawler (p.108) has noted that:

> "Ultimately the verb *pyrrhicizein*, which means properly 'dance the *pyrrhic*' comes to mean merely 'dance'."

and it is entirely possible that the dances Athenaeus is listing as *pyrriches* have been subject to this process.

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[58] Fire walking is still practiced in Modern Greece, See G. Megas, *Greek Calendar Customs*, Athen, 1963.

We have already noted the *linos* dance described on the shield of Achilles. The *linos* was a dance aimed at mimicking and hence helping to maintain, the regularity of the agricultural cycle and dances of this nature would have been performed at virtually every Greek village from the earliest times and variants are performed in Greek agricultural communities even today.[59]

We have discussed how dances such as those performed at weddings and the *pyrriche* were an important part of rite of passage ceremonies being able to neatly convey a sense of the 'movement' from one state to the next. Another ceremony expressing a liminal status that utilized dance as a major component was mystic initiation. Lucian maintained:

> *"I forbear to say that not a single ancient mystery-cult can be found that is without dancing since they were established, of course, by Orpheus and Musaeus, the best dancers of that time, who included it in their prescriptions as something exceptionally beautiful to be initiated with rhythm and dancing."*[60]

Plutarch[61] tells us that it was generally believed that by being purified through rituals of these sort people would be able to continue 'singing and dancing in Hades.'

Perhaps the most unequivocal statement linking dance and ritual comes in the famous line from *Oedipus Tyrannus* (896) where the chorus learning of the disaster that has befallen the city lament:

> *"If irreligious acts are honoured, why should I dance?"*

The most controversial of all the ritualistic dances are, unsurprisingly, those dedicated to Dionysus. The dances of this cult, which swept through Greece in the sixth and seventh centuries BCE and would eventually enjoy an,

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[59] See Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 1993, 236-238.
[60] *Dance* 15.
[61] *Moralia* 1105

albeit brief, flowering at Rome[62] before experiencing a resurgence in the third century CE in the east, were anything but the orderly, processional style of dance that is normally associated with ritual. These violent Bacchic revels are said to have so concerned the authorities that they found themselves forced to tone down or sanitise them by incorporating them into official, state-approved festivals where they could be controlled.[63] It was from the dances in honour of Dionysus that the *dithyramb* arose – a song and dance routine that in its early days, at least, was accompanied by the imbibing of a good deal of the god's primary gift[64]

It was fertility and the rhythm of the seasonal cycle Greeks seemed to feel could best be enhanced by ritualistic dance. Dionysus was the male deity most frequently honoured in this way. Artemis, Demeter and Persephone were the most important of the female deities.[65]

Artemis is known to have been honoured at Sparta at the shrine of *Artemis Limnates* and at Ephesus. Human fertility seems to have been the primary concern, at least in Sparta where the dances were apparently highly provocative, if not sexualised, and performed by girls in extremely short tunics *(chitons).*

The most important of the mystery rites were those performed for the mother and daughter deities Demeter and Persephone who were both fertility goddesses and promulgators of the rules for family life. Those performed at

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[62] Augustus would eventually suppress the cult because it had become associated with Marc Antony. See: G.W.Bowersock, 'Dionysus as an Epic Hero.' In N.Hopkinson, (ed) 1994.

[63] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964,76. says this is often considered to be the process by which the Dionysian Festival from which Tragedy and Comedy arose, came into being.

[64] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Grece,* 1964, 76. draws our attention to the Greek saying 'when you drink water it isn't a *dithyramb.'*

[65] One of the more intriguing examples of dance being used to honour a male deity is found in Callimachus who maintained that sailors did not dare pass the island of Delos, even if they had urgent business elsewhere, without going ashore to honour Apollo through dance.

> *"They quickly furl their sails and do not go on board*
> *again until under blows they have whirled in dance*
> *around the altar, and bitten the holy trunk of the olive*
> *tree holding their hands behind their backs: these*
> *ceremonies the Deliad nymph invented to furnish*
> *amusement and laughter to the young Apollo."*

Callimachus, *Hymns and Epigrams,* Lycophron: *Alexandra,* Aratus: *Phaenomena.* (trans) A.W. Muir, G.R. Muir, Loeb 1921, 105.

Eleusis, twenty kilometres from Athens, were the most important of all the Greek mysteries. They had the dual purpose of being a celebration of the orderly transition of the seasons with Persephone's return from Hades at the end of winter to spend the growing season with her mother and secondly this itself was seem as confirmation of the immortality of the soul.

The festival of the *Thesmophoria* best known to us because of Aristophanes' comedy the *Thesmophoriazsuae* in which he rather daringly pokes fun at it, also honours Demeter and her daughter. Only matrons of the highest standing in Athenian society were permitted to take part in it.

Not all dances that the Greeks offered to the gods were what a modern observer might characterise as 'dignified' however. In the *askoliasmos* which was performed at the Rural Dionysia in honour of Dionysius, for instance, the dancers hopped up and down trying to maintain their footing on specially greased wine skins. With reference to this Lawler makes the point that the Greeks did not always differentiate too carefully between the secular and the religious when it came to dance.[66] F.G. Naerebout goes so far as to maintain that for a Greek a festival without dance would have been impossible to conceive of and that despite the fact that all dance, not just pantomime, was highly suspect to the early Christian authors, it was extremely difficult to suppress it in their own festivals.[67] Clearly the link between festival and dance was a hard one to break.

Not all Greek dance was what we might call 'functional', that is to say having a specific purpose – a wedding, a funeral, the honouring or propitiating of a god, military training and so forth. Greeks also danced purely and simply for enjoyment. Indeed the suitors laying virtual siege to the house of Odysseus

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66 "And many of the dances in which he engaged informally to commemorate events of his own life or that of his family, or merely enjoyment, were offered to the gods."
Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 114.

67 "Still we find early Christian communities dancing at the festivals for their martyrs. They obviously could not think of any other way to produce a proper festive atmosphere."
Naerebout , *Attractive performances,* 1997, 372.

in the *Odyssey* seem to do little but help themselves to his food and while away the time dancing.[68]

It is perhaps an indication of the importance of dance to the Greek way of life that their classification of what actually constituted dance was far broader than we in modern times are likely to employ. Many of our modern metaphorical usages of the term could be employed quite literally by a Greek. Dance was not restricted to being upright and moving one's legs in a reasonably rhythmic manner. He or she could dance with any part of their body. Herodotus[69] tells the story of Hippocleides who 'danced away his marriage' by standing on his head in a vain attempt to impress his prospective father-in-law with his ability to dance by waving his legs in the air. Athenaeus in retelling the story says he displayed not the skilfulness of his body, but the vulgarity of his soul.

Although the Greeks believed, as we discussed earlier, that the ability to dance was a gift from the gods and was an essential facet of the need to bring order and cohesion to the *polis*, not all dance was greeted with approbation. We have already seen that the wild orgiastic revels of the Bacchic style of dance caused consternation among the authorities in the sixth and seventh centuries BCE and the same was true of the dance-mania reported to have swept Greece at the end of the Mycenaean period.[70]

For Plato, who maintained that choral dancing was an important element in the education of a good citizen, it was important to differentiate between good (noble) dances and those which were bad (ignoble). The categorisation of a dance as one or the other depended essentially upon

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[68] *Odyssey.* 1.152

[69] Herodotus vi. 128-33 cf. Athenaeus 14.628d.

[70] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 51. suggests that this was probably very similar to that which occurred throughout Europe in the Middle Ages in response to an outbreak of the plague and its causes may have been substantially the same. As with most Greek stories from the pre-historic period what was in all probability a widespread phenomenon is particularised. Proteus, the king of Tiryus, had three beautiful daughters who spontaneously went mad, ran out into the countryside and literally danced themselves to death. The idea that the dance-mania phenomenon may have been linked to an outbreak of pestilence gains more credibility when we link the stories from the Mycenaean period of a disfiguring disease known as *knyos* 'an itch' with the name of one of the dances handed down from the period – the *knismus* 'itch'. Similar stories, after all, are to be found in more modern times equating the invention of the tarantella with attempts to counter the effects of the bite of a tarantula through a bout of frenzied dancing.

whether the dance inspired the dancer (and presumably any spectators) towards virtue or vice.[71] It was not simply movements or gestures which decided this. In the *Republic*[72] he places rhythm at the heart of the matter, dividing rhythms into those which promote:

> *"An orderly and courageous life."*

And those which:

> *"Movement suit meanness and insolence*
> *and madness and other badness, and which*
> *rhythms are to be left to other people."*

In the *Laws*[73] however his concerns are more aesthetic. Serious dances are those which imitate beautiful bodies and are solemn. Bad dances imitate ugly bodies and are vulgar. The *pyrriche* and the *emmeleia* of tragedy fit into his first category whereas the *kordax* of comedy is a clear example of the latter. Only slaves and foreigners, Plato maintains, should be allowed to dance it.

Five hundred years later Athenaeus would return to this idea.

> *"Those songs which are noble and beautiful produce*
> *noble and beautiful souls, whereas the contrary kind*
> *produce the contrary. For whether in dancing or walking,*
> *decency and dignity of bearing are beautiful, whereas*
> *immodesty and vulgarity are ugly."*[74]

Plato, not surprisingly, shared the disapproval of many of his contemporaries for the orgiastic Bacchic style of dancing and even suggested heavy penalties for any who engaged in them. But just as we noted earlier concerning his vacillation over whether it is rhythm or posture and bearing which decides if a dance is noble or ignoble he is not entirely consistent in this respect either, for in the *Republic* we find him conceding that indulging in these dances actually freed people of their inner conflicts and could bring

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[71] *Laws* 655d.
[72] 399c-400b.
[73] *Laws* 655d.
[74] Athenaeus 14.628c.

peace to their soul. Lawler[75] tells of a similar sentiment being expressed by the third century musicologist Aristeides Quintilanus in his *On Music* at 2.1.4 [76]where he maintains that the sort of *enthousiasmos* that manifests itself, for example in Corybantic frenzy, is a disease of the soul which can be ameliorated through vigorous participation in the same. It would seem, then, that a virtuous person who engages in orgiastic dance risks being exposed to vice, but those whose souls are already damaged can purge themselves by sating themselves in the cause of their pollution![77]

Perhaps the prime literary embodiment of dance as pure 'functionless' entertainment in ancient Greece occurs in Xenophon's *Symposium.*[78] A dancer is described as performing with whirling hoops,[79] this is followed by a death-defying dance in which the performer dives through a ring of sharpened knives and the evening concludes with an erotically charged (and highly pantomimic performance of the love story of Ariadne and Dionysus.

> *"For theirs was the appearance not of actors who had been taught their poses but of persons now permitted to satisfy their long-cherished desires."*[80]

Rather mischievously Xenophon like his contemporary Plato evokes the presence of Socrates and puts words of approval of what he is watching into his mouth – sentiments that would almost certainly have clashed with Plato's attitude to the dances being described.[81]

The sort of dinner party dances being describe by Xenophon seem to have been a regular occurrence. Lawler[82] draws our attention to a Greek saying that wine makes even old men dance against their will. Vase paintings

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[75] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece*, 1964, 16-17.
[76] Aristeides Quintilanus, *On Music in Three Books*, Thomas J. Mathiesen (trans) Yale University Press, 1993.
[77] Perhaps not unlike the modern concepts of 'the hair of the dog' and 'like cures like.'
[78] Xenophon, *Symposium 2.22* in Xenophon, *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Sympossium, Apology.* E.C. Marchant, O.J. Todd (trans) Loeb, 1923.
This is another performance that a modern audience would not automatically categorise as dance. Circus style acrobatics tend, at least since the Middle Ages, to be separated out from dance. Interestingly enough in more recent times, rap, hip hop and jazz ballet seem to have gone a long way towards reintegrating them.
[80] *Symposium* ix.7.
[81] *ibid* ii.16.
[82] Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece*, 1964, 115

from Crete and Cyprus[83] show dancers, the remains of a banquet nearby, dancing in a very lively fashion, often in the nude. While this could simply be an example of poetic licence being applied, Pollux[84] refers to just such a nude dance (the *Iombroteron*) which was apparently performed after a great deal of drinking and featured much 'obscene language'.

Most Greek dances seem not to have involved physical contact (apart from the occasional outbreak of 'slapping' we see depicted on the vases), but there were two particular 'dances of the people' that were performed *cheir epi karpõi*, firstly in the serpentining style mentioned earlier when Theseus and his companions were able to escape from Minos. This style of dance is generally referred to as the *hormos* or 'chain'.[85] Lucian, however, calls it 'the string of beads'.

> *"The same sort of thing is done by those who dance what is called the string of beads – that is a dance of boys and girls together who move in a row and truly resemble a string of beads. The boy precedes, doing the steps and postures of young manhood, and those which later he will use in war, while the maiden follows, showing how to do the woman's dance with propriety, hence the string is beaded with modesty and manliness."*[86]

The other dance performed with linked hands is the *dipodia* (two foot) and this seems to have been performed either in a line with all the dancers facing forward or in a circle. Perhaps the most famous account of the *dipodia* occurs in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* when the now reconciled Spartans and Athenians line up to dance together. Interestingly it is a Spartan who takes the leadership in this for with the majority of our sources centred on Athens in is easy to lose sight of the very real importance that dance held for the Spartans as well. Libanius, for instance, tells us that in Sparta it was:

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[83] *ibid* 116.
[84] *Onomasticon* 4.105
[85] Despite Plutarch labeling it the Crane.
[86] *Dance* 12.

"entered upon by all."[87]

We may gain some sense of this importance when we recall that the central *agora* of Sparta was actually called the *Choros.* Perhaps not unsurprisingly the accounts we have if dancing from Sparta centre very heavily on variations of the *pyrriche.*[88]

Two quotes from the *Laws* are worth noting before we move on to deal with the vexed question of just how mimetic Greek dances were. The first occurs at 816a,

> "*This is the origin of dancing: the gestures that express what one is saying."*

and the second at 655d,

> *"Performances given by choruses are representations of character and deal with most varied kind of actions and situations. The individual performers depend for their rendering on a mixture of trained habit and imitative power."*

One of the techniques we can utilise in analysing the mimetic nature of Greek dance is to examine the titles that have come down to us through the sources. We discussed earlier the number of dances that had been given the names of animals. Perhaps the most famous combination of dance and animal mimesis in Ancient Greece can be found in the rituals Athenian girls were expected to perform at the shrine of Artemis at Brauron, at least partly in preparation for womanhood. Lonsdale notes that in the Suda it is recorded that Athenians actually voted to deny girls the right to marry if they had not been to Brauron and 'played the bear.'[89] It does not seem too big a step to assume

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[87] *On the Dancers* 64.19.

[88] In addition to the *pyrriche* boys in the military training schools were taught the uniquely Spartan *embateria* which sound very much like modern military marching and drilling songs – and were actually used in battle to enable orderly wheeling and flanking movements of troops without breaking formation. Lawler p.123 lists the words of one of these *embateria* attributed to the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus.

> *"Come sons of Sparta, home of brave men,*
> *advance your shield with the left arm, and throw the*
> *spear bravely before you, never fearing for your life,*
> *for that is not the way of Sparta."*

[89] See Lonsdale *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek religion,* 1993, 178.

that this and the other animal dances we know of were mimetic – if for no other reason that it needed to be clear to the deity to whom the dances were being addressed just which animals they were being asked to bring fertility to or protection from. From Athenaeus, Pollux and Heyschius we have the names of many other dances that clearly suggest they were meant to be performed in imitation of an action or a series of actions. Among these we find 'the itch', 'knocking at the door', 'the beggar', 'scattering the barley', 'setting the world on fire', 'the messenger', 'the snort' and 'stealing the meat.' It is difficult to conceive why they would be given titles such as these unless the dance was in some way meant to give an impression of the action implied in the title.

We are told by numerous sources that Greek dances were further broken down into three constituent elements, *phora, schema* and *deixis.* Modern scholarship now accepts that we were for many years led astray by Plutarch's confused and rather contradictory definitions of these terms at *Quaestiones Convivales.* 8.732. There was for a long time a reluctance to accept that the great first century polymath would write about something in which he had no specialist knowledge and that he might draw upon sources which he did not fully understand and which were themselves flawed.[90]

Reducing these terms to their simplest level it is now generally accepted that *phora* from the Greek *phero* (to carry) can be taken to mean the way in which a dancer carries himself (or simply 'moves') from one place to another. *Schema* is often translated as 'poses', 'shapes' or 'figures.'[91]

When we examine the names of some of these *schemata* once again the implication that the dancer was supposed to mimic the action seems

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[90] For a fascinating account of the tendency of writers in Antiquity, Plutarch among them, to use tainted sources with no real idea of their accuracy or provenance see: Glen Bowersock, *Fiction as History, Nero to Julian* University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 199) also Alan Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World.* Oxford University Press 2004.

[91] Lawler, I think, is nearer to the mark when, after analysing the names of some of the *schemata* that have come down to us, she suggests that:

> "it would seem that the *schemata* were really brief, distinctive patterns which were visible in the course of a dance, some occurring frequently, others used once or twice in a dance for a momentary effect."

Lawler *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 24.

inescapable.[92] We have the 'little basket', 'snub hand', 'hand flat down', 'seizing a club', 'the split', 'tongs', 'go past the four', 'sword thrust,' 'owl', 'two-foot', 'elbows out', 'spin-turn', 'lily', and the 'bunch of grapes.'

However it is *deixis* that I find in many ways the most interesting of the listed elements. Again it is a term that was misunderstood and still is by some scholars because of Plutarch's confused etymologising when he claimed that a dancer indicates objects by pointing at them.[93] *Deixis* in fact is generally considered to be derived from the word *deiknumi* which means to show in the sense of 'portray' or 'display', not point.[94]

At the risk of belabouring a point, if one of the most basic elements of Greek dance is to 'portray' then the mimetic nature, not necessarily of all Greek dance – we can I think exclude some of the more formal processional dances from the mix – but *most*, is self evident.

That dance in the Roman and later Byzantine worlds did not have anything like the religious or social implications I have argued it held for the Greeks, can perhaps be best attested by dance forms other than pantomime virtually disappearing from the sources[95] from the Augustan period on apart from an occasional disparaging reference to a senator's wife being overly fond of dancing, or the fulminations of church fathers against members of their congregations who permitted dancing at weddings.

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[92] Many of these titles having a striking resemblance to the bio-mechanics etudes devised by Vsevolod Meyerhold in the early twentieth century. Meyerhold's etudes were, of course designed to be mimetic, although exaggeratedly so

[93] In saying this he shows he did not really understand the concept of *cheironomia* either. Nowhere else in the very many references we have in the sources – as we shall discuss when we come to look at pantomime in the next chapter – do we have a reference to dancers who portray scenes or objects with their 'talking hands' by actually pointing to something. The obvious limitations this would place upon the range of images a dancer would be able to portray – i.e. only those he had brought with him as props, or which were naturally occurring at the location, simply does not gel with the effects we are repeatedly told skilled dancers were able to conjure up.

[94] Libanius, for instance, uses *deiknumi* five times in *On the Dancers (*66,68,70,77,113*).* Lawler *The Dance in Ancient Greece,* 1964, 27 also tells us that the related verbs *deiklela, deikliletai* and *deikelistai* were regularly used to describe the farcical skits in Sparta which 'portrayed' standard, almost Commedia dell arte type characters.

[95] A number of scholars of the seventeenth and eighteen centuries, in some ways taking their cues from the early Christian authors, were happy to separate pantomime out from the Greek corpus because of its perceived immorality which fitted better with the stereotypes of the excesses of the Roman Imperial Court than it did with the legacy of Socrates and Plato.

We will visit this again in the next chapter in specific reference to pantomime, but for the moment I will leave the last word on the mimetic nature of Greek dance to the inimitable Alexis Zorba.

> "*I've got a thick skull boss, I don't grasp these things easily... Ah, if only you could dance all that you've just said, then I'd understand.*"[96]

[96] Kazantzakis.*Zorba The Greek*, 1966, 282.

Chapter III

The Property of Wax[1]; Pantomime Takes the Stage.

> "*Declining his masculine breast with a feminine inflection and moulding his pliant torso to suit either sex, the dancer enters the stage and greets the people; promising that words will come forth from his expert hands. For when the sweet chorus pours forth its delightful song, what the singer declaims the dancer himself confirms with his movements. He fights, he plays, he loves, he revels, he turns around, he stands still, he illuminates the truth and imbues everything with grace. He has as many tongues as limbs, so wonderful is the art by which he can make his joints speak although his mouth is silent."* [2]

As we have already noted, performance of scripted tragedy, already in decline in the last century of the Republic, virtually ceased altogether with the arrival of the Empire and was replaced[3] - or perhaps more accurately superseded – by pantomime, which remained the de rigueur entertainment for the elite for nearly seven centuries.[4] This is not to say it was the exclusive province of the elite, especially during the early Byzantine period, but it is

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[1] Libanius *Oration* 64.103

[2] *Latin Anthology* 100, in D.R.Shackelton Bailey (ed) *Towards a Text of Anthologia Latina.* Cambridge Philological Society, 1979.

[3] Although the pantomime dancer drew his – and from the beginning of the Byzantine period there is increasing evidence to suggest *her* –themes from tragedy, the approach seems to have been more of an edited highlights style rather than a nuanced examination of Aristotelian cause and effect. That said, the expressive use of body language made it possible, as we shall see later, for the dancers to essay an examination of psychological motivation and emotional colour that was denied to the tragic actor, not only because of the constraints of costume and mask, but by the conventions of a genre where attempts at realistic *mimesis* were seen as vulgar and by Plato and Solon at least as dangerous. (See Plutarch, *Life of Solon* 29. Plato *Republic Book* 11.*)*

[4] For arguments concerning the extent to which Tragedy may have lingered as a performance genre into and beyond the Augustine period see: Gesine Manuwald, *Roman Republican Theatre* Cambridge University Press 2011, Charles Garton, *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theater.* Toronto, Hakkert 1972, Richard Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience.* Routledge, London 1991, 117-233, Patrick Kragelun, 'Historical Drama in Ancient Rome. Republican Flourishing and Imperial Decline?' *Symbolae Osloenses* 77, 2002, 5-51, Edward Champlin, 'Agamemnon at Rome. Roman Dynasts and Greek Heroes,' in D. Braund and C. Gill (eds) *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome. Studies in Honour of T.P. Wiseman.* University of Exeter Press, 1998, 295-319, T.P. Wiseman, *Roman Drama and Roman History.* University of Exeter Press, 1998, 1-74.

often said that readers get from literature what they bring to it and the same is true of audiences of the performative arts. The idea that there were aficionados who got from pantomime more than others did seems confirmed by this from Plotinus:

> *"The dancer's mind is on his own purpose, his limbs are submissive to the dance-movement which they accomplish to the end, so that the connoisseur can explain this or that figure as the motive for the lifting, bending, concealment, effacing of various members of the body, and in all this executant does not choose the particular motions for their own sake, the whole play of the person dictates the necessary position to each limb and member as it serves the plan."*[5]

While it is tempting to think of pantomime as occupying a position similar to that of ballet or opera in the modern world[6] the evidence provided by the pantomime riots of the fourth and fifth centuries in particular, suggests that especially after the banning of gladiatorial contests in 438 CE., the appeal was much more widespread than this. Perhaps it would be more accurate to argue that pantomime, while being judged by standards similar to those applied by a modern devotee of ballet or opera, thrived in a world where there was far less choice of entertainment genres and therefore it generated a much wider audience – one which, especially after its adoption by the Blue and

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[5] Plotinus, *The Enneads* 4.4.33 S.McKenna (trans) Penguin Classics, London 1991,320.

[6] As Montiglio suggests the parallels between pantomime and modern day opera were not simply restricted to the elite nature of their audience base:

> "*Si'L'opéra et la pantomime se ressemblent en ce qui concerne le role subordonné des paroles, la difference cruciale reside bien évidemment dans la fin ces des paroles memes: le chant pour l'opera, la danse muette pour la pantomime."*
> *"If opera and pantomime resemble each other in terms of the subordinate role of the words, the crucial difference obviously lies in the end of those words: song for opera, silence dance for pantomime."*

S.Montiglio, 'Paroles dansées en silence: l'action significante de la pantomimeet le moi du danseur, *Phoenix* 53, 1999, 267. Trans Harding.

Green factions, the purists did not always feel happy sharing the theatre with.[7] However, even though this intermingling of classes at pantomime performances was greatly exacerbated after the factions got involved, it was common enough in pre-Christian Rome for Plutarch to feel in worth commenting upon:

> *"Base-born and aristocrats alike were wholly captivated by star-dancers admiring them and enjoying them."*[8]

As we have noted, during the Imperial Period pantomime, in many respects, became the only effective means of maintaining something of the performative element of theatre – at least as far as tragedy was concerned.[9] Nothing existed in the Roman world to correspond to the Dionysian Festivals of Athens where the *choregus* chosen to bear the cost of mounting a set of tragic plays did so seemingly out of a sense of public responsibility (although it would be naive to underestimate the element of personal prestige involved in assuming the responsibility.) The favour of the masses and the political power attendant upon it[10] were far more important considerations for the Roman who chose to stage a festival.[11] Until pantomime with its immediacy and visual excitement gripped the public, Roman audiences were far more likely to respond to the arena spectacles – chariot racing and gladiatorial contests – than

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[7] See for instance; Ruth Webb, "The Nature and Representation of Competition in Pantomime and Mime", in K. Coleman and J Nelis-Cléments (eds) *L'organisation des spectacles dans le monde Romain.* Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 58, Genève, 239.
For a more general overview of the way in which the factions functioned see: Alan Cameron, *Circus factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium.* Oxford University Press, 1976.

[8] *Plutarch Moralia* 473b, in *Plutarch* Vol ix E.Minar, F.Sandbach and W. Helmbold (trans and commentary) Loeb, 1961.

[9] Although tragedy remained as literary form to be read in school or at home until its re-emergence as a performance genre in the Renaissance.

[10] Ismene Lada-Richards makes the point that pantomimes were a particularly useful tool for those who sought to make political capital out of theatrical displays.

> "The star pantomime's well-documented ability to throw vast crowds into raptures was easily convertible into political and economic capital as well as social prestige for a festival organizer or civic benefactor."

I.Lada-Richards, 'Was Pantomime 'good to think with in the ancient world?' In Hall and Wyles, *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 285.

[11] The fear that the staging of a festival created a situation whereby the benefactor could be seen as competing with the prestige and authority of a local governor, a consul, or even the emperor was one of the reasons severe restrictions were eventually placed upon just who was permitted to do so.

the cerebral, but often visually dull and even ridiculous-looking fare of tragedy.[12]

> *"As far as tragedy is concerned, let us form our first opinion of its character from its outward appearance. What a repulsive and at the same time frightful spectacle is a man tricked out to a disproportionate stature, mounted upon high clogs, wearing a mask that reaches up above his head, with a mouth that is set in a vast yawn as if he means to swallow up the spectators."*[13]

This process was already well-advanced in the Hellenic World, before accelerating under the Romans. Richard Hunter[14] argues that barely a century following the great period of Athenian Drama, virtually from the time of Aristotle, Athenian elites were already preferring to restrict themselves to home readings of the literary classics – in much the same manner of the Roman elite of the Imperial Period. It was not, however, fear of the emperor's wrath that led to a reluctance to stage drama in the Greek world – although we cannot help wonder if the changed political

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[12] To the often promoted idea that Roman audiences, other than the educated intelligentsia, were temperamentally unsuited to tragedy must be added the fact that almost from the time that Sulla assumed the dictatorship the writing, indeed the staging, of tragedy was a potentially hazardous business. Roman playwrights were afforded none of the licence that had been granted their Athenian counterparts – in particular during the *Lenaea.* That Roman intellectuals continued to write tragedies for home recitation, and that even this was a potentially hazardous undertaking, is shown in Tacitus' *Dialogue about Orators,* where he described attending as a young student a reading by Maternus of his tragedy *Cato* about the eponymous Republican hero. When Maternus' friends caution him if he intends to publish, or more dangerously still produce it, he will need to tone it down, he dismisses their suggestions and adds that anything left unsaid by *Cato* will be in his forthcoming *Thyestes.* (The ever-popular theme of the misfortunes of the House of Atreus was considered a particularly dangerous under-taking for any poet – showing as it did kingship at its most tyrannical.) That the dangers facing potential writers of tragedy were very real is evidenced by the fact that Tiberius ordered the playwright Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus to commit suicide after a performance of his *Atreus* he had taken particular exception to.

> *"Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus… was convicted because of a tragedy he had composed and fell victim to a worse fate than that which he had described. Atreus was the name of the drama, and in the manner of Euripides it advised one of the subjects of that monarch to endure the folly of the reigning prince. Tiberius, on learning of it, declared that it had been written with reference to him, claiming that he himself was Atreus because of his bloodthirstiness, and remarking, "I will make him Ajax," he compelled him to commit suicide."*

Dio Cassius, Roman History. 58.24 3-4 E. Cary (trans) Loeb 1924, 249.

[13] Lucian *Dance* 27, in *Lucian* Vol V. A.M. Harmon (trans) Loeb 1936, 238-9.

[14] R. Hunter, 'Acting Down, The ideology of Hellenistic Performance,' in Easterling and Hall, *Greek and Roman Actors, Aspects of an Ancient Profession,* Cambridge University Press, 2002, 190.

circumstances in Athens and subsequent degradation of the freedom of speech that followed the end of the Peloponnesian War did play some part in this – but seemingly that the tyranny of 'the uneducated audience' so deplored by Plato, had made theatre-going an unpleasant activity for the elite.

Karl Galinsky, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter IV, has suggested that the Roman populace, tired of the civil wars, rejected tragedy because of its subject matter.

> "After the bad times of the civil wars it was not surprising that the public should have been tired of tragic subjects and unwilling to experience pity and fear through the deep involvement and shared spiritual experience that tragedy demanded. Full-blown tragic performances had still flourished during the final decades of the republic when tragic horror corresponded to contemporary realities. By contrast the public of the *Pax Augusta* was bored with the endlessly repeated subjects of tragedy, but did not wish to part with them either. The new dramatic form that made allowance for the changed taste of the public was the pantomime."[15]

While I do have some reservations about this (Chapter IV) we can look to twentieth century parallels to support the logic of it – the hedonistic 'roaring twenties' that followed the First World War and the somewhat duller, but no less inward-looking 1950s when audiences turned to family-friendly sit-coms in the aftermath of the Second World War – but what Galinsky, I think, does not fully acknowledge is that the production values (to use a modern term) of tragedy had dated badly. In the face of the competition presented by the arena spectacles, the bawdy knock-about comedy of the mimes and the visual aesthetics of the pantomime, staged tragedy to an average Augustan, must have been as interesting as a modern audience finds watching a silent black and white movie. Not until tragedy discarded masks and moved to smaller, more intimate theatres (in comparison to amphitheatres at least) in the Renaissance, would it make a comeback as a major entertainment genre. In the

[15] K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture. An Interpretive Introduction.* Princeton University press, Princeton New jersey 1996, 268.

meantime the intelligentsia, for whom the poetry and ideas of the play were the major concern, could, as we have discussed, gratify their interests in home readings.

When and how did pantomime dancing arrive at Rome and why despite clear Greek and possible Egyptian antecedents,[16] why moreover despite in the initial stages of its Roman incarnation being performed by Greek-speaking dancers emanating from the Greek-speaking East and throughout its history drawing its themes overwhelmingly from Greek history and mythology, would it for much of that same history be consistently referred to as 'the Italian Dance'?[17]

While modern scholars are generally comfortable with the idea that in or around 23 or 22 BCE.[18], the dancers Bathyllus from Alexandria and Pylades from Cilicia either working in accord or, what seems more likely, independently of one another, introduced significant innovations into the genre, few subscribe to the idea promoted by Macrobius and Jerome in his

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[16] "The origins and development of pantomime, a form of solo dance portraying a mythological or historical theme which attained its greatest heights in the early years of the Roman Empire, have often been discussed. The evidence is scanty and apparently contradictory leading scholars to assign the origins to Egypt or Greece on the one hand or to see it as a purely Roman or Italian phenomenon on the other."

E.J. Jory 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Imperial Pantomime', *The Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies No 28,* 1981, 147

See also: Alessandra Zanobi, *Seneca's Tragedies and the Aesthetics of Pantomime.* Bloomsbury, London, New York 2014 , 2.

Also: I. Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence. Lucian and Pantomime Dancing.* Gerald Duckworth and Co. London 2007, 19.

[17] Approximately 500 C.E. for instance, the pagan historian Zosimus would upbraid Augustus for having introduced pantomime into the Roman world.

> *"For the dance called pantomimos, which signifies a dance in imitation of everything, was introduced into Rome at this period, it having never before seen in Italy, being invented by Pylades and Bathyllus, besides many other innovations that are still productions of great evil."*

Zosimus: The New History of Count Zosimus. 1.6.1 R.T. Ridley, *A translation with Commentary. Australiansia* 2, Canberra. Association for Byzantine Studies, Sydney University 1982.

[18] Jory, 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Imperial Pantomime,' 1981, 148 has demonstrated that 23 BCE is the more likely date, largely on the grounds that there are good reasons for believing it couldn't have happened in 22.

annotations to Eusabius' *Chronicle*[19] that either dancer was responsible for its 'invention'.

> "Pantomime entered the consciousness of modern scholarship inextricably interwoven with a myth, that of its 'introduction' into Rome at the end of the third century BC or even its 'invention' in that same city by two Eastern performers, Pylades from Cilicia and Bathyllus from Alexandria. Although there is every reason to believe it acquired its definitive form at the time of Augustus, thanks to the catalytic contribution of Pylades and Bathyllus, it is very misleading to imagine pantomime dancing appeared in Rome out of the blue towards the end of the first century BC."[20]

It is in trying to determine just how radical a departure from pre-existing mimetic dance forms the changes made by Bathyllus and Pylades represented that the consensus between even modern scholars breaks down a little. To give just one example; in reference to the concluding section of Xenophon's *Symposium* where a pair of young dancers give what was seeming a highly erotic performance of the love of Dionysus and Ariadne[21] Ismene Lada-Richards says:

> "To take the Greek tradition first, a significant remote ancestor of imperial pantomime can be found in the writings of the 4th century historian Xenophon and

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[19] Jory, 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Imperial Pantomime,' 1981, 147.

[20] Lada-Richards,*Silent Eloquence*, 2007, 19.

21 "The onlookers viewed a Dionysus truly handsome, an Ariadne truly fair, not presenting a burlesque but offering genuine kisses with their lips; and they were all raised to a high pitch of enthusiasm as they looked on. For they overheard Dionysus asking her if she loved him, and heard her vowing that she did, so earnestly that not only Dionysus but all the bystanders as well would have taken their oaths in confirmation that the youth and the maid surely felt a mutual affection. For theirs was the appearance not of actors who had been taught their poses but of persons now permitted to satisfy their long-cherished desires. At last, the banqueters, seeing them in each other's embrace and obviously leaving for the bridal couch, those who were unwedded swore that they would take to themselves wives and those who were already married mounted horse and rode off to their wives that they might enjoy them."

Xenophon *Banquet. 9.7* In *Xenopophon, Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology.* E.C. Marchant and O.J. Todd (trans) Loeb 1923, 635.

> concerns the mimetic interpretation of a given mythical theme by means of dancing."[22]

Whereas for Montiglio it is not a 'remote ancestor' – it *is* pantomime.

> "Mais le premier exemple de pantomime que nous connaissons est grec et remonte au quartrième siècle avant j.-c. C'est l'exécution des amours d'Ariadne et de Dionysos à la fin du *Banquest de Xenophon.* 9.2-7[23]

Part of the problem lies in the fact that pantomime's lengthy pre-history alluded to by Ruth Webb, also talking about the event described in Xenophon,

> "However, it is unlikely that Pylades and Bathyllus created a dance form *ex nihilo.* There is evidence for earlier mimetic dance forms in the Greek east, beginning with the famous Dionysus and Ariadne duet in Xenophon's *Symposium* 9.2.7."[24]

tends to be glossed over because the sudden elevation of Pylades and Bathyllus to superstar status meant that imperial pantomime had an impact upon its audience perhaps only paralleled in modern times by the advent of cinema and it was easy for citizens of the Roman and Byzantine worlds in the centuries that followed to lose sight of this lengthy pre-history, a heritage that importantly for the purposes of this thesis was very firmly Greek.

Jory has suggested that one of the reasons ancient sources very quickly accepted unchallenged the claim that Pylades, in particular, had virtually 'invented' pantomime or at least the Italian version of it, could have been the existence of a treatise on dance by Pylades himself in which it seems reasonable to assume he did not discourage the belief - one of the very many works from the ancient world now lost to us, but one which there is evidence to suggest may have been readily available for at least the first two centuries of the common era.

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[22] Lada-Richards, *Silence Eloquence.* 2007, 19.

[23] "But the first example of pantomime we know of is Greek and goes back to the fourth century BCE. It is the execution of the loves of Ariadne and Dionysus at the end of Xenophon's Banquet."
Montiglio 'Paroles dansées en silence,' 1999. 264.

[24] R.Webb, 'Inside the Mask. Pantomime from the Performers' Perspective'. In Hall and Wyles 2008, 46.

> "Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the claim that Pylades alone was the inventor of the Italian dance, with no hint of any contribution by Bathyllus, goes back to Pylades own work on the dance, a work which might even pre-date Aristonikos? The fact that such a book was preserved at least to the time of Athenaeus, together with the domination on the stage of the tragic dance of Pylades, was perhaps enough to canonize a version which was at variance with that of Pylades' contemporaries."[25]

With this in mind let us see exactly what Athenaeus, who we have seen in Chapter II was one of our major ancient sources on all forms of dancing, had to say on the subject. Interestingly enough he gives primacy to Bathyllus.

> *"Of the so-called 'tragic dancing' the first exponent was Bathyllos of Alexandria, who, says Seleucus, danced pantomimes. Aristonicus says that this Bathyllos together with Pylades, who wrote a treatise on dancing, developed the Italian style of dance...*
> *Now Pylades' dancing was solemn, expressing passion and a variety of character, whereas Bathyllos' was more jolly."*[26]

Yet the same writer would claim at 1.21F and 1.22A that in the time of Aeschylus a trained dancer could portray clearly the whole story of a play by dancing and gesture. If this does not sound like a description of pantomime, then what is it?[27]

Not all our ancient sources were prepared to subscribe to the idea of the Italian origins of the genre however. Jacob of Sarugh, one of Christianity's more strident critics of the theatre spectacles certainly had no doubt as to its origins, describing it unequivocally as:

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[25] Jory, 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Imperial Pantomie,1981, 151.
[26] Athenaeus 1.20d
[27] Certainly Lillian B. Lawler is a modern scholar who thought it was:

> "The dance presentations of the *pantomimi* bear a striking resemblance to an early stage of Greek Tragedy – the one-actor phases, in which a single performer, with the aid of varying costumes and masks, portrayed a series of characters concerned in a story."

Lawler, *The Dance in Ancient Greece*, 1964, 140.

"The folly which the Greeks invented."[28]

Glen Bowersock has suggested it may well have been the mythological, hence pagan, themes danced by the pantomimes that led Jacob to label it Greek.[29] While this may well be the case I do not think we can entirely dismiss the possibility that a commentator as steeped in the culture of the Greek East, as Jacob undoubtedly was, may have been aware of sources or at least traditions unknown to earlier writers from the Latin-speaking world or who had drawn much of their source material from Pylades' own version of events or those contained in Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius or Macrobius – for whom we are reliant for the bulk of our knowledge of post-Augustine pantomime.

One further instance of a literary source describing an unequivocally mimetic dance in this grey period between Xenophon and Augustus is the epigram of Dioscorides of Alexandria dating from the mid third century BCE, describing a dancer named Aristagoras performing the role of Gallus in what was evidently a competition where, presumably, others competed against him in a similar vein.

> *"Aristagoras danced 'Gallus.' I with much trouble got through the "Temenidai' lovers of war. He was sent off with applause, but one rattle of the clappers dispatched poor Hyrnetho. To blazes you deeds of heroes; for among philistines a lark would sing more musically than a swan."*[30]

John Jory, citing this and a famous inscription from Priene[31], goes further than most other scholars of pantomime when he says:

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[28] Jacob of Sarugh, *Folio 7 vers b.* Cited in Hall and Wyles,*New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008.
[29] G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 1996, 38.
[30] *The Greek Anthology.* 11.195. W.R. Paton (trans) Loeb 1918, 165.
[31] This famous inscription is generally accepted by scholars as the first time the label *pantomimos* was applied, or at least the first time it was *recorded* as being applied. It concerned a dancer named Ploutogenes who appeared at a festival in Priene in Asia Minor, by some accounts in 80 BCE, by others 75 BCE.

> "*After the war, as Stephanephoros he gave a notable feast to the whole people, the only person to do so, using the (meat) from the sacrifices for the reception… And desiring to prove what conduced not only to pleasure but also to amusement, he hired performers from abroad, including the pantomime Ploutogenes, who was able to beguile by his art, and he exhibited him for three days, making the occasion participate in this kind of enjoyment too."*

L. Robert; *Inscription from Priene honouring the public benefactor Zosimus of Priene.*

> "Thus a form of mimetic dance, the performers of which were occasionally called *pantomimi* existed in the Greek World from at least the middle of the third century."[32]

Paradoxically, although the world is clearly of Greek origin it was, so Lucian tells us, the Italianised Greeks who:

> *Quite appropriately call the dancer a pantomime."*[33]

The elder Seneca is the first recorded user of the Latinised *Pantomimus* when he said:

> *"If I were a pantomime, I would be Bathyllus."*[34]

Which is possibly an artistic judgement – Bathyllus seemingly had a more light-hearted and unpretentious approach to his art form than that applied by his great rival (see Plutarch below) – but it could also be an ironic reference to the fact that it was Pylades, not Bathyllus who had the ear of Augustus, which Seneca saw as a metaphor for his own position vis-a-vis the imperial power.

Part of the problem in trying to trace the history of pantomime or even trying to establish whether what Bathyllus and Pylades unleashed on the Roman stage was some new, more highly developed version of a much older art form is one of nomenclature.[35]The Greeks of the East, from whence pantomime almost certainly originated, usually used the term *orchestai* for pantomimes and many Romans referred to them as *histrio.* Both terms have a more generic meaning of 'dancer' – and in the case of *histrio* it can also be applied to tragic actors. It is well-nigh

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[32] E.J. Jory, 'The Masks of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias'. In Easterling and Hall. *Greek and Roman Actors*, 2002, 240.
[33] *Dance* 67.
[34] Seneca the Elder, *Controveriae* 3.16 M. Winterbottom (trans) Loeb 1974, 389.
The ascription to Seneca as the first user of this term is contestable, however. In the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 10.1074 is recorded this from Pompeii dated 20BCE.

> *"Aulus Clodus Flassus, son of Aulus, thrice duumvir,*
> *five times elected military tribune by the people, (gave)*
> *in his first duumvirate at the Apolline games, in the Forum:*
> *a procession, bulls, matadors, escape artists, bridge fighters*
> *three pairs, boxers in teams and fighters, games with every*
> *entertainment and with all the pantomimes and Pylades."*

[35] Pantomime is not the only theatrical art form to suffer in this way. The different forms of address for female performers over the first four centuries of the Christian era often make it extremely difficult to be sure if a performer is a soloist, member of a chorus, mime, pantomime, practitioner of some hybrid form of both, or even something altogether more salacious such as a strip-tease artist. The tendency of some ancient sources to refer to mime when it is clearly pantomime that is being described is also a problem.

impossible unless the context is specific, to know if references to either *orchestai* or *histrio* prior to 23BCE refer to pantomimes or whether they are simply being used in the generic sense.

Jory sums up the situation thus:

> "A mute imitative dance, with a vocal and musical accompaniment was common in the Greek World by the early first century BC. and was known as pantomime. A Greek tradition grew up, possibly deriving from the scholars of Alexandria, which saw the origin of this dance form in the dances of drama. This type of dancing became popular in Rome in the middle of the first century BC., at a time when scenic entertainment was going through a phase in which novelty was more prized than dramatic structure. Roman scholars, aware of the development Romanized the Greek tradition by attaching its beginnings to their own innovator, Livius Andronicus.[36] At a later stage, possibly before the time of Livy, the nature of this dance was transformed by Bathyllus and Pylades, a transformation which included the substitution of a choir for the single accompanist and an increased musical component, the change being dramatic enough for the new creation to be known as the Italian dance and to dominate the Roman stage."[37]

Remarkably enough we have Pylades own words as to what those changes constituted, or what Macrobius tells us they were at least:

> *"Since Pylades was said to have changed the old style of dancing that had been in its heyday with our ancestors and to have introduced a new and charming style, he was asked by Augustus what contribution he had made to dance and answered,*

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[36] Livy and Valerius Maximus report a tradition that Livius became hoarse during a rehearsal and danced the role mute thus initiating the genre in Rome. As Jory 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Pantomime," 1981, 157 notes:

> "This reflects a tradition which no extant author from antiquity seems to have followed."

[37] *ibid* 157.

(Il.10.13 'The sound of pipes and flutes and the din of men.'"[38]

While this may simply have been the glib response of an artist trying to demonstrate his erudition in front of the emperor by quoting from the Iliad, we are left with the very real possibility that the contribution of either dancer was nothing more than to turn the low key efforts of a solo dancer with a small accompanying band into a more lavish production with no particular technical enhancement.[39]

As Jory's reference to 'the middle of the first century BC.' (above) indicates there are reasons to suspect that pantomime was well established at Rome before its traditional dating of 23 or 22 BCE.[40]

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[38] Macrobius *Saturnalia.* R.A. Kaster(trans) *Macrobius Books* 1-2 Loeb 2011, 377.
[39] One thinks immediately of the modern day efforts of an Andre Rieu for instance.
[40] Jory himself suggests a date around 40 BCE partly on the basis of the phrase, *sine imitandorum carminum actu* ('without the gesture which is appropriate to the interpretation of themes') with which Livy describes the dancers from Etruria whom he credited with having introduced theatrical entertainment to Rome. It certainly sounds as if he is comparing their performances to a performative style that would be familiar to his readers and that it is pantomime. If as is commonly believed Livy gained much of his source material from Varro Jory further suggests it might be possible to push the date back as far as 47BCE when the *Antiquitates divinae* was published, but adds the cautionary note that,

> "There is no hint in Cicero, our most prolific commentator of the contemporary stage, that pantomime had made any real impact in Rome before his death in 43BC."

Jory 1981, 'The Literary Evidence for the beginning of Imperial Pantomime', 1981, 157.
I find it a little surprising that pantomime scholars have devoted little attention to this intriguing passage from Plutarch's *Life of Sulla* which seems to open the possibility of an earlier dating still.

> *"Nevertheless, even though he kept her (Valeria) as his wife at home, he still kept company with women who were ballet dancers or harpists and with people from the theatre. They used to be drinking together on couches all day long. Those who were at this time the most influential with him were the following: Roscius the comedian, Sorex the leading ballet dancer, and Metrobeus the female impersonator."*

Even allowing for the terminological slippage that Plutarch was on occasion prone to, his general antipathy towards the pantomime makes it unlikely that he would refer to Sorex as being one were she not. It is possible that this would run so counter to everything we believe we know about the timing if the arrival of female pantomime performers that it has led to it being glossed over. (Csapo and Slater in their translation of this excerpt describe Sorex as an 'archmime' and as we shall see the lines between pantomime and mime were frequently blurred and many female mimes in particular were dancers, so it is possible that this is what. Plutarch meant. All the same the distinction between 'panto' and 'arch seems a fine one.
To this we can add the following from Varro from approximately 60BCE

> "*Believe me, servants have devoured more masters than dogs have; if Actaeon had got in first and eaten up his dogs himself, he wouldn't have been a joke for pantomimes in the theatre."*

Varro: *Menippean Satires. Fr. 513 Astbury.* The fragmentary nature of this is, again, very frustrating. It almost sounds as if he is describing a mime performance, but the subject matter

Studies of pantomime are beggared by its aliterary nature. With the possible exception of the *Barcelona Alcestis*[41] and the fragmentary *Great Agamemnon*[42] pantomime left no direct textural record of the sort preserved from the great Athenian playwrights of the 5th century BCE. We are restricted in our knowledge of the genre to what was said *about* it and while, as I have just attempted to demonstrate, it is not entirely true that pantomime's activity went unrecorded before 23BCE, it is certainly true that this date marks the beginning of a period in which it was subject to far greater scrutiny than previously, for the impact it had made upon the emperor made it something major writers could not ignore.[43]

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is one of the most popular of the pantomime themes – and possibly the most famous of all the metamorphosis tales.

[41]See: Edith Hall, 'Is the 'Barcelona Alcestis' a Latin Pantomime Libretto?' In Hall and Wyles *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008.

[42] See E.J. Jory, 'The Pantomime Dancer and his Libretto.' In Hall and Wyles, *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008.

[43] Part of the problem for the student of pantomime is the abundance of material from a single source – the source being one of the most mischievous writers in all antiquity. I refer, or course, to Lucian and his *Dance.* While the idea that Lucian should write a perfectly straightforward and factual account of pantomime and its history, does not sit comfortably with what we know of his oeuvre and as Ismene Lada-Richards puts it:

> "We ought not to be surprised if we find one day among the Lucianic corpus a completely different rhetorical construction, an anti-pantomime tirade of the kind launched by Aelius Aristides and rebuffed by Libanius in his *Oration 64, On Behalf of the Dancers."*

Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence.* 2007,153.

Scholars generally have found themselves with little option but to accept the *Dance* as factual in its historical elements and honest where it comes to opinion, but with the caveat that both fact and opinion are likely to be highly hyperbolised.

We can be even less sure where the truth lies with the other great defender of pantomime, Libanius. While *Oration* 64, *On the Dancers*, is generally accepted by scholars to reflect his true views we find this in *Oration* 45.20

> *"Even if I grant money to be more precious than men's lives, surely dancers and mimes and horses are not."*

And in *Oration* 33.3 *(Against Tisamenus)*

> *"It is a mark of disgrace that Tisamenus took himself off to the dancers. (He wanted to become a leader of the chorus, and composed songs for them.)*

And most damning of all: *Oration* 19.28 where he attacks,

> *"Those who think more of the dancers of pantomime than the sun and moon and darkness itself."*

On the Dancers was by his own admission a reply to Aelius Aristides' *Oration* 34 attacking the pantomime. Aristides was seen by his successors as the model sophist who set the benchmark for other rhetoricians of the Greek-speaking world. Almost nothing remains of his attack except that which Libanius tells us he said and which he uses in his refutation. Much of this is surprisingly similar to the statements against pantomime Lucian has his critic Crato make. This raises the possibility that Lucian, a Syrian who struggled to find acceptance as a rhetor in greater Greece or Rome, wrote the *Dance* purely as an attempt to demonstrate, just as Libanius would two hundred years later, that he could compete with a, if not *the,* leading light of the Second Sophistic.

There are two further points to be made concerning the belief in the Augustan origins of the pantomime. The first is to point out that 22BCE was also the year that Augustus issued his regulations reorganising public spectacles and who should be allowed to give them, placing not only the pantomime, but the *munera gladiatoria* more directly under his personal control. This, I would argue, is why pantomime enters the literary record at this point – because the histories of Suetonius, Tacitus and Dio Cassius were concerned almost entirely with the activities of emperors. J.C. Edmondson,[44] for instance, points out that gladiatorial contests which we know from other sources to have taken place for at least two hundred years prior to Augustus, only appear in the sources from which we also derive our knowledge of pantomime at this point. In other words, pantomime does not show up unequivocally in the Roman literary record prior to this because until Augustus became infatuated with it, it simply was not important enough.

The second point concerns the years of training required to perfect the dancer's art and the specific nature of much of the dancer's semiotic gestural code. That these two artists, Pylades and Bathyllus should have arrived at Rome from centres as diverse as Egyptian Alexandria and Armenian Cilicia, with these skills already intact, displaying a rivalry that does not suggest a collusion between them in the creation of their art form, nor even in their training[45] is perhaps the strongest indication of all that pantomime came from a long-established and widespread Greek tradition. The appreciation of art and art forms being, after all, a highly subjective business, perhaps the major Roman innovation was to elevate pantomime to a level of high art which for the Greek-speaking east had previously been enjoyed by tragedy. Apart from Suetonius' famous description of Nero's lying under lead sheeting and abjuring apples to improve his voice, we have little information about the training a performer undertook in the classical period. Libanius is our only real source on the rigours a prospective pantomime dancer was subject to, and for that reason it is worth citing him in some detail, demonstrating as

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[44] J.C. Edmondson, 'Dynamic Arenas: Gladiatorial Presentations in the City of Rome and the Construction of Roman Society during the Early Empire.' In W.J. Slater (ed) *Roman Theater and Society.* University of Michigan Press 1996, 80.

[45] Importantly the rivalry between Pylades and his pupil Hylas was well attested (below) and had there been a similar previous relationship and falling out between Pylades and Bathyllus it is unlikely it would have passed unrecorded. However given the mobility of performers under the *Pax Augusta* we cannot discount the possibility that the two had encountered one another before coming to Rome. No real explanation has ever been advanced to explain why both should turn up at Rome virtually at the same time.

I maintain it does, the impossibility of both star dancers not having been practitioners of pantomime for many years before they arrived in Rome and supposedly invented it.

> *"First of all, it is not within the capability of everyone's body to take up the profession, but just as in the case of puppies and foals and those who would intend to become athletes, the men who are skilled in examining each of these apply a test, and select all who, through their physical type, show promise and excellence in the actions involved, but reject others who will not be appealing enough for the work, so it is necessary also for a boy to show he will attain a moderate height and will not become plump. Also he needs a straight neck and a look which is not furtive and fingers naturally well-formed and, in a word, beauty, which is an essential attribute in matters to do with the stage performances and especially in the case of the dancer."*
>
> *"And when he has taken him on, the gymnastic trainer will twist him round into more numerous and more remarkable bends than a wrestler, bringing up both his feet over his head and in addition even forcing them to project further past his face so that his heels approach his elbows... Just like, I imagine, the property of wax."*
>
> *"Such will the trainer render the body for the dancing teacher, and he, when he has taken it over, will render the framework of the limbs obedient with a view to the imitation of each figure and the labour of both is not small."*[46]

So intense was the training that although we might normally characterise the dancers as slender and lithe – and as we will see in Chapter IX the sources are rife with reference to their effeminate appearance and nature – as Ruth Webb notes[47] at least one had the strength and stamina to go on and become a gladiator!

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[46] *Libanius, On the Dancers* 103-105. Cited in Margaret Molloy; *Libanius and the Dancers.* Olms Weildmann, Hildeschiem, Zurich, New York 1996. Text cited is Foster R; (trans) *Libanius Orations. Vol iv* (Teubner 1908)

[47] Webb, *Demons and Dancers.* 2008, 67.

It was not simply that the training began early. Mortality rates among young dancers, perhaps as a result of the extremes their bodies had been subject to from an early age, were high even for a time when early death was a commonplace. Perhaps understandably reluctant to let their investment in time and money go to waste, the owners[48] often put their dancers on the stage at a very early age.[49]

W.J. Slater suggests that the dancer's training was probably similar to that which was offered to young males of the leading families by the *gymnasia*[50] and Ruth Webb has suggested that the closing of the *gymnasia* may have been behind what she perceives as an increase in amazement at the pantomime's physical dexterity in late antique sources. Now that ordinary citizens (as opposed to professional dancers) were no longer receiving such training, the ability of the dancers to perform athletic leaps and to contort their bodies in a way impossible to the untrained, began to appear almost supernatural.

An inscription from Tivoli cited in the *Corpus Inscriptorium Latinarum* 6.10115 indicates that although official agonistic competition between pantomimes are not generally considered to have begun until the second-century CE, competitions did take place and Augustus' favourite Pylades and his pupil Hylas were not necessarily considered the best by judges outside Rome. (Csapo and Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama*, 1994, 381, however, raise the possibility that Theorus was the given name of Bathyllus.)[51]

> "*Gaius Theorus, star, victor in pantomime.*
> *If god himself is now captured by your (art), Theorus,*
> *do men doubt that god wants to imitate (you)?*

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[48] Although a number of dancers achieved freedman status and some, like Pylades, went on to become extremely wealthy, almost without exception dancers began their careers as slaves.

[49]
> "The youngest ever recorded is the five-year-old Paridon ("Little Paris"), described as an *orchestes* (dancer) on his tombstone. Paridon may well have performed only in the private setting of his owner's house, but another young dancer, the twelve-year-old Sepentiro, gave two days of successful performances at Antimopolis (Antibes) before his early death."

Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 2008, 67.

[50] W.J Slater, 'Three Problems in the History of Drama.' *Phoenix* 47, 1993, 208-12.

[51] Margaret Molloy in the addendum to her book *Libanius and the Dancers* gives a list of the pantomime dancers recorded in the sources from the time of Augustus through to the sixth century and it is clear that the majority of them assumed generic stage names that clearly identified them as practitioners of their specific craft. (See below for the uses of the names Pylades, Paris and, from the Byzantine Period, Karamallos.)

> *(You defeated) Pylades of Cicilia, Nominus of Syria,*
> *Hylas of Salmakis, Pierus of Tivoli.*

The idea that Theorus was the real name of Bathyllus makes sense. The name Theorus occurs nowhere else in the pantomime literature. If there were someone capable of outperforming Pylades we would expect to see the name occurring in the literature of the imperial circle. If, on the other hand, it were Bathyllus, whose style was known to be more simple and not to Augustus' personal taste, there is nothing strange about the name not being recorded at Rome where he was always known by his stage name. The dating of the inscription is vague. If it could be placed as is suggested in the 20s BCE, the inclusion of a native-born Italian on the list would be significant. As it is, the fact that Nomius was from Syria and Hylas from Salmakis strengthens the argument for the eastern roots of the genre.

Art forms evolve.[52] To describe each new modification as constituting a completely new genre is to over-complicate a task that is already, at two thousand years remove and without detailed descriptions of specific performances to guide us, extremely difficult. We know that there were differences between the pantomime performances witnessed by Augustus and those being performed in Constantinople and Antioch six centuries later. And indeed, given the following from Plutarch, what Augustus watched was by no means uniform:

> *"Taking the cup, Diogenes said, "These, too, sound like sober words to me; the wine seems not to be harming or getting the best of us. So I fear that I may myself be subject to correction. All the same, most kinds of entertainment must be trimmed from the list. First of all*

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[52] We have confirmation from Libanius that this was perceived to be the case with pantomime. At 64.19 he says:

> "*Yes, Aristides says, 'for the dance is now a different matter compared to the one before, and it has not stayed in the same state as it was."*

And at 64.30 we find:

> "*People used to dance differently. That style was held in esteem before. Now movement has developed. So be it. Or shall we allow other skills to advance according to what is discovered, but despise this one if it has discovered something more clever? And shall we not heed the man who says that 'in the arts the new prevails?"*

> *tragedy; it is not at all appropriate to a party, with its majestic elocution and its elaborate presentation of events that are moving and sorrowful. As for the dances I should disqualify the Pyladic as pretentious and emotional and requiring a large cast; but out of Socrates' well-known praise of the dance I will accept the Bathyllic. It is a straight-forward unaccompanied dance, verging on the kordax, and represents a danced interpretation of Echo or some Pan or Satyr revelling with Eros."*[53]

Lucian, for instance, claims that at one stage the pantomime dancer used to sing the libretti himself, but that the effort of dancing and retaining sufficient breath to sing became too difficult and this aspect of the performance was handed over to the small band of musicians who accompanied him. Assuming this to be so, what conclusions can we draw? Either that later dancers were less physically adept than those who had preceded them or, which is far more likely, the roles became more physically challenging as time went by.

We must remind ourselves that Bathyllus and Pylades were the first superstar performers of the entertainment world.[54] Japanese Noh theatre is

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[53] Plutarch (Trans Minar 1961) *Sympotic Questions* 7.8.3.

[54] Roscius the comic actor may have been a close friend of Cicero, but Pylades, Hylas, Paris and Mnester were the confidants and lovers of emperors and their wives. (See Chapter IX). There is evidence to suggest that Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes obtained iconic status among the Greeks (and Euripides some of the notoriety we are more accustomed to associate today with rock stars) but it was the text that gave them their fame, not the performance. As we shall see, this cult of personality would make the pantomimes increasingly suspect among those who considered themselves the arbiters of public morality in the Roman World and would be at the root of the pantomime riots that plagued the Roman and Byzantine empires in much the way that modern day football riots have become the scourge of the sporting world.

The *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* gives a number of entries that show the wealth and position to which pantomimes were capable of rising. As we shall see in Chapter IX there were at least three Parises in the accounts of Suetonius and Tacitus. The Pylades in the inscription below was at least the third to have taken the name. Whether there was a formal anointing of a successor by the retiring 'holder' of the name (in much the way that football or basketball numbers are handed on in modern times) or whether newer Parises and Pyladeses simply appropriated the names as a way of announcing themselves is unclear.

ILS 5186

> "*For Lucius Aurelius Pylades, freedman of Augustus, first pantomime of his time, crowned four times in the sacred games, patron of the Parasti of Apollo, priest of the association, honoured at Puteoli with the grant of decurion and duumviral honours, augur,*

perhaps the only example of a performance genre where the performer is expected to perform a role exactly as it has been performed by previous generations. The requirements of stardom, the requirements of the performer's ego, make it highly unlikely that each of the performers who followed the path carved by Bathyllus and Pylades would not have tried to outdo their predecessors and add innovations of their own.[55] In other words the genre almost certainly evolved – even in the period of which we know something of its history.[56]

We know, too, that women began to perform as pantomime dancers. But complicating the issue is the gradual blurring of the lines between pantomime and mime. We have evidence, for instance, for genre-hopping performers, particularly females. Pelagia, the female performer best known to us because of her ostentatious life-style prior to her well-publicised conversion to Christianity and subsequent life as a transvestite monk, detailed in her famous biography *The Life of Pelagia,* was known both as the foremost female mime in Antioch and the lead dancer of the pantomime chorus-line.[57] Basilla is the other female dancer we know a certain amount about – primarily because of the wealth of detail on the *stele* that was raised in her honour by one of her co-performers – and she seems to have been another who had a foot in both camps. (The blurring of lines seems to have occurred mostly at the

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> *on account of his love for his country and his extreme generosity in producing a gladiatorial show with a public hunt, at the pleasure of the most holy emperor Commodus, the Cornelian tribe (set up this monument.)*

And in ILS 5193

> "*For the freedman of M. Aurelius, Agillus Sepentrio, pantomime, first ofhis time, priest of the synodus, Parasite of Apollo, aluminus of Faustina,launched by M. Aurelius Commodus Antonius Pius Felix Augustus, decorated with the ornamenta of a decurion by the decree of the order, and adopted into the inuenes. By the order of the Senate and the people of Lanuvium.*

University of California Online Edition, 1983.

[55] Indeed the famous account of the rivalry between Pylades and his pupil and, later, rival Hylas found in Macrobius (below) indicates that there were no definitive interpretations of roles and that invention and innovation were a staple of the genre.

[56] Ruth Webb, for instance, while maintaining that:

> "The forms of theatrical entertainment remained relatively stable throughout the period."

Also says:

> "There must have been local variations and significant changes over time in theme and technique, but these are largely invisible to us."

Webb, *Demons and Dancers,* 2008,10-11.

[57] See Lada-Richards *Silent Eloquence*, 2007, 30 and Webb *Demons and Dancers,* 2008, 289.

chorus level). By the sixth century Choricius, for instance, would assert in his famous defence of the mimes that a mime 'must know how to dance', but there is no real evidence to suggest that the dancing of the mimes ever had any real mimetic intent, nor, apart from an occasional satirical foray into mythological themes by the mimes, that there was any real commonality in subject matter.

We know, too, of duet performances.[58] We know of arena spectacles in the Byzantine period in which the lead dancer was backgrounded by a chorus of dancing girls. We know of performances that took place in especially flooded arenas creating a spectacle that sounds closer to something out of an Esther Williams movie than Augustan pantomime. Yet we still tend to use the title 'pantomime' for the Byzantine performances without seeming to notice that their divergence from those of Pylades and Bathyllus were very likely greater than those between Augustus' favourites and those of three hundred years earlier.

I have said elsewhere[59] that art forms do not appear in a vacuum as a result of an act of immaculate conception. What Xenophon describes is so close to being a basic form of pantomime that logic suggests a gradual refinement – and I stress gradual – rather than the dramatic leap implied by those who credit Augustus' dancers with the invention of pantomime – and this means a Graeco-Roman tradition (with the emphasis on Graeco) stretching back at least[60] four hundred years.[61]

Perhaps a vital link in this process is the dance form known as *hyporchema* – an art form generally considered to have pre-dated pantomime, but which if the following from Plutarch is to be credited seems to have been a form of pantomime under another name.

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[58] I argue, however, in Chapter V, that Apuleius' description of *three* dancers performing at Corinth in the *Golden Ass* is in fact a perfectly straightforward account of a single dancer performing three roles.
[59] R Harding, '*The Historian as Dramatist.'* 2011.
[60] The same chain of logic would suggest Xenophon's dancers did not invent their art form either.
[61] We have already noted, for instance, Lawler's comment on single dancers performing entire plays during the golden age of Athenian tragedy and the conformation of this in Athenaeus.

> "*There seems to be nothing of painting in poetry or of poetry in painting, nor does either art make any use whatsoever of the other, whereas dancing and poetry are fully associated and the one involves the other. Particularly this is so when they combine in that type of composition called hyporchema, in which the two arts taken together effect a single work, a representation by means of poses and words.*"[62]

This raises the possibility that the term 'pantomime' was only a localised rebranding of the pre-existing dance form. As late as the Second Century CE a number of theatrical dance forms with mimetic elements still existed in addition to the pantomime. The *Pyrrhic* and the *Orchestopaia* were originally marital dances that had been preserved as theatrical genres – the latter being attested well beyond the Second Century. The *Pyrrhic* and the *Bacchic* dance of the Black Sea Region (which, interestingly, seems to have been limited to Dionysian themes, creating another possible link between dance and metamorphosis) however seem to have died out before the establishment of Constantinople and are apparently unrecorded in Byzantine sources other than as a historical curiosity.

We find the link between pantomime and the plastic arts established by Plutarch (above) being echoed in Lucian at *Dance* 35.

> "*And she has not kept away from painting and sculpture, but manifestly copies above all else the rhythm that is in them, so neither Phidias nor Apelles seems at all superior to her."*

And in Libanius, *Oration 64.*116.

> "*And further, if by looking at statues of gods makes men more self-disciplined by sight, the dancer allows you to see portrayals of them all on the stage, not representing them in stone, but rendering them in*

[62] *Plutarch Moralia.* In Minar, Sanbach, Helmbold (trans) *Plutarch, Moralia* Vol IX Loeb 1961, 295

> *himself, so that even the top sculptor would yield the first places to dancers in a judgment of beauty in this respect."*

As Rosie Wyles puts it:

> "This implies that the audience should expect to read and decode the visual information of the pantomime in the same way they would a work of visual art."[63]

This linkage between pantomime and the visual arts will be explored in more detail in Chapter VIII when we examine the way in which Greek intellectuals strove to maintain their identity under Rome.

Part of the problem in tracing the pre-history of pantomime lies, paradoxically, in the abundance of sources, which we examined in Chapter II, attesting to the importance of dancing in Greek society for at least five hundred years prior to the period in question in which the assumption that a degree of mimetic interpretation was involved is implied, but not stated. We know, for instance, that tragic choral dance involved a mimetic element – that the chorus could indicate, for example, the earthquake that destroys Pentheus' palace in the *Bacchae*[64] or the tempest that drags Prometheus and themselves down to Hades in *Prometheus Unbound.*[65] We know also that dancers participating in festivals to honour individual gods incorporated into their dance some attribute or prop symbol of the god in question.

What we do not know is how pronounced the mimetic elements in choral dance were, nor can we formulate a timeline or point to seminal moments in the movement from what we surmise to be impressionistic – what we might call today 'interpretive dance' – to the specific, storytelling performances of the pantomimes.

We do know, however, that a number of the sources regarded mimesis as a vital element of dance and if the following from Libanius is to be credited

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[63] R.Wyles, 'The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008, 79.
[64] Euripides, *The Bacchae, Scene 111, Interlude III*
[65] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Unbound, Section 216.*

they regarded our core concern, metamorphosis, to be an essential element of not just pantomime, but *all* dance.

> "*Zeus did not depart from his own nature in the transformation which we hear of, but while attending to the occasion he was still himself. And with regard to Athena and all the other gods to whom alteration happened, one would say the same thing; that although they appeared in worse forms they preserved their own distinctive excellence. And these gods appear to me to be the parents of today's dance, through their own changes leading on those of men who were dexterous in the imitation of anything. For it no longer seemed shameful to take on any shape after the gods had done so.*"[66] (underlining mine)

And:

> "*Each one of them is almost like Proteus the Egyptian.*[67] *You would say through the wand of Athena, which transforms the shape of Odysseus, they take on every guise; old men, young men, the humble, the mighty, the dejected, the elated, servants, masters. With respect to their feet we might even question whether they possess the advantage over Perseus.*"[68]

We mentioned earlier the constant frustration of scholars that no pantomime libretti have survived to us. It has sometimes been suggested they were not preserved because they did not *deserve* to be. John Jory [69]has suggested this idea may have developed as a result of a remark of the elder Seneca concerning the son of Abronius Silo:

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[66] *Oration* 64.56
[67] cf. Lucian,
[68] *Oration* 64.117
[69] 'The Pantomime Dancer and his Libretto,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 157.

> *"Who composed fabuluae for pantomime dancers and not only wasted a great talent, but polluted it."*[70]

However, the fact that we know that poets like Statius who were considered to be of the first rank of their times composed pantomime libretti suggests that the literary quality may have been higher than is generally accepted.[71] Jory draws upon Libanius' response to Aristides' criticism of the texts to suggest another reason for the non-survival of the libretti.

> "After an admission that not all contemporary libretti were of outstanding poetic merit, he goes on to say *"For dancing is not made complete, but it is for the sake of the dancing that the songs are worked out. We judge the day by the beauty and ugliness of the dance, not by the words of the songs. Our consideration of these is brief."*[72]

In other words other than as a template for the performance the libretto had no purpose. There was no reason to read them as an independent work of literature and thus no reason for them to be preserved.

Undoubtedly the most fascinating portal we have into not only the mechanics of pantomime in the Augustan period, but the petty rivalries between the dancers and the very real familiarity the most privileged of them were able to assume with the emperor himself, occurs in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* at 2.7.12-19, and because it contains an account of the first incidence we know of what would become one of the major contributing factors in pantomime's fall from grace over the next seven centuries – the increasing public disorder that would come to be associated with the genre – it is worth quoting in full.

> "*But once having mounted the stage in giving my account, I shouldn't omit the actor Pylades, who flourished in the*

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[70] Seneca: *Suasoriae* 2.19.

[71] Allowing, of course, for the possibility that the poets in question may have shown their own contempt for the medium with a 'toss it off and take the money' approach. My own experiences in my former career as a producer of television serials makes me reluctant to discount this.

[72] 'The Pantomime Dancer and his Libretto,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008, 161.

Augustan age and brought his pupil Hylas so far along in his art that they competed on an equal footing. The people then divided their support between the two, and when Hylas was dancing to some songs whose concluding rhythm contained the phrases 'the great Agamemnon', Hylas measured out his stature to give the impression of someone massive and grand: Pylades lost his patience and called out from the audience: "You're making him big, not great!" Then the audience made him dance the same piece again, and when he had reached the passage that Pylades had criticised, he adopted the posture of one engaged in reflection, judging that taking thought for all was the most appropriate thing for a great general.[73]

... he shot an arrow into the audience and when he was acting Hercules at Augustus' behest in his dining hall, he aimed his bow and shot some arrows – and Augustus thought it only fair to find himself in the same position vis-a-vis Pylades as the Roman people had been. Since Pylades was said to have changed the old style of dancing that had been in its heyday with our ancestors and to have introduced a new and charming style, he was asked by Augustus what contribution he had made to dance and answered

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[73] Hylas' attempt to embody the inner workings of his character can be compared to Quintilian's advice to orators concerning gestures.

> "An orator has to be very different from a dancer, he must adapt his Gesture to the sense more than to his words – which indeed was the practice of serious actors too."

Quintilian. The Orators Education 11.3.89 in D.A. Russell (trans) Books 11-12 Loeb 2001, 130-131.

In this we can see the beginnings, at least, of an understanding of the concept of subtext, not really given a philosophical basis until the work of Chekov and Stanislavski at the end of the 19th century.

To Quintilian we might add Cicero:

> "But all these emotions must be accompanied by gesture – not this stagey gesture reproducing the words but one conveying the general situation and idea not by mimicry but by hints."

Cicero: *On the Orator*. ii.220 in Rackham H. (trans) Book 3 Loeb 1942, 176-177.

And for further evidence of the pantomime's ability not simply to embody dialogue and action, but abstract ideas: Athenaeus 1.20 where he talks of Memphis dancing Pythagorean philosophy!

> *(Il.10.13) The sound of pipes and flutes and the din of men.*

> *When his competition with Hylas provoked a riot, he replied to Augustus' outrage with the comment: "You're being ungrateful indeed your highness: let them be distracted by us."*[74]

This anecdote was evidently well known over the next four hundred years or Macrobius, at least, had read his Dio Cassius for in his *Roman History* the latter described the same incident – his account of Pylades' address to Augustus being marginally more restrained.

> "*It is to your advantage Caesar, that the people wear themselves out wrapped up in our affairs."*[75]

Later we will examine the arguments that mounted against pantomime almost from its 'arrival' centre stage in the Augustan period and would culminate in its banning under Canons 51 and 62 of the Council in Trullo in 691-92. But first we need to ask ourselves just what it was about it that prompted the seven centuries that it dominated popular entertainment. I have already stated that I believe that a great deal of its appeal lay in the pantomime's ability to give the transformations described in the metamorphosis tales a physical, tangible expression. Perhaps the clearest statement in Lucian of the importance of the link between pantomime and metamorphosis tales comes when he lists the stories a pantomime was supposed to carry in his repertoire. He lists transformation tales as being first in importance.

> "*Before all else, however, he will know the stories of their loves,including the lives of Zeus himself, <u>and all the forms into which he</u> <u>changed himself.</u>* (Underlining mine)[76]

Later I will discuss in more detail Lucian's reference to Proteus as a pantomime dancer.[77] Lucian, however, was not the only one from antiquity to

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[74] Macrobius: *Saturnalia.* In R.A. Kaster (trans) *Macrobius Books* 1-2 Loeb 2011,377.
[75] Dio Cassius; *Roman History 54.17.5. l* In E. Cary (trans) *Dio Cassius* Books 51-55, 327.
[76] *Dance* 60.

make the link between pantomime and the shape-shifting Proteus. We have already noted Libanius' evocation of 'Proteus the Egyptian' (above) and two hundred years later we find Nonnus doing the same. Nonnus even goes so far to evoke Proteus as the partner of his labours in his mammoth account of Dionysus and his many transformations!

> "*Bring me the fennel, rattle the cymbals ye Muses!*
> *put in my hand the wand of Dionysos whom I sing:*
> *put me a partner for your a dance in the neighbouring*
> *island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns, that he may*
> *appear in all his diversity of shapes, since I twang my*
> *harp to a diversity of songs.*"[78]

The catalogue of observations from the period of the pantomime's greatest appeal which, although not making the direct link to metamorphosis that Lucian, Libanius and Nonnus do, stress the way in which pantomimes could move from one character to another is impressive. This from Cassiodorus early in the sixth century is among the most intriguing. Coming as it does so late in our period and in an area where literary records were about to disappear for two centuries or more as a result of the chaos following the Byzantine wars of reconquest, an area moreover that was not subject to the decisions of the Council in Trullo and showing as it does that pantomime was still held in the highest regard by those currently in power in Italy – in marked contrast to the situation in the East – raises the intriguing possibility that pantomime may have persisted, particularly in theatre mad Graeca Magna, far longer than is generally thought.

> "*The same body portrays Hercules and Venus, it displays*
> *a woman in a man, it creates a king and a soldier, it renders*

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[77] "*Since we have spoken of India and Ethiopia, it will repay us to make an imaginary descent into Egypt, their neighbour. For it seems to me that the ancient myth about Proteus the Egyptian means nothing else than that he was a dancer.*"

Dance 19.

[78] Nonnus; *Dionysiaca*.W.H.D. Rouse, (trans) Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass 1940, 11.

an old man in a young differentiated by such a variety of impersonation."[79]

Almost directly contemporaneous with Cassiodorus, but at the opposite end of the former Roman Empire is Aristainetos.[80] That the two most extended accounts of women performing as pantomimes come from works of fiction should not deflect us from the reality that underpinned them. The first of these is Apuleius' description of the Corinthian dancing girls which I shall discuss in length in Chapter V and the second is Aristainetos' letter (Ep 1.26) which can be seen as an early example of fan mail (albeit fictional) in which a Byzantine audience member expresses his admiration for the dancer Panarete. It is doubly significant in the context of this work as once again it evokes Proteus. I cite here only the first section.

"Who was not dazzled when you danced; who could
watch you and not fall in love? The gods have
Polyhymnia and Aphrodite. You play them on stage
for us, and rightly so, adorned by the goddesses themselves.
Shall I call you 'orator', or name you 'painter of realism'?
You write down actions, you express all sorts of words,
you are absolutely the body image of all nature,
using your hands for different formations and varied
expressions instead of colours and speech; and like some
Egyptian Proteus you appear to change from one character

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[79] Cassiodorus *Variae* iv.51 In S.J.B. Barnish. (trans and notes) *Cassiodorus. Selected Variae.* Liverpool University Press 1992, 81
We will return to this quote in Chapter VIII when we examine the charges that would be laid against the pantomimes of lowering the standards of public morality – in particular through the promotion of effeminism.

[80] As John H. Starks Jnr 'Pantomime Actresses in Latin Inscriptions'. *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 111 demonstrates, this letter can be dated as late as the end of the fifth/beginning of the sixth centuries.

> "References to Constantinople as the 'New Rome', the term 'Parian' Proteus and the pantomime Karamallos date this work to the late fifth or early sixth century A.D. Karamollos was a particularly popular name C AD490-520n for principal pantomimes of the Green faction."

For more on this see: Malalas; *Chron 15.386* Malalas fr. 43. (*Excerpta de insidis)* trans Roger Scott *Byzantina Australiensia 4.* Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986(with always the reservations concerning Malalas' reliability discussed later in this paper.)

> *to another to the accompaniment of the artful song of the chorus.*"[81]

Frustratingly these accounts although telling us what a pantomime was capable of doing give very little specific indication of how they did it.[82] We do know from the number of references to the use of hands that a specific gestural language was involved. There seems little doubt that for the Romans in particular hand gestures (cheironomy) were used to supplement meaning, or *nuances* of meaning, especially in public performances by orators at a level that could be understood by a general audience that is almost comparable to the sign language used by the hearing- impaired today.[83] Indeed if some of the sources (below) are to be credited the pantomime *was* capable of conveying meaning as quickly and as clearly as a modern user of sign language.

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[81] Cited in *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008.

[82] The suggestion made by a number of scholars that pantomime dancers were able to portray different characters through rapid changes of mask or costume does not really gel with the speed the ancient sources indicate they were able to make the transitions. Rosie Wyles addresses the issue comprehensively in: 'The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime'.

> "For the performer there must have been much less a sense of character crystallized in visual material in the form of a *skeue* (costume) that might be put on. It is not just that the audience are not shown a full transformation of character in the costume; it is also that the *performer* cannot experience this sense of sartorially coherent character transformation. The potential impact of this on the performer is demonstrated in the story in Lucian (On Dancing 80) where a dancer is said to have become confused in the sequence he was dancing; instead of showing Cronus eating his children he presented the misfortunes of Thyestes because the similarity of the two stories had led him astray. Now, if a dancer had a strong sense of character through costume and could, therefore link a certain movement of the head with the visual material of a character-specific costume then it is my suggestion that a slip such as the one made by the dancer in this anecdote would not happen"

In *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 71.

[83] One of the clearest indications that the general public were not only capable of readily understanding the gestural language of the pantomimes but also *employing* it themselves is to be found in Ovid where he describes people partying during the festival of Anna Perenna:

> "*There they sing whatever they have learned in the theatre, and move their hands easily to the words.*"

Ovid; *Fasti 3.535-6* (trans Csapo and Slater) *The Context of Ancient Drama,* 1994.
(James Frazer's translation for the Loeb edition is slightly different:

> "*There they sing the ditties they picked up in the theatres, beating time to the words with nimble hands.*"

Frazer James G; *Ovid Fasti.* Loeb 1911, 161.

Gregory Aldrete, whose book *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome*[84] provides a detailed account of Roman gestural language, maintains:

> "Audiences at Rome were fluent in the language of acclamations because they had learned a series of formulas that could be adapted to various situations. Spontaneous demonstrations were possible because of their body of shared knowledge."[85]

And:

> "In all these functions as well as a few others, gestures constituted a significant non-verbal component of ancient oratory that could augment, supplement, or even take the place of an orator's words."[86]

And, most significantly:

> "Many of the popular forms of entertainment, including pantomime, mime and theatre, employed gestural systems comparable in intricacy with that used by orators. The link between the actor and the orator is particularly significant, and evidence suggests that each studied the other and that they even borrowed specific gestures from one another in order to hone their performative skills."[87]

Given the rules of decorum that governed the degree of 'staginess' an orator could employ, at least in the time of Cicero and, later, Quintilian, but less so during the Second Sophistic, the idea that a pantomime might be able to employ a far wider and more free-flowing range of gestures and body language indicates that some of the sources (below) were employing far less hyperbole than a modern reader might imagine.

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[84] Aldrete, G; *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1999
[85] Ibid, xxi
[86] Ibid, xix
[87] Ibid, xix.

Even the younger Seneca whose views on the moral and artistic impact of pantomime scholars are far from being in full agreement upon, had to concede in this *Epistulae Morales:*

> *"We can frequently marvel that the hand of the expert dancers can so readily adjust to every indication of events and emotions and the gestures match the rapidity of the words."*[88]

Seneca was not the only one to display a certain ambivalence in their attitude to pantomimes. In the case of St. Augustine the ambivalence was not so much an attitudinal one as a contradiction concerning what he claims pantomimes were capable of achieving. In *Christian Doctrine* at 2.25.38[89] he would claim that even in his own time in Carthage (by which time, presumably, audiences were completely au fait with the pantomime's semiotic language) spectators were incapable of understanding what the pantomimes sought to convey unless someone explained it to them. Yet in *Concerning the Teacher* 3.5 while discussing the ability of people to communicate through sign language he would maintain:

> *"For histriones dancing without words, frequently illustrate and expound whole plays in the theatre."*

The question immediately poses itself as to how a single dancer could convey dialogue between two or more characters. One suggestion might be that for the dancer to simply (even in a seduction scene) embody just one of the interlocutors and represent the other entirely through reaction – not unlike one-sided phone calls in modern plays or dramatic monologues where the speaker responds to the words of an unheard speaker in such a way as to make it clear what has been said.

Libanius has an intriguing passage on the presentation of just such silent solo dialogues.

> *"To signify Athena by showing Athena or Poseidon by showing Poseidon, or Hephaistos by showing Hephaistos*

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[88] Citedin *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 161.
[89] Examined in more detail in subsequent chapters.

> *is no great thing. But to signify Poseidon through Athena and Athena through Hephaistos, and Hephaistos through Ares and Zeus through Ganymede and Paris through Achilles, is this not more suited to sharpening the mind than any sort of riddle?"*[90]

One of the more interesting references to the use of hands in the dance, in that it comes from a neutral source – that is to say one that seeks neither to praise or condemn comes in Artimedorus' *Oneocritica* where, a little bizarrely, he makes the automatic assumption that dreams of a child dancing mean that he or she will grow up to be deaf and dumb!

> "*Seeing a little child dance indicates that the child will be deaf and dumb and consequently will rely upon gestures to convey his meaning."*[91]

Another interesting testimony to the manual dexterity of the pantomime comes in the *Greek Anthology* at 16.283 where Leontius Scholastius commenting on a *painting* of the pantomime Rhodoclea says:

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[90] *Oration* 64.113

[91] Artimedorus *Oneiocritica.* R. J. White (trans and commentary) Original Books Torrance Cal. 1975 , 1.76.

Like any good dream interpreter Artemidorus hedges his bets concerning dreams of dancing with about half boding well and half ill. For instance:

> "*For a man to dream of dancing himself in house in the presence of only his household servants and without any strangers present or looking on is a good sign for all alike. Furthermore it is good for a person to see his wife and children or any of his relatives dancing. For they predict great mirth and abundance of goods.*
> *But to dream of dancing in the presence of strangers regardless of whether they are many or few, or to dream that one sees any of one's relatives dancing is good neither for a healthy or a sick man. For in the latter case, it signifies that someone in the house will die; in the former, that the dancer will disgrace himself greatly."*

ibid 1.76

It is for dancing in the theatre that he reserves his greatest equivocality, however.

> *"If a man dreams that he is dancing in a theatre, wearing make-up and possessing the other theatrical equipment, that he is held in high esteem and praised, it signifies; for a poor man riches that will not, however, last till his old age. For on stage, the dancer plays the part of the king and is surrounded by many attendants. But after the performance, he is left alone. For a wealthy man, on the other hand, the dream predicts turmoil and many lawsuits because of the complications that arise from the plot."*

> "*Rhodoclea is the tenth Muse and fourth Grace, the delight of men, the glory of the city. Her eyes and her feet are as swift as the wind and her skilled fingers are better than both Muses and Graces*."[92]

The pairing of pantomime and painting, as we have seen, occurs often in the sources, but it is particularly interesting in this instance that Leontius appears to be able to analyse the dancer's skills from a static image! In all probability he had seen her dance previously, or was relying on word of mouth from those who had, but we are left with the possibility that he is simply ascribing to the portrait attributes that pantomime was commonly assumed to have.

The most extended account of the pantomime's use of the hands to dramatic effect, but once again not, unfortunately, as to how it was done comes in *Dance* 63 and 64 where Lucian claims that the principal dancer of Nero's time responded to a claim by the Cynic philosopher Demetrius that the dancers were mere:

> "*adjunct(s) to the flutes and pipes and the stamping, himself contributing nothing to the presentation but making absolutely meaningless idle movements with no sense in them at all."*

by challenging him to watch him dance the adulterous love affair of Ares and Aphrodite without any musical accompaniment at all.

> "*in such wise that Demetrius was delighted beyond measure and paid the highest possible tribute to the dancer; he raised his voice and shouted at the top of his lungs, "I hear the story you are acting, man, I do not just see it; you seem to be talking with your very hands."*

We can probably assume that just as the Athenian theatre relied upon audience familiarity with the material at hand not to require a diversion into

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[92] Leontius Scholastius. *Greek Anthology 16.283.* W.R. Paton, (trans) Loeb 1918, 329.

back story, the pantomime audience would be able to intuit which part of the familiar story they were watching. Perhaps indeed this was part of the appeal – just as a modern audience attempts to solve a crime story along with the detective, so too might not the pantomime audience thrill at the idea of attempting to identify which stage of the story they were at? For these reasons most modern scholars tend to exercise a degree of scepticism about Lucian's further claim at *Dance* 64 about the foreign potentate:

> "*One of the Barbarians from Pontus, a man of royal blood, came to Nero on some business or other, and among other entertainments saw that dancer perform so vividly that although he could not follow what was being sung – he was but half Hellenised – he understood everything."*

Given that the gestural language used by the pantomimes seems to have been specific to the Graeco/Roman world Lucian's further claim that this same man asked Nero to send a couple of pantomimes with him to use in communication between him and neighbouring states that didn't speak the same language does not ring true at all and is one of the indicators that suggest we must be very careful of accepting all of Lucian's claims.[93]

Before leaving the subject of pantomime gestures we might return to Cassiodorus,

> "*To those were added the speaking hands of dancers, their fingers that are tongues, their clamorous silence, their silent exposition. The Muse Polyhymnia*[94] *is said*

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[93] That said, as we will discuss in Chapter VI Nonnus has Dionysus' Indian adversaries display a similar ability to communicate with the use of their hands.

[94] In Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* written approximately forty years earlier we find:

> "*Polyhymnia nursingmother of the dance waved her arms, and sketched in the air the image of a soundless voice…*"

Dionysiaca V.105

When we compare the use of the same oxymoronic metaphor in Cassiodorus and Nonnus: Cassiodorus: '*Their clamorous silence,' 'Their silent exposition', 'The hand of meaning."* Nonnus: *"Voiceless hands" 1.423 'A soundless voice' 5.105 'Speaking silence' 19.157 'Eloquent signs'* 22.89 and most particularly: '*with eloquent silence*.' 36.378 we find least one reason that the assertion of a number of scholars that the Alexandrian poets were unlikely to be known in the Latin-speaking West and, crucially, vice versa might be worthy of reassessment.

> *to have discovered this, showing that humans could declare their meaning without speech."* [95]

And:

> *Then the hand of meaning expounds the song to the eyes of melody, and by a code of gestures, as if by letters, it instructs the spectator's sight; summaries are read in it, and without writing, it performs what writing has set forth."*[96]

I have been attempting to demonstrate that the pantomime's ability, in effect, to perform on stage metamorphoses was a large part of its appeal to its audience. If we return to the *Greek Anthology* we find an epigram from Antipater of Thessalonki describing the audience's terror and delight at Pylades dancing the role of the character most closely linked to metamorphosis in all Athenian tragedy – Dionysus and the *Bacchae* – and again we find the image of speaking hands.

> "*Pylades put on the divinity of the frenzied god himself, when from Thebes he led the Bacchants to the Italian stage, a delight and terror to men so full by his dancing did he fill all the city with the untempered fury of the demon. Thebes knew this god born of the fire; the heavenly one is this whom we see brought into this world by the hands that can utter everything."*[97]

And at 11.253 and 11.254 we have two epigrams by Lucilius describing a pantomime dancer transforming himself into the inanimate Niobe.

> *"From what oak-trees did your father cut you, Aristo. Or from what mill-stone quarry did he hew you? For indeed you are a dancer 'made of a venerable tree of stone,'*[98] *the living original of Niobe; so that I wonder*

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[95] *Variae* iv.51.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Greek Anthology* 4.290.
[98] Homer *Odyssey,* XIX. 163.

> *and say: "you too must have had some quarrel with Leto, or else you would not naturally be made of stone."*

And even more cutting:

> "*You played in the ballet everything according to the story, but by overlooking one very important action you highly displeased us. Dancing the part of Niobe you stood like a stone, and again when you were Capaneus you suddenly fell down. But in the case of Canace you were not clever, for you had a sword, but left the stage alive; that was not according to the story."*

Karin Schlapbach[99] points out that these poems automatically assume that the performer – much like a modern method actor – merges, at least for the duration of the performance with the character they play and this becomes a conceit to lampoon stiff or clumsy pantomimes. She goes on to point out, very importantly in the context of this thesis, that this was something unique to pantomime and that very few examples of metamorphosis are to be found in tragedy. The reasons for this are perhaps self-evident. The thought of a traditional actor in tragedy on built up platform shoes trying to put himself through the contortions necessary to effect a transformation inspires images more closely related to comedy than tragedy! She elaborates this point even further when she discusses Lucian's evocation of Proteus as a pantomime dancer, arguing that it is:

> "an excellent, subtle way to demystify myth."[100]

The metamorphoses of myth, thereby, become nothing more than illusions wrought by a skilled performer.

> "In this scenario myth is not thought to be pantomime's subject matter. It is the other way round: myth represents pantomime."[101]

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[99]K. Schlapbach, 'Lucian's On Dancing and the Models for a Discourse on Pantomime,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008, 323.
[100] *ibid* 323.

This immediately brings to mind Martin Esslin's famous description of Absurdism as a 'striving for an integration between the subject-matter and the form in which it is expressed'[102] and is, I believe, an excellent description of the relationship between pantomime and myth, specifically the elements of myth that involved stories of transformation.[103]

Two final epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* are worth citing to demonstrate just how popular the Dionysian theme was, before we move on to the final aspect of pantomime dancing where I feel a genuine link can be made to metamorphosis tales. The first of these is at 9.248 and is attributed to Boethus:

> "*If Dionysus had come revelling with the maenads*
> *and satyrs to holy Olympos, looking just as Pylades*
> *the great artist played him in the ballet according to*
> *the true canons of the servants of the tragic Muse,*
> *Hera, the consort of Zeus, would have ceased to be jealous*
> *and examined: 'Semele, you pretended that Bacchus was*
> *your son; it was I who bore him."*

The second is at 16.289, is anonymous and refers to the pantomime Xenophon of Smyrna.

> *We thought we were looking on Bacchus himself*
> *when the old man lustily led the maenads in their*
> *furious dance, and played Cadmus tripping it in the*
> *fall of his years, and the messenger coming from the*

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[101] *ibid* 323.
[102] Esslin M. *The Theatre of the Absurd.* Methuen, London 1961, 25.
[103] In support of this we might also add Libanius' famous:

> "*So up to the point where the race of tragic poets was in bloom, they continued to come to the theatres as universal teachers of the people. But when, on the one hand tragic poets dwindled and on the other hand, only the very rich could participate in the instruction offered in the schools of art and poetry, while the majority of the people were deprived of education, some god took pity on the lack of education of the many and, to redress the balance, introduced the pantomime as a kind of instruction for the masses in the deeds of old. Consequently, a goldsmith now will not do badly in a conversation with a product of the schools about the house of Priam or Laius."*

Libanius 64.112
(see also Macrobius *Sat.* 5.17.5)

> *forest where he had spied on the riot of the Bacchants,*
> *and frenzied Agave exulting in the blood of her son.*
> *Heavens! How divine was the man's acting."*

Clearly a huge part of the pantomime's appeal lay in their extraordinary physical ability. As Galen, the second century doctor and polymath, put it:

> "*During which they perform the greatest leaps and*
> *whirl around as they rotate with the greatest speed*
> *and, after sinking down on their bent knees, they rise*
> *up again and drag their feet forward and to the side*
> *and cleave them asunder as much as possible and,*
> *in a word, move extremely quickly."*[104]

The idea of speed clearly was of prime importance. The Elder Seneca, for instance mentions a dancer called Nomius, who he praises for the speed of his footwork even though his hand gestures were not up to the mark.[105] To this we need to add the further complication that it all had to be achieved perfectly in time (and I stress perfectly) with a musical accompaniment. Indeed the following from Libanius suggests something not unlike a modern gymnastic floor routine:

> "*They are carried along as if on wings but then finish in*
> *a motionless pose as if glued to the spot and along with*
> *the pose the image appears. Another, more difficult task*
> *is to finish at the same time as the song. So great is the*
> *dancer's concern for measure."*[106]

As Ruth Webb has discussed, audiences of the early empire when the physical training of the *gymnasia* was still in place were better equipped to understand how the dancers were able to perform their amazing physical acts, but as we move further into the third and fourth centuries the language of the sources is increasingly that of 'wonderment' and 'amazement.' Tatian, for

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[104] Galen, *On Preserving One's Health(Hygiene)* 2.11.40, I Johnston (trans) Loeb, 2017.
[105] Seneca the Edler, *Controversiae 5. Preface qo.*
[106] *Oration* 64.118

instance, in his great polemic *Address to the Greeks* would express his 'amazement' on first encountering the pantomimes. Gregory of Nyssa (*Letter* 9.46.1040*)* would describe pantomimes as 'the wonder making actors.'

Richard Buxton has entitled his book on metamorphosis *Forms of Astonishment.*

> "Metamorphosis stories posit overlaps between classes of beings/objects which are normally regarded as separate. Moreover metamorphoses take place at moments of potential danger, for example when the human comes into contact with the divine in a context where nothing – sacrifice, temple, prayer for instance – intervenes in order to mitigate the explosion of power represented by the presence of a god, or when a human individual is jolted out of one form into another. Such moments of abnormal crossover clearly have the potential to shock those present as witnesses. And indeed our Greek evidence is full of references to and depictions of bystanders being struck with 'astonishment' – *thambos* – when they observe the processes or consequences transformation."[107]

As I shall attempt to demonstrate in Chapter IX it would be pantomime's gradual assimilation to this realm of *thambos* and the supernatural that would lead, at least in part, to its ultimate demise.

[107] Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment, Greek Myths of Metamorphosis,* 2008, 24.

Chapter IV.

New Forms: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Pantomime.

> *"My mind is bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms. Ye Gods, for you yourselves have wrought the changes, breathe on these my undertakings, and bring down my song, in unbroken strains from the world's very beginning even unto the present time."*[1]

So begins Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* the longest and most comprehensive accounting of the myths involving metamorphosis to survive to us from the ancient world.[2] While it was a common conceit of both Greek and Roman poetry for the poet to speak of 'singing' this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that Ovid's magnum opus contains features that not only make it suitable for a more active engagement between a performer and audience than was usual, but that very possibly it was designed for one.

Stephen M. Wheeler argues that Ovid's *Medea* was an early vital step in the evolution of the Roman innovation of 'recitation drama',[3] and suggests it is not unreasonable to think of the *Metamorphoses* as an early form of performance poetry (as opposed to poetry simply designed to be recited). Perhaps the strongest indication we have that the poem was intended as a performance piece – or, as shall shortly be demonstrated, a *number* of

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[1] Ovid, *Metamorphoses 1.1.5* Frank Justus Miller trans Loeb 1916.
It is interesting to compare this in terms of timeline to the range Lucian tells us at *Dance* 37 needs to be included in the pantomime's repertoire.

> *"Beginning with Chaos and the primal origin of the world, he must know everything down to the story of Cleopatra the Egyptian."*

[2] As Elaine Fantham demonstrates *Ovid'sMetamorphoses.* 2004. 6 Ovid wasn't the first Latin-speaking writer to use metamorphosis themes, but the others are small beer in comparison. Calvus had composed a version of Io's rape and transformation, while his friend Cinna – possibly inspired by or inspiring Calvus – wrote a version of Myrrha's incestuous relationship with her father. The fact that two close friends wrote on related topics does not indicate a wider movement. In Chapter VII we will look at the flowering of interest in metamorphosis themes in the Hellenistic period. Nonnus' *Dionysiaca,* although certainly longer than Ovid's work is not solely concerned with the phenomenon and the 60 book 'Ηρῴικαι Θεγαμίαι of Pisander of Laranda has long since been lost to us.

[33] Stephen M. Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders. Audience and Performers in Ovid's Metamorphoses.* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London 1988, 22.

performance pieces – comes in the multiplicity of voices to be found in the work. When Virgil says:

"*Arma virumque cano.*"[4]

we are in no doubt as to whom the 'I' refers. In Ovid, however, just as we shall see in Chapter V when we examine Apuleius and *The Golden Ass,* it is never totally clear who is speaking. The *Metamorphoses,* in fact is probably the most highly mediated work in the classical canon. As Wheeler[5] points out, the narration of a given story in Ovid is often handed over by the primary narrator to a secondary narrative voice. Wheeler describes this as 'insert narration' and identifies sixty episodes in which this happens and approximately forty supplementary narrators. Between one quarter and one third of the entire work is in this way a description of a performance of the work in which the narrator must assume the persona of another teller of the tale. It is this constant switching between an omniscient third person narrator and first person descriptions of individual events with an occasional second person singular thrown in for good measure, coupled with frequent parenthesis where the primary narrator intrudes to add a qualification to or a judgement upon a statement made by a secondary narrator that, Wheeler argues, not only gives the poem its performative nature but makes it difficult to imagine it could work effectively otherwise.

This is despite generations of scholars, students and lovers of literature who have taken pleasure in silent reading of the work. The point or otherwise of reading dramatic texts as literature for the analytical senses alone is too big a debate to enter into here, but as we noted in Chapter III scholars of the dramatic arts are generally agreed that it is a skill or custom that only developed after the Renaissance and that we have few records of silent reading prior to accounts of St. Ambrose doing so in the 4th century C.E., so for a Roman even the act of reading the *Metamorphoses* in the privacy of their own home would have involved a degree of performance – this time on the part of

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[4] *"Arms and the man I sing."*
Virgil, *Aeneid 1.1*. H.R. Fairclough, (trans) *Virgil, Eclogues, Georgrics, Aeneid* I-VI Loeb 1916, 263

[5] Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders.* 1988, 45.

the reader themselves. (Or in the case of the more Patrician families by a specially trained slave or servant.)[6]

Nonetheless, despite the qualifications offered to this argument (below) there is little doubt that our reading experience of the *Metamorphoses* is heavily influenced by the number of insert narrators.

> "The maximum ever achieved in classical narrative"

And

> "Something of a scandal in the epic tradition."[7]

An example of a switch from first to third person, not only in the middle of a story, but in the monologue contained in the story within the story, comes in the account of Io's travails when Mercury sends Argus to sleep with the story of the Syrinx. Argus doses off mid-story. Mercury has no need to finish his account of the origins of the pan-pipes as he is more concerned with the need to decapitate the watchman before he can wake again. Rather than leaving his audience hanging, Ovid very obligingly takes over and finishes the story by telling us what Mercury was going to say!

In advancing a case for a relationship between Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and pantomime dancing I must acknowledge the work of Karl Galinsky[8] and Jennifer Ingleheart[9] both of whom have argued that excerpts of the *Metamorphoses* were highly suitable for use as pantomime libretti and, moreover, in all probability, were so used. More recently, as noted in the

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[6] It is virtually impossible, however, for a modern reader to conceive of how the actual mechanics of reading aloud may have worked in the ancient world. Certainly for most of us who read aloud to an audience it seems natural to individually 'voice' different characters which makes the reading automatically performative. But we have all encountered readers who do not attempt to do this and we have no way of knowing if ancient readers for an audience thought this to be necessary or even appropriate. Indeed there is sufficient in Cicero and Quintilian to suggest it may well not have been.

[7] A. Barchiesi, 'Narrative Technique and Narratology in the *Metamorphoses.'* In P. Hardie (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid,* 2006, 189.

[8] K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction.* Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1996

[9] J. Ingleheart, Et mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe. (*Tristia* 2.519) Ovid and the Pantomime' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 198-217.

introduction to this work, Ismene Lada-Richards has also written on the plausibility of this connection.[10]

In arguing that the relationship between pantomime dancing and metamorphosis tales is not restricted simply to Ovid's great work I must also acknowledge the ground breaking work of Bernhard Zimmermann[11] which is available in Edith Hall's translation,[12] and demonstrates how actual pantomime interludes occur in three of Seneca's extant tragedies: *Medea* 849 fl., *Agamemnon* 710 fl., and *Hercules Furens* 1082 fl. Which raises the possibility that at least by Seneca's time even a writer as ambiguous in his attitude to pantomime as Seneca appears to have been,[13] was pragmatic enough to accept that the tastes of his times required him to insert into his work passages that could function much like the song interludes in Brechtian theatre, or even be extracted from the text as standalone pantomime pieces.[14]

The quotation that began this chapter, demonstrating as I will argue it does the thematic parallels between Ovid's *magnum opus* and the subject

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[10] Ismene Lada-Richards, *Mutata corpora:* Ovid's Changing Forms and the Metamorphic Bodies of Pantomime Dancing. In *Transactions of the American Philological Association, Volume 143, Number 1.* Spring 2013, 105-152
And
"Dancing Trees: Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Imprint of Pantomime Dancing. *American Journal of Philology, Volume 137. Number 1.* Spring 2016, 131-169

[11] B.Zimmermann, 'Seneca und der Pantomimus'. In G. Vogt-Spira(ed) *Strukturen der Mundlichkeit in der romanischen Literatur.* Tubingen, 1990, 161-7

[12] E. Hall (trans) 'Seneca and the Pantomime.' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 218-226.

[13] Ambiguous in the sense that scholars have never really seemed sure to react to this:

> *"Who respects a philosopher or any liberal study except when the games are called off for a time or there is some rainy day which he is willing to waste? And so the many schools of philosophy are dying without a successor. The Academy, both the Old and the New, has no professor left… But how much worry is suffered lest the name of some pantomime dancer be lost forever! The House of Pylades and Bathyllus continues through a long line of successors. For their arts there are many students and many teachers."*

Seneca, Natural Questions. VII 32 1-3. T.H. Cocoran (trans) Loeb 1972, 297.
There does seem, however, to be a growing consensus that this should be seen not as an attack on pantomime, but simply a lament for the declining state of philosophy and that like his father he may well have been an admirer of pantomime – a belief conveyed to me by Elaine Fantham in private correspondence shortly before her sad passing in 2016.

[14] Given that scholars are generally united in their belief that Seneca's plays are unperformable and they were never intended for more than public reading, the existence of these parts which are clearly intended for performance is puzzling. Are we looking at an early example of mixed media – where the reading was interspersed by a pantomime enactment of some of the scenes rather like a Brechtian play where a song is introduced to comment on the action we have just seen?

matter utilised by the pantomime suggests that establishing a prima facie link between the writing of the *Metamorphoses* and the pantomime should be relatively easy. In fact, nothing could be further from the case.

The problem in trying to identify the way in which Ovid may have been influenced in the choices he makes in the *Metamorphoses* is twofold. Firstly there is the widely divergent stylistic nature of different parts of the poem – a divergence that is arguably greater than in any other work of literature that has survived to us from the ancient world[15] - which makes it difficult to privilege elements we can identify as likely to have been drawn from pantomime over other aspects of the work. While broadly speaking the *Metamorphoses* is essentially an epic, Karl Galinsky has identified elements of drama (both comedy and tragedy as well as mime),[16] hymn, catalogue poetry, the three 'eps' – epic, epigram, epyllion – as well as elegy as permeating the work. He stresses that these are simply the most important. He further suggests that Ovid's major divergence from Virgil is one of perspective, arguing that the *Aeneid* tells one specifically Roman myth and:

> "Proceeded to view it under the *species* of humanity."[17]

whereas clearly in the *metamorphoses* which deals with 250 discreet myths, although it also attempts to deal with a universal human experience, the variety of the experience is much broader.

The issue of whether pantomime is indeed one of the literary forms Ovid utilises is further complicated by the question of even if we can demonstrate pantomimic influences in the work, to what degree do they represent his true artistic vision and to what extent do they represent an attempt to ingratiate himself with the pantomime-loving emperor given the unpopularity the *ars amoratia* had earned him in that quarter?[18] At two thousand years remove that would be a difficult enough question to form a definite hypothesis about, but is made virtually impossible by Ovid's own

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[15] The possible exception being Nonnus' *Dionysiaca.*
[16] Though why he should argue in favour of mime elements and not pantomime he does not make clear. It is possibly another case of a scholar conflating the two.
[17] Galinsky, *Augustan Culture,* 1996, o262
[18] Or perhaps even an attempt to forestall his exile. Although it is generally believed Book 15 was largely rewritten in exile the bulk of the work was almost certainly completed beforehand.

mercurial changes of stance on the subject – as typified by the fifteenth and last book of the poem where he juxtaposes a claim for the apotheosis of Augustus with the immortality he maintains he will achieve himself through his popularity with the masses, despite the malignancy of the emperor who, significantly, he has equated with Jove throughout the closing sections of the poem.

> *"Far distant be that time when Augustus,*
> *abandoning the world that he rules,*
> *shall mount to heaven, and there, removed from*
> *our presence, listen to our prayers!*
>
> *And now my work is done, which neither the*
> *wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing*
> *tooth of time shall ever be able to undo. When it*
> *will, let that day come that has no power save over*
> *this mortal frame, and end the span of my uncertain*
> *years. Still in my better part I shall be borne immortal*
> *far beyond the lofty stars and I shall have an undying*
> *name. Wherever Rome's power extends over the*
> *conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips*
> *and, if the prophecies of the bards have any truth,*
> *through all the ages I shall live in fame."*[19]

Just as Procopius uses the *Secret History* as a vehicle for the sort of *kaiserkritik* once permissible to dramatic poets, Ovid, by seeming to flatter Augustus by comparing him to Jupiter, but a Jupiter who regularly lays aside his responsibility to maintain the order of the *kosmos* to indulge in love affairs that he must, like a hen-pecked husband go to great extremes to hide from his wrathful wife, is subtly reducing him to a figure of fun. As Due puts it:

> "Jupiter is a powerful, but incompetent ruler."[20]

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[19] *Met 15.871-880*
[20] Otto Steen Due, *Changing Forms. Studies in the Metamorphoses of Ovid.* Gyldenhall. Copenhagen , 1974 , 5

If Jupiter is something of a buffoon, Juno and by extension the deeply-despised Livia becomes a figure of unrelenting cruelty. The references to Juno's over-reaction in meting out punishments to those who have offended her become almost a leitmotif of the work.

When we search further for Ovid's possible intentions in writing the *Metamorphoses* we find, significantly, moments in the work where he himself directly draws the link between what he is writing and the world of the theatre. For instance, we have at 3.110 the famous description of Cadmus being confronted by the *Spartoi* emerging from the ground generated by the dragon's teeth he has sown.

> *"So, when on festal days the curtain in the theatre*
> *is raised, figures of men rise up, showing first*
> *their faces, then little by little all the rest; until*
> *at last, drawn up with steady motion, the entire*
> *forms stand revealed and plant their feet upon the*
> *curtain's edge."*[21]

In the Roman theatre at this time the curtain lay across the lip of the stage (itself called the curtain) and rose at the end of the play.[22]

Perhaps the most clear cut form of address Ovid employs throughout the poem is the use of parenthesis. Michael Von Albrecht[23] observes that Ovid uses parenthesis to make asides to an audience, going so far as to argue that Ovid's use of parenthesis not only anticipates an active response from a reader, but attempts to manipulate it.

Thus, early in Book I after Deucalion and Pyrrha have scattered stones in their wake in an attempt to regenerate the human race, we have:

> *"And the stones – who would believe it unless*
> *ancient tradition vouched for it? – began at once*

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[21] *Met 1.400-404*
[22] See: P. Hardie, 'Ovid's Theban History; the first anti-Aeneid.' *The Classical Quarterly.* Vol 40 No 1 May 1990, 224-235
[23] M. Von Albrecht, *Die Parathese in Ovid's Metamorphosen und ihre dichterische Funktion.* Spudasmata 7. Hildeschiem, 1964

> *to lose their hardness and stiffness, to grow softly,*
> *and softened to take on form.*"[24]

It is in Book III of the *Metamorphoses* – the so-called Theban section of the poem that poetry and tragedy most clearly cross-pollinate. The famous Ovidian scholar Brooks Otis[25] called the first two books of the poem a 'divine comedy', but with Book III and the first half of Book IV there is a radical change of tone. Ovid is no longer telling tales about the Greek version of the origins of the world, slanted ever so slightly through a Roman prism, with all that entails. He has moved firmly into the world of Aeschylus, Sophocles and, most particularly, Euripides. We have seen that Galinsky, Wheeler and others have argued that among the reasons for the decline of tragedy, virtually from the beginning of the Principate was that after two and a half decades of civil war Roman audiences were in a mood for lighter fare. In a justly famous essay Froma Zeitlin has said:

> "Thebes consistently supplies the radical terrain where there can be no escape from the tragic in the resolution of conflict or in the institutional provision of a civic future, beyond the world of the play."[26]

When we observe how Ovid in this way brought his poem headlong into the world of the greatest tragic writers of the ancient world, the argument that certain sections of the *Metamorphoses* were designed to facilitate easy transferral to the dramatic stage becomes easier to sustain.

It is surely significant that the dominant motif of the early books, as has often been observed, is the importance of seeing and being seen. We begin with Actaeon's accidental act of voyeurism as Diana bathes naked and move on to Semele's fatal insistence that Jupiter allow her to behold him as he appears on Olympus, then visit Juno's malicious removal of Tiresias' sight, follow this with Narcissus' doomed obsession with his own image and finish with Pentheus spying on the maenads.

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[24] *Met* 1.400-404.
[25] B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, Cambridge University Press, 1966
[26] F. Zeitlin, 'Thebes Theatre of Self and Society.' In P. Euben (ed) *Greek Drama and Political Theory*. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986.

A further link between Ovid and the tragedies of Euripides in particular, is the use of dramatic monologues – especially monologues on the part of women in extremis – something for which Euripides was famous and among a number of his contemporaries notorious. Perhaps the best examples of these in the *Metamorphoses* are those delivered by Myrrha at 10.320-355, beginning:

"To what is my purpose tending? What am I planning?"

and that of Althaea (8.44-80) the dramatic qualities of which we will discuss when we come to examine the explicitly pantomimic qualities of the poem. By definition a dramatic monologue is, rather obviously, dramatic. Even if we accept Wheeler's claim that Ovid was writing in an environment on the cusp between poetry intended for passive reading and that meant for recitation, speeches of this nature are clearly not meant for the former. We discussed earlier the difficulty for modern scholars in trying to decide how someone in the first century C.E. would have approached the problem of 'voicing' the myriad of characters encountered over the course of the work. When it comes to the dramatic monologues, however, I would argue that it is well-nigh impossible to read them aloud without in some way performing them – not without sucking the dramatic and poetic life out of them at least. Put simply, the fact that Ovid wrote dramatic monologues indicates he intended them to be treated as such.

Much scholarly debate has been entered into concerning the way in which the *Metamorphoses* has been divided into books – in particular the way in which the first three books end on incomplete stories which must be picked up again in the next. The theory that each book corresponds to what could neatly be fitted onto a papyrus roll has long been discounted – the endings are too explicitly placed at moments of heightened suspense. Book I, for instance, ends with Phaethon gaining the permission of his mother Clymene to visit the palace of his father Phoebus. Few of Ovid's audience would have been unaware of the disastrous consequences of her acquiescing to her son's request or how quickly the:

> *"Phaethon leaps up in joy at his mother's words, already grasping the heavens in imagination; and after crossing his own Ethiopia and the land of the Ind lying close beneath the sun, he quickly comes to his father's rising place."*[27]

will turn to tragedy for Phaeton and nearly occasion the end of life on Earth. But Ovid teases them with this seemingly benign ending to the book, making them wait for the fireworks to come.

As Wheeler[28] points out, a reader, or at least a first time reader, would be almost unable to resist the urge to unroll the next papyrus and Ovid has almost certainly chosen to end his first instalment at a moment of optimal suspense.

Certainly we find examples of this technique being applied to non-performative literary fiction in more modern times – such as the episodic manner in which Dickens' novels were originally published, but the point is there was no precedent for this at the time Ovid was writing and the fact that it is performance genres that have most closely embraced the technique in the modern period – television cliff hangers and the 'B' serials of cinema in the forties and fifties, being the obvious examples, show that even if it is not intrinsically a dramatist's technique, then it is certainly one that sits very comfortably with dramatic modes of story-telling. Whether or not Ovid himself saw what he was doing in this way is, of course, unprovable, but in the light of the evidence of dramatic techniques being employed in the *Metamorphoses* which we are examining in this chapter, then the doctrine of accumulated probability comes into play.

This is especially so when we note the way in which the structure of the individual stories within the poem fits so neatly the seven point plan long identified as standard in dramatic story-telling:[29] Establishment of the protagonist and his or her world/ the inciting incident/ the plan/ the surprise/

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[27] *Met* 1.776-779

[28] Wheeler. *A Discourse of Wonders,* 1988, 90. (Wheeler here, does seem to be accepting the papyrus roll/book theory, but even if we do not, the point he is making about the urge to rush on to the next section of the work is a valid one.)

[29] See, for instance: R. McKee, *Story.* S. Field, *Writing your Screenplay.*

complications/ climax/ resolution. As Wheeler further argues, it is typical of Ovid to slow the action before the moment of *peripeteia* to increase the suspense.[30] This we can broadly describe as 'complications."

> "But once the denouement has occurred he rushes to the end so that his audience's attention does not flag"

However despite Wheeler's further argument that although Ovid clearly devised a number of the stories he tells us in what he calls 'direct dialogue' with models he inherited from tragedy, the widespread agreement among scholars is that his telling of the myths rarely achieves a 'a proper Aristotelian response.'[31] I would argue this can be seen as irrelevant on two counts. Firstly, as Stephen Halliwell points out in the introduction to the Loeb edition of the *Poetics,* neither it, nor *On Poets* seem to have been widely read or known in antiquity.

> "The 'inaugural ' significance of the *Poetics* owes much to the way in which the work was rediscovered, and established as canonical by certain Italian theorists and their successors elsewhere in Europe."[32]

Secondly, as I have argued earlier, neither does the pantomime engender an Aristotelian response. By ending 'frozen' at the point of metamorphosis the pantomime does not give us a 'resolve' – something I will argue in Chapter IX may have contributed to the pantomime riots in that it gave the audience no sense of release from dramatic tension.[33] Ismene Lada-Richards draws our attention to how many of Ovid's metamorphoses – especially those involving aborification - end in exactly this way, with the subject rooted to the ground and immobile.

> "There is the recurrent motif of the morphing subject's sudden immobility and rooting to the ground, a trope

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[30] Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders,* 1988, 91
[31] Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders,* 1988, 164
[32] S. Halliwell, (ed and trans) *Introduction to Aristotle, Poetics.* Loeb 1995, 4.
[33] The Russian theatre director Meyerhold, as I have noted elsewhere in this thesis, in his 'bio-mechanics', a set of exercises used in the training of an actor, divided dramatic action into three steps – *otkaz* (preparation) – *posil* (action) – *stoika* (release). It was the release that was regarded as the most important, both for actor and audience. And it is this I suggest that neither Ovid nor the pantomime give us.

> infinitely more impressive when the dissolution into stillness follows a sequence of breath-taking swift movement, as in the case of Daphne, whose transformation begins in mid-flight "her feet but now so swift were anchored fast/ in numb still roots" (*pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret 1.551 Trans Melville.)*[34]

In this way I would argue that the *Metamorphoses is* in 'dialogue with dramatic models', but primarily in a way that directly paralleled the approach of the pantomime. As Lada-Richards also observes in an earlier work:

> "Uncertainties and gray area not withstanding, we can at least feel safe in our assumption that the public for which Ovid composed his *Metamorphoses* already had a great enthusiasm for pantomime. And since little reasonable doubt can cloud the proposition that Ovid would have found himself, even if occasionally, among the thousands of spectators enthralled by the startling visual images created by the dancing stars on stage, failure to pay serious attention to the interface between Ovid's poem and the new sensation on the horizon of Augustan entertainment impoverishes our understanding of both as expressions of cultural life in the early Principate."[35]

Joseph Solodow[36] draws our attention to the introduction of Philomela into the poem at *Met 6.451-54.*

> *"Lo! Philomela enters, attired in rich apparel, but richer still in beauty."*

suggesting that it strongly resembles the way on-stage characters in a play announce the arrival of a new character and that by introducing her in this way – that is, by actually giving the narrator a line of dialogue – he is himself stepping onto the stage and becoming a character in his own story. Solodow also draws our attention to 11.349-78 where a panicked cowherd comes to

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[34] Lada-Richards, 'Dancing Trees', 2016, 161
[35] Lada-Richards '*Mutata corpora',* 2013, 113
[36] Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 1988, 56

Peleus to tell him that a gigantic wolf has suddenly appeared on the beach and is eating all his cattle.

> "His language is very high-blown, although, he himself declares, there is no time to lose, he spends more than twenty lines elaborating the scenery."[37]

G.M.H. Murphy maintains that this section reads like a parody of the traditional messenger speeches that we find in Greek tragedy.[38] While this is true it is also worth noting that the messenger-speeches of tragedy are primarily concerned with the affairs of men whereas 'elaborating the scenery' through gesture and the extraordinary plasticity of their bodies was a particular speciality of the pantomime. Thus in Libanius we have:

> *"For what kind of picture, what meadow is more pleasant a sight than dancing and the dancer as he leads to spectator round to groves and lulls him to sleep as he evokes herds of cattle and flocks of goats and sheep, and their shepherds on guard over the young, some playing the pipe and others the flute, as they attend to their different tasks."*[39]

The relationship between myth and the natural world in Attic poetry has long been noted. In 1969 Charles Paul Segal undertook a detailed analysis of the way in which Ovid deploys landscape as a virtual character in a number of his stories.

> "In nearly every major ancient poet the natural world serves, in some degree to order the realities of the human world. Nature is not only the spatial and geographic framework for human action, it may also form a metaphor for various aspects of the human condition."[40]

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[37] Solodow, *The World of Ovid's metamorphoses,* 1988, 22.
[38] G.M.H. Murphy, (ed and comm.) *Metamorphoses Book XI* Oxford University Press, Oxford 1972)
[39] *Or* 64.116
[40] Charles Paul Segal, *Landscapes in Ovid's Metamorphoses.* Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH – Weisbaden 1969, 1.

Commager is another who sees myth and nature as working hand in hand in the ancient world as a 'grammar' by which virtually any experience could be explained – the one satisfied explanations gleaned from tradition and the other those derived from observation and simple, practical, common sense.[41] It is important to remember that Ovid was a city-dweller. His is a city-dweller's vision of the countryside. It has none of the realism and knowledge of the workings of the country that we find in Virgil's *Georgics,* for example. It is as unreal as the streetscapes of Roman comedy and like them it creates a theatricalised atmosphere of a location against which his characters enact their individual stories. Segal argues that the stock nature of Ovid's landscapes[42] is in fact a deliberate device, aimed at solving the problem of unity in a 15 book poem in which more than 250 individual myths are portrayed and that we are not supposed to think of any tale as taking place in its own unique location.

I suggest, however, that Ovid's mode of 'revealing' the subject matter of each story only after an elaborate setting of the scene, is once more a dramatist's technique – the invisible being slowly revealed or, to put it differently, the curtain coming up on an empty stage which the actors must occupy. I would further argue that, whether consciously or not, Ovid is replicating the stock *mise-en-scene* of the Roman theatre. Given the frequency of the occurrence of caves and grottos in the *Metamorphoses* the following description of stage directions for satyr plays from Vitruvius, written approximately twenty years before the *Metamorphoses* is particularly interesting:

> *"Satyric are adorned with trees, caverns, mountains and other details of the country formed to the appearance of landscape."*[43]

In *Poetics* Aristotle famously pointed out the importance of reversals of circumstances in tragedy. There is, I suggest, something highly theatrical about the way in which Ovid uses landscapes as the agent that brings about

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[41] Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace.* Yale University Press, New Haven 1962, .236

[42] "A secluded grove, quiet water, shade, coolness, soft grass, sometimes rocks or a cavern are the usual attributes."
Segal *Landscapes in Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 1969, 4.

[43] Vitruvius, *De Architectura. VI.9* F.Granger (trans) Loeb 1931

these reversals of circumstances. Idyllic, sylvan settings suddenly have their surfaces pealed back to reveal a world of murder, sexual assault and transformations which though on occasions representing a tenuous escape from the aforementioned, are just as likely to be a god's punishment for some trifling offence.[44]

Given the pantomime dancer's famed ability to portray not only character, but landscape, the constantly changing *nature* of the setting of Ovid's stories, as opposed to the physical surface, seems ideally set up for pantomimic realisation. In no other poem in the Roman oeuvre – not even the *Georgics* of Virgil – does landscape enjoy the active embodiment it does in the *Metamorphoses.*

Segal notes the way in which tranquil pools and streams are particularly liable to be home to hidden malignancy.

> "This shift in the symbolism of water from one condition to the opposite, from purity to sexuality and from peace to violence, also reinforces the instability and uncertainty that are general characteristics of the world of the *Metamorphoses.* The landscape symbolic or virginity may thus suddenly become the landscape of lustful sensuality; images of sanctity become images of desire."[45]

There is something also highly theatrical about the isolated nature of Ovid's landscapes. They are deep, dark forest places into which a stranger wanders or is lured, to his – or more often, *her*, peril. They represent a portal into a world where the rules of the safe, ordered, city-based lives of Ovid's

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[44] There is debate among Nonnian scholars as to whether the 5th century C.E. Alexandrian author of the *Dionysiaca* had encountered or even heard of the *Metamorphoses.* There is, however, a strange similarity between the two writers' treatment of pastoral scenes that inclines me to believe he had. As Byron Harries observes in relation to Nonnus with specific reference to his account of Cadmus' deception of Typhon:

> "This theme, that the apparently innocent world of pastoral enchantment has a sinister, ominous potential for destruction will be developed later in the poem."

B. Harries, 'The Pastoral Mode in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus'. In. N. Hopkinson, (ed) *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus.* Cambridge Philological Society 1994, 67.

[45]Segal, *Landscapes in Ovid's metamorphoses,* 1969, 25.

audience no longer have force, in exactly the way the theatre did, or the cinema, television and computer gaming does for a modern audience.

Segal suggests that landscape in the *Metamorphoses* in fact functions in two different ways. I would suggest that what he is describing is the difference between the way it acts upon males and the way it acts upon females. In the first instance it is the wildness and hostility of the natural world that is privileged. The story of Actaeon is a prima facie example of this. His accidental[46] viewing of the naked Diana bathing, his transformation into a stag and violent dismemberment by his own dogs (3.46) as described by Ovid is a tale we can argue a pantomime would have been keen to attempt – so too at the opposite end of the spectrum of physical destruction might be the gradual wasting and death of Narcissus.

The other side of Ovid's natural world Segal identifies is its lush and verdant side, where trees and welcoming shade seem anything but threatening. It is only when the unwitting human (girl/woman) is lured inside that the trap is sprung.

Thus far we have demonstrated both the probability of the *Metamorphoses* having been danced to and the suitability of certain sections for this treatment. If we wish to argue as Bernhard Zimmermann and Alessandra Zanobi have done in the case of Seneca that the pantomime had an active influence upon the choices Ovid made in the writing of the poem, more is needed.

As Ismene Lada-Richards notes:

> "One cannot help but notice the body's absolute centrality in Ovid's literary imagination. The poet's gaze seems to be consistently fixated on and fascinated with bodies."[47]

She further notes that:

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[46] In Ovid's version at least.
[47] Lada Richards, 'Mutata corpora' 2013,106.

> "Throughout the poem, Ovid's metamorphic characters shape or sculpt themselves into existence much in the manner of performers in the flesh."[48]

A decade earlier Elaine Fantham had drawn our attention to Ovid's,

> "delight in itemising the transformation by body parts"[49]

While earlier still Richlin had described it as 'a favourite tactic of the poet's' to,

> "Trace the metamorphosis step by slow step."[50]

I would argue that the fascination Ovid had, in common with the pantomime, for the actual processes of transformation places the *Metamorphoses* very firmly in the realm of the viewed and the visceral, rather than the read and the intellectualised. Solodow singles out the following passages as also demonstrating:

> "the marked interest which Ovid displays for in-between states."[51]

> *"And the stones – who would believe it unless ancient tradition vouched for it? – began at once to lose their hardness and stiffness, to grow soft slowly, and softened to take on form. Then when they had grown in size and become milder in their nature, a certain likeness to human form could be seen."*[52]

> *"Her fingers drew together and one continuous light hoof of horn bound together the five fingers*

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[48] ibid 120
[49]Fantham *Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 2004. 18.
[50] A. Richlin, "Reading Ovid's Rapes" In A. Richlin (ed) *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome.* Oxford University Press, 1992, 165.
[51] Solodow *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 1988, 186.
[52] *Met* 1. 401-404.

> *of her hand. Her mouth enlarged, her neck was extended, the train of her gown became a tail."*[53]
>
> *"As when one grafts a twig on some tree, he sees the branches grow one, and with common life come to maturity, so were these two bodies knit in close embrace: they were no longer two, not such as to be called, one, woman and one, man. They seemed neither, and yet both."*[54]

Other examples can be found in Cadmus' metamorphosis into a snake and back again at 3.237-39, the transformation of Acmon and his companions into swans at 14.509, the description of the androgynous nature of Atalanta at 8.322-24 and the transformation of Minyas' daughters at 4.399.

A further example of Ovid's interest in the processes of metamorphosis rather than the end product can be found in the description of Circe's return of Odysseus' crew to their former human state, which we have already cited in Chapter II as one of the few instances of reverse transformation in the metamorphic tradition.[55]

It is worth comparing Ovid's version with the account of the same event as it occurs in the *Odyssey.*

Ovid's version runs thus:

> *"The more she recited, the more we raised ourselves up from the ground. Our bristles fell out, the split disappeared from our cloven hooves, shoulders,*

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[53] *Met* 2.666-668
[54] *Met* 4.375-379
[55] In 2012, while I was still teaching at Charles Sturt University, I went to see a performance of the mime troupe 'Sticky Feet' made up of recently graduated students. The performance involved three maladroits trapped in a large box-like structure gradually becoming aware of one another's existence and establishing social contact through movement and gesture. At the moment they found themselves on the brink of full recognition of their own humanity an alarm sounded, a look of horror crossed their faces and they immediately reversed all their previous actions at high speed to resume the position of stasis we had been presented with at the beginning. I immediately thought of the reverse transformation of Odysseus' men in Ovid. I believe the chance to dance the original transformation of the crew then show the whole process in reverse is one no self-respecting pantomime could have passed up.

> *upper arms and forearms were restored to their proper states."*[56]

So once again we see a description of the process, whereas the version we have in Homer is much more concerned with the result.

> *"The bristles which her first deadly poison had made them sprout dropped off their limbs, and they not only became men again, but looked younger and much handsomer and taller than before."*[57]

Edith Hall has demonstrated that individual pantomimes are further broken down into 'monodramas'.[58] In other words they are episodic. Gordon Williams maintains that Ovid was responsible for the introduction of 'the cult of the episode' in Roman epic poetry arguing that it was a new kind of poetry, one that a reader can, in effect, dip into it at any point so long as they carefully identify the beginning of the section they are reading and there is no need to worry about how it fits into the overall scheme of the work.[59] In other words, Ovid began writing in an episodic manner at a time when there was no precedent other than the pantomime.

Williams's comment about the potentially tedious nature of the poem is a pertinent one. For all Ovid's claim to have written a *carmen perpetuum,* to sit through one unbroken recitation would require audience participation of Wagnerian proportions, not to mention that it would involve a feat of extraordinary vocal and physical stamina on the part of the reader. It is logical to assume, therefore, that the poem takes its episodic form to facilitate performance in stages.

Stephen Wheeler, without specifically noting the linkage to pantomime, argues that Ovid wrote the *Metamorphoses* for an active audience

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[56] *Met 14.302-5*
[57] *Odyssey X. 393-7*
[58] See Chapter VIII
[59] G.W. Williams, *Change and Decline* University of California Press, 1978
While I accept that this is a *possible* approach to the reading of *The Metamorphoses,* I do not accept that it is the optimum one, but I have to reluctantly acknowledge the validity of his further comment that,

> "In fact straight progress through the book is probably the worst way to treat it, its essential lack of unity breeds tedium."

– what he describes as a *viva voce* relationship. He draws our attention to the way in which in Book I Ovid playfully warns his audience of the danger of falling asleep during a performance of his poem, using the story of Mercury lulling Argus to sleep to underscore his point and suggesting that the fact that Argus loses his head as a consequence of falling asleep and failing to listen to the story to the end is,

> "undoubtedly of meta-narrative significance."[60]

Once more, as in the introduction of Philomela Ovid has stepped into the story to address the audience directly.

It worth noting that Wheeler also says: (cf. Galinsky)

> "The form and the content of the *Metamorphoses* elude equation with any single author or species of catalog poetry; the poem constitutes rather a *tertium quid,* an anomaly, or a potentially new literary category. *However this new literary category proves difficult to grasp."*[61] (italics mine)

I have highlighted the concluding sentence because I do not believe it is difficult to grasp this 'new literary category' if we move beyond comparing like with like and step outside the realm of epic poetry and look at what was happening in theatre at the same time as the *Metamorphoses* was written. I have argued in another publication,[62] discussing the emergence of written history and drama in the 5th century B.C.E., that contemporary developments in art and literary forms that are not necessarily directly related, nonetheless influence each other. The nearest contemporary genre of performative innovation to Ovid, writing approximately 2 C.E., was pantomime which, as we have already seen gained prominence at Rome in 23-22B.C.E. Ovid's 'new literary category' is not at all difficult to grasp if we are prepared to recognise the elements borrowed from pantomime – the artform, it is worth belabouring, so beloved of the man Ovid badly needed to impress and placate.

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[60] Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders,* 1988,.2
[61] Ibid, 2.
[62] See R. Harding *The Historian as Dramatist: The Use of Speeches in Thucydides.* Classicum Vol XXXVII.I April 2011, 15-20

Solodow suggests the story of Pygmalion as having pivotal metaphorical significance – Pygmalion the artist who brings his creation to life, paralleling Ovid who brings his creation into being, and it is difficult not to believe that this story of the reversal of the normal processes of metamorphosis – animate to the inanimate, as in the examples of Niobe and Daphne, to be discussed shortly, would not have had great appeal to pantomime dancers.[63]

Solodow while, like Wheeler, making no specific mention of the pantomime, also notes the importance of themes drawn from tragedy in the *Metamorphoses* – especially those of Euripides.

> "Second only to epic comes tragedy, and among tragedies none were closer to Ovid than those of Euripides."[64]

Tellingly in Lucian[65] we have a list of the titles a professional pantomime was supposed to have in his repertoire of dances. Five of them have the same titles as plays by Euripides – *Orestes, Troades, Herakles, the Bacchae and Hippolytus.* What we are presented with, therefore, is a situation in which both the pantomime and Ovid are drawing thematic material and even textual inspiration from a single source – Attic Greek Tragedies – specifically those of Euripides. As pantomime had been drawing on these themes for at least twenty five years, the influence of the pantomime upon the writing of the *Metamorphoses,* I would suggest, moves from the realm of the possible to that of the highly probable.

The strongest indication we have from Ovid himself that his work was being used for pantomime performance comes not from *The Metamorphoses*, but the *Tristia,* his bitter lament written shortly after his arrival in exile at Tomis. At *Tristia* 2.515-520 he gives rein to his bitterness at Augustus' hypocrisy in being a devotee of an art form where, Ovid maintains, things

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[63] For the dramatic appeal of such a moment we have only to think of the climactic moment of *A Winter's Tale,* when the 'statue' of Hermione is reanimated, or at a less elevated level the staple of modern horror films when the eyes of a children's doll flick open.
[64] Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses,* 1988, 180.
[65] *Dance* 63.68.72

every bit as licentious as the works he was exiled for, were regularly performed on stage.

> "*or does the stage that belongs to it make this genre of*
> *writing safe, and does the theatre grants mimes*[66] *whatever*
> *freedom they like. My productions have been danced*
> *for the public often, often they have even held your eyes."*

The salient words in this particular extract are to be found in the last line. The emperor was a devotee of the pantomime and his patronage, as has often been noted, was a major factor in its remarkable growth at this time. The inference to be taken from *often they have held your eyes,* that Ovid's poems, therefore, had been used as pantomime libretti seems an entirely reasonable one to draw. As Jennifer Ingleheart has argued, any suggestion that the final couplet is in some way a reference to the one work in Ovid's corpus we know unequivocally to have been written for the stage – the lost *Medea* – can be dismissed simply because he refers to it directly soon after at *Tristia* 2.554-4 making it clear that it is a different category of his work that he has now moved on to discuss. Perhaps the most telling clue to his intentions in the section cited, however, is in the use of the verb *saltare,* which as Ingleheart points out:

> "is the *vox propria* for pantomime dances."[67]

In *Tristia* 5.7.25-30, by which time Ovid seems to have abandoned all hope he would ever be allowed to return from exile, we find further evidence that Ovid's poems were being danced to:

> *"That my songs are being danced to in the packed theatres,*
> *and that my verses are applauded, you write, my friend.*
> *I have composed nothing (you know this yourself) for the*
> *theatres, nor is my muse ambitious for applause.*

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[66] "Such a failure to distinguish between mime and pantomime is actually fairly common in ancient sources, where there is frequently a lack of certainty as to which of these genres reference is being made."
Ingleheart, 'Et mea sunt populo saltara poemate saepe. (Tristia 2.51.9) Ovid and the Pantomime' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 209.

[67] ibid. 211

> *It is not, however, unwelcome, nor anything which hinders forgetfulness of me and brings back the name of an exile onto lips."*

The evidence that Ovid's poems were being danced to therefore seems strong, but does this necessarily means it was the *Metamorphoses* (for all that it might seem the obvious candidate with its enticing central theme) that was being utilised by the pantomime dancers as opposed to the *Heroides*, the *Fasti* or the *Ars Amoratia?* We find a clue to suggest it was the *Metamorphoses* in Jacob of Sarugh's homilies where he rails against the common themes exploited by the pantomimes.

> "*And this very god (Apollo*[68]) *loved a maiden (Daphne), and his lust was poured out after him... (Folio 22 recto b)... because she would not do his bidding. And the god, they say, was running but was not overtaking the girl; and when he was weary and was (therefore) unable to overtake her... And afterwards, they say, the earth defeated the intention of the god so that she was transformed..."*

Against this we can juxtapose:

> *"The roles of Daphne and Niobe, snub-nosed Memphis danced..."*[69]

The myth of Apollo and Daphne singled out by Jacob and by Pallades in *The Greek Anthology* as being a staple of pantomime is one Jennifer Ingleheart draws our attention to as having a particularly pantomimic appearance in Ovid's retelling.[70] Before moving on to examine these characteristics in more detail we might also add that the story contains the four characters that Edith Hall[71] has identified as being the normal requirement for a pantomime. In this instance the dancer would be required to transform himself between Daphne, her father, Cupid and, of course Apollo. There is

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[68] Jacob of Sarugh; *Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatre. Hom* 5. (trans) Hall and Wyles.
[69] *The Greek Anthology.* 11.255
[70] See also Lada-Richards 'Dancing Trees,'2016.
[71] E. Hall, 'Is the 'Barcelona Alcestis' a Latin Pantomime Libretto*?' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 258-284.

also the bow and arrow employed by Cupid to inflame Apollo with lust for Daphne. The famous account in Macrobius of Pylades shooting his arrows into the audience during his portrayal of *The Madness of Hercules* indicates that the bow was a commonly used pantomime prop.[72] The section that particularly takes Ingleheart's attention is the actual transformation itself.

> "Ovid's description of Apollo's praising Daphne's *digitosque manusque bracchiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos (fingers and hands and arms and upper-arms bare up to more than their mid-points)*[73] repeatedly draws attention to precisely the body parts which were the tools of the pantomime dancer's trade, and looks very similar to enthusiastic praise for the various 'speaking' body parts of pantomime actors in ancient sources."[74]

Penelope Murray draws our attention to how often Ovid 'freezes' the transformation[75] process part way through to explore the moment in depth, to examine the point where the entity undergoing metamorphosis realises what is happening, or the one in pursuit realises they can never achieve their objective. Murray particularly draws attention to the moment (*Met* 1.533*)* when Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is thwarted by her transformation into a laurel tree.

> "When Apollo puts his hand on the laurel tree he feels her heart still beating and kisses the wood as if it were limbs, but even as a tree she shuns his kisses."[76]

As discussed earlier in this chapter such moments of static emotion were exactly what a pantomime dancer aspired to create on stage. I find,

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[72] It has been suggested that on occasions the bow could also double as a lyre and, as we have seen Rose Wyles has shown how a skilled pantomime could use a scarf to portray either.
[73] *Met.* I. 500-501.
[74] Ingleheart, 'Et mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe. (Tristia 2.51.9) Ovid and the Pantomime' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 210.
[75] Something Ismene Lada-Richards also explores in her 2016 article.
[76] P. Murray, 'Bodies in Flux. Ovid's Metamorphoses'. *Changing Bodies, Changing Minds,* 1998, 81.

however, I must place a question mark of my own after the second part of the following from Murray.

> "Ovid's delight in describing the process of change in that
> stage of transformation between one shape and another
> when his subject is neither human being, beast or tree, is not
> reflected in that enormously rich artistic tradition
> deriving from his fleshly and corporeal poems.
> But then how does an artist represent fluidity and flux
> in the static and inflexible medium of painting sculpture
> or woodcut?"[77]

In her 2016 article Lada-Richards gives a comprehensive account of attempts made by artists of the classical period both in vase painting and wall friezes to capture precisely these moments – Daphne's metamorphosis being a particularly popular topic. In addition, even accepting that the description of the marble frieze[78] Lucius encounters in his aunt's house in the *Golden Ass* is within a work of fiction,[79] Marina Warner has written extensively of the attempts of Bosch and Pollaiuolo in particular to capture exactly these in-between states. Just as Ovid was fascinated by the process of change in a way no writers before him were (and arguably few after him until modern times) the artists who attempted to interpret his great poem in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance were similarly drawn to the unnatural hybrid state that linked one state of being to the next. Just as these moments appealed to the painter and the sculptor, so too were they a standard feature of the pantomime's repertoire.

Returning to the story of Daphne and Apollo, Ingleheart also draws attention to the rhythms employed by Ovid in this section. As Apollo's pursuit of Daphne speeds up so does the pace of the verse. Ovid uses, for example, internal rhyme at 475-8 *siluarum/captiuarum/ferarum* to create a cantering

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[77] ibid 80.

[78] *"from the tangle of branches appeared the face of Actaeon*
peering eagerly out, already half-transformed into a stage."
Apuleius; *Metamorphoses.*2.22 J.Arthur Hanson, (trans) Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge Mass 1984.

[79] As is the one Actaeon asks his father in a dream to erect over his grave in the *Dionysiaca*

cadence building to the beginning of the pursuit. He then slows it again, building the tension before the pursuit begins in earnest by placing the rhymes at the end of the lines[80] with *debes, nepotes,*and *iugales.* As Ingleheart rightly observes:

> "All these features would have added to the episode's performability for a dancer."[81]

In the *Dance* Lucian says:

> *"Or if you cross over to Aetolia, there too the dance finds a great deal – Althaea, Meleager, Atalanta, the brand."*[82]

This is clear reference to pantomime performances of the Althaea myth. While we have frustratingly few descriptions of the actual mechanics of pantomime performance there is little doubt that the Althaea/Meleager story as told by Ovid represented precisely the sort of challenge a dancer would have been keen to rise to. Ovid's description of Althaea's four attempts to throw the brand into the fire could virtually stand as stage directions for a pantomime. The sense of the intention for visual representation is almost inescapable. Once again the principal tool in the pantomime's armoury takes centre stage as Althaea describes her hand's refusal to carry out the act that will condemn her son to a horrific death:

> "*Brothers forgive a mother's heart! My hands refuse to finish what they began."*[83]

Like Euripides' Medea, Althaea endures contrasting extremes of emotion as she brings herself to the brink of the act four times only to recoil in horror on the first three occasions. Numerous sources testify to the importance of changing states of emotion *(affectus)* in pantomime performance. The chance for a bravura tour de force the scene represents would have been difficult for a star dancer to resist – to say nothing of the piece de resistance

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[80] Common enough in poetry of the modern era, but not at all standard in Roman poetry.
[81] Ingleheart, 'Et mea sunt populo saltara poemate saepe. (Tristia 2.51.9) Ovid and the Pantomime' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008.213.
[82] *Dance* 50.
[83] *Met* 8.490

that follows: the chance to enact Meleager's excruciating death as he is consumed by flames from within.

Ismene Lada-Richards has written at some length on the question of gender ambiguity and the attendant questions of degeneracy often levelled at pantomime dancers.

> "From the realm of the professional stage to that of social dancing and the array of festive occasions for which entertainers could be privately hired, opportunities for cross-fertilisation between pantomime and the characteristic habits of female movement were legion, and eagerly sought after by a genre in which the male routinely represented the female with an eye to performative verisimilitude."[84]

One strand of ancient reaction to this was summed up by that notorious enemy of pantomime Aelius Aristides:

> *"They behave in a manner very similar to that of some hermaphrodite or eunuch..."*[85]

And by Cyprian's even more vehement:

> *"Men are emasculated, the entire honour and vigour of the male gender melt because of the dishonour of a sinewless body, and whoever goes to greater lengths in order to break down virility into womanishness gives the greatest pleasure in that matter."*[86]

With this in mind we might add the story of Iphis to the potential pantomime libretti of the *Metamorphoses.* Iphis' gender is concealed by her mother at birth from her father who had promised to put the child to death if it was not born male. She grows up, falls in love and is betrothed to another girl, Ianthe. On the eve of the wedding she and her mother make an impassioned plea to the gods and she is miraculously transformed into a male. Further proof

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[84] Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence* , 2007, 30.
[85] *Oration* 34.48
[86] Cyprian: *To Donatus* 8.

that this story would have been grist to the pantomime's mill comes from Lucian:

> "*And he will not fail to know all the fabulous transformations, the people who have been changed into trees or beasts or birds, and the women who have been changed into men; Caeneus, I mean, and Tiresias, and their like.*"[87]

Once again I am grateful to Jennifer Ingleheart for drawing attention to the actual words Ovid uses to describe the transformation and noting that they seem ideally suited for pantomimic realisation.

> "*Iphis followed (her mother) as a companion she went, with a greater stride than she customarily had.*"[88]

The physicalistion of Iphis' stride gradually lengthening, the body seeming to achieve greater height and bulk immediately puts us in mind of Cassiodorus' famous description of pantomime:

> *"The same body portrays Hercules and Venus, it displays a woman in a man."*[89]

One last episode from the *Metamorphoses* we can draw upon as suggesting Ovid took inspiration from pantomime comes in Book I with the seminal story of Io desperately trying to communicate with her father Inachus.[90] She uses her hoof to trace out her name in the sandy bank of the river.

> *"But instead of words she did tell the sad story of her changed form with the letters which she traced in the dust with her hoof."*

Io is far from being the only character in the *Metamorphoses,* deprived of speech, who uses their hands to communicate.[91] As we have said the

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[87] *Dance* 34.
[88] *Met* 9.786-7.
[89] Cassiodorus, iv.9
[90] Galinsky further points out that the word *io* was the common cry of lament in Attic theatre.
[91] Philomela, her tongue ripped out, weaving her story into a tapestry immediately comes to mind.

'speaking hands' of the pantomimes were their principal tool. References to this abound in antiquity. Perhaps the most eloquent is contained in the same letter by Cassiodorus cited earlier.

> "*The hands of meaning expound the song to the eyes of melody, and by a code of gestures, as if by letters, it instructs the spectator's sight; summaries are read in it and, without writing, it performs what writing has set forth.*"[92]

In conclusion, the Greek desire to, as nearly as possible "Hellenise" Roman culture, we look at later in this work, was complemented by the Augustan willingness to assimilate not only Greek literature, but other aspects of the Greek cultural legacy to Roman ends and the *Metamorphoses* fitted the paradigm very neatly.

Galinsky has suggested that the blending of styles that we find in Ovid was a feature of the Augustan period not limited to literature but to be found in the fusion of Greek and Roman elements seen in the architecture of the time. It has been noted elsewhere[93] how 'movements' in art and literature inevitably spill over from one genre to the next, so:

> "The *metamorphoses* written mostly in the decade
> after the completion of the Augustan forum in 2 B.C.
> is a perfect analogue in the poetry of the Augustan mixture
> of styles."[94]

makes perfect sense.

Galinsky goes on to note that the Temple of the Dioscuri in the Roman forum, significantly completed a mere two years before Ovid's exile in 6 C.E. is another to exhibit this blending of Greek and Roman features.

Ovid, of course, was not the first to reimagine Greek literature for Roman purposes. We have already noted the complaints of Horace at the failure of Roman writers to break free of Greek themes and the hopes of

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[92] Cassiodorus, iv.9
[93] Harding, 'The Historian as Dramatist', 2010.
[94] Galinsky, *Augustan Culture,* 1996, 262.

Cicero that this would eventually be achieved. G.S. Kirk[95] has demonstrated how Virgil reimbued myth with the aspects it had enjoyed in Hesiod – metaphysical, philosophical and religious – and the status that it held for Greeks as a key to the inexplicable. In that sense we can argue that Virgil was, like Quintus Ennius or Plautus, a Roman writing in the manner of a Greek.

> "By contrast, Ovid, while not depriving myth of these qualities, does not emphasise them. Instead he brings out in unequalled fashion, myth's narrative and entertaining qualities."[96]

It is the ludic spirit with which Ovid approaches the telling of these tales that makes the retelling feel so in tune with a performance tradition.

Wheeler argues that the existence of the narrator (and we might add the constant change of focus on the part of the narrator) makes it difficult to attach the sort of meaning that we find in Hesiod to the way in which Ovid treats his tales, suggesting that his constant presence in the stories in some way undermines their provenance.[97] Given, as suggested in Chapter I, Ovid's versions of the tales have gone on to assume definitive status for so many readers, this needs to be questioned. However, it is true that this narrative presence, as a number of scholars maintain, puts Ovid at odds with Aristotle, citing the latter's famous reference to Homer:

> *"Homer deserves praise for many other qualities, but especially for realising, alone among epic poets, the place of the poet's own voice. For the poet should say as little as possible in his own voice, as it is not this that makes him a mimetic artist."*[98]

To argue that this in some way negates the idea that Ovid was writing a work that could be used for performance does not really hold. As Halliwell (above) has demonstrated, it is highly probable that Ovid had never read the

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[95] G.S. Kirk, *Myth, Its Meaning and Function in Ancient Cultures.* University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970.
[96] Galinsky, *Augustan Culture* 1996, 263.
[97] Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders,* 1998, 153.
[98] *Poetics* 1460a 5-8

Poetics and even if he had what we know of him suggests he would in all likelihood rebel against a proscriptive set of rules laid down three and a half centuries earlier. The very fact that the *Metamorphoses,* as we have demonstrated, was a new, hybrid form clearly demonstrates Ovid's reluctance to play by anyone else's rule book.

It has been suggested throughout this thesis that at least part of the success of pantomime in supplanting tragedy as the principal dramatic entertainment of the elite in the Roman and early Byzantine empires was the ability of the dancers to embody the metamorphosis tales that had such religious and cultural significance for the Greeks in particular and became a means by which they maintained identity under the Romans. It is by no means my intention to claim that this linkage was the only, or even the most important reason for its initial success. The well-attested enthusiasm of the emperors Augustus, Nero and Domitian were certainly important facts, but do not account for the continuing strength of the pantomime over the three and a half centuries that followed. We have seen that the fear of incurring the emperor's wrath led to the effective disappearance of pantomime's most serious rival, tragedy, so at least part of pantomime's success can be attributed to the lack of an effective rival. By the time we enter the Byzantine period, however, these other factors which can be argued to have accounted for pantomime's rise and assumption of the status of the dominant performance genre enjoyed by the elites had become irrelevant or died out altogether. It is my contention that the one causal constant throughout the seven centuries of pantomime's dominance was the nexus between it and the interest in tales involving metamorphosis. This chapter has demonstrated how the first major Roman re-telling of these tales appeared a mere twenty five years after Pylades and Bathyllus brought pantomime to prominence on the Roman stage. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate how pantomime and metamorphosis remained in lockstep until disappearing within a few years of each other at the end of the seventh century in the face of a determined assault from the Christian Church.

Chapter V

"*A delightful glimpse of the show*"[1]; Apuleius and Pantomime.

During the course of this work I shall be nominating two points where I maintain pantomime and metamorphosis tales collide head on. The first[2] is Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*[3] - the account of Lucius, formerly a student in Athens, who travels to Hypata on business. There, aided by the serving girl Photis, he applies an emollient intended to turn him, albeit temporarily, into a bird, only to discover he has been given the wrong cream and is transformed instead into an ass, a condition for which the only antidote is to eat rose petals which, unfortunately, are currently out of season. After a series of misadventures he finds himself in Corinth primed to be the star attraction in a version of the famous *Pasiphae* mime, an arena spectacular whereby convicted adulteresses and murderesses were mounted by a bull, or in the case in question by an ass.[4] The convicted woman, assuming she survives the bestiality, is then ripped apart by wild animals. Unfortunately for Lucius the lions sent into the arena to dispatch the criminal are unlikely to be too discriminating concerning whom or what they eat. He prepares to make his escape. Before doing so he is witness to a pantomime – or rather a 'meta-pantomime', to borrow a phrase from Regine May[5] - of *The Judgement of Paris.*

This is the second time in the novel that Venus is seen to dance. The first time is at the conclusion of the story of Cupid and Psyche, Book VI of Apuleius' tale, where Venus herself, finally reconciled to the marriage of her son Cupid and her mortal rival Psyche, dances at their wedding.

> *"Apollo chanted to the accompaniment of his lyre, and Venus danced gorgeously, stepping to the tune of the*

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[1] Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* 10.29 Vol II J. Arthur Hanson (trans) Loeb 1984, 225.
[2] The second, as we shall discuss in Chapter VII, is Nonnus' *Dionysiaca,* where Seilenos transforms into a river while dancing in imitation of one.
[3] Also commonly known as *Metamorphoses.* To avoid confusion with Ovid I have opted for *The Golden Ass* henceforth abbreviated to GA.
[4] See: K.M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions staged as Mythological Enactments." *JRS* 80,1990.
[5] Regine May, ‚Apuleius' Judgement of Paris. (Met 10.30 -34)' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,'* 2008, 357.

> *lively music. She had arranged the stage so that the muses were singing in a chorus, a satyr blew the flute and a Paniscus played on the reedpipes."*[6]

Edith Hall[7] has labelled this episode as pantomimic (although on the surface it seems nothing more than a description of a well-to-do matron dancing at her son's wedding) because of its twinning with the Corinthian pantomime. Regine May lends qualified support to the idea.

> "Although Apuleius is here straining at the leash, and beginning to experiment with the narrow definition of the pantomime performance conventions he may only be preparing the reader for a further deviation from what might be considered orthodox pantomime performance where he again casts a dancing Venus."[8]

Whatever we make of these dancing Venuses who bookend Lucius' life as an ass, the conclusion of the first story he hears in his incarnation as the creature, and the event that precedes his *effugit* to the beach where he encounters Isis in a dream – what Nancy Shumate[9] calls his 'preconversion crisis' – there is little doubt that Apuleius intends us to make *something* of it. Venus herself at *GA* 4.30 unwittingly prefigures the pantomime to come and her mimetic representation in it. The reference to Psyche being acknowledged by mortals as her equal in beauty, and therefore her earthly surrogate, can be seen also to refer to the Corinthian girl who 'deputises' for her in the pantomime in Book 10.

> *"It seems that I am to be worshipped in common and I must put up with the obscurity of being adored by deputy, publicly represented by a girl – a being who is doomed to die! Much good it did me that the shepherd whose impartial fairness was approved by great Jove*

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[6] Apuleius' *GA* 6.24.
[7] E.Hall, 'The Singing Actors of Antiquity'. *Greek and Roman Actors,* 2002, 29.
[8] *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 343.
[9] N. Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses.* University of Michigan Press, 1996.

> *preferred me for my unrivalled beauty to those great goddesses!"*[10]

In other words, both Pysche [11]*and* the Corinthian girl can be seen as pantomimic representations of the goddess.

The juxtaposition of the 'pure' amimetic simplicity of Venus, unmasked, dancing 'herself' in the Olympian theatre with the elaborate Corinthian theatrical display described in Book 10, might on the surface, much like Plato's analogy of the bed[12] be seen as dismissive of the pantomime's mimetic powers – a statement, as it were, that no matter how hard the dancer tries, or what expense the producer might lavish on the *mise-en-scene,* they can never hope to replicate the essence of the original.

The positive, indeed erotically charged, description Apuleius gives us of the performance initially suggests otherwise.

> *"And occasionally refreshing my inquisitive eyes with a delightful glimpse of the show through the open gate."*[13]

> *"After these another girl made her entrance, surpassingly beautiful to look at, with a charming ambrosial complexion, representing Venus as she looked when she was still a virgin."*[14]

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[10] *GA* 4.30.

[11] Given that ψυχή is also the Attic Greek word for 'butterfly' and that the butterfly is self-evidently the ultimate expression of naturally occurring metamorphosis the reasons for the choice of this particular insert tale are clear.

[12] In Book Ten of *The Republic* 595-97, beginning with the words:

> *"Speaking in confidence, for I would not like to have my words repeated to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe – but I do not mind saying to you, that all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them."*

Socrates and Glaucon discuss the tripartite nature of a bed – the bed as God creates it, the bed as the carpenter enacts what God has conceived and the bed as the painter renders what the carpenter has made - as a metaphor for the inadequacies of the performing arts. They conclude:

> *"And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore like all imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth?'*
> *'That appears to be so.'"*

[13] *GA* 10.29.

[14] *GA* 10.31.

> *"And now Venus, amidst loud applause from the audience, delightfully took her position at the very centre of the stage, smiling sweetly and surrounded by a whole mob of happy little boys.*[15]

These descriptions of the dancers have both tantalised and perplexed modern students of pantomime. Ismene lada-Richards' reaction exemplifies the frustration felt at the lack of detail we have available to us concerning the technical details of the performance.

> "How did the dancer 'translate' the aural into the visual, the libretto's words into the corporeal 'writing' of his voiceless limbs? Once again Apuleius' description painfully excites our curiosity. How was Minerva able, simply by means of menacing glares, tossings of the head and rapid contorted gestures, to indicate to Paris that if he were to assign to her the victory in the contest over beauty, he would become through her assistance, courageous and 'famous on account of trophies gained in war' (*Metamorphoses 10.31)* Or how exactly did the 'effort of her arms' convey the promise that Paris 'would acquire a bride equal in beauty to herself.'
>
> *(Metamorphoses 10.32)*[16]

We need to add to this Apuleius' description of the staging of this event.

> *"There stood a mountain, constructed with lofty craftsmanship to resemble the famous mountain of which the bard Homer sang. Mount Ida. It was planted with bushes and live trees, and from its very peak, from a flowing fountain made by the designer's hand, it flowed water."*[17]

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[15] *GA* 10.32.
[16] Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, 2008, 45.
[17] *GA* 10.30.

And:

> *"Then, from a hidden pipe at the very peak of the mountain, saffron dissolved in wine came spurting up in the air and rained down in a fragrant shower, sprinkling the goats that were grazing all around... Finally, when the theatre was filled with a delightful fragrance, a chasm in the earth opened up and swallowed the wooden mountain."*[18]

Given that what Apuleius is describing is more elaborate than any single pantomime performance known to have taken place, more elaborate as a spectacle perhaps than anything since the Triumph of Pompey in 61BCE, almost something of a scale a provincial centre such as Corinth is unlikely to have been able to mount, is it possible he is saying: this is the effort and expense to which humans need to go to even to approach the simple beauty of the goddess dancing herself?

Apuleius' well-known dislike of pantomime makes this an attractive possibility, but there is another reading of *the Judgement of Paris* pantomime that makes it possible to view it not as an aberrant version of the genre or even as Regine May has suggested, a new hybrid art form Apuleius was postulating,[19] but as a perfectly straightforward pantomime performance that is merely being described from an unreliable viewpoint. In his seminal 1985 hermeneutic study of the work,[20] John Winkler draws our attention to the concept of the *auctor* and the counterbalancing *actor*, a concept first coined, albeit in a non-theatrical context, by Cicero at *Sest* 28.61*:*

> *"dux, auctor, actor illarum rerum."*[21]

As Regine May points out[22] the term appears used in this manner on only two other occasions in extant Roman literature, the first being in Nepos

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[18] *GA* 10.34.
[19] Later in the chapter I will demonstrate that Apuleius' well-documented, Neo-Platonic aversion to theatre mentioned previously and the highly disparaging tone with which he concludes his description of the Corinthian spectacle makes this highly unlikely.
[20] J.J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor, a Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass.* University of California Press, 1985.
[21] *"The leader, author and actor of these things."*

(Atticus 3.2*)* and the second is at the conclusion of the Risus Festival tale in *The Golden Ass.*

> *"That god will propitiously and lovingly accompany the man who has been both his producer and his performer, wherever he may go."*[23]

Unlike the author and the narrator who in modern first person fiction remain, generally at least, discrete entities, there is a blurring of the lines in the person of the *auctor* that has significance for us in trying to determine how much Lucius is the author of his own tale and how much a performer, albeit unwilling and unknowing in a production that he is also simultaneously the author of – like a person caught in a dream that is clearly their own creation, but from which they cannot escape until awakened. Lucius is the unconscious author of his own story because the ass he becomes – the most stupid and base of creatures – is the embodiment of the life he has previously led, one of sexual adventurism and gluttony.[24]

Regine May draws attention to the repeated imagery of food throughout the book, so far as to equate Lucius with the stock character of Plautine comedy – the parasite. Lucius' first amorous encountered with Photis comes when she is cooking and the encounter is laced with innuendo linking these two driving forces in his nature.

> *"Well, well, my schoolboy, she said, "that is a bittersweet appetizer you are sampling. Be careful not to catch a chronic case of bitter indigestion from eating the sweet honey."*
>
> *"How so, my merry one?" I replied. "I am prepared, if you will revive me now with one little kiss, to be stretched out over your fire and barbequed."*[25]

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[22] Regine May, *Apuleius and Drama; The Ass on Stage.* Oxford Classical Monographs, Oxford, 2006, 205.
[23] *GA* 3.11
[24] In Chapter I we discussed the importance of the continuation in 'nature' between the metamorphosed entity and their former state – Lycaeon being the prima facie example.
[25] *GA* 2.10

Even in the misery of his transformation Lucius' first thoughts are of sex and his potentially enhanced potency.

> *"I saw no consolation in my wretched metamorphosis except for the fact, although I could not now embrace Photis, my generative organ was growing."*[26]

Winkler suggests the entire transformation can be seen as laced with phallic imagery.

> "Lucius' hair begins to bristle, his skin hardens, his fingers join into a hoof, a long tail emerges from the base of his spine; his mouth and his lips lengthen, his ears stand up... *Natura* and ψύσις in the language of folk medicine are regular terms for male or female genitals. Apuleius uses the word *natura* rather than another of the many words for the same thing in order to underline the point that in becoming an ass, Lucius has become the phallic animal *par excellence"*.[27]

In discussing the linkages between Ovid and pantomime in the previous chapter I argued that descriptions of 'in between' states and the *processes* of metamorphosis would have particular appeal to the pantomime dancer – citing the example of Iphis' transformation from female to male as being virtual stage directions for a pantomime performance. The description of Lucius' transformation cited above is another that fits this category. It is not, however, the first that occurs in the novel. In Book II he is accosted by Byrrhena, a woman who claims to be his aunt. She insists he accompany her to her house. In the atrium he encounters some remarkable statuary.

> *"The atrium was particularly beautiful. Columns were erected in each of its four corners, and on these stood statues, likenesses of the palm bearing goddess; their wings were outspread, but instead of moving, their dewy feet barely touched the slippery surface of a rolling sphere; they were*

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[26] *GA* 3.25.
[27] Winkler, *Auctor and Actor*, 1985, 174.

> *positioned as though stationary, but you would think them to be in flight."*[28]

And:

> *"In the middle of the marble foliage the image of Actaeon could be seen, both in stone and in the spring's reflection, leaning towards the goddess with an inquisitive stare, <u>in the very act of turning into a stag</u> and waiting for Diana to step into the bath.* (underlining mine.)[29]

What we are supposed to make of 'in the very act of turning into a stag' is unclear. What Lucius sees is neither Actaeon, nor the stag, but some 'in between' state we are left to create in our own imagination. Later I will be discussing the linkage between pantomime dancing and ekphrastic descriptions of this nature during the time of the Second Sophistic. Marina Warner[30] says of this section that it 'reads more like a filmed episode than the description of an immobile group of statues.' And so it does – in exactly the same way that Homer's depiction of the dance scenes on Achilles shield did. We will discuss in Chapter VII how we find in Nonnus' account of the transformation of Actaeon that when the ghost of the slain hunter appears in a dream to request his father mount a monument over his grave, what he describes sounds remarkably like the one that Apuleius describes here. That Nonnus, a Greek speaker generally assumed to have little or no knowledge of Latin literature, and Apuleius should independently conceive of a piece of statuary that captures a moment in the process of metamorphosis, not simply the end product, is a very strong indicator of the fascination that this process held for writers in the late Classical period – a process the pantomime dancers could give physical and dramatic realisation to.

We can be reasonably certain that Apuleius, as an acknowledged Middle Platonist would have known the following exchange from *Phaedo.*

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[28] *GA* 2.4
[29] *ibid*. 2.4
[30] Warner, *Fantastic metamorphoses,* 2002, 87.

> *"...but of the evil, which are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; and they continue to wander until the craving after the corporeal which never leaves them, they are imprisoned finally in another body. And they may be supposed to find their prisons in the same natures which they have had in their former lives.*
>
> *What natures do you mean Socrates?*
>
> *What I mean is that men who followed after gluttony, and wantonness, and drunkenness, and have had no thought of avoiding them, would pass into asses and animals of that sort."*[31]

It becomes therefore possible to see *The Golden Ass* as a morality tale in which Lucius experiences through metamorphosis a foretaste of what awaits him in the afterlife if he doesn't mend his ways by devoting his life to Isis. On first reading I may seem to be promoting a structuralist stance such as those advanced by G.S. Kirk[32] and Edmund Leach.[33] ndeed there are elements of the structuralist approach that fit my hypothesis of a meta-narrative of metamorphosis underpinning, or at least floating beneath the surface of religious belief and the way in which it developed in the ancient world, and the more instinctual reactions of fear, hope and superstition of the subconscious realm. However, like P.M.C. Forbes-Irving,

> "My approach is rather to suppose that the myths are primarily stories, and the imaginative and emotional response they evoke is not something to be distinguished from their narrative function, but a central part of it."[34]

Put more simply, the mere fact that Apuleius taps into these beliefs does not necessarily mean he intends us to take him seriously. When he

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[31] *Phaedo* 81.16.
[32] G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures,* Cambridge University Press, 1970.
[33] E. Leach, *Claude Levi-Strauss* , University of Chicago Press, 1970.
[34] Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths,* 1990, 6.

subverts our expectations, as he frequently does, he does not necessarily intend us to take the subversion seriously. As we will discuss when we look at the serio/comic aspects of the novel later, it is as much a mistake to take him seriously as it is not to do so.

Linkages between theatrical imagery and the sexual abound throughout the novel. The great British theatre director Sir Peter Brook maintains that three elements only are necessary to constitute a theatrical event – a performer, a performance space and an audience.[35] Lucius has two sexual interludes during his incarnation as an ass – one potential, which he aborts himself, which was scheduled to take place in the Corinthian theatre in front of a vast audience and one actual, which also fulfils Brook's criteria for a theatrical event, his encounter with the rich matron (performer) in his stall (space) with his hidden keeper (audience) watching. There is a codicil to this that emphasises the theatricality when he tells us the keeper was willing for her to come back again 'partly because he wanted to give Thyasus a novel peepshow'.

Winkler draws our attention to Lucius' relative sexual passivity. It is Photis who decides the where, when and how of their sexual encounters. It is the rich matron who comes naked to him in his stall. He is an unwilling participant in the *Pasiphae* mime. Even his initiation into the rites of Isis are described in terms that could equally apply to a lover who is forced, not once, but twice to remain waiting outside his mistress's boudoir door to be admitted at her whim. If we reduce the *Golden Ass*, therefore, to its purely sexual elements Lucius becomes a performer in a tale that is being written for him by women, of whom Isis becomes the ultimate expression.

Much scholarship has been devoted to the parallels between Apuleius' novel and the blander, more truncated, version of the same story entitled simply *Onos.* Although its former ascription to Apuleius' near contemporary Lucian is now generally discredited by scholars, given that as Naerebout has argued Lucian's works were likely to have been translated and widely disseminated in the Latin-speaking world, it is not too great a stretch to

[35] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space,* Oxford University Press, 1968.

assume Apuleius would have been aware of other works in his oeuvre. Two in particular that we have discussed previously in this work seem especially relevant – *The Dance* and the whimsical *Dialogues of the Sea Gods* – given that both, as we have seen, link Proteus to pantomime and reduce Proteus' famous transformations to the level of trickery and magic very similar to the various deceptions Lucius finds himself subject to or hearing about from the very beginning of the novel. When we add the element of the auctor/actor already discussed it becomes possible to view the *Golden Ass* therefore as an extended dramatic production of Lucius' own unwitting devising, one that as Regine May has demonstrated borrows heavily from Plautine comedy, but also I feel has many more links to pantomime than have previously been recognised. The first of the clues that Apuleius embedded in the text to justify this reading comes in the phrasing with which the 'real' pantomime in Book 10 is introduced:

> *"The curtain was rolled back, the screens folded back and the stage was set."*[36]

and the way in which the first of the insert tales that accompany Lucius' odyssey through the book is introduced:

> *"Remove the tragic*[37] *curtain and fold up the stage drapery, and give it to me in ordinary language."*[38]

The second link between *The Golden Ass* and pantomime specifically (as opposed to the arguments made by May for Plautine Comedy) comes early in Book 10 in the section that deals with Lucius' 'training' in preparation for the role he is to play in the planned theatre show in Corinth.

> *"He taught me first to recline at table leaning on my elbow: then he taught me to wrestle, and even to dance with my*

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[36] *GA* 10.30

[37] I have discussed in the introduction how pantomime had replaced tragedy and in effect become the new genre of tragic performance – a process complete by the time at which Apuleius was writing. The unnamed speaker clearly establishes that despite the comic elements that will permeate much of what follows, it is a tragedy – de facto a pantomime. The fact that this occurs immediately after the much-discussed prologue, sets not only the tone of the story Aristomenes is about to tell us, but also that of the first ten books. (How Book 11 fits this paradigm will be discussed later.)

[38] *GA* 10.17

> *forefeet in the air. Most amazing of all he taught me to respond to words with a gesture."*[39]

Much scholarly conjecture has been entered into concerning precisely what Apuleius meant by 'gesture' – something a hooved beast is clearly incapable of doing – a puzzle that is compounded by the described actions Lucius takes to communicate not involving gesture in the strict sense at all.[40]

> *"I would show what I did not want by raising my chin and what I wanted by dropping it; and when I was thirsty I would look round at the cupbearer and wink my eyelids alternatively to ask for a drink."*[41]

By describing as 'gesture' something that is not strictly so, something moreover that an ass is incapable of doing, our attention is brought to bear upon the word. An ass may be incapable of 'gesture', but it was something that a pantomime dancer could and did do – it was, as we have discussed on a number of occasions now, the principal weapon in their armoury. We have seen that the sources abound in references to hands and gestures in discussion of pantomime and there is little point in repeating them here. The point I do wish to belabour, however, is that once we start to recognise the way in which pantomime has influenced the shape of *The Golden Ass* a number of the problems that have vexed scholars concerning the text can be explained away.

The first of these is the question of whether the performers in *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime were masked as was traditional in pantomime. The following from Regine May perhaps best typifies the argument:

> "It is unclear whether Apuleius' goddesses are characterised by masks, or whether the Corinthian ballet school was fortunate enough to have three budding young dancers who, remarkably, provided visual appearance that corresponded closely with the typical iconographic representation of each goddess. There is no clear evidence

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[39] *GA* 10.17
[40] Refer to Chapter III for the use of gesture in the ancient world.
[41] *GA* 10.17

> either way within Apuleius' text. The reference to the girls dancing 'with their eyes alone' can be paralleled from other sources which refer to masks. Cicero, moreover, suggests that masks may have had large enough eyeholes to allow the eyes to be visible." [42]

The particular passage from Cicero to which she refers occurs at *De Orat* 2.193 where he says:

> *"I have often seen myself how the eyes of the actor seemed to gleam at me from behind a mask."*

This point in due course, but will make the preliminary comment needs to be made that Cicero's observations were almost certainly made with the advantage of having been gained from the front fourteen rows of seats (what in modern parlance might be described as the ringside seats) which following the Roscian legislation of 67 BCE were reserved for the Senatorial and Equestrian classes, whereas the viewpoint of the asinine Lucius is somewhat more restricted.

> *"I was left for a while outside the gate, where I had the pleasure of cropping the lush grass that was growing at the entrance. At the same time, as the gates were left open, I was able to cast my eyes on the very pretty sight inside."*[43]

Given of course that Apuleius may have been taking dramatic licence concerning how closely Lucius was capable of observing the performance, or may simply like Daniel Defoe (who famously had Crusoe strip naked, swim out to the wreck of the ship and fill his non-existent pockets with manner of useful objects) have forgotten the continuity of his own story, there are nonetheless a number of indicators to suggest that if we are to accept Lucius' account of what he saw[44] the performers must have been unmasked.

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[42] May, 'The Metamorphosis of Pantomime. Apuleius' Judgement of Paris. (Met 10.30.34)' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 344.

[43] *GA.* 10.30

[44] This qualification is very important.

> *"To him there entered an extremely pretty boy,*
> *naked except for a cloak such as teenage boys wear,*
> *over his left shoulder."*[45]
>
> *"Next there appeared a handsome girl representing Juno."*[46]
>
> *"After them there entered a third girl, the loveliest of the three, proclaimed as Venus by her ravishing ambrosial complexion."*[47]

These do not sound like assessments that could have been made had the performers been masked! However, as shall be demonstrated later, the issue is clouded by the question of what it is that Lucius in his transformed state is really seeing and how much we can trust his accounting of it.[48]

As mentioned previously *The Judgement of Paris,* although generally accepted by modern historians to have been a pantomime of some sort, largely on the grounds that of the known forms of entertainment in the Greco-Roman world pantomime is the one to which it most closely adheres,[49] nonetheless has features that make it unlike any recorded pantomime or the accounts of the art outlined by Lucian, Libanius, Cassiodorus, or indeed any of its detractors. I have already mentioned the employment of multiple dancers. To that we can add the use of an elaborate *mise-en-scène* and a chorus – both of which

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[45] *GA* 10.30
[46] *GA* 10.30
[47] *GA* 10.30
[48] Sir Arthur Pickard Cambridge in *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens,*Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968, talks about vase painting where the painter's memory 'melts' the distinction between character and actor. In private correspondence Rosie Wyles has told me: 'I actually think, given this analogy, it is possible to think of the masks 'melting' with the faces of the girls so that this could be masked performance.' See also:
Taplin and Wyles (eds) *The Pronomos Vase.* Oxford University Press 2010
[49] That *The Judgement of Paris,* was a popular pantomime subject is attested in a number of sources:

> *"Further, the entertainment of Paris and the rape of Helen,*
> *After a judgement in the matter of the apple."*

Lucian, *Dance* 45

> *"He maintains that this story about Mars is as false as the tale told about the three goddesses, Juno, Minerva and Venus, who are related to have engaged in a beauty competition, with Paris as judge, for the prize of her golden apple – a story which is performed in song and dance amid the applause of the theatre."*

Augustine, *City of God* 18.10

> *"You brook the stage recital of Jupiter's misdeeds and the shepherd judging Juno, Venus and Minerva.*

Tertullian, *Apology* 15.2

descriptions of pantomime from the period would lead us to believe the dancer was capable of creating *unaided.* These anomalies, I argue, sit comfortably with my contention that what Lucius *describes* not only in *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime, but throughout the first ten books of the novel, does not correspond the reality of what is before him.

Averring Apuleius uses pantomime as a metaphor for the life of Lucius before Isis mediates his final transformation into a 'true' human being, as opposed to the bestial one he had been up to that point, does not by any means imply he approved of the genre. Quite the contrary. What he is describing is a medium that is perfect to express the deceit and chicanery that is the life of Lucius prior to Isis' intervention.

We can demonstrate some of the sense of disconnect between the auctor and the actor when we consider that the tale is being told by the 'reformed' Lucius – the man who is now a Deacon of Isis, a man who in Book XI sits in judgement over the previous incarnation of himself, but the narratological voice of the first ten books, especially Book I, is that of the old Lucius who describes with gusto his encounter with Aristomenes and, as a man we will learn later has abjured sex, his physical relationship with Photis.

Then as Lucius chats with Milo (Book II) the Book XI narratological presence breaks in as he tells his host as *proof* of the efficacy of prophecy that a Chaldean at Corinth (where he has not yet been) has foretold the outcome of his journey – namely that he will be the subject of a famous book – something that only the Book XI narrator can know.[50]

The effect of Apuleius' strange digression into the consequences for the people of Troy of Paris's superficial judgement (another section that constantly incites scholarly debate) coupled with a reminder of the results of the favouring of Odysseus over Ajax during the conflict that arose from this decision, is to throw a bucket of cold water down our backs. It is, in effect, as if Apuleius, the rhetor of the Second Sophistic, often forced to share the stage

[50] Indeed, considering that Book XI is part of the 'famous book' even the Book XI narrator cannot know that what he is currently narrating will become famous.

with pantomimes and mimes[51] is pointing to the superficiality (as he sees it) of the genre.

> *"The scene was an artificial wooden mountain supposed to represent Homer's famous Mount Ida.*[52] (Underlining mine.)

The pretty piece of flummery which follows delights the Corinthian audience and through his lyrical and quasi-erotic description the readers are likewise gulled into being entranced. He then turns on us and points exactly what we are being tricked into being entranced by:

> *"Well then, you lowest of the low, yes, I am referring to the whole legal profession. All you cattle-like law-clerks and vulture-like barristers – are you really surprised that modern judges are corrupt when here you have proof that in the earliest stages of mankind, in this first law-court ever convened, the simple shepherd who had been appointed by Jupiter himself to give judgement in a question that was troubling heaven and earth, succumbed to a bare-faced sexual bribe (which was to prove the ruin of his whole family) and sold his verdict in open court?"*[53]

In this way Apuleius demonstrates that a pantomime, like a magician exhibiting a feat of sleight of hand, is able to trick an audience into forgetting to think about the consequences of what they are watching – something the genre pantomime had replaced never sought, nor could hope to do. With pantomime, therefore, style takes precedence over substance. This is why Regine May's otherwise excellent study of the elements of Plautine comedy

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[51] Apuleius' attitude to theatre in general is probably best contained in this extract from his *Florida:*

> *"The mime prattles idly, the comedian prates, the tragedian debates… the pantomime deals in dactylogy and the other people show their tricks to the people. But these things aside, nothing else ought to be looked at more closely than the enthusiasm of the audience and the vocalism of the speaker."*

Apuleius *Flor.*18. (Once again it is not the dancing of the pantomime, nor his physical dexterity that he singles out, but the gesturing.)

[52] *GA* 10.30

[53] *GA* 10.33

she has identified in *The Golden Ass*[54] can be argued to miss the point by privileging these elements over pantomime – an omission she might be thought to have addressed in the 'Metamorphosis of Pantomime: Apuleius' Judgement of Paris (Met 10.30.34*)"*[55]but which in fact really only addresses the literality of the spectacle that occurs in Book 10 and misses the wider significance of pantomime over the first ten books. That is to say she seems to see the Corinthian spectacle as a random and isolated event. As Winkler has demonstrated there is nothing random or isolated in *The Golden Ass.* May[56] has also made the claim that there is very little evidence for pantomimes using props in their performances and this cannot go unchallenged either. We have already discussed Macrobius' famous account of Pylades using a bow to shoot arrows into the crowd while dancing Hercules and the more tongue-in-cheek account in the Greek Anthology of the indifferent dancer who provoked the irony of the writer by dancing the part of Canace but left the stage alive even though he carried a sword by which he should have dispatched himself in order to make the performance true to life!

Rosie Wyles further notes:

> "In the iconographic evidence, there is a sword depicted in the belt of the Trier ivory pantomime, and the Pompeian wall painting from the house of Apollo shows characters defined in costume through their props."[57]

While I agree with May that Apuleius constantly subverts reader's expectations by turning genres on their heads,[58] the overall direction she maintains – that of Plautine Comedy, is not in my opinion justified by the text. For all the novel's lightheartedness, for all that it is constantly referred to as a comic novel, ultimately the tragic elements outweigh the comic. *The Golden Ass,* I suggest is a Fieldingesque morality tale. Like any 'serious' comic writer – like Fielding himself – Apuleius's comedy always has a sting in the tail. It

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[54] R.May, *Apulieus and Drama. The Ass on Stage.* Oxford Classical Monographs, 2006.

[55] *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 314-337.

[56] *ibid,* 335.

[57] R.Wyles, 'The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime.*' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 73.

[58] Something I will discuss in more depth later in the chapter.

is a book littered with corpses – hardly a marker of comedy – beginning with Socrates, then the murderous violence Lucius himself unleashes upon the wine skins (which are in human form at the time) proceeding to Pysche's sisters, to the robbers and their housekeeper (or rather cavekeeper) to Charite and Tlepolemus, the baker, the doctor and his wife and finally by the implication of Lucius' digression on the results of the Judgement of Paris, the majority of the population of Troy itself. Yes, Apuleius employs a comedian's tone in the telling of these stories, but always so that he can pull us up and say in effect: "Look here, exactly what do you think you are laughing at?"

Winkler expresses it differently, but the underlying principle remains the same:

> "The special pleasure of the *AA*[59] is the way assertions and denials of the strange-but-true are co-present, and every time the force of laughter or surprise compels us to acknowledge hidden truth there is something lurking close by that can remind us that our assent is still a fictional response."[60]

In creating a pantomime that is not strictly so and yet is nothing other than a pantomime Apuleius thus creates a metaphor for the novel as a whole – a work that is neither a comedy nor a tragedy, something May, in pushing her agenda for a Plautine model maintains is something that has no precedent except in the prologue to Plautus' *Amphitruo.*

> *"I will mix it and make it a tragicomedy. For it cannot be, I believe, right to make it a comedy, when all these kings and gods come along."*

However as Bracht Branham observes[61] there was a long-established Greek tradition of the *spoudogelois.*[62]

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[59] *Asinus Aureus. (The Golden Ass)*
[60] Winkler, *Auctor and Actor,* 1985, 42.
[61] R. Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence. Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass 1989, 26.
[62] From the Greek *spodaios* – serious, earnest, morally good, and *gelois* – comic amusing, ludicrous.

> "Although the use of the term *spoudogelois* in antiquity is poorly documented it is clear that it was a coinage meant to yoke qualities normally contrasted as opposites and served to point to a paradoxical quality in the seriocomic figure himself, who, while comic and amusing on the surface, frequently emerges as in some sense, earnest, with a claim to our serious attention."

Branham also points out that the serious use of humour was a standard feature of Cynic literature. Strabo, for instance[63] describes Menippus as *spoudogelois* and when we consider that we find in Eunapius, the following description of Lucian:

> *"Lucian of Samosata, who usually took serious pains to raise a laugh."*[64]

it may well be it is to Lucian and Menippus we should be looking as Apuleius' inspiration rather than Plautus.

The Golden Ass is nearly entirely composed of stories that begin and progress comically only to end in tragedy[65] and the inverse. The wedding in Olympus that ends the Cupid and Pysche tale prefigures the weddings by which potential tragedies in Shakespeare 'metamorphose' into comedies, while Venus' strangely unmotivated acceptance of the event is in itself a parody – an inversion whereby the most beautiful woman in creation is turned into the *senex* of comedy, a later staple of the Commedia and Moliere. Arguably too it is a marriage that ends *The Golden Ass* – Lucius' own 'marriage' to Isis where he forebears sex and becomes a priest of her cult, once again an inversion of the usual male/female role.

Even if Apuleius had not himself drawn our attention to the disconnect between the author and the actor in his book, the existence of the prologue

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[63] Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.29 c-759 H. L. Jones (trans) Loeb 2006, 297.
[64] Eunapius: *Lives of Philosophers. Introduction* 444. W. Wright (trans) Loeb 1921, 349.
[65] The Charite story, for instance, broadly follows the outline of the famous Chariton mime, involving the comedic rescue of a kidnapped heroine by her brother, the linkage being made explicit by the congruity of the names, only to be turned into a tragedy by an epilogue that is part of another story.

would. This prologue of little more than a page has presented so many problems for scholars that Kahane and Laird have edited a volume of more than four hundred pages dealing exclusively with the topic.[66] In it De Jong, for instance, argues that the *persona* of the *prologus* is neither Apuleius nor Lucius. Just who the 'speaker' of the prologue *is* is another matter.[67]

Regine May finds the most convincing argument the one advanced by Smith[68] that the *prologus* assumes "the persona of the *prologus* of Plautine Comedies."[69] Given that prologues are not generally regarded to have featured in pantomime this, on the surface, would appear a convincing argument against my contention the *The Golden Ass* takes its major inspiration from it. There is, however, an exception to this generally held view. Augustine, writing some two hundred years after his fellow Carthaginian, Apuleius, had this to say of the pantomime:

> *"For if these signs which actors make in dancing were of force by nature, and not the arrangement and agreement of men, the public crier wouldn't in former times have announced to the people of Carthage what the pantomime was dancing, what it was he meant to express – a thing still remembered by many old men from whom we have frequently heard it."*[70]

It is entirely possible, therefore, that pantomimes Apuleius had experienced in his youth in Carthage at about the time which Augustine indicates, were of a type that did feature a prologue. May's claims for the elements of Plautine Comedy to be found in the novel, not withstanding, I would argue that the introduction of the *Judgement of Paris* pantomime is

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[66] Ahuvia Kahane and Andrew Laird (eds) *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphosis.* Oxford 2001.

[67] The choice of 'speaker' is justified by:

> *"So please, I beg your pardon in advance if as a raw speaker of this foreign tongue of the Forum I commit any blunders."*

GA 1.1

[68] Warren S. Smith, 'The Narrative Voice in Apuleius Metamorphoses.' *TaPha*, 103, 1972, 513-34.

[69] R.May, *Apulieus and Drama. The Ass on Stage,* 2006, 110.

[70] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine 2.25*

necessary to add, in theatrical terms, tragedy. Lucius' philosophical interjection at the end, to which he is so careful to draw attention,

> *"But I am afraid one of you may reproach me for this attack of indignation and think to himself, So now we are going to have to stand an ass lecturing us on philosophy."*[71]

therefore becomes another tragic/comic inversion, reminding the reader/audience that pantomime is the realm of tragedy and that what they have been gulled into viewing as pretty will end disastrously.

Which brings us to the argument that *The Judgement of Paris* can be viewed as a perfectly conventional pantomime performance. There are two main points to be made in support of this. The first is that what is described to us as having transpired in the arena is described by Lucius-auctor – someone who has been revealed to us throughout the novel as not to be trusted. The second is to think of it as a conventional pantomime undertaken by a single dancer fits perfectly with the pattern of serio/comic inversion that has underscored all the insert tales we have been given over the first ten books. May[72] herself, in discussing the Corinthian spectacle, makes the point that the literary record suggests that pantomime performances were frequently considered to be so realistic that audiences would be deceived into thinking that what they were watching was real.[73] She cites the famous example from Xenophon's *Symposium* which affects the onlookers so much that 'those who were already married mounted horse and rode off to their wives that they might enjoy them.'

This is precisely the point. Nancy Shumate[74] has argued that Lucius' habit of allowing himself to be sidetracked into sexual interludes and to dabble in magic is the hallmark of a far greater character flaw. His flaw (his *'harmatia'* as she puts it) is 'missing the mark'. The root of what she calls his

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[71] *GA* 10.33
[72] May,'Metamorphosis of Pantomime: Apuleius' Judgement of Paris (Met 10.30.34*)' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 356.
[73] Which would support my point that much of the pantomime's appeal lay in their ability to make audiences believe metamorphosis was an actual possibility.
[74] Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses,* 1996, 78.

'preconversion crisis' is not a moral failure but an epistemological one. It is a failure to recognise things as they are.

Solmsen,[75] writing of *The Golden Ass* in 1979 supports this idea.

> "You know not whom to trust, what to believe – surely not your eyes."

Earlier still Ebel[76] writing in the journal *Arethusa* had gone so far as to argue that the thematic core of the novel,

> "is the universal fact that all appearances are unreliable and all 'realities' transient."

Once we accept this, Shumate suggests, everything Lucius takes to be true or known must be challenged. This she believes is the standard condition of being a 'pre-convert' – which Lucius clearly is. I am not sure that I am prepared to accept that all the mistakes of perception Lucius makes throughout the novel can be in this way seen as metaphors for a value system that has totally failed and deceived him, but it is true that throughout the book he remains resolutely incapable of recognising transformed entities for what they are. Beginning with the wineskins he butchers at Milo's gates[77] 'mistakenly' believing them to be brigands attempting to break in – the event that causes so much amusement to the people of Hypata as the centrepiece of their annual *Risus* festival – only to have Photis darkly tell him that those he attacked did indeed have human form at the time – the result of her mistress' black arts.

> *"Suddenly by the invincible power of the magical arts and the invisible power of divine forces constrained to her will, the bodies whose hairs were smoking and sizzling borrowed human breath and began to feel and hear and walk, and they came to where the stench from their hair was drawing them." GA* 3.18

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[75] F. Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans.* Harvard University Press, 1979.
[76] H. Ebel, 'Apuleius and the Present Time,' *Arethusa* 3, 1970.
[77] This incident is another conscious nod to the world of theatre by Apuleius. Apart from the often discussed fact that Lucius' murder 'trial' takes place in a theatre rather than a court room, the mistaken slaughter of the wineskins is an obvious borrowing from Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* where wineskins are sacrificed in place of babies.

Then, when Tlepolemus arrives at the cave of bandits in Book 7 Charite immediately recognises him as her cousin/lover, but Lucius who has never seen him before sees only Haemus '*the famous robber'* he has transformed himself into:

> *"But he was half-clothed in a veritable patchwork, ill-fitting and badly stitched together."*[78]

He is, in other words, 'in character' wearing the costume of a bandit and Lucius, therefore, only sees the transformation. This selective myopia is what Irene de Jong in her analysis of the prologue refers to as 'focalisation'.[79]

This 'epistemological failure' is not restricted to Lucius. Speaking of the doctor's wife who procures the poison for the woman Lucius is supposed to copulate with in the Corinthian amphitheatre, even though she has ample evidence she is not to be trusted, Shumate[80] argues that there is a powerful force preventing her from seeing the reality of the situation and that this happens routinely in the novel – character after character seeing only their own preconceived version of what is before them. Indeed, if we analyse the last third of the book we can see that every tale it contains, every chain of events, starts with a false assumption which begets a further chain of mistaken impressions that follow more or less logically from the first.

One of the very few moments of true perception in the novel occurs as Lucius wanders around Hypata prior to his encounter with his aunt Byrrhena. The supreme irony of this passage, the genius of Apuleius, lies in the fact that in the first ten books of the novel, the one time we can trust what Lucius tell us he sees is when he tells us he could not trust what he saw.

> *"Nothing I looked at in that city seemed to me to be what it was; but I believed that absolutely everything had been transformed into some other shape by some deadly mumbo-jumbo; the rocks I hit upon were petrified*

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[78] *GA* 7.4

[79] I. de Jong, 'The Prologue as a Pseudo-Dialogue and the Identity of its (main) Speaker.*' A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses.* 2001, 201-12.

[80] Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses,* 1996, 102.

> *human beings, the birds I heard were feathered humans,*
> *the trees that surrounded the city were humans with leaves,*
> *and the liquid in the fountains had flowed from human bodies.*
> *Soon the statues and pictures would begin to walk, the oxen*
> *and other animals of that sort to prophecy; and from the sky*
> *itself and the sun's orb there would suddenly come an oracle.*[81]

Which brings us back to *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime and why I believe it is a description of a perfectly straightforward pantomime. We are never told what the people of Corinth see when the pantomime takes place. It is related to us from Lucius' viewpoint.[82] Why should we therefore believe that in this one instance he is giving us an accurate accounting? Many scholars have commented of the fact that the girls playing the goddesses do not interact with one another. May goes so far as to say:

> "It would have been perfectly possible for Apuleius
> to describe a 'standard' pantomime performance in
> which a single dancer performed all the roles."[83]

Indeed it would. And, I argue, this is exactly what he did do. Throughout this thesis we have read account after account in the sources of the way in which pantomime dancers could segue effortlessly from character to character, how they could summon up elaborate landscapes with their hands and how audiences would be terrified or sexually aroused by the performance. When we balance the description Apuleius gives us of the boys playing the cherubs, the *mise-en-scene,* and the three goddesses against the accounts in the sources of pantomimes achieving just these effects through gesture, costume and the supreme plasticity of their bodies in front of audiences far less easily duped than Lucius has shown himself to be throughout the novel, I would argue what we are presented with is a perfectly conventional pantomime viewed by a narrator who in his own transformed state is capable only of seeing the illusion.

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[81] *GA* 2.1
[82] The viewpoint, I will argue shortly, of Lucius-*actor.*
[83] May,'Metamorphosis of Pantomime: Apuleius' Judgement of Paris (Met 10.30.34*)' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 352.

Moreover I suggest that this interpretation fits the story-telling technique Apuleius has applied throughout the novel to this point. For thirty years or more scholars such as J.J. Winkler and Stephen J. Harrison[84] have demonstrated that the insert tales in *The Golden Ass* prior to Lucius' Book 11 conversion are parodies of iconic Greek literature and in some cases of identifiable historical events[85] - especially that they are Milesian style parodies through inversion, something Apuleius himself draws our attention to very early in the piece.

> "*But I would like to tie together different sorts of tales for you in that Milesian style of yours...* "[86]

Yet scholars whose specific focus is upon *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime persist in seeming to regard it as the one episode prior to Book 11 that must be taken literally, despite what is being described, as I have previously noted, conforming to no known pantomime performance in antiquity.

Michael Paschalis, I believe, gives us a suggestion of how we should regard Apuleius' description of the pantomime when he twins it with his description of Lucius' viewing of the statue of Actaeon.

> "Taking everything into account, I would suggest that the person who describes the Diana and Actaeon group is Lucius – auctor (the retrospective narrator of action) and not Lucius – actor (the currently acting protagonist) Lucius actor is inserted rather abruptly immediately after the formal description 'I was staring again and again at the statuary enjoying myself enormously when Byrrhena spoke' *The enormous pleasure* Lucius actor takes in looking at it means that he does not absorb the warning; but he cannot be held responsible and accused of 'blindness' on account of the brevity of the description or of focussing on details because this is the

[84] Harrison, 'Literary Topography in Apuleius' Metamorphoses'. In Michael Paschalis and Stavros Frangoulidis (eds), *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient Novel,* Barkhuis Publishing and The University Library Groningen, 2002 ,40-57.
[85] I have added a summary of these as an appendix to this chapter.
[86] *GA*, 1.1.

> responsibility of the other Lucius, the retrospective narrator."[87] (Italics mine)

Let us contrast that 'enjoying myself enormously' with Lucius' opening statement about the pantomime performance:

> *"I was left for a while outside the gate, where I had the pleasure of cropping the lush grass that was growing at the entrance."*[88]

As Maaike Zimmerman-De Graf notes,

> "His general complacency with the situation is underscored by the amazing statement that he is 'gladly' (*libens*) browsing on the grass: throughout the previous books much has been made of the inability of Lucius, the ass, to get used to eating raw fodder."[89]

Considering that the majority of the novel has been a litany of Lucius' misery in his transformed state this attitudinal echo harking back to a point where he failed totally to recognise the significance of what he was seeing cannot be co-incidental.

Paschalis draws our attention to the link between the two pieces of description:

> "Worthy of consideration is also the longest *ekphrasis* in the novel, the pantomime performance on the subject of the judgement of Paris in 10-30-32. The case is, of course, different because a performance involves temporal relations as well, and specifically movement and change of scene. But even here are striking similarities with the Diana and Actaeon *ekphrasis.* The person who describes does not easily yield to the temptation of narrating instead of describing. Hardly any temporal adverbs

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[87] M. Paschalis, 'Reading Space: A Re-examination of Apuleian ekphrasis,' *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient Novel.* 202, 139.
[88] *GA* 10.30.
[89] M. Zimmerman De-Graaf, 'Narrative Judgement and Reader Response in Apuleius, Metamorphoses 10,29-34: The Pantomime of the Judgement of Paris.' In Egbert Forsten (ed) *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel Vol V*, Groningen 2003, 145.

> are employed to indicate transitions and the entrance of characters is rendered paratactically and in a way that brings to mind a series of tableaux."[90]

Just as Paschalis maintains the narrator of the first *ekphrasis* is Lucius-auctor describing the effect upon Lucius-actor the same, I suggest, is true of the account of the pantomime. What is it that any single pantomime dancing *The Judgement of Paris* seeks to portray? Five discrete characters and elaborate scenery. And this is exactly what Lucius-auctor describes and what Lucius-actor sees.

We know from a number of his writings that Apuleius despised pantomime. As Zimmerman-De Graf notes:

> "For the contemporary reader this description of the elaborately staged pantomime with its near-naked star-dancer and the other choruses of naked boys and girls would no doubt immediately call to mind the vivid debate on the moral worth of pantomime performances, a debate which in those days was at its height."[91]

Which leads logically to the possibility that he deliberately underscores the erotic nature of the display to emphasise the worthlessness of the pantomime. He subtly hints at this by giving vent to his own moral indignation at the role he was being called upon to perform in the display.

> *"But as for me, besides my shame at indulging in sexual intercourse in public.."*[92]

It is not only the elaborate description of what Lucius 'witnesses' that elevates the spectacle to a level that we know from Apuleius' other writings he did not consider it worthy of, but the poetic language he uses. Turning once more to Maaike Zimmerman-De Graf,

> "Right from the outset there is not only an abundance of poetical words, immediately recognizable as such for contemporary readers, but also in the very first sentence

[90] *ibid*, 139
[91] *ibid*, 149
[92] *GA* 10.28

> (10.29/260. 20-25) a careful metrical parallelism, combined with rhyme and alliteration. The authorial reader could be expected to notice the change of tone and, remembering the phrase *prospectu gratissimo,* would acknowledge this as the opening of an artificial prose description of a visual object, generally known as *ecphrasis.* "[93]

Why, therefore, do scholars persist in taking seriously Apulieus' description? Parody by inversion has been the name of the game throughout. He has parodied the heroic by rendering it prosaic and unheroic. How do you invert the already debased? You elevate it. You use poetic language. You describe the efforts of a single, probably highly indifferent pantomime bumbling his way through a performance of *The Judgement of Paris* in a relatively minor centre (such as Corinth was at this time) by describing exactly what he seeks to portray in the most over-blown terms possible.

Appendix I

I have argued in support of my belief that Apuleius parodies *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime, indeed all pantomime, by exalting it, that this fits a pattern of parody by inversion in which a number of iconic literary works and historical events are over the course of the first ten books in the same way inverted, in their cases the difference being that the inversion is in the opposite direction – from the sublime to the ridiculous as it were. Here follows a brief summary of these parodies which is greatly indebted to Stephen J. Harrison's *Literary Topography in Apuleius' Metamorphoses.*

To begin at the beginning, Harrison notes that the first insert story – the one told by Aristomenes – has two clear topographical allusions to Plato.

[93] *ibid,* 149.

> "As one might well expect in a narrative where one of the main characters is called Socrates"[94]

Apuleius' Socrates is attacked on his way to Larrisa (1.7). Harrison suggests that this is an echo of Plato's *Meno* where Plato's Socrates remarks that a man who knows his way to Larrisa ought to be able to guide others there. He further suggests that:

> "Equally literary is the moment when Aristomenes invites his friend to sit down by a plane tree (1.18) which turns out to be beside an attractive river (1.19). This, as many have noted, recalls the famous invitation of Phaedrus to the Platonic Socrates to sit down á deux under a plane tree next to the attractive river Ilissus. (*Phaedrus* 229 a-b)[95]

When Thelyphron arrives at Byrrhena's house he announces:

> "*When I was a boy I set out from Miletus and came to Larrisa."*

once again establishing that the tale he is about to tell will a distinctly Milesian flavour.

Harrison[96] draws our attention to numerous name changes from *Onos* to Apuleius' version of the tale. One of these is that of Patrae to Corinth. He argues that this makes Lucius' arrival there a *nostos* and that is one of a number of ways in which the shape of *The Golden Ass* has distinct echoes of *The Odyssey.*

Luca Graverini[97] agrees with the linkage to the *The Odyssey*, but his take on it is slightly different.

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[94] Harrison, 'Literary Topography in Apuleius' Metamorphoses', *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient* Novel, 2002, 42.
[95] *ibid* , 42.
[96] *ibid* ,43.
[97] Luca Graverini, 'Corinth, Rome and Africa: a Cultural Background for the Tale of the Ass', *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient* Novel, 2002,77.

> "If Lucius is a Roman citizen (This is clear in the *Onos* though the point is not stressed in the *Metamorphoses*) then maybe his real *nostos* is the travel to Rome a sea voyage the direction from east to west, and Rome as the final destination seems more in keeping with Odysseus and Aeneas."[98]

Other name changes from the *Onos* include Lucius' father becoming Theseus, with the obvious link to Athens' mythical founder, and the name of the man who provides Lucius his letter of introduction to Milo changed from Decmanus to Demeas which Harrison (p. 44) points out is a frequent occurrence in new Comedy. This can be seen as something of a literary in-joke for as Th. D. McGreight notes:

> "It is perhaps also relevant that in Terence's *Adephoe 935,* Micio calls his son as ass (asine) for listening to Demeas' advice.'[99]

The three tales of failed robber expeditions that are told by the unnamed survivor of the raids to the assembly in the cave, Harrison further demonstrates, are all parodies.

> "The expedition led by the bold Lamachus to Thebes, I would argue, is a parody of the legendary epic and tragic expedition of the Seven against Thebes. When Thebes is first mentioned in the tale, it is named with a reference to its traditional seven gates which specifically recalls the seven doomed heroes of the mythological expedition, one at each gate. (4.0 *enim Thebas heptapylos accessimus.)*[100] Harrison further argues that the name Lamachus evokes another failed expedition – that of the Athenians against Sicily in 415 BCE. Lamachus was the co-commander was killed rashly attacking Syracuse with an inadequate number of troops.

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[98] *ibid* , 59.
[99] Th. D. McGreight. 'Sacrificial Ritual in Apuleius' Metamorphoses.' *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel Vol V,* Groningen 2003, 176.
[100] Harrison, 'Literary Topography in Apuleius' Metamorphoses', *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient* Novel, 2002, 46.

> "This characteristic fatal overboldness is precisely picked up by the similar qualities of the Apuleian Lamachus, who is specifically said to have perished from 'excessive bravery'."[101]

The movement of the robber band from Thebes to Plataea, Harrison also argues, is a parody of the march of Mardonius, the brother of Xerxes, to defeat at the battle of Plataea and the death of the robber chief Thrasyleon is a low-life parody of the death of the Persian commander.[102]

The Milesian theme is picked up again in the Cupid and Psyche tale when Psyche's father goes to Apollo's oracle at Didyma for advice:

> "*So the wretched girl's unhappy father, suspecting divine hostility, fearing the gods' anger, consulted the ancient Miletian oracle of Apollo at Didyma.*"[103]

The four labours Venus sets Psyche are an obvious parody of the twelve set for Hercules, but as Harrison observes:

> "A suitable reduction in both scale and tone for the context of the novel."[104]

That one of these tasks involves taking a tuft of wool from a flock of extremely fierce golden sheep is something of a parody within a parody (a parallel parody as Harrison puts it p.51) being a clear reference to Jason and his quest for the golden fleece.

To these we can add the story of Charite and her rescue by Tlepolemus from the robbers cave. Her subsequent suicide following the murder of her husband has,

> "Long been observed to owe much to the suicide of Dido in Virgil's Aeneid."[105]

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[101] *ibid* 46.
[102] Neither of their bodies were ever found.
[103] *GA 4.32*
[104] Harrison, 'Literary Topography in Apuleius' Metamorphoses', *Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 1. Space in the Ancient* Novel, 2002, 49.
[105] *Ibid* 52.

while the rescue itself from a cave of bandits while in disguise,

> "is a clear version of the Homeric Odysseus."[106]

The last parody Harrison draws our attention to is the one contained in the tale Tlepolemus, disguised as Haemus, tells of the assault on the ship of the Roman matron and her husband which takes place at Actium and is a clear reduction in scale and moment of the famous battle of 31BCE that decided the outcome of the Roman Civil War.

> "These allusions, characteristically, not only demonstrate knowledge of famous and elevated genres and events (epic, tragedy, and the great battles of Greek and Roman history and literature) but also adopt those elements by parody and ironic repossessing for their appearance in the less elevated genre of the Roman novel."[107]

Which brings us back once more to the argument that there is no reason to suspect that *The Judgement of Paris* pantomime should not be treated in exactly the same way.

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[106] *ibid* 52.
[107] *ibid* 55.

Chapter VI

"Visited by a Demon"; Procopius and the *Secret History.*

> *"Apart from this, those who in the future, if it so happens, are similarly ill used at the hands of tyrants will not find this record altogether useless; for it is always comforting for those in distress to know that they are not the only ones on whom these blows have fallen. For these reasons, then, I shall proceed to recount all the wicked deeds committed by Belisarius first, and then I shall reveal all the wicked deeds committed by Justinian and Theodora."*[1]

We have so far examined two case studies that have demonstrated a strong link between pantomime dancing and metamorphosis tales – both by Latin speaking pagans and both occurring relatively early in pantomime's recorded history. In an attempt to show the longevity of the link that is at the core of this thesis, we will examine two from the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire – both from the Sixth Century CE and both by writers who were, notionally at least, Christian. The first of these is Procopius' *Anecdota* or *Secret History* and the second being Nonnus' remarkable, 48 book *Dionysiaca.*

In the case of the *Dionysiaca*, a work which after all is about the god of transformations, establishing a link between metamorphosis tales and the dance is relatively straight forward. In the case of Procopius, on the surface at least, it is far less so.

Procopius of Caesarea who, as Peter Sarris notes in the introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Secret History,*

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[1] Procopius, *The Secret History, Proemium.* G.A. Williamson and Peter Sarris (trans) Penguin Classics, 2007, 2.

> "is our primary source for the reign of the sixth-century Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Emperor Justinian I 527-65"[2]

wrote three major works, *The History of the Wars*[3], *The Buildings,*[4]and finally *The Secret History* - at 45,000 words the most sustained work of invective (*psogos*) known to us from the Ancient or Medieval periods. [5]

Although it would be to draw a very long bow indeed to describe *The Secret History* as being explicitly pantomimic it is a work that is laced with theatrical imagery that occurs nowhere else in Procopius' extant works. Moreover it is unequivocally a work of fiction. The most that can be said for episodes described within it that are based upon true events is that they have been greatly 'augmented' and in many cases completely fabricated. In creating a work of prose fiction he has not drawn upon models such as *The Golden Ass* or Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* which may well not have been known to him, but the one that we know that as an educated Greek-speaking Byzantine would have been a staple of his education – Athenian drama of the 5th century BCE. *The Secret History* is laced with monologues based upon the great speeches in Aeschylus, whom he also frequently cites, quotations from Aristophanes, which are used to create the sort of tragic/comic inversion we discussed in relation to Apuleius,[6] and a notorious and highly salacious description of Theodora performing as a mime in her youth. However it is when he comes to draw a fictional account of Justinian's metamorphosis into a daemon that he, consciously or not, falls back upon the only theatrical genre he knew that was capable of portraying it – the pantomime.

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[2] *ibid* , vii.

[3] Written deliberately in imitation of Thucydides and based upon his own observations and experiences as secretary to Belisarius in his campaigns against the Persians 527-31, the Vandals in North Africa 533-4, and the wars of reconquest in Italy 537-40.

[4] A rather over-blown panegyric crediting Justinian with virtually direct responsibility for all the ecclesiastical and military building in the Byzantine Empire of his time. (Although scholars tend to believe it was written before 558 because it makes no mention of the collapse of the dome of Hagia Sophia, given the way in which he describes Justinian over-ruling his architects and designing the supporting arch himself there is perhaps a malicious hint of his true feelings and of what was to come in the *Anecdota.*

[5] For obvious reasons it cannot have been published while Justinian lived. The first reference we have to it is in the tenth-century *Suda* which lists it among Procopius' unpublished works. It wasn't until a copy was discovered in the Vatican library in 1623 that it became generally available.

[6] Which he would have been able to find numerous Greek precedents for – notably Lucian.

Chapter IX looks at the evidence for pantomime's continuing presence in the Byzantine World. Nonnus notwithstanding, it is not so easy to demonstrate a continuing interest in metamorphosis tales – partly because from the fifth century onwards the Byzantine literary record tends to restrict itself to matters of religion, military, and court history, accounts of building works, and historiography, for which reason the period tends to have been neglected in works dealing with metamorphosis.[7]

For example, Richard Buxton in his highly readable account of Graeco-Roman metamorphosis tales, *Forms of Astonishment,* includes, as we have already mentioned, such Medieval examples from Western Europe as Gerald of Wales' 12th century search for the provenance of a priest's encounter with a werewolf and his were-wife, and his agonising over whether a being that is neither fully human or non-human can receive extreme unction, but apart from a passing reference to the tenth century Byzantine text *Geoponika* which ascribes the engendering of a white lily to the blood shed by Christ on Calvary,[8] he completely ignores the society in which the Ancient Greek (and in many respects Roman) traditions had their truest continuity.[9]Given that pantomime persisted as the dominant theatrical performance form in the Byzantine world for at least a hundred and fifty years after the establishment of Christianity as the officially endorsed religion of the Roman Empire, and in some form or other for another hundred until its final

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[7] It is often argued that the *Dionysiaca* is a highly anachronistic work not really reflective of beliefs and attitudes at the time it was written, something that will be addressed in the following chapter.

[8] In the final chapter of this work we will discuss the way in which Christianity countered pagan metamorphosis stories with its own 'superior' brand of metamorphosis – the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, the transubstantiation of the Eucharist, indeed the apotheosis of Christ Himself.

[9] One of the more unusual passages in the *Geoponika* – a work written in the middle of the tenth century, after six hundred years of Christianity as the state religion, occurs at 11.19 and suggests Christian authors were still making accommodations to pagan beliefs. It is all the more interesting for having appeared in a work not only sanctioned by the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, but commissioned by him.

> *Zeus fathered Herakles on Alkmene. He was a mortal, but Zeus wanted to give him a share of immortality, and so put him to Hera's breast while she was asleep. Full of milk the boy turned his mouth away from the teat, but the milk still flowed plentifully even when he was taken away. The milk that flowed into the sky created what is called 'the milky way'; what fell to earth and spread over the soil gave a colour like milk to the flower of the lily."*

Geoponika. Farm Work, 11.19. A. Dalby (trans) Prospect Books, Devon 2011.

proscription under three canons of the Council in Trullo in 692,[10]the current study cannot afford to do so. It behoves us to examine whether tales of metamorphosis continued to play a role in everyday life into the sixth and seventh centuries, or whether it was simply the case that pantomime was by now so firmly established as the theatrical entertainment of choice that the link between the two was no longer relevant or necessary.

The claim that pantomime 'persisted as the dominant theatrical performance form' clearly has to be justified, and this is no easy task. Until relatively recent times major writers on Byzantium have tended to ignore the question of the existence of any sort of theatre – profane theatre in particular – either downplaying its significance or denying its existence altogether.

In 1936 George La Piana in a thirty five page paper published in *Speculum*[11] under the all-embracing title *The Byzantine Theater* omitted an analysis of profane theatre altogether, seeming to see Byzantine Theatre as beginning sometime in the tenth century with the emergence of the Christian sponsored theatre, and rising to its peak in the eleventh or twelfth centuries with *The Christos Paschon.*

> "A long cento of verses from the Greek tragic poets and especially from Euripides, put together with undeniable skill in the form of a drama on the passion, death and resurrection of Christ."[12]

Although he himself does not draw the parallel, the implication appears to be that Byzantine Theatre emerged in roughly the same way and at approximately the same time as theatre re-emerged in Western Europe – Switzerland and England in particular. As William Tydeman says in his book *The Theatre in the Middle Ages:*

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[10] In the West, Cassiodorus' famous account of pantomime, with its implication of it as a continuing and still vibrant art form under the Goths, was penned as late as 507-12 CE. The consequences for theatrical activity on the Italian Peninsula of Belisarius' campaigns of reconquest are largely unknown.
[11]G. La Piana, "The Byzantine Theater." *Speculum*, Vol XI. No 2. April 1936,171-216.
[12] *ibid*, 176.

> "Suggestions that the originals of analogous dramas are not Western European, but stem from the Byzantine Empire in the East have been advanced for some decades."[13]

And:

> "The earliest unequivocal evidence for the performance of such a ceremony, is found in an English manuscript, *the Regularis Concordia* (c965-75) a code of laws drawn up by St. Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester from 963 -84, for the goverance of Benedictine monastic houses in England."[14]

It is difficult to believe La Piana would have been unaware of this. As a description of a specific type of theatre – one designed to help a largely illiterate congregation to a better understanding of biblical stories, and with the two geographic extremes of the Christian world acting, perhaps not in concert, but each with the knowledge of what the other was doing or had done, the theory makes a certain sense.

That,however, is as far as it goes. Where the parallel breaks down is when we consider that the English had no known theatrical tradition to draw upon, whereas the Byzantines were in lineal descent of both the riches of the Athenian Theatre and that of the Roman Republic. What La Piana and a surprising number of modern scholars either fail to recognise or refuse to acknowledge, was that the emergence of the Christian Theatre in the tenth century, far from being some sort of spontaneous rediscovery of their Athenian roots –

> "John of Damascus wrote a play 'Sussana'[15] which according to Eustathius was a 'Euripidean drama.'"[16]

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[13] Tydeman W; *The Theatre in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979, 35
[14] *Ibid*, 35
[15] This is now generally discounted. As early as 1897 Karl Krumbacher writing in *The History of Byzantine Literature. From Justinian to the end of the Eastern Roman Empire. 527-1453.* Beck, Munich 1897. had expressed his misgivings.

was simply a continuation of a process dating back to 5th century BCE Athens. La Piana was dismissive of anyone who argued for this idea of continuity, but was especially savage on K.N. Sathas[17] whose book *Historical Essay on the Theatre and Music of the Byzantines* published in Venice in 1879 he said:

> "was a mixture (in hopeless confusion) of disparate elements taken at random from the folklore and historical and literary sources, and forced together with an appearance of continuity. Above all, his interpretations of texts was often veritably fantastic, and hence his conclusions were entirely unreliable."[18]

In 1931 Venetia Cottas, although downplaying the breadth of Sathas' claims nonetheless argued in favour of a continuing tradition, looking to the hippodrome as fostering an ersatz or hybrid form of drama.

> *Le jeux de l'Hippodrome n'entrent qu'indirectment sans doubte, dans ce que nous appelons le theatre a Byzance.*[19]

A more recent believer in the theory of continuity, Klaus Neiiendam[20] has argued that in spite of the difficulties that theatre experienced at the hand of Justinian[21]profane theatre continued in the Imperial Hippodrome, in the

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> "As a homeopathic antidote for them, John of Damascus allegedly compose a now lost drama *Sussana,* which Eustathios calls Euripidean."

La Piana ignores the 'allegedly'. More modern writers tend not to discuss the possibility at all.

[17] Interesting enough Sathas was a Venetian. The organisers of the first Carnival of Venice in the 11th century were able to draw upon an existing tradition of street performers, mimes and what sounds suspiciously like pantomimes. Sathas himself may well have been drawing on local knowledge. Venice, beginning its existence as a client state of the Byzantine Empire, then transforming itself into its fiercest maritime competitor and instigator of the 1204 sack of Constantinople, occupied a unique position in East/West relations. If cultural cross-pollination was to happen between Italy and Constantinople, Venice is a likely point of intersection.

[18] La Piana, 'The Byzantine Theater,' 1936, 173.

[19]
> "Undoubtedly the games of the hippodrome indirectly led to what we call the Byzantine Theatre."

V. Cottas, *Le Theatre A Byzance.* (Paul Geuthner, Paris 1931) trans, Harding.

[20] K.Neiiendam *The Art of Acting in Antiquity.* Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen 1992, 125.

[21] Which famously led Cyril Mango to definitively state theatre did not exist in the Byzantine world from the 540s. (See C.Mango, 'Daily Life in Byzantium'. In *Jahrbuch der Oisterreichischen Byzantium,*Vienna ,1981, 350.

market places, and at feasts given by magnates, right up till the fall of the city to the Turks.[22]

More recent still is Walter Puchner, who points out that it is highly unlikely that a civilisation that lasted as long as Byzantium did,[23] especially one that prided itself as being the continuation of the Roman and Greek cultural traditions, could have done without some sort of organised theatre.

> "This thought becomes even more troublesome when we consider that modern drama started to develop in the Latin west from the ninth and tenth centuries onwards."[24]

In addressing the issue of why scholars as eminent as Cyril Mango have adamantly dismissed the existence of Byzantine theatre beyond the mid 6th century, he maintains:

> "Those who play down or even refuse to believe in the existence of Byzantine theatre are mostly – though not exclusively – Byzantinists. Among those who have accepted the reality of Byzantine drama the majority have come from a Greek tradition of philologists and cultural historians, but we also find scholars in several other disciplines."[25]

A major problem for scholars attempting to deal with the issue is the fact that Byzantine theatre as a whole, and not simply the pantomime, did not leave the literary record that its Greek and Roman predecessors did. Any argument that the lack of literary sources is prima facie evidence for the non-existence of almost anything in the Byzantine world is deeply flawed however. As Averil Cameron says in relation to Procopius:

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[22] Later in this chapter we will look at the argument that interpretations like these are based upon a misunderstanding of the word *theatron*. But interestingly enough when Pierre Gilles visited Constantinople in 1544 he described the existence of two theatres in the 14th Ward. As a man who would have by 1544 encountered theatres as theatres in the modern sense in Italy and France we can only assume that this is what he is describing. Given also that elsewhere he scrupulously describes the new uses that pre 1453 buildings had been put to, the fact that he describes them simply as 'theatres' suggests that they were, or had until recent times been, functioning as such.
See *Pierre Gilles Constantinople.* K. Byrd (trans) Italica Press, New York, 2008.
[23] Just over a thousand years from the sack of Rome till the fall of Constantinople in 1453.
[24] W. Puchner, 'Acting in the Byzantine Theatre,'. *Greek and Roman Actors* 2002, 321.
[25] *ibid*, 306.

> "Similarly, in Byzantine Africa, there had been secular learning displayed under Vandal rule and in the first days of the reconquest, but Corippus, the last African to write a secular poem in the classical manner, left to find a career in Constantinople. There seems to have been no attempt after this to promote circulation of secular literary works. All the energies of the imperial government went instead towards ecclesiastic matters, and it was here that literary production was stimulated."[26]

Anthony Kaldellis, also in reference to Procopius, indicates a further problem that I would suggest is especially relevant for students of performance history:

> "Procopius' modern readers are usually social, military or art historians who seem to have limited familiarity with the literary side of ancient historiography and almost no knowledge of philosophy."[27]

It is arguable that Kaldellis himself has approached Procopius from a particular literary viewpoint – that of a historian of political philosophy – and that unless one does approach Byzantine literature with a specific agenda, prepared to look beyond the text in a specialised way, much will remain hidden. For the purposes of this study that means that a historian whose field is not theatre will fail to find in the Byzantine texts the evidence of performers and performance that historians with other specialities would easily discern in Greek or Roman sources – as we see later in the chapter when we come to examine *The Secret History* – a text that is infused with theatrical imagery and techniques.

Thus, as literary descriptions of theatrical activity in the eastern empire are so lacking for the two and a half centuries prior to its 692 banning[28] it is to

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[26] Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985, 21.
[27] A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea, Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia , 2004, 5.
[28] A notable exception is Choricius of Gaza, whose *In Defence of the Mimes* was written sometime in the early sixth century C.E.

other sources we must look to support the claim that theatre in general and pantomime in particular, persisted in the Byzantine world in the way we have claimed. The first of these is the well-documented activity of the factions (primarily the Blues and the Greens), the second is the vehemence and frequency of the attacks on theatre by the fathers of the Christian Church, the third, as I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, is literary sources of a seemingly non-theatrical nature, such as the *Anecdota* and the *Dionysiaca.*

Other non-literary material identified by Louis Robert[29] as evidence of not only the continuance of pantomime in the Eastern empire, but of its very real power are inscriptions on *Steles* listing the rights granted to individual dancers over a large number of cities dating from the second to sixth centuries C.E. In Chapter VIII when we discuss the role that pantomime played in the preservation of Greek cultural identity in the Roman Empire and compare the evidence for the social status of the pantomimes with that of the rhetors of the Second Sophistic we find numbers of pantomimes who were 'adopted' as honorary citizens and even ambassadors of Eastern cities, revealing a story of prestige and even power that is simply not addressed in the literary record.

> "They emerge as individuals commanding extraordinary wealth and power, and as holders of municipal offices, priesthoods and much coveted honorary posts."[30]

One literary source we do have from the early sixth century is the letters written by the Roman senator Cassiodorus on behalf on his royal overlord Theodoric which we looked at briefly in Chapter III. These, written in the decade immediately before Justinian's withdrawal of funding from theatres in the East, indicate that in Italy both pantomime and the study of pagan literature upon which it was based were still thriving independently of what was happening in Constantinople. In *Variae IV 51* which was written in response to an appeal from the patrician and noted proponent of pagan culture Symmachus, for Theodoric to carry out much needed renovations to the Theatre of Pompey we have:

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[29]L. Robert, 'Pantomimen in griechischen Orient', Hermes 65, 1930, 106-22.
[30] Lada- Richards *Silent Eloquence,* 2006, 61.

> " *the Athenians were the first to raise the rustic beginning into an urban spectacle. To the place where they looked on, they gave the name of theatre, since the gathering throng, separated from the bystanders, could look on without hindrance*."

That the hippodrome and the arena spectacles had fallen out of favour in the West, at least among the elites, and that the behaviour of the factions was causing as many problems as in the East, can be garnered from:

> "*Racing is a spectacle that drives out dignified manners, it invites frivolous quarrels, it drains away honesty, and is a gushing spring of strife. Antiquity, indeed, held it to be sacred, but a quarrelsome posterity has made it a scandal."*

And:

> "*It would be a long task to describe all the other features of the Roman Circus, since they all seem to relate to separate reasons. However, this I declare to be altogether remarkable: the fact that here, more than at other shows, dignity is forgotten, and men's minds are carried away in frenzy. The Green chariot wins: a section of the people laments. The Blue leads, and, in their place, a part of the city is struck with grief. They hurl frantic insults and achieve nothing, they suffer nothing, but are gravely wounded and they engage in vain quarrels as if the state of their endangered country*[31] *were in question."*

That the mime had also fallen from favour in the West is attested by *Variae* IV 51.10.

> *The mime, too, which is now merely an object of scorn, was devised with so much care by Philisto,*[32] *that its*

[31] Given that this was written in the shadow of Belisarius' impending invasion this may have contained a literal as well as figurative meaning.
[32] If Cassiodorus is ascribing the origin of the mime to Philisto, born 6 C.E, he is wide of the mark by several centuries. It is unlikely that a man versed in classical literature, as

> *performances were set down in writing: a world boiling with consuming cares might thus be cooled by its humour*."

When we balance these comments with those, set down in the same sequence of letters, which lavish fulsome praise on the pantomime, we are left with the picture that in the early sixth century, just as Justinian was about to cut theatre funding in the East, it was still held in high regard in Ravenna and Rome. The question poses itself, that given our sources leading up to Trullo are overwhelmingly Byzantine, how sure can we be that the decline and apparent demise in the East was replicated in the West? Given the obsession with theatre in Magna Graecia is there not a possibility that it lingered in Italy? Indeed, how sure can we be that it disappeared completely in the East?

There seems to be no evidence of punitive measures being taken against theatre people who defied the canons of the Council in Trullo. What are we to conclude from this? That theatre people who are and were notorious defiers of authority meekly acquiesced and instantly abandoned their means of making a living, not only in the East, but throughout the parts of the Christian world not subject to the council? Given the traditional role of theatre, along with the arena and the hippodrome in maintaining a quiescent populace, is it not possible that some provincial governors, afraid of a political backlash turned a blind eye to its continuance? If, as it has often been argued, Justinian's 526 withdrawal of funding from the theatres had led to the art having died out anyway, why was it necessary 160 years later to issue the bans – something I suggest that would, given the time frame, make as much sense as a modern Western democracy feeling it necessary to reissue legislation banning slavery.

One of the principal differences between pantomime in the Latin West and the Greek-speaking East is the issue of female participation. In Chapter III we briefly examined the evidence to suggest that female pantomimes were

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Cassiodorus undoubtedly was, would not have read Livy and could make such a mistake, so the more likely interpretation of this passage would seem to be that the mimes of Philisto were considered to be of the highest standard. It also gives support to the idea that unlike the later Byzantine mimes which were known to be improvised from written scenarios (as were the *lazzi* of the Commedia) earlier Roman ones may have been fully scripted and occasionally by major poets. It further gives credence to the suggestion that the lines between the two genres were not as clearly drawn in the early empire as they would become subsequently.

known on the Roman stage, but there seems little doubt that they were a far more common feature of performances in the East.

Put simply, this meant pantomime was adding another dimension to its repertoire that was likely to put it on a collision course with the church in precisely the time and place[33] that the church had acquired the power to do something about it.

Once again demonstrating the parallels between pantomime and metamorphosis tales, a similar process of denunciation was being visited on the latter by Christian writers. We will examine this in more detail in Chapter IX when we discuss pantomime's ultimate demise, but for the moment, having seen in Chapter III Augustine's ambivalence towards the reality of the pantomime's mimetic abilities, it is worth reminding ourselves that he also vacillated in his attitude towards the reality of the pagan metamorphosis tales leading to his deciding to ascribe them to the work of daemons.

Approximately a hundred years earlier than Procopius we have this from him concerning his fellow (and thoroughly disliked by him) Carthaginian Apuleius.

> "*This is what Apuleius in the work bearing the title The Golden Ass, describes as his experience, that after taking a magic potion he became an ass, while retaining his human mind. <u>But this may be either fact or fiction.</u>*"[34] (Underlining mine.)

And from later in the same chapter:

> "*For that reason it seems to me that this phenomenon, which is generally talked about, and which has been recorded in literature, could have happened (assuming that it did happen) in the way I have suggested – I mean the habitual changing of*

[33] The deliberations of the Council in Trullo, for instance, were not enforceable in the West, which I would argue at least lends some credibility to the possibility that the theatrical activities Mango claims to have died out in the East may have persisted undocumented in the West – which, considering how little was documented in the West in the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth centuries is hardly surprising.
[34] Augustine; *City of God.* 18.18.

> *human beings into wolves by Arcadian gods (or rather demons) and the feat of Circe who*
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> *'By charms transformed the comrades of Ulysses.'*[35]

Before going on to examine *The Secret History,* I think it is worth looking at this from Aristotle's *Poetics* to remind ourselves that the lines between history and fiction were by no means as clear cut at the time Procopius was writing as they are considered to be nowadays.

> "*It is also evident from what has been said that it is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that between using verse or prose: Herodotus' work could be versified and would be just as much a kind of history in verse as in prose. No, the difference is this: that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur.*"[36]

And this from Eric Csapo:

> "The cognitive function of poetry in general requires the excision of unnecessary details of material reality: where history is concerned to represent particular truths, poetry is more serious and philosophical insofar as the poet attempts by stripping his models of all that is contingent and idiosyncratic to represent a universal truth."[37]

By placing his account in a highly theatricalised 'history' Procopius is following linkages that can be traced back to Thucydides. By linking Justinian's transformation to his daemonic nature he is echoing Augustine. But

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[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Aristotle; *Poetics,* Chapter 9, S. Halliwell,(trans), Loeb, 1995, 58-59.
[37] E. Csapo, 'Kallipodes on the floor-sweepings: the limits of realism in classical acting and performance styles,' *Greek and Roman Actors,* 2002, 134.

he is also drawing upon his fellow Byzantines John Chrysostom and Basil of Caesaria.[38]

In Chrysostom's *In Matthaeum Hom. 48* (PG 58.491) the Bishop says:

> *"For it was not for this purpose that God gave us feet, but so that we might walk in an ordered manner, not so that we could disfigure our bodies, not so that we could prance like camels, but so that we might dance with angels."*

The *Commentary on Isaiah* goes further, making the link between dance and daemons unequivocal.[39]

> *"Demons who bring about all sorts of sins within us, are said to dance because dance is a constantly changing movement of the limbs. And just as the dancers come on stage with different masks (or characters) at different times, so demons, using us like masks, sometimes dance the angry man. Sometimes the man full of desire and obsessed with the joys of the flesh, sometimes the liar. And this is what happens to us as we receive within ourselves the multifarious workings of demons and bend our hearts and limbs in accordance with their will."*[40]

Thus we find another important linkage between dance and metamorphosis being established. For the Christian Fathers of the fifth and sixth centuries both were evidence of daemonic inspiration, if not possession.

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[38] Or possibly Ps-Basil of Caesaria. P.J. Fenwick maintains that the *Commentary on Isaiah,* cited, is in fact by an unknown contemporary of Basil's.

[39] That ancient sources, particularly those in the East and from the fourth century onwards , perceived a link between daemons and dancing is acknowledged by Ruth Webb in the very act of naming her seminal work on pantomime *Demons and Dancers.* She herself says:

> "Of all the aspects of theatre, the one most frequently associated with the demonic is the dance. One might expect this because of the dancer's embodiment of the pagan gods but this does not seem to be the case, on the surface at least. Instead the connection between dance and the demonic lies at a deeper level than the subject of representation, as is suggested by John Chrysostom's succinct phrase 'where there is dance there is the devil."

Webb, *Demons and Dancers,* 2008, 164.

[40] Basil of Caesaria, *Commentary on Isaiah.* In Steven A. McKinnon and Thomas C. Oden (eds) *Isaiah 1-39, Ancient Commentary On Scripture: Old Testament Series,* Intervarsity Press, 2004

With this in mind the question of whether or not the use of pantomime imagery I maintain Procopius employs to describe Justinian's daemonic metamorphosis (in a work in which he has already used pantomime's despised twin, mime, in his account of Theodora) is a conscious decision on his part becomes far easier to answer in the affirmative.

I have said that *The Secret History* is laced with theatrical imagery and clearly this needs to be justified. The Loeb edition of *The Secret History* incorporates the text of the *Proemium*, in which Procopius lays out his reasons for writing the work, into Chapter I. The Penguin edition, more sensibly, I feel, separates it out and thus the book proper, begins:

> *"Belisarius was married to a woman of whom I had something to say in the preceding books. Her father and grandfather were charioteers who had displayed their skills in both Byzantium and Thessalonica; her mother was one of the theatre tarts. She herself in her early years had lived a profligate kind of life and had thrown off all moral restraint. She had been continuously in the company of her father's magic-mongering friends and had learnt the arts essential to her trade*."[41]

Averil Cameron[42] notes that Procopius is our only source of biographical detail on Antonina. This is important. Procopius does indeed have 'something to say' of Antonina in his series on the wars, but apart from an account of her part in the downfall of John the Cappadocian[43] that shows her to be capable of intrigue when necessary to ingratiate herself with the empress, there is no indication of her applying the magic arts she was allegedly a mistress of, and specifically no reference to her as having come from a theatrical family. In accepting Procopius' account of her provenance[44] scholars seem to have missed the point that: Antonina was sixteen years older than Theodora, that Justin is said to have specifically changed the law banning

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[41] Procopius, *The Secret History*, G.A Williamson and P. Sarris (trans), Penguin Classics, London ,1966 and 2007, 3.
[42] Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 1985.
[43] Procopius: *The Wars.* Book I. XXV.
[44] Averil Cameron does raise the possibility that her mother may have been a stripper.

people of the theatre marrying into the aristocracy so that his nephew could marry Theodora, and that Belisarius and Antonina's daughter was barely ten years younger than Theodora. Belisarius and Antonina, therefore, married at a time when marriage between the aristocracy and people of the theatre was illegal. Even if we accept that Belisarius himself may not have been an aristocrat by birth, it would seem unlikely he would have risen to a position of such authority with so unfortunate a wife.

It seems, therefore, that Antonina's theatrical background is a total fabrication on the part of Procopius – in part, possibly, to create a pairing in perfidy with the younger, more successful Theodora, and in part to align the description of Justinian's daemonic nature with the dark, magic-ridden world of the theatre. Whatever the reason, the effect is to tell us in the very first sentence that this is a book about how the two most powerful men in Byzantium were manipulated by two whores who learned their tricks in the theatre.

In examining Procopius' approach in *The Secret History* it is necessary to look at the concept of anecdotal or metaphoric truth and how it worked in the literature of the period. According to Anthony Kaldellis

> "Anecdotal 'truth' functions on a different level than factual reliability. Some authors explicitly warn that some of their stories are not strictly true. It is precisely here, in this paradox, where the historian is least constrained by and least interested in factual reliability, that we must seek the key to his intentions and truth."[45]

In support of this we might cite Plutarch's famous introduction to his *Theseus* in which he acknowledges the 'invented' nature of much of the material in his *Lives.*

> "*Let us hope that Fable may, in what shall follow so submit to the purifying processes of Reason as to take the character of exact history*."

[45] A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea,* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia , 2004, 69.

I have written previously[46] with specific reference to Thucydides, upon whom Procopius is said to have modelled his style and approach, that the habit of quoting verbatim and at length speeches that the writer was not witness to, and in many cases conversations where there are *no* recorded witnesses, and are thus fabricated, is a technique of the dramatist not the historian and in the case of Thucydides was almost certainly adopted from drama.

Of the way in which Procopius uses these speeches in *The Wars* as a way of getting to a more universal truth than can be achieved by sticking strictly to the facts, Kaldellis says:

> "Consider, for example, speech-and-battle scenes, a staple of both classical and classicising historiography. Jacqueline de Romilly has carefully dissected the structure of each episode in Thucydides, demonstrating that speeches delivered before battles debate the same points in perfect correspondence and use the same language, only from opposite points of view. The ensuing battle is then narrated in such a way as to reveal which of the two commanders had a better grasp of the situation prior to the engagement. It is only through the speeches that the reader can understand the battle."[47]

When we turn to *The Secret History* the first and most comprehensive example of an obviously invented dialogue occurs at 2. 7-11. Beginning with the words:

> "*When Belisarius learned the truth, he was beside himself with fury and prostrated himself at Photius' feet....*"

there follows a 249 word verbatim account of what the general was alleged to have said to his adopted son in what was a private conversation. At no point does Procopius offer the unlikely explanation that the general asked him to remain in the room as witness to what would have been a deeply humiliating and personal discussion of Antonina's adultery, nor does he suggest, for

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[46] R. Harding, 'The Historian as Dramatist: The Use of Speeches in Thucydides,' *Classicum,* Vol XXXVII.1, April 201, 8-14.
[47] Kaldellis , *Procopius of Caesarea,* 2004, 29. See also J. De Romilly, *Histoire et rasion chez Thucydide,* Paris, 1956.

instance, that while in an adjoining room he was able in inadvertently, or even deliberately, overhear. He offers no explanation at all for his perfect knowledge of this conversation.[48] Like his hero Thucydides nine hundred and fifty years earlier, Procopius is dramatising history. I would argue, however, that unlike Thucydides who was trying to reconstruct a sense of what he felt *must* have been said, Procopius creates entirely fictitious dialogues to fit a tale that is almost entirely invented as a metaphor for his times – and it is here in *The Secret History* that the line between history and dramatized fiction is crossed for once and for all.

If we return to the *Proemium,* coming almost immediately before his description of Antonina's alleged theatrical background, the extreme melodrama of Procopius' claim that:

> "*concerned as it is with Justinian and Theodora and the lives they lived, my teeth chatter and I find myself recoiling as far as possible from the task*."[49]

sets the tone for a highly dramatic work.

A few sentences later he adds:

> *"I am afraid I shall be regarded as a mere teller of legends or <u>listed among</u> <u>the tragic poets</u>. One thing, however, gives me confidence to shoulder my heavy task without flinching: my account has <u>no lack of</u> <u>witnesses to vouch</u> <u>for the truth</u>."*
> (underlining mine)

There are two points to be made here. The first is Procopius' own acknowledgement that his book will read like a work of tragic drama. The second is that in *The Secret History,* unlike *The Wars* and *The Buildings* he makes repeated reference to the numbers of people alleged to have witnessed the least credible of the events he claims to be describing. On the one hand, it is perfectly logical that he would try to imbue such things with this sort of

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[48] Strictly speaking a monologue – for he returns to reported speech for Photius' reply:
"He said he would do all in his power…"

[49] *The Secret History* i.iv.
Dewing's translation in the Loeb edition is slightly different:
"*I find myself stammering and shrinking as far from it as possible."*

credibility, however dubious, but when we remember Peter Brook's criteria for what constitutes theatre,[50] it becomes possible to argue that by claiming that these things were 'witnessed' he is establishing the presence of an audience and describing a performance.

It is generally considered that the time at which Procopius was writing *The Secret History* marked the beginning of the end for organised theatre in the east. Given the way in which Procopius quotes from such classical sources as Aristophanes and Aeschylus, but uses mime and pantomime to describe the depravity of Theodora and the daemonic nature of Justinian, we almost inevitably gain a sense of what was expressed by Julian 160 years earlier when he lamented his inability to restore the classic forms of theatre and showed his contempt for what had succeeded them.[51]

Speaking of the challenges being presented theatre by Justinian's reforms, Averil Cameron says:

> 'It is tempting to suppose that a regime conscious of an aim of 'restoration' was exercising a kind of patronage of the arts and that this artistic classicism is a main characteristic of the period."[52]

while acknowledging two pages later that:

> "Zonaras, writing at the end of the Byzantine period, did not see Justinian as a patron of culture. Quite the opposite: he ascribed the closure of schools, or rather the denial of funds payable to teachers, to the emperor's need for church building. His word for the resulting situation when the schools of

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[50] See Chapter V

[51] "If it were possible to banish all this indecency from the theatre
so that these could be given back to Dionysio in a purified state,
I would have done everything possible to do this, but now I see
that is neither possible, nor if it were possible, would it be advantageous,
I have renounced this particular ambition."

Julian, Letter 89, in *Ouevres Completes.* J.Beldez, Paris 1924, 172-73.

[52] Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century,* 1985,19.

> the empire thus declined was – tellingly – 'ignorance' (*agrokia).*"[53]

This denial of funds, as we have seen previously, was precisely the tactic employed by Justinian with regard to theatre when financing, in particular, Belisarius' Italian campaign. It is probable that Zonaras, writing at a time when profane theatre in Byzantium had long been in abeyance, and therefore used to living in a society without it, and quite rightly concentrating on the long term effects of the cuts to school funding, did not appreciate the significance of the limiting of theatre's accessibility in the sixth century. It is highly likely, therefore, that the two were conflated both in effect and purpose and that as much money as was saved by funding cuts to schools went to Belisarius' twenty years of campaigning as the building of churches, and the cuts to theatre funding, generally ascribed to the need to finance the military campaigns, were also a result of the desire to build churches. However, given that Justinian's cuts to theatre funding occurred in 524 and that in 528 we find in the *Chronicon Paschale*[54] a record of his undertaking the restoration of the theatre at *Sykae* at no small expense, there is a distinct possibility that the prorogation was nowhere near as long-lived or as devastating as has generally been assumed.

It is interesting, for instance, to find John Lydus writing, approximately 35 years after the supposed closure of the theatres:

> *"Things belonging to a community, not to individuals are, for instance, those in cities – theatres, stadia and the like and anything else which is the common property of the city."*[55]

Arguments have been advanced cautioning against seeing the existence of a building described as a theatre as de facto evidence for the continuance of drama in the Byzantine period. As Przemyslaw Marciniak, writing in *Byzantine Theatron – a place for Performance* put it:

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[53] *ibid,* 22.
[54] *Chron. Pasch. The Prosopography.* Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (trans) Liverpool University Press, 1989, 618-619.
[55] John Lydus, *On the Division of Things 6.* In A.C. Brady (trans) *Ioannes Lydus on Powers.*, The American Philosophical Society, 1983

> "At times, the term *theatron* was misinterpreted by scholars seeking evidence of theatre *sensu stricto* in Byzantium. Cyril Mango gives an example of Albert Vogt's study on Byzantine Theatre, where the French Scholar interpreted Photios' phrase ἡ στάσις αὐτου δραματουργειται δυνοσίω θέατρω, as proof of the existence of theatre at the beginning of the ninth century. Rather then (sic) this the phrase should be translated: 'their discord became a spectacle for the people', meaning that the discord happened *before the eyes* of the crowd, rather than it being a staged event."[56]

and from Walter Puchner we have:

> "*Theatron* generally refers to the hippodrome and any other form of public spectacle and its audience. In the church fathers down to the fifth century *theatron* refers to a stage building, the amphitheatre, the stadium, the hippodrome, dramatic art of performance (*poio theatron* can also mean 'tell a story') *theatron* can also mean 'public display', 'spectacle', 'audience', 'gathering' (including a church gathering) 'martyrdom' or 'visible world."[57]

Just as today theatre can mean 'operating theatre', 'theatre of war' and so on.

Puchner continues:

> "In the chronology of Psellos the word 'theatre' always refers to the hippodrome."[58]

Given that any form of dramatic performance that may have survived Trullo is likely to have been marginalised street theatre, this sort of etymological change concerning the buildings they previously occupied by the

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[56] P.Marciniak, 'Byzantine Theatron – a place for performance,' In. Michaela Grunbart ed: *Theatron. Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Age,*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2007, 279.
[57] Puchner,'Acting in the Byzantine Theatre,' *Greek and Roman Actors,* 2002, 308.
[58] *ibid,* 308

ninth century – and the eleventh in the case of Psellos – is perfectly logical ,[59] but given that Lydus writing in approximately 560, separates theatre from stadia, it seems reasonable to assume that he is referring to theatres still functioning as sites for dramatic performances and that the age of Justinian was not quite the cultural dark hole it is often characterised as. That said, if we are to take *The Secret History* as a true indicator of Procopius' attitudes, he certainly saw it as such. As Kaldellis puts it:

> "Procopius' cultural views were firmly rooted in the classics. He prized above all 'liberal education' and 'liberal character' and watched with sadness as both were destroyed by a corrupt regime[60] whose values did not stem from classical culture."[61]

Both Kaldellis and Cameron have noted the fact that Justinian never speaks in *The Secret History* - Cameron suggesting that he is little more than a caricature. To this we can add the fact that just as the speeches we have previously discussed are thrown onto the page without any corroborating evidence, Procopius repeatedly makes assertions about Justinian's 'true' motivations and intentions without offering anything to support his claims.[62] Whatever the truth of Justinian's character, the man who is presented to us in *The Secret History* is a construct of Procopius' hostility towards him. What I find interesting about this is the frequency with which both the major commentators on Procopius find it necessary to fall back on theatre terminology and imagery in their discussion of this particular work without either seeming to fully appreciate the significance of their doing so. I believe Cameron is quite correct in describing Justinian as he emerges from the pages of Procopius' work as a caricature. But what were the models Procopius had for the use of caricature if not drama? This is not in any way to say Justinian resembles the *senex* or the cunning servant from comedy who were the most

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[59] Psellos also wrote a brief pseudo-Aristotlean analysis of the facets of classical drama, which makes it strange that he would misuse a term like theatre. (See *Reading Michael Psellos,* Charles Barber and David Jenkins (eds) ,Brill, 2006.

[60] Given the almost syndromic tendency for cultured individuals to regard the age in which they live as culturally retrograde one wonders how seriously we should take Procopius' attitude to the world of Justinian and Theodora however.

[61] Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 2004, 4.

[62] Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century,* 1985, 229.

common archetypes of the literary tradition, or the *calvus stupidus* of the aliterary mime, simply that the precedents available to him for the concept of demonstrating a universal truth, whether comic or tragic, by use of a character who is an agglomeration of characteristics rather than the embodiment of a fully-fleshed human being, came from drama. Kaldellis comes closest to acknowledging what I believe to be the true nature of *The Secret History* when he says:

> "In a sense, *The Secret History* is a kind of stage on which Procopius caricatures Justinian and Theodora and exposes their crimes while portraying them as grotesque creatures. Theodora appears literally on stage in the work. Procopius graphically recreates the performances of her youth, effectively transforming us into her audience. (9.11-26) Comic language here is very dense. Even when she is empress, he says that her behaviour lacked seriousness '*as though she was on stage in the theatre*.' (15.24) This statement follows his account of the way she parodied the liturgy to mock the old patrician."[63]

It is worth looking at the incident where the old patrician is mistreated by the palace eunuchs in a little more detail.

> "*But Theodora, learning of his purpose in advance, instructed the palace eunuchs that when the patrician came before her, they should stand around him in a circle and should listen to her attentively as she spoke, suggesting to them what words they should say in the manner of a 'response*'".[64]

And:

> "*So she spoke. And the women replied in sing-song, "O Patrician So-and-So" (naming him) and the chorus*

[63] Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 2004, 149.
[64] *The Secret History 15.27*

> *of eunuchs, catching up the strain, said responsively*
> *"It's a large hernia you have!"* [65]

Significantly, Procopius goes so far as to describe Theodora's assembly of eunuchs as a 'chorus', for the whole scene with the eunuchs grouped in a circle around the old man is surely modelled on the orchestra space and the chorus of Greek tragedy.

Perhaps even more interesting is Kaldellis' claim[66] that the procedure he followed in examining *The Secret History* is based upon one laid out by M.C. Nussbaum in a work I have cited earlier.

> "We reflect on an incident... by burrowing down into the depths of the particular, finding images and connections that will permit us to see it more truly, describe it more richly; by combining the burrowing with a horizontal drawing of connections so that every horizontal link contributes to the depth of our view of the particulars and every new depth creates new horizontal links."[67]

In the context of this paper it is significant that Kaldellis in describing his approach to unravelling the semiotic encoding of *The Secret History* draws upon a book on Greek tragedy for an account of the process. What, I would argue, both Kaldellis and Nussbaum are describing is that which a modern student of theatre literature would call subtext. Kaldellis spends more than two hundred pages brilliantly tracing the hidden meanings in *The Wars, The Buildings,* and *The Secret History*. Hidden meanings (subtext) are by means limited to drama, but with its unique combination of the analytical and the visceral they are a staple of it. I have suggested previously that a historian tells his or her audience what has happened and presents them with an analysis of the reasons, while a dramatist, even when dealing with material based upon historical events guides his or her audience to 'discover' what happened to formulate their own conclusions about causes, and that the likelihood of the

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[65] *The Secret History 15.35*
[66] Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea,* 2004, 175.
[67] M.C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness, Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy,* Cambridge University Press, 1986, 69.

discovery being effected and the level to which it is made depends upon the intellectual equipment and knowledge of the individual audience member.

Kaldellis also points out that the only works of ancient literature that dealt specifically with the role of women in society were comic plays, and that only those of Aristophanes have survived to us. As we have previously noted Aristophanes is the most frequently quoted source in *The Secret History* and a number of quotes are used more than once. We should not be deceived by this in any way into thinking that Procopius was writing a comedy. Although there is serio/comic inversion of the sort used by Apuleius and Lucian, it is by no means as light-hearted and the effect is anything but comedic. That dedicated admirer of Greek theatre, Bertolt Brecht, was well aware that there is a thin, shadowy demarcation line between tragedy and comedy.

> "There is truth in the principle that comedy is less likely than tragedy to omit to take human suffering seriously enough."[68]

As Kaldellis also notes:

> "Aristophanic language deprives even crimes of their gravity though not their seriousness."[69]

This was especially true of the political satires of Old Comedy. Beacham has argued that the comedies of Aristophanes were not favoured, or perhaps even permitted in Rome because of their political subversiveness – something that was regarded as healthy in the Athenian Republic, less favoured in its Roman counterpart [70]and not permitted at all under the Empire. We must always remember also that Aristophanes having once been prosecuted for defaming the *polis* in the *Dionysia* restricted himself henceforth to the 'anything goes' forum of the *Lenaia* and after the fall of Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War and the subsequent restriction on political

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[68] *Brecht on Theatre,* J. Willet (trans), Methuen Drama, London 1966, 70.
[69] Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea,* 2004, 149.
[70] For an argument that Roman playwrights had more political freedom than is generally believed, especially once theatrical form known as *fabula praetexta* emerged see T.P. Wiseman , 'Politics and the People', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. University of London,* Vol 60 No 1, June 2017.

freedom his work took on an entirely different cast, becoming much more like the innocuous stuff of New Comedy.

The point, surely, of Procopius' use of Aristophanes beyond its efficacy as a literary link between the depredations of Justinian and Theodora and those being pilloried by the Athenian playwright, is the revelation of a yearning for a time when criticism of ruler – what Kaldellis describes as *Kaiserkritik* – was permitted.

Peter Sarris[71] has identified phrases in *The Secret History* borrowed from Aristophanes' *The Clouds, The Peace, The Acharnians,* and *The Knights,* as well as from Aeschylus' *The Supplicants.* I would suggest, however, that these 'borrowings' extend far further than the use of an occasional quote.

Let us compare, for instance, this description of Justin in *The Secret History*:

> *"A doddering old man, totally illiterate – in popular parlance, he didn't know his ABC – an unheard of thing among the Romans."*[72]

with this account from *The Knights* of the sausage seller who will become the political power in Athens.

> *"But look here – I 'ardly went to school. I got no learning – why I can hardly read and write."*

Given the frequency with which Procopius cites Aristophanes and given the frequency with which Aristophanes addresses many of his most scurrilous accusations of maladministration at Cleon who was seated in the audience for the performances of his plays in Athens, and given also the parallels between not only the specific charges Procopius levels at Justinian and those Aristophanes charged Cleon with, but the language with which the

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[71] P. Sarris, *Introduction. Procopius, The Secret History,* Penguin Classics, London, 2007, vii-xx.
[72] *The Secret History,* 26.

charges are laid, the argument for Procopius having taken the inspiration for *The Secret history* directly from drama becomes all the stronger.

The famous account of Theodora putting some starch into her vacillating husband during the *Nika* riots is found only in Procopius (all subsequent iterations of the 'event' use Procopius as their source) and is a piece of pure theatre that has more in common with the doings of Clytemnestra, Medea or Antigone than it does any real life figure.

As Averil Cameron puts it:

> "We only have Procopius to thank for the story. On closer inspection the speech itself is part of a rhetorical set-piece, as its introduction betrays: "Many speeches were made putting the opposite point of view." Procopius only gives us this one, ascribing it to Theodora, possibly for dramatic and rhetorical effect..."[73]

We can compare this to Procopius' description of Belisarius after his cold reception at the palace.

> *"In the grips of this terror he went upstairs to his room and sat down on his bed alone. There was no honourable thought in his head; he was not conscious that he had once been a man. The sweat ran down his face unceasingly, his head swam, his whole body trembled in an agony of despair, tormented as he was by slavish fears and anxieties utterly unworthy of a man."*[74]

Procopius fully concedes that Belisarius was 'alone' but he professes to know that he was sweating and trembling and even to know what was thinking, and in fact what he was not thinking! This is the work of a novelist or a dramatist, not an historian.

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[73]Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, 1985, 69.
[74] *The Secret History*, 17.

With these points in mind I wish to examine probably the most famous (or notorious) description of metamorphosis in the Byzantine period:

> *"And they say that Justinian's mother stated to some of her intimates that he was not the son of her husband Sabbatius nor of any man. For when she was about to conceive him, a demon visited her... And some of those who were present with the Emperor, at very late hours of the night presumably, and held conference with him, obviously in the Palace, men whose souls were pure, seemed to see a phantom spirit unfamiliar to them in place of him... and the head of Justinian would disappear suddenly ... And another person said that he stood beside him when he sat and suddenly saw that his face had become featureless flesh."*[75]

If we are to push a specific claim for pantomime, rather than the more generalised 'drama' as driving the shape of *The Secret History* it would be that, as frequently observed in this paper, pantomime had been the only performance genre for tragedy since the time of Augustus – five hundred years by the time Procopius was writing – and therefore he is unlikely to feel the need to draw attention to the point. Moreover classic tragedy was for the most part centred upon two main characters – the protagonist and the antagonist – Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Pentheus and Dionysus, Medea and Jason etc. *The Secret History,* however is centred upon four main characters – chronologically, though not in order of importance, Antonina, Belisarius, Theodora and Justinian – in fact five if we include Chosroes the Persian Emperor.

At this point it is worth revisiting Lucian:

> *"In that connection I should like to tell you something that was said by another barbarian. Noticing that the dancer had five masks ready – the drama had that number of acts – since he saw but the one dancer, he*

[75]*ibid*, 52.

> *enquired who were to dance the other roles and when he learned that the dancer himself was to act and dance them all, he said: "I did not realise, my friend, that though you have only this one body, you have many souls."*[76]

Writing about the Barcelona *Alcestis,* arguably the only extant pantomime libretto, Edith Hall says:

> "But the feature that is too often overlooked is also the most obvious one. The text consists of five 'monodramas' in succession, offering the expression of emotions and the imitation of the actions of Admetus, Apollo, Admetus' father, Admetus' mother and Alcestis.... In the pantomime about the first generation of the accursed royal family of Argos described by Lucian, the dancer takes on four roles: Atreus, Thyestes, Aegisthus and Aerope. *(On Dancing* 67*)* Perhaps four roles was the minimum expected by a great dancer: an epigram by Crinagoras says that a story was shaped for the pantomime dancer Bathyllus so that it offered 'four roles or more' (*terrarsi diaplasthema prosopois/muthon kai touton... epi pleison."*[77]

Hall's reference to 'mondramas' is useful in the context of *The Secret History* because not only do we have the four of five characters necessary for pantomime, but Procopius' work is constructed around the twinning of personalities and the opposing of twinned personalities: Justinian and Chosroes, Justinian and Belisarius, Justinian and Theodora, Theodora and Antonia, Antonia and Belisarius – each of these twinnings creates a discrete monodrama with protagonist and antagonist, although with Procopius' jaundiced eye guiding us it is not always possible to tell which is regarded as which.

Let us return to Procopius' description of Justinian's metamorphosis that began this section:

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[76] *Dance* 66.
[77] Hall, 'Is the 'Barcelona Alcestis' a Latin Pantomime Libretto?' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 265.

> *"And the head of Justinian would disappear suddenly..."*

And:

> *"Another person said that he stood beside him when he sat and suddenly saw that his face had become featureless flesh."*

As with Apuleius' juxtaposition of the dancing Venuses in *The Golden Ass*, the question must be 'what does he intend us to take from this?' The obvious (all too obvious, I would argue) explanation is that in sixth-century Byzantium there was no real consensus as to what a daemon was supposed to look like,[78] and Procopius may have felt it would have strained the already limited credibility of his account to have described one, but as Anthony Kaldellis has so cogently argued, the obvious interpretation of anything in *The Secret History* is rarely the 'right' one. Given too that Procopius offers no explanation as to why 'the king of the demons' would risk exposing his true nature by transforming himself in public view there is, I suggest, another explanation for someone removing their head or transforming their face into 'featureless flesh' in public. It is, of course, an actor on the classic stage donning or changing a mask – and the only ones described as doing so in front of the audience (as opposed to tragic and comic actors who made use of the *skene* to effect their transformations) were pantomime dancers. The 'featureless flesh' could equally refer to the actor whose own identity is neutralised beneath the mask of the character, who is in this case the emperor - which fits with Procopius' claim that under Justinian 'the state seemed like the game of 'King' played by children'[79] – or more subtly, Justinian is himself the actor donning one of the featureless pantomime masks John Jory [80]has identified as adorning the propylon frieze of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias to play at being emperor.

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[78] For an accounting of ideas in the ancient world concerning the possibly of actually seeing a daemon see, Gergory A. Smith, 'How Thin is a Demon?' *Journal of Early Christian Studies,* Vol 16, Number 4, Winter 2008, 479-512.
[79] *The Secret History 14.4*
[80] J. Jory, 'The Masks of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,' *Greek and Roman Actors,* 2002, 238-253.

Is Procopius consciously evoking pantomime imagery in his description of Justinian's transformation? I believe he is. We have seen that both metamorphosis and dancing were attributed to daemonic inspiration by the time at which Procopius was writing. We have seen that *The Secret History* is work that abounds in imagery taken from the theatre. It makes sense that he should use the mime – the genre that had become associated with depictions of female adultery[81]- for his account of Theodora. It makes perfect sense that he would use dramatic monologues modelled on Aeschylus in his account of the fall of a great general because of the machinations of an evil woman.[82] He could not use the tragic model in his account of Justinian however for although, as he clearly states at numerous points throughout the work, Procopius believed that his rule had been a tragedy for the Roman people, tragedy, as Aristotle had famously said was about the 'fall of a great man' and he could not dignify Justinian with the implication of greatness. So it makes perfect sense that he should borrow imagery from the genre that had succeeded tragedy without inheriting its gravitas.

One final observation. It was mentioned earlier that scholars have long been perplexed by the fact that in a work that is peppered by speeches, monologues and invented conversations Justinian, the principal player, *never* speaks. Not one word is recorded as having come from the emperor's mouth – and there is only one form of ancient theatre where the principal performer does not speak, relying instead at all times on their 'silent eloquence.'

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[81] So much so that Choricius in his famous defense of the mime felt obliged to point out:

> *"But my good sir, when you watch adultery, then you also see the magistrates court; the husband of the woman caught in flagranti makes an accusation, the man who rashly committed adultery is tried with his lover and the judge threatens them both with punishment."*

Choricius, *Oration* 9 *(on Behalf of the Mimes)* In *Rhetorical Exercises from late Antiquity, a Translation of Choricius of Gaza's preliminary talks and declamations.* R.J. Perella (ed), Cambridge University Press, 2009, 29-30.

[82] The parallels with Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* immediately come to mind.

Chapter VII

'An overcrowded tapestry'[1] – Nonnus and the *Dionysiaca.*

> *"Bring me the fennel, rattle the cymbals, ye Muses!*
> *Put in my hand the wand of Dionysos whom I sing:*
> *but bring me a partner for the dance in the neighbouring*
> *island of Pharos, Proteus of many turns, that he may appear*
> *in all his diversity of shapes, since I twang my harp to a*
> *diversity of songs."* [2]

In the late antique period there occurred, mostly centred upon Egypt and the cities of Alexandria and Panopolis in particular, a flowering of Hellenistic poetry which the great Nonnian scholar Francis Vian[3], among others once referred to as 'the school of Nonnus.' Subsequently Vian, along with Alan Cameron[4] and more recently Glen Bowersock[5] have tended to reject this title, with its implications of community or commonality of purpose, preferring to speak of stylistic and thematic similarities[6] of which Nonnus was simply the author of the longest and most influential work that has survived to us.[7] Nor was Nonnus the originator of the resurgence of Hellenistic interest in metamorphosis tales between the third and sixth centuries of the Common Era.

As Neil Hopkinson notes:

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[1] H.J. Rose, *Mythological Introduction. Nonnus Dionysiaca.*,Loeb, 1940, pxii.
[2] *Dionysiaca,* 1.1.
[3] See, in particular: *Nonnos de Panopolis. Les Dionysiaques. Tome 1 Chants I*-II, Bude, Paris, 1976.
[4] Cameron, 'Wandering Poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt', *Historia* 14, 1965, 470 -509, initially described, if not a 'school' a movement at least. But from the 1970s onwards (e.g. *Claudian Poetry and propaganda at the court of Honorius,* Oxford , 1970, he began to distance himself from the idea.
[5] See, for instance, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity,* University of Michigan Press, 1996.
[6] For an accounting of possible influences of Nonnus upon Dioscorus see J-L Fournet *Hellénisme dans L'Égypte du vi siècle. La bibliothèque et l'oeure de Discore d'Aphrodíte.,* Cairo IFAO, 1999, II, 678-679 .
[7] It is worth emphasizing 'that has survived to us' for the 60 book Ἡρῴικαι Θεγαμίαι of Pisander of Laranda, now lost to us, which Neil Hopkinson so aptly parallels with Mr. Casaubon's efforts in *Middlemarch,* undertook to record *all* the tales of Greek mythology and by all accounts dwarfed even Nonnus' massive poem.

> "Scholars are divided over the question of whether Nonnus alludes to Latin poets and in particular to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid."[8]

I has already been demonstrated in Chapter III there arestrong parallels in phrasing between Nonnus and his Latin near-contemporary Cassiodorus. It seems more likely that Cassiodorus' remit as secretary and adviser to the Gothic rulers Theoderic, Athalaric, Amalasuintha, Theodahad and Wittigis[9] makes it more likely that he, the non-specialist, needing to be able to write on behalf of his royal masters on almost any subject that touched the administration, had borrowed from Nonnus (if indeed the parallels are anything more than coincidence) rather than the other way around,[10] and this should be seen as prima facie evidence Nonnus was aware of Ovid or had read Latin poetry. It does, however, suggest that Graeco/Roman literary cross pollination at the time may have been more common than is generally believed.

It has been maintained from the beginning of this work that interest in tales involving metamorphosis was an essentially Greek phenomenon and that Ovid was thus an aberration adapting a Greek tradition for a Roman audience partly as a novelty and partly as a metaphor for what had happened to Rome with Augustus' assumption of the imperial power, and as a portent of the likely fate of the empire. We have come to associate metamorphosis with Ovid's Latin hexameters partly because of the power of his writing but also because the many Greek texts on the theme have been mostly lost to us.

They almost certainly would have been available to Nonnus however.[11] In particular we can be reasonably comfortable in assuming he had access to the third century father and son combination Nestor and Pisander of Laranda

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[8] N. Hopkinson, *Introduction*, in N.Hopkinson, (ed) *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus*, Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume No. 17, 1994), 3.

[9] Cassiodorus' Talleyrand-like ability to remain so useful to so many, often bitterly-opposed rulers, is one of the most remarkable stories of post-imperial Italy.

[10] By the fifth century C.E. evidence suggests that Latin-speaking intellectuals who could speak and read Greek would have been more common than their Greek-speaking counterparts who would not have felt it necessary or even profitable to master Latin in the same way, with the administration of the empire now firmly centred upon Greek-speaking Constantinople.

[11] See: A Hollis, 'Nonnus and Hellenistic Poetry', *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus,* 1994, 43-62, for word and phrase echoes in Nonnus of earlier Hellenistic poets, to gain some idea of the possible depth of his own reading (and borrowing).

and their almost immediate contemporary Antonius Liberalis.[12] The *Μεταμορφώσεις* of Nestor may have been the immediate inspiration for a number of the transformation tales in the *Dionysiaca* – in particular his strange and highly extended account of the Actaeon/Artemis story. This and the remarkable *Ἡρῴικαι Θεγαμίαι* of Pisander, along with Nonnus' own work, clearly show that interest in mythology and metamorphosis tales in particular persisted in the Greek-speaking world well into the late antique period. That these tales were seized upon by Greek-speakers trying to validate their own cultural heritage in a world dominated by Rome can be inferred from this increasingly important role Dionysus came to play in the process.[13]

The cult of Dionysus grew rapidly after the restrictions placed upon it by Augustus, because of its associations with Antony, faded away. It is often argued that its greatest appeal to those who identified themselves as Greek[14] lay in its assimilation to Alexander the Great through the parallels with Dionysus' mythological conquests of the Persians and the Indians. In an empire where military prowess was valued above all, Alexander was someone the Hellenistic world could hold up to rival the triumphs of Julius, Pompey, Augustus or Scipio.

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[12] Despite Liberalis' *Metamorphoses* being one of the few works of this nature still available to us, his dating is less than secure. It is generally considered that he wrote in the Antonine Period which would place him in the second century, but some scholars have suggested a dating as late as 300 C.E.

[13] Nonnus' own immediate inspiration to pursue the Dionysian theme may have been the lost *Bassarica* of Dionysus. But he was only one of a number of Hellenistic writers dealing with the topic. Another lost 3rd century work with the same title by Soterichus may well have been one of his starting points. Stylistically Nonnus has often been linked to Callimachus and Apollonius, while the way he describes the assembly of Dionysus' expedition to India in almost direct parody of Homer's account of the marshalling of the Greeks for the Trojan War clearly owes inspiration to Homer himself, but the decision to 'rework' Homer may have gained its impetus from the *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smyrna. (Once again assuming Nonnus had no Latin and no knowledge of Virgil.)

[14] And increasingly from the 3rd Century BCE those who identified themselves as Greek included many who had not been born in Mainland Greece, many indeed who had never even visited Greece. Being Greek came for many to be a state of mind – the adoption of a value system, the language, and a way of thinking. While this was generally a phenomenon of individuals (Syrians were perhaps the most common, but we also have cases of Egyptians and even Gauls who made the claim) it could also be writ large as in the cases of the cities in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE who claimed a highly specious provenance in attempting to gain membership of the Hellenic League. (See; R. Preston, 'Roman Questions, Greek Answers, Plutarch and the Construction of Identity.' In Goldhill (ed) *Being greek Under Rome*, 2001,86-119 and T. Whitmarsh, 'Greece is the Word – exile and identity in the Second Sophistic,' *ibid* , 269-305.

That this was not seen by Greek-speakers, following the Gothic incursions into Italy and the subsequent diminution of Roman power, as leading to a belief that Greece might in some way reassert itself politically can be deduced from the way in which the Dionysus myth was also assimilated to the civilizing role of Rome. In other words, as Hopkinson and Bowersock have independently pointed out,[15] the Dionysus myth became another expression of the way in which those who identified themselves as Greeks clung to a notion of the empire as a partnership in which, in the simplest terms, the Romans provided the brawn and the Greeks the brain.

One problem for modern readers of Nonnus has been the cruelty and randomness of the acts of metamorphosis in the *Dionysiaca.* We saw that with Ovid the metamorphoses that could be characterized as punitive nearly always involved punishments that matched the crime, at least in a poetic or symbolic sense[16] - Minerva turning the boastful weaver Arachne into a spider[17] and so forth – but in Nonnus the transformations are often simply cruel and the behaviour of his ostensible hero barbaric.

> "The half-erotic, half-sports joust with Pallene (48.106-182) and over all the traps into which he fools Aura (8.564-612) echoing and worsening Nicaea's fall are just as amoral. They mirror a coward and lustful future god…"[18]

As Chuvin indicates the brutal and highly gratuitous rape of Aura, one of the handmaidens of Artemis, is especially problematic given that it occurs in Book 48 and therefore presents one of our last images of the god the work has supposedly been written to celebrate. Even though the act itself can partly be explained by Dionysus having been wounded by one of Eros' arrows – at the behest of Nemesis, herself acting on instructions from Artemis – when recovered from the effects he shows no remorse at having bound and raped the

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[15] See for instance G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity,* Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 1996 and N. Hopkinson *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

[16] Though not always proportionate.

[17] As Elaine Fantham wryly notes:

> "To this reader at least the destruction of Arachne's masterpiece seems more terrible than the ensuing metamorphosis."

Fantham, *Ovid's Metamorphosis,* 2004, 55.

[18] P. Chuvin, 'The Poet of Dionysus*,' The Brill Companion to Nonnus,* 2016, 121.

girl, happily moving on to take his place on Olympos, leaving the pregnant girl[19] to make a failed attempt at abortion and eventually give birth to twins, one of whom she eats in a fit of madness. The remaining son, Iacchos, is only saved by Artemis – shocked at how far the chain of events she herself started to punish Aura for mocking her breasts has gone – whisking him away to safety. Dionysus' indifference to what he has done to her is emphasized by the cruelty of her metamorphosis.

Aura began the chain of events leading to her doom by mocking Artemis for the femininity of her breasts as opposed to her own more androgyne shape, more befitting, she suggests, a huntress. So after she drowns herself:

> *The son of Kronos turned her into a fountain:*
> *her breasts were a spring of water pouring from*
> *a mountain source.*"[20]

She will therefore spend eternity with the breasts she despises for their connotations of a woman's role as source of sustenance, a constant stream of life-sustaining water![21]

Comparing the way in which such things happen in Nonnus with the way in which Ovid deals with similar material only underscores the point made in Chapter I about the danger of beginning an exploration of metamorphosis tales with Ovid or thinking of his 'take' on them as being the definitive version. Metamorphosis tales, like pantomime dancing, were Greek in origin. They were, as I have continually stressed throughout this work, a metaphor for the puzzling and often brutal processes of change in the physical world. That a Roman who, whatever the difficulties of his personal circumstances might have been, was writing at the height of the relative calm of the Pax Augusta, should have seen metamorphosis as following balanced

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[19] "A god's embrace', after all 'is never fruitless.'
[20] *Dionysiaca,* 8.610.
[21] The last book of Nonnus' immense work is in this way concerned with Dionysus' amorous adventures before his welcome into Olympos – none of which reflect well upon him. It does almost feel, no matter how unsatisfactory we may find the explanation personally, as though Nonnus, the author of the *Paraphrase of St. John,* feels the need to appease his fellow Christians for his previous 47 books in praise of a pagan god by pointing out at the last moment, just how unworthy the gods of their ancestors were.

and logical processes is understandable. That a Greek-speaking Egyptian, writing shortly after Rome and Carthage had been sacked by barbarian invaders, and at a time that the Eastern Mediterranean was devastated by famine and plague, should have a different perspective is equally understandable.

Nonnus himself has been strangely neglected by pantomime scholars.[22] Ismene Lada-Richards mentions him three times in passing in her book *Silent Eloquence,* he merits three casual sentences in Hall and Wyles' otherwise comprehensive *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime* and only one in Ruth Webb's *Demons and Dancers*! [23]Yet, by my count there are 218 references to dance in the *Dionysiaca* (see Appendix to this chapter)[24] including, as we shall discuss, the moment when pantomime and metamorphosis unequivocally coalesce in Book XIX when Seilenos dances so effectively that he irrevocably metamorphoses into the river his dance is designed to represent! If further proof is required of the central premise of this thesis that pantomime dancing and metamorphosis were mutually dependent and that the relationship was still seen to be in existence in the late antique period, this is surely it.[25]

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[22] I should probably qualify this to say 'Scholars writing in English.' It is perhaps indicative of the way French-speaking scholars have championed the study of Nonnus that in Montiglio's seminal 1999 article 'Paroles Dansées en Silence: L'Action Signifiante de la Pantomime et le Moi du Danseur,' *Phoenix,*Vol 53, No 3/4 , 263-280, references to Nonnus are third only to Lucian and Libanius in his demonstration of the way in which the interaction between the dancer and his or her audience most probably worked.

[23] In her Subsequent article 'L'Organisation des Spectacles dans Le Monde Romain' ('The Nature and Representation of Competition in Pantomime and Mime'), *Foundation Hardt Vandoeuvres* – Genève 2011, Webb does discuss the 'dance-off' in Book 19 as possible evidence of the way in which audiences of the fifth century had become habituated to the idea of pantomime's role in agonistic competitions.

[24] As no systematic evaluation of the dance motif in Nonnus has yet been undertaken that I have been able to discover, I have undertaken as a justification of my contention that dancing, and specifically mimetic or pantomime dancing, is a virtual leitmotif of the *Dionysiaca,* to catalogue the incidences of words referring specifically to dance. I have undertaken a similar breakdown for references to metamorphosis and hands being used to convey meaning, but will discuss the most relevant of these in the body of the chapter rather than set them out in table form.

[25] Even in the 2016 *Brill Companion to Nonnus* Ronald F. Newbold is the only contributor who makes more than a passing comment on dance.

> "One might expect a poem that *appears* to be an encomium of the God Dionysus and is composed in an ornate and exuberant style, to lean heavily towards celebration of the physical, natural world, a world of richly meaningful shapes and exteriors, a world of endless renewal and cycles that invites living forms to dance in step with it….. Dance is everywhere, even in battle and the womb."

In addition there are in the 48 books of Nonnus' magnum opus a further 93 references to 'revels', 'carousing' or phrases such as 'twirling feet' that can reasonably be construed as denoting dance. For the most part the dance references can be categorised as declension of the noun χορός (the dance) conjugations of the verbs ὀρχεόμαι (dance) and χορεύω, translated by W.H.D Rouse as 'dance a round (as opposed to dance around). In the last third of the work there is a marked increase in the use of more fanciful adjectival forms such as χοροπλεκύς (dance weaving), νυκτιχόρευτον (night dancing) and χοποτερπέος (dance delighting) which may suggest Nonnus was aware of the importance of dance as a motif of his work and sought ways of being less repetitive.

There are 14 references in the *Dionysiaca* to hands being used to convey meaning and there are 76 incidences of metamorphosis – less than Ovid's 250 admittedly, but this is not a work in which they are the primary concern and each therefore has an individual significance.

We have alluded to a so-called 'School of Nonnus' among Hellenistic poets of the late antique period, characterised by certain stylistic similarities. The defining feature of this style is ποικιλία, which can broadly be defined as complexity and variety of style and word usage. Two comments on this as regards Nonnus, the one from Neil Hopkinson and the other from the leading contemporary Nonnian scholar Laura Migulez Cavero are worth examining. Hopkinson suggests ποικιλία results in abrupt transitions between individual episodes, continuous changes of mood and wild variations in pace. He points out that Nonnus' extraordinarily prolific use of compound adjectives makes the work vividly pictorial, but at the same time makes the images explicit and unique.[26] He also argues importantly that the speeches are in the most case monologues rather than conversations.

Ronald F. Newbold, 'The Pyschology in the Dionysiaca*,' Brill Companion to Nonnus,* 2016, 196.
Yet even Newbold, despite acknowledging that 'Dance is everywhere' goes no further in attempting to analyse the significance of this.
[26] As opposed to Ovid who, as I discussed earlier in this work uses the same natural location again and again.

> "and resemble the rest of the narrative in their pursuit of immediate effect at the expense of consistency or characterisation. Nonnus' style is unmistakable in its luxuriating vivacity; it is as if the narrator himself is a raging or proselytising Bacchant."[27]

Cavero on the other hand tends to see it as a facet of Nonnus' ego with little purpose other than to display his erudition. She justifies this contention by pointing to just how often his flights of lexical fancy have:

> "no counterpoint in the thread of the story."

She then backs away from this position, saying that it is not as simple as imagining him taking delight in his own learning. She draws on examples from the time of Oppian to suggest that lexical complexity was often used to bring a sort of unity to passages that have no thematic coherence. The downside of this, she suggests, is that the reader is given a sense of circling back again and again over the same material.

> "until it becomes irritating or, in extreme cases, it produces dizziness."[28]

Arguably the convolutions of Nonnus' style have been a strong contributor to the neglect he has been subject to in modern times. It is a style that does not fit comfortably with modern tastes. It speaks volumes that H.J. Rose the man chosen to write the introductory notes to the Loeb Edition of the *Dionysiaca* in 1940, should dismiss it thusly:

> "It is little to be wondered at that he gives us neither living figures nor even a gallery of pleasing portraits or statues, by rather a faded and overcrowded tapestry, moving a little now and then as the breath of his sickly and unwholesome fancy stirs it."[29]

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[27] Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry in the Imperial Period,* 1996, 124.
[28] L.M. Cavero, *Poems in Context. Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid,* Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2008, 121.
[29] H.J. Rose, 'Mythological Introduction,' *Nonnus. Dionysiaca,* Loeb, 1940, xii.

It is not only in modern times that ποικιλία should be controversial however. In Chapter VIII we shall see how Dionysius of Halicarnassus would lambast fellow sophists who used affected and ornate turns of phrases as 'Asiatic', while Plato at *Republic* 399-404 rejects its use in no uncertain terms.

> *"Thus we have made a purgation of music, and now we will make a purgation of meters. These should be like the harmonies, simple and suitable to the occasion."*

Whereas Aristotle, perhaps simply to stress the independence of his own school, is much more accommodating:

> *"To do the same thing often is pleasant. And to change is also pleasant. Change means an approach to nature, whereas invariable repetition of anything causes the excessive prolongation of a settled condition. Therefore says the poet, change in all things is sweet."*[30]

In Chapter III in relation to Karin Schlapbach's claim that pantomime and myth became facets of each other, we discussed the phenomenon whereby the style or technique of an artistic genre becomes a metaphor for the content and this is particularly true in the case of the *Dionysiaca.* Nonnus himself draws attention to what he is doing in the excerpt from the proem cited at the beginning of the chapter, virtually placing himself along with the Muses and with Proteus thrown in for good measure, in the *Thiasos* – Dionysus' Bacchant band of followers.[31] So, as we see, just as in Lucian and Libanius, Proteus is summoned up, this time as partner in Nonnus' labours.[32] He links the shape-shifting Proteus firmly to the dance – in effect establishing his 48 book poem as one gigantic dance party. The extension of this is that the exuberance, the wildly rambunctious nature of the work – the ποικιλία that annoyed Rose so much – is an attempt to embody the mercurial, ever-changing Dionysus himself.

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[30] *Aristotle, Rhetoric,* 1371a. W.D. Ross (trans) Oxford University Press, 1931.
[31] Hopkinson,*Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period.* 1996, 124. and Hopkinson, 'Introduction', *Studies in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus,* 1994, 9.
[32] And of course in Lucian and Libanius the link is specifically to pantomime.

By evoking the shape-changing Proteus as his partner in what is, I maintain metaphorically at least, a gigantic dance, it is clear – as the Seilenos episode demonstrates – it is the mimetic efforts of the pantomime dancer that Nonnus has in mind – and there are numerous elements of his work that support this interpretation. Speeches are a case in point. As Hopkinson points out,[33] they are nearly always monologues rather than conversations. Hopkinson feels that this was a feature of rhetorical education at this time.[34] However monologues of this sort performed by a single dancer are exactly the way we generally imagine pantomime libretti to have worked, for just as the pantomime breaks the great stories of Greek mythology down into scenes – the highlights, as it were, of the story, or often, if we accept the titles given to us by Lucian, the plays themselves that the tragedians fashioned from these stories – so too Nonnus' approach is highly episodic.[35]

In Chapter VIII we will discuss the increasing importance of *ekphrasis* from the time of the Second Sophistic. Cavero[36] argues that poetry in the late antique period in the same way becomes an examination of scenes, not simply the images one might see casually looking out of a window or on a stroll through an art gallery – for *ekphrasis* is an analytical process requiring the viewer to detach themselves emotionally and interpret[37] the object viewed – but much more like the scenes portrayed on a stage.[38] Just as we have discussed when Bernhard Zimmermann argued that Seneca's dramatic works were influenced by pantomime to the extent that they resembled nothing dramatically that had preceded them, so too poetry, which in Nonnus' time was accessed by far more people through dramatic declamation than through

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[33] *bid,*124.

[34] Cavero, for instance, talks of a 'third sophistic' in which poetry rather than oratory was used to epideictic effect.

[35]
> "Nonnus usually works in episodes made up of tableaux…
> motifs, scenes and episodes are brought together to produce
> different patterns comparable to baroque contrappunto."

Cavero, *Poems in Context,* 2008, 293.

[36] *ibid,* 287.

[37] And indeed, as we will see when we look at Philostratus the Elder and Younger, to 'reconstruct' the work in a new medium. (Prose or Poetry)

[38] And although there is some evidence as Blake Leyerle has demonstrated in her discussion of John Chrysostom (See B. Leyerle *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives)* that theatre-goers in the east may have on occasion been treated to an 'edited highlights' approach to the classics on their local stages, the over-whelming evidence for an episodic approach in the theatre points to pantomime.

private reading, would inevitably have been influenced by the dominant entertainment genre of his time.

We have seen that with the demise of tragedy, writing for the theatre became something purely for the visual realm and not something that could any longer be read at leisure by an individual or among groups of friends in private homes. Pantomime was something that appealed almost exclusively to the visual. When we examine the ekphrastic nature of late antique poetry it becomes possible to argue that a similar process had taken place. The characters, particularly in the *Dionysiaca,* become just that – characters, not defined by word or thought, but appearance. As Cavero puts it:

> "Their performance becomes ritualised and each movement is marked, giving the impression of dramatic immobility. It is not that the scene is frozen, but the attention is focussed on the climax."[39]

This exactly parallels the way in which Plutarch and Libanius tell us that it is the pose assumed at the end of the pantomime's dance that becomes the locus of the audience's attention[40]- a climactic moment up to which all things have led.[41]

Another clue to the way in which we are supposed to 'view' the *Dionysiaca* as if we were an audience at a stage production lies in the way in which not only the gods, but the minor characters are described for us. As Cavero points out[42] it is not simply the *appearance* of Dionysus, or Zeus or Athena that Nonnus describes, but their *attributes.* In other words, character is revealed by *appearance* rather than through the Aristotelian paradigm of *action.*

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[39]Cavero, *Poems in Context,* 2008, 287.

[40] And which, as we have seen, (Lada-Richards, 'Dancing Trees,' 2016.) is a particular feature of Ovid's aborifications.

[41] In other words, with pantomime there is no resolution. It is no wonder that pantomime came to be seen by the authorities as dangerous, it is no wonder that pantomime performances led to riots, if each performance ended at a point of heightened emotion without the pressure-releasing 'resolve' of tragedy. The effect must have been similar to that strived for by the Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who wanted his audiences to leave the theatre in a state of agitation, still debating the issues – for which he was executed by the Communist authorities.

[42] L.M. Cavero 'The Appearance of the Gods in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus,' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies,* 2009, 558.

For example our first description of Dionysus at VII 100-104 concentrates not only on his attributes but those of other minor deities.

> *"So the god shall wind a tendril of garden vines laid upon the bright ivy around his locks for his garland... having a serpent-coronet as a sign of a new godhead. He shall have equal honour with the gods, and among men he shall be Dionysos of the vine, as Hermes is called Goldenrod, Ares Brazen, Apollo Farshooter."*[43]

The attributes of the gods are described and the accoutrements symbolically associated with these attributes – which are precisely the props used by the pantomime dancers as a shortcut to audience identification.[44] It could be argued that what Nonnus describes is not the gods themselves, but a collection of pantomime actors playing them – or indeed, given the pantomimes' ability to rapidly transform themselves from one character to another, a single pantomime.

If this is true of Hermes, Ares, and Apollo it is even more so of Dionysus as he appears in the poem. The description we have of him at 14.II.230-237 sounds more like a standard description of a pantomime than any other figure of the antique period.

> *"Dancing to battle he came, holding no shield, no furious lance, no sword on shoulder, no helmet on his untrimmed locks or metal to cover his inviolated head. He only tied his loose tresses with serpent knots, a grim garland for his head: instead of fine-wrought greaves, from ankle to thigh he wore purple buskins on his silvery feet."*

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[43] This use of attributes as names of the gods is more common than the actual names. Aphrodite, for instance (below) is 'the seafoamborn.'

[44] Cavero also draws our attention to the theatricality of these descriptions.

"These common images create a background for the literary stage." Cavero, 'The Appearance of the Gods in the Dionysiaca of Nonnus,' 2009, 570.

The 'untrimmed locks' is especially telling. That they kept their hair long was one of the standard identifying marks of a pantomime. [45] As Lada-Richards notes:

> "The popularity of the metamorphic tales on the pantomime stage combined with the pivotal role played by hair in the system of conventions under-pinning the sub-category of tree-metamorphosis may well be one of the choreographic reasons why long hair was a trademark of the professional *pantomimi*."[46]

The long hair was just one aspect of the wider issue of effeminacy. In a world where manliness[47] was prized above everything, attacks on the pantomimes' lack of this quality occurred almost from the moment of their arrival on the Roman stage.[48] But they would be a particular feature of Christian responses to the art form.[49] Even in Cassiodorus' famous letter in praise of pantomime dancers we see the suggestion of androgyny at least.[50] Androgyny had long been a feature of both iconographic and literary representation of Dionysus.[51] However Nonnus takes this characteristic of the god to new extremes. In Book XVII, early in the Indian War, for instance, Orontes challenges Dionysus thus:

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[45] One the features that raised the constant contempt of their opponents.

[46] Lada-Richards, 'Dancing Trees,' 2016, 142.

[47] Literally *vir*ility.

[48] For example:

> *"They behave in a manner very similar to some hermaphrodite or eunuch, but if he were to abstain from blaming either his body's disability or fate but would claim instead that he acquired such nature through providence."*

Aelius Aristides *Oration* 34.48

[49]

> *"I have often seen and been amazed to see, and the amazement has ended in contempt, to think he is one thing internally, but outwardly he counterfeits what he is not – giving himself excessive airs of daintiness and indulging in all sorts of effeminacy, sometimes darting his eyes about, sometimes throwing his hands hither and thither, and raving with his face smeared with mud; sometimes personating Aphrodite, sometimes Apollo."*

Tatian's Address to the Greek,. Chapter 22, J.E. Ryland (trans), Kessinger Library Reprints.

> *"The same body portrays Hercules and Venus, it displays a woman in a man."*

Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51.

[51] One of the earliest and most famous of the literary representations being the cross-dressing efforts of Dionysus and Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

> *"You there, you with the soft skin of a woman!*
> *Leave all those Indians and fight a duel with one,*
> *Orontes. Simple soul! How he waves those long flowing*
> *locks round and round! A simple soul is this charming*
> *champion of the Bassarids! Yes, the women do just the*
> *same – pretty looks are the shafts of their quiver."*[52]

In Book XX Lycurgos makes the same fatal miscalculation based upon Dionysus' feminine appearance.[53]

> *"But the yellow shoes of unwarlike Bacchos, and his*
> *woman's dress of purple, and the woman's girdle that*
> *goes around his loins, these I will keep for your*
> *sister-consort*[54] *the seafoamborn."*

Discussing Ovid, we noted that rhyming effects are rare in antique poetry. It was suggested that Ovid used them in sections that were especially suitable for pantomime realisation as a means of conveying rhythm and movement enabling the listener to visualise the scene exactly as if he or she were watching a pantomime's enactment of it.[55] Curiously enough two of the four uses – and certainly the two most striking – of rhyming effects Hopkinson[56] identifies in Nonnus occur in the section of the *Dionysiaca* I would argue to be most suitable for direct pantomimic realisation, both on account of audience identification and length - the seventy line description of the fate of the hunter Actaeon and the strange, two hundred line flashback where the ghost of the dead hunter visits his father in a dream and tells him precisely what we have already seen.

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[52] *Dionysiaca* 17.187.

[53] A miscalculation that would be repeated by a number of pantomime's critics when we consider as Ruth Webb notes there was an instance of a pantomime strong enough (and manly enough) to fight as a gladiator and especially when we consider, as Libanius was at pains to point out, how rigorous and physically demanding the training of a pantomime was.

[54] Aphrodite, here again named for her attributes.

[55] A good semi-modern example of the way a poet could use rhythm to convey movement that every English-speaking child of a certain age was introduced to very early in their school life is Robert Browning's *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix:*

> *"I sprang to the stirrup and Joris and he:*
> *I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three."*

[56] Hopkinson, *Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period*, 1996, 131.

Thus at V. 416-417 we have not only end rhyme, but repetition to convey rhythm and movement.

> ἔγρεο καὶ γίγωσκε νόθην ἄγνωστον ὀπωπήν
> ἔγρεο καὶ πήχυνε φίλης ἐλάφοιο κεραίην,[57]

Similarly at V. 427-428 we find:

> νῖα, πάτερ γίωσκε, τὸν οὐκ ἐσάωσεν Ἀπόλλων·
> νῖα, πάτερ, στενάχιξε, τὸν οὐκ ἐφύλαξε Κιθαιρών. [58]

Hopkinson argues that Nonnus uses these effects to produce:

> "Noisy Bacchic hexameters reflecting the divine ecstacy."[59]

I would agree, were these effects being used during the examples of Bacchic frenzy that accompany the Indian War,[60] or even his account of Pentheus' fatal encounter with his cousin the god. But they do not. I believe Hopkinson is correct in suggesting the effect is used to mimic a dance rhythm, but I believe the inspiration comes from pantomime.

There are two other examples of metamorphosis I want to look at in detail at the end of this chapter, but there is one further observation to make before we leave the Actaeon section of Book V. Having appraised his father of his fate, the shade makes a very specific request concerning the shape of his tomb:

> *"And ask a skilful artist to carve my changing dappled shape from neck to feet, but let him make only my face of human form, that all may recognise my shape as false."*[61]

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57 *"Wake and recognize my unknown changeling looks;*
wake, and embrace the horn of the stag you loved."

58 "*Know your son, my father, whom Apollo did not save!*
Mourn your son, my father, whom Cithairon did not protect."

59 Hopkinson,*Greek Poetry of the Imperial Period*, 1994, 131.

60 And given that one way or another the war occupies 33 of the 48 books of the *Dionysiaca* there were plenty of opportunities for him to have used rhyming effects in this way.

61 *Dionysiaca* 5.526

We find a piece of statuary almost identical to the one Actaeon requests of his father being described in another work we have examined in this thesis.

> *"In the middle of the marble foliage the image of Actaeon could be seen, both in stone and in the spring's reflection, leaning towards the goddess with an inquisitive stare, in the very act of turning into a stag."*[62]

Whether or not this further echo of an earlier Latin work turning up in Nonnus is anything more than coincidence is in a sense irrelevant. What is clearly evident is a common fascination with 'inbetween states' – the ephemeral moments of transition, the ability of the pantomimes to embody, I have argued from the start, was a vital element of their appeal.

The artist sought to hold the moment frozen in time, the pantomime to embody it again and again, but each were opposite sides of the same coin, for as Plutarch put it:

> *"When the dancers, having arranged their overall appearance in the shape of Apollo or Pan or a bacchant retain these attitudes like figures in a painting."*[63]

We have previously observed the ability of the pantomimes to make themselves clearly understood through use of a system of gestures commonly understood in the Graeco-Roman world.[64]As I indicated earlier I have identified 14 incidences in the *Dionysiaca* where hands are used in precisely this manner. Seven of these refer specifically to dance.

The first occurs in Book V as the Muses celebrate the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia.

> *"Polymnia nursing mother of the dance waved her arms, and sketched in the air an image of a soundless voice,*

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[62] Apulieus, *The Golden Ass* II.VI.
[63] Plutarch, *Moralia 747c.*
[64] See Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome,* 1999.

> *speaking with hands, and moving eyes in a graphic picture of silence full of meaning."*[65]

At 7.20 Nonnus plays pantomime perhaps his highest compliment, albeit in a slightly back-handed manner by saying that before Dionysus' discovery of wine dance was only pleasing to spectators,

> *"When the circling dancer moved in twists and turns with a tumult of footsteps, having only nods for words, hand for mouth, fingers for voice."*

in other words when the dancer employed the standard features of the pantomime's trade. The corollary of this, perhaps not truly intended by Nonnus, is that the pantomime did not need to ply his audience with wine to entertain them!

It is in Book 19 that this coupling of dancing and 'speaking hands' becomes a veritable crescendo, climaxing in the metamorphosis of Seilenos. It begins with Dionysus in camp with his followers during the Indian campaign proposing a series of artistic competitions – perhaps modelled on the debate between Ajax and Odysseus for possession of Achilles' armour and weapons that we find in the *Iliad* – and laying down the ground rules for the dance section. While he does not specifically name what he is proposing as pantomime, what he describes makes it clear that this is precisely what it is.

> *"My turning-point is the dance, the skipping feet, the beckoning hand, the pirouette, the nods and becks and glances of the expressive face, speaking silence, which twirls the signalling fingers, and the dancer's whole countenance."*[66]

Maron is the first to take up the challenge.

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[65]*Dionysiaca*, 5.105.
Cf: Lucian, *Dance* 36.

> *"Before all else, however, it behoves her (Dance) to enjoy the favour of Mnemosyne and her daughter Polymnia."*

[66]*Dionysiaca*, 19.150.

> *"Maron danced with winding step, passing the changes right over left, and figuring a silent eloquence of hand inaudible. He moved his eyes about as a picture of the story, he wove a rhythm full of meaning with gestures full of art."*[67]

And:

> *"He did not what an old man of Titan blood might have done, show the Titan race in his speaking picture....*
> *... no he left all the confusion of that ancient stuff-*
> *he depicted with wordless art the cupbearer of Cronides."*[68]

Although Dionysus himself may have omitted to specify that it is a pantomime we are watching, Nonnus himself removes any equivocality.

> *"So Maron sketched his designs in pantomime gestures, lifting his rhythmic feet with the motions of an artist as he trod the winding measures of his unresting dance."*[69]

All of which leads Seilenos to begin his ill-fated attempt to compete with him.

> *"Now Seilenos danced; his hands without speech traced the cues of his art in their intricate mazes. This is what he acted with gesturing hands."*[70]

And:

> *"So horned Seilenos wove his web with neat handed skill, and his right hand ceased to move."*

We have a number of further examples of hand gestures being used in place of words in the *Dionysiaca.* At the beginning of Book IV for instance Electra, having been informed by Hermes that it is the desire of Zeus that her ward Harmonia should be married to Cadmus, summons the girl to her side.

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[67] *ibid*, 19.198.
[68] *ibid*, 19.209.
[69] *ibid*, 19.219.
[70] *ibid*, 19.225.

> *"and curving her fingers with a significant movement towards Ares' unwedded daughter, she beckoned Harmonia by this clever imitation of speech."*[71]

What is significant here is not that Electra should crook her fingers[72] to summon the girl, which even we in the modern world for whom the elaborate gestural language of antiquity is a lost art, would nonetheless find commonplace, but Nonnus' description of it as 'a clever imitation of speech.' There are few among us today, with the exception of those trained in sign language, for whom gesture, except of the most basic kind, could ever be thought of as standing in place of speech.

A much more elaborate example occurs in Book XXII where a complex message is conveyed through the use of gesture. Dionysus' forces are in camp at mealtime and an Indian army have hidden themselves in a nearby forest and are on the point of attacking when a Hamadryad nymph, having spotted them, perches in a tree above the camp of the Bacchants and rather than alert the Indians that they have been spotted by calling out:

> *"She indicated the enemy's plot by eloquent signs."*[73]

The Indians, too, according to Nonnus were capable of this sort of gestural eloquence for in Book XXXVI when Deriades, the Indian Prince and the greatest of their warriors is smothered by the tendrils of the vine Dionysus causes to sprout around him,

> *"Deriades struggling with his throat entangled in the vine twigs... held out a dumb hand, with eloquent silence uttered all his troubles."*[74]

Before leaving this theme of the way in which events in the *Dionysiaca* are described can be thought of as having drawn their inspiration from pantomime we need to return briefly to the issue of the mask worn by the

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[71] *ibid*, 4.7.
[72] Not, albeit, as W.D.Rouse the translator of the Loeb edition notes, by bending a single index finger upwards in the modern Western fashion, but by curling all the fingers on the hand downwards as was standard in the Eastern Empire at this time.
[73] *Dionysiaca*, 22.89.
[74] *ibid*, 36.379.

pantomimes which scholars such as John Jory[75] have stressed can be readily identified as such because of their closed mouths. In Chapter VI it was suggested that the featureless face of the daemonic Justinian described by Procopius in the *Secret History* had its closest parallel in the real world with the mask of the pantomime. With that in mind this from Book XXVII is worth noting.

> *"The satyrs also fought; they were whitened with mystic chalk, and on their cheeks hung the terrifying false mask of a sham voiceless face."*[76]

The link that we have seen established by Plutarch, Lucian and Libanius between pantomime and the work of painters and sculptors is one that Nonnus makes between metamorphosis and art in his very first reference to the transformations that will be performed by his eponymous hero.

> "*Changing shape like a master-craftsman, I will hymn the son of Zeus."*[77]

We have seen Lucian go so far as to suggest that the transformations carried out by Proteus may have been nothing more than the effects wrought by the most gifted of pantomimes capable of deceiving on-lookers into thinking the deception is real. Is Nonnus in his opening statement regarding Dionysus in the same way implying that his metamorphoses over the course of the 48 books that are to follow are acts of artistic deception rather than those of a supernatural agency? Certainly there are a number of accounts in the *Dionysiaca* where Dionysus uses techniques in his encounters with Indian warriors that mimic those used by Proteus in his struggle with Menelaus in the *Odyssey.* Techniques that Menelaus himself denounces as nothing more than a trick – not, albeit in Homer's version, but in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Sea-gods.*

> *"I think it's all a trick and you cheat the on-lookers and don't turn into anything of these things."*[78]

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[75] For example: *The Masks on the propylon of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias.* In Easterling and Hall
[76] *Dionysiaca*, 27.235.
[77] *ibid*, 1.23.

Which we can compare with Deirades' response to Dionysus fighting him in the same way.

> *"As the chieftain stabbed and thrust, the god changed his shape, and put on all sorts of varied forms. Sometimes he confronted him as a wild storm of fire shooting tongues of flame through dancing smoke, sometimes he was running water, rolling delusive waves and sprinkling watery shots, or taking on the exact image of a lion's face, he lifted high his chin and let out a harsh roar."*[79]

Until Deriades is reduced to:

> *"... why do you hide yourself Dionysos? Why tricks instead of battle?"*[80]

Four books later Athena takes on the shape of Morrheus in order to shame him into renewing the battle and his complaint is the same.

> *"Spare your words. Why do you reproach me fearless Morrheus? No soldier is this, no soldier who is always changing shape. Indeed I am at a loss who it is I am fighting and whom I strike."*[81]

Once again this cannot be seen as proof positive that Nonnus had read Lucian, but the echoing of ideas between the two is significant. The strongest evidence of all that Nonnus like Lucian saw a link between metamorphosis tales and pantomime dancing I will address shortly, but before leaving Proteus it is worth noting that in Book 43 as if to hammer home who Dionysus' model for using shape-shifting as a means to confuse humans was, Proteus himself is added to the fray, although we might ask ourselves what practical use in battle could be derived from an old man whose only skill is to evade capture!

> "*Round him in a ring rushed the swarthy Indians at the summons of Bacchos and crowds of woolly headed men*

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[78] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Seagod*, 239.
[79] *Dionysiaca*,36.302.
[80] *ibid*, 36.339.
[81] *Ibid*, 40.37.

> *embraced the shepherd of the seals in his various forms.*
> *For in their grasp as old man Proteus took on changing*
> *shapes weaving his body into many mimic images....*
> *... so from one shadowy shape to another in changeling*
> *form he bristled as a lion, charged as a boar, flowed as*
> *water – the Indian company clutched the wet flood in*
> *threatening grasp, but found the pretended water slipping*
> *through their fingers.*"[82]

'Mimic images', 'pretend water?' What are we to make of this? What does Nonnus *intend* us to make of it? Is he, like Lucian, telling us that the metamorphoses of Proteus are simply gigantic David Copperfield style tricks? I do not believe we can discount the possibility that he is.

Before leaving the subject of metamorphosis in the *Dionysiaca* we should return to the dance-off between Maron and Seilenos mentioned earlier and to what for the purposes of this thesis is arguably the most significant example of metamorphosis in all antique literature. This is the moment where Seilenos involuntarily self-metamorphoses into a river as he attempts to dance the story of Dionysus' discovery of wine. I have cited the concluding section of the description in full.

> "*So Seilenos went scratching the ground with hairy*
> *foot, restlessly moving round and round in his wild*
> *caperings. At last his knees failed him. With shaking*
> *head he slipt to the ground and rolled over on his back.*
> *At once he became a river: his body was flowing water*
> *with natural ripples all over, his forehead changing to*
> *a winding current with the horns for waves, the turbulent*
> *swell came to a crest on his head, his belly sank into the sand,*
> *a deep place for fishes, his hair changed into natural rushes,*
> *and over the river his pipes made a shrill tune of themselves*
> *as the breezes touched them.*"[83]

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[82] *ibid*, 43.227.
[83] *ibid*, 19.283.

This work I has endeavoured to demonstrate how pantomimes drew their subject matter from metamorphosis tales. Five hundred years after Ovid tells us in the *Tristia* that his works were being performed on stage by pantomimes[84] we have a poet describing not simply a dancer drawing source material from metamorphosis tales, but bringing about an actual transformation. The link between the two which enabled the one to buttress the other and vice versa was so obvious to Nonnus that in the world of the *Dionysiaca* art imitates art and creates reality.

[84] Seemingly without his consent which given the non-existence of copyright laws in antiquity was not only possible, but probable.

Appendix II. Dance in the *Dionysiaca*.

ἐχόρευε. 6.149, 18.145, 18.151, 19.225 25.286, 25.420, 44.7.

ἐχόρενεν. 5.184, 24.123, 33.230, 47.11, 47.37.

χορεῖαι. 12.261, 46.145

χορείαις. 5.88,14.28, 14.285, 19.36, 28.328.

χορείῃ. 9.164, 9.201, 11.509, 13.158, 18.99, 18.122, 22.49, 28.44, 46.173, 47.730, 48.193, 48.639.

χορείης. 3.62, 5.103, 5.116, 6.50, 7.17, 12.118, 14.389, 18.147, 19.5, 19.166, 20.89, 20.304, 20.341, 21.84, 24.348, 28.36, 28.296, 29.219, 33.232, 36.255, 40.245, 44.29, 45.226, 45.273.

χορείην. 13.504, 15.67, 15.72, 17.115, 21.185, 36.439.

χορεύει. 3.109, 30.223, 47.374, 48.209.

χορεύεις. 11.331, 19.301,19.342.

χορεύειν. 20.91.

χορεύων. 5.100, 16.230, 16.289, 19.180, 19.268, 26.263, 30.2.

χόρενε. 30.124.

χορεύσατε. 27.167, 47.727.

χορεύσῃ. 8.228, 16.56, 19.177.

χορίτιδας. (Dancing Girl) 1.504, 12.126

χοροτεύπον. (Dancer at arms) 28.290.

Χορὸς. 5.119, 15.53, 40.39, 45.36, 46.162, 47.457.

χοροῦ. 1.13, 13.506, 29.243.

χοροὺς. 9.285, 29.247, 44.4.

χορὸν. 3.72, 8.28, 12.383, 13.502, 16.127, 17.183, 19.179, 20.47, 21.252, 36,453, 40.247, 45.62, 47.4, 47.485, 48.640, 48.967.

And:

ἀντεχόρευε. (danced with) 22.44

ἀρτιχόρεοτον. 24.193, 26.268, 43.419.

ἀχόρευτυς. 7.53, 11.457, 21.192, 46.147, 47.34, 48.642.

ἀχόρευτον. 4.323.

ἐπωρχηόαντο. (danced in the dust) 18.60. 21.281,

ἐπιόκαιρουτα. 43.419

ευτροχάλου. 11.147

νυκτιχόρευτον. (Night Dancing) 9.117, 12.391, 13.8, 16.401, 27.214, 47.28, 47.729, 48.961.

ὀρχομενοῖο. 41.225

ὀρχηθμοτο. 11.334, 13.35, 17.214, 19.152, 30.120, 43.161.

ὀρχησαίτο. 19.148.

ὀρχηστῆρας. 3.66,19.152, 22.28, 32.223.

ὀρχηστῆρες. 14.124, 28.275.

ὀρχομενοῖο. 41.225

ὀρχηστῆρα. 30.109

ὀρχηστηρι. 6.48, 7.20, 10.239, 13.35, 18.143, 20.67, 28.304, 28.325, 43.237, 46.157.

ὀρχομενοῖο. 41.225

περιόκαιρουσα. 18.127, 19.115.

περιτρέχει. 25.12

περιτρόχον. 47.466.

τροχαλόιο. 19.242.

τροχαλῶ. 18.14, 24.262.

Chapter VIII

"Everything is Greece to a wise man."[1] Pantomime's role in the struggle to maintain Greek Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire.

> *"Others, I doubt not, shall with softer mould beat*
> *out the breathing bronze, coax from the marble*
> *features to the life, plead cases with greater eloquence*
> *and with a pointer trace heaven's motions and predict*
> *the risings of the stars. You, Roman, be sure to rule the*
> *world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice,*
> *to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud."*[2]

> *"Yourself unattended seem, and wretched age with mean*
> *attire and squalor is your lot."*[3]

I now wish to look at the role pantomime played in helping maintain Hellenic cultural identity during the period that the Greeks, formerly the dominant political and cultural entity of the Mediterranean Coast, were subject to the military and political dominance of Rome. This period almost exactly coincides with pantomime's own span, something that can hardly be regarded as coincidental, any more than was the timing of pantomime's arrival in Rome and the renewal of interest in metamorphosis tales fostered by Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

Dating the point at which the Greek states irremediably became subject to Rome largely depends upon whether one credits Polybius, Strabo or Pausanias as our authority on the matter, but we can be reasonably unequivocal in stating that following the disastrous capture of Corinth in 146BCE resistance to the western power on the part of the states that a mere two centuries earlier had carried the force of their arms to the banks of the Ganges, effectively ceased. Indeed it can be argued that the decision of the

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[1] Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* 1.35, C.P.Jones (trans), Loeb, 2005, 95.
[2] *Virgil, Aeneid. Vi 848-854,* in *Virgil, Ecologues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6,* H.R. Fairclough (trans), G.P. Gould (rev), Loeb, 1916 and 1999. 593.
[3] *Homer, The Odyssey.* 24.249.50. Ingeniously reused by Dio Chrysostom in his *Olympian Oration.*

organisers of the Isthmian Games of 229 BCE to allow Rome to participate, represented a prescient bowing to the inevitable. This decision, creating the conceit that Rome was in fact a Greek city,[4] can be seen as the first salvo in a seven hundred year struggle to maintain Greek cultural, social and even political status under Rome – a struggle that would go on for at least two centuries after the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the transference of imperial power to the Greek-speaking East.

The quotes which opened this chapter capture the gist of the two dominant positions that could be taken by Greeks and Romans. The first, that from the *Aeneid*, promoting the rather simplistic argument of a symbiotic relationship in which Greeks provided the culture, clearly regarded by the Hellenes as the more important, and the Romans the 'muscle', just as clearly regarded by the Latins as the imperative concern in the maintenance of a civilised empire.[5] The second, taken from the *Odyssey* and placed by Dio Chrysostom in his *Olympian Oration* into the mouth of Pheidias' famous statue of Zeus, revealing the cold reality of life as he saw it for Greeks under Rome, at least at the time of Domitian and before the advent of the Hellenised emperors Trajan and Hadrian.

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[4] Only Greek cities, in theory at least, were permitted to compete in the games.

[5] Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 14. is one who cautions against the inflexibility of the formula equating the Romans with power and the Greeks as the purveyors of culture, pointing out that displays of the sort of *paideia* normally associated with Greek orators were not only permitted, but expected of the Roman forensic orators. But that, I suggest, is as far as it goes, for *paideia* of this nature was clearly seen as being Greek. When it was applied to Roman oratory it was seen as nothing more than the flourishes that demonstrated the speaker's learning, not as an end in itself. Philostratus makes no bones about it. Sophists were Greeks and their followers were 'Greeks.' By this he means, as we have noted before, that being Greek was not simply a matter of ethnicity, nor did it mean having Greek as a first language, for the language of the sophists was not Demotic Greek but the Attic Greek of 5th century BCE Athens. Being Greek in this sense meant mastery of the Attic form of the language and a thorough grounding in Greek culture and literature. Syrians such as Lucian, for instance, could in this way claim to be Greek, although we are continually left with the feeling that his was regarded as a second-class 'Greekness.' Despite his reputation as a writer, particularly as a satirist, and despite accounts of his declaiming as far afield as Gaul, there is no record of him ever having been invited to speak in the 'Big Apple' of his time –Rome. At *Vitae Sophistarum* 571 Philostratus records a sophist asking another to send his 'Greeks' to visit him – i.e. his followers. The reply he received was 'I shall come myself along with my Greeks.' We have also previously noted (Chapter III) that the highly immodest Aelius Aristides, wishing to assert his superiority over all other sophists refers to himself on at least two occasions (*Oration* 33.24 and *Oration* 32.50.87*)* as 'the first among the Greeks.'

There are two important ways in which it can be demonstrated that pantomime played a pivotal role in the struggle to maintain Greek cultural identity in the period in question.[6] As Peter Brown has observed,

> "The age of the Antonines was the heyday of the Greek Sophists. These men – known for their devotion to rhetoric - were at one and the same time literary lions and urban nabobs. They have enjoyed vast influence and popularity. One of them Polemo of Smyrna 'treated whole cities as his inferiors, emperors not as his superiors and gods as his equals.'"[7]

Brown wrote this in 1971. Two years earlier Glen Bowersock published his ground-breaking, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire.* Since then there has been a proliferation of studies of the way in which Greeks sought not only to preserve their cultural identity but ensure that Horace's famous tag:

> *"Captive Greece her savage victor hostage took,*
> *and invaded rustic Latium with the arts."*[8]

became a wider reality[9] not merely the disgruntled epigram of a poet frustrated at the inability of Roman tragedy and comedy to break free from the

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[6] Something in specific reference to pantomime Ismene Lada-Richards has called 'cultural colonization.' (See, Lada Richards, *Silent Eloquence* , 2007, 17.)

[7] P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity,*W.W. Norton and Co., New York ,1971,17.

[8] Horace *Epistulae* 2.1.156-157, in *Horace. Satires, Epistles, The Art of Poetry,* H.R. Fairclough (trans), Loeb, 1936.

[9] After all, if it had merely been a matter of 'conservation' of culture this could probably have been achieved at a regional level through the numerous festivals –many in honour of Dionysus – which continued in cities like Edessa until well into the sixth century CE. Jewish and, at a qualified level, indigenous Egyptian culture survived in this way for almost a millennium. However, as we shall examine, for the Greeks it became a battle for cultural domination that they were prepared to take all the way to Rome itself, the Athenaeum rather than the Circus Maximus or the Flavian Amphitheatre being their battleground. It was a struggle made all the more easy for them by certain commonalities such as a largely shared Pantheon of gods, a willingness for the Romans to adopt Greek mythology in a similar fashion to the way in which Christians were able to adopt the Jewish Old Testament into their own Bible, and a considerable Roman cultural inferiority complex.

Not all Romans, of course, welcomed Greek culture with open arms. Cato the elder was another who shared Horace's misgivings, famously observing that Romans should 'observe, but not examine' the cultural products of that 'perverse and corrupting race.' To which we could add Nepos' observation:

> *"Almost everywhere in Greece it was thought to be high honour*
> *to be proclaimed victor in Olympia. Even to appear on stage*

paradigms inherited from Greece,[10] but these have inevitably concentrated on the epideictic oratory of the Second Sophistic[11] and ignored the very real commonality of material and indeed intent between the orators and the pantomimes.[12]

As Whitmarsh[13]points out, modern scholarship has been divided ever since the publication of Bowersock's book as to how the sophists were perceived not only in Rome, but in the eastern Greek and Syrian cities from which most of them originated.[14] Bowersock maintained in essence that the primary function of the sophists was to provide a conduit between the provincial cities and Rome. Their importance lay not in what they said or in their copious literary productions, but in the role they played as mediators between the seat of imperial power and the cities from which they either came or which had adopted them as unofficial, and sometimes even official, ambassadors. As Whitmarsh puts it:

> "Within a short space the battlelines for the next phase in the life of the Second Sophistic had clearly been drawn."[15]

(in scaenam procline) and exhibit oneself to the people was never regarded by those nations as something to be ashamed of. Among us, however, all these acts are regarded as either disgraceful or as base and inconsistent with respectability."

Nepos *Lives* 5, in *Cornelius Nepos,* (trans) J.C. Rolfe, Loeb, 1929.

[10] Chapter III Idiscussed the way in which Roman attempts to create a truly indigenous theatre telling Roman stories and using Roman literary tropes effectively ended with the Republic when the freedom of speech (the *parrhesia* so valued by Euripides) necessary for theatre to survive, effectively came to an end.

[11] I find the seemingly obligatory 'so-called' scholars find necessary to attach to 'the Second Sophistic' unnecessarily picky. The term may be no more accurate than 'Baroque', 'Classical' or 'Absurdist', but like these it is a useful descriptor of the spirit of the time.

[12] There is however an argument that suggests this view of the resurgence of Greek cultural activity sees it as far more pro-active, at least in its intentions, than it truly was and that interest in Hellenic philosophy in particular was inward-looking rather than proselytizing. Martha Nussbaum, for instance, is one who has stressed the therapeutic nature of this reawakening of interest, suggesting it as something designed to bring consolation to Greeks subject, as we discussed in Chapter I to the exogamy that was a common experience of intellectuals in the first four centuries of the Common Era.
See M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics.* Princeton University Press ,1994.

[13] T. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*,Cambridge University Press, 2005,

[14] As Elaine Fantham has pointed out Latin orators of the 2nd to 5th centuries CE, many of them like Apuleius and Augustine originating in North Africa, tended to move quite quickly into branches of the civil administration (or the church) and generally found it difficult because of the on-going Roman cultural inferiority complex to compete with Greek orators. (See; E Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture from Plautus to Macrobius,* 1996, 2013, 206.

[15] Whitmarsh,*The Second Sophistic,* 2005, 8.

The ‘battlelines’ to which he refers are those of academic contention, for there was an almost immediate reaction against Bowersock’s argument originating from Oxford University, which held to the more conventional line that the Second Sophistic was a manifestation of resurgent Hellenism trying to counter the impact of Roman occupation.[16]

For the purposes of this study, the divide is in a sense irrelevant. Just as the interest in metamorphosis tales greatly augmented the appeal of pantomime dancing, so too it is what the *audiences* of the elite declaimers thought about what they saw and heard that is of primary importance. Arguably the declaimers themselves and the majority of the *bouletic* administrations that adopted them as ambassadors of their cities probably conform to the Bowersock paradigm, whereas for most of their provincial audiences, for whom Rome was something upon which they could never hope to exert any influence, that of the Oxford scholars, Ewen Bowie and Simon Swain, most closely describes their position. It is this group – the audience – that is the primary concern of this thesis.

Perhaps one of the clearest indications that pantomimes not only played a part in the reassertion of Greek culture during the Second Sophistic, but were seen to be doing so lies in the fact that as Ismene Lada-Richards notes[17] they were also frequently granted ambassadorial status by Eastern cities and much like the victorious poets in the Athenian Dionysian Festivals, were frequently granted a role in the city’s administration. This suggests that the status of the pantomime, galling though it must have been to the sophistic orators, at least in the East, matched their own. Not only that, but very importantly it suggests that they had a *function* that paralleled that of the orators. While this does not disprove the Bowersock position, for it is entirely possible the pantomimes acted as the cultural ambassadors, while the orators

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[16] One rhetor who we can argue decidedly fitted the Bowersock model, although strictly speaking predating the Second Sophistic, was Dionysius of Halicarnassus who accused sophists who used an excessively poetic style of being Asiatic. (‘Asianism’ is still used by scholars today to describe an overly sonorous writing style.) In his *Roman Antiquities* Dionysius would promote the Augustan revolution as a cure for Greek cultural decline every bit as much as it was a panacea for Roman woes following the civil wars. Perhaps taking his cue from the organisers of the Isthmian Games he would also promote the idea that Rome was in essence a Greek city.
See: *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus,* E. Cary (trans), Loeb, 1950.
[17] Lada Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, 2007, 17 and 146-149.

with their superior eloquence and proven expertise in arguing a case, may have been called upon to negotiate legal or quasi-legal issues on behalf of their client city,[18]it does suggest it cannot be accepted without reservation.

Oratory was, of course, an extremely important facet of Roman life as well. The ability to deliver forensic oratory in particular was regarded as essential to any Roman who wished to have a successful public career. The rules governing dress, deportment, oratorical delivery, gesture and the use of *figurae* were extremely strict in the sense that any departure from them would have been regarded as infra dig and would be used in attacks on the speaker in other forums and occasions.[19]

Roman oratory had the two-fold purpose of firstly, persuading a jury either to convict or acquit an accused and secondly, the advancement of the career of the speaker. In this way Roman oratory was not dissimilar to Classical Greek oratory of the sort for which Pericles and Demosthenes were famous, but was totally unlike that of the Second Sophistic which, the educative and cultural claims of the rhetors themselves notwithstanding, was clearly what a modern observer might label a branch of the entertainment industry.[20] That is to say the oratory of the Sophists had no strictly functional purpose as had the Roman forensic variety. Nor was it, as much of its Classical Greek predecessor was, aimed at persuading citizens of a city to a particular course of political or military action. Perhaps the only point of real commonality between it and Roman and Classical Greek oratory was its use to advance the career of the speaker, a number of whom became extremely wealthy and achieved major celebrity status.

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[18] The issue of a particular city's entitlement to membership of the Hellenistic League, is one that is frequently cited as having been submitted to the emperor for arbitration.

[19] That Cicero could devote 61 chapters (books) to the subject and Quintilian 12 (roughly, however, equivalent in total length to his predecessor's) gives us some idea of the complexity of these precepts and their importance in Roman public life.

[20] The closest modern parallels might be to see them as a cross between the modern celebrity speaker – retired generals, former Heads of State, famous authors etc, who do the speaking circuit (largely in the United States) – and the motivational speakers who fill auditoriums promising to teach us how to be more assertive and make vast sums of money, for although the content of the speaker's material was supposed to be of a level we would expect from the former, (or even higher, Ismene Lada-Richards draws a parallel between the rhetors and modern university dons. See *Silent Eloquence*, 2007, 146) the level of delivery – the performance level if you like – was much closer to the often histrionic displays of the latter.

It was not only in purpose that the epideictic oratory of the Greek sophist differed from the more formal forensic oratory of the Romans however. The topics upon which the former expounded were often drawn from the same mythological material that formed the bulk of the pantomime's repertoire – and it is also undoubtedly true that many sophists utilised techniques they had learned from the theatre in their performances; intonation patterns, gestures, even movements. To these we can add the use of costume. Whether this was done in order to compete with pantomimes,[21] to compete with one another, or simply because they felt the mythological material that formed the substance of many of their declamations required such a treatment has never been truly established, and of course any attempt to apply a collective reasoning to the actions of such a diverse group of individuals is in many ways pointless. It may simply have been the case that a number of them used these theatrical tricks because some of their most successful competitors did.

The art of improvisation was something the orators also took from the theatre. Part and parcel of their skills was the ability to be able to appear to speak spontaneously upon almost any subject. To do this, as Lucian intimates in his *Professor of Rhetoric*, the orator had to have a prodigious memory in order to finesse the topic using carefully accumulated turns of speech and long-prepared arguments. It seems that at least one famous orator was quite

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[21] While it has become common to think of sophists as being in competition with the pantomimes it might be more accurate to think of it as a number of the orators we could style as being of the second tier, who had little hope of breaking into the first echelon, borrowing techniques from the other popular entertainment genre of their time in order to develop a style and fan base that was uniquely their own. The only sophists who are on record as having specifically attacked pantomime, and whose attacks have perhaps been given more weight than they deserve by scholars, are Apuleius and Aelius Aristides. The comments by Dio Chrysostom in his *Oration* 32.5 about what was required to entertain the people of Alexandria, which are often cited as an attack on pantomime,

> *"It is not easy to cope with the din of so great a crowd nor to stand face to face with countless myriads of humans beings without the support of a song and a lyre; for this is indeed the antidote (needed) against the people of your city."*

can just as easily be seen as a criticism of audience tastes. Apuleius was never regarded as being in the foremost ranks of the elite declaimers. (He spoke Latin for a start) Moreover he was, like Lucian, a satirist and a number of the comments he made about pantomimes (mimes, trapeze artists and jugglers as well) were in the context of defending himself against accusations of sorcery and must be viewed as an attempt the ridicule the charges by hyperbole. The ever-egotistical Aristides rejected the title of sophist for himself and refused to acknowledge the merit of anyone, not just pantomimes, who competed against him for fame.

deficient in this respect. Aelius Aristides, according to Philostratus (VS 583) in fact tried to make a virtue out of it.

> *"When Marcus Aurelius asked:*
> *'When shall I hear you declaim?'*
> *'Propose the theme today,' he replied 'and tomorrow*
> *come and hear me, for I am one of those who do*
> *vomit their speeches, but try to make them perfect."*

Although the more extreme types of theatricality employed by some sophists can reasonably be adduced to an active study of pantomime, an element in training in mimeticism of the type that involved taking on the character of a famous figure from history (*prosopcia*) was a standard feature of any orator's education.

That this nexus between pantomime and oratory was recognised at the time and is not merely the construct of modern scholarship can clearly be seen in the writing of the sophistic orator, on the surface at least, most sympathetic to pantomime.[22] This was, of course, Lucian who at *Dance 35* maintains:

> *"Dancing has not held itself apart from Rhetoric*
> *either, but has a share even in this art, insofar as it*
> *displays characters and passions which is also what*
> *orators long for."*

At *Dance 65* he goes so far as to say that it is the impersonation of a character – role playing – that is the common link between the two.

> *"The chief occupation and the aim of dancing, as I*
> *have said, is impersonating, which is cultivated in the*
> *same way by the rhetoricians, particularly those who*
> *recite those pieces that they call 'exercises'*[23]*for in*

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[22] We must always be mindful of the questions raised in Chapter III about the sincerity of Lucian's enthusiasm for the dance.

[23] By 'exercises' we assume he is referring to the set-piece declamations (the *prosopcia* mentioned above) described by Schmitz, 'Performing History in the Second Sophistic,' in M. Zimmerman (ed) *Geshichts-schreibung und Poliischer Wandel im 3 Jh, n. Chr,* Franz Steiner, 1997, 78 whereby the orator portrayed one of the famous orators of the past. (Demosthenes was a great favourite) Exercises of this nature were a standard feature of Classical Greek education until well into the Byzantine period. What X would have said to Y on the occasion

> *their case there is nothing we can commend more highly than their accommodating themselves to the roles which they assume."*

It is important to stress at this point that Lucian's alter-ego Lycinus is pointing out that it is not only the mimetic qualities of the pantomime that the rhetor attempts to replicate. The two are linked by the educative value of what they do, not merely by the similarity in content. Whether or not the pantomime's intention is educational is highly doubtful – it is the perceived outcome of their performances that matters. We have already discussed in Chapter III Libanius' *Oration* 64.112 where he avers 'consequently, a goldsmith now will not do badly in a conversation with a product of the schools about the house of Priam or of Laius' because of the efforts of the dancers. That, and Lucian's *Dance* 81*:*

> *"Then people contain themselves for pleasure, and with one accord they burst into applause, each seeing the Delphic monition 'Know thyself' realises itself from the spectacle and when they go away from the theatre they have learned what they should choose and what to avoid and have been taught what they did not know before."*

clearly demonstrates that pantomime's role in the maintenance of Greek *paideia* was recognised by intellectuals in the second, third and fourth centuries CE. Indeed we could go so far as to say that for figures like Aristides to reject the educational value of pantomime they had at least to acknowledge the existence of a belief in it. In fact it can be argued that Aristides' objections were based largely on the fact that the pantomime required his audience members to draw upon their own resources to 'discover' what they needed to take from a performance, in much the same way that Plutarch (*Moralia* 42b*)*

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of Z. (Readers of Proust will note similar exercises, in essay form, being forced on French High School Students as recently as the beginning of the 20th century.)

> "Every sophist had many times enacted the role of Demosthenes, had spoken before King Philip of Macedonia or the Athenian assembly… In these speeches the personality of the sophist would completely disappear behind the figure he was embodying: when he said 'I' this pronoun referred to, say, Demosthenes, not himself."

Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence,* 2007, 114.

maintained that the audience member leaving a sophist's lecture should 'turn the gaze back upon himself', in effect in search of what he has 'discovered' about life, but moreover about himself. The ego of an Aristides, however, required that his audience should be 'taught' what they needed to know through the agency of a superior intellect such as his own.

Very importantly, Lada-Richards observes:

> "So with an eye fixed on what counts as especially significant in the intellectual quarters of the second sophistic, Lycinus presents his pantomime as 'Greek' on account of *both* descent and culture – ironically the doubly powerful credentials that Lucian, himself a Syrian, partly lacked."[24]

The sixth-century orator Choricius of Gaza, another elite declaimer comfortable enough in his own skills to be a supporter of theatre[25] also saw a strong parallel between the attempts of the rhetors (himself included) who sought to embody the characters they portrayed in their orations with the performances of the pantomimes.

> *"You have already, I am sure, been spectators of choruses in the festival of Dionysus, where, I suppose, you have seen some pantomime now enchanting the stage with masculine bodily configurations, whenever he dances the Thessalian or the Amazon's young lad, or some other male figure, now imitating most skilfully the much-desired daughter of Briseus and Phaedra in love, and attempting to persuade the audience in the theatre, not that he is in the process of imitating others, but that he really is by nature the object of his imitation."*[26]

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[24] Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, 2007, 114.
[25] Perhaps even more notably so than Lucian, when we consider his *Defence of the Mimes* – seemingly a bookend to the other's three-centuries-older *Dance* – sought to uphold the virtues of an art form considerably lower on the social scale even than the pantomime – one, moreover, that had occurred the especial wrath of the Christian Fathers.
[26] Choricius *Oration* 21.1 Foerster-Richtsteig, 248.

Not all the elite declaimers were comfortable with the lengths their colleagues were prepared to go to in order to attract an audience, however. Dio Chrysostom, arguably along with Aelius Aristides and Hadrian of Tyre, among the most successful and influential of all the sophists, described the more histrionic and flamboyant of his colleagues as:

> *"Many coloured peacocks."*

and as being:

> *"Carried aloft as on wings, by their fame and their students."*[27]

In this respect the antagonism between the elite declaimers and other sophists was in many ways more savage than between the sophists and the pantomimes. (See below) Although there seems not to have been the formal agonistic competitions between them that eventually pantomime became part of, the competition was very real nonetheless – a competition that came to be known as the 'zero-sum' game.

As Maud Gleason puts it:

> "In the world of declaiming intellectuals, correspondingly, the antagonism between eminent performers was a 'zero-sum' game predicated on the idea that for one man to triumph, all his rivals had to lose."[28]

Philostratus, whose *Lives of the Sophists* is our major source of information about the elite orators, and to whom we are indebted for the term 'The Second Sophistic', gives in his account of Dionysius of Miletus, a telling picture of the discomfort the success of one of his rivals could occasion even an orator supposedly as secure in his position as Dionysius was.

> *"Dorion remarked, "The young man*[29]*seems to make you uneasy by his rapid advancement to great reputation." "Yes, by Athene," said Dionysius, "he does not allow me*

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[27] Dio Chrysostom *Oration* 12.5.
[28] M. Gleason, *Making men. Sophists and Self-Preservation in Ancient Rome*, Princeton University Press, 1995, xxiii.
[29] Polemo. If the remark cited from Brown earlier in this chapter is anything to go by Dionysius may have been wise to have been alarmed at his growing success!

> *to sleep. He makes my heart palpitate and my mind too, when I think how many admirers he has.”*[30]

Philostratus himself was another who did not approve of the theatrical tendencies of a number of the sophists of whom he wrote, as we can gather from his description of Scopelian, who made a speciality of topics taken from the Persian Wars and,

> “*Acted out in them the arrogance and empty-mindedness intrinsic in the character of the barbarians. And people say that in these declamations he would sway his body to and fro more than usual as if he were possessed by some Bacchic frenzy.”*[31]

The fourth-century Grammaticus, Themistius, went so far as the describe sophists as ‘pretend philosophers’, claiming they,

> *“Often bring their eloquence out to the theatres and festive assemblies, adorned in gold and purple, exuding the smell of perfumes and painted and rubbed with cosmetics all over and with garlands of flowers.”*[32]

and we have already discussed in Chapter III how Lucian counterbalanced his unexpected praise of the pantomime by satirising his own profession in his *Professor of Rhetoric,* adding to his description of the ‘foppish fellow’ cited previously, that orators of the sort regarded virility, such an important component of Roman attitudes towards what it was to be a man, to be ‘boorish and not befitting the dainty and desired orator.’[33] In order to compete with the mimes and the pantomimes the orator, he suggests, had become ‘a one man band, designed to eclipse the glitz and plaudits of the shows.’[34]He is at his satirical best when he advises fellow sophists that it,

> *“Must be your desire to look beautiful and you must make it your concern to create the impression that you*

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[30] Philostratus, V. 525.
[31] Philostratus V520
[32] Themistius, *Oration* 28.341. b-c, In *The Private Orations of Themistius,* R.J. Penella, University of California Press, 2000.
[33] Lucian, *Professor of Rhetoric* 23.
[34] *ibid*.

> *are earnestly being pursued by women. For the masses will attribute even that to your rhetorical prowess."*[35]
>
> *"And this other thing as well, do not be ashamed if you seem also to be loved by men... In fact let some stand around you to create this very impression."*[36]

The Christian Fathers seem to have drawn very little distinction between the Sophists and their more common target the theatre. Tatian in his *Address to the Greeks* which, much like Tertulian's *On the Spectacles* was primarily aimed at theatre and the games of the circus, makes precisely this point.

> *"Wherefore be not led away by the solemn assemblies of the philosophers, who dogmatise one against the other even though each one vents but the crude fantasies of the moment."*[37]

Although, as we have noted, the mastery of oratory was something to which the Roman *vir* was supposed to aspire, we get an indication of the depth of the Roman inferiority complex once again in Philostratus, when he describes the excitement surrounding the news that Hadrian of Tyre, appointed by Marcus Aurelius as Professor of Greek Rhetoric at Rome, was about to declaim in the Athenaeum.

> *"A messenger had only to announce in the theatre that Hadrian was going to declaim when even members of the senate would arise from their sitting, and the members of the equestrian order rise and not only those who were devoted to Hellenistic culture, but also those who were studying the*

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[35] As Lada-Richards puts it:

> "Sophists like Herodes, whose rhythms were said to have rivaled the variegated tones of flutes and lyres, or the declaimers who even Philostratus deemed beyond the pale 'intoxicated' as they were with the voluptuous condiments that seasoned their speeches (*Lives 573 and 522*) were clearly keen to redefine elite performance as a spectacle that holds the crowd in thrall by 'pantomime-style' seductions of the eye and ear."

Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence, 2007,* 146.

[36] Lucian, *Professor of Rhetoric,* 23.

[37] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks,* III.

> *other language*[38] *at Rome and they would set out on the run to the Athenaeum, overflowing with enthusiasm and upbraiding those who were going there at a walking pace."*[39]

This was despite the fact that rhetoric was still a standard feature of an elite Roman male's education. According to Quintilian this involved first a period of studying Virgil under a Grammaticus.[40] After reaching a sufficient standard the boys were passed on to a rhetor to study Livy and Cicero and '*whatever was closest to Cicero.*'[41]

In other words with the study of rhetoric still such a feature of Roman education the rhetors of the Second Sophistic were taking Rome on with its own weapons and the argument that it was a battle for cultural supremacy becomes easier to uphold.

Roman forensic orators were well aware that they too had a deal to learn from the theatre, but were clearly ambivalent about the idea of something that was such a vital element of the political armoury of their society owing anything at all to a profession which they held in so much contempt. Thus in Quintilian at 11.3.5 we have:

> *"Stage actors demonstrate this. They add so much charm to the greatest poets that their productions give us infinitely more pleasure when heard than when read and at the same time they secure an audience even for some of the poorest so that the authors for whom the libraries have no room may often find a place on stage. And if delivery has this power to produce anger, tears or anxiety over matters we know to be*

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[38] That is to say Latin, which as Elaine Fantham notes had been 'the native language of Italy for many centuries past." (See Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture*, 1996/2013, 216.)
[39] Philostratus. *V.233*
[40] Significantly by Quintilian's time the curriculum did not, much to his regret, include Homer. This is generally taken as a sign of the state of decline into which the study of Greek in the West had fallen by this time.
[41] *Quintilian, The Orator's Education* 11.3.5, D.A. Russell (trans) ,Loeb, 2001, 89.

> *fictitious and unreal how much more powerful must it be when we really believe!"*[42]

However at 11.3.10 he adds the cautionary note:

> *"However, there are those who think that raw delivery, such as is produced by the impulse of a person's feelings, is stronger and in fact the only kind worthy of a real man"*

An important clue to the way in which Greek sophism worked in defining the relationship between the Greek and Roman parts of the empire can be found in the way in which different emperors reacted to it. Domitian and Vespasian perhaps accurately viewing the phenomenon as a challenge to Roman authority, both at times expelled the sophists from Rome, but later Hellenised emperors beginning with Hadrian were far more supportive – Aelius Aristides rather cynically maintaining that he had turned the empire into a gigantic festival procession. Onno Van Nijf[43] suggests that Hadrian, Trajan, Antonius and Marcus Aurelius may not have been motivated purely by their predilections for Greek culture. The festivals they sponsored were emblazoned with statuary and inscriptions clearly establishing their imperial patronage. The organisers of the festivals became in effect a new class of Greek aristocracy who owed their social position to this patronage and whose loyalty could therefore be counted upon. In other words, the festivals themselves became a means of augmenting political control at minimal cost[44] by reminding citizens in the East that many of their pleasures and privileges came through the aegis of Rome.[45]

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[42] *ibid.*

[43] O.Van Nijf, 'Local Heroes, Athletes, Festivals and Elite Self-Fashioning in the Roman East,' in S.Goldhill (ed), *Being Greek Under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[44] Not unlike, but perhaps more subtle than, the 'bread and circuses' approach applied in Rome itself.

[45] Peter Brown has suggested that the importance and influence of this renaissance of Greek culture in the age of the Antonines can be seen in the way that:

> "Byzantine gentlemen of the fifteenth century were still using a recondite Attic Greek deployed by the Sophists in the age of Hadrian."

Brown , *The World of Late Antiquity*, 1971, 17.

This process worked both ways. Simon Price[46] has demonstrated how the Greek cities integrated the imperial cult into their own often idiosyncratic religious institutions. By placing them under imperial patronage they gained imperial protection and became thus virtually inviolable.[47]

The second facet of pantomime which situated it squarely at the forefront of Hellenic culture in the period in question is the way in which it fitted perfectly the newly emergent paradigm of the educated viewer – the *peipaideumenos theates.* According to Simon Goldhill,

> "In Hellenistic society a new cast of expert viewer - sophisticated, educated, cultivated, grew up. The viewing subject as articulate, witty uncoverer of sedimented and learned images found its most fully developed epistemological and physiological model for viewing in Stoic theory – which unlike Platonic paradigms of mimesis privileges viewing as a means of access to knowledge of the world."[48]

Goldhill's work refers, however, mostly to the viewing of art works. Plutarch, Lucian and Libanius, as we have previously noted, have all referred to a linkage between pantomime and art, particularly the plastic arts, and just as pantomime and art could be linked so, in the opinion of Quintilian, could orators and the practitioners of the arts of painting and sculpture.

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[46] S. Price, *Rituals and Power in Imperial Cults in Asia Minor.* Cambridge University Press, 1984.

[47] The Second Sophistic needs to be seen only as one facet of what Peter Brown (*The World of Late Antiquity,* 1971*)* has characterised as 'an age of ambition'. During the second and third centuries of the Common Era the Greek elite sought to assert themselves not only through culture but the accretion and display of wealth. Brown draws our attention to the way in which wealthy Greeks lavished money, at a time when the gap between rich and poor was greater than at any other point in antiquity, upon the construction of monuments and private homes, but above all in sponsoring festivals at which the promotion of Greek culture and *paideia* was in many ways secondary to the promotion of the sponsor. These festivals, if not in direct competition with the *kalends* with which new consuls were traditionally supposed to celebrate their appointment, at least had the purpose of demonstrating that Greek euergetism could match Roman. Eventually both in Rome and the eastern cities they would come to be banned or at least heavily proscribed for fear of the economic damage they were doing not only to their sponsors but the wider community. They would eventually die out altogether during the severe economic downturn of the 4th and 5th centuries.

[48] S.Goldhill, 'The Erotic Eye,' in S. Goldhill (ed) *Being Greek Under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire.* Cambridge University Press, 2001, 168.

> *"Now since style is the product of both rhetoric and the orator, as since there are (as I shall show) several forms of it, both the art and the artist are involved in all these, though they are very different from one another, not only individually as one statue differs from another or one painting from another."*[49]

Of the two main senses by which we generally decode our environment, although Socrates maintained that it was necessary for him to hear a man speak in order to 'see' his mind, sight was always privileged over hearing in the ancient world. In the Second Century of the Common Era this emphasis on the importance of seeing had taken on a new impetus and the era of the educated viewer had come into being, perhaps most succinctly expressed by Apuleius in his *Florida 2* (although he was in fact quoting a line of Plautus.)

> "*One witness with good eyes is worth more than ten with good ears."*[50]

And in one of the more famous works from the period devoted to the subject of viewing art works (in this case a house and its contents) Lucian's *De Domo,* 20 he maintains that words fly off and die the moment they are uttered, but '*the pleasure of seen things is always present and lasting and wholly entices the spectator.'*

We in the modern world take for granted the distinction between 'viewing' and simply 'looking' or even 'seeing'. The concept of tourism is largely predicated upon this distinction. We visit art galleries, photographic exhibitions and avant-garde cinema for the express purpose of 'viewing'.

Tourism was not unknown in the ancient world. Alexander, for instance, reputedly made a famous voyage to Troy before departing on his Asian adventures – and he was far from being the only ruler to visit that tourist mecca of the ancient world. (The Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of

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[49] *Quintilian* 12.10

[50] *Truculentus,* 489. Alongside this we can put the tag from Herodotus: *"For ears happen to be less trustworthy than eyes." Herodotus* 1.8.2.

Alexandria, along with the Pyramids being others on the 'must-see' list of the educated traveller of the Mediterranean World.) The writings of Pausanias, for instance, were a veritable tourist's handbook. And it scarcely needs to be said that the Mediterranean landscape, and not merely the cities, was dotted with art works that despite the cultural vandalism of art galleries and private collectors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, still adorn the suburbs and surrounds of cities like Rome, Athens and Istanbul in staggering quantities.

The corollary of this is that during the Second Sophistic if the viewer was *expected* to interpret the work then the creator of the work has done so with all these possible interpretations in mind and must ultimately take responsibility and even ownership of the interpretations. The art of viewing therefore had become a form of dialogue between the viewer and the creator.[51]

These ideas of the way in which images impress themselves upon the human subconscious were an extension of the Stoic idea of *Phantasia Kataleptike* with the important qualification that for the Stoics the impression that was left upon the viewer was an image of the object as it actually is. Thus Diogenes Laertius and Sextus Empiricius offer the following, almost identical definitions of the concept.[52]

> *"A cognitive impression is one which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is."*[53]

> *"The cognitive, which Stoics say is the criterion of things, is that which arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is."*[54]

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[51] Pantomime with its semiotic code of gestures fits squarely into this paradigm. As we will observe in Chapter IX even the costume of the pantomime would be subject to this sort of interpretive evaluation. Rosie Wyles for instance (op cit) has written of the way in which the scarf of the pantomime's costume could be viewed as simply that – a scarf – but could be kinetically manipulated to represent a sword, a whip or a javelin as circumstances required and the experienced pantomime viewer would be expected to know which was being embodied at any particular moment.

[52] See Goldhill , 'The Erotic Eye,' *Being Greek under Rome.* 2001,176.

[53] *' Sextus Empiricius, Oulines of Pyrrhonism.'* R.G. Bury trans, Loeb, 1933, 247.

[54] *Diogenes Laertius, The Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* vii 46. R.D. Hicks ed, Perseus Collection of Greek and Roman Materials.

Curiously enough, the pair of writers whose work most clearly demonstrates to us the way in which viewing and the analysis of the images had evolved in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE were, like the source of most of our information on individual sophists, named Philostratus. The exact relationship of the man who wrote the *Lives of the Sophists* to the elder of the Philostratuses who wrote the *Imagines* or even his to the younger, is unknown. It has variously been suggested that the Elder Philostratus was the nephew, the son of a cousin or even the son-in-law of the writer who supplied so much material for the first part of this chapter.[55] Scholars are a little more comfortable in listing Philostratus the Younger as the grandson of the Elder.

The description often applied to Philostratus the Elder as the Father of Art Criticism is not very accurate. We have already discussed Apuleius' detailed description of the statue of Actaeon in the *Golden Ass* and also briefly mentioned Lucian's *De Domo.* Perhaps even more germane is Homer's description of the shield of Achilles which we looked at in Chapter I – a description that contained a wealth of detailing that could not possibly have been contained on so small an object.[56] This is where it becomes inappropriate to think of what either Philostratus or Callistratus was doing as art criticism in the modern sense. As Fairbanks notes:

> "The excellence of the picture for him lies in its effective delineation of character, in the pathos of the situation, or in the play of emotion it represents. Its technical excellence is rarely mentioned, and then only as a means of successful representation of colour. We hear only that it is brilliant; or drawing only that

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[55] For the purposes of this thesis I shall use in the case of the latter two writers the nomenclature adopted by the Loeb edition of their works – translated by Arthur Fairbanks – Philostratus the Elder and Philostratus the Younger. The quotation from Callistratus (below) comes from the same volume. Of Callistratus himself nothing is known, but the fact that he quotes both Philostratus the Elder and Philostratus the Younger suggests he came after them and took their work on paintings as inspiration for his own on statues.

[56] In the *Life of Homer* which has been attributed to Plutarch, but is generally considered by scholars not to have been his, we find:

> *"If we were to say that Homer was a teacher of painting as well, this would be no exaggeration, for, as one of the sages said, "Poetry is painting that speaks and painting is silent poetry."*

> it is able to give perspective. Composition and design are not mentioned."[57]

In essence what Philostratus and others who wrote about art in this period were doing was using a work of art in one medium to inspire and in a sense justify their own literary productions. As Philostratus himself puts it in the opening sentence of his work:

> *"Whosoever scorns painting is unjust to truth; and he is also unjust to all the wisdom that has been bestowed upon poets – for poets and painters make equal contribution to our knowledge of the deeds and the looks of heroes."*[58]

And it is into this realm of hybridism of the literary and the visual that pantomime situates itself perfectly.[59] For it is too easy to characterise pantomime as having seamlessly picked up the baton of tragedy and being therefore definitively a member of the dramatic arts. Lada-Richards[60] is one who sees it more accurately as a hybrid:

> "Lying at the intersection of the dramatic and the figurative arts."

The metaphorical linking of dramatic poetry with the visual was a common conceit.

> *"We who build as with a shining hall, raising its portals on golden pillars."*[61]
>
> *"I have constructed a monument more lasting than bronze."*[62]

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[57] A. Fairbanks, Translator's Introduction: *Elder Philostratus, Younger Philostratus, Callistratus.* Loeb 1931, xix.

[58] Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* I.I.
It is important to note that all the paintings Philostratus describes are of scenes from mythology – specifically they are lifted from the literary record of mythology. There are none of the scenes from everyday life that we expect to see in contemporary art. In other word the painters – if what Philostratus describes are genuine paintings and not his own literary construction, and this is by no means a given – have undertaken not so much to create works of their own, but to augment the Classical Greek literary record.

[59] Froma I. Zeitlin, for instance, has noted that pantomime was very firmly rooted in,
"The expanding visual culture of the post-classical era."
See. F.I. Zeitlin 'Visions and Revisions of Homer,' *Being Greek Under Rome,* 2001, 205.

[60] Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence,* 2007, 47.

[61] Pindar *Ol 6.1.3,* Pindar *Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes.* W.H. Race (trans) Loeb, 1997.

But this was especially so of pantomime. I have cited previously the modern teacher of writing for the theatre Stuart Spenser and his observation that we listen to a play and we watch a film.[63] Pantomime with its unique semiotic system of gesture and movement can be thought of as the ancient world's version of cinema in that it was an almost entirely visual medium eliciting from its audience in the first instance visceral rather than analytical responses, and its devotees were highly educated in 'reading' the stories the pantomime sought to display. In fact of all the attempts scholars have made to create a picture of what pantomime was 'like' the only real point of agreement they have been able to reach is that it was an overwhelmingly visual art form.

> *"When the dancers having arranged their overall appearance (schema) in the shape of Apollo or Pan or a bacchant retain these attitudes like figures in a painting."*[64]
>
> *"Shall I address you as a painter? You draw many actions, using instead of colours a hand that creates many a colour."*[65]
>
> *"Now to the arts and crafts and their production. The imitative arts, painting, sculpture, dancing, pantomime gesturing – are, largely earth-based: they follow models found in sense since they copy forms and movement and reproduce seen symmetries, they cannot therefore be referred to that higher sphere except indirectly, through the Reason-Principle in humanity."*[66]

However, despite Libanius' observations paralleling the educative value of viewing statues with those of attending pantomime performances,[67]

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[62] Horace, *car* 3.30. 1-2 Horace *Odes and Epodes.* N. Rudd (trans) Loeb, 2004.
[63] Of course we also watch a play and listen to a film, but the point remains that film is essentially a visual medium and theatre an aural one and that primarily what we learn in attendance at either of these we are shown in the one instance and told in the other.
[64] Plutarch *Moralia* 747c.
[65] Aristaneteus *Letters* 1.26.7.11
[66] Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.9.11

> *"Further, if looking at statues of gods makes men more self-disciplined by the sight, the dancers allow you to see them on stage, not representing them*

not all the reactions elicited by a work of art, or the performances of a pantomime (or a mime for that matter) could hope to be thought of in this way. The line between some types of art and pornography, for instance, has always been a fine one, often regarded as being 'in the eye of the beholder.'[68]

This leads us to what Goldhill has called the concept of the 'erotic gaze'.[69] The simplest way of looking at it is to say that viewing an object for which one had desire was seen as tantamount to physical, carnal relations. For Greek pagans this was most comprehensively expressed in Achilles Tacitus' novel *Leucippe and Cleitophon.* At 1.9.4. Cleinias, Cleitophon's house mate says:

> "*You do not know what a thing it is when a lover is looked at. It has a greater pleasure than the Business. For the eyes receive each other's reflections and impress from there little images as in mirrors. Such an emanation of beauty flowing down from them into the soul is a kind of copulation at a distance. This is not far from the intercourse of bodies. For it is a novel kind of embrace of bodies."*

For the Christians as we shall examine in Chapter IX this led via Matthew 5.28[70] to the concept that anyone who looked at a woman with lustful thoughts had committed an act of adultery, they had already 'lain with the whore' in their mind as John Chrysostom would put it in reference to the viewing of the performances of the mime actresses.

What this meant for pagans and Christians alike was that if the creator if the image is responsible for the interpretations that may be applied to the image, then anyone who displays himself (or more commonly in the case of the mimes 'herself') before the public for money is sexually available because

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> *in stone, but rendering them in himself, so that not even the sculptor would yield first place to the dancers in a judgement of beauty in this respect."*

Libanius *Oration* 64.116

[68] The pornography Tiberius, for instance, was allegedly addicted to was by all accounts finely wrought and anatomically accurate.

[69] Goldhil, 'The Erotic Eye,' *Being Greek Under Rome,* 2001, 157.

[70] *"But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after he hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."*

one of the interpretations of such a display is inevitably that they are. The linking of pantomime and this concept of the 'erotic gaze' would be one of the main causes of its ultimate demise.

How does metamorphosis fit into this paradigm of a resurgence of Greek cultural identity? We saw in Chapter VII when we looked at Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* how there had been a reawakening of interest in the theme in late Hellenistic poetry that almost certainly inspired Nonnus himself. If we accept that the Second Sophistic arose as a way for Greeks to deal with the changed circumstances of their world under Roman domination, then the same must be said of the renewed interest in the tales of metamorphosis. In Chapter I we looked at the way in which tales of this sort became a tool by which Greeks tried to explain the constantly changing nature of the physical world as they saw it. In other words the Roman conquest of Greece brought about a metamorphic state. In the same way the rise of the visual culture that worked in parallel with the oratory of the sophists is a description of metamorphosis. Leonard Barkan[71]has argued that *ekphrasis,* the description of a work of art as a rhetorical exercise such as we see in Philostratus stood beside metamorphosis,

> "As a key to the complex and celebratory rhetoric concerned with the instability of reality."

It is possible to go so far as to suggest that given the way in which so many of the ekphrastic descriptions that come to us concentrate not on the frozen image presented by the painter or the sculptor, but the way in which it represents an in-between state bridging what has happened and what will happen they are, in effect, accounts of metamorphosis.

It is arguable the sort of cultural vacuum the sophists and the pantomimes sought to fill, which can be seen as a vacuum of identity as much as it was one of culture, provided the perfect environment for the survival and then rise of Christianity. Gilhus, Shumate and Tatum have all noted the way in which in Tatum's words:

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[71] Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh,* 1986, 10.

> "Conversion to belief in some kind of transcendental authority was a familiar occurrence in the lives of sophists of the Roman Empire."[72]

As leading sophists who fit the pattern he lists Aelius Aristides, Dio Chrysostom and Apuleius. And as we have previously noted conversion is, for a person living in the real world where the mythological powers of the gods are just that – the stuff of myth – conversion was the most profound form of metamorphosis knowable.

[72] J.H. Tatum, *Apuleius and the Golden Ass.* Ithaca N.Y., 1979, 42.

Chapter IX

Vicisti Galilaee[1] - Pantomime's Fall from Grace.

We have seen in our discussion of metamorphosis and the associated concepts of metempsychosis and metensomatosis how they would come under assault from Christian thinkers and eventually lose their role as a means of explaining man's role in and relationship to a cosmos ruled, no matter what the philosophic tradition of Plato and Aristotle might say regarding their providential nature, by gods who were increasingly perceived as indifferent, at best, to the fate of ordinary humans.

By the time Nonnus wrote the *Dionysiaca* he did so for an audience the *majority* of whom were no longer expected to regard the literality of the tales as a given or even a possibility.[2]

Pantomime in the mid to late Roman and early Byzantine periods experienced a fate that paralleled that of the metamorphosis tales – paralleled it in the sense that the grounds for the attacks that would be made upon it by Christian thinkers were in a number of significant ways identical to those they would make upon the mythological tales they had inherited from pre-Christian Greece and Rome, but diverged from it in the sense that metamorphoses tales were an *idea* that could be addressed on religious and philosophic grounds and relegated to the level of by-gone literature and superstition, whereas pantomime and its practitioners were a physical reality that would require, on occasion, physical remediation.

Almost from the moment of its arrival at the court of Augustus, pantomime was under attack – firstly, as we have previously discussed, on the grounds of a lack of artistic merit and then, increasingly on moral grounds and in the Christian period for its subject matter which, because it drew its themes primarily from mythology, was seen as promoting paganism. That it should

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[1] Attributed to the Emperor Julian.

[2] Richard Buxton, as we have seen, has written extensively on the vexed question of just how seriously the ancients regarded the tales. I am working here from an assumption, and it must be stressed that it can only be regarded as an assumption, that at the time Ovid wrote the majority of the Graeco-Roman population – as opposed to his *audience*, which even in public readings would have been composed of a more literate city-based demographic – would have believed. By the time Nonnus wrote, five centuries later, although the 'hang-over' of paganism had been by no means purged, the believers were almost certainly in the minority.

survive seven hundred years of attack before its final banning at the Council in Trullo is a tribute to the resilience of its practitioners, who would increasingly face periods of proscription prior to this final act of extinction,[3] and also to the devotion of its audiences.[4]

Dance has always been a suspect art form. Even in relatively modern times the arrival in the first years of the nineteenth century of the Waltz – a dance that required men and women to put their arms around one another – was a scandal. Even more so was the Cancan some fifty years later. The Charleston and Rock and Roll elicited similar responses from church leaders. In fifth-century BCE Athens, as we have seen, the belief that a knowledge of choral dance was the mark of an educated man was tempered by a fear of the excesses that would result from a surrender to the 'frenzy' of the Bacchic dances in honour of Dionysus. Even before the arrival of Bathyllus and Pylades at Rome dance was a commonly used metaphor for weakness of character and dissolute living.[5]

Ismene Lada-Richards[6] has suggested that pantomime was a genre that lost favour with the elites as it became more popular with the masses – that it became 'trivialised.' This may have as much to do with the steps pantomimes themselves took to expand their fan-base. The history of performance genres for which we have more exact records suggest that when they move from being the province of an elite audience they tend to 'de-intellectualise' themselves in order to accommodate the newer, expanded audience. Cause and effect in this process is not always easy to establish. In the modern era the causal link to the greater financial gain to be had from an expanded audience base (what Adorno called 'The Culture Industry') is reasonably clear. It is not

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[3] We will briefly examine in the conclusion to this work the evidence to suggest a possible, albeit limited, continuation of the genre beyond the seventh century.

[4] The use of the plural is deliberate. Over its seven hundred years of unequivocal existence pantomime's 'fan base' changed markedly from the elite who gathered in Augustus' dining hall to the rowdies of Constantinople and Antioch who came to the theatre looking for any excuse to riot.

[5] Perhaps epitomised by Cicero's famous comment in *Pro Murena* that a man only danced when drunk. Generally speaking, dance at Rome was something that seems to have been regarded as having an important role in ritual and religious festivals, but was not something to be indulged in for pleasure – especially not by the aristocracy and most especially by women of the aristocratic classes.

[6] I. Lada-Richards, 'Was Pantomime 'good to think with,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008, 294.

so easy to make this claim for pantomime. The social and very often financial advantages for a pantomime in maintaining a smaller audience of elites would seem to outweigh any gains to be had performing on a larger stage. What is almost certain, however, is that following the success of Pylades and Bathyllus the numbers of those trying to make a name for themselves at Rome would have proliferated. We have accounts from the second and third centuries of the common era (below) of performances by some very indifferent pantomimes indeed.[7] It seems reasonable to assume that this dilution of standards, other than at the very highest level, may well have begun at a very early point in pantomime's Roman history.

One of the strongest arguments we have for conjecturing a proliferation of pantomimes is the sheer number of theatres in existence in the Roman world. According to Edith Hall,

> "We know of around 170 theatres in Italy and Siciliy, and considerably more that have been found in the provinces, from Lisbon (Olisipo) in the west and Catterick in the north to Comona in Cappadocia. No fewer than fifty three theatres are attested for one of the six African provinces - Africa Proconsularis."[8]

When we add to this Pausanias' famous comment[9] that Panopeus was scarcely worth being called a city because it had no theatre, a picture emerges of a widespread theatrical life throughout the empire at a time when the

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[7] Perhaps the most famous account of sub-par pantomimes at work comes once more from Lucian – at *Dance* 76.

> *"To illustrate, I should like to tell you about the cat-calls of a certain populace that is not slow to mark such points. The people of Antioch, a very talented city which especially honours the dance, keep such an eye upon everything that is done and it is said that nothing ever escapes a man of them. When a diminutive dancer made his entrance and began to play Hector, they all cried out in a single voice "Ho, there Astyanax! Where is Hector? On another occasion when a man who was extremely tall undertook to play Capaneus and assault the walls of Thebes, 'Step over the wall,' they said. 'You have no need of a ladder!' And in the case of a plump and heavy dancer who tried to make great leaps, they said, 'We beg you spare the stage!' On the other hand to one who was very thin they called out 'Good health to you,' as if he were ill."*

[8] E.Hall, 'Introduction,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, 2008,7.

[9] Pausanias, 10.47.

traditional genres of tragedy and comedy had all but disappeared. We know from Apuleius and Augustine that pantomime had been established in Carthage very early in the imperial period, and Julian's disparaging remark that mimes, flautists and pantomimes outnumbered ordinary citizens in Antioch in the mid-fourth century, indicate a long-established tradition in the East. Either these performers came from an even longer tradition of pantomime suddenly made fashionable by Augustus' passion for Pylades and Bathyllus, or they were performers from another genre (almost certainly mime) who had quickly upskilled to meet the new demand – in which case, given the skill level required of a successful pantomime and the years of training Libanius tells us were involved, there would have been some very indifferent performances and a wide disparity of styles.

The role of Antioch (above) in fostering theatrical life, particularly pantomime, in the late imperial period is worthy of a study in itself. It was almost certainly at Antioch that Lucian wrote his seminal defence of pantomime as did Libanius his, and it is not hard to conclude that they took their thematic inspiration from what was a common feature of everyday Antiochene life. According to John Malalas (admittedly a notoriously unreliable source) Commodus' decree for the provisioning of the city included a stipulation that called for public support of mimes and pantomimes. Perhaps more than any other art form pantomime thrived or declined according to the predilections of the emperor of the time and if Malalas is to be believed in this instance performers in Antioch may well have benefited from a particular window denied other centres. Whatever the reason *something* was happening there on a scale that does not seem to have been replicated elsewhere. Blake Leyerle, for instance, has done a provoking analysis of mosaic floors in the ruins of a number of grand villas in the up-market suburb of Daphne that raises the intriguing possibility that conventional stage drama was still being performed there several centuries after it is generally considered to have died out in the Roman West.[10]

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[10] See Blake Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives. John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage.*

In Chapter III we mentioned the elder Seneca's enthusiasm for pantomime – an enthusiasm scholars generally regard to have been shared by his son, despite his seemingly disparaging remark that Romans were perfectly happy to allow the schools of philosophy to fall into abeyance but would despair and the death or illness of a pantomime.[11]

Plutarch, while happy to detail the history of pantomime, as we have previously seen, was probably closer the general attitude of the elite when he said:

> *"They throw one's soul into greater confusion than any amount of drink."*[12]

Plutarch notwithstanding, for an accounting of the relationship between pantomimes and the imperial court over the century following Augustus we are almost totally dependent, as one might have expected, upon Suetonius and Tacitus. Of the two Suetonius is the more measured.[13] Tacitus is never quite able to hide his indignation at the affront to Roman morality presented by the liaisons between the successors of Pylades and Bathyllus and those of Augustus. Even from Suetonius' more even-handed depictions it is easy to see how quickly the pantomimes acquired, among those who were not enamoured of them, the reputation for licentiousness that would dog the profession over the centuries to come.

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[11] See, A. Zanobi, *Seneca's Tragedies and the Aesthetics of Pantomime.* Bloomsbury, London, New York, 2014. B. Zimmermann, *Seneca und der Pantomime.* (trans)Hall, *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 218-226.

[12] Plutarch, *Moralia* 712. He is even more savage in his attack on mime, maintaining they:

> *"Ought not to be seen even by the slaves who fetch our shoes, if their masters are in their right minds."*

[13] That said, as Karl Galinsky points out, Suetonius is particularly severe on Augustus – presumably for his role in initiating the imperial fascination with the genre.

> "Suetonius spends an incomparably larger chunk of the Augustan *vita* – three chapters in all 43-45 on the princeps' predilection for a lavish sponsorship of mindless *spectacular,* the *plurimus horas* of his attendance there, and his concern especially for the conduct of the pantomime players. It transformed myth and tragedy into the non-demanding and glitzy fast food of show business. Because pantomime is 'sub-literary' it gets only random mentions in our history of Roman literature.

K. Galinsky, 'Ovid's Metamorphoses and Augustan Cultural Thematics,' in Hardie et al, *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses.* Cambridge Philological Society, 1999, 104.

It is with Caligula that the unseemly record begins. Tacitus' account of this period is, or course, lost. We can only speculate, given his dislike of the pantomime and the dancers' relationship to imperial circles, what he would have made of the events described by Suetonius

> "*On those he loved he bestowed an almost insane passion. He would shower kisses on Mnester the comedian,*[14]*even in the theatre; and if anyone made the slightest noise during a performance, Gaius had the offender dragged from his seat and beat him with his own hand*."[15]

The story of Messalina's passion for this same Mnester is well known. Claudius, seemingly, initially connived at it, even ordering the doomed man to obey the empress' wishes and making public excuses for the dancer's non-appearance on occasions at which he was supposed to dance when everyone in the audience knew it was his liaison with Messalina that had prevented his attendance, but eventually the ridicule to which this made him subject was too much even for this most hen-pecked of emperors and he had him executed.[16]

But it was with Nero, who himself dearly wanted to be a performer,[17] that imperial pantomime-mania reached its peak. Tacitus, once again was the more strident of the two great historians in his disapproval. In fact his first statement concerning Nero runs:

> "*Nero had long desired to drive in four-horse chariot races. Another equally deplorable ambition was to sing to the lyre like a professional*."[18]

The precedent of noble-born people demeaning themselves by performing on stage was in fact set by Julius Caesar when he compelled the knight and writer of mimes, Laberius, to appear on stage in one of his

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[14] In fact a pantomime, lover of Caligula, Poppaea Sabina the Elder and reluctantly, but fatally Messalina. Once more Robert Graves is being somewhat cavalier in his translations of theatrical terminology.
[15] *Suetonius: The Twelve Caesars. Caligula* 55. R. Graves, (trans) Penguin Classics, London 1957/1979 ,179.
[16] Tacitus, *Annals.* xi.27.
[17] Nero's aspirations, however, are generally considered to have been towards performing as a *rhapsode* rather than a pantomime. (See below for qualification to this.)
[18] *ibid,* xii.1.

productions, but according to Tacitus, Nero took this to new heights when he then tried to mitigate his own dishonour by offering inducements to impoverished aristocrats to join him on the stage.[19] The floodgates were open. But it is for the pantomime that Tacitus would reserve his most savage invective.

> "*Traditional morals, already gradually deteriorating*
> *have been utterly ruined by this* <u>*imported laxity*</u>*. It makes*
> *everything potentially corrupting and corruptible flow*
> *- foreign influences demoralize our young men*
> *into shirkers, gymnasts and perverts."*[20] (Underlining mine)

While it is entirely possible that Tacitus is simply continuing the common Roman practice of maintaining that anything that was seen as posing a threat to 'traditional' Roman values was imported (and usually from Greece) and this could be more pro forma than a genuine opinion, it is interesting that he is another quite early in pantomime's Roman history who challenges its Roman origins.

Significantly, Tacitus also charges Nero with the politicising of the claques – something that would have wide-ranging consequences over the next six hundred years.[21]

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[19] *ibid* ,xii.4.
[20] *ibid,* xii.20.
[21] The claques were professional audiences hired, primarily by pantomimes, to rouse the rest if the audience and 'lift' the performance through the use of rhythmic chanting, much like the 'Barmy Army' who follow English cricket teams in modern times, or crowds at football games. They were very skilled at their job. A normal audience member would smell a rat if applause was offered up at inappropriate times. Claques were there to ensure the applause *did* come when it should and that it was sustained perhaps longer than was really justified. The skill of the professional claquer is perhaps best illustrated by the longevity of the profession. (Opera companies were still using them in the 1920s. The modern phenomenon of performers who 'warm-up' audiences for live T.V. shows is arguably derived from them as well.) In Tacitus we have this description of Percennius who inspired the revolt of the Pannoninan Legion.

> "*There was a man called Percennius in the camp. Having*
> *become a private soldier after being a professional applause-leader*
> *in the theatre, he was insolent of tongue and experienced in*
> *inciting crowds to cheer actors." Annals* ii.2

It would be Constantine who completed this process of politicising the claques, by hiring them to heap praise on him on important state occasions. In Eunapius we have:

> "*For the sake of applause in the theatres Constantine*
> *organised bouts of vomiting men because he loved praise*."

Eunapius: Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists. Wilmur C. Wright, (trans) Loeb, 1921, 452.

> "*Now, too, was formed the corps of Roman Knights known as the Augustiani. These powerful young men, impudent by nature or ambition, maintained a din of applause day and night, showering divine epithets on Nero's beauty and voice*."[22]

Suetonius is only marginally less scathing of Nero's theatrical ambitions:

> "*Just before the end Nero took a public oath that if he managed to keep his throne he would celebrate his victory with a festival, performing successively on water-organ, flute and bagpipes, and when the last day came he would dance the role of Turnus in Virgil's Aeneid.*[23]*He was supposed to have killed the actor Paris*[24] *because he considered him a serious professional rival.*"[25]

Suetonius does offer us, however, one of the few accounts[26]we have of the training undertaken by a professional (or would-be professional) performer in those days. It is generally considered there is no reason to assume Suetonius is exaggerating the lengths to which Nero was prepared to go.

> "*Then, little by little, he began to study and practice himself, and conscientiously undertook all of the usual*

Constantine could scarcely have known what a monster he was creating. The power he had unintentionally given the claques could not easily be rescinded. The claques could not only promote applause, but they could withhold it. Alan Cameron cites Libanius having to warn a new governor of Antioch how the claque in that city worked and how best to deal with it. Many a governor who failed to learn how to deal with his local claque found himself being greeted with a resounding silence on occasions of great civic importance or, worse still, his rivals being meet with wild applause. See: Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium.* Oxford University Press, 1976, 234.

[22] *Annals* xii.5

[23] Despite the generally held view (cited above) that Nero did not aspire to be a pantomime, this and the reference to Paris (below) suggests that he did. Grave's reference to Paris as an actor is less than helpful in this respect. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that despite training as a *rhapsode* (below) primarily, such was Nero's ego there was no artistic endeavour he felt he couldn't master. This quote also opens the possibility that Virgil's Aeneid had been adapted for pantomime. (See: Costas Panayotakis, 'Virgil on the Popular Stage,' *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 185-197.

[24] Again a pantomime.

[25] *Suetonius.* Nero 54

[26] We have already discussed Libanius' description of the sort of training a potential pantomime would have had to undergo.

> *exercises for strengthening and developing the voice. He would lie on his back with a slab of lead on his chest, use enemas and emetics to keep down his weight and refrain from eating apples and every other fruit considered deleterious to the vocal chords. Ultimately, though his voice was feeble and husky he was pleased enough with his progress to begin to nurse theatrical ambitions.*"[27]

The dance made a further appearance in Suetonius' account of Titus' brief reign...

> "*His dinner parties, far from being extravagant, were very pleasant occasions, and the friends he chose were retained in office by his successors as key men in their own service and in national affairs. He sent Queen Berenice away from Rome, which was painful for both of them, and broke off relations with some of his favourite boys – though they danced well enough to make a name for themselves on the stage, he never attended their public performances.*"[28]

... before making a last appearance in either historian's record in Suetonius' account of the excesses of Domitian.

> "*She had presented Domitian with a daughter during his second consulship and the following year with a son. But he divorced her because she had fallen in love with Paris*[29]*the actor.* "[30]

And:

> "*He executed one beardless boy, in distinctly poor health, merely because he happened to be a pupil of the actor*[31]*Paris*

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[27] *Nero* 20
[28] *Suetonius,* 299.
[29] The second of three leading pantomimes to take the name.
[30] *Suetonius,* 305.
[31] That Graves as recently as the 1950s and Michael Grant revising his translations in the late 1970s should so consistently fail to differentiate between pantomimes and the more all-purpose 'actor' despite, as we have seen in the past few pages the overwhelming evidence that

> *and closely resembled him in his style of acting and appearance*."[32]

Pliny would be the next to take up the cudgels against pantomime in his letter praising Trajan for reversing the theatrical excesses that had been common under Domitian.

> "*And what place remained ignorant of wretched flattery, when the praises of emperors even at games and opening events were celebrated or danced and corrupted into every kind of low theatre by effeminate voices, rhythms and gestures? What was disgraceful was that they were praised at the same time in the Senate and on the stage, by actor and consul. You, on the other hand, have removed the arts of the theatre from your worship*."[33]

Margaret Molloy has given us a comprehensive study of the relationships between pantomimes and the later emperors in her book *Libanius and the Dancers.* Briefly summarising, we can say that we know from Pliny's *Panegyric 54* that Trajan once again banned the pantomimes from Rome in 99CE.[34] This was despite Trajan apparently being in a relationship with a pantomime himself.[35] He felt confident enough after his victory over Decebalus, however, to bring them back again in 103.

Although the sources tell us little of the activity of the pantomimes over the next thirty years or so – mainly because neither Hadrian nor Antonius Pius were fans – we do know they were still around. Alan Cameron,[36]citing the astrologer Vettius Valens, draws our attention to a pantomime who was imprisoned in 123,

> "Somewhere, unfortunately, unspecified."

Mnester and Paris were dancers, is surely an index of just how neglected this field of study has been until relatively recent times.

[32] *ibid* 310.

[33] Pliny; *Panegyricus* 54.1.

[34] They had briefly been restored by Nerva after Domitian had banned them because of his wife's affair with Paris.

[35] One of the succession of Pyladeses.

[36] Cameron, *Circus Factions,* 1976,224.

after being held responsible for having caused a riot, then he was released after popular pressure was brought to bear.[37]

The next emperor to display an interest in pantomimes – and once more an interest that, in keeping with the pattern displayed by a number of his imperial predecessors, was excessive to an extent that gave fuel to pantomime's critics – was Lucius Verus, notorious for his licentious lifestyle and the fact that he took a small army of performers with him wherever he travelled. Unrest on the Eastern Frontier forced him to take up station in Antioch for four years where, according to his critics, he passed up a number of opportunities to gain the upper hand in the war, preferring to spend his time at the theatre.

Fronto takes over from Pliny as our most useful source for this period. In the letters that passed between him and Verus' successor, Marcus Aurelius, they exchange views on the respective talents of yet another Pylades and a further dancer named Apolaustus. It is from this series of correspondence that we learn something of the philosopher emperor's distaste for the dance. Although his objections are laid out in his typically analytic manner[38] the fact that, as Molloy points out,[39] Marcus' wife Faustina was another who kept alive the tradition of imperial consorts who had extra-marital relations with pantomimes, may have been a contributing factor.[40]

The pendulum swung back again with the arrival of Commodus. Hollywood has made much of his infamous death fighting in the arena, but almost nothing of the fact that like Nero he regularly entertained his inner

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[37] Incidences of pantomimes being brought to book for riots following their performances occur again and again over pantomime's seven hundred year history. Unfortunately we are never told precisely why it was that the pantomimes were considered to have been the instigators of the riots. It is difficult to conceive of the dancers themselves as 'political animals' in the way many performers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have become – especially when we consider that the consequences of them being held to account for inciting civil unrest included banishment, with the subsequent loss of income, and/or public flogging. A more likely explanation would seem to be the age old conflation of the singer and the song, especially when we consider that so many of the tales from which the pantomimes took their themes involved the evils of misused tyranny.

[38] Essentially to the effect that there is nothing so remarkable about the dancers' skill that should promote the time wasting and fanaticism of their followers.

[39] Molloy, *Libanius and the Dancers*, 1996, 59.

[40] The fact that Commodus was so unlike his father and his Nero-like desire to perform (below) coupled with Faustina's liaisons with pantomimes was a source of at least one of the many rumours that surrounded his parentage.

circle by doing his own singing and dancing. Like Nero, Claudius and Domitian he was also responsible for the execution of a pantomime – the fourth to have taken the stage name Apolaustus.

The dangers involved in being a dancer beloved of the imperial family continued unabated. The sons of Septimus Severus, Geta and the infamous Caracalla, were notorious for their indolent, luxurious lifestyles as princes. Herodian maintains they had:

> *"An excessive enthusiasm for the theatre and chariot racing and dancing."*[41]

Unfortunately for the performers favoured by Geta the enthusiasm of the brothers for the dance was matched only by their hatred of one another, Caracalla not simply being content to murder his brother to secure the throne, but undertaking wholesale slaughter of the performers Geta had supported.

Not that Caracalla's own assassin was much different. If Herodian is to be believed Macrinus was another pantomime-lover who totally ignored the business of government affairs while wasting time at the theatre.

> *"He indulged regularly in a life of luxury by wasting his time on mime shows and performers of all the arts and rhythmic dancing."*[42]

Then came one of the most remarkable emperors of all – remarkable in the sense of his total unsuitability to be emperor and in the sense that he took the imperial court's descent into an all-singing, all-dancing, farce to new lows. This was Marcus Aurelius Antonius, better known to posterity as Elagabalus. According to the anonymous writer of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* charged with recording his exploits, the 14 year old emperor,

> *"Could sing and dance, play the pipes and the pandura*[43] *and he also performed on the organ."*[44]

Perhaps worse still:

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[41] *Herodian* Vol 1.10.3, C.R. Whittaker (trans) Loeb 1969, 327.
[42] *Herodian* Vol 2.4.
[43] A form of mandolin or lute.
[44] *Historia Augusta Vol II, Antonius Elagabalus* xxxii.8 D. Magie (trans),Loeb 1924, 171.

> *"As prefect of the guard he appointed a dancer who had been on the stage at Rome."*[45]

He would eventually, at the age of 18, be dragged from the latrine in which he had taken refuge and his body tied to weights and thrown in the Tiber so it could never be found and buried – such was the disgust his lifestyle during his four year reign had provoked.

The last references we have to pantomime being linked to the imperial court occur in the even briefer reign of Carus, who according to his biographer gave a series of games at which more than a thousand pantomimes performed.[46]

The status pantomimes held at this point, at least in the eyes of this particular historian can perhaps best be indicated by the company in which he includes them.

> *"He filled the palace with actors and harlots, pantomimists, singers and pimps."*[47]

He sums up his account with a salutary warning for future emperors against such behaviour.

> *"All of this I have put into writing in order that future givers of spectacles may be touched by a sense of shame and so be deterred from cutting off their lawful heirs and squandering their inheritances on actors and mountebanks."*[48]

While historians like Tacitus, Suetonius and Herodian and aristocrats like Seneca and Pliny were understandably concerned with the impact of pantomime upon the integrity and reputation of the imperial family, satirists and poets were more interested firstly in the competition pantomime presented to the 'serious' art forms and secondly to the challenge it presented to public morality.

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[45] *ibid* xii.1.131.
[46] *ibid Carus* xix. 2.
[47] *ibid Carus* xvi.7.
[48] *ibid Carus* xxi.1.

Ovid was perhaps the first in the existing sources to note the effect pantomime was having upon a more general public outside imperial and aristocratic circles. In *Fasti iii*, as cited earlier, he describes a crowd returning home from celebrating the festival of Anna Perenna.

> *"There they sing the ditties they have picked up in the theatres, beating time to the words with nimble hands, they set bowls down, and they dance lubberly, while the spruce sweethearts skip about with streaming hair."*[49]

While this might seem fairly innocuous stuff by modern standards, we must remind ourselves that by those of a traditional Roman the sight of ordinary people singing and dancing on the streets would have been nothing short of scandalous. For the ones who saw themselves as upholders of those standards[50] the events Tacitus describes as having occurred early in the reign of Tiberius must have seemed an inevitable consequence.

> *"Disorders connected with the stage had started in the previous year, and now their violence increased. There were civilian casualties, soldiers too, and a company-commander were killed, and a colonel of the guard injured, in keeping order and protecting officials from disrespect."*[51]

The phenomenon of the pantomime riots which would dog it throughout its history had begun.

The relationship between the dancers and the imperial family was not the only complaint Tacitus had against pantomime. He was also deeply

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[49] Ovid, *Fasti* iii 535-40. J.G. Fraser (trans) Loeb 1931,161.

[50] Ismene Lada-Richards, *Silent Eloquence*, 2007,64. points out:

> "In the first place the theatre itself did not have and easy relationship with Roman culture. Singled out by jealous guardians of cultural boundaries and indigenous morality as an 'imported licentiousness' it was feared as the abominable off shoot of foreign (Greek and Etruscan) decadence, which had the power to 'overthrow ancestral morality from its foundations' and cause the youth of Rome to degenerate into lovers of 'indolence and disgraceful erotic passions' (Tacitus *Annals* 14.20.4)

[51] *Annals* 1.77.

concerned with the tendency of orators of his time to ape techniques borrowed from the theatre – something, as we have seen, Cicero and Quintilian also cautioned against – and was appalled that some orators actually boasted that their speeches could be sung or danced to as if this was something to be proud of when they should be ashamed.[52] It was his opinion that introducing,

> *"the rhythms of stage dancing in one's own speeches, not only does not benefit an orator, but is scarcely worthy of a man."*[53]

Initially the attacks launched by the satirists (Juvenal being pre-eminent) concentrated upon the challenge pantomime represented to the purveyors of quality literature and the effect the dancers had on the female members of the audience.

> *"The city is all agog when Statius agrees to fix a recital date. He's a sell-out, no one can resist that mellifluous voice, that ever-popular Theban epic of his: the audience sits there spellbound by such fabulous charm. Yet despite the cheers and the stamping Statius will starve, unless he can sell a libretto to Paris*[54]*, Director-in-Chief of Imperial Opera and Ballet, Paris, the carpet-knight maker, the jobber of high commands."*[55]

And:

> *"When pansy Bathyllus dances Leda, all fouettes and entrechats just watch the women. One can't control her bladder, another moans in drawn-out ecstasy as though she was coming."*[56]

It was not only poets like Statius who found themselves in competition with the pantomimes for what today we might call the entertainment buck. We have already seen in Chapter V how Apuleius as an orator deeply resented having to share venues with performers from the theatre, but Apuleius was far

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[52] Tacitus *Dialogue* 26.3.
[53] *ibid* 26.2.
[54] The name assumed by at least three of Bathyllus and Pylade's principal successors.
[55] Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires.* vi 63. P. Green (trans) Penguin Classics, 1967, 166.
[56] *ibid* 129.

from being alone among orators of the Second Sophistic in attacking pantomime.[57] The most famous of these is, of course, the tirade unleashed by Aelius Aristides,[58] which was the subject of Libanius' rebuttal (*Oration* 64. *On Behalf of the Dancers)* and very possibly the inspiration for Lucian's *On the Dance.* While Aristides took a number of different tacks in the various assaults he made upon the dance, it is difficult not to feel that underlying his attack and those of a number of his fellow sophists[59] was a deep sense of frustration that their audiences could not see that what they had to offer was so much more valuable in every sense of the word than the cheap thrills of the theatre.

> *"And this other thing as well; it is not fitting, I think, for the orator and the philosopher and all those involved in liberal education to please the masses in the same way*

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[57] Nor was he alone in lamenting the fact they had to share the theatre spaces. Dio Chrysostom for instance, was painfully aware that in the use of such spaces they had to play second fiddle to:

> *"mimes and pantomimes, best of men in beating the ground with their dancing and the riders of swift horses."*

Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.4 *(Speech to the Alexandrians.)*

And that it was very difficult for the sophist and his clearly more elevated material to stand out in such circumstances.

> *"It is not easy to cope with the din of so great a crowd, nor stand face to face with countless myriads of beings without song and a lyre, for this is indeed the antidote against the people of your city."*

ibid 32.20

Not all sophists seem to have regarded pantomimes as rivals, or at least as rivals worthy of contempt. Hadrian of Tyre famously delivered a funeral oration for the pantomime Paris equating his skills and virtues with those of a sophist. Glen Bowersock has suggested it may have been this endorsement by such a leading figure of the Second Sophistic that Aristides was trying to counter in his famous Oration 34.

> "As scholars have readily perceived that eulogist was none other than Aristides distinguished second-century contemporary Hadrian of Tyre. It is obvious that Aristides had protested bitterly because his eminent rival had treated Paris just as if he were a deceased sophist and even called him that. As far as Aristides was concerned Hadrian had sullied his reputation by an encomium of a whore."

G.W, Bowersock, 'Aristides and the Pantomimes,' in *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome and the Gods.* W.V. Harris and Brooke Holmes (eds) Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2008, 72.

> "In his austere preaching against corruption from watching lubriciousentertainments, Aristides sounds more like a Father of the Christian Church than the dedicated polytheist he was, the author of resplendent prose hymns to Olympian gods. Libanius by contrast, espouses with particular warmth a form of entertainment that we know he openly disliked and avoided. Subsequently he even undertook to terminate it in his native city of Antioch."

ibid 69.

[59] A title Aristides famously rejected for himself.

> *that these servile fellows do, the pantomimes and mimes and jugglers."*[60]

Eventually, once women began to perform as pantomimes[61] Christian moralists, in particular, would rail against their perceived effect upon male audience members and the threat this was seen to pose to traditional family life,[62]but for more than three centuries pantomime's opponents had already been concerned for the moral welfare of the male members of the audience. Accusations of effeminateness and the implication that the majority of the dancers were passive homosexuals and that by watching them young males ran the risk of being dragged into that way of life, was something pantomime would be dogged with over the entire course of the genre's history. It would reach fever pitch with the arrival of Christianity as a force to be reckoned

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[60] Aelius Aristides, *Oration* 22.3, in *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works.* C.A. Behr (trans) Leiden, 1981, 183.
Perhaps even more to the point is this from the famous *Oration* 34.

> *"Who is there who does not think he is better than any dancer? Or who would permit a mime to speak off-stage?"*

Only fragments of this oration remain to us and we are largely reliant on Libanius' rebuttal for our knowledge if what was said. If his accounting is accurate then it was fairly no-holds-barred stuff.

> *"It is the ruin of cities and households and whoever watches them is lost and his inability to escape from them is the worst of disasters."*

Libanius *Or.* 64.31.

> *"They, themselves, live dishonourably, and they corrupt the spectators by dragging them toward what it is worse (to do.)*

Libanius *Or.* 64.37.

> *"A nod of theirs is more capable of producing moral corruption than the war-engines of others are of forcing the surrender of a city."*

Libanius *Or.* 64.59.

[61] While there is evidence to suggest women mimes may have even pre-dated Augustus' accession to the imperial power, precise dating of the arrival of women on the pantomime stage is extremely difficult. (See, for instance, R. Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 2008, 44-71.) There are many reasons to discount the possibility that the Sorex referred to by Plutarch (Chapter III) was in fact a pantomime. If they had been performing when Tatian and Tertullian wrote their attacks on theatre in the first and second centuries CE, it seems highly unlikely that their erotic allure would not have been among the charges they laid against the theatre spectacles (as John Chrysostom would do on numerous occasions.) By 383 Amminanus Marcellinus (14.16.18) would claim as many as 3,000 *saltatrices* were permitted to remain behind at Rome to provide entertainment during the terrible famine of that year, and as we discussed in Chapter III there is ample epigraphic and literary evidence to suggest they were a common feature of the theatrical scene by that time.

[62] As Clement of Alexandria put it,

> "*We declare that not only the use, but the sight and hearing of these things is to be forbidden. Your ears have fornicated, your eyes have whored; your sight has committed adultery before you have embraced."*

Exhortation to the Greeks, IV.14.

with, but the charges were by no means restricted to Christian moralists. In Columella, for instance, we have:

> *"As if struck by thunder, we are lost in admiration of the gesture of the effeminate males, the reason being that with their womanish motion they feign the sex denied to men by nature and deceive the eyes of the viewer."*[63]

It would be the Christians who really hammered home the attack on this score however. In Tertullian we have:

> *"And so, the theatre's greatest charm is above all produced by its filth – filth which the actor of Atellan farces conveys by gestures, filth which the mime actor even exhibits by womanish apparel, banishing all reverence for sex and sense of shame so that they blush more readily at home than on the stage, filth, finally, which the pantomime experiences in his own body from boyhood in order to become an artist."*[64]

And from Cyprian's famous letter to the grammaticus Donatus, we have this:

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[63] Columella *On Agriculture 1. Preface* 15.. Harrison Boyd Ash (trans) Loeb, 1941.
Columella wasn't the only pagan writer unsure whether to praise or censure this facet of the pantomime performance. In the Latin anthology we find:

> *"Declining his masculine breast with a feminine inflection and moulding his pliant torso to suit either sex, the dancer enters the stage and greets the people."*

Latin Anthology 100. D.R. Shackelton Bailey (Loeb, 1982, 88-89.
And in Cassiodorus' letter in praise of the pantomime cited in Chapter III we have a hint of the same ambiguity.

> *"The same body portrays Hercules and Venus; it displays a woman in a man."*

Cassiodorus *Variae* 4.51. 7-9.
Other pagan writers were not so guarded. Lucian has Crato (admittedly so he can shoot him down) describe the dancers as *theludrian anthropon.* Pliny (*Pan* 46) refers to *effeminatues arêtes* and Apuleius *(Apol* 78*)* to *exossis et enervis.* (See J. Jory, 'The Drama of the Dance. Prolegomena to an iconography of the Imperial Pantomime.' in W.J. Slater (ed) *Roman Theatre and Society.* University of Michigan Press 1996.
The Emperor Julian in his attack on Antiochene theatre-goers, *Mispogon*, would say in a highly sarcastic vein:

> *"You ought to feel grateful to those who out of kindness of heart admonish you wittily in anapaestic verse to shave your cheeks smooth and then, beginning with yourself, first to show this laughter-loving people all sorts of fine spectacles, mimes, dancers, shameless women, boys who in their beauty emulate women, and men who have not only their jaws shaved smooth, but their whole bodies too."*

The Works of the Emperor Julian Mispogon 345D. Wilbur C. Wright (trans) Loeb, 1913.
[64] Tertullian, *Spectacles* 17.2,Kessinger Reprints, 20.

> *"Men are unmanned, all the honour and vigour of their sex is softened by a disgracefully enervated body and the most popular is the one who has most effectively broken the man down into the woman."*[65]

Further to this, the loose-fitting, free-flowing robes the dancers wore to enable the freedom of movement necessary for the athletic dance movements for which they were famous[66] were often described as being effeminate. Clement of Alexandria, for instance, speaks of:

> *"Curious vestments and appendages of fringes and elaborate motions of figures show the trailing of sordid effeminacy."*[67]

And in Tertullian we have:

> *"These features which are particular to and characteristic of the stage, that wantonness in gesture and posture they dedicated to Venus and Liber, deities both dissolute, the former by sex perversion and the latter by effeminate dress."*[68]

Rosie Wyles points out:

> "The seductive element in this feminine beauty left pantomime and its costume vulnerable to depiction in a negative light, e.g. in the *Codex Theodosianus* 2.17.11, where the costume is described as *humilis* – a term which in this context must mean morally low rather than cheap (silk was an expensive commodity.)[69]

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[65] Cyprian, *Ad Donatum* 8.11, Jean Molager (ed) Paris 1982, 181-83.
[66] And presumably also to facilitate, without the need to change costume, the numerous characters it was necessary to embody in a single performance. See R. Wyles, 'The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime*' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008.
[67] Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 2.11, William Wilson (trans) The Ante-Nicene Christian Library.
[68] *On the Spectacles* 10.8
[69] R. Wyles, 'The Symbolism of Costume in Ancient Pantomime,*' New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 85.

John Jory makes the cogent point that it is possible that this criticism was based upon the already perceived 'unmanliness of the artist',[70] and as Lucian has his *advocatus diaboli* Crato say,

> *"Watching a girlish fellow play the wanton with dainty clothing."*[71]

Libanius, would attempt to counter the argument that the costumes were a badge of effeminateness – or more specifically the more convoluted argument that the wearing of such apparel would, presumably through some form of osmosis, *make* one effeminate, by arguing that the same actors wore lion skins and played Heracles and various other heroes and by extension the same argument would suggest this should make them ultramasculine.[72] Logic of this sort did not have much effect upon pantomime's critics however. Those who portrayed heroes on stage were 'acting' and the female roles they played aligned with their true nature.

I do not find entirely plausible the suggestion mentioned in Chapter III that following the closing of the gymnasium ordinary members of the elite no longer experienced the training in flexibility that was obviously a hallmark of the pantomime's performance technique and therefore what they saw performed on stage gained an uncanny or 'unnatural' dimension. The writers we find in the sources were all obviously highly intelligent and educated men. Few of us today watching an Olympic gymnast at work will have experienced anything of the training they have undergone, but we are well aware of it. Libanius, as we have seen, was equally well aware of the training required to be a pantomime and the quote from Tertullian (above) shows that he at least had some idea of it as well. Nor do I find the arguments of scholars who suggested that a performer who moved and danced as a woman was somehow

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[70] See J.Jory, 'The Drama of the Dance. Prolegomena to an iconography of the Imperial Pantomime.,' *Roman Theatre and Society*, 1996.11.

[71] *Dance* 2. As with everything Lucian says, however, we must be guarded in accepting it as his true opinion. The same Lucian who would appear to be defending pantomimes against the accusation of effeminateness, would lay the same charge against fellow Sophists. In his *Professor of Rhetoric* 11, he describes his archetypal 'street smart' rhetorician as:

> *"An exquisitely beautiful fellow, a man with a shimmy in his walk, with his neck bent… with a womanish look in his eyes… an altogether soft guy."*

[72] *Or.* 64.53

seen as more dangerous than a traditional actor from tragedy or comedy who remained essentially motionless as he played the part of a woman entirely convincing. On the other hand our sources, being members of the elite, were quite likely to have moved in the same circles as number of the more famous pantomimes *off* stage and I suggest it may well have been the behaviour and mannerisms the dancers exhibited in their non-theatrical lives that made their stage mannerisms seem not merely the stuff of performance.

I mentioned earlier the advent of women pantomimes as a further cause for criticism in our sources. We do not see, however, the same unity between pagan and Christian writers on this issue as we do over the effeminateness of the male dancers.[73] Indeed many of the pagan writers enjoy the sexualised performances we find described in a number of the texts.[74] We have, for instance, from the *Greek Anthology* and attributed to Automedon:

> *"The dancing-girl from Asia, who executes these lascivious postures, quivering from her tender finger-tips not because she can express all variations of passion, or because she moves her pliant arms so softly this way and that, but because she can flutter even around a worn-out*

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[73] The ambiguity of Roman and Byzantine attitudes to female performers of both mime and pantomime was never easily resolved. Relatively early in the Roman period we have a famous account of the rather prudish Cato leaving the theatre before female mimes began what was by all accounts a highly sexualized performance in order not to inhibit his friend's and colleague's enjoyment of the spectacle, so clearly there was no unanimity of opinion at play there. I find this from Costas Panayotakis particularly interesting in this respect.

> "I argued elsewhere that the actors and actresses of the popular stage paradoxically played an important role in ensuring the perpetuation of the moral behavior of the elite women in the hierarchally structured Roman society. By means of their portrayal as negative social examples, mimes and pantomimes reinforced the status quo in terms of gender roles and indicated to men and women of the Roman elite the norms for morally proper and socially acceptable behavior."

C. Panayotakis, *Virgil and the Popular Stage. New Directions in Ancient Pantomime,* 2008, 189.

[74] It is important to remind ourselves of the entirely straight-forward pantomime performances by female dancers we saw described in Chapter III. It is all too easy to allow the attacks of John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria and Jacob of Sarugh to lead us to the conclusion that a female dancer automatically equates to a sexualized performance. That said, it seems undoubtedly true that, as Catherine Edwards has observed, it was generally considered that,

> "those who sell their bodies for public exhibition in the theatre or the arena are sexually available. All these bodies are subjected to uninhibited public gaze, subordinated to the desire of others."

Edwards, 'Unspeakable Professions. Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome,' *Roman Sexualities,* 1997, 85.

> *rod and is not put off by the wrinkles of age; she tongues it, she teases it, and kicking up her legs can bring it back from the dead."*[75]

John Chrysostom was easily the most vocal of the Church Fathers in his fulminations against the theatre – there are more than 40 of them in his extant writings. Perhaps the most savage of his arguments about the effect of female performers upon male audience members and by extension the sanctity of marriage comes in his pointedly named *Contra ludos et theatre. PG* 56-263-70.

> *"Even if you have not lain with the whore you have copulated with her in desire: and you have committed the sin in intention, not only at the moment, but also when the show ends and the actress exits, her image remains in your soul – her words, her gestures, her glances, her walk, her rhythm, the tone of her voice, her seductive look – and you return home with countless wounds."*

For the most part the civil authorities found themselves in a cleft stick, trapped between the *desire* to appease the Christian Bishops and the *need* to respect the rights of the general populace to be entertained. As Fronto, writing about the middle of the second century CE observed:

> *"The Roman people are held fast by two things above all; the corndole and the shows... the success of the government depends upon amusements."*[76]

However, the theatre riots which became increasingly prevalent after the theatre claques effectively merged with the factions of the Circus Colours – the Blues and the Greens most notoriously – eventually became something the civil authorities simply could not ignore.

We should be under no misapprehension as to just how serious these riots were. The early fifth century 'riot of the statues' according to Libanius

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[75] Automedon *GA* 5.129.
[76] *The Correspondence of Cornelius Fronto.* C.R. Haines (trans) Loeb, 1919, 216-17.

resulted in 3000 deaths and he had no doubt as to the cause, laying it at the feet of the claques who,

> *"Consider the dancers more important even than the sun, the moon or the clouds."*[77]

The death tally and the cause were confirmed by Marcellinus[78] who was in all probability a witness to the actual event. There were riots of a similar scale in Constantinople in 499/50 and in Rome in 509.

It was noted before that from Plutarch and Libanius we gain the impression that pantomimes, rather like a modern gymnast dismounting from the various apparatus upon which they compete, attempted to finish the performance in a static pose timed to end precisely as the music did and seemingly as a high point of the drama, leaving the audience, as it were, 'dangling' in a state of heightened emotion. This may be why it was that the pantomime rather than the more rough and ready performances of the mimes paradoxically came to be associated with post-performance violence. Klaus Neiiendam has gone so far as to say that mime performances actually had a 'calming effect' upon those who attended them. In other words the loud, boisterous comedy of the mimes provided their audiences with a release – a 'safety valve' as Neiiendam puts it[79] that was not available to the pantomime audiences.

While this may be true – and certainly there is evidence in Tacitus, as we have seen, that rioting occurred relatively early in pantomime's Roman history, it is undoubtedly the case that the problem was greatly exacerbated after the factions in effect took over the management of the performances.

The earliest evidence we have of the colours being actively engaged as supporters of the pantomimes is to be found in John Malalas[80] where he describes the presentation of dancers to the factions in Constantinople in 490 – apparently as an act of appeasement following a bout of rioting. While, as previously noted, much of Malalas is of dubious provenance, this is close

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[77] Libanius *Or*. XIX. 2.
[78] Amminanus Marcellinus xv 7 1-10
[79] Neiiendam pp 206-7
[80] John Malalas *Chronicle* 15.12.386

enough to his own period and sits well enough with other evidence for us to feel on this occasion reasonably comfortable in accepting its veracity. Suggestions have been made for an earlier date for the switch of allegiance by the *factionisti* from the hippodrome to the pantomimes – most notably centring on a curse tablet from Apheca in Syria which the original editor Audollent argued dated from the third century. Louis Robert however has argued strongly for a date in the second half of the fourth century at the earliest.[81]

The weakening of the situation of the pantomime which, following Justinian's withdrawal of state funding for the theatres in 526, was becoming increasingly precarious anyway, that came about as a result of the dancers being forced to align themselves with one or other of the colours, was not restricted to the guilt by association that came from the riotous and often extremely violent behaviour of the partisans. The colours had in every city in which the dancers performed replaced the quasi guilds which had hitherto afforded them a certain protection, collective bargaining power. This meant that negotiations for performance terms would henceforth be carried on by the faction leaders in each city – not the pantomimes or their representatives – if indeed they had representatives as such any longer.[82]

Malalas reports that in 520 each of the factions pleaded with the emperor to provide *them* – not the theatre troupe – with new dancers.[83] Similarly in Cassiodorus' *Variae* 1.20 we find King Theodoric requesting the noble leaders of the factions to choose the new Green dancer. The sort of independence we read of the dancers enjoying in the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius had long since passed.

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[81] See Cameron *Circus Faction,* 1976, 194.
Cameron adds:

> "The clearest evidence of the changed situation comes from the abundant Blue and Green graffiti, none of it earlier than the fifth century, in Asian and Syrian cities that had no hippodrome. Of these, where the inscriptions have been found *in situ* most conspicuous of these is Aphrodisias where acclamations of Blues and Greens have been found in both odeum and theatre."

ibid 194.

[82] In Chapter III we noted that pantomimes, at least in the early stages of their careers, were generally slaves – often owned by the leader of the troupe in which they performed. How this worked in practical terms under the new arrangements we can only speculate.

[83] Malalas. *Exec. De. Insid.* 170.3.

It is probably the strongest attestation yet of the continuing popularity of pantomimes among the general public even into the sixth and seventh centuries that despite provocations on the scale of the riots the civil authorities were never able to impose more than a temporary sequestration upon it. It would take a church council to bring about its final and apparently irrevocable banning.[84]

We have already seen how the presence of women on stage outraged a number of the most influential of the Church Fathers. Although there were a number of notable examples of female pantomimes particularly, possibly exclusively, in the Byzantine period,[85] it was mime, with its emphasis upon adultery themes[86] and other performances that seem to have been little more than striptease, that caused most outrage on this score.

For the pantomime it was the emphasis upon themes taken from pagan mythology, particularly those involving metamorphosis – the linkage I have argued throughout was pivotal to the success of the genre – which would make it so dangerous in the eyes of the Church Fathers.[87]

Thus in Jacob of Sarugh we have:

> *"See that I have shown you through actions, without wronging truth, that Satan means to set up paganism by means of the play."*[88]

And from Homily 5:

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[84] In the conclusion to this work I will briefly examine the evidence that pantomime, albeit in a highly restricted form may have survived the Council in Trullo.
[85] See Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 2007, 62-63.
[86] The idea that women not only performed in mimes in which clever young women cuckolded their older dim-witted husbands, but in effect took ownership of the ideas behind them, must have been deeply offensive to the elders of such a strongly patriarchal organization.
[87] It was not simply that the dancers were retelling pagan stories that incensed the Christian Fathers, the series of ritualized gestures that accompanied the performances and which were traditionally seen as evoking the pagan gods were possibly even more problematic. These included the carrying on a prop lightning bolt to symbolize Zeus or wearing a lion skin to represent Heracles. In addition certain gestures like the playing of an invisible lyre were used to symbolize Apollo and particular dances steps represented Pan or Dionysus.
[88] Jacob of Sarugh. *Homilies on the Spectacles of the Theatre*. *Homily* 3.

> *"And this very god (Apollo) loved a maiden (Daphne) and his lust was poured out after him because she would not do his bidding. And the god, they say, was running, but was not over-taking the girl; and when she was fleeing from before him he was not able to catch her... Shall these things be called virtuous? But if they are not why are they mimed? For it is on these things that the mimer of lying things meditates."*[89]

Tertullian was also in no doubt as to the link between paganism and the stage.

> *"And quite obviously, the arts of the stage are the patronage of Liber and Venus."*[90]

But it would be John Chrysostom who would lay out the Christian objection to the theatre themes pantomime had inherited from tragedy in most detail.

> *"Then their dramas were replete with adultery. One man loved his stepmother, another woman her stepson, and in consequence hanged herself. What else? Do you want to see a son married to his mother? This too happened among them, and what is terrible although it was done in ignorance, the god they worshipped did not prevent it, but allowed this outrage to nature to occur, even though the woman involved was a person of distinction. And if those, if for no other reason, yet for the sake of their reputation with the masses might have been expected to keep to virtue rushed headlong into vice what was likely to be the conduct of the greater part who live in obscurity?"*[91]

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[89] See Bowersock, *Hellenism in Antiquity*, 1996, 38.
"Jacob tells us, in effect, that Hellenism is what makes paganism flourish."

[90] *On the Spectacles* 10.8.

[91] John Chrysostom, *Hom in Tit 5.4. P.G.* 62.693. P.Scharf (trans) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series Vol* 13, New Advent Online Encyclopaedia.

When we look at the canons of the Council in Trullo that directly affect theatre it is the last in the sequence, Canon 62, that gives us our clearest indication that it was pantomime's link to paganism that was the greatest concern to the church leaders. Canon 62 banned the feast of March 1st at which women were permitted to dance in public. Also banned were the wearing of comic, tragic or satyr masks and the invocation of Dionysus at the time of the grape harvest. In addition men were forbidden to dress as women and women as men. When we consider that Canon 51 promulgated perhaps months earlier (given that the council ran for more than a year) had already banned mime, pantomime and wild beast shows outright, Canon 62 might on the surface seem a little redundant,[92]until one remembers that all of these had been banned on numerous occasions in the past, but had always managed to stage a comeback. Canon 62, therefore, I suggest, can be seen as the back-up plan. If they did manage to make a come-back in a generic form they would at least be stripped of the elements that were of the greatest concern to the Church Fathers – which in the case of pantomime were its links to the stories of Greek mythology. And there is evidence to suggest that mime did survive in some form or other, perhaps even as Klaus Neiiendam[93] has suggested, bubbling along at the level of street theatre or village fairs until its rebirth as the Commedia dell'Arte. Pantomime, however, has only one mention in the sources as a continuing performance genre and that I believe is likely to have been a result of the age-old confusion between mime and pantomime.

Thus the link between pantomime and the stories of Greek Mythology, particularly those featuring metamorphosis, which I have argued throughout this thesis was its greatest source of strength, had ultimately destroyed it.

Conclusion.

Dance was an integral element of Greek social and religious life from the earliest times. It was a means by which they sought to propitiate the gods, and regulate the harvest, it was an important component of wedding

[92] The ban on women dancing in public doesn't seem directly to apply to theatre and as Rosie Wyles has demonstrated the costume of the pantomime, although often characterised as feminine, was essentially unisex, whereas cross-dressing was common in mime, so really only the references to the masks and the Feast of Dionysus are directly attributable to pantomime.
[93] Neiiendam p.135

celebrations and even a means by which they trained for war. It was present in Greek literature from the outset, having a recurring presence in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Philosophers such as Plato and Xenophon debated its merits – both being prepared to evoke Socrates to support their claims. It was often used as a metaphor to describe the motion of the stars and even to account for the origin of the universe itself.

By contrast, for a Roman *vir* to dance was considered unmanly - Cicero going so far as to maintain that a man only danced when drunk or deranged - and for his wife to show excessive enthusiasm in its pursuit unseemly.

One aspect of Greek dance, however, did take a hold in Roman society[94] - largely as a result of the enthusiasm of Augustus and several of his successors. It is undoubtedly true that some form of pantomime dancing existed at Rome for at least forty years prior to its supposed introduction by the performers Bathyllus and Pylades, either acting in concert or independently of one another. We shall probably never know what were the modifications to the artform made by these two performers, but they were sufficient for it to be known as 'the Roman dance' for much of its six hundred year history as the dominant performance genre of the ancient world.

Pantomime, like all dance forms, was regarded as suspect by the Roman elite virtually from the moment Augustus' patronage elevated it to its position of pre-eminence. There were four major charges that could levelled at it. The first of these was a perceived lack of artistic merit – particularly on the part of the libretti. When many Roman poets who were regarded as being of the highest quality struggled to find an audience for their work, Romans, including what many saw as a disturbing percentage of the female population, flocked to the pantomime's performances. The second, the complaints that the pantomime dancers were the first performers to achieve what in modern times would be described as super star status. Hitherto the level of public exposure a number of the leading pantomimes were able to achieve had been reserved for generals and senators. Those who attained to this level of public interest were

[94] The other possible exception being the military *pyrriche* which Dio Cassius' routinely describes as being performed at the ascension of emperors.

expected to be arbiters of social standards, which for the Roman elite meant nothing more or less than rigid adherence to codes of behaviour, dress, and deportment that had been long established and were strictly followed. Pantomime dancers, however, lived by nobody's standards but their own.

A third source of complaint was the access pantomime dancers were given to members of the imperial family.[95] It was bad enough that emperors should allow mere performers to eat with them and speak with an unprecedented level of freedom, but it became almost a norm of imperial life that emperor's wives, and indeed the occasional emperor himself, should be involved in sexual relationships with pantomimes.[96]

The fourth accusation levelled at pantomimes by those who saw themselves as the guardians of public morality was that they promoted effeminacy. It seems highly likely that a number of the pantomimes were homosexual – the reported incidences of pantomimes involved in sexual relationships with emperors themselves would suggest this to be so –but the impression was compounded by the realism with which pantomimes were able to embody the female roles that were such a large part of their repertoire[97] and the long flowing, colourful robes the dancers needed to wear in order to dance freely. These accusations of effeminacy would gain new currency and reach a virtual crescendo in the early Christian period in the writings of Tatian, Tertullian and Jacob of Serug.

Over time two new points of contention between pantomimes and the civil authorities would arise, the first of these was the so-called pantomime riots that were such a feature of the fourth and fifth centuries – especially after the partisans of the Blue and Green factions took virtual control of the organisation of pantomime performances. There had been disturbances at Rome from the very beginning of what we might call 'the pantomime period',

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[95] In the later Roman empire the fascination of Caracalla and Egalabalus in particular for pantomimes reached such a level of absurdity that it was at least a partial contributor to their overthrow.

[96] The excuses Claudius was forced to come up with to explain Messalina's non-attendance at public events when it was an open secret among the audience that she was in fact otherwise occupied with the dancer Mnester made him a constant figure of ridicule.

[97] As opposed to the stilted and ritualistic way such roles were performed by males in traditional tragedy.

but these in the East three centuries later were very serious affairs indeed occasioning large scale loss of life. It seems highly unlikely that the pantomimes themselves did anything to directly provoke the violence,[98] the consequences for them that inevitably followed the riots makes it highly illogical that they would. Rather, it seems that the factions who were constantly on the lookout for an excuse to foment violence saw the crowds that assembled for the performances as creating the ideal conditions for a flashpoint.

The last charge that would be laid at the pantomime's door came in the Christian period. This was the accusation that the dancers promoted paganism. As the pantomime's repertoire was drawn, as nearly as we can tell, entirely from Greek mythology this was very difficult to refute. Not even the claim that the tales were simply the legacy of a distant past that no-one took seriously any longer, nor that the plays of the great Athenian dramatists based upon the same tales were still being studied in the schools, could hold sway and pantomime would finally and irrevocably be banned under three canons of the Council in Trullo of 691-2.[99]

Everywhere the Greeks looked they saw a world subject to fluctuation and change. Whether it was the predictable cycle of the seasons, the movement of the tides and stars, or more extreme and wholly unpredictable events such as earthquakes, landslides, droughts or floods, for people yet to

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[98] Any more than a modern day footballer seeks to inspire the sort of violence that so often follows their matches.

[99] Just as the case with the retelling of the metamorphosis tales there is an argument to suggest pantomime may have persisted much longer than is generally considered to be the case. Authoritative scholars tell us that theatre ceased in the East from the mid-6th century onwards. It seems strange, however, that the Council in Trullo would find it necessary to ban that which had already been extinct for 150 years, and even though it had been absent from the literary record during that period we cannot therefore take that absence as being proof positive of non-existence. In fact there do exist the faintest echoes of a theatrical presence in the Byzantine World after the 7th century. Robert Browning tells us of a scholion to Lucian's *Dance,* by Arethas the 9th century archbishop of Caesaria in which he states that even in his time a dancer of pantomime was corrupting the youth of his diocese. (Scholars such as Walter Puchner tend to dismiss this by saying it is unclear that what he was talking about was actually pantomime, which seems strange considering it was a scholion to the most explicit text on pantomime dancing that we have.) See:R. Browning *A Byzantine treatise on Tragedy.* In Varcel and Willetts eds *Τέρας; Studies Presented to George Thomson on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday.* Prague, 1963 67-81. Further we have a 9th century Byzantine maritime law that bans sailors on shore leave visiting the 'inns of the actresses' which of course my well be a euphemism for prostitutes, but seems a strange one to use three centuries after 'actresses' had supposedly ceased to be.

experience the scientific advances of the following two millennia these had to be the workings of the gods. The aspect of Greek mythology that concerned itself with tales involving metamorphosis became a philosophical and sometimes metaphorical accounting of the causes of these events. Highly intelligent and educated people at times struggled to reconcile wholehearted acceptance of the literality of these tales with their own natural scepticism, but even minds as acute as St. Augustine's with the benefit of Christianity's new, alternative, vision of the workings of the cosmos to support him, could not dismiss the stories out of hand.

The retelling of these stories persisted at least into the sixth century of the Common Era[100] and the frequency of these retellings indicates a fascination that went beyond a mere antiquarian interest. The timeline for the period of peak interest in the stories almost directly corresponds with the period of pantomime's reign as the dominant performance genre of the Classical and Post-classical periods.

There is an important caveat to this however. Ovid was not the first Roman to show an interest in this aspect of the mythology they had inherited from the Greeks, but he was the first to assay a large-scale retelling of it and, as might have been expected of the author of the *Ars Amatoria*, the philosophical underpinning of the tales was largely ignored in favour of accounts of the gods utilising metamorphosis to effect sexual conquest.

This would have consequences for pantomime dancers. Clearly the challenge of being able to enact metamorphic transformations on stage would have held a great deal of appeal to the dancers and we have numerous accounts of these particular tales featuring heavily in the pantomime repertoire. It is the central proposition of this thesis that there was an almost

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[100] The operative phrase being 'at least' for there is a case for saying that the arguments that maintain that interest in and the retelling of pagan metamorphosis tales ceased at this point because they had been superseded by Christianity's own 'superior' brand of metamorphosis, do not entirely hold up. Richard Buxton and Marina Warner have written of the 11th and 12th century accounts of were-wolves in locations as remote from Rome as Ireland – before the rediscovery of Ovid's great work – accounts moreover that arose from the illiterate peasant population rather than any work of literature. The question poses itself as to whether the memory of Ovid's account of the first transformation performed by the gods – Lycaeon – linger on and pass into folklore, or did this particular aspect of the metamorphosis literature draw upon a pre-existing myth that was far more widespread than the Graeco/Roman world?

symbiotic relationship between the two. The pantomime's ability to embody the transformations on stage gave, at the very least, longevity to interest in the tales themselves – and the tales provided the dancers with the most spectacular material for their performances. Whether because of the natural predilections of the dancers themselves or because it was what their audiences expected – probably a combination of the two – there seems little doubt that it was the sexualised versions of these stories most commonly performed by the pantomimes and this gave further ammunition for the Christian Fathers[101] to launch their attacks.

That this link between pantomime dancing and tales involving metamorphosis was clearly recognised by people at the time can clearly be seen in the number of literary works from the period that utilise techniques borrowed from the pantomime stage in attempting to describe metamorphosis. Four of these have been discussed in this thesis. In the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus the linkage is made explicit when Seilenos metamorphoses into the river he was dancing in imitation of!

In the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era there occurred the phenomenon generally referred to as The Second Sophistic. Broadly speaking this can be thought of as an attempt by Greek-speaking intellectuals to recover some of the ground lost in their military subjection to Rome by asserting their cultural superiority over their conquerors. Studies of this period have tended to concentrate on the work of the epideictic orators, largely because they were of the greater interest to those who have left us our literary record of the time. This thesis, however, has demonstrated that for ordinary people it was the dancers who were the prime movers in this regard – Libanius going so far as to say that it was purely because of the dancers that people who were not 'products of the schools' had any knowledge of the mythological tales at all.

It was this linkage between the dancers and pagan mythology as we have seen, that would lead to this remarkable artform's final and irrevocable demise.

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[101] John Chrysostom and Jacob of Serug in particular.

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