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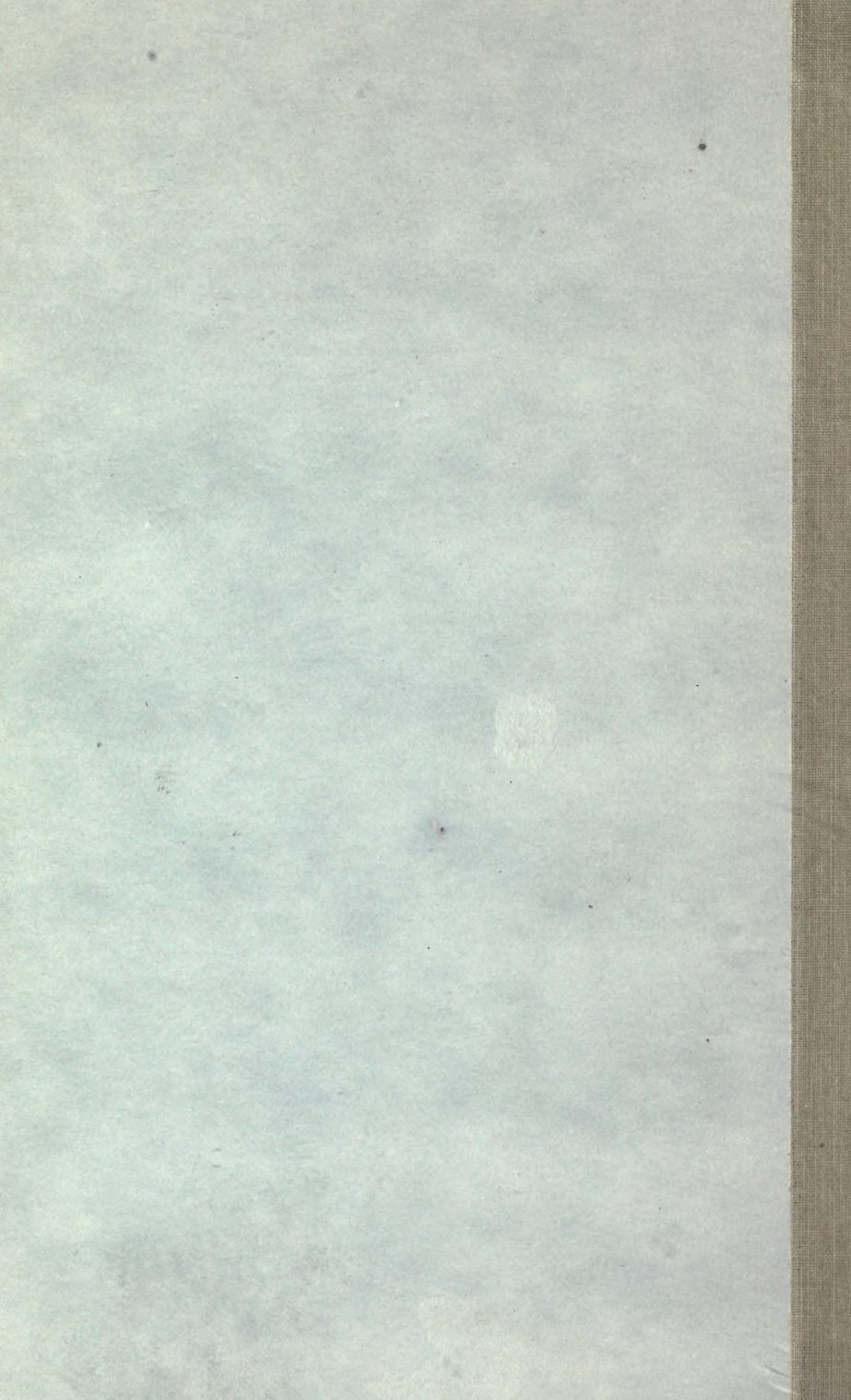
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Frank B. Jerome

... Masks and acting

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# MASKS AND ACTING

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## MASKS AND ACTING<sup>1</sup>

Though masks were worn by all the actors on the Athenian stage and though a presumption is thus suggested that the association between masks and acting may throw some light on the origin of the drama, Aristotle in the *Poetics* only once mentions the masks used in Comedy; and, if we did not know from other sources of information that masks were used in Tragedy, nothing in the *Poetics* would require us to believe that they were. Seeing a play on the stage is in Aristotle's opinion but a poor way of appreciating it. "The power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors." Ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς. ἴσως γὰρ τῆς τραγῳδίας δύναμις καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἔστιν. Aristotle, therefore, looking at Tragedy apart from representation and from the masks that the actors wore, viewed it as literature merely, classed it along with dithyrambic poetry, and supposed it to have originated with the leaders of the dithyramb. Aristotle's view has for long been accepted, on Aristotle's authority, though no one supposes that Satyric drama, and even Aristotle does not suppose that Comedy, originated with the leaders of the dithyramb. Masks and acting, in fine, which are essential to all three forms of the Greek drama, are left out of account by Aristotle, and cannot be brought into account by his theory of the origin of Tragedy. The power of Tragedy may indeed be felt apart from representation and actors, but Tragedy could neither have come into existence nor can it continue in existence apart from representation and actors—and in Athens the actors were masked.

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this paper was read at a meeting of the Northumberland and Durham Classical Association on May 29th, 1915; and is here printed with some omissions and additions.

It would seem that when Aristotle said tragedy had its origin in the dithyramb he was misled by the form which the dithyramb had come to assume in his day. In his late day the dithyramb had come to incorporate some elements of acting. But the history of the dithyramb can be fairly well traced, and it is quite certain that in earlier times than those of Aristotle there was in the dithyramb no acting. It was a song, or choral song, and the chorus that sang it also danced—but dance and song together are not acting. In the dithyramb neither the leader, *ὁ ἐξάρχων*, nor the chorus acted any part or personified any character. Narrative, even when sung and accompanied by dancing, is not acting. To act is to play a part, and in the dithyramb no one plays any part. The dithyramb was essentially narrative; and not until the late times of Aristotle did it take on anything of a dramatic character—and then only to a slight extent and under the influence which the drama, when it had reached its highest development, came to exercise. The Greek drama in all its forms—tragedy, comedy and the satyric drama—had its origin in the chorus. The dithyramb, like all forms of choral lyric, was sung by a chorus: it is essentially choral. Nothing therefore is easier or more obvious than to jump to the conclusion that the drama is a development of choral lyric and in particular of the chorus that sang the dithyramb. But this conclusion that the drama is a development of the dithyrambic chorus is an *a priori* conclusion; and it breaks down when confronted with facts. The first fact which it has to confront is, as already said, the fact that the dithyramb remained narrative long after the drama had developed, and only under the influence of the developed drama came to be to some slight extent dramatic. The next fact we have to notice is that the early history of choral lyric can be traced; and, when traced, shows clearly that in it there never was any acting. The chorus of lyric poetry is a development of the ejaculations of sympathy with which the words of a speaker meet from his hearers. In those ejaculations there is no acting. The bystanders and hearers are playing no part, they are expressing their own approval or sympathy; and they repeat the heart-felt ejaculation as often as the words of the speaker elicit their

sympathy, and they—or as many of them as are touched—repeat it together, in chorus. When thus repeated in chorus at the end of each of the speaker's sentences, it becomes a refrain or *ἐφύμνιον*. The form in which the sympathy of the chorus of by-standers expresses itself may consist in an emphatic and heart-felt repetition of one of the speaker's words—the one which specially goes home to the hearts of the hearers and comes forth again from them as an echo, and in chorus. Thus in Homer at funerals the next of kin was the *ἐξάρχων* of the lamentations: he started them, he expatiated on the merits of the deceased and on the grief of the survivors, and they all joined in from time to time, especially the women, and groaned in choral echo to some poignant expression of grief or of admiration. The next of kin, as Homer says, *ἐξῆρχε γόοιο*, that is, was the *ἐξάρχων* of the lamentations, and made his funeral address of praise and lamentation, and then *ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες*. And, it is scarcely necessary to say, what thus took place amongst the ancient Greeks took place amongst all primitive peoples—even, the least cultured—who had funeral rites at all. Funerals however are not the only occasions on which the community gathers together, nor is grief the only emotion to which it gives expression. There are also wedding festivities at which the wedding-song was sung, and the refrain of the song, in which all the company joined, was Hymen, Hymenaeos (*Iliad*, xviii, 473, and Hesiod, *Shield of Hercules*, 272 ff.). Besides funerals and weddings there are further other occasions on which the community gathers together and gives utterance to its emotions: if the tribe had won a victory in war, some one person started singing praises to the gods, and everybody chimed in at appropriate moments with the cry of "Paian." As Homer says, *Il.* i, 472, *οἱ δὲ πανημέριοι μολπῇ θεὸν ἰλάσκοντο, καλὸν ἀείδοντες παιήονα* (cf. the paean raised in *Il.* xxii, 391, by the followers of Achilles at the death of Hector); and as the wedding song was called the *ὑμέναιος*, from the cry of "Hymen," so the song of victory came to be known as the Paean. Again, in the vineyard when the grapes were gathered, one of the harvesters would start singing a song, and the rest would join in

from time to time, *μολπή τ' ἰνυμῶ*, *Il.* XVIII, 570, repeating in chorus the refrain or *ἑφύμνιον*, *Λίνε, αἰ Λίνε*, from which the song got its name of the Linos song, in the same way as the wedding song got its name of *ὑμέναιος*, or the song of victory its name of Paian.

On all these occasions, and on other occasions when the young people danced merely for joy and the sheer delight of dancing, the ancient and earlier custom was for one person to start singing and for the rest of the youth to accompany his song with appropriate gesture-dancing and an occasional cry or *ἑφύμνιον*, a cry which, at first but a breathless ejaculation, gradually developed from a mere predicate into a fully formed sentence. But the chorus, once started, were not satisfied to limit themselves to a single sentence: they encroached upon the domain of the soloist who started the dithyramb, the *ἐξάρχων*, until the portion which they sang of the hymn became as extensive and artistically even more important than his solo. Finally, indeed, the whole hymn or dithyramb might be sung by the chorus, and the *ἐξάρχων* performed no solo but sank to the position merely of leader of the chorus and the dance.

Thus far we have been dealing, it is important to note, with the lyric, not the dramatic, chorus; and in this choral lyric there is no acting whatever. At funerals the mourners are mourners: they are not playing a part. At weddings, the company are enjoying themselves with song and dance: they are not actors hired to perform. After a victory they are rejoicing in heart and soul, with song and dance, and not acting a part. At the vintage they sing about Linos but they do not pretend to be Linos—neither they nor the *ἐξάρχων* who starts the song. It seems then that in choral lyric, in the rendering of the lyric chorus, in the dithyramb, there was from its most rudimentary beginnings to the period of its highest artistic development no acting whatever. This however is a purely negative conclusion—important indeed because it demonstrates conclusively that it is vain to search for the origin of the drama in the dithyramb or in lyric poetry of any kind. Important, however, as it is in warning us off the



wrong line of search for the origin of the drama, it is essentially negative. It tells us we must look elsewhere. But where else shall we look?

Of late years classical scholars both of Oxford and Cambridge have paid increasing attention to anthropology as well as to the classics; it is however surprising how little attention has been paid to the possibility that there may be some connexion between the use of masks in the performance of savage mysteries and in the performance of the Greek drama. The fact that masks were used in the Greek drama is one of the first things we are taught when at school we begin the study of Greek antiquities; and it is one of the last things we think of—if indeed we think of it at all—when we turn to speculations on the origin of the Greek drama. The reason of this forgetfulness is obvious. When we read a Greek play, we may be absorbed by its beauty as literature or by its textual difficulties; but the fact that the words as they were uttered issued from the mouth of a mask, is a fact which does not and cannot force itself on our attention, and which even Aristotle dismissed from his notice. It is a fact which is forgotten. Nay! when a Greek play is performed at Oxford or Bradfield or London, it is a fact which is absolutely suppressed and deliberately excluded from the field of attention.

It is to this neglected fact—and to its importance—that it is necessary to direct our attention. In the first place, as has been already said, the origin of the Greek drama is not to be looked for either in lyric poetry in general or in the dithyramb in particular; and now it is necessary to notice that masks, which were always worn in every stage of the development of the Greek drama, were never worn at all or at any time in the performances of the dithyrambic chorus or of its *ἐξάρχων*, or indeed of any chorus whatever save the chorus of drama. This clear and unmistakeable difference between the *τραγικοὶ χοροί* and all other *χοροί*, indeed between all forms of the dramatic chorus on the one hand—whether tragic, comic or Satyric—and all forms of the lyric chorus on the other, is of itself enough to show that the dramatic chorus and the lyric chorus are two different streams and that their waters

always flowed in two different channels. But there is also another difference, the nature of which may be first stated, and then its significance. The dramatic chorus consisted always and only of male members. The lyric choruses were frequently, and more especially so in more ancient times, constituted of women and girls. It is hardly necessary to say, as regards Ionic-Aeolic culture, that Sappho and Alcaeus composed lyrics to be sung by choruses of girls; that for the Spartans Alkman did the same; that amongst the Boeotians Corinna, like Simonides and Pindar, composed *παρθενεΐα*; that at Delos the choruses of maids, the *Δηλιάδες*, performed at a large number of festivals; and that female choirs performed at Aegina, as we know from Herodotus, v, 83, and at Elis, as we know from Pausanias, v, 16, 6. There is indeed no possibility of doubt about the fact that whereas the dramatic chorus consisted always of men or boys alone, the lyric chorus frequently consisted of women or girls. The importance of this indisputable fact is that the choruses from which women were excluded were the choruses which wore and always had worn masks. The consequence was that in Greece women never were actors (on the stage). They were allowed to sing in chorus; but their chorus never wore masks and never acted.

Why the Greeks—so artistic a people—should have used masks in the performance of the greatest tragedies and most perfect drama is a problem which has presented itself to every writer on Greek antiquities, and has been dismissed rather than solved by reference to the size of Greek theatres or to the fact that they were open to the sky and that therefore a mask was necessary to render the performer visible to the most distant spectator or audible by means of some sort of megaphone to the most distant auditor. But such explanations are useless. Masks were worn when plays were performed in the market-place and no artificial means of magnifying the features or voice were necessary. What is more, masks were worn by the chorus before the actor had been developed out of the *ἐξάρχων*, and anyhow in the case of a chorus no artificial magnification of the voice or features was ever requisite. In

this connexion it is important to bear in mind that it was out of the chorus that the Greek drama was developed. That is indicated plainly enough by two facts: first the fact that the more ancient plays have no name but the name of the chorus; next, that the word *τραγῳδοί*, tragedians, which suggests to us, as to the later Greeks, the actors, was originally the word designed to designate the choreutae who wore masks, and acted the part indicated by the mask, and so were distinguished from members of a lyric chorus who did not wear masks and consequently had no part to act.

Let us now turn to a closer examination of the various kinds of Greek drama. Those kinds were three in number—tragedy, comedy and the satyric drama. The one feature common to them all was that the performers in all three wore masks, that is to say, were actors performing their parts. To wear a mask is to act; and throughout the history of the Greek drama it was tacitly assumed to be impossible to act without wearing a mask. But though tragedy, comedy and the satyric drama have this feature in common, it is abundantly manifest and universally agreed that the three kinds of Greek drama had three separate sources. We have therefore to seek for three sources which though separate and distinct yet have the common characteristic that masks were worn and a part was played, or characters presented, by the band or chorus of performers. It is to a chorus wearing masks that we have to look for the origin of the three kinds of drama; or rather it is for three kinds of chorus that we have to look, each of them wearing masks, and singing and dancing.

The tragic chorus—to begin with tragedy—at Athens came to be so closely associated with the feasts of Dionysus, that naturally enough it has come to be regarded as self-evident that the tragic chorus must have originated in the worship of Dionysus with which it was associated. And if it were on Athens alone that our gaze had to be fixed when looking for the origin of tragedy, it would be natural enough to look no further than the feasts of Dionysus, and to say to anyone who wished to look further, *οὐδὲν πρὸς Διόνυσον*. But it so happens that scope for the employment of the method of

comparison is afforded by the well-known passage of Herodotus (v, 67) from which we learn that at Sicyon about 600 B.C. there were *τραγικοί χοροί* which performed the story of Adrastus. The importance of this piece of information has never been wholly overlooked, but it has never yet been fully appreciated, save by Dr Ridgeway in his *Origin of Tragedy*. Its importance is two-fold. On the one hand it has been appreciated as evidence that tragedy at this early date was not only not confined for its subject-matter to the myths of Dionysus, but had nothing to do with them. At Sicyon tragedy found its material in *ἥρωικαὶ πράξεις*, in the doings and sufferings not of gods but of heroes. The words of Herodotus about the Sicyonians are very explicit: they celebrated the *πάθεα* of Adrastus *τραγικοῖσι χοροῖσι, τὸν μὲν Διόνυσσον οὐ τιμῶντες, τὸν δὲ Ἄδρηστον*. The implication is quite clear that at Sicyon the *τραγικοί χοροί* were no part of the worship of Dionysus. The well-known passage of Herodotus is therefore important on the one hand as evidence that the *τραγικοί χοροί* from which tragedy as we know it was evolved were not essentially or necessarily part of the worship of Dionysus. On the other hand the passage has an importance as indicating that *τραγικοί χοροί* had their origin in the worship of heroes. That is the point which affords an important link in the argument. In the case of the Romans we know that on occasion the *imagines* of deceased ancestors figured in ceremonial processions; and death-masks occur in the Aegean culture. They are of gold, occurring in royal tombs. But we may be sure that in the case of the lesser nobility they were of cheaper and more perishable material. If this is so, then we may suppose that the wearers of these *imagines* played the part of the heroes whose death-masks they wore, that they constituted *τραγικοί χοροί*, and enacted in gesture-dancing and possibly at first in dumb show, the *πάθεα* say, of Adrastus at Sicyon or of other famous heroes at other towns. What is suggested by this fact is, as Dr Ridgeway argues, that the origin of tragedy has nothing to do with Dionysus; that it goes back to the custom of wearing the death-masks of deceased ancestors, and of enacting at first in gesture-dancing and dumb-show some scene connected with them.

Let us now turn to the Satyric drama. In Athens Satyric dramas were originally produced upon the stage quite independently of tragedies. They afterwards came to be normally produced at the Dionysia as after-pieces, when the tragedies were over; and only quite late did they come to have any inner connexion with the trilogy which preceded them, just as it was only quite late that tragedies were composed with a unity of subject-matter so as to form a trilogy. Just as tragedy had its origin in the *τραγικοί χοροί*, so the Satyric drama had its origin in the *Σατύρων χοροί*. But whereas the *τραγικοί χοροί* had their origin in the death-masks of the nobility, it is conceivable that the *Σατύρων χοροί* had their origin in masks worn on occasion by the lower classes. What is quite clear to start with is that the masks worn by the *Σατύρων χοροί* were not those of deceased heroes: they were masks representing the theriomorphic spirits which the popular fancy has at all times imagined were to be met with in solitary places at unexpected moments. In the reality and potency of these spirits the savage begins by unfeignedly believing. That unfeigned belief may continue and give rise to religious rites. If so, and as long as that is so, worship is accorded to the spirit by the community that unfeignedly believes in the existence and potency of such a spirit. In that belief we have one of the earlier stages in the history of religion. Expression, visible and outward expression, is given to the reality of that belief when the men—to the exclusion of the women and children—seek to identify themselves with the spirit they worship by dressing themselves up, or rather, since the savage has no clothes, by wearing a head-dress which subsequently develops into a mask, to represent the spirit in the form with which their fancy invests it. At this point, however, the very means adopted to give expression to the belief proves fatal to it. For a time indeed those who act the part of the spirit may continue to believe in the existence of the spirit. But eventually as they realise more and more that they are acting—for the benefit and edification of the spectators, that is the women and children—they come to realise more and more that they are only acting. Their

attention is diverted from the religious to the artistic side of the ceremony. The consequence is that the savage comes to feel under his mask that he is simply taking in the women and children. The mask has then come to be a masquerade. He feels a childish delight in taking in the women and children; and if he finds his account in it, if it enables him to acquire a control over them which otherwise he could not exercise, he will for sound practical reasons continue and develop it. Whether the women are to the end taken in by it is a matter for speculation. If, as is quite conceivable, they pretend to be taken in by it—to please, or to avoid offending, their lords and masters—the masquerade and mummery may continue for long enough to be performed. All the children believe in it. Many or most both of the women and of the men believe that there is something in it. And anyhow it has become firmly engrained in the tradition and custom of the tribe. On the other hand, in other cases, what ensures the continuance of the masquerade is the sheer childish delight in masquerading which tends to pass eventually into the artist's joy in art for art's sake, together with just enough belief or half-belief in the existence and reality of the spirits, demons and satyrs to give point and zest to the performance.

The suggestion may be made then that the *Σατύρων χοροί* were masked to represent the goat-shaped spirits who figured in the popular belief of the Peloponnese. Originally the masking may have been felt to afford a sort of communion or quasi-identification between the worshipper and the object of worship with whom he sought to identify himself, just as children when they wear a mask do their best to act up to the part they are playing, and just like the amateur who felt that he could only play Othello properly if he were blacked all over.

Let us now turn to the last of the three forms of Greek drama, that is Comedy. Just as in Tragedy the chorus existed before actors did, and the earliest *τραγῳδοί* consisted of the chorus alone, so in Comedy the chorus existed before actors did, and the earliest *κωμῳδοί* consisted of the chorus alone; and after actors had been added to the chorus, it was long the custom for comedies to take their name after that of the

chorus. In Comedy, again, as in Tragedy and the Satyric drama, the chorus always consisted of men and was always masked. The presumption is that the earliest *κωμῳδοί* were bands of young men celebrating the harvest-home; and that their masks were designed to represent the various animal forms in which vegetation-spirits were believed to manifest themselves. If Tragedy was originally the commemoration of the *πάθρα* of some departed hero, Comedy was essentially the jollification with which the labourers celebrated the harvest-home and the termination of their labour; and their revelry displayed itself in the wearing of masks and in acting up to the parts to which the masks were assigned.

The proposition, that in ancient Greece there was no acting without masks and no masks without acting, states not merely a theory but a fact. If the statement held true only of the ancient Greeks, it would be of importance in considering the origin of the Greek drama. But it applies to all early peoples, and is therefore of much wider importance: in it lies the origin of all early drama. Attention to this fact was called first by Mr Webster, in his *Primitive Secret Societies*, from which I venture to quote some instances. Among the Sulka, a tribe of New Pomerania, there are many proceedings at which masked men play an important part; the women and children believe the maskers are the spirits of the dead. In African secret societies, such as the Ukuku in the Benito region, or the Ekongolo, a society among the Quollas, "the chief masquerader is usually a personification of the spirit or *manes* of the dead." All of the great religious festivals celebrated by the Hopi Indians constitute a worship of the clan ancestors: one important group of these festivals is that of the *Katcinas*, "who are masked men personating the ancestors." In the *Chilinchili* festival held by the Aymara, a civilised tribe of Bolivia, the participants "represent the souls of the dead and go through pantomimic scenes."

In these cases it is, as it was at Sicyon, deceased ancestors who are personated by the masked performers. In other cases it is, as it was in Athenian comedy, spirits or gods who are represented. The Hopi Indians have, in addition to the

conception already mentioned of clan ancestors, "other conceptions of masked clan gods." In New Guinea "young men hidden by masks and long draperies of grass" personate gods. In what was Kaiser Wilhelm Land a masked figure plays the part of the spirit Asa. The Kwaikiutl of British Columbia believe in spirits or supernatural beings, and these spirits are personated in dance performances by performers wearing masks. In South America the Caishana tribe celebrate masked dances in honour of the Jurupari demon. The Akonwarah of the Iroquois tribes wore masks, as their name, Akonwarah, i.e. False-Faces, indicates, and by wearing them impersonated the spirits. Amongst the Sia Indians of New Mexico the men who wear masks and personate the Katsuma deities are believed by the uninitiated to be the actual deities. Amongst the Zuñi "those who personate the Kokko," the ancestral gods, "are endowed for the time being with their actual breath"; the personators are young men wearing masks.

To these instances of the use of masks may be added the information given by Dr Haddon in the fifth and sixth volumes of *The Expedition to the Torres Straits*. The ceremony of Eudlera Roairoai, i.e. the dead man's likeness, took place as a rule four to six months after the death. Not more than four men were selected to act as ghosts of the dead, and they wore a head-dress of leaves. At low water, when there would be a large expanse of beach so that the crowd of spectators might be kept at some distance from the performers; the *keber le* who impersonated the deceased, and whose personality remained strictly unknown, came out from the bush on to the beach and began to dance. "The delusion that the *keber le* is the ghost of the dead person is aided by the ordinary dancing costume and the leafy head-dress and diamond-shaped bamboo object which hides the face—the make-up is splendid, the mimicry is excellent, and, should the *keber le* somewhat resemble the figure of the man he is impersonating, the delusion is almost perfect, more especially as it is assisted by the implicit belief of the women and children that it is really the ghost of their deceased relative." The *keber le*, as he danced, came nearer and nearer, imitating the gestures and movements of the



deceased, until the widow or mother of the dead man recognised her husband or son. Thereupon "the drummers suddenly cried out Ah! Ah! Ai! Ai! and the women fell to the ground and the *keber le* made his escape into the bush," and "the ghost was supposed to be now leaving for its final resting place at Boigu."

The Eudlera Roairoai is faithfully described by its native name: it consists simply in the presentation of "the dead man's likeness"; it is indeed acting but it contains nothing in the nature of a dramatic plot. In the ceremony of Terer and his mother, Aukem, however, we have "the dramatisation of a legend," Dr Haddon tells us: "in this ceremony the chief performer, who personated Terer, the spirit messenger, was supposed to take away the ghosts of the dead to Boigu." It is or was the custom in the Torres Straits to remove the epidermis of a dead person by scraping. The legend told to explain the custom is that once upon a time Terer's enemies had flayed him while he was yet alive; and that his mother, Aukem, accordingly, refused to regard him as any longer living, and drove him off to Boigu. So, ever since, to make sure that the ghost of a recently deceased person becomes a spirit, and, as such, goes to Boigu, his body is flayed as was Terer's. In the dramatised version of the legend Terer wears a mask "like a visor concealing his face," and comes out of the bush. He is "supposed to take possession of the spirit and to be bearing it from the body to the island of Boigu. The women now showed intense excitement, for only the old men were said to know that in reality Terer was not a spirit." The man who impersonated Aukem, the mother of Terer, wore "long tufts of grass hanging from his head over his face and reaching to his shoulders." The performance was this: Aukem "walked after her son with the unsteady, hobbling gait of an old woman, holding her two hands up to her mouth. Now and again Terer would turn back derisively towards Aukem, posturing and skipping as if intending to let his mother catch him, but he would dance away again going still farther west." Eventually on reaching the sea both plunged into the water and while swimming westward divested themselves of their

“spiritual attire,” and then “returned in ordinary mundane dress and quietly rejoined the assembly.”

These instances, quoted from Mr Webster and Dr Haddon, may suffice to show that outside Europe masks and acting are employed at funerals and in commemoration of the dead, and also form part of the worship both of vegetation-spirits and of theriomorphic spirits. A presumption is thus raised that in ancient Greece also masks and acting were originally employed alike in commemoration of the dead and in the worship of vegetation-spirits and other spirits; and, if these three kinds of ceremonies eventually gave rise in Greece to Tragedy, Comedy and the Satyric drama, as elsewhere similar religious rites eventually passed into dramatic performances in which the actors wore masks, then it would be a welcome confirmation of the presumption, if traces of these ceremonies could be found surviving in modern Greece and elsewhere in Europe. Such traces and survivals may possibly be found in the Mummers’ Plays of England and modern Greece. In those plays the performers are masked, and they originally performed in dumb-show a play the central incident of which is always the revival of one of the characters, whose death and restoration to life, though explained in various ways in various versions of the play, are the one invariable feature of the play. That the character revived was originally some spirit of vegetation is a conjecture which seems likely enough; and, if the conjecture be accepted, then the Mummers’ Plays spring from the same source as did Greek Comedy; and, like it, inherit their masks and acting from pre-historic times.

Finally, masks must, like everything else, have gone through a process of evolution; and evolution implies continuity in change and change in continuity. In the evolution of masks, as of everything else, the earliest forms may be expected to differ so much from the latest that the connexion between them at first escapes notice.

The connexion between them is brought to notice by the discovery of the intermediate forms; and these forms are shown to be intermediate by the fact that all more or less effectively serve the same purpose. The mask in all stages of its evolution

is worn for the purpose of acting; and, for that purpose, it is essential that the features of the performer should be disguised. Hence we reach the conclusion, paradoxical at first but patent on reflection, that the earliest form of mask could not have been a mask. Any head-dress which concealed the features of the performer would disguise him sufficiently for the purpose of acting. Thus in South East Australia, in the Kuringal ceremony, "ten men have bark fibre, made up into monstrous wigs, placed on their heads; and their faces were further disguised by reverting the upper and lower lips by cords, made of fibre, tied behind the head, thereby showing the teeth and gums, and the effect was hideous" (Howitt, *Native Tribes of S.E. Australia*, p. 539), and Mr Howitt speaks of them as "the masked men." So, too, in the Torres Straits ceremony of "the dead man's likeness," the leafy head-dress, which was worn, simply concealed the features of the dancer, and prevented his identity from becoming known: the likeness of the performer to the deceased was effected by mimicry of the deceased's gait and gesture, not by means of any mask portraying his features; and the head-dress or visor by concealing the features of the performer allowed the imagination of the spectators to picture a likeness in face. The purpose for which the mask is worn is effected by the co-operation of the spectators with the performer. But there is always a tendency in spectacular and dramatic performances to become more and more "realistic," and to leave less and less to the imagination of the spectators; and so the head-dress, or visor, becomes a mask, portraying the features of the character impersonated. In the Torres Straits, though in funeral ceremonies the leafy head-dress alone is worn, in totem ceremonies the masks represent totem-animals, sharks, sword-fish, etc., while in the Boma rites sacred masks are produced representing human faces and figuring forth the features of Boma and Malu. The method, by which a mask, portraying the features of the deceased, was produced in the Torres Straits, consisted in taking a wax mask from the skull. Like causes produce like effects in lands widely remote from one another, and in Rome *imagines* were prepared in the same way and with much the same motives as the wax masks

in the Torres Straits. Indeed, as in Roman funeral processions a buffoon with a wax mask figured, so in the Torres Straits at the end of the ceremony of "the dead man's likeness" came a buffoon wearing a mask and skipping and dancing about, with the object of making the spectators laugh, and of removing their emotional strain.

Elsewhere than in the Torres Straits we find here one and there another stage in the evolution of the mask surviving. But in the Torres Straits we find all the stages existing side by side, in such a way that though the changes which have taken place in the evolution of the mask are manifest, the continuity between them is undeniable. And the continuity between them consists in the fact that all serve the same purpose: there are no masks without acting, and there is no acting without masks. The power of Tragedy may "be felt even apart from representation and actors," when, after long centuries, the art of writing has been at length evolved; but at least until the alphabet has been discovered masks and acting alone can make the power of the drama felt.



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