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NO ONE DOUBTS THE IMPORTANCE OF MIMES FOR THE ANCIENT THEATRE, but we are still far from being able to read a synthesis that would reflect that importance. One reason is the lack of a good collection of the widespread archaeological material; the other is the lack of detailed attention to the epigraphical and philological material, which is my concern here. Any summary that concentrates solely on the so-called literary mime and its reflexes in the elegiac poets, Petronius, or the novel will obviously not be able to do full justice to this multi-faceted genre,¹ especially since nearly all our sources, including the fathers of the Church, tend to show hostility to such manifestations of popular culture. Mimes varied from the *mimologi*, with their acting of coherent quasi-comic plots, to the many varieties of jugglers, dancers, and such people, who did not need to speak at all. On the one hand this anarchic genre resists any attempt at narrow definition; but on the other, a highly developed and ill-understood terminology was needed to describe its specialities and organization. The following article attempts to give two examples where we may be able to reach greater precision, and is meant as a protreptic for further research to that end.

PUBLIC MIMES

The *communes mimi* would have bored you, wrote Cicero not altogether truthfully to his elderly friend M. Marius,² describing the extraordinary spectacle with which Pompey inaugurated his temple-theatre in 55 B.C. Who are these performers? "Public pantomimes" translates Shackleton Bailey,³ who doubts *communes*.⁴ But they are mimes, and cannot at this date be pantomimes,⁵ who

¹ The last overview by an expert is that of the late Elizabeth Rawson (Rawson 1993), which was, one suspects, never intended for publication as it stands, despite the learning displayed. Like so much recent writing, it is concerned almost exclusively with the "literary mime," and starts from literary material. See Wiseman's comments (1994: 150, n. 18). There is much interesting material from a wider perspective in Horsfall 1996 and Cicu 1988, where mime is considered as a phenomenon in its own right. It will be obvious that the acute problems of literary mime cannot be touched in this paper.

² Cic. *Ad fam.* 7.1.

³ Shackleton Bailey 1978: 1.79.

⁴ See Shackleton Bailey 1977: 1.324 *ad loc.*: "the paradosis with some misgiving . . . *communis* . . . seems oddly used . . ."; Rawson (1993: 257), however, takes Cicero absolutely seriously, when he clearly is having elegant fun: "It was all such a bore, really," he says, consoling Marius for not being there at the greatest spectacle Rome had probably ever seen.

⁵ See Jory 1981, and his valuable new survey of archaeological data, Jory 2001. Note also already Weinreich 1944: 51: "So ist auch hier festzustellen dass der Unterschied von Mimis und Pantomimis offenbar selber Philologen von Fach nicht immer klar ist."

did not appear on the great spectacle stages until thirty years later. Worse, while we may be right to translate *communis* as “public,” we still do not know what public mimes are supposed to be. Tyrrell reports that Madvig had argued that since *communis* did not mean, as had been thought, “vulgar,”⁶ one should emend to *comminus*, which Tyrrell⁷ happily adopted, deeming it “admirable”; it would seem that very good Latinists did not even consider the possibility of mimes being “public.” On the reasonable assumption that there is nothing wrong with the text, it is worth asking how they could be.

A parallel can I believe be found in an apparently lost but well-known inscription, *CIL* XIV 2408 = *ILS* 5196 from A.D. 169, which was the subject of an interesting article by John Jory;⁸ it begins with the proud titles

L. ACILIO L F POMPT(EIO) EUTYCHE[TI] NOBILI ARCHIMIMO
COMMUN(I?) MIMORU(M) ADLECTO DIURNO PARASITO APOLL(INIS)
TRAGICO COMICO ET OMNIBUS CORPORIB(US) AD SCAENAM
HONOR(ATO) DECURIONI BOVILLIS QUEM PRIMUM OMNIUM
ADLECT(I) PATRE(M) APPELLARUNT etc.

Lucius Acilius Pomptei Eutyches, son of Lucius, noble archmime ?appointed (*adlectus*) to the commune of the mimes?, on daily salary, Parasite of Apollo, honoured by tragic, comic, and all corporations connected with the stage, decurion of Bovillae, whom first of all (men) the adlecti named as Pater . . .

There are many novelties in this inscription. L. Acilius Eutyches, a Roman citizen, was a distinguished and wealthy mime, whom the *adlecti scaenicorum*, perhaps an executive body of a theatrical guild, honoured with a statue in Bovillae, after (or indeed, because) the honorand had himself paid for *munera*, as well as distributing handouts to the local dignitaries. Only the greatest mimes or pantomimes were *munerarii*, following in the tradition of the original Pylades.⁹ Jory rightly pointed out that “tragic” and “comic” are like *omnibus* here applied to the corporations who have honoured him, not to the honorand, as had been universally assumed; he therefore did not anomalously perform as a comedian or tragedian, nor was he uniquely described as *comicus* and *tragicus*, for he was a mime, but he had been honoured by all the stage corporations, whatever they might have

⁶Two examples will serve for many: “mimes qui jouaient pour une foule,” says the Budé translation (Constans 1960), which must be wrong. Likewise Kasten 1976: 365: “abgedroschene Possen.” It is impossible to write social history from translations, though it seems fashionable.

⁷Tyrrell (1886: 2.95), who at least understood that it was a highly rhetorical piece; Shackleton Bailey’s 1977 commentary on the passage largely follows Tyrrell and Purser 1906: 2.111, though the book is said to be “a mine of honest misinformation” by Shackleton Bailey (1978: 9).

⁸Jory 1965: 307–308; Segré 1938: 253–263 (to be added to Jory’s bibliography). The interpretation of Jory is taken up by Courtney (1995: 329), but criticized in detail by Leppin (1992: 114), who argues that the otherwise unknown tragic and comic *corpora* would contain also those who helped put drama on the stage.

⁹Dio 55.10.11.

been.¹⁰ Whether he could have been related professionally or otherwise to another mime, Aurelius Eutyches (*ILS* 5224), of the period is unknown.

But to my knowledge all who have dealt with this inscription, save Leppin,¹¹ have assumed that it declares that Eutyches was “an archimimus with membership of the *commune mimorum*”—to quote Jory; i.e., reading *commun(i) mimorum adlecto* together. Yet while we have plenty of references to the *corpus scaenicorum* or the *Parasiti Apollonis*, there is no example of this shadowy association elsewhere, an omission which, in view of our considerable evidence, is very puzzling. Even the use of the word *commune*, as if it were equivalent to *collegium*, is not one I can parallel. Leppin suggested unhappily¹² that we should perhaps understand *archimimo commun(i) mimorum*, apparently as “public archmime of mimes”—but one cannot see why an archimimus could call himself *communis*, or have a superfluous *mimorum* without any designation; and Leppin admitted that he was unable to come up with any clearly better suggestion. I suggest therefore that we must accept that this alleged corporation did not exist, and that we must inevitably read, punctuate, and interpret *nobili archimimo commun(ium) mimoru(m)*, *adlecto*, *diurno*, *parasito Apollinis*, etc. He holds the high status (cf. *nobilis*)¹³ of an *archimimus* of the public mime actors, presumably of Rome rather than, or as well as, Bovillae. Bovillae is not an insignificant place: it is ten miles from Rome, had been the site of the festival of the Julian family, had a theatre, and is close to the Mons Albanus with its festivals; Wiseman has noted it as the home of mime-friendly Anna Perenna.¹⁴ He is an *adlectus*¹⁵ of the *scaenici*, and these sixty *adlecti* are listed at the end of *ILS* 5196, so there is no need to specify to what he has been *adlectus*; they seem to function as a general executive of the *scaenici*, in the widest sense. It would be a reasonable hypothesis that these *adlecti* are a collegiate group comprising not only elite citizen mimes and

¹⁰ Leppin (1992: 237) rightly supports Jory’s interpretation: apart from the grammatical arguments, we have no examples of tragic or comic actors who are honorary members of mime associations, only as here the reverse. *Scaenicus* has confusingly both a general and a technical meaning even in the same inscription: in the troupes of *ILS* 2178 and 2179 it can describe specifically a mime who is not of the first or second parts or a *scurra* or *exodiarius*, but also just a mime, since the list of the mime troupes is of *scaenici*, and elsewhere even non-mimic actors. I shall be dealing with this in an article on military mimes.

¹¹ See Leppin (1992: 185), who had noted the improbability of *commune* as the name of an association, and also the lack of coherence of the whole honorary decree, if this were true. *Communis* in *ILS* 5447 is a translation of Greek κοινοῦ.

¹² Leppin 1992: 185, n. 73: “Vielleicht kann man aber COMMUN als Adjektiv auf den Geehrten und dessen Apostrophierung als Archimimus beziehen”

¹³ This is almost certainly a technical term; cf. *AE* 1975, 255 = *EAOR* 3.34 from Paestum: *ad nobilium gladiatorum conductionem* . . ., on which Buonocore (1992: 59) comments *ad loc.*: “da intendensi probabilmente, gladiatori ben equipaggiati e famosi e pertanto più costosi.” One suspects a more precise significance.

¹⁴ Wiseman 1998: 72–74.

¹⁵ See Leppin 1992: 184–186; but his assertion (at 185, n. 72) that sixty is too large for an executive body is unjustified.

pantomimes—as in the Parasites of Apollo—but also co-opted representatives from the—otherwise little understood—corporations of (Latin?) comedians and tragedians, and necessarily all other (*omnibus*) groups connected with the stage such as the important colleges of *tibicines* and *scabellarii*, or the impresarios and middlemen of the theatre industry. One can see how useful the possibilities of such collegial networking would be for the typically Roman programmes that combine theatrical events of all kinds. The difficult term *diurnus* to which I shall return should mean “on a daily salary,” as Mommsen supposed, though this is disputed; in the inscriptions it always indicates high status.¹⁶ The “common mimes” here and in Cicero would therefore be the mimes that are in the employment of a city and perhaps under a regular contract, as opposed to those owned, rented, and loaned by a private person,¹⁷ or those obliged to travel and accept irregular work.

This raises the complex issue of the associations of theatrical artists, which were last treated in a valuable article by Jory.¹⁸ The certain evidence for publicly supported mime troupes is small by comparison with those that were privately maintained by individuals, emperors, and legions. A public mime would be part of a *grex urbanus*, as was Aur. Eutyches, who held the role of *stupidus* in the *grex urbanus* of Arminium, which should mean “in städtischen Diensten” as Leppin says.¹⁹ Our Acilius Eutyches will possibly then have belonged to the *grex Romanus*, attested in *ILS* 5195 from the second half of the second century, and as its archmime, he will have been among the greatest stars of the period. Though chief priests maintained their own gladiatorial *familiae*, which they passed on to their successors, cities could evidently do so as well, and this will have been

¹⁶ Leppin (1992: 183–184) speculates against Mommsen that *diurni* were artists who enjoyed such popularity, that they not only had a major role in a troupe, but played as guest stars elsewhere. But this fails to deal with the *locator* Plebeius who is a *diurnus* (*ILS* 5206), and Mommsen’s view seems to me reasonably secure. The military equivalent is the *hydraularius salariarius* of the second legion (*CLE* 489 = *CIL* 3.10501). The term *officialis* appears in the title of the archimimus and later *promisthota* (= *manceps*) Uttedius Venerianus (*ILS* 5208) from Philippi; Leppin (1992: 58, n. 38, 90, n. 20) says reasonably “anscheinend zeitweise fest angestellter Schauspieler der Stadt,” but see Bouley 2001: 225: “mais on ignore ce que signifiait la charge d’*officialis*.” She is, however, generally less helpful on such matters, translating (225) *magister mimariorum* of *CIL* 3.3980 (= *ILS* 5228) as “maitre dans l’art du mime”; see correct translation at Leppin 1992: 254 and 113.

¹⁷ *SHA* Hadrian 19 tells us that the emperor *mimos aulicos publicavit*. This ought to mean that he allowed them to be used for public purposes, not just his own *munera* or private use. See the discussion of Leppin (1992: 180).

¹⁸ Jory 1970: 224–253. Some important inscriptions, e.g., those dealing with the *collegium scabellarium*, have since appeared, and some older inscriptions have been improved. The most important are Leppin’s improvement of *AE* 1956, 67 in *AE* 1989, 60; Caldelli’s of *ILS* 5192 at *AE* 1993, 684. On the other hand some ghosts are still refusing to disappear. Jory’s citation (1970: 245, n. 5) of Orelli 2673 is taken over from the useful but dangerously inaccurate one in Bonaria 1955; this is *CIL* IX 486*, which was declared a fraud by both Mommsen and then Hirschfeld (1905: 287), as Dr G. Chamberland reminds me. Bonaria has also managed to insert these Suredii into *RE* Suppl. X col. 925. Leppin (1992: 318) has also confirmed Mommsen’s judgement that *CIL* IX 256* is a forgery, though this L. Rebellius Renatus appears in *RE* Suppl. X 872 and elsewhere.

¹⁹ Leppin 1992: 237. See also de Ruggiero 1922: 593, s.v. *grex*.

far more expensive than supporting a mime troupe. *CIL* IX 2249, lost but now reissued as *EAOR* III 32,²⁰ refers to an *Augustalis bisellarius* of Telesia:

EDENTE / [DIEM P]RIU(ATUM) MUNER(E) FAMIL(IAE) GLAD(IATORIAE)
TELES(INAE)/ . . .

Dr G. Chamberland draws my attention also to a disputed graffito, where it is unclear whether Herculanei fought at Puteoli or Puteolani fought at Herculaneum:

PUTEO////////V////////VS DEC./

PUGN(ABUNT) HERCULANEI PRO SAL[UTE CAE]SARUM ET LIVIAE AUG²¹

Just why cities maintained mime troupes we do not know, but perhaps they existed for religious purposes rather than just official *ludi*. It is tempting to compare the *munera*, mostly gladiatorial, which were founded and maintained by testament, but which would be operated by a municipal authority such as a *procurator muneris*.²² If there is merit in these arguments, we will therefore not be surprised that Cicero can refer to “public mimes,” since Pompey’s impresarios will have recruited the main Roman public troupe for his own privately sponsored over-sized games in his own over-sized theatre. Cicero seems on reflection to imply that this was odd. The term may be rare perhaps principally because publicly owned and operated troupes had no opportunity or motive to advertise themselves directly as “public.”

In view of what has been said above, it is worth here considering whether help can be derived from the fragmentary *ILS* 5201.²³

*Lau]datus populo, solitus mandata referre,
Ad]lectus scaenae, Parasitus Apollinis idem,
Quar]tarum in mimis saltantibus utilis actor.*

. . . praised by the people, accustomed to carry out orders, appointee to the stage, likewise Parasite of Apollo, a capable actor of the fourth parts among dancing mimes . . .

²⁰ See Buonocore 1992: 57 *ad loc.*: “sarebbe l’unica testimonianza di una familia glad. urbana.” Their availability for the *munera* required by Augustales would be extremely useful. The text I give is that of the stone, with Dr Chamberland’s supplement, which seems much superior to Buonocore’s [*pec(unia) p]riv(ata) muner(a)*], but this does not affect the point made here.

²¹ *CIL* IV 9969. The reading PUTEO[LIS...]V [ID]US DEC(EMBRES) / PUGN(ABITUR) HERCULANEI PRO SAL[UTE] is adopted by some, including Fora 1996: 134, no. 103, but the resulting interpretation: “At Puteoli <and> on the 9th of December there will be a fight at Herculaneum” is an unparalleled formulation, and does not agree with the sketch in Sabbatini-Tumolesi 1980: Tav. XIII no. 7, where the place or gladiators and date are in larger letters by themselves, as I illustrate.

²² Examples are given by Sabbatini-Tumolesi (1980: 103), commenting on the *familia Capiniana* of Puteoli, whom she takes to be named from a benefactor Capinius. These could then be considered to be “Puteolani” by rival cities. I owe this observation to Dr Chamberland. It would agree with the similar phenomenon in Greek cities, e.g., the *Eudameioi technitai* and *Hagetoreioi Polystrateioi technitai* of Rhodes, cited most recently by LeGuen (2001: 1.327). Gladiators were retained by army units: Wahl 1977.

²³ *ILS* 5201 = *CIL* 6.10118 = *CLE* 411 = Courtney 1995: 121.

Courtney²⁴ should not translate *mimi saltantes* as “pantomimes,” who danced but did not speak, since the description of his “fourth parts”²⁵ means that he was a mime, and his role required him to dance as well as act. The interest of the lines arises from the description of the artist as a Parasite of Apollo, and as *adlectus scaenae*, obviously both professional titles as we saw, but also as *solitus mandata referre*, which is mysterious. Courtney (1995: 329) explains: “*mandata referre* probably means that he performed parasite roles . . . in which he would execute commissions and report back.” There are two objections to this. The first is that parasites do not normally execute and report back instructions, and we do not expect a very specialist role of this limited kind to exist in mime or drama at all; and indeed such a role should belong after the titles along with his description as a mime of the fourth parts. Second, and more important, the role of parasite was notoriously that of a mime of the second, not fourth, parts, as Festus²⁶ explicitly says, and as other evidence²⁷ confirms. It cannot be ruled out that a mime of the fourth parts also was a parasite, but it is unlikely. On the whole it looks as though some other explanation must be sought, and that one should assume that the words represent some title, or honour, rather than a role. I suggest therefore that it is a poetic version of the prosaic *diurnus*, since that is the only other suitable honorific title we know in inscriptions of mimes. If so, then it would mean that the mime was in the habit of carrying out or performing his official instructions, i.e., was under regular contract to perform and not a free artist. This would confirm Mommsen’s view. One can compare Vergil *Aen.* 5.605, *dum variis tumultu referunt sollemnia ludis*, for the notion of *referre* as “rendering, performing.” This seems a more satisfactory interpretation than Courtney’s, suits the epigraphic data, and also fits well enough with the idea that “public mimes” represent a technical term for a type of civic organization in the theatre industry.

VENTILATORS AND ACROBATS

The many specialists of mime who appeared on the ancient stage²⁸ are infrequently mentioned in our sources, and, when they do appear, their performances

²⁴ See Courtney (1995: 119), who however correctly but confusingly says in his note (329): “pantomimes, though they cannot be meant here.” The material is collected in Leppin 1992: 9, n. 39.

²⁵ Another mime of the fourth parts is a parasite of Apollo as well: *CIL* 14.4198 = *ILS* 5200. To judge by *ILS* 5201, an actor of the fourth parts specialized in dancing.

²⁶ Festus 438,22 L: “Volumnius, who danced to the flute, was an actor of *secundarum*, who is introduced in nearly all mimes as a parasite”

²⁷ Hor. *Epist.* 1.18.10–14; with Pseudoacron *ad loc.*; cf. Sen. *Ira* 3.8.6; Suet. *Calig.* 57. Cicero (*Brut.* 242) uses the term *secundarum* of a yes-man. But elsewhere he says (*Div. Caec.* 48.10) that the mimes of the second and also third parts speak lower to make the mime *primarum* sound better. Later, Epiphanius (*Adv. haeres.* 1.260.4) uses *deuteros mimologos* as an insult, but that is because that actor plays the *stupidus* Christian who is baptized in a bathtub; cf. Malalas 314,15 Bonn. The roles of first and second parts (Latinus and Panniculus: Mart. 5.61.11) remind one of Hardy and Laurel.

²⁸ Of recent similar clarifications, most useful are Hillgruber 2000a and 2000b, to which add the epigram from Pompeiopolis, now in Merkelbach and Stauber 2001: 2.322, where Terpnos must be a

are seldom described in any detail, so that translations tend to gloss them with general terms like “jester” or “mime,” thereby concealing the details we need to appreciate. It is problems like these that make any commentary on Martial so difficult; epigram 9.38 provides an example.²⁹

*Summa licet velox, Agathine, pericula ludas,
Non tamen efficies, ut tibi parma cadat.
Nolentem sequitur, tenuisque reversa per auras
Vel pede vel tergo, crine vel ungue sedet;
Lubrica Corycio quamvis sint pulpita nimbo
Et rapiant celeres vela negata Noti,
Securos pueri neglecta perambulat artus,
Et nocet artifice ventus et unda nihil.
Ut peccare velis, cum feceris omnia, falli
Non potes: arte opus est, ut tibi parma cadat.*

This is translated elegantly by Shackleton Bailey as:

Nimble Agathinus, you play very dangerous games, but you will not manage to let your little shield fall. It follows you against your will, and returns through the [*tenuis* is omitted] air to sit on your foot or on your back, your hair or your fingernail. Though the stage be slippery from a Corycian shower [i.e., saffron], and swift south winds tear away the awning denied us, the neglected shield roams over the boy's heedless limbs; wind and water do not impair the artistry [lit. “artist”]. Though you want to make a mistake, whatever you do, you cannot slip; skill is needed to make your shield fall.³⁰

It is not really a good poem, being based merely on the rather forced conceit that a very skilful performer needs even more skill to make a mistake; nonetheless the performer is unique and deserves attention. Who is Agathinus? “A juggler with a small shield,” notes Shackleton Bailey (1993: 264) correctly but none too helpfully; so too, Friedlaender (1886: 2.69) in his Martial commentary. As often in Martial, it is seldom that lesser mortals will succeed where the immense learning of Friedlaender and his helpers failed. Likewise the passage did not escape the far flung net of Hugo Blümner, as he collected material for his *Fabrendes Volk*,³¹ still the best introduction to the lesser performers of the ancient world, but he too had nothing more to offer. The epigram deserves attention, if only because it is more interesting to juggle shields than balls, knives, torches, or other objects. Yet one immediately observes that Agathinus only has one shield, and is not perhaps technically a juggler at all. Since even one smallish shield (but *parma* is

proper name (cf. the parallels in Leppin 1992: 303–304); also Choricus *Apol. Mim.* 78. Carter (1999) deals with *draucus*, to which add the discussion in *AE* 1998, 999a–b, and perhaps *CGL* 5.424,18: *histrionibus, droccerum*.

²⁹ This epigram is treated in Hendriksen 1999: 2.189–191; I have not learned anything from it.

³⁰ Shackleton Bailey 1993: 264.

³¹ See Blümner 1918: 18–19, where Agathinus is incorrectly described as “auf einem Gerüst.”

not *parmula*) requires considerable skill to manipulate, he is in a sense a type of *pyrrichistes*, and his artistry has a different history.

But first we need a name for him, and indeed we can find it in Blümner's own book, for elsewhere (1918: 16) he refers to "Jongleurs" who "bei den Römern (ein griechisches Wort dafür ist nicht bekannt) *pilarii*, wenn sie mit Bällen spielen, oder allgemeiner *ventilatores* hiessen." This is inaccurate, for just as Agathinus does not deserve to be called a juggler, so a *ventilator* should not be considered a general term for juggling objects other than balls. Blümner was to some extent misled by Quintilian (10.7.11), who lumps the two together:

miracula illa in scenis pilariorum ac ventilatorum, ut ea quae emisierint ultro venire in manus credas et quo iubentur decurrere.

... those wonders of ball-players and *ventilatores* on the stage, so that you would think that what they have released returns spontaneously to their hands and runs around where bidden.

But another passage, which he does not cite, is more helpful: Seneca at *Ep.* 117.25 asserts,

Quam stultum est, cum signum pugnae acceperis, ventilare. Remove ista lusoria arma: decretoriis opus est.

What idiocy, to *ventilare*, when you've got the signal to fight. Get rid of that fun armour; you need serious stuff.

This seems to have been the inspiration for a more precise passage in Fronto also:³²

<Uti> clipeo te Achillis in orationibus oportet, non parmulam ventilare neque hastulis histrionis ludere.

You have to use Achilles' shield in your speeches, and not *ventilare* a little *parma*, or fiddle with the toy spears of an entertainer.

It is obvious that *ventilare* should have a technical significance of doing tricks with a type of shield that was not used in real warfare.³³ Certainly the word itself means to throw things in the air (*ventus*) generally, especially in the manner of those using a winnowing fan (*ventabulum*). But when it is used of theatrical games, there is no example of it applied to anything other than the

³² Van den Hout (1997: 369) mentions two further passages in his comment on his 156,7 [= 152,6 ed. 1]: "*ventilare*: 'Wave' ... Martial 5.31.4 *ventilat arma*; Sen. *Controv.* 3, praef. 13 *totum aliud est pugnare, aliud ventilare*." The extended Senecan comparison of rhetorical with gladiatorial education was obviously a standard *color* of the schools.

³³ For *arma lusoria* see the good collection of material at van den Hout 1997: 39, 16–17. Garelli-François (2000: 503) mentions our Seneca and Fronto texts, without understanding correctly the performer or the role of *pyrriche*. She therefore regards the metaphor as "assez banale." The Fronto text at this point is not completely secure.

throwing of a shield. Martial 5.31 deserves also to be considered briefly in this connection:

*Aspice, quam placidis insultet turba iuencis
Et sua quam facilis pondera taurus amet.
Cornibus hic pendet summis, vagus ille per armos
Currit et in toto ventilat arma bove.
At feritas inmota riget: non esset harena
Tutior, et poterant fallere plana magis.
Nec trepidat gestus, sed de discrimine palmae
Securus puer est, sollicitumque pecus.*

See how the troupe leaps upon the placid steers and how each obliging bull loves its own burden. One hangs from the tips of the horns, another roams running along the shoulders, and shakes about the weapons over the whole ox. But its unmoved ferocity remains still; the sand would not be safer, and level ground would more easily cause him to slip. The one who is carried has no fear, except about the chance of victory; the boy is free from worry but the bull is anxious. (Tr. Howell 1995: 41)³⁴

The text of the second last line given by Howell is, however, that of Shackleton-Bailey; the mss have *nec trepidant gestus sed te (v.l. et ne) discrimine palmae (v.l. parmas)*. The change to *trepidat* is not really necessary, and while the remainder of the line now makes good sense, one may remain suspicious that it removes the shields, which are implied by the *arma ventilat*, and one is surprised that a victory palm can be awarded for such spectacles to boys in competition. Whatever one reads, the reference is clearly to a performance on bull-back in the arena by *pueri*. The bull is said to be quite still while one boy hangs from its horns and another acts as a *ventilator* on its back. The poem gives us another example of the variations possible in such entertainments. But it is by no means certain that we are dealing with mimes, though there is good evidence for arena spectacles of bull-riding as pure entertainment, as well as the well known agonistic *taurokathapsia* and such traditional rodeo events at the games in parts of Northern Greece and Asia, including Carian Aphrodisias.³⁵ In particular there is an interesting inscription from Miletus,³⁶ which is an encouraging oracle of Apollo for Apphion (also known as Heronas) of Alexandria, who has asked anxiously whether his appearance in shows will continue to be successful. He has good reason for his anxiety, since he operates ἐν / τε τοῖς ἀκρωνύχοις καὶ τῷ ταυροδιδᾷ / ξίη and despite the obscurity³⁷ it seems likely that he too he is a performer who makes a dangerous

³⁴ His comments on the poem are not helpful.

³⁵ On this see Liermann 1889: 27–35; Robert 1940: 315–319; Roueché 1993: 63.

³⁶ Milet I 7 (Sudmarkt) no. 205 (= Milet VI,1 33). Merkelbach and Stauber (2001: 118) provide a long bibliography for this inscription.

³⁷ Robert (1938: 106) produced a good parallel from Manetho 4.245, as well as some hilarious attempts at explanation by earlier scholars.

living from dancing on bullback, though whether he juggled as well is unknown. Similar arena performances on bullback, dressed up as myth, are known from Martial's *De spectaculis* 18 and 19.³⁸ It is however at least worth considering whether Martial may be talking not about professional mimes or performers but about the games of the *iuvenes* in their competitions (*iuvenalia*) common in most Italian cities of his times.³⁹ From what little we know, they did indulge in various kinds of bull-fighting, and boys appeared in other potentially dangerous performances such as Troy games. Indeed, twirling shields on a placid bull trained to stand still does not sound exciting enough for the Roman amphitheatre, but safe enough for the upperclass teenagers of Italy.⁴⁰

To return to our *ventilator*: L. Robert, who contributed more than any other modern scholar to the elucidation of such matters, often pointed out that the *Corpus Glossariorum* can preserve details of such performances,⁴¹ and indeed we find *CLG* 2.206.2: *ventilator*: ὀπλοπεκτὴ καὶ λικμήτης (the literal meaning) and *CLG* 3.308.65: ὀπλοπέκτης: *ventilator*. Therefore the Greek equivalent for our performer, which Blümner sought in vain, is ὀπλοπαίκτης, a word that occurs in Vettius Valens 74.13, an author rich in such terms. Agathinus belongs with those other specialist θαυματοποιοί: the ἰσχυροπαίκτης,⁴² ψηφοπαίκτης, σκυνδαλοπαίκτης,⁴³ καλοπαίκτης, κοντοπαίκτης, τροχοπαίκτης, σφαιροπαίκτης, ὀψιοπαίκτης, and the dubious σκληροπαίκτης at Ath. 129d. As for the poem itself, it would seem clear that the artificial reference to *ventus*, which drags *unda* after it, as well as *per auras*, is an indirect allusion to our performer's professional designation.

Perhaps one may be allowed here a word about the status of such performers. Gounaropoulou⁴⁴ has republished an important imperial epitaph from Beroea, an area of strong Roman cultural influence, and, though fragmentary and difficult to read, it seems to suggest for the first time that an acrobat could be awarded a crown, probably at the imperial festival of the province. The date is uncertain but probably ca A.D. 200. The lines that concern us are in verse, which I write out somewhat adventurously, in view of the gaps:

... στε]φανωθεῖς[
[...17...]ἀθλήματα ΛΥΖΣΙΙΙ[.5...]
κα]λοβάτης εἴτ' ὀξυβάτης ΔΕΛ[...8...]λιστης

³⁸ The notes on these poems by Shackleton-Bailey are misleading; see rather Weinreich 1928: 59 on mythological spectacle with bulls. K. Coleman informs me that she will deal with these matters in her forthcoming edition of *De spectaculis* in the introduction to *Spect.* 18 (16).

³⁹ Further references to the juvenile antics of *iuvenes* in the arena can be found in Slater 1994.

⁴⁰ I speak from experience of riding frequently as a small child on an extremely large and peaceful Aberdeen-Angus bull.

⁴¹ Robert (1969: 2.895 = 1928: 423) noted this, but he wrote: "par *ventilator*, escamoteur; ce doit être l'avaleur des sabres," perhaps because he thought *armilisor* translated *hoplopaiktes*.

⁴² Robert 1938: 103; 1969: 2.893.

⁴³ Robert 1987: 216. These are not the same as *scandalistae*.

⁴⁴ *SEG* XXVII 266, now published as no. 402 in Gounaropoulou 1993. This was first brought to my attention by Chr. Chaniotis.

τοῦ θρέψαντος ἀπ' αἰῶ[νος με]γάλου παραδόξου
Μαξίμου Ἀμ[...]ων συναγωνιστῆς ὁ λαλητός etc.

This *threptos* (*alumnus*)⁴⁵ named Am[??] and presumably assistant of Maximos lived only twenty-seven years, but the language is notable for the concentration of agonistic words: *athlema*, *synagonistes*, *paradoxos*, the acclamatio *ἀπ' αἰonos*, as well of course as the crowning. Whatever his own performance was, Maximos wanted it to be considered as equivalent to the old festival categories, and the same appears true for his *alumnus*. Yet, there can be no doubt that he did not belong there, but in the general mime category, for it is impossible to think of any known supplement other than *skalobates*, a ladder-acrobat or *kalobates*, ropewalker, which would fit the verse. This in turn would complement *oxybates*, if that is the right reading, a “quickstep” expert, or, like ἀκρο-βάτης, someone who “goes/climbs on a point.” Provided that we do not have an adjective like καλλίστης which is difficult to fit in syntactically, that leaves another professional term ending in */listes*. The poetic δεικηλίστης can be ruled out; and only two other words are known to me. *Kotylistes* had already been conjectured in *SEG*, and it alone will scan properly. However, though the term, which occurs once in Julian (*Misopogon* 360a), means mime of some sort, I conjecture that it must be the Greek equivalent of *acetabularius*, a shell-game expert, or *parophthalmistes*.⁴⁶ It does not seem possible to combine shell-games with acrobatics, though the singing highwire artists of Oxyrhynchus⁴⁷ should give us pause. That leaves as the sole possibility among known words *skandalistes*, a word that appears in both Greek and Latin,⁴⁸ and is roughly the equivalent of *petauristarius*, just the kind of acrobatic artist we seek. Regrettably it does not scan accurately, though that would not stop a determined imperial versifier, but it seems to be at the moment the only possibility. This inscription would then take its place along with *FD* iii,1 226, a decree⁴⁹ honouring Aurelius Nonnos (also known as Demetrios), who was a *kontopektes*, *skandalistes*, *kalobates*, and so impressed the frivolous Delphians that they made him a councillor and citizen. All of this is yet more evidence that under Roman influence mimes of all sorts were able to gain status from the second half of the second century onwards.⁵⁰ Another late imperial *alumna*, the mime actress Kyrilla,⁵¹ also appears at Beroea, claiming to have won many crowns ἐν θυμέλαις, but this was probably in singing and dancing, which is more understandable.

⁴⁵ Compare the *threptos*, who is in my view a professional pyrrichistes, of *SEG* XXXV 1327, discussed by Jones (1990). A tragedian is an *alumnus* of the Dux Ripae at Dura, and so a military performer: Wells 1952: 31, no. 945.

⁴⁶ *kotyle* = *acetabulum*. See now the excellent survey of similar terms in Dickie 2001.

⁴⁷ *P. Oxy.* 2707.

⁴⁸ Perpillou-Thomas 1995: 228.

⁴⁹ Corrected and explained by Wilhelm (1974: 2.83).

⁵⁰ I may refer to Slater 1995 and Slater 1996 for the evidence, though I should now have to revise my statements there (derived from L. Robert) about imperial *epinikia*.

⁵¹ Bouley 2001: 224; Gounaropoulou 1998: no. 339 (= *SEG* XII 325). There are crowns from the Augustan period for gladiators in the imperial cult at Thasos (Bouley 2001: 245 and 132), for a

The manipulation of shields while dancing was a popular feature of entertainment in antiquity. Yet Homeric lines such as "I know how to dance to furious Ares in close battle" were loaded metaphors for listeners whose lives might depend on such skills,⁵² and the history of such shield dancing has now been well explored in the recent books of Ceccarelli and Lesky.⁵³ But the *ventilator*, whether on bullback or not, is yet another variant excogitated by the theatre industry, very probably connected to or derived from some military performance, as Seneca suggests by his reference to *arma lusoria*. So doubtless is the related *pyrricharius*, whose artistry is still undefined.⁵⁴ The manipulation of a small shield, thrown in the air and twisted round one's body dexterously, while not touching the ground, was very likely to have been accompanied by music, like *pyrriche* itself. It therefore takes its place alongside both the gymnasium training of *hoplomachia*, attested in Hellenistic times, and the *arma lusoria* of gladiatorial schools with their use of specialized armour. Related⁵⁵ too is *orchestopala*, dance-boxing aerobics, which was also a popular stage and circus event deriving from gymnasium *pyrriche* and *skiamachia*. Perhaps doing tricks with a shield may seem to be yet another example of the excess of the theatre industry and the frivolity of the Roman audience. But skill with a shield was something very different from juggling; and long before the construction of Rome's theatres its citizens had been able to watch other tricks with shields, which had more immediate applications. Livy (44.9) describes the capture of Heracleum in 169 B.C., in which "some of the young Romans actually captured the lowest part of the wall by means of a circus performance turned to military use," whereby they ran up a "tortoise" formed of their shields. One suspects that Livy really should have spoken of this rather as a military performance turned to circus use, but perhaps he was misled by the *theatralis licentia* of his times to assume that the spectacle came first.

CONCLUSION

These two examples are meant to suggest the kind of detailed questions that should be asked before a new synthesis of the ancient mime can be written. Yet, while it may be possible to achieve greater precision about mime-performers than modern translations suggest, it would be equally mistaken to assume that we can reach some precise definition of this protean genre, and establish an absolutely clear division between mime and pantomime,⁵⁶ between mime and comedy,⁵⁷

pantomime who is a Roman citizen in the theatre at Gortyn, an area of Roman influence (Robert 1969: 1.677). These were of course not part of regular Greek festivals.

⁵² Griffin 1980: 194.

⁵³ Lesky 2000; Ceccarelli 1998.

⁵⁴ Despite the learning of Sabbatini-Tumolesi (1970).

⁵⁵ Slater 1990.

⁵⁶ See an example in Slater 1994: 121, n. 2.

⁵⁷ An example can be found in *Bullep* 1967, no. 645 referring to an imperial inscription from Caesarea (*RevBibl* 1967, 56–59) for a *komodos [pro]tologos* from Antioch in Syria. But *protologos* should mean actor of *primarum partium* as L. Robert points out *ad loc.*, and so mime.

and even mime and tragedy,⁵⁸ save perhaps within the formal and conservative categories of Greek festivals. Sporadic examples of this effacement of categories⁵⁹ are often noted by modern writers on the ancient theatre but it was precisely part of the Roman genius to eliminate traditional distinctions by dynamic innovation, so that influences from gymnasium and bath athletics, religious music and mime-ritual, military exercises and *munera* of all sorts, in both public and private spheres, could overlap in the interest of effective spectacle.⁶⁰

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⁵⁸The masked mythological mime used old tragic themes of incest and adultery; Theocharides 1940: 88–89, citing John Chrysostom.

⁵⁹A generous referee provides me with a wealth of references to this effect, most of which refer to an earlier period; I shall acknowledge them in another place.

⁶⁰My thanks are due to Guy Chamberland and Katherine Coleman for their precise and constructive criticism; they do not necessarily agree with anything expressed here. I am grateful also for the generosity of this journal's referees.

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