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Wylie, Mary Kathryn

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF "ATTITUDE" AS A BASIS FOR MIME

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1984

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF "ATTITUDE"
AS A BASIS FOR MIME

by

KATHRYN WYLIE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1984

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Stanley A. Wan

Chairman of Examining Committee

Stanley A. Wan

Executive Officer

Benito Orso

Charles Fether

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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Mime, perhaps because it is a silent art, so often pursued by lone individuals struggling on the fringes of the performance arts, has been largely ignored by the scholarly community. There is a general consensus among many theoreticians that it is an incomplete or imperfect art at best, whose place lies among the circus arts, side shows, or merely as an adjunct to other performance arts. However, those who have gone beyond the painted surface of mime find a wealth of unexplored aesthetic territory.

It was the feeling that mime was not only one of the oldest arts but a very profound and multilayered one that prompted my inquiry into what makes it unique from the other performance arts. After much reading and practical study, I concluded that the recurring concept of "attitude" might hold the key. The choice of the diverse types of mime covered in this study was first made because of my special interest and involvement with each of them. However, as the study unfolded I began to see that they had basic similarities that could be explained by examining them from the standpoint of "attitude."

A work such as this is not the outcome of a single individual but owes a great debt to a network of

people. I would like to begin by expressing my warmest thanks to my parents and husband for their nurturing support and love, which have enabled me to pursue my deepest interests. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the many mime performers whose struggles to deepen and extend the language of mime have been truly awesome. Special memories and appreciation must be given to Zeami, the late Claude Kipnis (my first mime teacher), and the ferociously dedicated Etienne Decroux (with whom I studied in Paris).

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, most critics who have attempted to define the nature of mime and pantomime consider movement as a critical element of their definitions. The dictionary defines "mime" as "the art of creating and portraying a character or of narration by body movements (as by realistic and symbolic gestures)."¹ "Pantomime," is defined as "the art of expressing the action of a story by simplified, exaggerated, and often conventionally symbolic gestures without words."² As we shall see in Chapter One, these terms were used in antiquity to refer to distinct performance genres.³ However, today "Mime" and "Pantomime" are practically synonymous in meaning and generally refer to both the performer, as well as to "gestural" performances (which may include a variety of elements such as singing,

¹Webster's Third New International Dictionary, rev. ed. (1966), s.v. "mime."

²Ibid., s.v. "pantomime."

³To avoid confusion, "Mime" (with a capital M) will be used as a generic term (which includes pantomime) to indicate the performance; "mime" (with a lower case m) and "Mime performer" will designate the agent of the action. This convention follows the usage suggested by Jean Dorcy, The Mime, trans. R. Speller, Jr. and P. de Fontnouvelle (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1961), p. xv. Similarly, the term "Pantomime" (with a capital P) will indicate the performance, and "pantomime" (with a lower case p) will indicate the performer.

dancing, acrobatics, etc.) or to the "gestural" element in various types of performance arts.

Most would agree that movement is an important aspect of Mime. Yet attention given to the "motional" qualities of gesture tends to obscure the equal, if not greater importance, of attitude as a basis for Mime. "Attitude" has frequently occurred in descriptions and definitions of Mime. Today's statements by Mime performers and critics are essentially representative of the historical usage of this term:

One may conceive of a movement as a succession of attitudes.¹

Whoever studies the idiom of a mime will be struck by the multiplicity of attitudes and by their nature. ... Attitude is the original method of the mime and the essence of Mime.²

[Mime is] the art of gesture and attitude.³

Mime is the art of attitude . . .⁴

The attitudes which many mimes consider to be the result and quintessence of the mimodrama crystallize the whole sequence and form the armature of the story.⁵

¹Etienne Decroux, Paroles sur le mime (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 25. From here on, all translations from the French, unless otherwise indicated, have been made by the author of this paper.

²Dorcy, The Mime, p. 33.

³Tony Montanaro, quoted in Louis Harold Campbell, "An Analysis of Selected Contemporary Mime Philosophies and Techniques" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1976), p. 2.

⁴Marcel Marceau, Lecture/Demonstration on Mime, Videotape, Brooklyn College, 1976.

⁵Patrice Pavis, Languages of the Stage (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), p. 58.

While many Mime performers have attested to the importance of attitude in their work, few have made any attempt to explain their usage of the term.

The purpose of this study is to determine the principal elements that constitute the basis of the activity known as Mime. The initial hypothesis is that the widely used but little understood concept of attitude not only provides an important key to understanding Mime but contributes valuable insight into what distinguishes Mime from other performance genres. In an examination of attitude in various forms of Mime, this study proposes to focus on two interrelated meanings of the term; one, which will show it to be an important element in the creative process of the Mime performer and the other, which will establish it as the primary stylistic device underlying all forms of Mime.

The term "attitude" has been used with a variety of meanings. Tracking the term historically reveals that it was originally employed in the Fine Arts to indicate "the posture of a figure in sculpture or painting."¹ This usage, which has continued to the present, refers to a "pose" of the body resulting from the arrangement of its various parts into a fixed and stationary formal composition. "Pose" is defined as "a fixed or sustained posture of the body or a part of the body."² It is a discrete shape which appears to

¹Oxford Universal Dictionary, Illustrated, 3rd ed. (1969), s.v. "attitude."

²Webster's Third, s.v. "pose."

be "held" in time and space. The "poses" or "postures" of painted and sculpted figures have frequently served as models for the depiction of attitudes in the various performance arts which employ gesture. As one looks at the many Mime genres throughout history, one is struck by the "sculptural or "pictorial" nature of their styles. Like sculpture, Mime gesture often appears to unfold from and culminate in a stationary attitude. Similarly, the held pose can be found in dance, oratory and acting.

In dance terminology "attitude" was employed in the early nineteenth century by Carlo Blasis to refer to a new posture he had created modeled on a statue of Mercury. More generally, both "attitude" and "posture" have been used for centuries to denote "any position [in the dance] held momentarily."¹ Gloria Strauss states, "Like the rest in music with which it shares several functions, a posture or pose [in the dance] may literally stop or interrupt the process of movement."² Much of what scholars know about early dance has primarily been derived from the study of poses or postures recorded in the sculptures and paintings of the era in which the dance existed. Along with the occasional descriptions by viewers and written records left by dancers and choreographers, the visual records left in stone and paint attest to the importance

¹Oxford Universal, s.v. "attitude."

²Gloria B. Strauss, "The Aesthetics of Dominance," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 37 (Fall 1978): 73.

of postures deriving from those involved in hunting, working, worshipping, playing, etc. Today, "attitude" and "posture" continue to form a vital part of dance technique and performance; however, as in the case of Mime the study of postures has been largely neglected in dance scholarship, "dancers continue to speak of movements even when, to be exact, they are referring to postures."¹

An attitude is more than a discrete shape that appears to be at rest in space, it serves the purpose of conveying information. "Attitude" also means "a posture of the body proper to or implying some action or mental state."² The attitudes depicted in painting, sculpture, dance, Mime, acting and oratory generally portray a combination of character, action and emotion or an abstract concept or idea. In the Fine Arts various attempts were made to codify the attitudes depicting the "passions," especially in the area of facial expression, to be used as norms for conveying emotion in works of art. Charles Le Brun's Traite sur les Passions represents one such attempt. Attitudes in dance have generally been modeled on natural human expression in everyday events and activities. Stylized and revised within the matrix of the dance, these attitudes or postures often serve as abstract and stylized renditions of their counterparts in the society from which they evolved. Many of these postures function as "denotative" signs which

¹Ibid.

²Oxford Universal, s.v. "attitude."

refer directly to concrete denotata. Traditionally, it is this "denotative" attitude that has been termed by critics and historians as the "mimetic" element in dance. However, the dance also possesses more abstract postures which do not appear to "denote" concrete phenomena within the realm of the viewer's experience. These abstract and symbolic postures, whose connection with their original models in society has become all but effaced, are analogous to the key determinants in music. While abstract postures operate on the level of "suggestion" and "evocation" they are essentially mimetic in nature and origin.

In recent years the term "attitude" has come to refer to the "mental state" of the individual and is defined in psychology as "a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices or other tendencies that have given a set or readiness of act to a person because of varied experiences."¹ According to attitude psychologists, the "mental state" of the individual tends to manifest itself in movement "held up from going into action" or in a dynamically charged "posture" of the body, which expresses emotion and/or readiness for action. The individual's attitude towards external stimuli or internal imagery causes him to assume a pose which reflects his psychic state. Mental attitudes form the basis of the individual's thoughts, dreams and memories, and hence, his language.

¹See below, p. 49, for footnote reference and a fuller discussion of "attitude" defined as a "mental state."

The bodily attitude is, therefore, not merely a stylistic device of the various arts but appears to be the result of a psychophysical process bound up with the expression of mental attitudes. Moreover, the attitude or posture of the body appears to function as a linguistic sign which articulates the inner world of the individual.

In practice, the term "attitude" may often be equated with the term "posture." A common meaning of posture refers to "the relative arrangement of the different parts especially of the body, the characteristic position or bearing of the body or that assumed for a special purpose."¹ Posture is usually associated with the "carriage" of the body--the body part relationships and spacial emphases which are maintained in the body as a baseline from which the mover operates. An individual's posture is an expression of the "habitual mental attitude" which comprises his personality. However, transitory positions of the body, which express feeling, thought or action, are also referred to as postures.

Mime today, is generally associated with the element of "gesture" which refers to all voluntary or involuntary movements of the human body, the aim of which is to signify thought or emotion. In earlier definitions, however, "gesture" meant "a position or attitude."² Gesture unfolds from a bodily attitude--a held position of the body or parts

¹Webster's Third, s.v. "posture."

²Ibid., s.v. "gesture."

of the body. While "posture" may be conceived of as an impulse which spreads throughout the whole body observably affecting all parts, gesture tends to involve peripheral or isolated movement of one part of the body, such as the eyes or hands. Like bodily attitudes, gestures serve a linguistic function of conveying the mental attitudes of the individual.

This overview of the various definitions of "attitude" and related terminologies demonstrates range and overlap. One set of definitions refer to attitude as a "pose" of the body that is held in time and space, which is indicative of or helps to articulate the "mental state" of the subject. In more recent usage, attitude also refers to the individual's inner world of thought and emotion, which is manifested outwardly in a held position of the body. Moreover, the terms "posture" and "gesture" appear to have originally meant a bodily attitude or "pose." While attitude and related terminology will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two, for the sake of clarity at this juncture, the terms "attitude," "posture," and "gesture" are here defined as follows: "attitude," except where clearly indicated otherwise, will be used to refer to the "mental state of the performer; "posture" will indicate a held "pose" or position of the body or parts of the body; and "gesture" will refer to isolated movements of parts of the body.

Throughout history, Mime has rarely occurred as a pure art of posture and gesture unsupported by such elements as music, dance or spoken language. Moreover, it has traditionally formed an integral part of such arts as dance, acting and oratory. In examining what scholars have referred to as "Mime" in these arts, we discover that it consists of "held" postures of the body (often modeled on figures in statuary and painting) and "gestures" which unfold from a postural base; both elements serving as linguistic signs expressing (mental) attitudes. Etienne Decroux refers to these various forms of Mime as "The Mime of the Dancer," "The Mime of the Actor" and "The Mime of the Speaker."¹ The Mime of the dancer involves codified postures and gestures which function as word equivalents to "tell a story," accompany a text with literal gesture, or as dialogue between two dancers. The Mime of the actor involves imitations of characters and bodily enactment of common activities and feelings. Role playing by the actor generally involves the assumption of a character posture as well as the usage of posture and gesture as a subtext or paralanguage which runs in conjunction with a spoken text both enriching and altering its meaning. The Mime of the orator also involves posture and gesture which are employed to depict character and emotion, as well as to amplify, modify and punctuate certain words, phrases and meanings simultaneously uttered in sentences. While the

¹Dorcy, The Mime.

gestures of the orator are often codified and abstract signs, they nevertheless serve the important function of conveying the essential attitude of the speaker towards the verbal content of his speech.

Strongly influenced by the classical Mime-dance of antiquity, the ballet through much of its history has incorporated posture and gesture as a basis of its style. As in the Greek and Roman pantomimic dance (which we will speak more about in Chapter Five), the various styles of classical ballet have sought to "tell a story," through languages involving codified postures and gestures. In the early eighteenth century John Weaver, the originator of ballet d'action, wrote in an essay on the history of dancing:

Stage-Dancing was at first designed for Imitation; to explain Things conceived in the Mind, by Gestures and Motions of the Body, and plainly and intelligibly represent Actions, Manners, and Passions; so that the Spectator might perfectly understand the Performer by these motions, tho' he say not a word. Thus far the excellence of the Art appears; but its Beauties consist in the regulated Motion of all parts, by forming the Body, Head, Arms, and Feet, into such Positions, Gestures, and Movements, as represent the aforesaid Passions, Manners, and Actions. . . . And, without the help of an Interpreter, a Spectator shall at a distance, by the lively representation of a just Character, be capable of understanding the Subject of the Story represented, and be able to distinguish the several Passions, Manners, and Actions; as of Love, Anger, and the like.¹

Weaver created a code of posture and gesture which he felt

¹John Weaver, An Essay Towards an History of Dancing (London: John Tonfon, 1712), pp. 160-61.

to be in accord with ancient tradition. The following are examples taken from the scenario of his ballet "The Loves of Mars and Venus" which was modeled on a Greek dance of the same name:

Astonishment: Both hands are thrown up towards the Skies; the Eyes also lifted up, and the Body cast backwards.

Anger: The left Hand struck suddenly with the right; and sometimes against the Breast.¹

The ballet postures and corresponding gestures show the influence of contemporary norms for portraying the "passions" in painting and sculpture. Until the advent of Noverre in the latter part of the eighteenth century, ballet depicted national characters, mythological or historical figures with the aid of costumes, dance steps and postures which resembled painting by portraying a series of instantaneous pictures.

The art of "posing" or "posturing" has frequently developed into an art within the general body of dance itself. The trend towards "instantaneous pictures" (frozen postures) in the ballet culminated in several unique genres which reached their fullest development in the eighteenth century: Tableaux Vivants, Monodramas and Attitudes.² "Attitudes," a

¹John Weaver, quoted in Selma Jeanne Cohen, ed. Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History From 1581 to the Present (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1974), p. 54.

²See Kirsten Gram Holmstrom, Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967).

performance genre created by Lady Hamilton and Ida Brun, was primarily an art of posturing based on poses of figures in painting and classical statuary. According to Lorenzo Hammarskold, "attitudes" constituted the art of "representing plastic works of art by mimic means, gestures and draping, and transforming their local and existing life into a successive temporal one."¹ Lady Hamilton performed in the middle of a drawing room, dressed in a white tunic and girdle. She hid herself by means of shawls which she would lower to reveal various postures of mythological women copied from sculpture and painting. An important aspect of these performances was her ability to depict in rapid succession various emotions such as grief, sadness, joy and fright. Each "attitude" was characterized by "an intensive instant of immobility carrying within it the seed of lightening swift movement. The radiation of psychic tension . . . was Lady Hamilton's principal artistic means of expression."² There is no mention in historical descriptions of "dance-like" movements as connecting links between the different postures, nor does there seem to have been any musical accompaniment. More importantly, this mimoplastic art embodied in picturesque poses does not appear to have possessed any dramatic context or plots. It remained for Ida Brun, another performer of this genre, to depict a dramatic sequence of events in "attitudes."

¹Ibid., p. 119.

²Ibid., p. 120.

Noverre, inspired by the pantomimic acting of Garrick, attempted to reunite action with dancing. In place of the largely static and courtly postures of earlier ballet, he advocated the concept of la pantomime heroique, which he envisioned as a series of "shifting" or moving "pictures" endowed with real feeling and life through pantomimic action. Through finely wrought dramatic structure and well-developed characterizations, he attempted to create a flowing narrative composed of mimetic postures and gestures.

A well-composed ballet is a living picture of the passions, manners, customs, ceremonies and customs of all nations of the globe, consequently, it must be expressive in all its details and speak to the soul through the eyes; if it be devoid of expression, of striking pictures, of strong situations, it becomes a cold and dreary spectacle.¹

The ballet of Noverre was composed of a codified system of postures and gestures which like the "letters of the alphabet" could be arranged to "explain . . . clearly and simply, the actions which, it [the ballet] represents."² Early in his career, Noverre was interested in the possibilities of a conventional language drawn from the deaf and dumb alphabet of Abbé de l'Epée. This was mimed language without choreographic or emotional content which permitted actual dialogue between the dancers. Words were set down

¹Jean Georges Noverre, Letters on Dancing and Ballets, trans. Cyril W. Beaumont (New York: Dance Horizons, 1968), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 20.

in the scenario and translated on stage by matching postures and gestures.

Carlo Blasis, the nineteenth-century Italian dancing master, who contributed to the codification of dance instruction, believed that "Pantomime is, undoubtedly, the very soul and support of the Ballet."¹ Accordingly, he felt that "gesture" was the dancer's means of expressing "the inward operation of the mind" through "exterior movements and attitudes of the body."² His ballet choreography was often modeled on the poses of figures in classical sculpture which he translated into dance gesture and movement which were posturally based.

In an attempt to find new forms of expression, modern dancers and choreographers have broken with the codified vocabularies of posture and gesture of classical ballet. While dancers, such as Isadora Duncan and Maud Allan, based their work on the postures depicted in Greek and Roman art, the emphasis was on the plastic transition from pose to pose. Fokine says of the creation of a Bacchanal modeled on a dance as depicted in a Greek bas-relief:

All positions were in accord with what we see on bas-reliefs. However, they were not imitations of bas-reliefs, but movements flowing naturally from these positions and terminating in them. In "reading" the

¹Carlo Blasis, The Art of Dancing, trans. R. Barton (London: Edward Bull, 1831), p. 111.

²Ibid., p. 112.

bas-reliefs, one must understand what movement it was that resulted in a particular pose.¹

In contemporary times, Martha Graham uses the element of posture as an integral part of her dance style. Her work Lamentations might be considered less a dance than a series of strongly dramatic postures. Graham defines "posture" as "that instant of seeming stillness when the body is poised for most intense, most subtle action, the body at its moment of greatest potential efficiency"; and according to Graham, "Each condition of sensitivity has a corresponding condition of posture."²

Mimetic postures have long been an integral part of Asian "dances."

In many East Asian danced and mimed genres the significant pause is the goal toward which motionally active dance aims. The achievement of the static posture thus becomes a climax to, as well as the end of, a series of movements.³

Some Asian dances that include posture as an essential element of their styles are as follows: the Chinese posture dance; the traditional dance form of India, termed Bharata Natya; the Noh drama of medieval Japan; the more popular Kabuki theatre of Japan, which along with the mimetic postures of the kata is characterized by the mie--a frozen

¹Fokine, quoted in John Spiegel and Pavel Machotka, Messages of the Body (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 46.

²Martha Graham, quoted in Dance as a Theatre Art, p. 139.

³Strauss, "Aesthetics of Dominance," p. 74.

instant of immobility that epitomizes the essence of a phrase or situation; and the Kathakali dance-drama of India.

Like dance, the art of acting has relied heavily on the element of Mime as a basis for its aesthetics. Indeed, the term for "actor" and "mime" in antiquity were often synonymous. Up through the nineteenth century the actor possessed a codified language of "postures" which were modeled on those employed for the representation of character, action and emotion in painting and sculpture. As early as Roman times, Lucian stated that actors must learn from great painters.¹ Yet, classical painters and sculptors often chose their subjects from among actors, dancers and Mime artists who were proficient in the "pictorial" pose. The codification of postures depicting the norms for portraying the "passions" in the Fine Arts appears to have been pursued with equal zeal in the art of acting. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Antoine Coypel lecturing at the Academie Royale de Peinture told his audiences that anyone who wanted to perfect himself in painting must go to the theatre, and that the converse is true, "that actors have much to learn from great painters."²

¹Holmstrom, Monodrama, p. 15.

²Antoine Coypel, quoted in Holmstrom, Monodrama, p. 15.

From the classical era up through the early nineteenth century, acting as well as the other arts (including Mime), was influenced by the art of rhetoric. Classical education was centered on the student's power of expression and persuasion, and thus a great deal of thought was given to all aspects of style in speech, gesture and writing. According to Quintilian, Cicero considered "action" as the "supreme element of oratory."¹ Gestures were seen as a type of corporeal eloquence or language of the body, which had a more immediate effect on the spectator than speech. Quintilian states that gestures in oratory should express, "the impulses of the mind," and "like movement in pantomime should have a direct effect on the emotions."² The classical treatises on oratory were restudied during the classical revival of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when an attempt was made to reduce everything to rigid canons based on antique precedent. It is apparent that a kind of "double influence" existed between the use of posture and gesture in oratory and acting. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Thomas Wright in England held up the actor's use of voice, eyes, face, posture and gesture as a model for orators of his day.³

¹Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria 2, Loeb Classical Library, p. 247.

²Ibid., 4: 291.

³Bertram Joseph, The Tragic Actor (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 5.

Wright states that "in the substance of external action for the most part orators and stage players agree."¹ Both the orator and actor used gesture and posture to express the "emotion" of a speech or phrase rather than to mime its meaning. Quintilian had expressly urged the orator not to "use his hands to imitate attitudes or to illustrate anything he may chance to say."² In an eighteenth-century treatise on Elocution John Bulwer wrote:

Gesture must attend upon every inflection of the voice, not scenical, but declaring the sentence and meaning of our mind, not by demonstration, but signification; for it must be accommodated by the hand, to the words, as to the sense.³

It appears that the orator and actor must have used stylized postures and gestures to amplify and give nuance to certain words and phrases as well as to literally "denote" actions, characters and passions in the text.

In the mid-nineteenth century Franoise Delsarte attempted to devise a "scientific" method for the portrayal of attitude to be used as a basis for the training of the actor, orator and singer. Believing that the laws of stage expression were discoverable through scientific observation and that these could be formulated as precisely as mathematical principles, he analyzed emotions and ideas as they were expressed in posture and gesture. He

¹Wright, quoted in Joseph, The Tragic Actor, p. 9.

²Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria 4, Loeb Classical Library, p. 291.

³John Bulwer, Chirologia, Chironomia (1644), p. 133.

divided and subdivided the body into parts and related each to a physical, mental, emotional or spiritual function of the individual. His work culminated in an elaborate system ("The Science of Applied Aesthetics") in which he attempted to define how each organ of the body, (i.e., eyes, head, feet, etc.) is positioned and moved to communicate particular attitudes.¹ While his system degenerated after his death in 1877 into stereotyped postures and gestures, his theories, nevertheless, had an important impact on the gestural formation of singers, dancers and orators of the turn of the century.

The twentieth century has seen a disappearance of formal codification of posture and gesture in the Mime of the actor, speaker, dancer and mime. Contemporary culture prizes informality and personal style. The classical rules of oratory and the "Voice Culture" of Delsarte have given way to "public speaking," signaling a general shift away from formal rules for behavior in the arts as well as all sorts of contexts during this century. Until the very recent past, the "silent" Mime performer employed codified postures and gestures which could be directly translated in to word equivalents to "tell a story." Today's Mime performer eschews conventional Mime languages and linear narrative to work, instead, from codified Mime "grammar" consisting of techniques which allow him to create a personal

¹A. Giraudet, Mimique: Physionomie et Gestes: Methode Pratique d'apres le system de F. Delsarte (Paris, 1895).

vocabulary of corporeal expression. Yet, while Mime today may appear to approach its subject matter from a wholly non-linguistic point of departure, it continues to be an articulation of attitudes; and, as such, it employs gesture in a manner that parallels spoken language. In the past, Mime languages tended to be discursive and narrative in style. Today, Mime languages are more akin to spoken "poetry," and consist in the creation of "image clusters" composed of non-codified signs which must be interpreted by means of a "key" provided by the performer. While the often "abstract" languages of modern performers appear to mark a divergence from earlier forms of Mime, they merely signal a purification and deepening of tendencies that have always been present.

Mime today also seems to be moving away from the static element of posture towards a concern with the underlying "energies" or motional qualities that characterize the expression of attitudes. Influenced by modern trends in art, which express the movement and dynamism of this age, the Mime appears to have broken with the rigid restraints of classicism. While posture continues to be an important element of Mime, it is no longer modeled on the static poses of figures in statuary and painting. Instead, it is a dynamically charged form which contains the movements which preceded it and the movements which will flow out of it. Moreover, it is the basis of the new technical grammar of the Corporeal Mime performer.

This study will explore the concept of "attitude" as a basis for the creative process of the Mime performer, and "posture" as the root of Mime style. It focuses on an examination of four Mime genres, attempting to synthesize and make connections among them: the ritual Mime in rites of possession and shamanism; the Roman pantomime; the mime-dance of the Japanese Noh; and the Corporeal Mime of Etienne Decroux.

Chapter One answers the question, "What are the basic elements of Mime as established in antiquity?" The term "Mime" and its derivatives will be analyzed with an eye towards seeking out elements of the creative process of the artist based in "mimesis." What constituted the essential elements of the activity known as "miming" among the Greeks will also be explored. As a result, Chapter One will establish that Mime is intimately bound up with the expression of attitudes which are conveyed through the postural and gestural mimesis of the "species characteristic traits" of phenomena.

In Chapter Two there is a more complete analysis of the terms "attitude" and "posture." Employing research drawn primarily from the areas of Attitude Psychology and Laban's concepts of "Effort/Shape," "attitude" will be seen as directly involved in the creative process of the Mime performer and expressed in the distinctive postural style of the Mime.

Chapter Three, on the role played by attitude in shamanic mimesis, lends additional verification to the conclusions arrived at in Chapter Two. To fully understand the operation of and importance of attitude to Mime, it is helpful to begin with an examination of mimetic enactment in ritual, which reveals the a priori root of the mimetic process. Scholarship in the West has historically occupied itself with post-ritual Mime, creating the erroneous impression that Mime first established itself as a viable performance "art" in the West with the Greeks and Romans and that it bears little relation to earlier ritual forms. This view is best exemplified in a recent doctoral dissertation:

As culture developed, the dance form evolved into mime and theatre. Although there were ancient mimic dances that narrated explanatory tales of mystic events, mime as an art form is a more conscious act than primitive dance, occurring at a different time in the acculturation process; mime tends to be more social than religious or spiritual--it is a less direct form of expression.¹

This writer believes that Mime is an essential element of ritual performance. Indeed it could be argued that it forms the trunk of a large tree whose branches include not only the art of Mime, but those of dance, drama, art and poetic language as well. June Ellen Harrison states:

We shall find in these [pantomimic] dances the meeting point between art and ritual. . . . Moreover, we shall find in pantomimic dancing a ritual bridge, as

¹Mira Felner, "Born in Silence: An Analysis of Modern French Mime" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1977), p. 9.

it were, between actual life and those representations of life which we call art.¹

Mime is one of man's earliest languages. Through Mime he expressed deeply-felt needs, wants and fears in order to achieve some practical end or to give vent to important attitudes or archetypes through the enactment of myth.

While Mime is an essential element of many types of ritual manifestations, from hunting dances to various kinds of ceremonies, the ritual performance of the possessed shaman or "hungan" appears to be a prototype for the creative process and postural style of Mime as a performance art. The Theatrical Event by David Cole, which helped to inspire this study, provides a fascinating insight into the parallels between hunganic and shamanic performances and the creative process of the actor as the locus of the theatrical event.² An analysis of the relationship between the ritual performer and his body-instrument as expressed in posture and gesture provides a clear paradigm for the creative process of the Mime performer.

Chapter Four analyzes the Mime-dance of the Japanese Noh as a "living" example of a form of Mime which marks a "bridge" between ritual and art. It helps to establish a relationship between the ritual performer's creative process and performance style and that of the Noh actor. This connection is significant because it

¹June Ellen Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (New York: Holt & Co., 1913), p. 27.

²David Cole, The Theatrical Event (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

strengthens my hypothesis that ritual Mime (especially that of the possessed Shaman) provides a paradigm for Mime as an art based in attitude and posture. While the Noh appears to point to the past, it also looks forward. In its use of a codified, abstract and geometric gestural language based in posture, the radiation of the mental and spiritual energies of the performer, and the predominant importance of "immobility" or the crystallized pose of the body, the Noh appears to be very modern. And ironically, it has served as an inspirational force for the formulation of the aesthetics, style and grammar of Corporeal Mime in this century.

Chapter Five analyzes Roman Pantomime using material drawn primarily from Lucian's Saltatio ("On Pantomime"). First, it seeks to establish that Roman Pantomime employed "postures," modeled on Greek and Roman statuary as an integral basis of style. Second, it attempts to show that Roman Pantomime consisted of the articulation of attitudes contained in Myth through a codified language of signs, which reveals similarities to deaf-mute languages. From an analysis of the language of Roman Pantomime it is possible to see that it contained elements of the Mime of the dancer, in the use of codified signs which translated words in the sung text; the Mime of the speaker, in the use of "hand signs" and corporeal postures and gestures modeled on oratory; and the Mime of the mime, both in the use of

non-codified signs (which were newly created by the performer) and the use of gestural images which did not literally "denote" words or phrases in the accompanying text but served as symbolic or metaphorical equivalents.

Chapter Six, on the Corporeal Mime of Etienne Decroux, brings us into the twentieth century. It further establishes that the creative process of the Corporeal Mime performer and the style of Corporeal Mime are based in attitude and posture. Moreover, it reveals a significant relationship between elements in the art of Corporeal Mime and ritual forms of Mime (including the Noh). Decroux is important because he is generally considered the inspirational source for the revival of Mime in this century. He is credited with having created a comprehensive "grammar" of Mime which provides the basis for the training of the performer comparable to that which exists for a dancer. Moreover, his system of Corporeal Mime has been an influence on many modern Mime performers.

Chapter Seven, the conclusion, summarizes basic findings of the study, using additional statements by contemporary Mime performers and critics, not only to further reinforce the validity of the findings but to offer additional interpretations and applications.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEANING OF "MIME" AND RELATED TERMS IN ANTIQUITY

Greek Mime

The Greek word mimos, denoting both the person performing this activity as well as a certain kind of dramatic performance--namely "Mime," is known to have existed before the classical era.¹ Mimeisthai, the verb form of mimos, meant "to behave like a mime actor," or "to behave in the manner of the mimes," or to "give something a mime-like character."² Mimesis is a noun which generally denotes the activity of imitating.³

In antiquity many types of entertainment were loosely grouped under the heading "Mime"--a term which also stood for the performers themselves and for a literary genre. Mime performances frequently encompassed such elements as: short playlets, mimetic dancing, imitation of birds and animals, singing, acrobatics and juggling.

All over the ancient world these comedians, cittern players, clowns, dancers, and prestidigitators grouped under the name of mimes. . . .

¹Göran Sörbom, Mimesis and Art: Studies in the Origin and Early Development of an Aesthetic Vocabulary (Stockholm: Scandinavian University Books, 1966), p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 204

³Ibid., p. 13.

From fifth century Greece, where the mime is first mentioned, to the end of the trail in the collapsing Roman World, the mime is a typical professional and versatile artist. Whether he does a tight-rope act, juggles, or plays the fool, the mime is above all an actor, singer, dancer--and that simultaneously.¹

The earliest Mime performers can be traced to ancient Doria in Greece.² Archaeological evidence, mainly in the form of vase paintings, reveals a striking similarity in costuming and mimic subject matter between the Dorian mime plays of 600 B.C. and Dionysian revelries, which indicates that Mime in the West may have originated in ritual mimetic enactment. Dionysian rites were essentially collective and orgiastic. The devotees used wine and religious "dance" to induce trance and once possessed indulged in comic revelry and antics often involving extensive use of Mime. The Doric mimes portrayed grotesquely clad stock figures most of them wearing the phallus associated with the worship of Dionysus; and performed short scenes of real life and mythological burlesque which bore a remarkable resemblance to the characters and subject matter of Dionysian rites.

Evidence suggests that Doric Mime was either a recitation with different parts acted by one person or a dramatic performance executed by two or more persons. The Mime was, probably, not connected with religious festivals

¹Benjamin Hunningher, The Origin of the Theatre (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), p. 64.

²Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), p. 20.

but rather with rich men's banquets and other secular occasions. Deriving its subject matter primarily from the antics of "low-life" characters, the Mime presented human life "as it is," without tragic greatness or the mirror of comedy.

Greek mimes were prototypes of early actors. Not only did mimes resort to spoken dialogue, but they often performed from written Mime plays. Epicharmus, who some scholars state began his career in Doria in the fifth century B.C. was, along with Sophron, an important writer of literary Mime. These plays, which for the most part involved mythological burlesque, strongly influenced the slightly later Old Comedy of Athens, from which they differ in not having either a chorus or political subject matter. The phlyakes, Southern Italian mimes--who scholars believe to be direct descendants of the Dorian mimes--performed a literary genre known as phlyax plays involving mythological burlesque as well as comic scenes from daily life. In contrast to the often obscene and lascivious performances of the Dorian mimes and phlyakes, the Ethologues "Painters of Manners" performed short written plays which sought to inculcate useful moral lessons. Sophron, who wrote a number of these plays, was considered to be one of the greatest Ethologue performers.

While spoken dialogue, mimed action and various gymnastic elements appear to have been the stock of many Mime performances, Mime also formed an essential part of "dance" in antiquity. Many authorities have tended to employ the term "dance" when they were actually speaking about "Mime." Broadbent, in A History of Pantomime, witnesses to the frequent and troublesome application of the term dance by early writers to Mime and other gestural manifestations:

In tracing the History of Pantomime it becomes a matter of considerable difficulty, and, as Baron, in his Lettres sur la Danse, observes that when the word Dancing occurs in an old author, that it should always be translated by 'gesticulation,' 'declamation,' or 'Pantomime.' 'The Greeks,' mentions Butteux, applied the term 'Dancing' to all measured movements, even to military marching.¹

Nicoll believes that Dorian Mime may have grown out of mimetic dances, as evidenced in the dancing figures shown on Greek vases and which reappear among phlyax farces. In the Poetics, Aristotle states, "Rhythm alone, without harmony, is the means in the dancer's imitations; for even he, by the rhythms of his attitudes, may represent men's characters, as well as what they do and suffer."² In this brief and unique allusion to "dance" in his works, Aristotle sets forth the essential element of "dance" which is "rhythm," but also indicates that "dance" is grounded in

¹R.J. Broadbent, A History of Pantomime (New York: Benjamin Blom, 19), p. 42.

²Aristotle, Poetics, trans. Ingram Bywater, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), pp. 624-25.

the portrayal of characters, actions and passions by means of "attitudes." From what we know of it, the "dance" referred to by Aristotle appears to have been highly mimetic. According to Philadelphus and others, it was a form of "pantomimic dance" in which miming probably comprised an essential part of the performance.¹

One form of mimetic dance can be traced to the Dithyramb--the song and dance performed in honor of the god Dionysus. At first, the celebration that took place at the Spring festival in honor of Dionysus was wild and improvised, but in time it began to conform to a more ritual structure, with set songs and dances. In 508 B.C. a contest in the Dithyramb was inaugurated. The name given the performers was orchestes, because they performed in the orchestra--the circular dancing space of the open air theatres.² The "dance" of the orchestes was characterized by symbolic and conventional gestures called cheironomia. Readily understood by the spectator, the cheironomia appear to have been composed of gestures conveying character, action and emotion. Descriptions of the dance tell us that the bottom half of the body moved very little, probably consisting of a walk. The upper half expressed itself in stylized postures and gestures of which documents reveal

¹Alex Philadelphus, "La danse antique," L'acropole, no. 4 (October-December 1926): 318.

²Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 131.

ten basic usages. These were muscular tension, rapidity of motion, marked admiration, pointing, mimetic carrying of an imaginary object on the palm of the hand, abandon, deterence, and caution or stealth. The most common gesture was a tense palm turned upward with fingers open and curved back, used when the chorus reacted to horrible news or events.¹

There were also many other mimetic dances in ancient Greece. The Pyrrhic dance was a sort of military miming of sword play and battles. Many pantomimic dances were based on mythological themes such as "The Loves of Adonis and Venus," and "The Exploits of Ajax"--which formed the subject matter of early ballet.

Roman Mime and Pantomime

The Roman mimii (mimes), largely derived from the phlyakes of Southern Italy, were primarily itinerant buffoons, who danced, sang, enacted vulgar and often obscene sketches, played instruments and sang. The fabula atellana, which grew up in Southern Italy and which was imported to Rome in the third century B.C., was a Mime genre consisting of short, largely improvised sketches based on domestic situations or mythological burlesque. Four stock characters appeared in the fabula atellana: Bucco, a loud-mouthed braggart; Pappus, a comic old man; Maccus, a

¹Lillian Lawler, The Dance of the Ancient Greek Theatre (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 1974), pp. 36-37.

gluttonous fool; and Dossenus, a hunchback.¹ These stock characters, each with their own mask, costume and behavior, are believed to have been the prototype of the commedia dell'arte "masks."

The liberal use of spoken dialogue, dance, acrobatics and mimetic gesture by Roman mimes resulted in a variety of terms being applied to this performer in antiquity. They were frequently referred to as planus or planipes. (literally, "bare feet"), because unlike the actor of tragedy who wore cothurnus, the mimes performed without foot gear.² The Roman mimes, probably because of the similarity between their performances and those of actors, came to be called histriones--the generic term for actor.³ In earlier times, the word saltator (literally "dancer" or "acrobat") was often used to refer to mime performers--a usage that continued up to medieval times.⁴

Under the Roman Empire, a unique Mime genre developed called "pantomime" or saltatio. "Pan" referred to the god of Nature and "pantos" to "all"--coupled with "mimus" the word pantomimus meant "an imitator of all of nature."⁵ Pantomime was considered to be "the art of

¹Oscar Brockett, History of the Theatre, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1977), p. 58.

²Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 83.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Broadbent, A History of Pantomime, p. 14-15.

interpretive dancing."¹ The performances generally involved one individual who took a variety of roles in a single play. The pantomime was probably assisted either by a singer or a chorus who outlined in chanted form the development of the plot while he (or she) acted out the corresponding action. This genre appears to have reached a high-point in the performances of Pylades and Bathyllus. These "silent" performers were experts in portraying entire tragedies or myths in solo performance. Aided by appropriate music, chanted text and a variety of costumes and masks, they depicted entire myths solely by means of posture and gesture.

Today, the terms "Mime" and "Pantomime" are largely synonymous and are employed, as in antiquity, to refer to both the performers, as well as, a variety of performance phenomena. What is striking as we look at modern forms of Mime is the diversity of their styles--many of which freely incorporate elements from other arts: there is "Mime-dance," "Mime-theatre" involving spoken dialogue and the use of costumes and props, illusionistic Pantomime, "story Mime" without words and abstract Mime which eschews plot and narrative, "clown Mime" involving juggling and acrobatics, "Zen-Mime" and so forth. Yet, while some contend that modern Mime forms appear to differ fundamentally from earlier forms:

¹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 131.

There are probably fewer real differences between today's mime forms and the mime theatre of the ancient Greeks where miming, dancing, singing, text, acting and other stage arts were rarely separated from one another.¹

The Essential Characteristics of the
Activity Known as "Miming"

While the term "Mime" has been used to loosely refer to a variety of performance genres, we can single out two basic elements that have traditionally appeared in Mime performances and which form the kernel of the general behavior associated with "miming." The first of these is the "gestural" portrayal of selected "physical" aspects of the object of imitation--that is, its outer shape and/or characteristic motions, actions or gestures. The second of these is the vocal mimesis of the "sound" aspects of the object, which comprises such elements as tone, rate, inflection, pitch, etc.

It is clear that what the Greeks referred to as "miming" did not involve an exact duplication or "copy" of the object of imitation. And while the mimes dealt with realistic subject matter, often drawn from everyday life, evidence suggests that their performances were not realistic in style. It appears that the Mime performers based their imitations in the portrayal of the "characteristic" physical or vocal "species traits" of phenomena--those

¹Annette Lust, "From Pierrot to Bip and Beyond," The Mime Journal, 1980-82, p. 15.

which distinguished it from other classes of phenomena.

This particular kind of acting [Mime] was, as far as we can judge; characterized by a desire to make something clear, to caricature, to choose the characteristic details of something, or strongly emphasize some of the characteristic traits of phenomena in representing them.¹

The "species characteristic traits" of the object of imitation were not necessarily overstated, over-emphasized or caricatured; sometimes it was enough to portray only the characteristic traits and to exclude all others to make a message clear. Thus, "the originally metaphorical meaning 'to behave like a mime actor (or as people do in mimes)' merged into something like 'to represent something vividly and concretely by means of qualities that are similar to qualities in other phenomena.'"² The portrayal of species characteristic traits was then a form of representation by which a phenomenon was "denoted" by rendering one or more of its essential features. In this process the Mime performer "abstracted" essential qualities which formed the basis for his imitation.

One aspect of miming in antiquity involved the vocal mimesis of the characteristic "sounds" of phenomena by the performer. For example, we know that the Greek and Roman mimes imitated the sounds of natural phenomena such as wind and rain, the cries emitted by animals, the noises

¹Sörbom, Mimesis and Art, p. 204.

²Ibid., p. 39.

produced by the action of objects, as well as the non-verbal qualities of the voices of characters. Plato, who deplored the mime's willingness to "imitate anything," gives us an indication of the mime's propensity for imitating sounds:

They will seriously try to represent in public all the things we were talking about. We shall have the noises of thunder and wind and hail, and of axles and wheels, the notes of trumpets, pipes, flutes, and every possible instrument, the barking of dogs, the baaing of sheep, and twittering of birds. And so this style of expression will depend largely on representation by sound and gesture.¹

The mimesis of sounds--relating to the portrayal of objects, characters, and the actions involving objects--also plays an important role in the performances of modern mimes. Etienne Decroux, the French patriarch of modern Mime refers to this type of miming as "vocal Mime."

The characteristic physical traits of objects of imitation have traditionally been portrayed by the Mime performer through bodily posture, gesture, costume and mask. In Euripides' Rhesus, Dolon proposes to steal into the enemy camp by "miming" a wolf.² To do this he slips into a wolf's skin, assumes its four-footed posture and mimics its gait. In so doing, he mimes the essential physical attributes of the wolf: first, by means of disguise or costume (which constitutes a "mask" of the body);

¹Plato, The Republic, trans. Desmond Lee (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 155-56.

²Euripides Rhesus, Loeb Classical Library, p. 177.

second, through the assumption of its characteristic "posture;" and third, through the execution of its characteristic gesture as manifested in its four-footed walk. Although there is no mention of it, it is also possible that he "mimicked" its characteristic sound.

It is clear that the Greek concept of mimesis, as set forth by Plato and Aristotle, did not imply an exact "copy" or "duplication" of a particular model. The mimesis of species characteristic traits suggests that the Mime performer sought to represent the "universal" or "typical" aspects of classes of phenomenon. For example, Dolon's imitation of a wolf did not involve a detailed "portrait" of a particular wolf, but the representation of those essential traits which typify all wolves. This process of abstraction and generalization appears to have been an essential element of the activity known as miming among the Greeks.

Gestural mimesis was viewed by the Greeks as a form of communication. Plato in Cratylus states that individuals may communicate with one another by means of gestures and sounds which are similar to things he wishes to designate.¹ For instance, if someone wants to denote a galloping horse he assumes the position of a horse and mimes the essential movements associated with galloping. The

¹Plato Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias, Loeb Classical Library, p. 430.

spectator formulates the idea of a galloping horse by recognizing the similarity between the imitation and its model. In the same manner, the mime attempted to communicate general classes of phenomenon to a beholder--such as "a man running" or "an athlete throwing a discus."

While the mime portrayed phenomena for the purpose of "denoting" them to spectators--that is, calling up in their minds an equivalent in reality which they recognize in the imitation--this process also involved "transformation" or "simulation." Couched within the concept of mimesis is the idea of "playing a role" for the purposes of deception. Dolon states, "Over my back a wolfskin will I draw . . . the wolf's four-footed gait I'll mimic, baffling so our enemies."¹ The mime of antiquity created a world of paradox and illusion through the aesthetics of "transformation" in which he not only physically and vocally transformed himself into the object of imitation, but also created the illusion that that which was absent was indeed present before the spectator. For this reason, the mimes were sometimes called paradoxi (literally "strange beings").² Apuleius, states that the mimic art was one of hallucination or mimus hallucinatur.³ Therefore, in the case of the Mime performer, the process of mimesis appeared to involve the selection of characteristic features of a

¹Euripides Rhesus, p. 177.

²Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 126.

³Ibid.

phenomenon which were transferred to the medium of gesture where they were transformed to communicate the semblance of presence or actuality.

Mimesis and the Expression of Attitudes

According to Allardyce Nicoll, "The mime [performance] in essence was the very incarnation, the first ideal of that mimesis on which is based the whole of the peripatetic literary theory," it is, "the pure example in dramatic art of Aristotle's theory of mimesis."¹ While Aristotle's writings contain little about the nature of Mime in antiquity, the Poetics provides a paradigm for the nature of artistic mimesis--particularly as it relates to Mime. According to Aristotle, and other early Greek philosophers, a work of art was never conceived of as a literal replica of nature concerned solely with the depiction of external traits. An artist should not content himself with a superficial glance at the object, but should attempt to penetrate its inner structure. Aristotle felt that the essence of the artistic process lay in imitating nature's productive activity. Since nature in the Aristotelian scheme is a way of acting, art does not imitate what nature is in its products, but how nature acts. This idea of imitation closely parallels that of Asiatic art, which according to Coomaraswamy is "like Nature, not in appearance, but in

¹Ibid., pp. 81-82.

operation."¹

In the Poetics, Aristotle states that the "objects" of imitation are not things or persons which the arts copy, but human actions mimetically represented. According to Francis Fergusson, when Aristotle says that poets (like painters, mimes, dancers and other artists) "imitate actions" what he means by "action" is not physical activity but a "movement-of-spirit."² The word Aristotle uses to indicate any movement-of-spirit is energeia of which there are three types: praxis, poiesis and theoria.³ Praxis, the "motive to do something," does not mean the actual physical deeds or events, but the motivation or "attitudes" from which deeds spring. Action (praxis), according to Aristotle springs from two natural causes, character and thought. Character, which is defined by Aristotle as "an habitual action," and thought are the key determinants of action. They in turn are motivated by ill-defined feelings and emotions which he calls pathos (emotion). Emotion is essentially passive, it represents the conscious or unconscious inner movement of the psyche which results in the outward execution of an action. Samuel Butcher states

¹Ananda Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 11.

²Francis Fergusson, Literary Landmarks: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Literature (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 5.

³Ibid., p. 10.

that the ancient concept of mimesis meant essentially the reproduction of "an inward process, a psychical energy working outwards; deeds, incidents, events, [and] situations, being included under it so far as these spring from an inward act of will, or elicit some activity of thought or feeling."¹

The important element in Aristotle's concept of mimesis is the idea of energeia or movement-of-spirit grounded in emotion, which forms the basis of human actions and events. Since art imitates nature in its operation or essence of life movement, mimesis is primarily bound up with the representation of those actions from the surrounding world which mirror the inner movements of the artist's psyche. The artist's understanding of the operation of nature, which forms the subject of his portrayal, springs from identifying with those actions from the surrounding world which mirror the movement of his own psyche and which serve as metaphors for his inner attitudes. As Coomaraswamy explains, "true knowledge of an object is not obtained by merely empirical observation or reflex registration, but only when the knower and known, seer and seen, meet in an act transcending distinction."² Insight into the inner-workings of nature is attained only when the artist senses himself as part of phenomenon through a form of "poetic

¹S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 123.

²Coomaraswamy, Transformation of Nature in Art, p. 6.

inspiration."

Plato believed that the poet (artist) comes into contact with "Ideal" beauty or the higher realms of existence through a form of "divine inspiration" in which the gods or Muses use him to "transmit" their messages. Socrates tells Ion the rhapsodist, "A poet is a light and winged and sacred thing; and is unable ever to indite until he has been inspired and put out of his senses, and his mind is no longer in him. . . . For not by art do they utter these things, but by divine influence."¹ While Plato's concept of poetic inspiration has undoubtedly been influenced by the inspired utterances of oracles or ritual performers --who may be considered the prototypes of the first poets --it nevertheless suggests the importance placed by the Greeks on allowing subconscious elements entry into consciousness. These unconscious elements may be seen as "archetypal" in nature and representative of important motivating attitudes that are present in the individual artist and the community as a whole.

There is evidence that what the poet identifies with in the process of artistic creation are "mental images" deriving from the past perception of sensory phenomena. In his Memorabilia, Xenophon indicates that the artist has a "mental image" which he tries to approximate through the medium of his art.² In the Poetics,

¹Plato Ion, Loeb Classical Library, p. 423.

²Sörbom, Mimesis and Art, pp. 88-89.

Aristotle gives us an indication of how this mental theatre of images operates in the work of the poet:

At the time when he is constructing his Plots, and engaged on the Diction in which they are worked out, the poet should remember to put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes...As far as may be, too, the poet should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages. Given the same natural qualifications, he who feels the emotions to be described will be the most convincing.¹

What is important in this passage is that the poet, during the process of constructing his plots, mimetically "identifies" with the essential gestures conveying character, action, and emotion. The poet "acts out," as it were, an internal mimesis of the drama. Not only does he actually "see" the scene before his eyes, but he senses the basic emotions and actions of agents and events within the muscles of his body.

The Mime performer is at once the subject and object of his work of art. Through the medium of the body, he acts out the drama of nature--that of his own "human" nature, as well as that of the phenomenal world of which he is the epitome. The mime portrays the gestic content of mental images--those "actions" of phenomenon recorded from the surrounding world which serve as metaphors for attitudes. And he does this for the purpose of communicating a "movement-of-spirit," emotion, or energeia which is couched within the particular action embodied in the enacted image.

¹Aristotle, Poetics, p. 646.

The Style of Antique Mime as Expressed
through Posture and Gesture

The unique "manner" or style of Mime is a product of the psychophysical process involved in the expression of attitudes. This idea will be explored more fully in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that posture--the "fixing" of the body or parts of the body in space as a platform from which gesture unfolds--is a primarily stylistic device of Mime. Reference to "posture" or "attitude" is found in Aristotle's brief and unique allusion to the dance in the Poetics as well as in Lucian's Saltatio.¹ There is evidence that the stylistic conventions of "posture" in Mime were influenced in part by the arts of sculpture and painting. Maurice Emmanuel, a scholar of antique Greek dance, states, "The sculptors studied the poses of dancers, and the dancers, in turn, copied the poses of statues."² The "dance," as primarily recorded in vase paintings, was in actuality a form of pantomimic dancing comprised of both mimetic and seeming nonmimetic postures and gestures; however, "all of the gestures [of the "dance"] originally had a concrete significance, becoming symbolic with the passage of time."³

¹See below, p. 187, for reference to posture in Lucian.

²Maurice Emmanuel, The Antique Greek Dance, trans. Harriet Jean Beauley (New York: John Lance Co., 1916), p. xiv.

³Ibid.

It appears that the Greek mimes also emulated the stylized gestures of string puppets. Along with the growth of Doric Mime, the puppet show began to assume a place of importance. Xenophon in the fifth century B.C. mentions a mime who performed with puppets, and according to eyewitness accounts these marionettes were managed so skillfully that they seemed to be alive.¹ Evidence also suggests that the Mime performers adopted the stylized actions of the puppets:

The puppets naturally took over certain themes which were more largely interpreted by breathing actors, and as a result a kind of double influence ensued, the puppets taking farces from the performers, the performers themselves sometimes viewing in the puppets methods of expression which might be employed on the stage.²

The stylistics of the puppet's gesture lies in posturally based movement, which gives it the aura of an "animated statue." As we shall see in the next chapter, the mime's isolation of the segments of the body, and the "fixing" of the body or parts of the body in space finds its counterpart in the movement of the puppet.

The puppet, Mime performer, and acrobat's performances, according to Nicoll, all bore traces of subject matter and stylistic elements derived from Dionysian rites:

Out of these mists step the puppet showmen, the acrobats, and the jugglers, and by their side we can just distinguish the comic and terrifying forms of the Dionysiac demons who were to enter into their bodies, never to be exorcised.³

¹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 37.

²Ibid. ³Ibid.

As we shall see in a subsequent chapter, the creative process of the Mime performer, as based in attitude and the postural style of Mime, is almost clearly revealed in ritual mimetic enactment.

Summary

The term "Mime" in antiquity referred to both the performer and to a performance art encompassing such elements as dancing, singing, acting, acrobatics, juggling, spoken dialogue--often derived from a written script--and the mimetic portrayal of characters and their actions. While the term Mime was applied to a variety of performance phenomena, the characteristic behavior associated with the activity of "miming" consisted of the imitation of phenomena by means of voice and gesture. With regard to gesture, the mime portrayed the "species characteristic traits" of objects of imitation--those formal (shape) elements or dynamic actions which set it apart from other classes of phenomena. This process involved a form of "abstraction" in which the performer sought to render the "universal" trait of a phenomenon rather than its particular "individualizing" traits. Transformed through the medium of gesture, these traits were enacted by the mime for the purpose of "denoting" the phenomenon to spectators as well as for the purpose of creating the semblance of actual presence.

Mimesis was not concerned with a superficial copying of the traits of a phenomenon. Rather, the artist sought to penetrate its innermost structure. While there must have been many classes of Mime performers, the best among these sought to reveal important truths about life. Nicoll states that in the later days of the Roman Empire mimes were admired not only by aristocrats but by serious Roman thinkers. It is probable that the best performers among the mimes and pantomimes embodied the highest ideals of artistic mimesis. Therefore, while lesser mimes may have merely enacted the obvious traits of phenomena for the purpose of arousing laughter or making obscene comments upon their subjects, the more serious mimes must have attempted to penetrate the surface of nature's activity to reveal underlying universal truths.

Mimesis is based in nature's productive activity --the actions produced by phenomenon from the surrounding world. The mime, like other artists, portrays the actions of agents (both human and nonhuman) for the purpose of conveying important attitudes or emotion associated with events. His work appears to be grounded in the enactment of "mental images" stemming from the memory's storehouse of sensory perceptions of objects and events in the surrounding world. As we shall see in the next chapter, he essentially portrays the "gestic" content of imagery which serve as metaphors for important attitudes striving for expression.

Finally, there is evidence that the Mime gesture was based in "posture." It appears that the Mime performer borrowed stylistic elements from sculptured figures conveying character, emotion, and action. Moreover, it seems probable that the mime may have also found in the gestures of the marionette a posturally based style which mirrored his own "fixing" of elements of the body as fulcrums for the isolated movement of other elements. The sculptural "pose" and the isolation of elements of the body are more than borrowed stylistic devices: they are the result of a creative process bound up with the expression of attitudes.

CHAPTER TWO

AN EXPLANATION OF ATTITUDE AND POSTURE AS THEY RELATE TO MIME PERFORMANCE

Definition of Attitude

"Attitude" is a term most commonly used to denote either a "mental state" or a "bodily posture," or both. From the point of view of modern psychology, attitude is generally defined as "a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices or other tendencies that have given a set or readiness to act to a person because of varied experiences."¹ Attitudes affect the muscular configuration of the body manifesting themselves in characteristic "postures." Originally, attitude was a term employed in the Arts of Design to refer to, "the posture of a figure in sculpture or painting" and was later expanded to include "any position or bearing indicating action, feeling, or mood."² Attitude is closely tied up with "posture"--that is, "the relative arrangement of the different parts, especially of the body: the characteristic position of the

¹E.G. Chave, "A New Type Scale for Measuring Attitudes," Religious Education 23 (1928): 364.

²Oxford Universal, s.v. "attitude."

body or that assumed for a special purpose."¹ The posture representative of an attitude (mental/emotional state) is generally an "immobile" or "held" form that interrupts the flow of movement. We will be using the term "posture" in this study to refer to the psychophysical manifestation of the attitude in a momentarily held "pose" of the entire body or parts of the body. The term "attitude" will be used to refer to the "mental state" representing a complex thought and emotion deriving from the conscious and subconscious layers of the mind of the performer which is expressed externally in the language of posture and gesture.

Attitudes and Emotion

The posture in Mime appears to be largely the result of a creative process bound up with the body's expression of attitudes. At the root of the individual's thoughts, dreams and memories there are underlying "emotions" or motor attitudes being held in readiness for action. Emotion is essentially a product of the individual's response to both his inner and outer worlds. According to Rubinstein, human feelings:

Express not the attributes of the objects but the state of the subject, the modifications of the internal states of the individual, and his relation to what surrounds him. Human feeling is a person's attitude to the world.²

On their most basic level, emotions are portrayed through postures which express "instinctual" responses--such as

¹Webster's Third, s.v. "posture."

²S.L. Rubinstein, quoted in Nina Bull, The Body and Its Mind: An Introduction to Attitude Psychology (New York: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1962), p. 24.

fear, love, anger, etc.

Attitude as Expressed Through Posture

The motor attitudes which lie at the base of emotion are primarily expressed through posture. According to Alfred Binet: "The emotions are attitudes, that is, actions in preparation which for one reason or another are deferred or suppressed. The emotion exists when the attitude is actualized."¹ Aristotle in his famous "Movement of Animals" was one of the first scholars to indicate the postural basis of emotion and action. He states that the relationship of posture to action is primarily mechanical. In order for an animal to move its body or any part of it, some other parts have to be "fixed"--like fulcrums from which movement can take place--as when the shoulder is fixed in order to permit the measured movement of the forearm.² There is a temporal sequence in which the "fixing" of the muscle groups must come first. He speaks of the fixing as the "origin" of movement and thus lays down a mechanical law in which posture (the fixing) is prior to and leads to an action.

Twentieth-century theories of attitude psychology

¹Alfred Binet, quoted in Bull, The Body and Its Mind, p. 22.

²Aristotle Movement of Animals, Loeb Classical Library, p. 1.

tend to bear out Aristotle's finding that posture is the origin of movement and prepares for action.

The preliminary stage in every kind of action is attitudinal, by which we mean postural with orienting tensions. Some portion of the organism has to be stabilized and oriented before movement can take place, and this is true even when the movement is spontaneous, with no delay between the attitude and action stages.¹

An attitude is reflected in a bodily posture characterized by a frozen preparation for an action in which the muscle groups become fixed in an intention towards a phenomenon.

Much of the reflex reaction expressed by the skeletal musculature is not motile but postural, and has as its result not a movement, but the steady maintenance of an attitude.²

Nina Bull has advanced a theory of attitude in which the postural inner adjustments of the skeletal structure when held from going into action are manifested in a feeling which in turn can lead to an action. Contemporary psychologists, such as Feldinkrais, also support this view:

Which comes first: the motor pattern or the feeling? I would like to stress the idea that they are basically the same thing. We cannot become conscious of a feeling before it is expressed by a motor mobilization, and therefore, there is no feeling so long as there is no body attitude.³

The Attitude theory of emotion is a modification

¹Bull, The Body and Its Mind, p. 89.

²C. S. Sherrington, quoted in Bull, The Body and Its Mind, p. 15.

³Moshe Feldinkrais, "Image, Movement, and Actor: Restoration of Potentiality," trans. and ed. Kelly Morris, Tulane Drama Review 31, Spring 1966, p. 113.

and extension of the James-Lange theory, and rests on the main contention that feelings in emotion are the result of bodily changes that occur as a direct response to stimulation. The belief is that "action" produces an emotional response. Feelings of sorrow come because we cry, feelings of fear are produced because we run away, feelings of anger come because we strike, etc. Bull's theory states that bodily changes that lead to feelings in emotion are due to the initial step in a response--"that is, to a preparatory motor attitude--held up from going into action; and not to the action itself," as in the James theory.¹ Thus, feelings come from a readiness to cry, fear is the feeling of readiness to run away. According to this more recent theory, the action phase of the response (crying, sorriness, escape) is not only unnecessary for feeling an emotion, but if carried out intensively results in the extinction of the emotion.

Emotions are bodily events that become legible through the muscular configuration that results in a posture. They are literally movements or motions within the body that result in outward bodily postures and actions.

We can recognize the angry person by his flushed face, clenched fists and snarling mouth. . . . Affection or love produces a softening of all the features . . . Sadness has a melting look, as if the person were about to break down in tears.²

¹Bull, The Body and Its Mind, p. 18.

²Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 55.

Lowen is describing some typical emotions as reflected in the outward appearance of the body. These are clearly "preparatory" postures in which the thought or emotion is "constructed" in the musculature of the body. In this process there is a tendency to crystallize units, to secure points of rest, definitiveness, and absence of change. It would appear that the maintenance of the posture involves a kind of "internal struggle" in which the emotions connected with it are realized. "Emotion originates from suspense and conflict. It does not function when an inner situation finds a direct and satisfactory solution."¹

Gesture as Based in Posture

The crystallized pose results in an action or gesture which mirrors the attitude contained in the posture from which it unfolds. Gesture derives from the "fixing" of the body or parts of the body as a platform from which an action develops. The original definition of "gesture," as "a position or attitude" provides another indication that gesture originates in a "pose" of the body or its various organs. Today, "gesture" refers to all voluntary or involuntary movements of the human body, the aim of which is to signify thought or emotion. Gesture is the active expression of the emotion encapsuled in the posture. It is characterized by the "articulation" of a thought or emotion through the localization of segments

¹Dr. Charlotte Wolff, A Psychology of Gesture (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 36.

of the body which allows for the isolated movements of parts of the body. Gestures tend to have literal associative meanings which relate to the attitude from which they evolve.

A posture in mime is either the commencement or the culmination of a gesture. Laban has said that to look at movement as a series of postures is to deprive ourselves of the experience of the multifaceted tensions that are operative at any moment in the process of going from one position to another. What Irmgaard Bartenieff, a disciple of Laban, says about the dance holds true for Mime as well:

The end position derives its degree of drama or lyricism not merely from the geometrical outlines of its end shape. The end shape is the culmination of several dynamic processes leading into a still dynamic state of equipose.¹

Each posture in mime is the nexus of many dynamic tendencies that are embedded in the mental attitudes of the performer. The pose in mime is never static but is in a state of operative "tension" either witnessing the gesture that precedes it or promising a "plan of action" or possible gesture to follow. The physical posture of the mime is then a condensation of several facets of movement tension operative in the accompanying attitude. This condensation Laban terms "Ballung" to describe the tensions operative in a form which are the culmination of lines and forces in

¹Irmgaard Bartenieff, "Harvard Lecture," n.d.
(located in the library of the Laban Institute for Movement Studies, New York City)

the gestures which precede the pose and which will follow it.

The Basic Emotions and Posture in Mime

The Mime performer has traditionally expressed the basic emotions--such as love, fear, anger, pride, joy--through posture and correlative gestures. Until this century these postures were most often conveyed through stationary "poses" modeled on the norms for conveying the "passions" in the Fine Arts and acting. These stylized postures generally served as denotative "signs" for their counterparts in natural expression. For example, a typical stereotyped Mime posture expressing "love" might consist of placing both hands over the heart, thrusting the chest forward, tilting the head to one side and back, and placing one foot behind the other. This posture would be preceded by the movements or gestures that the performer makes in assuming the pose and may be followed, in turn, by another gesture which actively expresses the emotion. For example, he may "blow a kiss" through an isolated movement of the arm and hand which are brought to the face and followed by a blowing gesture in which the whole body participates. The inclination of the chest, arms and face of the the mime towards the object of affection may in turn be frozen momentarily into a pose which summarizes the attitude contained in the action.

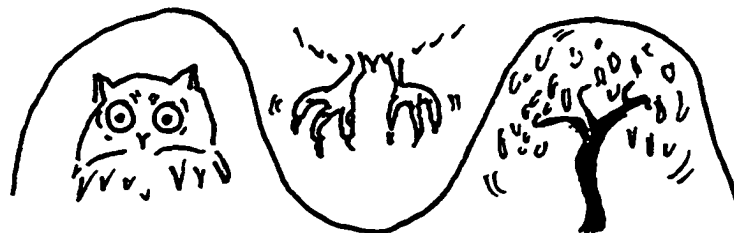
The emotion represented by a posture is also mirrored in a characteristic facial expression--as noted in the statement of Alexander Lowen above. Mime performers have traditionally been either masked or maskless. The masked performer is able to manipulate the mask so that it appears to take on the emotion embodied in the posture. The spectator tends to "read" a corresponding facial expression into the mask based upon the emotion presented by the posture. The maskless performer presents a microcosm of the posture through the constriction of the facial muscles which emblemizes the underlying emotion. However, some modern mime performers prefer to "neutralize" the face either through covering it with a neutral mask or through the maintenance of an essentially "expressionless" face. The purpose of this is to concentrate the spectator's attention on the torso as the prime vehicle of communication. These "corporeal" Mime performers feel that the play of facial expression tends to dominate the spectator's attention, drawing it away from the more difficult and subtle expressions produced by the segments of the torso.

The representation of the basic emotions through posture, facial expression and gesture is the most obvious expression of attitude in Mime. However, since it consists in the portrayal of motor reactions it is little more than a stylized "copy" of natural human emotion. The real nature of artistic mimesis as revealed through Mime

involves the expression of attitudes which underlie agents and their actions in the phenomenal world.

The Mime Enacts the "Gestic" Content of Images

Artistic mimesis in the Greek sense meant imitating nature's "productive" activity--how nature acts. The cosmos performs an "immense mimodrama," according to the anthropologist and linguist Marcel Jousse, consisting of myriad imbricated "tri-phased actions."¹ Each phenomenon or "agent" possesses a "characteristic gesture" which sets it apart from other classes of phenomenon. In the words of Jousse, the gesture characterizing a phenomenon causes it to appear to be "taking an attitude."² Agents in turn perform "transitory gestures" upon other phenomenon (agents) and so on ad infinitum.³ He gives the example, "the owl grips the tree." The characteristic gesture of the owl is l'ocularisant (literally, "that which stares wide-eyed"). The owl performs a transitory gesture of agrippe (literally, "gripping") upon the tree whose characteristic gesture is le tremblant (literally, "that which sways"). Written in mimographic expression it appears as follows:⁴



¹Marcel Jousse, L'anthropologie du geste (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1974), p. 46.

²Ibid., p. 142.

³Ibid., p. 47.

⁴Ibid., pp. 51-52.

Man "the most mimetic of all animals," states Jousse, "records" these "gestic" traits that characterize agents and their actions in the form of "gestural images" which serve as metaphors for his internal life.¹ It is these gestural images which form the basis for the individual's attitudes as revealed in his thoughts, dreams and memories, and as expressed outwardly in spoken and gestural languages.

The Mime performer sculpturally shapes his or her body in space in relation to images which spring from the various layers of the psyche in active creative reverie. This empathic relationship between the body and the content of imagery reveals the operation of what Gaston Bachelard terms "the Material Imagination," which shows "an amazing need for penetration which going beyond the attraction of forms, thinks matter, dreams in it, or in other words, materializes the imaginary."² In relation to his internal imagery, the mime facets phrases of movement constructed out of the characteristic formal and dynamic traits of phenomena. While he is physically present before us, he is imaginatively in the dream mode of reverie. He is remembering what it feels like to hold a ball or walk in water and this memory relived through action releases important attitudes associated with the reenacted image.

¹Ibid., p. 128.

²Gaston Bachelard, L'air et les songes (Paris: Librairie Jose Corti, 1970), p. 14.

Attitude and "Effort"

Mimesis, according to Aristotle, means the "imitation of an action"--not physical activity but a "movement of spirit" or energeia. Beneath the gestures that characterize agents and their actions in the phenomenal world lie basic "tensions" or "energies" that fill out the agent's form and give sense and significance to its gestures. The mime performer essentially "identifies" with this energy which mirrors the psychic tensions contained in the attitude which gave rise to the enacted image.

Rudolf Laban's theories of "Effort/Shape" give us an insight into what is meant by the "tension," "energy," or "dynamism" that underlies the mime's expression of agency, action and emotion. Effort is a system developed by Laban in the twentieth century to describe a person's inner "attitude" (conscious or unconscious) towards the movement factors of "time, weight, space and flow."¹ Effort is a translation of the German word antrieb which means "motor," the thing that gets a person going. The individual reveals his own basic "Effort attitudes" by a preference for either an "indulgence in" (yielding to) the basic Effort factors or a "fighting against" them. Briefly, the motion factors which comprise Effort can be described as the moving person's "attitude towards": space, e.g., the flexibility or

¹Rudolf Laban, The Mastery of Movement, 3rd ed. (Boston: Plays Inc., 1971), p. 24.

directness of attention; weight, e.g., the sensitivity or forcefulness of attention; time, e.g., the leisureliness or urgency of decision; flow, e.g., the ease or restraint of the action.¹

Each phenomenon in the universe presents a constellation of the four Effort factors which are apparent in the special material qualities of the phenomenon but are most clearly seen in its characteristic gestures or actions. For example, snow is characterized by an "indulgence" or "yielding to" the four motion factors. It possesses lightness of movement (weight factor); indirectness of movement (space factor); generally a slowness of movement (time factor); and a "freeness" of movement (flow factor). The factors indicated above are the ones most commonly associated with the snow--perhaps reflecting the author's own attitudes towards it; however, there are different types of snow storms (driving blizzards, etc.) that can alter these motion factors significantly.

The Mime performer's creative process is essentially based in the portrayal of attitudes which are rooted in the motion factors underlying the gestic content of imagery. One aspect of this process involves a reaction to images. "Images can revive and even produce emotions and corresponding emotional expressions . . . The emotional images have a

¹Marion North, Personality Assessment Through Movement (London: MacDonald & Evans, 1972), pp. 231-32.

direct influence on the organism."¹ For example, one might have any number of different attitudes to real or imagined snow. A person who is open to the lightly falling snow may take on these inner qualities which give a light, free-moving and indirect quality to his movement. His corresponding posture in this case might be one of expansion and opening outwards, the body forming a convex with the head tilted backwards. However, another person might be irritated by the snow, his movement becoming more direct, sudden and bound (flow). His posture in this case might become hunched over, the body forming a concave and the head turned downwards.

However the mime not only reacts to the content of imagery but more importantly acts out the image itself. In this process he assumes the characteristic and transitory gestures of agents and their actions whose motion factors mirror essential attitudes striving for expression. He might become alternately a "bird gripping a tree," a "bird flying and then landing," and so forth. The postures representing "bird", "gripping," "flying" and "landing," as well as the gestures accompanying these, are all animated and given significance by the "Effort" or motion factors. Effort is, therefore, that form of energy that underlies the posture and gesture of the mime and which imparts to

¹Wolff, Psychology of Gesture, p. 64.

them their sense and significance.

A person's ability to change the quality of effort, that is, the way in which nervous energy is released, by varying the composition and sequence of its components, together with the reactions of others to these changes, are the very essence of mime.¹

Emotion always indicates the presence of "tension" in the body. It is this tension that causes a restructuring of the muscular configuration to produce the posture and its corresponding gesture. The art of Mime appears to have a predominance of the effort quality of "bound flow." Cecily Dell describes "flow" as follows:

As you watch a person moving, you may notice that he either holds back, restricts, binds the flow of his movement, or that he goes with the flow, his body moving freely and easily with the motion. The "going with" the flow of the movement we call free; the restriction of the flow we call bound.²

Bound flow is similar to what we often call very tense; free flow to relaxed; however, both require muscular tension, and it is the relationship among the muscles tensed rather than the presence of tension in the body which determines the quality of flow.

The element of bound flow is most clearly seen in the mime's preference for the posture--in which the movement becomes totally bound or frozen--and in the walk. The mime is primarily a rooted creature subject to the laws of gravity and the struggle with matter--that of his own body and

¹Laban, Mastery of Movement, p. 13.

²Cecily Dell, A Primer for Movement Description: Using Effort-Shape and Supplementary Concepts (New York: Dance Notation Bureau Press, 1977), p. 14.

the phenomena in the world around him. Dance, as opposed to Mime, is traditionally associated with the Effort factor of "lightness." It strives for the conquest of gravity and freedom from the "tensions" associated with the mime's struggle to articulate attitudes.

Free dance movement produces, above all (for the performer as well as the spectator) the illusion of a conquest of gravity, i.e., freedom from the actual forces that are normally known and felt to control the dancer's body.¹

Frank Theiss states that the main tendency of dance, "is always to surmount the bonds of massive weight, and lightness of movement is, perhaps, the cardinal demand one has to make on a dancer."²

Effort, from the beginning, has a form and takes a shape. Effort does not exist apart from a shape or posture which it animates and every change in Effort is accompanied by a change in posture. In the muscular configuration which makes up a posture and its ensuing culmination in a gesture/action there is a particular blend of the four Effort factors. The gesture which either proceeds or follows the dynamic pose is an expression of the essential Efforts contained in the posture, and vice versa. Marianne Simmel sums up the importance of Effort to Mime as follows:

Whether through articulation of its shape, or its impact on the actor's movements, or through expressive movements

¹Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 194.

²Frank Theiss, quoted in Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 194.

depicting the object's inherent characteristics or its impact on the actor--each of these techniques achieves the representation of the object by way of the rendition of its dynamic characteristics.¹

The Postural Style of Mime as Analogous to the
Statue and Marionette

The body-mind relationship in Mime is analogous to the work of the sculptor and the marionettist. The mime employs his body as the material of his art through which he actualizes his dreams of matter, much in the way a sculptor takes a lump of clay or a piece of stone and facets forms which express his inner visions. As previously stated, the original definition of "attitude" was "the disposition of a figure in statuary or painting; hence the posture given to it."² The frozen quality of sculpture finds its counterpart in the "bound" Mime posture. The analogy between the task of the sculptor and that of the Mime performers is one which appears frequently in the works of critics and practitioners of Mime.

The word "sculpture" comes from the same Latin root as the word "static." However, according to Herbert Read, "underlying the whole development of sculpture from classical times, and very insistent in our own times, is the

¹Marianne Simmel, "Mime and Reason: Notes on the Creation of the Perceptual Object," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 31 (Winter 1972): 198.

²See above, p. 3, n. 1.

desire of the artist to represent movement."¹ Rodin, the twentieth-century French sculptor, conceives of movement as "a transition from one attitude to another."² The sculptor creates the illusion of movement through the "attitude" (posture) which indicates both the movement that has been completed and the movement that is just beginning. Conversely, Mime, which is a "kinetic" art of movement, has traditionally striven for "stasis." Lecoq, the French Mime teacher, states, "All that is great tends toward immobility (immobility is also a gesture)."³ Like statuary, Mime attempts to synthesize and condense several phases of movement into a dynamic postural image, which does not present a "static" pose but a dynamically charged gestural symbol. In the words of Jean Dorcy, "A successful attitude [posture] is like a condensed drama; perfect, complete, it is an image epitomizing identity, origin, destination, and intent."⁴

The mime is able to use his formidably trained instrument as a "marionette" through which he transmits attitudes. The perfectly articulated body of the Mime performer serves to translate mental imagery into gestural

¹Herbert Read, The Art of Sculpture (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 88.

²Auguste Rodin, L'art: Entretiens reunis par Paul Gsell (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 43.

³Jacques Lecoq, "Mime, Movement, Theatre," in Mimes on Miming, ed. Bari Rolfe (London: Millington Books, 1979), p. 153.

⁴Dorcy, The Mime, p. 33.

images. The mime resembles, at the same time, marionettist and marionette in the distance and control with which he presides over his body as the material of his art in order to present fully realized images to his audience. The mime must possess a perfectly disciplined instrument which is subject to the dictates of his mind and emotions. Being "in" his body and employing it as an instrument of expression he must, in a sense, stand at a distance from it in order to control the slightest nuance of gesture.

The marionette is essentially an animated statue, made of wood or other materials, whose segmented body is capable of independent and isolated movements. Like the marionette, the mime's style is based in the "fixing" of organs of the body which provide a platform for the unfolding of movement. The Mime performer is able to clearly isolate elements of his body which move on a fixed base--such as the head moving independently of the neck, or the separation and movement of elements of the torso. This gesture which is posturally-based is, in addition to the static pose of the entire body, one of the main stylistic devices of Mime.

Agency Portrayal in Mime

The Mime performer enacts the characteristic traits of agents (both human and non-human) through a combination of posture and gesture. Character portrayal has typically been the major vehicle for attitude expression in Mime.

Alexander Lowen states that "character" or "personality" is "a psychic attitude," which is conveyed outwardly through the maintenance of a bodily posture.¹ Character is essentially a constellation of dominant emotions whose tensions affect the muscular tonus of the body manifesting themselves in characteristic postures. In Laban terminology, this posture is referred to as a "body attitude": "It is concerned with what qualities are maintained in the body, which spatial emphases, body part relationships and tensions are held in the body as a kind of baseline from which the mover operates."² Character in Mime is expressed outwardly as a "mask" of the body. It is an accretion of emotion that visibly shapes and transforms the postural tonus of the performer. The facial mask often worn by the mime is a sculptural stylization of the energies of the character from which all particularities or incidental traits of personality have been eliminated.

In the portrayal of nonhuman agents--such as animals, plants, insects, machines, etc., the mime often adopts typical elements of their "shape," which are animated by characteristic Efforts. The mime not only imitates the characteristic "postures" of agents, but also conveys the essential energies or Efforts through the dynamic

¹Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 137.

²Dell, Primer for Movement Description, p. 82.

tensions that animate its shape, and are contained in characteristic gestures. According to Aristotle, character is "an habitual action." In the language of physiology, the attitude representative of character manifests itself in a "fixed pattern of behavior."¹ In Mime, agents are portrayed by imitating their typical "gestures" and for a human agent its "walk." For example, in the Commedia dell'Arte, Dottore swayed as he walked with tiny mincing steps. He often held a small book in one hand and gesticulated professorily with his free index finger. Harlequin entered the stage urgently on unbent legs--strutting. He possessed the characteristic gesture of lowering his head without moving his shoulders and extending it suddenly in an accordion like manner. He also manipulated his hat and wooden batte. A bird, for example, might possess characteristic gestures such as quick "pecking motions," "flapping motions of the wings" while in flight. Its Efforts might be direct, light, quick and free flowing.

Action portrayal in Mime

Mime, like the art of drama with which it is so closely connected, involves the "imitation of an action." As such, it chrystallizes the dynamic postures and gestures of agents acting upon one another which are the figurative embodiment of attitudes:

¹Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 137.

Man's conflicting efforts (the inner impulses from which movement originates) in his struggle for values are most truly revealed by mime.¹

Conflict in Mime is an embodiment of the interaction of phenomena within the universe which are "recorded" by the body and come to serve as metaphors for the inner conflicts within the individual. This tension can involve the confrontation of two characters as in Marcel Marceau's "David and Goliath." Or it may be embodied in the struggle of a single agent against the forces of the universe--such as the mime fighting against the wind or a tree struggling to grow against gravity and buffeted and changed by the seasons as in Decroux's "Les Arbres" (The Trees). The mime may also embody the struggle in different parts of the body--as in Niedzialkowski's "Beret," in which a red-gloved arm representing Communism dictates over the mime's body (Poland) which is valiantly defended by the white-gloved arm of freedom. These Mime pieces are composed of the actions of agents on or against other agents (human or non-human) within the phenomenal world. Each action in Mime unfolds from a posture and in turn culminates in a posture. The ensuing action or deconstruction of the pose into a gesture appears to serve the function of a catharsis in extinguishing the emotion underlying the image--which is crystallized in the musculature of the performer's body.

¹Laban, Mastery of Movement, p. 10.

Attitude and the Expressive Function of the Mime Sign

Attitudes form the basis of human communication. From its earliest origins, gesture has assumed an "expressive" function which serves as a type of body language which conveys the individual's orientation and intention to others in a group. Out of the need for more explicit modes of communication human speech has arisen; which, as a final step, has become internalized as "thought" (sub vocal speech). Nina Bull and others contend that:

Underneath the various activities of speech and thought, there can be always found an underlying state of tension, implying that a motor attitude, or group of motor attitudes, is being held in readiness for action, and then held up from going through with it.¹

Attitudes form the basis, not only of spoken and written languages, but of the various arts as well. Of all the arts, Mime--whose medium consists of posture and gesture--may be seen as the most direct expression of the communicative function of attitude.

One of the crucial differences between dance and Mime appears to lie in the "expressive" nature of the posture and its accompanying gesture. Expressive has two alternate meanings: it can mean "self-expressive," i.e., symptomatic of the inner state of the performer or, as expressive of a "concept" or phenomenon from the external world, or both.² While a Mime sign may be purely the

¹Bull, The Body and Its Mind, p. 26.

²Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 180.

expression of an emotion, it tends to be characterized by the portrayal of the mental state of the performer in terms of postures and gestures which "denote" concrete phenomena within the realm of the viewer's experience. Anya Royce, a dance anthropologist, states:

The object of mime is always to communicate some feeling, emotion, or story. In other words, movement in mime is always secondary to whatever is being communicated, whereas in dance movement is often an end in itself.¹

While dance possesses the elements of posture and gesture, the essential elements which characterize this art are movement and rhythm. In non-mimetic dance, the posture and gesture which were originally based on concrete phenomenon, have become totally abstract signs which convey information primarily on empathic, subliminal and kinaesthetic levels.

The most basic type of Mime sign consists of an exact duplication of a phenomenon in which there is no difference between the imitation and the model. It is a true "copy" of all of the features of a phenomenon, i.e., a performer picking up a real glass of water and drinking it. However, this type of sign rarely occurs in Mime, because more often features of a phenomenon are selected and transposed through the media of posture and gesture to create a new insight into the phenomenon.

The mime works much in the manner of an abstract artist. In the portrayal of a phenomenon he "abstracts" its

¹Anya Peterson Royce, The Anthropology of Dance (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 197.

most essential characteristics. Therefore, the difference between mimetic and non-mimetic postures and gesture, which appears so plausible at first glance, is one of degree. Abstraction, in the Greek sense of aphairesis means "the process as well as the result of the withdrawal (of the eye) from the particular, accidental, inessential, in order to obtain the general, inevitable, and essential."¹ According to Baur, abstract art searches for the essence, "for some central meaning in what is seen, for a distillation of the character, mood or spirit of nature's aspects and a more intense expression of the artist's response."² By the very nature of the medium of gesture, the representation is highly abstract. Often a gesture is so striking because it singles out one feature relevant to the discourse and leaves to the context the task of identifying the referent. For example, we do not know if a posture in which a mime stands on his toes, round his arms forward and raises his shoulders explicates "surprise," "a giant Christmas present," or the character "Goliath" except by its relation to the postures and gestures which precede and follow it.

It is the degree of abstraction that separates a Mime sign from that of the dance. If the viewer can recognize the referent it is a Mime sign. However, this becomes

¹Sigfried Giedion, The Eternal Present, 2 vols. (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1962), I:12.

²John Baur, Nature in Abstraction (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 6.

problematic, because identification of signs depends on the education and particular culture of the viewer. What may be a denotational sign to one viewer might not necessarily be so to another viewer.

Traditionally, the most characteristic type of Mime sign has formed a part of a "codified" language in which relevant features of a phenomenon were selected and portrayed in stylized postures and gestures. "Classical" forms of Mime which existed from antiquity up to the end of the nineteenth century (Greek and Roman mime, nineteenth century pantomime blanche, etc.) appear to have possessed clearly codified languages. Many critics and practitioners of Mime have come to view these earlier forms of Mime as analogous to "deaf-mute" languages which attempt to communicate through concepts that are grasped by the viewer much in the way words are in language:

Gesture [pantomimic gesture] is a movement having a definite word or occupational significance.¹

Lecoq defines pantomime as a gesture substituting for a word.²

Pantomime known as "classic" is the means of translating words by use of gesture.³

However, many forms of modern Mime language consist of original and non-codified signs which are interpreted by means of a "key" established by the performer which

¹Irene Mawer, quoted in Mimes on Miming, p. 7.

²Rolfe, Mimes on Miming, p. 7.

³Georges Wague, quoted in Mimes on Miming, p. 7.

"indicates the modality of the body in action, the distance separating normal gesture (ours, the one we normally experience) from the gestural mode in which what follows must be 'read.'"¹ The first movements of the mime establish the operational mode of the ensuing enactment--the laws of time, weight, space and flow that govern the movements of the enacted agent and indicate the type of world it inhabits. The spectator, on "matching" the performer's initial posture and movements with, for example, that of a "fish," prepares himself for a series of activities that might take place within an underwater world. However, he must continue to adjust his expectations as the performer's modality changes--when, for example, he is transformed into a bird.

Along with abstraction, transformation is an important characteristic of the Mime sign. The performer does not merely "denote" phenomena through the imitation of specific traits--these traits are "transformed" as they pass into the medium of gesture. The task of the mime lies in making images appear to be present through a transformation (involving the collusion of the viewer) of his body and the surrounding space into the imaginary locus of enacted events. Like the actor, the Mime performer makes "imaginary truth present" through a process involving

¹Pavis, Languages of the Stage, p. 55.

mimicry. Mimicry is that form of imitation which may be defined as "a superficial resemblance that some organisms exhibit to other organisms or to the natural objects among which they live and thereby secure concealment, protection, or some other advantage."¹ Animal mimicry puts into play mechanisms of camouflage and transformation which operate on the forms and colors of the animal. It makes that which is present (the animal, etc.) disappear or that which was absent (the phenomenon that is mimicked) appear. Human mimicry is different but it puts into play mechanisms of imitation which affect the attitudes or emotional states of the performer so he can "disappear" or cease to be himself, thus enabling him to metamorphose into the various agents being enacted. Eric Bentley finds mimicry a normal manifestation of an instinct or desire to "live twice, to inhabit more than one world, to play a role."² The mime performer is not only able to vanish in his own right, presenting himself as agent that is actually absent, he is also able to summon up phenomena that are not there. A mime who bumps into an "invisible" wall and falls over backwards--makes the spectator actually "see" the absent wall. Thus "representative transformation," i.e., the

¹Webster's Third, s.v. "mimicry."

²Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 9.

selection of traits of objects which are transformed through the modality of the mime's gesture to create the "semblance" that that which is absent is actually present and vice versa, is one of the chief characteristics of the Mime sign.

Many forms of modern Mime do not appear to employ imitation as it has been used in more traditional forms--in which "denotation" and "transformation" have often played a central role. The Corporeal Mime of Etienne Decroux, which has served as a basis for the work of many of today's younger performers, is concerned primarily with the portrayal of the "inner world" of the performer rather than the recreation of phenomenon from the surrounding world. Mime for Decroux, according to Annette Lust:

is no mere imitation of the seen world, it is a revelation of an unseen one. The world of forces, zones, magnetic fields, and causality is made visible by Mime, while Pantomime more often contents itself with a reproduction, usually a caricature, of the seen world.¹

The work of Corporeal Mime performers often consists in translating the "impulses of the mind" or in conveying the abstract function of thought. As such, it attempts to free itself from the traditional attachment to the object in order to get to the central purpose of mimesis which is the enactment of attitudes. While the postures and gestures of many of today's mime performers verge on pure abstraction--thus broaching the hazy borders between dance and Mime--they

¹Annette Lust, "Etienne Decroux: Father of Modern Mime," The Mime Journal, no. 1 (1974), p. 17.

are still based in the portrayal of the characteristic traits of phenomena. This connection is often only apparent through "suggestion" in which the sign evokes images in the spectator's mind--which are not "denoted" by the sign but arise as "analogies" to what is seen. Decroux states, "I renounce all signs, I desire that my spectator be moved by analogy between my mime's action and a certain thing which he remembers. Analogy is not a sign."¹

The Poetic Nature of the Mime Sign

When Mime eschews the tyranny of denotation--in which a gesture is translated into a word equivalent or linked up immediately with a "signified" in the phenomenal world--it recovers its essentially "mythic" nature in a language of personal metaphor. Kenneth Burke's statement that the "symbolic act" constituting poetry is "the dancing of an attitude" could also be applied to Mime.² Like the poet, who puts words together into images in order to create new meanings which do not lie in the words themselves but "hovers" above them, the Mime performer, often using gestures drawn from everyday activities, objects and events, combines them in such a way as to suggest images of his inner world of thought and emotion. In this process, the spectator is freed from the necessity of matching up the postures and gestures of the

¹Ibid., p. 17.

²Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1941), p. 9.

Mime with correlatives in the phenomenal world to engage in his own personal reverie which is triggered by the performer's gestural metaphors.

The posture and gesture of the Mime performer are comparable to word clusters which form the nucleus of an image in poetry. Mime achieves a clear articulation of an attitude through the "juxtaposition" of images, which are clearly separated from one another by a briefly held "pose" or posture of the mime's body which epitomizes the essence of an image. As in poetry, where the attitude or emotion created by the poem does not lie in the denotational meaning of the words but in the words as "sounds," the "Efforts" or tensions contained in the mime's postures and gestures are the primary semantic vehicles in Mime. In poetry the words are themselves "double constructions"--they have denotational meaning but beyond this they have the additional subliminal meaning created by their "sounds." The tone or mood which is created by the careful juxtaposition of word sounds hovers over the poem and creates its emotional impact. In Mime, the "Efforts" or tensions in the postures and gestures, are analogous to the "sounds" of words in poetry. While a posture or gesture may denote many things it is the particular blend of the motion factors that contributes to its sense. And more importantly, it is the Efforts which convey the overall attitude or emotional significance of images.

Summary

The creative process of the Mime performer appears to be grounded in the corporeal expression of attitudes. An attitude is defined as "a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices or other tendencies that have given a set or readiness to act to a person because of varied experiences." Attitudes are conveyed outwardly through bodily postures--that is, the fixing of the body or parts of the body in space as a platform for the unfolding of gesture. The most basic manifestation of attitude in everyday life, as well as in Mime, lies in the expression of emotion through posture.

Attitudes are formulated through the individual's responses to both his internal and external worlds. The emotional reaction is primarily a response to a phenomenon which may be real or "imaginary"--that is, contained in the individual's mental imagery. The Mime performer's creative process involves the enactment of these mental images which serve as metaphors for attitudes. Attitudes which form the basis of the individual's thoughts dreams and memories (and hence his languages), are encapsuled in images deriving from the body's "intussusception" of the "gestures" of phenomena. The gestural traits of phenomena are animated by essential "Efforts" or motion factors which mirror the tensions contained in the performer's attitudes.

The basic structure of the image consists of an agent--acting upon--another agent. The agent, according to Marcel Jousse, possesses a "characteristic gesture" and in turn performs any number of "transitory gestures" or actions on another agent, and so on. The mime enacts the characteristic "formal" and "dynamic" traits of agents, which are animated by particular "Efforts." The formal traits of the agent are portrayed in Mime through posture--which represents a "mask" of the body; and its "gestic" aspects are conveyed through characteristic movements which are animated by a particular blend of the motion factors. Action is expressed both posturally and gesturally. The posture summarizes the essence of the action through a characteristic "pose" which is either preceded or followed by a gesture which unfolds from the postural base.

The enactment of agency, action and emotion in Mime is embodied in a postural style which is analogous to that of the sculpted figure or the marionette. The Mime performer projects the essence of mobile statuary by means of three important stylistic devices: the first, is the pose or held posture, which serves as a basis for the unfolding of gesture; the second, is the "fixing" of parts of the body in space as "fulcrums" which allow for independent and isolated movements of segments of the performer's body (which gives it the aura of an articulated marionette or animated statue); the third, is the "bound" quality of Mime gesture which "carves out" the surrounding space to make visible

a dramatic world of objects, emotions and events.

Mime languages reveal four areas of similarity to poetry. First, the mime tends to convey his message through the juxtaposition of gestural images--similar to word clusters which make up poetic imagery. Second, the mime "signs" (postures and gestures) tend to "denote" concrete phenomena within the realm of the viewer's experience. Third, the "Efforts," which underlie the postures and gestures of the mime performer and which are analogous to the "sounds" of words in poetry, are not only the primary carriers of the emotional significance of an image but also contribute to its denotational meaning. Fourth, the transformational quality of mimetic enactment--which either allows the spectator to actually "see" absent phenomena as "present" or, to creatively participate in his own reverie triggered by the gestural metaphors of the performance--is analogous to the imaginary world created by the poem.

CHAPTER THREE

RITUAL MIME

Ritual Mimesis and Attitudes

Perception of the world which surrounds us and our knowledge of self as being in the world cannot be divorced from the body which is our condition of being in the world. A dialogue with nature forms our first "intelligence" out of which a consciousness of self develops. At the root of human intelligence--the mind that perceives, knows, feels and remembers--are "automatisms" or kinaesthetic motor responses based in the imitation of phenomena. Aristotle writes in the Poetics,

Imitation is natural to man from childhood, . . . he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation.¹

The body of the self is in synecdoche with nature. Human beings have an awareness of self through the body's sympathetic involvement with the motions occurring in its internal and external worlds.

Archaic peoples tend to view the world animistically in terms of an "immense mimodrama" made up of myriad "gestures" which characterize agents and their actions upon one another. These gestures are intussuscepted by the

¹Introduction to Aristotle, p. 627.

individual who "records" them with his entire body. This "identification" with phenomena that become imprinted on the neural and muscular reflexes of the body forms the basis of the individual's thoughts, dreams and memories-- and hence his language:

The veritable mechanics of human expression is that having received the real, it can, with its absence, in spite of its absence, make a "presence" and reenactment without the object. It is this that comprises the memory.¹

The popular term for the inward play of the gestures of phenomena within the individual's memory is "image." However, this term is misleading as it tends to imply a type of "mental picture." According to Marcel Jousse, the image is primarily "gestic" in content:

The images are that which we always carry with us. But images do not exist. They are nothing but gestures which are sketched or pushed outwards; corporeal gestures, manual gestures, ocular gestures, auricular gestures, laryngo-buccal gestures, papillary gestures, pituitary gestures . . . Our entire mental life is nothing but gestures.²

Ritual mimetic enactment is based in the "expression" (the outward propulsion) of the most deeply felt archetypal images (attitudes) of the individual and the society as a whole. A "rite is a ceremonial act or action or series of such acts."³ Its purpose is to reestablish a connection with the sacred realm of existence (Illud Tempus).⁴

¹Jousse, L'anthropologie du geste, p. 62.

²Ibid., p. 128.

³Webster's Third, s.v. "rite."

⁴Cole, The Theatrical Event, p. 7.

The Illud Tempus is believed by archaic peoples to have been a time of origins, when gods walked the earth, men visited the sky, and the great archetypal events of myth took place. It is really a metaphor for the ceaseless replaying of paradigmatic images within the memory of these peoples.

The purpose of mimetic enactment in ritual is to generate and release "emotion" through the portrayal of events associated with the needs, wants and fears of the community. "Ritual then involves imitation; but does not arise out of it. It desires to recreate an emotion, not reproduce an object."¹ A ritual reenacts a myth, past hunt or battle--not for the sake of copying it, but for the sake of the emotions felt about these events. Ritual mimesis contains man's response to the supreme realities of generation, achievement, and death.

It is primarily an articulation of feelings. The ultimate product of such articulation is not a simple emotion, but a complex, permanent attitude. This attitude, which is the worshipers' response to the insight given by the sacred symbols, is an emotional pattern, which governs all individual lives. It cannot be recognized through any clearer medium than that of formalized gesture.²

Mimetic enactment in ritual is inherently dramatic. Through the portrayal of agents acting upon one another, the ritual performer reenacts the great conflicts of the psyche. The tripartite structure of the image (agent--acting upon--another agent) is mirrored in the overall

¹Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual, pp. 25-26.

²Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 153.

"rhythm" of the mimetic enactment, which depicts the confrontation of the dynamic forces in the universe. The energy patterns involved in the confrontation of protagonist and antagonist are a reflection of the archetypal conflicts involved in the individual's own struggle for value.

Ritual is not concerned with the crude mimesis of phenomenal events, but with the reproduction of primordial agents and their actions which are the figurative embodiments of archetypal attitudes. It is movement that suggests the presence of life in a phenomenon for archaic man. A tree swayed by the wind moves--therefore, it is alive. The individual does not perceive that it is the wind that causes the movement. Rather, he instinctively recognizes that here is something he does not understand and is, therefore, a mystery inspiring awe, "these spontaneous people, confronted with a phenomenon that moved, attempted to see the action, and beneath the action to seize the agent."¹ It is only natural that early peoples would come to see the movement inherent in phenomena as the embodiment of supernatural powers--spirits or gods. Thus, the mimesis of natural phenomena in ritual tends to be figuratively embodied in the incarnation of spiritual beings and their actions.

The Possessed Devotee and the Shaman--Prototypes
of the First Mime Performers

Rituals involving trance, spirit possession and the

¹Jousse, L'anthropologie du geste, p. 78.

reenactment of myth are not only the progenitors of dramatic art, but of the art of Mime as well. In both possession cults and shamanic rites, ritual performers act out the myths of their cultures through vocal and gestural mimesis based in spirit incarnation. Belief in spirit possession exists in most areas of the world. Chief among these is Africa, particularly the West coast, and those parts of the New World that have retained African forms of worship--as the West Indies and parts of South America. The most well known possession cults are the Vodun in Haiti, and the Candomble of Bahia.

Spirit possession may be defined as "any altered state of consciousness, indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit."¹ Possession generally involves the "mounting" of the performer by a god during a trance phase induced by drumming, chanting and rhythmic dancing. Once possessed the devotee generally enacts "mimo-dramas" associated with the deity through the use of mimetic gesture and spoken dialogue. While the parallels between the possessed devotee and the actor have been amply explored by David Cole and others, there has been little documentation on the parallels between possession enactment and the art of Mime.

In many respects the geneology of the shaman is as problematic as that of the Mime performer. The shaman

¹Vincent Crapanzano and Vivian Garrison, eds., Case Studies in Spirit Possession (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977), p. 7.

employs techniques that are his and his alone. These may involve clowning, juggling, puppetry, magic, dance, story-telling, acrobatics, chanting and mime--to name a few. Shamanism, in the strict sense, is preeminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia, but is found all over the world in various guises. The word shaman comes through the Russian from the Tungusic "šaman."¹ Among scholars there is considerable variation in meaning attributed to the term. The definition given by Mircea Eliade has come to be used by numerous scholars, "an individual religious expert," one who "specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld."²

Scholars appear to be divided on whether spirit possession may be counted among the techniques of the shaman. Eliade and de Heusch take the position that spirit possession and shamanism are dramatically opposed phenomenon. De Heusch sums up the difference between them as follows:

Shamanism appears to us to be a mounting of the individual towards the gods, an ascensional technique and metaphysic; possession is a descent of the gods, an incarnation.³

However, many definitions that have appeared in recent

¹Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³Luc de Heusch, "Cultes de possession et religions initiatiques de salut en Afrique," Religions de Salut: Annales du Centre d'Etudes de Religions 2 (1962): 132.

anthropological works include spirit possession among the techniques of the shaman:

The condition of possession is typical of the medicine men of the Siberian arctic region, who are called shamans.¹

A shaman is a person of either sex who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body.²

Shamanism and possession appear to meet when the possessed individual remains aware and in control of his spirits. Even if the shaman "takes into himself," as the term often runs, the spirits, he nevertheless retains his own personality. Possession is usually characterized by a loss of control in which the individual is manipulated by the possessing spirit. On coming out of the trance, the devotee can remember nothing of what has occurred. However, scholars have noticed that there are various degrees of trance, from complete loss of consciousness on the part of the devotee to a partial or total consciousness and control. In Haiti, certain individuals--notably the Hungans (the directors of rites)--appear to maintain a partial consciousness during possession. This is called la prise des yeux and refers to an initiate who can see on two levels simultaneously.³ Here the nominal distinction made in anthropology

¹Notes and Queries in Anthropology, quoted in J. Reinhard, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession: The Definition Problem," in Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas, ed. J.T. Hitchcock and Rex L. Jones (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1964), p. 13.

²I.M. Lewis, Ecstatic Religion (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), p. 51.

³Francis Huxley, "The Body and the Play Within the Play," in The Anthropology of the Body, ed. John Blacking (London: Academic Press, 1977), p. 36.

between possession and shamanism disappears. I.M. Lewis states that possessed individuals who are able to "master" and "control" their spirits are "properly called shamans."¹ The shaman is one who is able to "double" his consciousness. That is, he not only has the faculty of "self-witness" and the ability to control the spirits which enter his body, but is able to "become" these spirits as well. It is said of the Tungus shaman that he "possesses his spirits (although they also possess him)."²

We will, therefore, be using the term "shaman" in the following sense:

A person who at his will can enter into a non-ordinary psychic state (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community.³

Both the shaman and the possessed devotee may be seen as prototypes of the Mime performer. However, it is primarily the shaman, who maintains a consciousness and control of the mimesis of the incarnating spirits, who comes closest to the creative process of the post ritual performer. While the focus of this chapter is on the mimetic enactment of the shaman, there will be frequent reference to rites of possession; first, because there is more documentation available

¹Lewis, Ecstatic Religion, p. 56.

²Ibid., p. 55.

³John Reinhard, "Shamanism and Spirit Possession: The Definition Problem," p. 16.

on possession rituals; and secondly, the psychophysical process involved in spirit possession, which forms the basis for ritual mimesis, is roughly similar in rites of possession and shamanism.

Ritual Trance and Identification

The ritual performer comes into contact with the most deeply-felt images of the subconscious through the vehicle of the trance. Trance is defined by Sunderland as:

A state of the nervous system, in which the mind is said to pass beyond the use of the external senses, a condition in which the mind is more or less active, without the normal consciousness of the external world.¹

Trance is essentially an altered state of consciousness similar to a waking dream in which distinctions between real and imaginary phenomena becomes blurred. It is characterized by the loosening of the limits of the body which brings about an oceanic feeling in which the individual senses himself as part of nature.

Through the mystic trance, the body participates in the rending of the sky by lightening, the lapping of the ocean waves on the beach, the germination of plants and in the copulation of the animals of the forest.²

The trance generally has two distinct phases. In the first, the individual "dances" to achieve a "loss of self." The word trance as defined by the Oxford Dictionary also has a verb form--

¹LaRoy Sunderland, The Trance and Correlative Phenomena (Chicago: James Walker, 1868), p. 109.

²France Schott-Billman, Corps et possession (Paris: Gauthiers-Villars/references, 1977), pp. 164-65.

which stems from the old French transir, which means "to pass away, to die."¹ Possession is generally characterized by "dispossession" of the self; that is, the individual must first free himself from the "habitual" mental attitudes that make up his personality in everyday life. The "dance" is generally characterized by rhythmic and repetitive movements that are not grounded in the mimesis of concrete phenomena. This type of dance is termed "imageless dance" by Kurt Sachs: "The purpose of its movement is to lift the body out of its accustomed corporeality" and to deaden the senses connection with the external world enabling the performer to make an ecstatic ascent to the Illud Tempus.² In short, the "imageless dancer" dances to lose his body and become spirit.

The second phase of the trance involves the "mounting" of the ritual performer by the possessing god or spirit. In actuality, the performer becomes possessed by his inner mental images which he expresses outwardly through gestural enactment involving role playing or mimicry. The possession phase is purely "motor" in which the devotee is literally "moved by the spirit."³ Many scholars

¹Oxford Universal, s.v. "trance."

²Kurt Sachs, World History of the Dance, trans. Bessie Schönberg (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1937), p. 60.

³M.J. Field, "Spirit Possession in Ghana," in Spirit Mediumship in Society in Africa, eds. John Beattie and John Middleton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 5.

refer to the gestural enactment involved in the possession phase as a form of "dance." While the enactment of the Shaman and possessed devotee contains dance elements (repetition, rhythm and choreography) it is essentially mimetic in nature. Mime appears to form the basis for what Sachs has termed the "image" or "pantomimic dance." The "pantomimic dancer" is one who is tempted to "give himself up to an object and to assimilate with the object."¹ This often takes the form of animal or god incarnation in which the performer undergoes ecstatic metamorphosis in order to capture the "power" of an incarnated being. The rough division that Sachs makes between the image and imageless dances provides a basic distinction between what could properly be termed the purposes of "Mime" and "dance"; the former seeks "identification" with phenomena and the latter seeks "freedom" from phenomena.

Ritual Mimesis and the Expression of Images

"The shaman's histrionic achievement lies in his almost complete identification with the images in and through the trance."² Rather than symbolically "representing" images, the shaman becomes the images and therefore is living the realities of the spirit world rather than

¹Sachs, World History of the Dance, p. 60.

²Andreas Lommel, Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art trans. Michael Bullock (New York & Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 137.

imitating them. The purpose of ritual possession is to make paradigmatic images "present."

Every ritual has the character of happening now, at this very moment. The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made present, "re-presented" so to speak, however far back it may have been in ordinary reckoning.¹

The possessed individual experiences the dream images as present reality. In Haitian spirit possession, the devotee becomes completely identified with the images of his inner psychic world which he projects outward as superimposed on ordinary reality. In the Dinka religion, the world is filled with "powers" or supernatural entities:

which represent images of the Dinkas' reactions to and interpretations of their experiences in their physical and social environment. They see these images not as memories of the past existing only in their minds and influencing them . . . but rather as part of an objective reality, which can act upon them . . . as outside agents.²

Images, according to Jousse are nothing more than the gestures of phenomena (he terms these mimemes) recorded by the entire body of the individual and replayed in his thoughts, dreams and memories. The images which form the substance of mimetic enactment in ritual are the figurative embodiment of basic "archetypes" present in the individual and the society as a whole. Archetypes are "instinctive trends" which manifest themselves in fantasies

¹Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: World, 1970), p. 392.

²Sheila Walker, Ceremonial Spirit Possession in Africa and Afro-America (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1972), p. 162.

and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images.¹ It is in and through the trance that the shaman makes contact with the essential archetypes of his community. For the American Iroquois and Malayan Senoi, dream enactment is recognized as the only available access or key to an inner life which is other than waking consciousness. The inner life is believed to be as real or more real than the waking world; and according to Stephen Larsen, dreams are believed to "ask for making real."² Trance experiences, states Michael Harner, "are like dreams, but waking ones that feel real," in which the shaman "can control his actions and direct his adventures."³

Images and the Figurative Embodiment of Attitudes

The "re-presenting" of psychic images through ritual enactment is based in the expression of attitudes. In rites of possession the individual becomes "identified" with the repressed attitudes of his inner psychic structure (which are also those latent in the society as a whole). Both the shaman and the possessed devotee enact the externally projected figurative embodiments of attitudes in terms of agents and their actions derived from the phenomenal world.

¹Carl Jung, Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), p. 58.

²Stephen Larsen, The Shaman's Doorway: Opening the Mythic Imagination to Contemporary Consciousness (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 95.

³Michael Harner, The Way of the Shaman (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. 27.

Projection and articulation by means of spirits are both essentially metaphorical processes. In projection, the other is the vehicle for qualities, feelings, and desires--the tenor of the metaphor, in I.A. Richard's terms--that are within the self.¹

In Haitian spirit possession the devotee projects the inner drive that possesses him as "other"--most often in the form of a god or spirit--precisely because he cannot acknowledge it as an aspect of himself. The Loa (Haitian possessing spirits) represent images of both group and individual, common and significant human experience that are projected into the supernatural sphere and then are seen to act on people by taking possession of their bodies and minds. According to Sheila Walker, the deities which possess individuals are elements of themselves, developed or partially developed from past experience, which come to the fore on certain occasions and become the ruling force in their existence for the moment. Moreover, the god's personality corresponds to some latent aspect of the possessed individual's personality which is probably not expressed in his normal everyday behavior.

The possessed is then a subject "hypnotized" by a mythological figure, and if this figure can reveal itself in taking "possession" of the body of the subject, it is because it has already been inscribed within the person as a culturally transmitted attitude . . . invisible but present.²

¹T.K. Oesterreich, Possession, Demonical and Other Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, The Middle Ages, and Modern Times (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 12.

²Schott-Billman, Corps et Possession, p. 148.

The god who mounts a devotee during a seance is the embodiment of the physically repressed elements of his psyche in terms of the prescribed behavior patterns of the deities within his culture. It appears that the various and perhaps contradictory attitudes which an individual has acquired in the process of growing up and coping with life possess him as Loa.

Attitude as Expressed Through Posture
In Ritual Mimetic Enactment

According to Francis Huxley, character consists of a number of attitudes summed up physically in an individual's posture, the total way he carries himself, and neurosis or nervousness is another name for the accumulation of tension in the musculature.

These tensions, we may say, are the half-acted attitudes that a man stores within himself--attitudes towards other persons which he has learned over his life. They are, it must be stressed, bodily attitudes.¹

It is these "half-acted attitudes" which tend to be enacted under the guise of gods in rites of possession and shamanism. The muscular tensions associated with an attitude are expressed through the assumption of one or more of the characteristic postures of the possessing deities.

Every pattern of muscular tension betrays some hidden psychological attitude, and every attitude which is allowed to act out its emotional life to the full is a loa.²

¹Francis J. Huxley, The Invisibles: Voodoo Gods in Haiti (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 208.

²Ibid., p. 209.

The posture of the devotee is important in releasing the muscular tension associated with it. If we take our guide from the attitude theories of Nina Bull and James-Lange, that emotions are grounded in the awareness of physical states, we could go on to say that when we repress certain emotional experiences from consciousness, we are also repressing the physical sensations associated with them. It seems that we repress unpleasant sensations, whether they are immediate ones or memories, by hardening ourselves to them, that is, by tensing muscles in the immediate neighborhood where those sensations are experienced. In this way one creates other, stronger, but more neutral sensations, which block the original feeling. That these blocked emotions cause back tensions which affect the entire postural tonus of the body has been borne out by Mathais Alexander and others.

The whole of the postural and balance mechanism centers in the musculature of the neck. The nape of the neck is where dissociation begins in Voodoo and where the soul of the possessing deity is said to enter. In the trance the devotee achieves "loss of self"--his habitual posture and the "blocking" tensions associated with the ego. The freeing up of the inhibitory mechanisms associated with the maintenance of the individual's everyday personality coincides with a "loss of awareness" on his part. On coming out of the trance the devotee remembers nothing of his behavior while possessed. However, it appears that the shaman and

hungan are able to maintain a partial or total awareness during possession. Moreover, they are able to appear in their own person (with their habitual posture) as well as to assume the postures of possessing deities--which are the figurative embodiments of latent attitudes.

The loss of the habitual posture and the expression of latent ones--in the form of possession deities--is often described by archaic peoples with the image of a "tree," which is a metaphor for the spinal column--the center of posture. In Haitian ritual, according to Huxley:

The image of the old tree falling finds it's analogy in the fact of dissociation, during which a man loses his sense of balance and often does fall; . . . One would expect a new tree to grow in its place, and this is indeed figured out by the sudden appearance of a god called Grand Bois, or Great Tree . . . The new tree is thus the new posture expressed by the god who possesses the dissociated man: anatomically, it is the spinal column.¹

The analogy of the tree for the backbone or spinal column is also found in shamanism. During his initiation, the future shaman is carried off, under the guidance of a "tutelary spirit," to the Illud Tempus where he is instructed in the secrets of the universe and the techniques of his craft. On this journey he experiences the pulverization of his body; the renovation of the internal organs, and; the ascent to heaven or descent to hell--all of which symbolize the "death" of the old self or habitual attitudes

¹Francis J. Huxley, "A Discussion on Ritualization of Behavior in Man and Animals," Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London 251 (1966): 425.

and the release of latent "powers" or attitudes. In this process the shaman comes to see himself on the inside-- that is, he comes face to face with his "bone essence." He witnesses the painful destruction of his physical body, which is stripped of skin and flesh and often boiled until nothing remains but the bones. The importance of "seeing himself from the inside" is borne out by Knut Rasmussen in a discussion of the Igulik Eskimo shaman:

Though no shaman can explain to himself how and why, he can, by the power his brain derives from the supernatural, as it were by thought alone, divest his body of its flesh and blood, so that nothing remains but his bones, And he must then name all the parts of his body, mention every single bone by name. . . . By thus seeing himself naked, altogether freed from the perishable and transient flesh and blood he consecrates himself in the sacred tongue of the shamans, to his great task through the part of his body which will longest withstand the action of sun, wind and weather, after he is dead.¹

In the spiritual horizon of hunters and herdmen, "bone" represents the very source of life both human and animal. To reduce oneself to the skeleton condition is equivalent to reentering the womb of primordial life, that is, to complete renewal, a mystical rebirth.

Of all the bones, those of the spinal column are the most important. They represent the ridgepole or central "housepost," and as such are equated with the World Tree or Axis Mundi. Throughout Siberia, it is held that shamans are hatched in nests lodged in the branches of

¹Intellectual Culture of the Igulik Eskimos: Report on the 5th Thule Expedition 1921-24, quoted in Peter Furst, "The Roots and Continuities of Shamanism," Arscanada 31 (Spring 1974): 34-35.

this tree. The eagle, bird of the sun, perches at its summit. To exteriorize the light of this sun (which represents knowledge and power) the shaman must climb the tree, branch by branch, heaven by heaven, bone by bone. It is a journey during which he meets with various personages and adventures, which he recounts to his audience in great detail either verbally and/or in mime. The backbone represents a hierarchy of "powers" locked within the deepest recesses of the self--which the shaman releases in the figurative embodiment of spirits and their actions.

The shaman is able to use his latent attitudes as agents of the drama.

His dissociation appears as a crisis of dismemberment, which can be understood as a radical unseating of cathexes throughout the body: a crisis into which he is sometimes drawn as though down a tube, whose bodily referent remains to be diagnosed. He is in touch with spirits, which must be those cathexes transformed from parasites of the body-mind into its instruments. They travel through the various levels and domains of a well-ordered cosmos, or personified image of nature; and they stage their adventures in front of an audience for the benefit of a client, a patient, or an entire congregation.¹

The shaman's "tutelary" and "helping spirits" are the embodiment of "powers" or latent attitudes which assist him in his adventures. They symbolize a real connection between the natural and sacred realms of existence. Archaic peoples believe that in primordial times heaven and earth were connected and that man lived on equal footing with the plants

¹Huxley, "The Body and the Play Within the Play," p. 37.

and animals. The shaman has been termed a "microcosm" of all flora and fauna, because he understands their language and is able to converse with them. Essentially, the shaman is able to completely "identify" with the "powers" or "Efforts" which underlie the characteristic gestures of plants and animals and in this process is able to discover similar Efforts that exist in the form of latent attitudes within his own body and mind.

The Mimesis of Agents in Ritual

The enactment of spiritual agents--animal, ancestral, god or hero--entails a form of role playing in which the ritual performer (shaman, hungan or possessed devotee) becomes available to one or more of his repressed attitudes through the vehicle of "roles that have been learned from models passed on by tradition":

Living the spirit roles, manifesting them to the point of identification does, however, mean that these roles have been learned. During his initiation period the novice [shaman] constructs his supra normal counter-roles in accordance with models provided by tradition.¹

In spirit possession the mimesis of gods is clearly learned behavior in terms of the prescribed patterns of a particular culture. The devotee and hungan in possession cults study the comportment and gestures of spirits--much in the way an actor prepares for a role. The shaman is instructed in the techniques of his craft and its underlying theory--which

¹Anna-Leena Siikala, "The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman," F. F. Communications (Finland) 93 (1978): 52-53.

includes the techniques of possessing and controlling the spirits as well as a repertoire of magical gestures for exorcism and curing. In shamanism the enactment of counter-roles or "spirit helpers" is passed on by tradition and manifests itself in several alternative techniques. The first is "role identification," in which the shaman is changed directly into a spirit. The second is "dual role" in which the shaman plays his own role and that of the spirit with which he creates a vocal and/or gestural dialogue. The third is "description of counter-role" in which the shaman sees or hears a spirit which is external to himself and remarks on it.¹

Agency As Expressed Through Effort

Role playing involves the mimesis of the essential postures, gestures and "Efforts" characterizing possessing spirits--as well as their vocal utterances. As previously stated, the ritual performer manifests the presence of a possessing spirit in his body through the assumption of its characteristic posture. These spirits are metaphorical embodiments of inner attitudes (mental imagery) which are expressed externally in the form of agents and their actions from the phenomenal world. The dynamic Efforts contained in the enactment of the characteristic and transitory "gestures" of agents upon one another mirror the ritual performer's latent attitudes struggling for expression.

¹Ibid.

According to Laban, in archaic societies the gods are perceived as the "instigators of Effort in all its configurations," and the ritual mimesis of agents and their actions is an embodiment of the performer's "Effort thinking."¹ In rites of possession and shamanism, the incarnated deities have distinct personalities and modes of behavior, which may be defined as their basic "Effort attitudes." Agency portrayal in ritual is primarily based in a mimesis of the "Efforts" that underlie the characteristic postures and gestures of deities.

The gods, as previously mentioned, are figurative embodiments of the important "powers" residing in natural phenomena. These "powers" are none other than the motion factors or Effort configurations that animate the shapes and "gestures" of phenomena. In hunting societies, which depend upon animals for their health and well-being, the deities are primarily animal-gods. By incarnating the power of an animal (i.e., its strength, swiftness, sinuousness, etc.) the ritual performer taps into his own strengths or latent efforts that mirror those of the deity. "Animals," according to Laban, "are perfect in the efficient use of the restricted Effort habits they possess; man is less efficient in the use of the more numerous effort shadings potentially possible to him."² The performer is able to employ the

¹Laban, Mastery of Movement, p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 11.

clear and simplified expression of animal Effort to effect important changes or bring about desired results for the benefit of an individual or the group as a whole.

Laban has identified eight basic Effort configurations typifying eight gods that are found in ritual mimetic enactment. These are "Dabbing gods, Flicking gods, Slashing gods, Floating gods, Gliding gods, Pressing gods, Punching gods, Slashing gods, and Wringing gods."¹ Effort attitudes as a basis for characterization in ritual possession can be seen in the following description of the deities of the Nago-Yoruba cult:

Orun, god of blacksmiths, warriors, hunters, and all who use iron, is characterized by coarse and energetic manners; Shango, god of thunder, by manly and jolly dances; Orishala, the creator god, by calm and serene behavior. Shapana, god of smallpox and contagious diseases, by restless agitation; Eshu Elegba, messenger of the other gods, by cynical abusive attitudes.²

Often the Effort characterizing the god is expressed through a "dance." This is especially true of the initial phase of the trance when the devotee "dances" in order to become possessed. It appears to be bound up with effecting a "release" of the latent attitude associated with the deity.

Effort is usually associated with a characteristic "gesture" of the deity. Each god is imagined as being eternally in the process of repeating some single action or

¹Ibid., pp. 18-21.

²Pierre Verger, "Trance and Convention in Nago-Yoruba Spirit Mediumship," in Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, p. 51.

course of action. This can be seen in the mimesis of gods in the reenactment of myth during the Kwakiutl ceremonies in northern Vancouver Island. The highest order of the winter ceremonial is that of the hamatsa or cannibal dancer.¹ The reenactment of the myth among the Kwakiutl signals the entrance of young men, who have undergone a lengthy initiation period, into the hamatsa society. The ritual involves spirit possession, masks, costume, spoken dialogue and mimetic gesture. The following are some examples of agency portrayal in the hamatsa "dances." The performer incarnating "The Cannibal Bird," "hops sideways, moves the beak [of his mask] through sweeping arcs and shakes his head. The motions are reminiscent of the movements of a raven scavenging for food on the beach."² The god Bookwus or "Man-of-the-Ground," who is the chief of the dead, wears a skeletal, grimacing mask, has a bent over posture and possesses the characteristic gesture of shielding his face with the back of his hand, because he is essentially very shy.³ The performer portraying the sea monster Iakim:

Circles the floor in an extended undulation which represents the creature as diving under a kelp bed and rising on the other side. At the top of each crest, the dancer pauses slightly and peers around as if scanning the horizon. The articulated lower jaw is opened at this point and the dancer emits a gasp as a sea mammal would when surfacing for air.⁴

¹Peter L. MacNair, "Kwakiutl Winter Dances: A Re-enactment" Arscanada 31 (Spring 1974):94-109.

²Ibid., p. 101.

³Ibid., p. 105

⁴Ibid., p. 106.

Ritual Possession and Transformation

"Possession could best be defined as a transformation of the personality. The face metamorphoses and the entire body becomes the simulacrum of the god."¹ The release of repressed cathexes or attitudes during ritual incarnation affects the outward appearance of the body triggering mechanisms of imitation similar to mimicry. As previously stated, mimicry involves mechanisms of camouflage or transformation which operate on the forms and colors of insects and animals causing that which is present (the animal) to appear absent and that which was absent (the phenomenon that is mimicked) to appear present. The possessed individual undergoes an "inner transformation" of his mental state which is expressed externally in the assumption of the postures and gestures of the incarnating deity--as well as through costume and a mask or mask-like face.

The transformation of the individual's posture into that of the possessing deity is emblemized by the wearing of a mask or the formation of the facial muscles into a mask of the god. Erika Bourguignon states that possession trance and the wearing of masks have much in common--"both involve the impersonation of spiritual entities by human beings."² Masks are commonly used in ritual for the purpose

¹Roger Bastide, La Candomblé de Bahia (Paris: Mouton, 1958), p. 175.

²Erika Bourguignon, "Trance Dances," Dance Perspectives 35 (1968): 12.

of disguise. It "hides" the identity of the wearer--making that which was present (the wearer) appear absent. However, in the case of possession trance the identity of the impersonator is known to all:

Instead of covering the face and body with a mask or disguise, the body itself, so to speak, becomes the 'mask' that clothes the identity of the spirit who now inhabits the body.¹

While the mask marks an "external" transformation in the identity of the wearer, possession generally marks an "internal" transformation. In ritual possession both the devotee's face and body mirror the presence of the incarnating spirit. According To Schott-Billman:

The crisis of possession properly speaking manifests itself by an important modification of the face, . . . The facial traits are unrecognizable, it appears as if the possessed devotee has put on a mask. This mask corresponds naturally to the characteristics of the incarnated god; masks of wrinkled old men (Legba, Haiti), Sofo (Haoussa), grimacing individuals (Guede, Haiti), . . . beautiful women . . .²

The metamorphosis of the facial expression is supported by a modification of the posture, motor behavior and voice into a "mask" of the god. Schott-Billman relates how a toothless old woman was transformed into a beautiful young princess with graceful carriage and a lovely voice--all in the space of a few minutes.

The trance state itself is often signified by a neutral or blank expression of one in deep sleep. The word

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Schott-Billman, Corps et Possession, p. 120.

mask, according to Leuner, is derived from the Langobardic masca; meaning the net in which a corpse was shrouded and later by extension, it meant the dead man himself on his return as an evil spirit.¹ Often, the shaman and possessed devotee wear masks, whose immovable expressions cause the performer to appear as though dead, yet animated by an unseen force. However, the mask is given life by the gestulation of the body which supports it and gives it nuance. In addition, the face during trance and at the moment of dispossession often assumes a "blank" or neutral expression of one in deep sleep. Schott-Billman recounts his impression of a group of African trancers as follows:

I was struck by their expressions. Their eyes were vague, the eyelids rarely blinked. They appeared to me to be hypnotized and they moved like sleep walkers.²

It appears that the blank facial expression is bound up with the "dispossession" of the attitudes normally associated with the ego.

Trance states are essentially a form of waking dream in which the individual experiences his mental imagery as superimposed on reality. The entranced individual is able to experience absent phenomena as present and frequently engages in dialogue and action with invisible agents. The shaman is known to be a great "conjurer" who is able to perform a variety of magic tricks--such as

¹H. Leuner, Psychopathy and Pictorial Expression (Basel: Sandoz, 1974), p. 56.

²Schott-Billman, Corps et Possession, p. 147.

moving objects through the air or causing them to mysteriously appear, shaking the hut where the seance is held, interacting with invisible spirits whose voices he mimicks through ventriloquism. Moreover, the shaman often performs with puppets or other objects which through skillful manipulation are made to appear as though possessed by spirits. While not so varied in his abilities the possessed devotee, also projects his inner world outwards as superimposed upon reality. However, he tends to interact with other possessed performers, in relation to the behavior of their possessing gods. His function is closer to that of an "actor" who makes the "images" of the spirit world present to an audience through the enactment of a ritual script played out in terms of "roles" handed down by tradition.

The reliving of imagery involves an alteration of the laws of space and time of the enacted events, which mirrors that of the performer's interior world. Bogoras states that the spirits which the shaman "sees" and interacts with are "relative" in size and shape and that they change in connection with the various alterations of the surrounding objects and with the actions of other spirits or performers.¹ The supposed reason for this mutability is that men and spirits belong to different worlds separate and distinct from each other. According to Bogoras, the active element, the prevailing or victorious spirits are

¹Waldemar Bogoras, "Ideas of Space and Time in the Conception of Primitive Religion," American Anthropologist 27 (1925): 216.

represented as big and even gigantic, while the losers are depicted as small in size. Obviously, the size of spirits is bound up with the performer's attitude towards them, it is standard knowledge that that which is potentially threatening is perceived psychologically as being bigger and more powerful than it might be in actuality, and that which is non-threatening, smaller and less powerful. The shaman is also able to condense space. During his voyage he moves easily through vast dimensions of space which symbolize the cosmos. This movement is often indicated by a "spiraling" or circular walk or turning motion.¹

The trance state greatly alters the devotee's attitude towards time. The inner time of the ritual performer's dream world is projected outward upon reality and manifests itself in two distinct modes. The first of these is compression of time, in which a series of events or long duration of time is condensed into a single action or short period. Second, the duration of the performer's gestures is substantially lengthened. The individual appears to be a sleepwalker whose gestures unfold with "dream-like" slowness. Schott-Billman remarks on the slowness of the gestures performed by a young Brazilian portraying Xango:

The slowness of the gestures, the time and the importance that he gave to each one of his movements . . . evoked the work of Bob Wilson.²

¹Ibid., p. 215.

²Schott-Billman, Corps et Possession, p. 125.

Often the element of duration in ritual is a reflection of the "time factor" that comprises the "Efforts" of the incarnated god. For example, the Rab-cameleon god of Senegal is portrayed through movements that verge on immobility in which the possessed individual stares fixedly at the spectators with a "reptilian look." Moreover, he walks on hands and knees with the erie slowness of a stalkingameleon--punctuated with swift thrusts of the tongue.

Possession and Puppetry

The postural and gestural enactment of the possessed individual is analogous to that of the puppet. The transformation of the individual into the possessing deity essentially constitutes a "mask" of the body which clothes the identity of the spirit.

The god then acts out his divine nature in the traditional manner, showing a quite definite character in his movements and in his expression, which is like a mask. Every god has a different habit.¹

Huxley has noted that the incarnation of Loa through behavioral and postural changes represents "a mask of the entire body, not of the face alone."² In the initial throes of possession when the devotee is "mounted" by the god, he is often jerked and propelled around like a string puppet or marionette that has been picked up by its manipulator. In

¹Huxley, "The Ritualization of Behavior in Man and Animals," p. 425.

²Huxley, The Invisibles, p. 209.

the calmer "mimetic phase" of the trance the devotee is literally "moved" by the spirit--his body, like a large puppet, propelled by his inner attitudes.

Possession and puppetry are closely interwoven in rites of possession and shamanism. Jane Belo has identified what she terms a "puppet complex" in the possession rituals of Java and Bali, in which the "dancers" are trained to emulate the gestures of the wayang kulit (shadow puppets). Belo says of the Javanese "human puppets" (wayang wong):

Anyone who has ever seen one of these performances given by the highly trained actors cannot doubt that their every action was modeled upon that of the puppets, and the stylization of the gesture, the position of the figure in profile to the audience, the absolute immobility of the face, recalled the puppets' representation of the mythological characters, and not any human rendering.¹

Belo sums up the puppet complex by stating that "actors and dancers are like puppets, for they behave in accordance with a spirit which is not their own."² The word boroek is used by the Balinese to describe a corpse which is falling to pieces with decay. It is used to epitomize the fantasy of the body as made of separate independant parts. This fantasy takes many forms--among others, that the body, like a puppet, is pinned together at the joints. This idea is closely linked with the "postural release" involved in possession whereby energy, tension or the sensation of "self" tends to be experienced in the joints.

¹Jane Belo, Trance in Bali (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 12.

²Ibid.

The release of repressed cathexes throughout the body manifests itself in a posturally based style of movement which is similar to that of the puppet. Milton Erickson states that trance gesture appears as "unitary movement" in which the arm, for example, tends to be moved from a stationary shoulder joint as a single unit and as "economy of movement," that is, the use of only that part of the body necessary for the action.¹ The isolation and independence of segments of the body which move as units gives the performer the aura of an articulated marionette. It appears that the emotion that lies at the base of the enacted attitude is "held up" in the joints of the body which serve as a kind of "platform" for the unfolding of gesture.

In possession cults a god which is external to the devotee takes over his body and uses it as a puppet through which to articulate its will. The devotee is a mere vehicle who, when he comes out of the trance, can remember nothing of what has transpired. The supreme difference between the shaman and the possessed devotee is that the former remains, for the most part, aware and in control of the possessing spirits. The shaman is able to "double" his consciousness--that is, even if he "takes into himself" the spirits, as the saying goes, he nevertheless retains his own personality. Over the course of the seance the lone figure of the shaman becomes the "lieu" of the enacted drama. He

¹Milton H. Erickson, quoted in Belo, Trance in Bali, p. 4.

uses the figurative embodiments of his latent attitudes as "instruments" of his will. Like the master puppeteer, his conscious will presides over the strings of imaginary characters from the spirit world in order to relay back important messages necessary for the mental health of the community. Throughout the seance he must respond to the demanding expectations of his entourage--showing proof of a solid nervous constitution, an acute power of concentration, unusual muscular strength, a perfect control of the smallest and most violent movements of the body, and finally, a prodigious memory.

Ritual Mimetic Enactment and Archetypes

In the verbal and gestural enactment of the shaman and possessed devotee can be found the schema of a culture's great "myths." According to Robert Graves, "true myth may be defined as the reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime performed on public festivals."¹ Gesturally enacted myths are essentially "explanatory mimodramas" which express the deepest archetypes of a community through the mimetic portrayal of agents and their actions upon one another. Primarily the figurative embodiments of motor attitudes, archetypes, in the words of Carl Jung, represent "instinctive trends" which "manifest themselves in

¹Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), I:10.

fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images."¹ The ritual enactment of archetypal imagery represents a creative striving of the unconscious layers of the ritual performer's psyche to reconstitute its structure by allowing repressed cathexes held up in the body to actualize themselves. The gestural "acting out" of the attitude essentially allows emotion, which has become crystallized in the musculature, to purge itself--this process has a definite therapeutic effect on the performer as well as his entourage, who become identified with the drama unfolding before them.

Ritually enacted myth forms the basis for the structure and content of tragedy. Tragedy essentially involves the mimesis of agents and their actions for the purpose of "stirring," "releasing," and at last "appeasing" the passions associated with archetypal attitudes. Kenneth Burke defines the "tragic rhythm of action" as "Purpose, to Passion, to Perception."² The amnesia of the possessed devotee can be accounted for by the fact that "the servitor in question is an agon who has not fully undergone the reversal of his situation, so that his faculty of self-witness is still fragmented."³ While the possessed

¹Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 58.

²Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1962), p. 41.

³Huxley, "The Body and the Play Within the Play," p. 36.

devotee is able to achieve a purgation of emotion, he has no memory or "knowledge" of what has occurred. The shaman on the other hand, possesses the faculty of self-witness, because he has fully undergone the reversal of the situation. His enacted adventures match those of the mythological journey of the "hero," which consists of separation, initiation, return or rebirth.¹ The successful completion of this journey by the shaman not only entails the release of emotion, but an awareness of the reintegration process itself.

Ritual Enactment--Mime or Dance?

The gestures of the shaman and the possessed devotee in ritual performance have often been referred to by scholars as "dance." This is primarily due to the rhythmic and repeated nature of some of the movements--especially those comprising the initial phase of the trance. Marcel Jousse states that in our ignorance we have come to call the global corporeal expressions of the shaman and other ritual performers "dance" when they are in actuality "explanatory mimodramas" or enacted myths.¹ Elsewhere, scholars such as J.P. Roux have come to question whether the term "dance" is appropriate for the gestural expression of the shaman.

Roux states:

¹Joseph Campbell, The Hero with the Thousand Faces (New York & Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1956).

²Jousse, L'anthropologie du geste, p. 85.

If one closely examines the phenomenon of shamanic ecstasy, one has the right to wonder if these manifestations . . . really merit the title "dance" . . . these dances or attempts at dance, comprise a part of a vast ensemble whose frontiers are poorly defined.¹

Despite attempts to clarify the difference between mimic and dance elements in ritual, the area of distinction, according to Marcel Mauss, between the two is insufficiently drawn and the point at which dance becomes so narrative as to be properly termed mime remains unclear.²

It cannot be denied that dance comprises an important element of ritual, but to look at the movements of ritual performers purely from the standpoint of dance is to belie the mimetic elements that constitute a great portion of ritual enactment. Yves Lorelle states that the first phase of the trance, when the devotee seeks dispossession, is basically "dance" movement characterized by repeated and rhythmic movements that do not appear to be grounded in the mimesis of phenomena. The second phase of the trance is basically mimetic involving four possible groups of gestures; animal mimicry, divine or theomorphic mimicry, human or anthropomorphic mimicry, and gestural or mimetic exorcisms for curing.³ J.P. Roux identifies two basic

¹J.P. Roux, "La Danse chamanique de l'Asie central," Les danses sacrées, ed. René Sieffert (Paris: Le Seuil, 1963), p. 283.

²Marcel Mauss, "Les techniques du corps," Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique 32 (1968): 276.

³Yves Lorelle, L'Expression Corporelle du mime sacré au mime du théâtre (Bruxelles: La renaissance du livre, Collections Dionysos, 1976), p. 28.

"mimetic" elements in "shamanic dances," which are also found in possession rituals; the walk and the mimesis of animal spirits.¹ The circular walking signifies the shaman's ascent or descent into the world of the Illud Tempus. As in possession, the shaman is often transformed into a spirit (god, ancestor, human or animal) whose characteristic posture, gestures and actions are portrayed through Mime.

There are numerous references in scholarly works to rites in which the shaman actually physically mimes his sacred voyage. "Many processes during the soul journey, in particular obstacles in the way, are represented dramatically."² Stephen Larsen refers to one such sacred voyage by a shaman in an Eskimo rite involving a visit to the "Mother of the Sea Creatures"--which symbolizes the society's social situation, infraction of taboo, as well as other deeply-felt attitudes:

The shaman as emissary of the community re-enacts it [the rite] personally and it is believed, actually. This enactment then belongs in and through the experience of the shaman. The shaman flies personally to the numinous, mythogenic realm, there to enact the symbolic drama.³

Lucile Hoeck Charles writes of shamanic exorcisms:

Actual performance includes dramatic invocation of evil and benevolent spirits, or both, for diagnosis

¹Roux, "La Danse chamanique," p. 295.

²Lommel, Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art, p. 137.

³Larsen, The Shaman's Doorway, p. 87.

and advice as to treatment; possession of or battle with the shaman by spirits through ecstasy or frenzy which may be considered a supreme example of dramatic impersonation, often with the elaborate use of voice, dialogue and body pantomime.¹

The classic account of the seance of the Altaic shaman made by Radlov provides a clear insight into the mimetic nature of shamanic enactment.² The actions performed by the shaman portray the characteristic and transitory gestures of agents acting upon one another that forms the basis for dramatic mimesis. Moreover, these postural and gestural "signs" are metaphorical equivalents to the chanted and sung narration of the shaman who simultaneously "recounts" his voyage for the benefit of his entourage. While in a state of trance, the shaman performs his own role and dialogues and interacts with various spirits and personages along his journey. The seance begins with the invocation of helping spirits through drumming and the sacrifice of a horse whose soul is to accompany the shaman throughout his celestial journey. The mimed and chanted representation of the mythic events goes as follows. He straddles a scarecrow in the shape of a goose (helping spirit), and "rapidly waving his hands as if to fly," sings, "Under the white sky,/ Over the white cloud;/Under the blue cloud;/Rise up to the sky, bird!" The shaman then imitates the cackling of the

¹Lucile Hoeff Charles, "Drama in Shaman Exorcism," Journal of American Folklore 66 (April-June 1953):96.

²Radlov, quoted by Eliade, Shamanism, pp. 191-92.

goose's reply. Sitting astride the goose, the shaman pursues the soul of the horse (which is supposed to have fled) and neighs like a charger. With the help of those present, he drives the animal's soul into the palisade and laboriously mimes its capture; he whinnies, rears, and pretends that the noose that has been thrown to catch the animal is tightening around his own throat. Sometimes he lets the drum fall to the ground to show that the animal's soul has escaped.

The ritual enactment of the possessed devotee also involves extensive use of Mime. However, unlike the primarily "solo" performance of the shaman, possession cults generally entail a collective performance involving a group of individuals. Rituals in which the personalities and activities of the deities are acted out are called "ethnodramas" in Haiti. They deal with the realities of daily social life and embody the qualities and faults, anxieties, hopes and needs of the individual within the community. The devotee projects images of what he is, needs and wants into the personalities and myths of the gods and then embodies them in possession and acts them out. Metraux describes a typical "improptu" Haitian possession rite, which has all the appearances of a commedia dell'arte performance: including stock characters, improvisation, dialogue and a repertoire of tricks:

someone possessed by Zaka appears under the peristyle in the get-up of a peasant. By canny movements he mimes the anxiety of a countryman come to town, and who

fears to be robbed. Now another possessed person joins him, one might almost say "comes on." It is Guede-nibo, of the Guede Family, which watches over the dead. Zaka is clearly terrified by the presence of his gloomy colleague and tries to propitiate him, inviting him to have something to eat and to drink some rum. Guede, who is making a show as a townsman, exchanges courtesies with him, trying to tease him. He asks him: "What have you got in your bag?" He searches it and examines the contents. Alarmed, Zaka cries "stop, stop." The bag is returned to him only to be surreptitiously lifted off him while he is examining one of the sick . . .¹

Clearly, this example of ritual possession enactment is essentially a "mimodrama" in which the principle performers function as "actors" rather than dancers.

Gestural Mimesis and Poetry

Many scholars have termed the vocal utterances of the shaman as the beginnings of poetic art. Lommel states that the shaman is not merely a "sorcerer," but also "the poet and artist of his group."² It is he who molds and gives renewed shape and fresh life to the essential archetypal images that live in his own and the community's imagination. He functions as a "mediator" between the profane world of everyday life and the spiritual world that constitutes the core of the subconscious. Not only does he mimetically enact mythical dramas of which he is the "hero," but he also recites, chants or sings the verbal dialogue that accompanies his actions. In both rites of shamanism

¹Alfred Métraux, "A Selection From Voodoo in Haiti," in Anthropology of Folk Religion, ed. Charles Leslie (New York: Vintage, 1960), p. 414.

²Lommel, Shamanism, p. 140.

and possession gestural mimesis tends to function as a metaphorical equivalent to the spoken or sung text.

Many scholars adhere to the theory that "gesture" lies at the root of spoken language. Jousse believes that archaic peoples intussuscept the "aural" mimemes (sound gestures) of phenomena as well as their gestural mimemes.¹ An agent also possesses a characteristic sound, for example, an owl's characteristic sound might be a "hoot," a cat's might be a "meow," and so forth. Furthermore, each agent performs a fixed number of "transitory" sounds such as "the wing flapping sound of flight" in the case of the owl. Some scholars hold that the gestures performed by the tongue and mouth organs are merely a microcosm of the individual's global corporeal expression. According to Condillac, "the language of action, principle of all language, is found to be 'prolonged' by the articulated language."² Wundt states that "vocal language is nothing by a sector of the entire system of expressive movements. The sounds emitted by the vocal organs being nothing but a vocal gesture, fragment of the mimic of the ensemble."³

Cassirer in Myth and Language states that gestural "metaphors" come to be embodied in "lingual metaphors"

¹Jousse, L'anthropologie du geste, pp. 114-15.

²Condillac, Essai sur l'origine, quoted in André Veinstein, La Mise en Scène Théâtrale et sa Condition Esthétique (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), p. 95.

³Wilhelm Wundt, quoted in Veinstein, La Mise en Scène Théâtrale, p. 96.

which retain the gestic and mythic content of their origin.¹ "Metaphor is the supreme agent by which disparate and hitherto unconnected things are brought together in poetry."² On their most basic level lingual and gestural metaphors abstract the characteristic "gestic" traits of phenomena which serve to link them to other classes of phenomena with similar gestic traits. Cassirer gives the example of lightning," which is perceived by archaic peoples in terms of its gestural trait of "serpentine." This lingual and gestural metaphor is figuratively embodied by early peoples as a "snake" or "snake-like" god. The "sun," which is perceived in terms of its gestic qualities of "flight" because it moves across the sky, frequently appears in gestic, lingual and pictorial expressions as "the heavenly flier," an "arrow," or a bird."³ There is a leveling distinction embodied in the metaphor--every specimen is equivalent to the entire species. Thus, "lightning" is a "snake," a particular god with "snake-like" movements, or any other phenomena that possesses a serpentine gesture; and the "sun" is a "bird," "arrow," or any other flying phenomenon which fits the essential nature of the original conception. Unlike discursive language in which a sign serves the fundamental aim of

¹Ernst Cassirer, Myth and Language, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1953).

²Ivor Richards, quoted in Archibald MacLeish, Poetry and Experience (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960), p. 75.

³Cassirer, Myth and Language, pp. 96-97.

establishing "logical" relationships between a given phenomenon and others that are like it according to some coordinating law. In mythic language nothing has any significance or being except that which is given tangible reality. Here is no reference and meaning as in logical thought; every content of consciousness to which the mind is directed is immediately translated into terms of actual presence and effectiveness.

On another level lingual and gestural signs serve as metaphors for the attitudes of the ritual performer and the community as a whole. The externally projected imagery which forms the substance of ritual enactment and which is based in the characteristic gestures of phenomena is charged with emotional significance.

Phenomenon were not seen empirically by primitive man but as spiritualized forces, whose formulation engendered by our subjective models, is really a great metaphor for our internal life.¹

For example, the "serpentine" gesture of the snake, depending on the cultural attitudes towards this phenomena, might be associated with such qualities as "deviousness" or "sinisterness." The person performing this gesture would find his inner attitudes mirrored in the slowly twisting and serpentine movements of the snake. Taking this process one step further, the "snake" might in time come to stand for the concept of "evil."

¹Ibid., p. 61.

With time and repetition, the original spontaneous gestural expression in ritual becomes "codified" into a language which still retains its original metaphorical overtones but the "signs," which have become increasingly abstract, take on the "denotational" quality of words in language.

As soon as an expressive act is performed without inner momentary compulsion it is no longer self-expressive; it is expressive in the logical sense. It is not a sign of the emotion it conveys but a symbol of it; instead of completing the natural history of a feeling, it denotes the feeling, and may merely bring it to mind, even for the actor. When an action acquires such a meaning it becomes a gesture. Genuine acts are completed in every detail unless they are forcibly interrupted, but gestures may be quite abortive imitations of acts, showing only their significant features. They are expressive forms, true symbols. Their aspect becomes fixed, they can be deliberately used to communicate an idea of the feeling that begot their prototypes. Because they are deliberate gestures, not emotional acts, they are no longer subject to spontaneous variation, but bound to an often meticulously exact repetition.¹

For the most part, the performances of the shaman and possessed devotee follow rigorous patterns handed down by tradition. However, true possession entails a deep emotional participation on the part of the ritual performer and while his postures and gestures may be clearly "codified" they reflect a degree of spontaneity and variation that is not found in reified ritual languages in which participants merely "go through the motions" of performing ritual acts. The important thing to note is that the original mythic structure of spontaneous gestural language, with time, comes to resemble that of spoken language.

¹Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, pp. 152-53.

Summary

The ritual enactment of the possessed devotee, shaman, and hungan marks the oldest occurrences of Mime as a performance art and, as such, provide a paradigm for the creative process of the Mime performer as well as giving valuable insight into the essential elements involved in mimetic enactment.

The psychic and physical changes that the ritual performer experiences during the trance are roughly similar to those undergone by post-ritual mimes. The trance represents an altered state of consciousness, which could be compared to a "waking dream" state in which the body-mind, released from its habitual attitudes which normally constitute the ego, experiences subconscious images as present reality. The content of these images is purely gestural and postural--a product of the body's intussusception of the formal and dynamic traits of phenomena. Comprising important "pearl lessons" relating to the group's needs, wants, fears, and hopes, they serve as "metaphors" for its most deeply felt attitudes. As Marcel Jousse has shown, an image is a tripartite entity consisting of an agent/ acting upon/another agent, and it is this tripartite series of gestures which provides for the structure and content of mimetic enactment. During the trance the ritual performer comes into contact with mental imagery through a form of "identification" (often involving possession) in which he "senses" the actions of agents within the muscles and organs

of his body. He either interacts with the externally projected imagery and/or he embodies images and acts them out in ritual through a form of possession. The incarnation of agents tends to be an expression of "half-acted" attitudes that are latent within the performer and the society as a whole. These "roles," which are handed down by tradition, are portrayed by means of characteristic postures, gestures, and "Efforts," which not only mirror those of the performer's latent attitudes but which serve as metaphors for natural phenomena.

The assumption of latent attitudes involves the process of metamorphosis or transformation in which the whole postural tonus of the performer, as well as his facial features, conform to those of the incarnating deity. Often the transformation is emblemized by the wearing of a mask as well. Transformation also plays an important role in the mimesis of dramatic events as the shaman must actually make his entourage "see" or "hear" the presence of agents outside his body. During the trance the performer's inner dream world is projected outwards upon reality. This brings about a "deformation" of the real in which the time and space of the dramatic action is greatly altered.

Scholars have indicated that the actions executed by the possessed devotee and shaman are highly "postural." Trance movement has been termed "unitary" by Erickson--major joints of the body appear to act as "fulcrums" for

isolated and independent movements of segments of the body. Furthermore, the postural nature of mimetic enactment finds its analogy in the movements of the puppet. There is evidence that both possession cults and shamanic rituals not only used puppets in their rites but borrowed some of their aesthetics from puppet performances. Puppet movements are highly postural--involving fixed organs and isolated movements. In addition, the creative process of the shaman with regard to his body-instrument is analogous to that of a stringed puppet or marionette. Like the marionettist, the shaman stands at a distance from his body. His controlling will, similar to the strings of the marionette, presiding over the play of the deities who possess his body. He must possess a thoroughly trained instrument and great endurance in order to relay important messages to his audience. The aesthetics of the mask is closely tied to that of the marionette--the postural and gestural expression of the incarnating deity, as Huxley makes clear, presents a "mask" of the entire body.

Finally, the postural and gestural language of ritual mimetic enactment is a "language" based in the abstracted characteristic and transitory gestures of agents. Enacted by means of posture, gesture, and Effort these "signs" are analogous to poetic metaphors which at the same time unite phenomena with similar gestic traits with important attitudes latent in the performer. Shamans are considered by many scholars to be the "first poets."

The gestural metaphors found in shamanic and possession rituals are likewise embodied in lingual metaphors, which possess a similar tripartite form of agent/acting upon/another agent.

As Mime moves away from its religious function in ritual into the realm of a performance art, we find all of the elements that were operating in shamanic mimesis remain intact. The ritual performer creates out of compulsion, in which mythic consciousness has not yet freed itself to play with the various forms of existence. With the growth of language and discursive logic, the mime becomes a conscious maker of poetry. He is able to step back from experience and see it from the outside as well as the inside. He now associates phenomena in new ways to say new things and thus creates new gestural metaphors, which still retain their mythic propensity but also possess the discursive nature of "signs."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MIME-DANCE OF THE JAPANESE NOH

Origins of the Noh

The "mime-dance" of the Japanese Noh, which was perfected during the fourteenth century by Zeami Motokiyo, a great actor, writer and theorizer of the Noh drama, and which has come down to the twentieth century largely unchanged, provides us with a living example of an Oriental form of mime-dance that marks a "bridge" between ritual and art. All of the elements that make up the Noh drama, from the subject matter, dance, music, and performance space to the creative process of the central performer of the drama, have been shaped by a variety of influences--the most important being the dance-dramas associated with Shinto and Buddhist rites. A preliminary discussion of some of the influences attributed to these sources, and others, will provide an insight into how the unique expression of attitude and posture in Noh drama was achieved.

The Noh, which is a musical dance-drama in which Mime is a major component, is the culmination of several earlier dance-drama forms. The earliest origins of the Noh, and the source to which it owes much of its mysterious and moving power, can be traced to primitive kagura,

a form of ancient Shinto ritual drama involving spirit possession and the enactment of myth by means of Mime, music and song. In the fourth chapter of the Fūshikaden, Zeami attributes the roots of sarugaku (Noh) to the legendary kagura of "The Myth of the Heavenly Cave," in which the goddess Ama-no-Uzume "in a state of divine possession" dances and performs mimetic antics in order to entice the Sun Goddess out the cave where she had hidden herself plunging the world in darkness.¹ The miko, a kagura dancer attached to Shinto shrines, is considered to be a remote ancestor of Uzume. She is essentially a "spirit medium" who in a state of trance invites a god or spirit to use her voice and body to name itself and make its utterance.² Some miko merely act as mediums for monks who serve to conjure the trance and control the actions of the spirits. However, others are often able to self-induce possession and once possessed retain a "partial consciousness" and "control" of the spirits.

The term kagura derives from kamu kura, which means a "divine seat."³ Kamu is an euphonic change of kami "god" and kura is the archaic word for "a seat."⁴ The

¹Zeami, Kadensho, trans. Chûichi Sakurai et al. (Kyoto: Sumiya-Shinobe Publishing Institute, 1968), p. 54.

²Carmen Blacker, The Catalpa Bow (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 22.

³Sachiyo Ito, "Some Characteristics of Japanese Expression as They Appear in Dance," CORD Dance Research Annual 10 (1979): 269.

⁴Ibid.

miko in primitive kagura would repeat turning motions around a sacred altar striving to be possessed by a spirit. According to René Sieffert, kagura originally manifested itself in two forms both of which were present in the dance of Amaterasu: the waza-ogi and kami-kakari.¹ The waza-ogi is similar to the first phase of the trance referred to by Yves Lorelle, in which the individual "dances" in order to induce possession. This phase consists of an "invitation" to the gods by means of "imitative" gestures or buffooneries. The kami-kakari designates a state of possession in which the devotee produces the "comportment" of the god.

Originally associated with possession and ritual enactment of miko, kagura became differentiated into various types under the influence of the changing views of the deities, and the geinō, a term which refers to drama and such fragmentary arts on its circumference fringe as songs, dance and mimicry. However, the basic element of "divine possession" and many of the other elements of this early ritual dance-drama continued to exert an important influence on the subsequent development of the Noh--especially with regard to the actor's creative process. Like the primitive miko, the Noh actor must "transform" himself into various characters which form the focal

¹René Sieffert, "Les Dances Sacrées Au Japon," in Les Dances Sacrées, ed. René Sieffert (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963), p. 459.

point of Noh drama. This is effected through the assumption of the "mask" of character emblemized in the facial mask and as conveyed by the global corporeal emsemble through posture and gesture. As in ritual enactment, the Noh actor's art is based in the expression of the deeply-felt attitudes or emotions of characters through posturally based mimetic gestures.

Scholars have also identified another form of possession which contributed to the formation of Noh drama. This entertainment, based in ritual spirit possession, was the product of yamabushi aesthetics--itinerant monks who formed part of a mountain cult that practiced a religion combining Buddhism, Shintoism and Taoism. The yamabushi was essentially a spirit medium or shaman, who in a state of trance made a magical flight to the world of the spirits. He accomplished this journey either in a visionary form, in which he verbally recounted his adventures, or by means of "symbolic mimesis; the other world projected by means of powerful symbolism on to the geography of our own."¹ During his voyage through the various realms of the cosmos he generally became "possessed" by various spirits. The early yamabushi aesthetics used a medium as receiver and one or several priests as conjurers of the trance. The role of the priest who conjures the trance finds its counterpart in the Noh in the function of the

¹Blacker, The Catalpa Bow, p. 22.

waki. The waki in a Noh play appears either as an "official"--shrine official or retainer; a "priest"--either a high level Buddhist priest or a travelling monk; or a "man"--warrior, townsman or country person. He is essentially the reason for the shite (protagonist) to appear. He does not enter into the action of the play, but rather sits to one side and evokes appropriate responses to the thoughts, feelings and pleas of the main character. The shite is the counterpart of the medium who becomes possessed by a ghost, or spirit of a living being--human or sub-human. It is the spirit's narration of the story of his pre- and after-life (which the audience is expected to believe occurs in the monk's dream) that constitutes the core of the Noh play.

Zeami also attributes the roots of Noh to another sacred source based in divine inspiration which derives from the ritual enactment of Buddhist mythology in India.¹ According to Zeami, a dedication of a new Buddhist monastery was being interrupted by a group of unorthodox rivals who held a raucous ceremony in the courtyard. The Buddhist priests, acting on divine admonition, performed a series of sixty six "mimes" which attracted the interest of the demonstrators and eventually calmed them down. Whatever the truth of this story, there is no doubt that Buddhist philosophy, ritual and dance-drama performances

¹Zeami, Kadensho, pp. 54-55.

were important influences on the Noh.

In the sixth century A.D. dance-dramas associated with Buddhist ritual were imported from Korea and China and adapted by Japanese Buddhist priests and aristocrats of the Imperial Court. Gigaku and, more importantly, bugaku eventually came to express the aesthetic ideals of the court aristocracy. Bugaku often involves abstract renditions of fragmentary mimetic actions--e.g., a croquet game, spear dance, or a war dance showing a god symbolically subduing his enemies--by means of architectural and non-representational movements.¹ The geometry, balance and spiritual calm, devoid of emotion, which characterizes these dances is believed to be connected with the Buddhist "mandalas" of India, Tibet and China--those symmetrical drawings produced out of the subconscious when purified of temporal (emotional or psychic) disturbances. The gestures of the Noh mime-dance reveal the influence of bugaku in their elaborate symbolism, codification into abstract signs, simplicity, and geometric and architectural grace. Bugaku also contributed the important structural element of jo-ha-kyū to the Noh, which not only forms the basic unit of the Noh mime-dance phrase (the kata), but the overall structure of the Noh and all its elements as well.

¹Faubion Bowers, Japanese Theatre (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1977), p. 9.

While religious dance-dramas and foreign importations patronized by the nobles were crystallizing in form, in the countryside the more popular folk-entertainments, deriving from Shinto and Buddhist influences, were developing as part of local festivals. Dengaku was a field performance which grew out of ancient agrarian rites. Originally an elaboration in the dances of rice planting festivities and harvest ceremonies, it soon came to incorporate such popular entertainments as acrobatics, juggling and a story content. The most characteristic performance which was carried over into the Noh drama was the dance of Okina, associated with a prayer for longevity, in which the performer became "possessed" by a god who appeared in the figure of an "old man." In the Noh, the structure and content of Okina plays corresponds to the three stages of Shinto ritual: a god is invoked, who comes forth, dances and is sent off.¹ This over-all structure forms a part of many other Noh plays as well. The character of the "old man" in the Noh, who projects the quality of "spiritual calm," also undoubtedly owes something to the character of Okina.

Sarugaku, in contrast to dengaku which was primarily dance, was purely mimetic in nature. It developed as an interlude between sacred music and kagura dances

¹Kunio Komparu, The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives, trans. Jane Corddry (New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill, 1983), p. 4.

performed at the Imperial Court shrine. Sarugaku, whose origin is attributed to the vulgar and comic antics of Uzume's dance before the cave of the sun-goddess, developed from a variety of entertainment forms including comic skits, mime, dances, popular songs, acrobatics, and magic acts.¹ According to Kunio Komparu, the "magic" element of sarugaku performances, which consisted of conjuring up certain phenomena using the powers of supernatural or mystical beings, is reflected in the Noh actor's physical and psychological "transformation" into the characters he enacts.² In time, dengaku and sarugaku began to influence one another with dengaku incorporating mimic elements into its pure dance style eventually becoming dengaku Noh, and sarugaku incorporating dance elements into its mimetic action developing into sarugaku Noh--the basis for the Noh drama which would be further refined by Zeami.

The Enactment of Character in the Noh Through Transformation

The Noh is essentially a mime-drama based in the expression of the deeply-felt emotions of a single character (the shite). According to Komparu:

The image of the human character, which is of greatest relative importance, is not evoked through interaction with other human beings; rather, the character is given life and breath by depiction of the complexities of life and death involved in that figure's personal

¹Ibid., p. 7. ²Ibid.

battle with fate--that is what is deeply impressed upon the consciousness of the viewer.¹

Noh plays, which are primarily divided into two sections, involve the vocal and gestural narration of a single event in the life of the main character (shite). In the first part, the shite is generally a god, spirit (human or non-human) who appears in the guise of a human; in the second part, the shite metamorphoses into its "real" form and performs a mime-dance, accompanied by chant, in which it "acts out" or "dances" an attitude relating to present or past events.

The five categories of Noh plays, are based on the types of shite which appear in them. In a brief glance at each category the importance of "transformation" and attitude expression becomes clear.

The first category comprises "god plays" kami-Noh which are dedicated to gods and shrines. The kami, which are numinous presences or "powers" believed to exist in natural phenomena, have been the principal object of worship of Shinto cults since pre-Buddhist times. For the most part they are "natural phenomena" which are perceived as supra-ordinary, awesome, powerful or terrifying. "Thus the emperor, dragons, the echo, foxes, peaches, mountains and the sea" are all seen as kami because they are mysterious and full of strangeness and potency.² In spirit

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Blacker, The Catalpa Bow, p. 34.

incarnation, the kami are figuratively embodied in the images of a "snake, an old man dressed in white with long white hair and a beard, and as an animal, bird, or plant."¹ The figure of the "old man", who appears in Okina plays, is thought to be the presentation of the divine ancestor, commonly associated with many of the kami.²

As a rule, kami-Noh are divided into two parts. In the first, a god appears in the form of a mortal and tells his story to the waki, who is visiting the place. In the second part, he appears in his own form and performs a mai (mime-dance) giving a blessing to the land. Since the kami are generally associated with beneficial powers, the attitudes associated with their enactment tend to express joy and thanksgiving.

The second category are the "warrior plays" shūra-Noh. In a typical shūra-Noh, a ghost of a warrior fallen in battle appears in the guise of an old or young villager and recounts something that has happened in the past. In the second part he appears as the ghost in full battle attire and acts out that tale in a dramatically concentrated form in the present. The emotions expressed through mime-dance are those which characterize the warrior's struggle with destiny.

The third performance category are the "woman's plays" or kazura-mono ("wig-pieces"). The shite is usually a young and elegant woman. In most cases she is a ghost

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 37.

or spirit, sometimes a living woman. When she is a ghost or spirit she appears to a monk in the first part in the form of a local woman and tells a story relating to the place. In the second part, she appears in her real form as a princess, a dancer, an old woman, spirit or ghost and performs a mime-dance. Many of the kazura-mono deal with the pathos of longing, sorrow and regret over lost love or beauty.

The fourth category are "madness plays" kyōran-mono which derive from the apparent madness of exorcism and spirit possession which were a part of primitive sarugaku. Madness in the Noh is the result of such extreme emotions as intense suffering over the loss of a loved one, rage, jealousy, hatred, or violent love, which are so great that they cause a temporary loss of normal consciousness on the part of the shite. The state of unknowing, which is similar to trance, has been compared by scholars to the Zen Buddhist state of "nothingness."¹ Often madness in the Noh is the result of the temporary "possession" of the shite by a spirit or ghost. In many of the kyōran-mono the shite appears in a disguised form in the first part and in the second undergoes a transformation.

The fifth category are "demon plays." The shite in this group of Noh is a lesser deity, dragon god, ghost of a mighty general or highway man, monstrous animal, etc.

¹Komparu, The Noh Theatre, pp. 47-48.

In the first part the shite appears in various human forms, such as a monk, old man, young woman or a boy, then is transformed in the second part into its true form as a monster or demon in order to demonstrate its power, and to help or attack humans. The demon symbolizes the concept of "evil" and is associated with the attitudes of horror and loathing.

The Noh actor performing the role of the shite usually undergoes several "transformations" within the course of a play. Before he enters the performance space he performs a ritual in the "Mirror Room" kagami-no-ma which is analogous to shamanic spirit possession. The mirror kagami originally meant "god" (kami) but later came to mean one's true self or essential way of being.¹ In Zen Buddhist philosophy the mirror is a metaphor for the pure and undefiled Buddha nature of the individual, which reflects the myriad forms of the universe but whose essential nature is "nothingness" as it does not keep or hold anything. As the Noh actor looks at himself in the mirror through the tiny eye holes of the mask he gradually becomes loosed from his ordinary consciousness and the attitudes that make up his personality and comes to identify the image in the mirror with one of the many forms of his latent subconscious. The transformation is complete when he comes to sense the externalized image (the character)

¹Ibid., pp. 126-27.

as himself. In the second part of a Noh play the actor must again "transform" himself into another "image" (character) by undergoing the same process. In and through these transformations the actor becomes the "medium" through which the audience experiences the emotions or attitudes of the shite. This does not entail a form of identification on the part of the audience, rather the shite is himself a "mirror" in which the audience is able to experience a reflection of its own latent attitudes.

Loss of Self and Identification as a
Basis for Imitation in the Noh

The basis of the Noh actor's art lies in monomane variously translated as "imitation," "mimicry" or "role-playing." In the Fūshikaden, Zeami states that monomane "forms the fundamental basis" of the art of Noh.¹ The Noh actor undergoes a long period of training in which he learns the techniques of his craft which are grounded in the imitation of the various shite roles in the Noh plays. As training for these roles, Zeami urges the actor to study the comportment of ministers, generals and courtiers, as well as that of natural things such as flowers, birds, wind and the moon. However, when an actor proceeds to a higher stage of training, he should not be satisfied with the mere imitation of the outward appearance of a character--such as posture,

¹J. Thomas Rimer and Masakazu Yamazaki, trans. and eds., On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 10.

walk, dress and voice. He must penetrate the hon-i ("primary meaning" or "true intent")¹ of the object. The theory of monomane, as set forth by Zeami, contains the principle of "identification." In the East, the concept of identification is partly derived from Buddhism, and involves the observer's merging into or becoming one with the object of perception. When the Noh actor has reached this level of artistic development, he performs as if truly "possessed." In other words, he lacks the conscious will to imitate and has become completely identified with the thing imitated.

The Noh actor's art is predicated upon the loss of the habitual personality which interferes with his ability to achieve complete oneness with the hon-i of his role. Zeami states in the Kakyō, "'first truly become the thing you are performing' represents a principle that applies to every variety of Role Playing in sarugaku."² According to Buddhist philosophy, unless one become "empty" of all of the attitudes associated with the temporal self one cannot be filled with the Buddha nature or "true self." The essence of this experience is to become like a little child again. In the Fūshikaden Zeami states that the appearance of the child is the basis for yūgen or "beauty" in the Noh. In the

¹Benito Ortolani, "Zeami's Aesthetics of the Nō and Audience Participation," Educational Theatre Journal 24 (1972), p. 111.

²Rimer and Yamazaki, On the Art of the Nō Drama, p. 77.

child-like state (which is similar to trance) the limits of the body are loosed and the dualism of man and nature is breached.

For the Japanese, identification means becoming one with the Unconscious, both inner and outer. Unlike ritual trance which is primarily grounded in motor archetypes, the Buddhist Unconscious is a larger metaphysical concept, which encompasses the idea of a spiritual soul or "Buddha nature" which permeates all matter. The unconscious within the actor is a mirror of the larger Unconscious of the universe. The Noh actor strives for the cessation of the temporal personality and the assumption of the larger "true self." When the actor reaches the state of mushin, the Unconscious is realized. Mushin is "something identified with a state of ecstasy in which there is no sense of 'I am doing it.'"¹ The ultimate stage of imitation in the Noh actor's art is the attainment of the state of "non-imitation." In the art of Zen archery this state is achieved when "the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality."² At this stage the actor has entirely entered the thing he is imitating.

Zeami states in the Fūshikaden:

In the art of Role Playing [monomane], there is a level

¹D.T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism, ed. William Barrett (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956), p. 290.

²D.T. Suzuki, Introduction to Eugen Herrigel, Zen and the Art of Archery, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. vi.

at which imitation is no longer sought. When every technique of Role Playing is mastered and the actor has truly become the subject of his impersonation, then the reason for the desire to imitate can no longer exist.¹

Attitude and Posture as a Basis for
Role Playing in the Noh

Monomane in the Noh is based in the expression of the various character roles by means of posture, gesture and rhythm. The santai ("three roles") form the basis for the representation of character in the Noh. Zeami regarded the "woman," "old man," and "warrior" as basic personality types and all others as "applied styles which developed out of these according to the personality of the performer."² According to Yamazaki, the santai represent "the basic attitudes of man towards his world."

The old man represents the attitude of retiring from life, and the calm contemplation of it. The warrior shows an aggressive and vigorous attitude. The woman stands between the two, symbolizing an attitude of harmony with the world.³

The santai were shaped by three influences operating in the Ashikaga court during the time of Zeami: bushidō--"chivalry," a code of ethics and conduct of the samurai which are embodied in the "warrior" whose straight forward, practical, healthy and forceful qualities were representative

¹Rimer and Yamazaki, On the Art of the Nō Drama, p. 55.

²Richard McKinnon, "Zeami on the Art of Training," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 16 (1953), p. 219.

³Masakazu Yamazaki, "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity: The Artistic Theories of Zeami," in On the Art of the Nō Drama, pp. xlii-xliii.

of the rural plebeian; miyako--the elegant world of the Imperial court nobles in Kyoto, whose polished manners and refined grace are embodied in the role of the "woman;" and Zen Buddhism, the spiritual training in the form of meditation adopted by the samurai in the twelfth century, whose qualities are best exemplified in the role of "older person."¹

The Noh artist, "however, did not see attitudes of man on the spiritual plane alone but also regarded them as very concrete attitudes (postures) of the body."² While acquiring the external details of costuming and gesture is an important aspect of monomane, the actor's primary task is to adapt himself completely to the norms of posturing for each role. The base body posture of the santai is centered in the tsune-no-kamae or "standing position." The Noh actor's trunk, which is held in one piece and slightly inclined forward, acts as a platform and energy source for movements of the arms and legs. The back is lengthened to achieve a straight line by tucking in the chin; the knees are bent slightly; and the arms curve downward and a little forward of the body with the elbows lifted creating a fuller line for the large hanging sleeves of the kimono. Whether the actor is standing or sitting, the kamae must never

¹Carl Wolz, "The Spirit of Zen in Noh Dance," in Asian and Pacific Dance: Selected Papers from the 1975 CORD-SEM Conference, ed. Adrienne Kaeppler, Carl Wolz, and Judy Van Zile (New York: CORD, 1977), pp. 55-56.

²Yamazaki, "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity," p. xliii.

reveal any relaxation in any part of the body. "In other words, the actor must concentrate every part of his body and all his senses on the kamae in order to fully express the character he is playing."¹

The kamae for the santai are based on subtle variations in the "basic standing position" (tsune-no-kamae).

According to Zeami:

When performing the part of an old man, for example, as such a character will naturally have an aged posture. The actor must bend at the hips, walk in a frail fashion, and use small gestures when moving his hands. . . . When performing a woman's role, the actor should slightly bend the hips, hold his hands high, sustain the whole body in a graceful manner, feel a softness in his whole manner of being, and use his physique in a pliant manner.²

As in all aspects of corporeal expression in the Noh, the postures and gestures comprising a role should be subtly understated.

Effort as a Basis for Character Enactment in the Noh

The actor, according to Zeami, should not be concerned solely with the depiction of the external traits of a character role, but must penetrate its surface to discover its essential "spirit" (hon-i). The hon-i or "primary meaning" of the object of imitation, as mentioned above, is the central element in the actor's monomane of character in the Noh.

¹Yasuo Nakamura, Noh: The Classical Theatre, trans. Don Kenny (New York & Tokyo: Walker/Weatherhill, 1971, p. 228.

²Rimer and Yamazaki, On the Art of Nō Drama, p. 77.

Zeami was not advocating a thoroughly realistic and detailed form of imitation. It is clear from his notes on the representation of particular roles that the important thing was to grasp and convey the essential character or spirit of a role.¹

The hon-i or "spirit" of a role essentially refers to the "powers" it possesses in the form of Effort attitudes. Because many of the characters of the Noh are the figurative embodiment of natural phenomena (kami) they possess the "Efforts" or "powers" associated with these, which serve as metaphors for latent attitudes. Thus, the ultimate stage of identification should bring the actor into contact with the "characteristic Efforts" or energies which constitute the hon-i of a role.

"Asiatic art," according to Coomaraswamy, "is ideal in the mathematical sense; like Nature, not in appearance, but in operation."² Asian artists tend to perceive nature in terms of its "gestic" aspects, while Western artists tend to be concerned with the "formal" qualities of phenomena, i.e., its shape or structure. For example, a Westerner views a "knife" as a handle and a blade--placing generic emphasis on it. The Chinese, on the other hand, see the essential nature of a knife in terms of its "cutting quality" and that of a "willow tree" in terms of its "swaying suppleness."³ When Zeami exhorts his actors to capture the

¹P.G. O'Neill, Early Nō Drama (London: Lund Humphries, 1958), p. 140.

²Coomaraswamy, The Transformation of Nature in Art, p. 11.

³George Rowley, Principles of Chinese Painting (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 37.

hon-i of a character, he appears to be referring to the "Effort" qualities that animate its characteristic postures and gestures. Effort is an important element in character enactment in Mime:

The value of characterization through dancelike mime movements lies in the avoidance of the simple imitation of external movement peculiarities. Such imitation does not penetrate to the hidden recesses of man's inner effort. We need an authentic symbol of the inner vision to effect contact with the audience.¹

Rather than being concerned solely with the superficial external details of a character, the Noh performer primarily seeks to capture the characteristic "inner attitudes" of the object of imitation as expressed through a unique configuration of the four Effort factors of "time," "weight," "space," and "flow."

In the monomane of the santai (three roles) the actor must not only acquire the stylized formal aspects of the character--such as dress and carriage--but he must, more importantly, discover the "Effort attitude" which forms the heart of each role. The essential quality for the representation of the "woman" is "suppleness," for the "older person" the important element is "calm serenity," and for the "warrior" the basic quality is "forcefulness."² Zeami states in the Shikadō-sho:

The noble perfection of the dances of the gods derives from the mastery of the role of the old

¹Laban, Mastery of Movement, p. 20.

²McKinnon, "Zeami on the Art of Training," pp. 220-21.

man; beauty and elegance in the singing and gestures derive from the role of the woman; and vigor in the movements of the body and the feet derives from the role of the warrior.¹

While Effort is a key element in the basic "body attitudes" of the santai and the various applied styles, it is also the essential vehicle by which the character's "emotions" or "mental attitudes" are transmitted to the audience. Thus, when Zeami tells the actor to capture the hon-i of a role he means its base "body attitude" as well as the emotions which color and temper this attitude. His comments in the Fūshikaden on how to act a "frenzied" or "mad" person's role provide an insight into the importance of attitude expression, by means of Effort, as the fundamental object of monomane in the Noh.

The really difficult parts involve those characters whose thoughts have become confused because their minds have become crazed--a parent searching for a lost child, for example, a wife thrown over by her husband, or a husband who lives on after his wife. Even a relatively skillful shite may fail to make the distinction between them, and he will create his mad gestures in the same manner, so that no emotional response is engendered in those who watch him. In the case of characters of this sort, the actor must have as his intention the manifestation of the precise feelings that can indicate the character's emotional disturbance, and make them the core of his Flower; then, if he feigns madness with all the skill he has at his command, there will certainly be many arresting elements in his performance. If an actor possesses this kind of skill, and if he can make his spectators weep, his art will represent the highest attainment possible.²

¹Ryusaku Tsunoda, William T. Barry, and Donale Keene, eds. and trans., Sources of Japanese Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 298.

²Zeami, On the Art of the Nō Drama, p. 13.

The "emotional disturbance" is the primary psychic attitude of the character which constitutes the core of its personality. If the performer can capture the essential "mental tensions" of the mad person's disturbance the muscular configuration of his postural tonus and his gestures will be subtly altered by the Efforts associated with this mental attitude. When the actor becomes "one" with the dynamic mental attitude of the character of the mad person the "primary cause" of the insanity is revealed to the hearts and minds of the spectators.

The Mask and Attitude Expression in the Noh

The Noh mask is a microcosmic condensation of the essential "energies" of a universal character type--such as the "old man," "young woman," or "demon." Virtually all the shite characters in the Noh wear masks, while the waki are maskless. In those few plays in which the shite performs without a mask his face is (according to tradition) "mask-like." The waki too must maintain this mask-like aspect. The paradox here is that the mask-like face is made to live while the unadorned face is kept in a mask-like rigidity. This creates the psychological impression of the juxtaposition of the real and the not real--the living and the dead, which derives from the phenomenon of spirit possession comprising the subject matter of many of the Noh plays.

As previously mentioned, the actor's "transformation" into a role is effected by the assumption of a mask. While the transformation of the appearance of the Noh

actor is an important function of the mask--making that which was present (the actor) appear absent and the phenomenon imitated appear present; the primary function of the mask is to bring about a transformation in the consciousness of the actor. The Noh mask is the embodiment of the essential "spirit" (hon-i) of a character and when the "whole heart and soul of the actor" is "concentrated on the mask" he feels his entire body imbued with its emotional and spiritual qualities.¹ Thus, the facial mask assists the actor in becoming, himself, the "mask" of character.

While the Noh masks emblemize the particular age, sex, and social status of the different characters, they are, more importantly, "the impersonal expression of a personal emotion."² For example, the mask used for the madwoman play Hyakuman depicts the grief-stricken face of a mother who has become slightly deranged in the search for her lost child; while the "Old Man's" mask depicts "calm serenity." Moreover, the masks are carved in such a way that the expression appears to change based upon the movements of the actor. They can be made to express sadness, grief, joy, contemplation, as well as a variety of other emotions. Just as the various shite (main characters) in the Noh represent the figurative embodiment of the "powers" of

¹Nakamura, Noh, The Classical Theatre, p. 161.

²Makoto Ueda, Zeami, Bashō, Yeats, Pound (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), p. 29.

natural phenomenon, the terminology for mask choreography are metaphors which link an emotion with a natural phenomenon. Omote o kumorasu, which means "to shade the face" by tilting the mask down and putting it in shadow, expresses "sadness."¹ Omote o terasu, which means "to make shine" by tilting the mask up and catching the light, expresses "joy."² Omote o shioru, which means "to wilt or fade," indicates the attitude of "crying."³

The Actor's Will in the Noh and the
Concept of the Marionette

According to Komparu, when the actor undergoes the process of transformation by looking through the tiny eye holes of the mask at his image in the mirror "a kind of willpower is born."⁴ This "will," which is most directly expressed through the Noh mime-dance, is analogous to the shamanic ability of controlling the "spirits" (the figurative embodiments of latent attitudes which have surfaced from the unconscious and taken possession of the body). The Noh performer, while totally identified with his role, must be able to stand at a distance from himself in order to judge the effects of his performance on the audience. Zeami writes in the Kakyō:

To see the figure (of an actor) from the audience is

¹Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 229. ²Ibid.

³Nakamura, Noh, The Classical Theatre, p. 161.

⁴Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 7.

a view detached from the self. This being so, then to see it with one's own eyes is a "self view." This is not a detached view. To see with a detached view is to see as if of one mind with the audience. When this happens, the self is enabled to perceive its own figure.¹

The Noh actor appears to be able to "double his consciousness." While he is fully identified with his role, he is able to simultaneously maintain the necessary objectivity to observe his performance from the vantage point of the audience ("detached view"). This complex creative process is embodied in the concept of kokoro, which briefly defined, encompasses:

such things as feeling and emotion, soul and spirit, mind and the objective knowing process, consciousness and self, intent and will, a pure and non-conscious mind, and a spiritual state representing the deepest levels of the total self.²

The basic elements comprising kokoro appear to be the unconscious mind of the performer, with its feelings and emotions which are expressed through a spontaneous state of mushin or ecstasy--in which the actor is unaware that he is acting; and a rational or conscious mind, "which is aware of what and how the styles and effects are produced, but which keeps such secrets to itself and does not let this consciousness be reflected externally on the stage."³

The quality of "control" which enables the actor to project his inner attitudes through the subtly animated

¹Zeami, quoted in Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 16.

²Richard Pilgrim, "Some Aspects of kokoro in Zeami," Monumenta Nipponica 24 (1969): 394.

³Ibid., p. 396.

form of his body--as though it were being moved by a superior force--reveals the influence of the Zen Buddhist concept of "Big mind" which possesses concentration, "will" and the ability to control all of the spiritual, mental and physical "powers" of artistic expression. Kokoro, which is essentially "the one mind linking all powers," has been compared by Zeami to the "strings" of a marionette:

Life and death, past and present--
 Marionettes on a toy stage.
 When the strings are broken,
 Behold the broken pieces.¹

In the Noh, the gestural enactment of the actor is based upon a precise and stylized technique bound up with the expression of attitudes (powers). What holds the elements of the performance together is the mind, which must not be disclosed to the audience. If the audience senses that the performer is "doing it," it is just as if the marionette's strings are visible. It is this perception which destroys the magic and beauty of the performance.

The secret of unifying the body and spirit lies in controlling the seika-no-itten, the single spot in the lower abdomen. The gathering of energy at this spot, which is at or close to the center of the weight of the body, reinforces the pull of gravity and appears to give the body

¹Zeami, quoted in Tsunoda et al., Sources of Japanese Tradition, p. 291.

more weight. The importance of seika-no-itten in the Noh appears to have been influenced by the Zen Buddhist concept of hara, the point below the navel which is considered to be the focal point of meditation. It is the source of breath and energy and is, moreover, the locus of both the "Big Mind" and the emptiness or "mindlessness" associated with the larger Unconscious. The actor's performance in the Noh originates in the energy (ki) that is gathered in the seika-no-itten, which he imagines as lines of force emanating from this spot into all directions in space. The projection of spiritual power from the center of the performer's body creates the impression that he is an animated marionette or statue which is moved by an unseen force.

The visual style of Noh performance is highly sculptural and is partly the result of the external transformation of the actor's body into a "mask" of character through the assumption of the Noh mask and costume. However, it is even more so the product of the limited use of posturally-based gesture. A certain sculptor has said:

The Nō has the elements of sculpture more than any other histrionic art. I even feel as if the Nō were an extension of sculpture . . . The Nō studies how one can move with a minimum of movement . . .¹

The "control" of the energy which is situated in the seika-no-itten is closely bound up with "posture." As in

¹Kōtarō Takayama, quoted in Ueda, Zeami, p. 28.

Zen meditation posture in which the spinal column is kept erect and immovable above the hara, the Noh actor's spine in the basic kamae (standing position) is held in one unit and appears to be "transported" by the slightly bent legs. The lack of free play and divisions in the spine creates the impression that the torso is a wooden sculpture which is carried through space; while movements of the limbs and head, which are effected from the fixed base of the torso, seem to be controlled by invisible strings.

Immobility As a Basis for Gesture in the Noh

The Noh, which is primarily based in the portrayal of the attitudes (emotions) of a single character (shite), is the purest expression in dramatic art of "movement held up from going into action" (which forms the physiological basis of "posture"). Strong emotion in the Noh brings about immobility--characterized by the actor's maintenance of a frozen "pose"--during which he projects the underlying "tensions" associated with the attitude outwards towards the audience. The i-guse, or seated kuse (the kuse, which is often the emotional high point of a play, is a narrative song-poem that the shite usually dances), is performed with the shite sitting immobile at the center of the stage. While to the uninitiated there appears to be nothing happening during these moments of "no-action," the actor is in actuality "dancing" from the depths of his heart and mind. The spiritual power which he projects through his

crystallized posture is a product of kokoro--single-minded "will"--which not only conveys the emotions of the shite but the underlying spiritual strength of the performer as well.

While the i-guse represents a prolonged moment of immobility, it provides insight into the essential nature of gesture in the Noh. According to Komparu, "the times of action in Noh exist for the sake of the times of stillness."¹ Movement in Noh evolves out of the immobility of a frozen postural form and ends in the stillness of another form or sculptural pose. It is the moments of "no-action," when the performer is animating his held position with all of the spiritual strength that he can muster that the audience, according to Zeami, "finds the most enjoyable."²

All movement in the Noh consists of kata which are codified movement "patterns" or a "form in time or in space."³ The Noh actor performing one of the character roles uses kata to express the inner mind of the character in an outward and visible form. The word kata derives from kami (god) and ta (paddy or hand), which indicates that the kata are formal patterns which derive from possession

¹Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 216.

²Zeami, quoted in Tsunoda et al, Sources of Japanese Tradition, p. 291.

³Wolz, "The Spirit of Zen in Noh Dance," p. 56.

rituals and agricultural rites.¹ There are more than two hundred kata used in the Noh today, however, most Noh plays are made up of about thirty basic kata which are combined and repeated within a regular structure. While the kata are the basis of all movement in the Noh--with every situation having its prescribed position, posture, gesture or action--the Noh shimai (mime-dances), which present a series of kata linked together, are the primary vehicles for conveying the deeply-felt attitudes of the shite.

In theory each kata consists of a kamae "stance" or "posture" and a hakobi "progression" which together form the basic unit of monomane or "mimicry" in the Noh. Komparu states that "the stance and carriage" which comprise the kata "are the bases not of movement but of the acquisition of the technique of nonmovement."² The kamae is the basic standing position, which provides a platform for the unfolding of gesture. The torso is held as a unit and transported through space by the legs. The basic form of the kamae is altered by the angle it presents to the audience and by the changing line of the arms with their long kimono sleeves which move about the fixed base of the trunk. Gestures in the Noh unfold from the immobile platform of the basic kneeling or standing kamae. Evolving

¹Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 221.

²Ibid., p. 216.

from stillness, gesture ends in the stillness of a held postural form. The "inner tensions" of the shite, resulting from the "withholding" and "struggle" of emotion for articulation, contributes to gesture which is high in the Effort quality of "bound flow." Komparu states, "The basis of Noh dance lies in stopping each movement just at the moment when the muscles are tensed."¹ It is in the moments of "no-action" when the gesture has become totally "bound" or frozen that the emotional high point of the kata is most truly expressed.

The hakobi, according to Zeami, expresses "silence in action"² . . . "when the performer is standing still, the spirit is in action; when he is walking, the body is still."³ The hakobi, or manner of walking, is the most characteristic movement in the Noh. The walk appears to be partially derived from the slow, circular turning motions made by the miko in primitive kagura as she moved around an altar striving to become possessed. The forward position is usually dominant and the actor looks as though he is being drawn forward by some invisible force. With a slight lean forward and no body rotation, there is a strong frontal focus reminiscent of Zen meditation trance. The feet appear to "glide" across the smooth polished wooden surface of the stage, a motion which,

¹Ibid.

²Zeami, quoted in Nakamura, Noh: The Classical Theatre, p. 228.

³Wolz, "The Spirit of Zen in Noh-Dance," p. 61.

according to E.T. Kirby, recalls the movement of "ghosts" who in Japanese tradition have no feet.¹ In contrast to the moments of "no-action" where the emotion of the character and the inner spiritual strength of the actor are projected through the energies animating a held posture, the hakobi serves to express the modulations of the inner mental state of the performer through movement of the legs and feet during which the torso maintains its immobility. "A few halting steps backwards indicate disappointment, and two or three rapid steps forward show excitement."²

The Nature of the Mime Phrase (Kata) in the Noh

The kata, which are the primary vehicles for expressing the attitudes of the shite, were originally derived from the mimesis of concrete phenomena that formed an important element of sarugaku and other performance arts contemporary with the Noh. Refined by Zeami within the context of the Noh, the kata are, for the most part, abstract and symbolic renditions of mimetic gesture.

There are three types of kata: realistic (descriptive), symbolic, or abstract.³ The realistic kata, which are patterns possessing concrete significance, are the most common in the Noh. While they consist of the

¹E. T. Kirby, "The Origins of Nō Drama," Educational Theatre Journal 25 (1973): 275.

²Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 221.

³Ibid., p. 217.

portrayal of the characteristic traits of phenomena, they are highly refined and "essentialized" in form and are often employed symbolically. Realistic kata which are purely mimetic include:

to scoop salt water (shio o kumu): to use special buckets for scooping up seawater for salt; to jump into the bell (kane ni tobikomu); to actually jump into the giant bell property as it falls; to slash with a halberd (naginata de kiru); to brandish a life-size halberd; to thrust with sword (katana de sasuru); to brandish a life-size sword; and to read a book (sōshi o yomu): to hold a book or scroll in the hands.¹

Symbolic kata include:

to droop (shiori): signifies weeping. One hand . . . or both hands . . . are raised slowly to the eyes and then lowered again; to use the mask (omote o tsakau): to turn the face left and then right, indicating searching or the blowing wind. . . . to view the moon (tsuki no ōgi): indicates the moon. The dancer brings the open fan (in the right hand) to the left shoulder and gazes up to the right.²

Abstract kata appear to have no inherent meaning and are included in the Noh mime-dance for their refined beauty as well as choreographic elements, to mark the beginning and end of pieces (sayū), and to provide transitions as well as percussive punctuation by means of foot stamps (ashibyoshi). While it is difficult to trace their origin, the abstract kata are, in all probability, derived from ritual mimetic gesture for exorcism or curing, as well as from the abstract and architectural movements of bugaku. While abstract kata do not have specific denotata, they appear to take on meaning in relation to the kata which

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 217-18.

precede and follow them, as well as in association with the words in sections of the chanted text. They express the inner attitudes of the shite through a kind of mobile geometry, which is animated by inner tensions or Efforts as well as by the kokoro or spiritual control of the performer.

The mimesis of the hon-i (primary meaning) of a character, action or emotion in the Noh is based in what Ortolani terms "the principle of essentialization," which consists of the suppression of individual and non-essential details.¹ The goal of Noh is to express the highest ideals with the simplest means. It does this through the "pose" and the limited use of posturally-based gesture. All intense emotional and spiritual energy leads to immobility. In the Noh, the segmentary and limited movement patterns seek to translate this inner energy into an outer and visible form. However, it is in the moments of silence between the movements and in the tensions leading up to the "freezing" of gesture, that the true essence of the Noh lies. Zeami states in the Kakyō:

After you have polished and perfected what you have learned, you should perform by using all the powers of your mind and heart while moving your body with the greatest possible economy. This is true not only in dance but also in all the movements executed during the time one is on stage. The body should at all times be working much less than the heart and mind. The body performs the piece itself while the true substance of the play

¹Ortolani, "Zeami's Aesthetics of the Nō and Audience Participation," p. 111.

is expressed from the inner depths of the heart and mind. In this way you will be able to hold the interest of your audience.¹

The Noh Mime-dance and Poetry

Scholars believe that Japanese poetry, which forms the basis of the Noh text, began in the shaman's recitation of his spiritual voyage. Nakayama cites the miko's trance utterances as being "the womb of literature."² And recent studies made by Frank Hoff indicate:

It is now possible to view the relation of poetry, that is, song, to significant movement (fuzei, to use Zeami's term), as part of a longer continuity in Japan which extends back to song for shaman-related dance.³

In the Noh, the kata of the Mime-dance serve as semantic equivalents to meanings in the text. As in shamanic enactment, they appear to proceed from and accompany the verbal recitation.

Zeami considered the "Two Mediums"--dancing and singing--to be the basis for actor training in the Noh. The dance, according to Zeami, conveys the meaning of the song chanted by the shite and chorus in an outward and visible form. In the Fūshikaden, he states:

The musical element in Nō appeals to the ear and the

¹Zeami, quoted in Nakamura, Noh: The Classical Theatre, p. 229.

²Nakayama Tarō, quoted in Blacker, The Catalpa Bow, pp. 293-94.

³Frank Hoff, "Dance to Song in Japan," Dance Research Journal of CORD 9/1 (Fall/Winter 1976-77): 7.

posturing appeals to the eye of the audience. Everything in Nō has its own style, based upon the meaning of the words, for it is language by which the profound meaning is conveyed. Song is the substance of Nō and elegant carriage is its expression.¹

As the author of many Noh plays, Zeami offers his advice to other playwrights on how to enable the actor to "derive the action naturally from the singing."² He suggests that the playwright "write down the singing passages in his text while always bearing in mind the action that accompanies them."³ The result is that realistic and symbolic kata tend to be postural and gestural "signs" for the images in the text. According to Zeami:

The shite has to devise his movement according to the meaning of the words. For instance, at the phrase "to look at," he must see something; for "to point to" or "to draw back" he has to stretch his arm or draw it back, for "to listen to" he must give his ear to some sound [assume the attitude of listening], and so on.⁴

The more numerous abstract kata, which form the substance of long instrumental dances and have no fixed meaning, appear to take on poetic significance through juxtaposition with images in the chanted text.

The relation between the kata and the text, according to Frank Hoff, seems to be one of "equivalence." The kata can be looked upon as "metaphors" for certain verbal meanings in the chanted poem, "in the Nō . . . movement is not exclusively mimetic, not literal, directly illustrative of

¹Zeami, Kadensho, p. 72

²Ibid., p. 73. ³Ibid., p. 72. ⁴Ibid., p. 48.

the text. Rather it is suggestive."¹ In the words of Donald Keene:

The movements of the dance are unassertive but they express and epitomize the texts, not by crude miming . . . but by evoking the ultimate meaning, the 'dignity' of the work.²

The Noh texts are essentially poetic language rich in images and allusions, whose purpose is the lyrical evocation of the most deeply-felt attitudes (thoughts and emotions) of the shite. Poetic images in the Noh are characterized by the density of their symbolism--a word or phrase may contain layer upon layer of meaning. For example, the Japanese word matsu ("pine tree") is a metaphor which, while denoting a specific tree, encompasses the attitudes of "to pine away," or "longing." According to Ueda, the pine tree carries the additional overtones of "permanence," "constancy in love," and the "eternal God who rules both man and the cosmos."³ Thus the pine tree condenses cosmic, human and religious levels of meaning into one poetic image. Similarly, the kata rarely function in a purely denotative capacity, rather then tend to serve as metaphors which convey the underlying emotional and spiritual attitudes of the central character. For example, in the

¹Hoff, "Dance to Song in Japan," p. 1.

²Donald Keene, NŌ, The Classical Theatre of Japan (Tokyo and Palo Alto: Kodansha, 1973), p. 79.

³Ueda, Zeami, pp. 27-28.

Sarugaku dangi Zeami states:

It is painful to see an actor who speaks the line "I feel ashamed to see the moon" and then hides his face with his open fan while speaking to the actor facing him, without looking at the moon, all the while stooping and crouching in a realistic manner. Rather, at the words "see the moon," the actor should lift up his open fan high, so as to reveal the fact that his shame concerning the moon forms the basis of his gesture.¹

This kata, if done correctly, combines into one gesture: the moon (which is portrayed by the fan); the action of indicating the moon (through the lifting of the fan); and the action of hiding from the moon (in which the fan serves a double function of shielding the shite from the moon). While conveying these various meanings in a complex symbolic gesture, the kata serves primarily to convey the underlying emotion of "shame."

Noh drama is basically tragedy. It is a pure expression in dramatic art of Aristotle's conception of mimesis which, according to Butcher, is the reproduction of "an inward process, a psychical energy working outwards."² The mime-dance is the direct expression of "energy" which represents the inner tensions characterizing an attitude. While the kata convey the meaning of the text through formal postures and gestures, they derive their emotional significance from the inner Efforts which animate these forms. Moreover, it appears that the Efforts contained in postures and gestures mirror the elements of "diction" which underlie

¹Rimer and Yamazaki, On the Art of the Nō Drama, p. 185.

²See above p. 41, n. 1.

the "non-verbal" elements of the chant.

The Tripartite Structure of the Noh Phrase

According to Zeami the actor's first task in mono-mane or "mimicry" is to grasp a character role in terms of its underlying attitude and to convey this externally through posture. Equally important, he must also discover the essential "rhythm" of the attitudes expressed through the character's gesture and convey these through the rhythmic structure of jo-ha-kyū. According to Yamazaki, the posture represents the "spacial support of acting," and the "rhythm of action" embodied in the jo-ha-kyū the "chronological axis:"¹

To Zeami, a beautiful style meant nothing other than the beautiful attitude (posture) for action and the ideal rhythm that all actions should possess.²

Jo-ha-kyū, which forms the structural principle of all the elements of the Noh, is originally derived from gagaku and meant a "three-part piece played at a gradually increasing tempo."³ Zeami viewed jo-ha-kyū as the rhythm of nature innate in all things on earth, living or lifeless.⁴ The Noh is based on an animistic mode of perception which derives from the mimesis of the "gestic" or "operational"

¹Yamazaki, "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity," p. xliv.

²Ibid., p. xlv.

³Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 24-5.

⁴Chifumi Shimazaki, The Noh, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Hinoki Shoten, 1972), I:42.

aspects of nature. The jo-ha-kyū is similar to the rhythmical structure of the tripartite mimeme (Agent/Agisant/Agi) which, according to Marcel Jousse, forms the basic unit of all actions in the phenomenal world.¹ Ueda states:

As the universe gives each object of nature a rhythm of life, so does the artist pour life into his work through the rhythm of nature. It follows that the language of the Nō must be rhythmical, too; it must be poetry.²

The Noh plays take place against an imaginary backdrop of natural surroundings. The texts and songs are interwoven with lines describing, contemplating or enjoying nature, and the attitudes of the characters are frequently expressed by means of poetic metaphors based in natural imagery.

Like the spoken phrase or poetic image, the structure of the kata is tripartite. Jo means "beginning," ha means development in time and space or "breaking", and kyū means "quick."³ Zeami states, "The pattern of jo-ha-kyū is visible even in one gesture in a dance, or in the echo of one step."⁴ For example, in the kata of "standing," jo would be the preparation for movement consisting of the inner mobilization of muscles and energy, as well as a shift of balance or weight. Komparu suggests that jo refers to

¹See above p. 58.

²Makoto Ueda, Literary and Art Theories in Japan (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1967), p. 70.

³Shimazaki, The Noh, I:42.

⁴Rimer and Yamazaki, On the Art of the Nō Drama, p. 138.

"position" and is thus a spatial element.¹ Ha consists of the destruction" or "breaking" of this postural form through a gesture which epitomizes the action of the kata. In the kata of standing this would involve the lifting of the knee off the floor through a visible shift of weight to the rear and the upward progression to the standing position. The kyū is a temporal element characterized by "quickness" or the increasing tempo of movement leading up to the posture or held pose which summarizes the essence of the kata. In the kata of standing, the left foot is brought quickly to the side of the right foot as a "punctuation" while the arms simultaneously assume their final position.

The relationship between kata and the images of the Noh text can be seen in Hyakuman, which depicts a grief-stricken mother's search for her lost child. It is one of the oldest extant Noh plays and thus, according to Nakamura "the mime element in it is strong":

Each kata (movement pattern) of the shite is a movement which illustrates the lyrics of the utai. This is especially true of the movement patterns in the . . . kuruma no dan and sasa no dan.²

The karuma no dan is literally "the cart pulling scene," which reveals Hyakuman's suffering heart and deranged mind. The cart image and related verbs of "pulling" in the utai

¹Komparu, The Noh Theatre, p. 25.

²Nakamura, Noh: The Classical Theatre, pp. 225-26.

"chanted verse" are unifying metaphors which are used throughout both dan ("scenes") to symbolize the burden of sorrow carried by Hyakuman. The most clearly mimetic gesture which is both realistic and symbolic is the kata of "cart pulling" in which the shite places the bamboo branch she is carrying in her left hand, turns towards the left and mimes pulling a cart. This kata illustrates the following verses of the utai:

Shite: I tug at my cart, its burden as of seven carriages.

Chorus: Never yielding to exhaustion.

Shite: I pull its unbearable weight.

The sasa no dan (literally, "the bamboo branch scene") depicts Hyakuman's love for her lost child. In this scene, the shite mimes the choral passage, "I am bound to my love from past to present and beyond into the future, yoked like an oxen to a cart," by placing the bamboo branch around her neck and walking a little towards the left and right. This is followed by the kata of "cart pulling" to the lines, "(chorus) destined to drag my burden/(shite) dragging this cart."

Many of the abstract kata, which appear to have no meaning when viewed separately from the text seem to take on significance in relation to such lines as, "I go towards the West," (sayū) and "As weeds in wild disarray" (hiraki). There are also several indicative gestures

as when the shite points with her branch on the lines
 "a wondrous sight," and to her eboshi (hat) on the lines
 "she wears the ancient eboshi."

Summary

The Noh mime-dance is a pure example in dramatic art of movement held up from going into action. The kata are figurations of mental tensions so profound and intense, that they cause an immobilization of the body. They are not so much a series of movements as they are tableaux vivants, which represent the inward struggle of attitudes for expression. The shite appears to be poised between two worlds or two moments of time--seeking to move forward but pulled by the past--a dynamic principle which is conveyed by opposing movement forces which hold the body in check. When the shite finally breaks forth into movement, its gestures appear to "engrave" the surrounding space--tracing through its "bound" movements a portrait of its inner landscape of thought and emotion. Gesture in the Noh begins from immobility and ends in the immobility of a crystallized posture in which the gesture is frozen at its point of greatest emotional intensity.

The Noh mime-dance is closely connected to ritual. It, therefore, provides evidence of a continuity in creative process and performance elements between ritual and post-ritual forms of Mime. The creative process of the Noh actor is analogous to that of the possessed shaman.

The actor seeks a state of dissociation comparable to the trance in which he strives to bypass the habitual attitudes that comprise his ego in order to become "identified" with a character image latent within himself. He conveys the essential attitudes of the character both through the assumption of its characteristic posture and Efforts as well as through gestural images (kata) which serve as metaphors for meanings contained in the accompanying text. Like the shaman, he possesses the ability to "double his consciousness"--that is, he performs from a state of "unknowing" in which his performance seems to flow effortless from the realms of the subconscious; yet, he is able to remain aware and in control of his body-instrument in order to create the desired effect on his audience. This process contributes to the aesthetics of the marionette, in which the Noh actor appears to be a piece of sculpture animated by an external force (latent attitudes); yet his bodily movements are carefully regulated by his controlling mind and will (kokoro), which are analogous to the "strings" manipulated by a marionettist.

Like the formalized gestural languages of ritual, the Noh mime-dance is made up of conventional signs (kata) which function as metaphorical equivalents for images in the accompanying text. The verbal and gestural language of the Noh is closely patterned on the rhythm of nature that underlies all phenomena. As in the mimeme of agent--acting upon--another agent which forms the nucleus of all

action in the material world, the Noh kata is a rhythmical tripartite entity consisting of pose--progression--pose. While the kata were originally purely "mimetic" signs which denoted concrete phenomena within the realm of the viewer's experience, they were refined, abstracted and stylized by Zeami who sought to reduce their mimetic content. The reduction of concrete gesture to its barest traits of line and dynamism in order to create a stylized, symbolic and suggestive language which conveys the inner world of a character or the performer, is comparable to trends among many of today's Mime performers.

CHAPTER FIVE

ROMAN PANTOMIME

Origin of Pantomime

Pantomimus or "Pantomime" was "the art of interpretive dancing."¹ Panto meant "all" and mimus meant "to imitate;" thus, the term pantomimus meant the art of imitating everything.² The pantomimes or performers of this genre were also referred to as fabulae saltatores or saltatores ("dancers").³ Pantomime appears to have differed from Mime performances in that one individual took a variety of roles in a single play. The performer was probably assisted either by an actor or chorus who sang the accompanying text (canticum) of the drama while the pantomime acted out the corresponding action.

The Roman Pantomime was the precursor of classical ballet which, likewise, possessed a codified language of mimetic postures and gestures which were used either to

¹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 131. Note: Pantomime, with a capital P, will indicate the performance genre and pantomime, with a lower case p, will indicate the performer.

²De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Theatrale: Recherches sur l'origin, les progres, & les effets de la pantomime chez les anciens (Paris: Chez Barrois l'ainé, 1790), Note vi.

³Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 131.

translate the meanings of a sung text or as dialogue between two dancers. It was also the prototype of the largely silent Pantomime genres of the nineteenth century, such as the pantomime blanche, in which the performer attempted to "tell a story" by means of a language of codified postures, gestures, facial expressions and hand signs which were used as a substitute for spoken text and dialogue.

The art of interpretive dancing in Greece was referred to as orchesis or cheironomia ("rule of the hand").¹ Aristotle's definition of the "dance" as the portrayal of characters, actions and passions by means of rhythm and attitude, is basically a definition of pantomime.² According to De l'Aulnaye:

Pantomimic imitation is the foundation and the essential object of Dance. . . . It is Pantomime which animates and vivifies dance just to the smallest gesture of the performer. Without it, the Dance would be nothing but a series of inexpressive movements and arbitrary steps, little able to move a sensitive spectator.³

Ancient Greek and Roman dances were highly mimetic in nature, and were frequently accompanied by a spoken or sung text, which was "translated" by the stylized and codified gesture language of the performer. While the Roman Pantomime was basically "The Mime of the Dancer," it also contained elements of "The Mime of the Speaker," "The Mime

¹De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 19.

²Kathleen Sorley Walker, Eyes on Mime (New York: The John Day Co., 1969), p. 44.

³De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 2.

of the Actor," and "The Mime of the Mime."¹

While most classical Roman authorities concede that Pantomime was in existence well before its appearance in Rome, many credit Livius Andronicus with establishing it as a popular performance genre. A native of Greece and a freed slave, Livius Andronicus was a well-known playwright and actor in Rome. In 240 B.C., as the story goes, while performing his first complete dramatic work in verse before an enthusiastic audience, he lost his voice whereupon he called upon a young slave to declaim the lines of the text while he acted it out in Pantomime. Historians state that his performance was even more animated than before, because he was no longer forced to divide himself between gestures and words. The performance met with instant success and resulted in the birth of the Roman genre of Pantomime.

At first, the Pantomime was primarily performed by young people in the streets of Rome. Later it was used as an *entra'act* in comedy where, to the accompaniment of a flute, an actor would mime the scene which was to follow. This type of performance was similar to that of the Ethologues who performed before Greek tragedies.¹ The Pantomimic interludes soon met with even more success than the Comedies themselves and quickly separated from them to become an important genre in their own right. At the

¹See above, p. 9, for a more detailed discussion.

²Brockett, A History of the Theatre, p. 43.

height of the Empire there were more than six thousand pantomimes throughout the Roman world and the performances of the best of these outshone all other forms of theatrical entertainment in popularity.

The Pantomime reached a high point under the reign of Augustus (63 B.C. - 14 A.D.) in the performances of three famous pantomimes: Pylades, his student Hylas, and Bathyllus; who are credited with having introduced the fuller pantomimic display of the "ballet opera."¹ Pylades was a freed Sicilian slave of Augustus who performed in grave and serious scenes primarily derived from Tragedy. Bathyllus was a freed slave and native of Alexandria who excelled in the performance of comic pieces. These two went into management together in Rome about 22 B.C., and Pantomime flourished as a result. But jealousy and rivalry set in, with supporters taking sides and fighting in the streets, so their partnership soon dissolved. Hylas, a student of Pylades, came to rival his teacher in fame. These pantomimes were experts at portraying entire tragedies, comedies and satyr plays in "solo" performances. Accompanied only by an actor who sang the text (canticum), a flute and percussion instruments, costumes and masks, they depicted in succession all of the characters and their actions and emotions which made up the story.

¹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 133.

Pantomime and the Gestural
Enactment of Myth

"True myth may be defined as the reduction to narrative short hand of ritual mime performed in public festivals."¹

Unlike Mime, whose themes encompassed parodies of myth, or comic and often obscene sketches of everyday life, the Pantomime tended to be more serious in tone. Its subject matter embraced three genres of drama which were primarily based on the mythology of gods and heros: Tragedy, Comedy, and Satyr plays. Lucian, in his essay "On Pantomime" (Saltatio) lists an imposing number of Pantomimes deriving from mythic subject matter still performed in the second century A.D.² Bathyllus was known for his performance of "Jupiter and Leda," Pylades performed such subjects as the "angry Hercules," "the loves of Jupiter and Apollo," "the feats of Ajax, Prometheus and Hector," and "the judgement of Paris;" while Hylas excelled in portraying Oedipus.³

The fact that pantomimic portrayals of myth came to outrival the Roman drama (which was also primarily based in myth) in popularity suggests that the corporeal enactment of myth was a more direct and immediate

¹Graves, The Greek Myths, I:10.

²Lucian Saltatio, Loeb Classical Library, pp. 249-65.

³De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 80.

expression of the gestural underpinnings which gave birth to these stories. Many authorities believe that myth grew out of ritual pantomimic dances and captures in its verbal metaphors the "gestic" elements of these performances. Accounts of pantomimic performances indicate that spectators found them to be more animated and vital than the performances by dramatic actors of similar works, where gesture was subordinated to the text; and it is possible to conclude that Pantomime may have offered a more vital expression of the essential attitudes contained in these myths.

Pantomime and the Expression of Images

The corporeal expression of the Pantomime performer was essentially a "translation" of the verbal images of the chanted or sung text (canticum). Unfortunately, there are few extant classical sources on the nature of the pantomime's creative process or the style of his performance other than Lucian's Saltatio; which, at best, offers only a glimpse into these areas. According to Lucian, the pantomime must not only be possessed of a highly disciplined instrument, but must have an excellent "mind" and "memory."

The dancer [pantomime] must know "what is, and what shall be, and was of old," so thoroughly that nothing will escape him, but his memory of it all will be prompt prompt. To be sure, it professes in the main to be a science of imitation and portrayal, of revealing what is in the mind and making intelligible what is obscure.¹

It appears that the pantomime did more than merely

¹Lucian Saltatio, p. 247.

translate the words of the canticum, rather he attempted to find gestural metaphors which served to express the deeper meanings in the text. The personal choice of gestural images by the performer essentially displayed his "mind" to the audience and revealed the depths of his artistry. An example of the importance of image selection can be seen in an account of Hylas' and Pylades' differing interpretations of the words "the great Agamemnon." When Hylas performed these lines during a Pantomime performance with the gestures of a man who measures another greater than himself, Pylades, who was present, stood up and cried, "You make him tall, but not great."¹ When the spectators obliged Pylades to perform the same piece, he performed these lines by representing Agamemnon as plunged into a profound meditation. Whereas, Hylas merely translated the words of the text with descriptive gesture, Pylades presented a symbolic image of a profound attitude characterizing Agamemnon. Pylades felt that this attitude better designated the monarch, who was constantly occupied with important functions.

The pantomime, according to Lucian, must also be possessed of a prodigious "memory."² The chanted cantica were essentially second rate imitations of Greek drama and it remained for the Pantomime performer to enrich these

¹De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 65.

²Lucian Saltatio, p. 277.

texts with gestural images derived from his own storehouse of knowledge on mythology. Pylades, in the above account, gives an indication of the importance of memory in enriching artistic performance and adding depth to the meanings in the text. The best pantomimes appear to have been those who were able to discover corresponding gestures that gave unique nuances and insight into the images of the canticum.

Identification and Transformation in Roman Pantomime

Lucian suggests that the pantomime became "identified" with his mental imagery. According to him, Proteus, the famous mythological pantomime and prototype of the Roman pantomime, "became what he imitated."¹ Identification with phenomena manifested itself in the "transformation" of the performer into the thing enacted. Proteus was "able to shape himself and change himself into anything:"

He could imitate even the liquidity of water and the sharpness of fire in the liveliness of his movements; yes, the fierceness of a lion, the rage of a leopard, the quivering of a tree, and in a word whatever he wished. Now just that thing is characteristic of dancers [pantomimes] today, who certainly may be seen changing swiftly at the cue and imitating Proteus himself.²

If, as Lucian suggests, the Roman pantomime's performance was analogous to that of Proteus', it would appear that his imitation of the characteristic traits of phenomena primarily involved identification with its "gestic"

¹Lucian Saltatio, p. 233.

²Ibid.

traits--the underlying Efforts contained in its dynamic gestures and formal shape. The image of the "quivering tree" is similar to the "characteristic gesture" of the tree, which Marcel Jousse states is perceived by archaic man in terms of its "swaying suppleness."¹ The "liquidity of water" might have been portrayed by the Roman pantomime with an undulation of the body--a movement animated by the Effort qualities of lightness, free flowingness and indirectness. The "sharpness" of fire might have been conveyed through gestures which were quick, direct, light and free-flowing. Moreover, the underlying Effort qualities contained in the pantomime's portrayal of phenomena appear to have served as metaphors for basic attitudes or emotions. Thus, the tiger was portrayed as the embodiment of "fierceness," and the lion the incarnation of "rage."

The Roman pantomimes underwent a series of transformations on stage as they changed rapidly from one character to another. While each character appears to have been indicated by a characteristic posture and gestures, which were animated by a particular set of motion factors, the transformation was effected externally through the assumption of a mask and costume. Unlike the speaking actor who wore masks with large mouth openings, the Roman pantomime wore masks that covered his entire head and had no mouth

¹See above, p. 58.

openings. With the aid of these masks, the performer was able to display the age, sex and appropriate physiognomy of a role. Some of these masks had a different expression painted on each side and depending on the side that was shown to the audience the performer could, for example, portray the character as happy one moment and sad the next by a simple turn of the head. While most performers changed costumes along with masks, others, according to Lawler:

wore a swirling cloak, and by slight re-arrangement or handling of it managed to portray vividly all the characters of the story. With a twist of the cloak, say our ancient sources, he could portray a swan's tail, the tresses of Venus, a Fury's scourge.¹

Thus it appears that the pantomime was able to magically transform objects which he manipulated, in this instance a "cloak," in order to create the illusory semblance of concrete phenomena.

Posture as a Basis for the Language of Roman Pantomime

De l'Aulnaye, after sifting through the fragmentary accounts of Roman Pantomime in classical sources, suggests that "the art of pantomime consisted of a series of more or less rapid movements, of diverse attitudes [postures] and varied and imitative gestures."² Posture appears to have been an important element of the pantomime's style and was used in two ways: first, to depict character

¹Lillian B. Lawler, The Dance in Ancient Greece (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), p. 140.

²De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 85.

through the maintenance of a bodily posture; and, second, as a momentarily held "pose" which summarized the essence of a word or phrase in the canticum.

Plutarch, a classical Greek historian who lived in the first century A.D. and who wrote widely on contemporary Roman life and history, identifies three elements comprising the "dance" (pantomime): the phrase, the pose, and pointing.¹ By "pose" Plutarch meant both the carriage or disposition of the body (base posture) indicating a character role and a crystallized "position" of the body which summarized the essence of a movement.

Dancing consists of movements and positions . . . "poses" is the name of the representational positions to which movements lead and in which they end, as when dancers compose their bodies in the attitude of Apollo or Pan or a Bacchant, and then retain that aspect like figures in a picture.²

Movement in Pantomime appears to have evolved out of and ended in briefly held "poses," which Plutarch states were analogous to the "intervals" or silences in music.³ The "pose," according to Plutarch, "was imitate [sic] of shape and outward appearance,"⁴ of phenomena and was frequently modeled on figures in painting and statuary depicting character, action and emotion.

Lucian also briefly refers to "posture" as being an important part of the pantomime's performance. Quoting

¹Plutarch Moralia 9, Loeb Classical Library, p. 289.

²Ibid., p. 289-91. ³Ibid., p. 289

⁴Ibid., p. 293.

Thucydides statement on Pericles oratorical style, he says:

What Thucydides said of Pericles in praising the man would also be the highest possible commendation of a dancer [pantomime], "to know what is meet and express it;" and by expressing I mean the intelligibility of his postures.¹

Posture was primarily employed in Pantomime as a basis for character portrayal. According to Lucian, "the chief occupation and aim of dancing is impersonating, which is cultivated in the same way by the rhetoricians."² Throughout the early history of Pantomime, performers borrowed stylistic elements from orators and orators, in turn, found in Pantomime material for their art. Roman orators frequently assumed the postures of characters which they referred to in their speeches; however, as in all aspects of mimicry in oratory, these postures were understated.

The postures and gestures of the Pantomime performer also encompassed the portrayal of the emotional state of characters caught up in fixed events.

In general, the dancer undertakes to present and enact characters and emotions, introducing now a lover and now an angry person, one man afflicted with madness, another with grief, and all this within fixed bounds.²

Lucian indicates that the primary element underlying the performance of the pantomime was attitude or emotion. It appears to have been not only the basis for characterization but the motivating force behind action in Pantomime as well. Plutarch states that the "phrase" (gesture) "is expressive of some emotion or action or potentiality."³

¹Ibid., p. 269. ²Ibid., p. 271.

³Plutarch Moralia 9, p. 293.

According to De l'Aulnaye:

It is gesture which carries out our soul, love, terror, pity, and all the affections that it pleases the pantomime to excite in us. Gestures are the "declamation," the pathetic accent, the passions.¹

"Declamation," is the non-verbal vocal element in oratory which conveys the underlying emotional content of words and thus, indicates the manner in which they are to be interpreted by the spectator. In Pantomime, the "tensions" or Efforts which underlie postures and gestures are analogous to "declamation" in oratory. The presence of attitude as a basis for gesture suggests that gesture must have either unfolded from or culminated in characteristic postures or poses of the body and that it was the active expression of the "tensions" animating the formal shape of the "pose."

The postures portraying character, emotion and action in Roman Pantomime were often modeled on figures in sculpture or painting. Lucian states that the pantomime, "has not kept away from painting and sculpture, but manifestly copies above all else the rhythm that is in them."² According to Emmanuel, sculptors in antiquity, studied the poses of dancers [pantomimes], and the dancers, in turn, copied the poses of statues."³ Plutarch indicates that pantomimes composed their bodies in "attitudes" representative of various mythological deities and "then retained

¹De l'Aulnaye, De la Satation Théâtrale, p. 13.

²Lucian Saltatio, p. 247.

³Emmanuel, The Antique Greek Dances, p. xiv.

that aspect like figures in a picture."¹

Hand Signs as Primary Semantic Vehicles in
the Language of Roman Pantomime

In addition to global corporeal postures and gestures, the performer had a large repertoire of "hand signs," which were the primary semantic vehicles of the Pantomime. Cassiodorus spoke of the pantomimes as:

Men whose eloquent hands had a tongue, as it were, on the tip of each finger--men who spoke while they were silent, and knew how to make a recital without opening their mouths.²

Demetrius, on witness the pantomime Paris perform without the support of the canticum or music, shouted to the performer, "I hear the story that you are acting, man, I do not just see it; you seem to me to be talking with your very hands."³

The pantomime's use of hand signs reveals the influence of oratory. The Roman orator possessed a clearly codified language of hand signs which enabled him to be easily understood by large audiences. Rich in the Companion to the Latin Dictionary says of the Greek and Roman orators who addressed large audiences on the stage and in the tribune:

It would have been impossible for the majority to comprehend what was said without the assistance of some conventional signs, which enabled the speaker to address himself to the eye, as well as to the ear of the audience. These were chiefly made with certain positions of the hands and fingers, the meaning of which was

¹Plutarch Moralia 9, Loeb Classical Library, p. 291.

²Cassiodorus, quoted in Broadbent, History of Pantomime, p. 67.

³Lucian Saltatio, p. 267.

universally recognized and familiar to all classes,
and the practice itself reduced to a regular system.¹

Rich indicates in the above quote that "signs" were chiefly produced by "positions of the hands and fingers." It is important to note that hand signs are primarily microcosms of global corporeal postures and involve both a momentarily held "position" as well as gesture. The position or "posture" of the hand summarizes the essence of the sign and allows the spectator a moment of "readability" in what would otherwise be a rapid flow of movement.

Moreover, it appears that hand signs in Roman oratory were representative of attitudes. This idea is borne out in many passages in Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria:

For other portions of the body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may almost be said to speak. Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question or deny? Do we not employ them to indicate joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity, number and time: Have they not the power to excite and prohibit, to express approval, wonder or shame: Do they not take the place of adverbs and pronouns when we point at places and things? In fact, though the peoples and nations of the earth speak a multitude of tongues, they share in common the universal language of the hands.²

While hand signs in oratory appear to have served, among other purposes, the function of conveying attitudes, Quintilian was against the "literal" use of gesture in

¹Rich, quoted in William Blake, "A Preliminary Study of the Interpretation of Bodily Expression" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, Teachers College, 1933), p. 3.

²Quintilian Institutio Oratoria 1, pp. 289-90.

oratory and warns that "the orator should be unlike a pantomime as possible," and that "his gestures should be adapted rather to his thought than to his actual words."¹ Quintilian expressly cautions the orator not to "use his hands to imitate attitudes or to illustrate anything he may chance say," and that this rule applies not merely to the hands but to all movements performed by the body.² According to him, gestures in oratory should express, "the impulses of the mind," and like movement in pantomime "should have a direct affect on the emotion."³ Rather than "denoting" the meaning of the accompanying words, the hand signs of the orator appear to have functioned to suggest the emotion of the speaker, as well as to provide "punctuation" which conveyed not only the flow and phrasing of the thought, but enhanced and clarified the meaning of the verbal recitation.

Roman Pantomime and Spoken Language

Hand signs, as well as the postures and gestures of the performer's body in Pantomime, served primarily to "translate" or "denote" meanings in the canticum. Plutarch strongly insisted on the intimate union of Poetry and the art of gesture calling Pantomime, "silent poetry" and poetry "articulate dance."³ (This is similar to Kenneth Burke's

¹Ibid., p. 291. ²Ibid.

³Plutarch Moralia 9, p. 295.

designation of poetry as "the dancing of an attitude.")¹

The Roman Pantomime appeared to "speak" principally by means of "hand signs", while he expressed character by means of bodily posture, gesture and walk. These hand signs bore a striking resemblance to "deaf-mute" languages with the performer, according to Cassiodorus, actually seeming to "write" in the air:

The actor appeared on the scene to the acclamations of the spectators. A choir of instruments accompanied him. By the sole movement of his hands, he explained to the eyes the poem that was chanted by the musicians. And by employing gestures composed, as in writing, where one uses letters, he spoke to the vision and rendered sensible even to the slightest nuance of his discourse and showed without speaking all that writing is able to express. The same body presented to us Hercules or Venus, a King or a soldier, a man or a woman, an old man or an adolescent and the illusion was so great that you believed you saw several men in one when the actor varied his posture, his walk and gestures.²

An anecdote related by Lucian also reveals the close proximity between "deaf-mute" languages and the language of Pantomime. Pontus, who had come to visit Nero from a neighboring state (where they spoke a different language), on witnessing a Pantomime performance and finding it so clear and easy to follow, begged Nero to give him the performer as an interpreter for barbarous neighbors, stating, "this man will interpret everything for me by signs."³

¹See above, p. 78, n. 2.

²De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 87.

³Lucian Saltatio, p. 269.

An indication of how the Roman pantomime may have translated the words of the canticum can be gleaned by looking at the use of hand signs in deaf-mute languages. In a discussion of the various gesture languages used by deaf-mutes, Cistercian monks, American Indians and others, Wilhelm Wundt identifies three basic forms of affective gesture ("Demonstrative," "Imitative," and "Symbolic") which are roughly analogous to those that might have been performed by the Roman pantomime.¹

According to Plutarch, the pantomime employed gestures of "indication," which involved the simple "pointing" out of phenomena the actor was involved with, as well as the representation of absent objects by the portrayal of their attributes.¹ De l'Aulnaye states that the pantomimes of Carthage used "indicative" gestures which consisted of a "paraphrase with hand movements of an object that was not on stage and could not be shown to the spectator."² "Indicative" gestures find their counterpart in "deaf-mute" languages in "demonstrative" and "Imitative" hand signs. According to Wundt, "demonstrative" gestures are the simplest and include: pointing to objects which are present, indicating spacial relationships and dimensional concepts, as well as pointing to parts of the body to indicate

¹Wilhelm Wundt, The Language of Gesture (Paris: Mouton, 1973), pp. 72-101.

²Plutarch Moralia 9, p. 291.

various organs and their functions. Hylas' portrayal of the lines "the Great Agamemnon" with the gesture of measuring a man greater than himself was essentially a "demonstrative" gesture. "Imitative" or "mimed" gestures are sub-divided by Wundt into two types: the "indicative" and the "plastic." Indicative gestures include either a transitory sketch in the air ("indicative") or a briefly held hand posture ("plastic")--both frequently occurring together. An "indicative" gesture in deaf-mute language portraying a "house" involves making an outline of the roof and sides with the index finger. "Smoke" is portrayed by making a spiraling movement with the index finger. These two signs can be placed together to make the sentence "the scent of smoke coming from the house" in which the indicative gesture for smoke is followed by a roof sketch. "Indicative" gestures in deaf-mute languages generally involve the mimesis of "characteristic gestures" associated with the phenomenon. For example to communicate bread, the deaf-mute traces a circle to stand for loaf and makes a "slicing" motion. "Plastic" signs are created by hand postures which are used to depict natural or artificial forms. For example, a horned animal is depicted by extending the index and little finger, with the rest of the hand standing for the head. A bottle is indicated by the uptilted thumb which stands for the neck of the bottle and the clenched

fist for the body. "Imitative" gestures can also connote a phenomenon through the depiction of its "secondary traits." For example, a "goat" is depicted by quickly outlining its beard, a "man" by making the movement of lifting a hat; and a "child" by a rocking motion.

The final class of gestures is the "symbolic," which Wundt compares to the "word" in spoken language--as being the "sign" of a mental concept. "Symbolic" gestures operate through conceptual extension and association, and refer indirectly to the ideas they represent, in contrast to the direct indication of the previous classes of gesture. Wundt says of "symbolic" gestures:

Since one thinks of a 'symbol' as a sensory image that is supposed to represent a concept differing from itself but related to it by association, then a 'symbolic gesture' will be, in this general sense of the meaning, one which stimulates a certain sensory image in order to tie together different thoughts as associated through inner qualities.¹

The "deaf-mute" signs we have encountered up until now have been such that the signs have directly denoted phenomena: "demonstrative gestures" "point" directly to present objects or literally "describe" spatial and dimensional concepts; "mimed" and "connotative" gestures also arouse their corresponding images directly because their traits are like those they depict. With "symbolic" gestures there is always at least one intermediate idea between the gesture and the

¹Wundt, Language of Gestures, p. 88.

concept that is expressed. For example, the hands cupped like a ladle are directly associated with a "drinking gourd." The Indians use this same gesture to indicate "water"--the ladle referring indirectly to what it holds. As gestural language develops, the number of associative links between the object and its concept increases. For example, with time the sign for "asses head," consisting of pointed index and little fingers, has become the well-known symbol for "stupidity" or "cuckhold."

The usage of gesture in deaf-mute languages is roughly analogous to that in Roman Pantomime. Classical authorities suggest that pantomimes used a predominance of codified "hand signs" which served to "translate" words in the sung text canticum. The comprehensiveness and complexity of this language was such that performers often studied it at special academies.¹ However, hand signs were generally accompanied by postures and gestures of the body, and rarely occurred alone. If the performers had merely translated the text by means of hand signs, the Pantomime would have quickly waned in popularity. In the above discussion of the usage of gesture in deaf-mute languages, it is possible to see that hand signs frequently involved the participation of the face and arms, as well as the entire body.

While lesser Pantomime performers may have translated the canticum primarily with descriptive and imitative

¹De l'Aulnaye, De la Saltation Théâtrale, p. 25.

gestures, the better performers appear to have attempted to discover "symbolic" or "metaphoric" gestural equivalents for verbal images. This is evident in Pylades' portrayal of "the great Agamemnon" with a symbolic posture of "meditation" as opposed to Hylas' descriptive gesture. Athenaeus says of the pantomime Memphis, "He discloses what the Pythagorean philosophy is, revealing everything to us in silence more clearly than those who profess themselves teachers of the art of speech."¹ It would seem that to suggest the abstract and metaphysical nature of Pythagorean philosophy, Memphis must have used a considerable number of symbolic postures and gestures.

At the time Pantomime was flourishing in Rome, the arts of oratory, acting and pantomime all borrowed from one another in shaping their styles. It is possible that the best Pantomime performers tended to adopt elements of their gestural style from oratory. Quintilian had cautioned the orator not to indulge in gross "mimicry" in conjunction with his discourse. He states that the order should be as unlike the actor or pantomime as possible:

You [the mime/actor] may suggest a sick man by mimicking the gesture of a doctor feeling the pulse, or a harpist by a movement of the hands as though they were plucking the strings. But this is a type of gesture which should be rigorously avoided in pleading.²

The orator's "gesture," according to him, should be "adapted to his thought than to his actual words, a practice which

¹Quoted in Lucian Saltatio, p. 275, n. 1.

²Quintilian Institutio Oratoria 1, pp. 88-89.

was indeed once upon a time even adopted by the more dignified performers on the stage."¹ Quintilian goes even further suggesting that this rule should not only be applied to the orator but to the actor who has a high conception of his art. According to him, the actor should avoid the excesses of exaggerated mimicry: "certain forms of imitation may be a blemish even in those whose whole art consists in imitation."² The truly great actor, like the orator, should not strive to represent external phenomenon as perceived by the senses, rather he should attempt to render the particular emotions and thoughts ("attitudes") that these awaken in him. In a similar manner, the pantomime, whose art primarily consisted of the depiction of the words of the canticum with mimetic gesture, may have tried wherever possible to not only use symbolic gestures which expressed a character's inner world of thought and emotion but, to be "subtle" and "suggestive" in his use of gesture in all its forms. Where as Roman Mime was generally characterized by comic exaggeration and burlesque, the Pantomime was a more refined and serious art. Lucian gives an example of a pantomime performer who went beyond the bounds of propriety and ruined his reputation through "an ugly bit of acting through exaggerated mimicry."³

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Lucian Saltatio, p. 285.

The syntactical and grammatical elements of the language of Roman pantomime were probably roughly analogous to that of deaf mute languages which, according to Wundt, possess certain laws of syntax where postures and gestures performed by the hands are combined to form sentences, which like spoken languages contain subjects, verbs, objects and adjectives.¹ However, grammatical elements in deaf-mute languages are not found in the traditional order of adjective-subject-verb-object of Western speech, rather the structure is subject-adjective-object-verb. This structure is similar to the tri-phased action of "Agent/ Acting Upon/Another Agent," identified by Jousse.

In Roman Pantomime, the Subject (Agent) was generally the character role being enacted by the performer. This was conveyed through the maintenance of a "characteristic" body posture and the execution of gestures typifying the role which were animated by a particular blend of Efforts. The "verb" element of the pantomime phrase was basically the "transitory" gesture performed by the Subject (Agent) and appears to have been portrayed by gestures which conveyed "action." Since actions are generally directed towards an object or another agent, the pantomime must have expressed the "object" in terms of its characteristic shape and gestural elements. The "adverb" which describes "how" an action is performed, was probably

¹Wundt, Language of Gesture, pp. 116-18.

conveyed by the pantomime primarily through the Effort qualities that underlay the gesture. Adjectives depicting attributes of objects or agents, would have probably been depicted by variations in the portrayal of their characteristic shape and gestures.

However, it is wrong to suppose that the Roman pantomimes indulged solely in a word for word translation of the canticum. In all probability they translated "images" or phrases of the verse with equivalent metaphorical gestural images (formed of a composite of posture and gesture). This representation did not necessarily coincide with the words of the text, but was expressed as a "resonance" of the sung phrase. According to Plutarch, poets not only use:

proper names of things to indicate or denote them . . .
but employ onomatopoeia and metaphor in their pursuit
of imitative representation and vivid suggestion . . .
and they often shape the collocation of words in their
songs to imitate matter.¹

In a similar manner, the pantomime's, "pose is imitative of shape and outward appearance. The phrase again is expressive of some emotion or action or potentiality. By pointing they literally indicate objects."² Given the fact that the canticum was composed of metaphors which were intended to evoke an attitude as well as tell a story. It is possible to assume that pantomimic performances at their best were primarily metaphorical translations of poetic imagery and involved a high degree of symbolic gesture.

¹Plutarch, Moralia 9, p. 291.

²Ibid.

Summary

The Roman Pantomime was the prototype of the largely "silent" Pantomime genres that have existed in diverse forms up to the present day, in which one or more performers enact a dramatic narrative solely by means of postures and gestures without the support of the spoken word. Lucian indicates that during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, there was a pantomime (who historians believe was called "Paris") who performed entire myths without the aid of the canticum, costumes or music and was still readily understood by the spectators.¹ If this is so, it would appear that the best performers of this genre possessed a highly developed language consisting of conventional signs which, while analogous to both spoken and deaf-mute languages in the fact that a sign could be linked up with a verbal equivalent, was not fundamentally different from the languages of many of today's Pantomime performers.

Twentieth-century Pantomime appears to mark a divergence from the codified languages of the past, because the performer's employ non-codified signs which must be interpreted by a "key" which establishes the distance separating the mode of the gestural language used by the performer from normative gesture (that which we experience in everyday life and activities.) This language is closely bound up with the creation of "illusion" in which the performer actually seems to make absent phenomena appear

¹Lucian Saltatio, p. 267.

"present" before the spectator's eyes. The most popular performer of illusionistic Pantomime is Marcel Marceau, who has developed a repertoire of techniques to create illusion. Many of these techniques, such as the profile walk, climbing imaginary stairs and ladders, opening invisible doors, have become the stock conventions of a host of young performers and, as such, have become a part of a codified vocabulary of signs, which, as in Roman Pantomime, instantly denote activities to a spectator familiar with these conventions. Marceau's actions in Objective Mime pieces (which reveal "how man does things" through the manipulation of imaginary objects) can be readily translated into verbal equivalents, "he is opening the door," "he is climbing the stairs slowly," etc. While many of today's Pantomime performers contend that Pantomime no longer translates words by means of gesture, much of its language can be readily translated into verbal narrative.

At first glance, it appears that one of the primary techniques possessed by the Roman Pantomime for indicating absent phenomena was through descriptive gestures. However, like his modern-day counterpart, the Roman pantomime created the illusion that invisible phenomena were indeed present either through corporeal transformation (assisted by a mask and costume) or by transforming objects which he manipulated (such as a cloak). It would seem that the use of transformation on the part of the Roman pantomime was not a part of his codified language,

and required the collusion of the spectator, whose knowledge of the enacted events would have assisted him in identifying the the transformations. Furthermore, it appears that the Roman pantomime employed many "symbolic" gestures which may have been part of a conventional language, but were also probably developed by each performer according to his skill and artistry. These "signs" did not directly denote words or phrases in the text but served as metaphorical equivalents. Along with symbolic signs, the performer probably sought to constantly enlarge his vocabulary through variations on the expression of existing signs or through the creation of "new" signs. The best of these signs (symbolic or otherwise) were probably rapidly incorporated into the stock Pantomime vocabulary. There is every indication that the Roman pantomime employed novel transformations as well as newly created signs in an effort to gain in popularity by stimulating the spectator's imagination. This would account not only for the continuation in the popularity of this genre throughout the Roman Empire, but for some of the heated rivalry between many of these performers, who attempted to "out-do" each other by finding the most creative and daring expressions for verbal images in the canticum.

The important element that can be derived from this chapter is that Roman pantomime was essentially an articulation of attitudes through a conventional language of posture and gesture, which sought to find gestural

equivalents for those in the sung canticum. As in modern-day forms of Mime and Pantomime, the performer's style appears to have been based in "posture," as the basis for the unfolding and termination of gesture. Many pantomimes performed in large arenas in which visibility would have been difficult for those spectators not seated close to the stage. Therefore, posture, which is an integral part of the expression of attitudes, was probably slightly exaggerated by the performer to clearly articulate one phrase from another. The pantomime's style was closely modeled on the art of oratory and the fine arts of painting and sculpture: the former, providing norms for conveying character and emotion, clues on punctuating and separating phrases, and hand signs; and the latter, norms for conveying character, action and passion through the "pose."

CHAPTER SIX

THE CORPOREAL MIME OF ETIENNE DECROUX

The Origins of Corporeal Mime

Etienne Decroux, referred to by some as "The Father of Modern Mime," is a twentieth-century philosopher, critic, performer and teacher of Mime, who may be credited with having reestablished that Mime is above all the art of "attitude." Decroux's system of Corporeal Mime marks a divergence from the cliched poses and realistic mimicry of traditional Western forms of Mime such as the commedia dell'arte and the nineteenth century pantomime blanche. Influenced by such modern movements in art as symbolism, abstraction and cubism, Corporeal Mime is based in a technical "grammar" of movement which seeks to convey images through the construction of postures and gestures based in the principles of kinetic architecture and geometry. The discovery of "designed" postures and the isolation and independance of the movements of the organs of the body as a basis for expression, which does not limit the performer to a system of acquired gesture, has served as a basis for the renovation of the art of Mime in this century by providing a technical foundation for the development of the Mime artist somewhat comparable to that of the ballet dancer.

Decroux's philosophy of Mime was shaped by several twentieth-century theatrical innovators: most notably, Jacques Copeau and Edward Gordon Craig who, in the process of attempting to renovate the theoretical and technical foundations of the theatre, were seeking to redefine the art of the actor in relation to his corporality. As a student at the Vieux Columbier from 1923 to 1925, Decroux was first introduced to Mime in a class on corporeal expression called "Les jeux masques." These were a series of exercises designed by Copeau to assist the actor in exploring the expressiveness of his body and consisted of the gestural enactment of short scenes by students who wore neutral masks which forced them to use their bodies as the sole means of communication. According to Decroux they:

mimed modest actions; a man bothered by a fly, attempts to get rid of it; a woman deceived by a fortune-teller, strangles her; a craft, the enchainment of the movement of a machine.¹

These pieces involved the slow performance of a gesture "in which many others were synthesized,"² an element, which along with the neutral mask, was to form an integral element of the style of Corporeal Mime. They also included experimentation with a form of aural Mime--such as "the sounds of the village, the house, nature, the cry of animals"³ which were produced by the performer's vocal apparatus as well as his hands

¹Decroux, Paroles sur le Mime, p. 18. Henceforth, referred to as Paroles.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

and feet.

Decroux was also introduced to the theories and practices of the Noh drama at the Vieux Columbier, "they taught a course on the Japanese Noh that was quite well done."¹ The notes of Susanne Bing, one of the teachers at the school, tell of the excitement of the similarity in dramatic laws exemplified in the Noh and those outlined in Copeau's theory course--especially the importance of the philosophy of discipline and self-abnegation in which the actors had to subordinate themselves to a very strict form as well as to ensemble playing.² Although Decroux has never specifically stated that the Noh has had any influence on his work and, according to Annette Lust, even emphatically denies any debt to the Oriental theatre,³ Corporeal Mime reveals many similarities to the Noh. Decroux's son, Maximilien, who is also a Corporeal Mime performer and teacher, indicates that his father's work is not a continuation of European forms of Mime:

but is based in reality on a completely different model, the Mime of the extreme Orient. . . . A turning point has been made without it being realized or inspired by by this model (continuity with the commedia dell'arte) but by the contrary model of the Japanese Noh and new

¹Etienne Decroux, "The Origin of Corporeal Mime," The Mime Journal, nos. 7-8 (1978), p. 11.

²Barbara Kusler, "Jacques Copeau's Theatre School, 1920-1929" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 148-49.

³Annette Lust, "Etienne Decroux and The French School of Mime," The Quarterly Journal of Speech 57 (October 1971), p. 294.

means of expression which came from and were inspired by this pole, this source.¹

Jacques Copeau was one of the first theatrical innovators to adopt Craig's ideas in France. Many of the theories and exercises at the Vieux Colombier (including those on the Noh) had been inspired by On the Art of the Theatre and Craig's seminal articles in The Mask. Decroux's discovery of Craig's ideas at the Vieux Colombier was to serve as the primary inspirational source behind the development of Corporeal Mime.

Integral to Craig's conception of non-illusionistic theatre based in symbolic movement was the demand that the human actor, as he presently exists, be replaced by a more perfect instrument, one capable of "symbolic gesture."² Craig's rejection of the actor is consistent with an aesthetic which forbids imitation as an artistic process. According to Craig, today's actors merely "impersonate and interpret;"³ and their corporeal expression is little more than a duplication of nature by means of "realistic" gestures. The necessary action in art, according to him, is symbolic movement, not gesture which attempts to reproduce nature. Deploing the actor's lack of discipline, predominance of ego and his inability to control corporeal expression under the

¹Pinok et Matho and Maximilien Decroux, Ecrits sur pantomime, mime, expression corporelle (Paris: Publication du Temp, 1975), p. 25.

²Edward Gordon Craig, On the Art of the Theatre (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1956), p. 61.

³Ibid.

sway of emotion, Craig stated "The actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure--the Über-marionette we may call him, until he has won for himself a better name."¹

The Über-marionette, Craig's conception of the perfectly disciplined and controlled actor, capable of using his body as the material of his art to create symbolic gesture, represents Craig's denial of the psychological method of acting of the Western theatre and the affirmation of the symbolical nature of Eastern drama. Craig's concentration on symbolic movement as the purest language of theatrical expression led him in The Mask to make an investigation into Oriental theatre. In 1910, The Mask became concerned with the Noh drama, which seems to suggest itself as the type of theatre towards which Craig was moving. The Noh offers a supreme example of the disciplined actor completely subject to his form whose "acting," consists "for the main part of symbolical gesture."²

Craig's attack on the human actor concentrates on two aesthetic problems; the obtrusive element of the actor's personality and the paucity of discipline he wields over the control of vocal and gestural expression. Craig believed that true art necessitated calculation and control and that the actor was a "slave" to his emotions which "possessed" him and kept him from controlling the movements of his body

¹Ibid., p. 81.

²M.A. Hinckes [Gordon Craig], "Review of the Japanese Drama," The Mask 2 (October 1910): 90.

and the expression of his face:

The actions of the actor's body, the expression of his face, the sounds of his voice, all are at the mercy of the winds of his emotions; these winds, which must blow forever round the artist, moving without unbalancing him. But with the actor, emotion possesses him; it seizes upon his limbs, moving them wither it will.¹

Craig felt that the actor, instead of being a master of himself, allowed his emotions to overcome his intelligence and his instincts to overpower his knowledge causing his gestural performance to be little more than gratuitous and uncontrolled.

Craig was continuing in the vein of Diderot's "Paradox sur le Comedien" written during the 1780s, which was the first serious analysis of the actor's creative process. Diderot had called for the actor to remain cool and disciplined in his approach rather than letting himself be carried away by his "passions." The actor, according to him, must be superhuman--that is, shamanic in his control but with the heart and warmth of possession. This could only be accomplished through rigid control and discipline of the body instrument, in which the actor was to essentially remain unmoved while moving the audience. This is the shamanic essence of the "doubling of consciousness." Just as the sculptor approaches his stone, the painter his canvas, the actor must approach his own instrument from a distance, as it were, separated from himself. He must constantly look

¹Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p. 56.

at his machine in operation in order to create the desired effect upon the audience.

In a passage remarkably reminiscent of Zeami, Diderot claims that the actor gives all his feelings during the performance to the audience and keeps none for himself, "for the actor is an empty shell, a vessel to be filled with whatever he chooses."¹ Thus the actor creates his characters from "nothingness." "Perhaps, it is just because he [the great actor] is nothing that he is before all everything. His own special shape [personality] never interferes with the shape he assumes."² In other words, he is able to release his body from the control of the habitual attitudes comprising the ego, which allows for the opening out of a deeper self that lies buried in the subconscious. Therefore, according to Diderot, "A great actor is also a most ingenious puppet, and his strings are held by the poet, who at each line indicates the true form he must take."³

Like Diderot, Craig tried to find a compromise between the undisciplined emotionalism of star performers and the vision of a calculated craft in which the actor would not "show himself" but would reveal, through the transparency of his art, a unique impersonal vision of the world that transcends human limitations. In "The Actor and the Über-marionette," Craig sets forth his theories on the

¹Denis Diderot, The Paradox of Acting, trans. Walter Herries Pollock (London: Chatto & Windus, 1883), p. 53.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 62.

characteristics of the "ideal" actor based on the concept of the actor as marionette. The Über-marionette is the actor who has acquired the essential qualities of the marionette: obedience, impersonality, calculation and symbolism.

According to Craig, if the actor wants to participate in the creative advancement of the theatre, he must annihilate his ego. In 1925 Craig elaborated on the definition of the actor as marionette in On the Art of the Theatre:

The Über-marionette is the actor plus fire, minus egotism; the fire of the gods and demons, without the smoke and steam of mortality.¹

In order to avail himself of the dictates of his subconscious and to express these to the audience through a controlled technique--he must possess the marionette's obedience and malleability. It is the impersonal quality of the actor-marionette that enables the spectator to see beyond human limitations to vision of a new "force." The distance and control which Craig envisioned for the ideal actor would manifest the "trance-like" aesthetics of the marionette, that is, "to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit."² This involves the actor entering into what Craig terms "a spiritual state of ecstasy" which, according to him, "is not apparent

¹Craig, On The Art of the Theatre, p. ix-x.

²Ibid., p. 85.

excitement but apparent calm":

It is the white heat of emotion; . . . it is almost a trance. . . . You must awaken your imagination and let it possess you entirely. Ecstasy is nothing else than a kind of madness, remember, not any kind of madness. It is all that is Rapid . . . White . . . Glowing . . . Circular . . . Vast . . . Steady.¹

What Craig meant by ecstasy appears to be a spontaneous liberation of the subconscious or creative imagination which by-passes the inhibiting mechanisms of the ego. While Craig generally declared that the actor was not a creative force in the theatre and that his basic function should be that of of a "puppet" manipulated by the director as an element of the stage design, his writings also reveal a vision of the creative possibilities of the actor.

the ideal actor will be the man who possesses both a rich nature and a powerful brain. . . . It will contain everything. . . . The perfect actor would be he whose brain could conceive and could show us the perfect symbols of all which his nature contains.²

The ideal actor envisioned by Craig was one who would be able to create a new language of movement consisting of "symbols" which are "mademainly from material which lies outside his person."³

Corporeal Mime and the Marionette

Decroux's philosophical conception of Corporeal Mime is a practical realization of the essential elements of the

¹Craig, "Hamlet in Moscow: Notes for a Short Address to the Actors of the Moscow Art Theatre," The Mask 7 (May 1915): 109-110.

²Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p. 11.

³Ibid.

theories of Diderot and Craig concerning the actor's corporality--his relation to his body qua instrument. Decroux states, "if the marionette is basically the image of the ideal actor, one should, therefore, attempt to acquire the virtues of the ideal marionette."¹ Unlike Diderot, who saw the actor as subordinate to the literary text, and Craig who envisioned the director as the animator and sole creator behind the actor's art, Decroux has sought to reestablish the primacy of the actor as a "creator," who employs his corporality as the focal point of the dramatic event. The basis for the renovation of the actor's art lay for Decroux in the Corporeal Mime performer, who was to meet Craig's ideal of the Über-marionette. The Corporeal mime's controlling will and creative subconscious ideally commands a perfectly trained and articulated instrument which is able to portray feeling and thought solely through posture and gesture, without the support of words or theatrical means. Through a highly disciplined technical grammar the performer uses his body as the "material" of his art to create designed postures or "attitudes" which convey images of "inner movements." Expressivity in Corporeal Mime forbids all anarchic spontaneity and requires strict discipline, which imposes not only mastery but great exuberance, and the difficult task of honing and purifying "attitudes."

¹Decroux, Paroles, p. 51.

Decroux's model for the Über-marionette was inspired by the acting style of the renowned French actor, Louis Jouvet.

I felt in his work the beginnings of, a taste for, the marionette . . . a certain way of turning the head, of using his neck, a certain way of taking his place on the stage. One sensed in him the articulated man.¹

The key to Decroux's style of Corporeal Mime lies in the interdependence and articulation of each segment of the body, which allows the performer to play upon it like a "keyboard."² The trained mime, according to Decroux, should make each part of his body independent of the others, and in so doing, make it capable of obeying the subtlest nuances of emotion and thought.

A student once told Decroux, "The day you said, 'head without neck' you found your whole system."³ In Decroux's classes, the student learns to isolate each "organ" of the body from the others, (i.e., head from neck, neck from chest, etc.) so that the various organs can be commanded singly or in concert. For the mime to move the head, the neck must not move. For every movement that is made there are contingent movements that must be simultaneously suppressed:

One must, therefore, mobilize only that which one wants to mobilize: a single determined organ or several. What is not mobilized must be immobilized.⁴

¹Decroux, "The Origin of Corporeal Mime," p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 15.

³Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁴Decroux, Paroles, p. 105.

In this technique we find the essence of "posture" in Corporeal Mime--that is, the "fixing of parts of the body in space as a "platform" for the unfolding of gesture. The decision and mobilization to act produces a contraction of localized muscle groups into a "pose" of the body or parts of the body, which is followed by a release of other muscle groups which discharge crystallized emotion or energy through gesture. Gesture, in turn, culminates in immobility which again prepares for the displacement of other organs, and so on.

The singularity of Decroux's system of Corporeal Mime is that the articulation and punctuation of movements by the immobilization of the body or parts of the body, offers an infinite number of combinations which do not limit the student to an acquired system of gesture as in classical and romantic forms of Mime. Craig, on witnessing a performance by Decroux and his troupe in 1945, stated:

I have travelled far in Europe, visiting many cities in Holland, Germany, Russia, Italy, England and Scotland--but till this day I have never seen anything comparable to this attempt . . . We were present at the creation of an alphabet--an ABC of Mime.¹

The Neutral Mask

Like Craig, Decroux strongly believes in the necessity of the actor-mime's suppression of "personality."

¹Craig, "Enfin un Createur au Theatre," Arts, August 3, 1945, p. 1.

"The artist must show his work without showing his person."¹ For the work of the artist to be of lasting value and significance, it must not be a "personal" expression but should bear the stamp of the "impersonal." Decroux is totally against the concept of the "star performer," believing that the mime or actor must go beyond expressing the limitations of his ego, and like the unknown builders of the great medieval cathedrals, must dedicate himself to the creation of works which "transcend" the self.

The Corporeal mime achieves impersonality through a variety of techniques--the most important being the "neutral" or "inexpressive" mask.

What do I mean by the term neutral or inexpressive mask? The neutral or inexpressive mask has a form that permits the actor to portray all possible sentiments without being ridiculous.²

According to Decroux: "One may be sublime with a mask, but not with the face. The face has something incurably realistic about it."³ It is not only subject to the limitations of the physical type, age and sex of the individual, but to fleeting and uncontrolled emotion. Moreover, the audience's attention tends to be drawn to the face if it remains uncovered rather than the trunk of the body which is the key vehicle of expression in Corporeal Mime. As in the Noh, the neutral mask allows for a kind of "gestalt" in which the

¹Ibid., p. 118.

²Decroux, "The Mask," The Mime Journal, nos. 7-8 (1978), p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 34.

audience "reads in" emotion depending on the postures and movements of the body. The Corporeal mime often performs without a mask; rather, his face assumes a neutral or "blank" expression (reminiscent of expression of the ritual performer during the initial stages of dissociation brought on by the trance). The "impersonal" style of Corporeal Mime is based in "classicism" which, according to Decroux, "does not show things. It has you guess at them--when the body is expressing depression the face should not show it."¹

The mask also serves the important psychological function of assisting the performer to enter into a highly focused and creative state. It enables him to "absent" himself from the necessity to express the demands of the ego and thus allows him to enter more deeply into his "true" nature--which is not subject to the limitations of personality. Thus one could say that the neutral mask facilitates the "loss of self" or habitual attitudes that constitute the everyday personality thus opening the way out for a larger and more impersonal self.

Corporeal Mime and the Expression of Attitudes

The perfectly articulated body of the Corporeal mime serves to translate inner thoughts and emotion into gestural images. Decroux states, "The essential aspect of

¹Decroux, 1975 class lecture, Boulogne Bilancourt, France.

my art is articulation."¹ Through isolated and independent movements of the various organs of his body, the Corporeal Mime attempts to give a clear and effective gestural expression of his inner language of feelings, thoughts and ideas. Decroux's system of Corporeal Mime is based on two distinct, but inter-related, styles: the objective and subjective. "Objective Mime" involves the portrayal of phenomena from the surrounding world in which denotation plays a large role. "In Objective Mime there is not one movement that does not have a meaning."² Objective Mime is primarily based in the imaginative creation of "illusion" through the mime performer's interaction with invisible phenomena.

However, the core of Decroux's philosophy and style of Corporeal Mime is centered in what he terms, "Subjective Mime." This is defined as "movement of the mind expressed by the body."³ Decroux states, "What Freud makes us say, the mime makes us do it."⁴ This brief and unique allusion to Freud in Decroux's writings, when analyzed in terms of its rhetorical context, suggests that Decroux does not associate the subconscious with the strictly Freudian function of expressing instinctual, sexual or archetypal impulses. Rather, for Decroux, the subconscious expresses the

¹Decroux, quoted in Lust, "Etienne Decroux and The French School of Mime, p. 294.

²Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

³Ibid.

⁴Decroux, Paroles, p. 155.

"movements of the soul" or attitudes that represent a higher manifestation of emotion--in other words, the idealization and universalization of basic instincts and reactions.

Decroux attributes a "rationalizing" function, normally associated with the conscious mind, to the subconscious:

It can be either the conscious or subconscious which reasons. The subconscious is the region where we reason logically. We imagine that the subconscious makes mathematical calculations--like an adding machine. We see only the results of its calculations. Does the subconscious have a place under the conscious? There are in reality many consciousnesses.¹

The impulses which bubble up from the subconscious appear to have a "logic" of their own. The creative process of constructing a Corporeal Mime piece involves impulses from the subconscious which the performer allows to shape his postures and gestures. During this process, he begins to discern a story which appears to have an internal logic and a coherence of its own. Through the purification and honing of postures and gestures he arrives at a fully realized image of an idealized attitude.

Decroux believes that the truly expressive attitude (posture) the truly meaningful gestures are exterior manifestations of inner movements which are able to convey the ideal rather than the particular. To achieve this exterior manifestation of inner movement, the entire body must transform itself into a portrait of inner movement.²

¹Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

²Annette Lust, "Etienne Decroux: Father of Modern Mime," The Mime Journal, no. 1 (1974), p. 18.

The "inner movements" of the subconscious are conveyed in Corporeal Mime through postures and gestures involving interaction with phenomena. Everything in mime stems from the material world. Decroux calls himself a "spiritual materialist," because he takes a spiritual idea and looks for its analogue in a material action.¹ Decroux noticed that the movements which represent thought and emotion resembled work:

In looking at the carpenter, you will find all the movements of the mind; struggle, thought, judging. There is finesse of care. We must learn to do all the metiers because a craftsman, worker must think. The thought that makes a straight line on a table, exists as a straight metaphysical thought.²

Work movements, which are the metaphorical embodiment of attitude in Corporeal Mime, are expressed primarily by means of "counterweights." The counterweights are a muscular compensation which permits the body to rediscover its equilibrium when the members are displaced through movement. Dorcy defines them as a tangible muscular compensation for intangible imaginary forces.³ In Objective Mime, the counterweights are used to indicate the actor's actions and reactions to imaginary phenomena. The principle of the counterweights are derived from the forces involved in pushing and pulling material objects. Decroux has developed a series of exercises involving pistons and extensors in space, which the student pushes or pulls using a tripartite execution

¹Decroux, "Origins of Corporeal Mime," p. 8.

²Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

³Dorcy, The Mime, p. 47.

involving preparation, a spasmodic movement of push or pull, and a relaxation. The "spasmodic movement" involves an instantaneous frozen postural form in which the muscles groups become "fixed" in a clear image epitomizing the essence of the underlying attitude, which forms the basis for the action. From these exercises, Decroux has developed figures based upon abstracts of work, i.e., "The Carpenter," "The Blacksmith," "The Hauler," "The Reaper," etc. He has also developed a series of figures based on "sports," i.e., "The Discus Thrower," "The Spear Thrower," etc.

In Subjective Mime the counterweights are employed to reveal the "moral" and "spiritual" struggles of the individual. According to Decroux, everything in the counterweights can be translated with very little change into metaphysical meditation or movement of the spirit. "Emotion and suffering have a manner similar to will and in will there are counterweights--one remembers one's trials in moving things. . . . Danton hitting the table three times--'Audacious! Audacious! and more Audacious!!--is like hitting a forge.'¹ The work of a carpenter making a table involves emotion and thought as translated through the counterweights in the movements of gouging, sanding, planing, etc.

In the counterweights the mime reproduces the profound conflicts of the psyche. Corporeal Mime is inherently dramatic, it crystallizes the dynamic postures of agents

¹Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

acting upon phenomena from the material world which are the figurative embodiment of attitudes. For Decroux, the mime is not a simple philosopher before the universe, he is an inexhaustable force against the universe. The struggle with phenomena reveals the moral struggle involved in the forces acting in the individual's psyche. The art of Mime, according to Decroux, "is political or Promethean as opposed to religious . . . it is the opposite of dance. It is not accepting."¹ The tripartite movement of the counterweights: preparation, action and release, could be seen as an analogue to the "Agent/Agissant/Agir" or the conflict between protagonist and antagonist which forms the nucleus of dramatic action. For example, the mime of the toreador reconstructs by its alternation in corporeal play, the desire to flee and attack. The carpenter's work involves the struggle with matter which becomes a "mirror" of the performer's attitudes as manifested through the subtle variations of attack and retreat contained in the gestures of gouging, planing, etc.

The Nature of Posture ("Attitude") in Corporeal Mime

Might one say that mime is an art of movement in which the attitude is but the punctuation? . . . One may conceive of a movement as a succession of attitudes.²

The term "attitude" is used by Etienne Decroux to refer to a "designed" posture which is either held

¹Decroux, "Hugo and Baudelaire," The Mime Journal, nos. 7-8 (1978), p. 51.

²Decroux, Paroles, pp. 124-25.

momentarily or transported through space on a fixed base. It is essentially a product of the fixing of the body or parts of the body into a momentarily held "pose" as a basis for a gesture or movement which precedes or follows it. The "attitude" (posture) in Corporeal Mime is a frozen instant of movement, which serves to punctuate and highlight the essence of a movement phrase through a distilled gestural image:

A successful attitude is like a condensed drama; perfect, complete, it is an image epitomizing identity, origin, destination, and intent.¹

It is a dynamic "symbol" which witnesses the movement that preceeded it and which promises a plan of action to follow. Decroux has compared the "attitude" to a "snapshot" which captures a frozen instant of movement--with the difference that the attitude combines several phases of movement into a postural and gestural image.

Decroux is credited with having created the stylistic device of raccourci, which is the faculty for mimed gesture to contract or condense the time and space of an action and to translate the action into a muscular image. The "attitude" in Corporeal Mime is basically a product of raccourci, which according to Jean Dorcy is "the condensation of idea, space and time."² Similar to the cinematic ellipsis, raccourci consists of the process of reducing a movement to its primary components--that is, a

¹Dorcy, The Mime, p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 46.

series of postures which are connected by gesture and translations of the body. Decroux takes a simple gesture, such as walking, and reduces it to its primary components. This entails the following questions: what is it that moves, in what direction, with what energy, and in how much time?

These four characteristics comprise the movements of an articulated Über-marionette. Once Decroux has reduced a movement to its basic elements, he creates phrases made up of a series of "attitudes" which summarize and exaggerate the primary physical and psychological components of the movement:

The attitudes which many mimes consider to be the result and quintessence of the mimodrama crystallize the whole sequence and form the armature of the story; "what the mime must do is to juxtapose the numerous attitudes that he has constructed."¹

The concept of raccourci forms the cornerstone of economy--which is an important stylistic element of Corporeal Mime. Decroux believes in the philosophical premise that richness of expression arises in direct proportion to the economy of expression. The Mime performer, according to Decroux, is like the base of a pyramid, if he does only "one thing at a time," he is able to create highly stylized and simplified images in which the effect is narrowed to "the point of a pyramid pushing at the public."³ The

¹Pavel, Languages of the Stage, pp. 58-59.

²Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

postures which highlight segments of movement are comparable to "gestalts" or forms. The information of these forms should be simplified and clear enough to allow the memory to store and remember them.

The importance of posture in Corporeal Mime is seen most clearly in the crystallized pose called the "fugitive." These are moments of no-action, similar to those in the Noh drama, in which the movement becomes totally bound or frozen. The fugitive is based on fragments drawn from memory which have an important accent of significance:

In memory what stays is things that did not last very long, but last a long time in our memory. Things which have on the surface the sense of being nothing--a modest flower which pushes through the rocks. Memories are little snatches of music, flowers. This is the revenge of the fugitive. You didn't think something was important which passes. Yet it follows us.¹

Like the image in a poem, the fugitive is a symbolic posture in which many things are reunited. It is essentially an "attitude" which not only condenses several phrases of movement but serves as a gestural symbol.

Corporeal Mime and Statuary

The fugitive is intimately bound up with the aesthetics of the statue, which is a moment of eternity frozen into a fixed form. Decroux defines the art of the mime, in the etymological sense of his corporality, by analogy with the work of a sculptor:

I would have liked to have been a sculptor. . . . I
I would like to have been a poet. I desire that the

¹Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

actor, accepting the artiface sculpts the air and makes us sense where the verses begin and where they finish . . . Our thought pushes our gestures just as the thumb of the sculptor pushes out forms and our body, sculpted from the interior, bends. The mime is at the same statuary and statue.¹

An important stylistic element in Corporeal Mime stems from a composite of theories and techniques based in "mobile statuary," which is described by Decroux as "mobile non-figurative sculpture."² The primary illusion of sculpture, according to Susanne Langer, is "virtual space," in the mode of "kinetic volume."³ Applying Langer's definition to Mime, Hollis Huston states:

Mime creates that illusion [of sculpture] by organizing parts of the body in relation to each other. The mime's body is an instrument; its bones, muscles, and joints, are the keys of that instrument; by playing articulately on those keys, the mime tries "to make tactual space visible."⁴

With his perfectly articulated body, the mime is able to "carve out" a world of illusion by endowing the space which surrounds him with tangible "powers" through the subtle variation in the "Effort" qualities underlying his postures and gestures. Corporeal Mime is high in the effort quality of "bound flow"--which restricts or binds the flow of movement. When coupled with the space factor of "directness," bound flow contributes to movements that appear to "carve"

¹Decroux, Paroles, pp. 29-30.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 89.

⁴Hollis Huston, "Dimensions of Mime Space," Educational Theatre Journal 30 (March 1978): 65.

space, much in the way a sculptor works with a chisel or shapes clay with his hands.

Decroux states, "we must find postures as crystallized as statuary."¹ Statuary mime, which forms the basis for "the fugitive," involves the creation of postures which are either stationary or transported through space. Like the sculptor, the Corporeal mime sculpts his body from the interior in order to present designed postural forms which are expressive of thought and emotion:

Statuary mime . . . depicts arrested, imaginative, significant movement in silence, like a Rodin statue, motionless yet bursting with potential movement. Instead of breaking into facile movement, statuary mime gradually evolves from movement into immobility, seeking to stir the imagination by suggestion.²

Corporeal Mime style is based on the aesthetics of Greek and Roman statuary. By means of mobile statuary, according to Decroux, the mime employs a minimum of space and movement to the maximum in sentiment, similar to a "Greek statue changing form under a globe."³ Elsewhere, Decroux has said that the Mime performer "works on a barrel." Rather than "filling" the performing space like the dancer, the mime creates the semblance of space while working "in place" (sur place). When the Corporeal mime moves he should not displace from under his globe--rather, he moves with it. This creates the illusion of what Decroux has termed

¹Decroux, 1976 Class Lecture.

²Lust, "Etienne Decroux: The Father of Modern Mime," p. 20.

³Decroux, Paroles, p. 58.

"transported immobility." The translational movements, i.e., displacement of the mass of the body, primarily by means of the legs, serve to carry a sculptural form or posture through space creating the aura of an animated statue.

As in the moments of "no action" in the Noh, when the performer appears to be in repose like a statue, but is nevertheless projecting energy towards the audience; the Corporeal mime animates his arrested posture with the totality of his psyche. He must concentrate on the projection of the inner quality or life of the form--that is, the expression of the "Efforts" which it contains and which are manifested in the gestures which proceed and follow it.

Decroux states:

If a movement stops, if we look closely, we see that something has continued inside . . . Like a serre vie "bookends." A man pushing against a wall looks like he has stopped but he is pushing like the sap from a tree.¹

During his moments of immobility, the Corporeal mime performer keeps his internal "motor" working. We sense that the sculpted posture or "fugitive" form will burst forth into life.

Decroux's philosophy and aesthetics of Mobile Statuary shows the influence of canons of classical sculpture as manifested in the work of Auguste Rodin. Many of Rodin's ideas on the art of sculpture can be found in Decroux's essays and lectures. In an essay entitled, "Le mouvement dans l'art," Rodin states that he has mostly tried

¹Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

to "accentuate the mime, " in such pieces as "Bourgeois de Calais," "Balzac," and "Homme qui marche," and that in most of his other works he has always sought to put in some indications of gesture.¹ Movement is a way of expressing inner life, and it is the emotional impulse or mental attitude represented in the posture of the sculpted figure that causes it to thrill and surge from within. Rodin states that he attempts to "render the interior feelings by the mobility of the muscles."² This is echoed in Decroux's statement that, "The interior must be expressed on the exterior and this is done through mobile statuary."³

Decroux's approach to the expression of the "inner life" of a posture ("attitude") is remarkably similar to that of Rodin with regard to statuary. Rodin relates that an old stone carver taught him to "never consider a surface as anything but the extremity of a volume, the point more or less large it directs towards you."⁴ Applying this principle to the execution of figures, Rodin represents them "as projections of interior volumes."

I endeavored to express every swelling of torso and limbs, the efflorescence of a muscle or bone extending deep under the skin. And so the truth of my figures, instead of being superficial, seems to blossom forth from within like life itself.⁵

This same manner of expressing inner attitudes through the

¹Rodin, L'art, p. 41.

²Ibid.

³Decroux, 1976 Class Lecture.

⁴Rodin, L'art, pp. 36-38.

⁵Ibid., pp. 38-39.

projection of bodily volumes towards the spectator is referred to by Decroux as "pyramid on its point." The mime cannot alter the volumes of his body the way a sculptor can in modeling a figure. However, through the isolation and intensification of elements of the torso, the Corporeal mime can project these elements along with the "energy" or "Efforts" contained in the postural form outwards towards the audience.

The point of the pyramid on the chest has a greater force than the bottom of the pyramid (legs). In Mime we are trying to have the point of the pyramid go towards the public.¹

"Attitude" (posture) forms an essential element of sculpture. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, Rodin has said that a "movement is a transition from one attitude to another."² This is analogous to Decroux's statements that "we may conceive of a movement as a succession of attitudes,"³ and that Corporeal mime "gives the idea of movement by the attitude and the attitude by the movement."⁴ According to Rodin, an instantaneous photograph does not express movement, because it arrests it by immobilizing or paralyzing the subject without any indication of the dynamic line of the movement. The sculptor solves this problem by indicating both the movement that has been completed and the movement that is just beginning and in so doing attempts to

¹Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture.

²Rodin, L'art, p. 43.

³Decroux, Paroles, p. 125. ⁴Ibid., p. 46.

"condense several moments into one image."¹ This is essentially the idea of raccourci--the condensation of an idea in time and space that forms the basis of "attitude" in Corporeal Mime.

Geometry and Abstraction in Corporeal Mime

Geometry, which is a primary law of nature, plays an important role in the work of Decroux and Rodin. Rodin states:

I have come to realize that geometry is at the bottom of sentiment or rather that each expression of sentiment is made by a movement governed by geometry. Geometry is everywhere present in Nature. A woman combing her hair goes through a series of rhythmic movements which constitute a beautiful harmony. The entire rhythm of the body is governed by law...Nature is the supreme architect. Everything is built in the finest equilibrium; and everything too is enclosed in a triangle or a cube or some modification of them. I have adopted this principle in building up my statuary.²

In Corporeal Mime training "the accent is on the geometric spirit."³ The geometry of the mime is based on an instinctive sense of his body in space with regard to paths, planes, intersections, angles and axes. These paths through space can be moved along like a "trolley on a cable" (line) or like "windshield wipers on glass" (plane).⁴ Decroux's "system d'esprit géométrique" has led him to the

¹Rodin, L'art, p. 55.

²Ionel Jianou, Rodin, trans. Kathleen Muston and Geoffrey Skelding (Paris: Arted Editions d'Art, 1971), p. 23.

³Etienne Decroux, "80th Birthday Interview," The Mime Journal, nos. 7-8 (1978), p. 60.

⁴Decroux, Paroles, p. 104.

notion of "ideal" lines and clear angles. The laws of geometry in Corporeal Mime come from the realm of architecture--but in a kinetic form, that is; the circle, the straight line, ballistics, etc. Movements in Corporeal Mime are analyzed and reconstructed according to these geometric principles. The simple task of giving something to someone is reduced to body inclinations, rotations, convex spheres and arcs in space. All expression is channeled through geometric postures and gestures. Decroux tells his students, "don't just cry, but cry through this fine geometric pipe."¹

Central to the idea of the human body functioning according to the laws of mobile geometry is the image of the "machine," which represents the externalization of human gestures involved in work into mechanized functions. Decroux states that the Corporeal mime "must be able to move like a mechanism."² Like a machine, the mime should be able to "go from one point to another on an itinerary which is composed of a succession of simple designs" which are based in geometry.³ The image of the perfectly mechanized body of the mime finds its analogy in the robot, or a mechanical marionette. One of the dangers Corporeal Mime faces is that in attempting to employ the pure rules of geometry to movement it runs the risk of ending in

¹Decroux, "80th Birthday Interview," p. 61.

²Decroux, Paroles, p. 105. ³Ibid.

dehumanization. However, Decroux employs the image of the machine as a model for economy and utility, as well as for movements which do not involve "force" or the "struggle" with matter. Moreover, he stresses that the ability of the mime to imitate the machine leads him to the understanding of the ways in which human movement ceases to imitate it.

Raccourci as conveyed through geometrically stylized postures and gestures is the basis for "abstraction" in Corporeal mime. The mime uses the impersonal elements of geometry to portray the personal--that is, emotion and thought--through lines, arcs and tensions in space. Moreover, he is able to evoke "the concrete by means of the abstract" by presenting the schematization of agents and their actions in the phenomenal world. Abstraction, as defined earlier, involves the elimination of the inessential and particular in order to achieve the essential. In reducing postures and gestures to geometric principles Decroux seeks to find the essential structural elements of phenomena which are animated by basic energies or Efforts which fill out their forms. The condensed geometric images created by Corporeal Mime "evoke" or "suggest" reality through "ideal" movements. They are not a stylization of reality, because their primary aim is to evoke the inner subjective world of the performer, who uses postures and gestures based in reality as metaphors for his inner world of thought and emotion. The images created by the mime do not "point" to reality but to ideal forms which unite the

inner world of dream, thought, emotion and memory with the object (phenomenon).

Corporeal Mime approaches "abstract cubism" through the juxtaposition of postures ("attitudes"). Decroux states, "the mime passes before the world like a crystal ball"--in which each geometric facet represents a posture. Often, the significance of a posture can only be understood in relation to postures which precede and follow it. And it is precisely in the tensions created both through the "articulation" of the mime's body and the momentarily held forms that the essential attitude of the piece is conveyed.

Character in Corporeal Mime

Corporeal Mime training is based on the study of four basic character types, whose "Effort/Shape" patterns provide models for Corporeal Mime posture and gesture. These characters are: "The Man of the Drawing Room," "The Man of Sport," "The Man of Dreams" and "The Marionette." The "Man of the Drawing Room" forms the basis for the other three characters as well as applied styles. He is based upon a modern conception of the "court aristocrat." The aesthetic for this type of man can be found in Baudelaire's essay on "The Dandy"--an essay Decroux often mentioned in class lectures. The Dandy, who combines the qualities of elegance and forcefulness, does not show what he is thinking, rather he allows it to be guessed.

This impassiveness forms the basis for the impersonal style of Corporeal mime. Baudelaire writes:

The specific beauty of the dandy consists particularly in that cold exterior resulting from the unshakeable determination to remain unmoved; one is reminded of a latent fire, whose existence is merely suspected, and which if it wanted to, but it does not, could burst forth in all its brightness.¹

In The Book of the Courtier, the Count states that the courtier should:

Practice in all things a certain sprezzatura (non-chalance), so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it . . . much grace comes of this.²

Decroux says of "The Man of the Drawing Room."

The classical style does not show things. It has you guess at them. An actor acting in the classical style would have you deduce rather than show you. Classicism in mime is when the body expresses depression--without the face showing it.³

What Decroux terms "classicism" is essentially the concept of the actor who remains "unmoved" while moving his audience. "The Man of the Drawing Room," who represents the kernel of Corporeal Mime philosophy and style, must be portrayed by the performer as standing at a distance from his body. Decroux states, "One must represent suffering without suffering, effort without effort, pain without pain."⁴

¹Charles Baudelaire, Selected Writings on Art and Artists, trans. P.E. Charvet (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 422.

²Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 43.

³Decroux, 1975 Class Lecture. ⁴Ibid.

The quality of remaining "unmoved" is emblemized in the neutral mask or facial expression.

"The Man of the Drawing Room" is the practical realization of the aesthetics and technical mastery of the Über-marionette. He represents the highest ideals of western rationalism, which has freed the individual from the necessity for physical labor. Corporeal Mime, as emblemized in "The Man of the Drawing Room," is based upon a hierarchy of the organs of expression in which the trunk is first, the arms and hands next, and finally, the face. The trunk, which is the primary expressive vehicle of the performer, is articulated into three segments--the bust, the waist and the pelvis--which are capable of isolated and independent movement. Of these three, the bust is given highest priority. It represents both the affective emotional organ of the mime's body as well as his "eyes" (by indicating the direction he is looking) and is the locus of the "pyramid" whose "point" and energy are directed towards the audience. Movements effected by the trunk tend to be lead by the bust. The waist forms a vertical platform for the movements of the bust, while the pelvis tends to remain vertical--rarely inclining forward or backward. The arms move in harmonious resonance with the trunk and the legs are straight, with the weight installed on one foot and the other foot free and pointed to the back and slightly to the side. The body attitude of the Corporeal mime performer, the use of basic positions for the unfolding of movement, and the geometric

paths followed by the body in space reveal the strong influence of the techniques and aesthetics of classical ballet. Decroux states, "I have been walking in a light" . . . "form a source" . . . "and that light is classical ballet."¹

The hierarchy of the elements of the trunk represents the dominance of the "will" and "intellect" as the energy and shaping force behind Corporeal Mime movement. Unlike Eastern theatre where the movement radiates from the diaphragm and is supported by the breath, Corporeal Mime movement tends to originate in the chest. Breathing, which is an essential element of movement is rarely, if ever, mentioned by Decroux; and the abdomen, which is the true "center" of the body, is given little emphasis and is nearly always flat and contained. For this reason, Corporeal Mime often appears to be more of a "rational" exercise composed of controlled movements verging on rigidity than a spontaneous, organic expression of the primary nature of the individual. It is truly the embodiment of attitudes expressive of thought and will rather than emotion, as evidenced in Decroux's frequent usage of such words as "Promethean," "will," "mastery," and "control" in relation to Mime. Western psychology, increasingly under the influence of Eastern religious practice and philosophy, has come to see a body centered in the chest as a manifestation of a "rigid

¹Decroux, "The Mask," p. 40.

I" or predominance of "ego." It is not surprising that the intellect should play such an important role in the philosophy and technique of Corporeal Mime, after all France is the home of "rationalism"--having produced such thinkers as Pascal, Voltaire and Descartes. "The Man of the Drawing Room" represents the highest manifestation of rational thought. Possessed of the ability to do several things at one time, he is able to "play upon" his perfectly articulated body like a "keyboard" in order to express thought through gestures involving interaction with concrete phenomena.

"The Man of Sports" is inspired by gestural elements derived from sports, work and crafts. In this character all organs collaborate in harmony with the action being performed. Decroux calls this "inter-organic solidarity." This means that when one organ is engaged all the other organs come to its aid. There is no separate head, neck or bust as in "The Man of the Drawing Room," nor can he do several things at once. His attention is focused on doing one thing at a time and the "point" of the pyramid (focus of energy) is directed at his task rather than the public.

The movements of "The Man of Sports" are based in gestures which involve force--representing the individual's struggle with matter. The waist and stomach are important in creating inter-organic solidarity. The "spasmodic" movement of pushing or pulling of the counterweights generally involves a kind of "impulse" from the stomach

which passes from the center of the body down through the legs and feet as the body both releases to and pulls away from gravity. This essentially "emotional" falling and straightening or straightening to fall culminates in a brief pose which is a complex image epitomizing both the action and the attitude which underlies it.

"The Man of Dreams" combines the features of the above characters, however, he is a "poetic" figure who moves in a "dream-like" manner. The body is inclined on a vertical backwards with the bust (pyramid) projected towards the sky. The movements of this figure are centered around the study of the "fondue"--a slow melting movement similar to "slow motion" cinema. His most characteristic feature is the walk, which is similar to the gliding motions of the Noh. The body moves evenly and slowly across the floor always maintaining the same level. There are no abrupt "shocks" or rapid movements in this figure as there are in "The Man of Sports."

The character of "The Marionette" is studied to help the student achieve "spontaneity" and "quickness." In this figure movements appear to be animated by some outside force. This involves a suspension of the "will" of the performer who must be able to allow the movement to happen spontaneously. Studying figures taken from puppetry, the student attempts to attain the "ideal" qualities of an Über-marionette. That is, the effortless articulation of all of the organs of the body performing singly and in concert.

The four types of personages outlined above form the basis for the study of Corporeal Mime technique and are not meant to be seen as character roles per se. The Corporeal Mime performer does not generally engage in character enactment, rather, he tends to perform from a "neutral" position which incorporates elements of these figures into his own basic Efforts and posture. However, this does not mean that character portrayal does not exist in Decroux's philosophic conception of Corporeal Mime. Decroux often speaks about character in Mime terming it, "the crystallization of a determined or dominant sentiment."¹ According to him, it is "the walk" that most truly expresses the essence of character--as well as attitudes in general, of which character is but one predominant manifestation.

Corporeal Mime and Dance

The heavy influence of Classical ballet technique on Corporeal Mime coupled with the abstract and geometric nature of its postures and gestures, which often do not have clear denotational meaning, has led many dancers and scholars to conclude that Corporeal Mime is not "Mime" but "Dance." Decroux gives many arguments as to the basic differences between these genres. The Mime, according to him, is a "rooted" creature subject to the laws of gravity, while the dancer "lacks weight" and uses the ground primarily as a spring board for movements away from the

¹Decroux, "The Mask," p. 31.

earth. Moreover, with dance one cannot see the beginnings and ends of movements because they tend to trail off into space, while Mime clearly separates phrases from one another through the "punctuation" of the "attitude"(posture). Mime he states, is a series of present "actions" which are dramatic in nature because they represent the individual's conflicts involved in the struggle with matter, "Mime is the portrait of work and dance the portrait of dance."¹ The dancer translates natural movements into unnatural movements and when it attempts to be dramatic it becomes Mime. Finally, rhythm, according to Decroux, is the exception in Mime, whereas in dance it is the rule--and is usually based in a musical accompaniment. Mime derives from the dramatic rhythms of attitude as metaphorically embodied in work gestures--which are characterized by surprise, the question mark, dramatic hesitation, and so forth.

None of Decroux's arguments for distinguishing dance from Mime really hold up under closer analysis. The real difference between these two genres is that Mime is basically a postural "language" based in the expression of attitudes and is essentially analogous to spoken poetry or diction. Epstein, a Corporeal Mime student, teacher and performer states:

It is, indeed, in the spoken word that Decroux's mimetic movement has found its phrasing, rhythm, articulation and even a certain "intonation." . . . it is here that any confusion between the Mime and the Dance is

¹Decroux, Paroles, p. 76.

finally dispelled. The articulation and flow of the Mime is directly inspired by the "movement" of the spoken text; its fluctuation, lack of identical repetition, intensity independent of rhythmic structure and not by dance movement which is essentially steady flowing, based upon identical repetitions of rhythmic pattern, and displaying its greatest intensity in moments of speed and complicated rhythmic structure. And the reason for this basic separation is a dramatic one: the psychology of the dramatic actor opposed to the élan of the dancer. The Mime is often most forceful and striking to the eye in near immobility and movement unchoreographic in itself. . . . The mime's virtue is in the faceting of a movement so that each phase is bright and detached to the spectator's gaze. The dancer's virtue is the very opposite, his fluent welding of separate parts into a smooth and indistinguishable effect.¹

Corporeal Mime and Spoken Poetry

Decroux entered the Vieux Columbier in 1923 with the intention of perfecting his "diction" for oratory and the recitation of poetry. He states, "I would have liked to have been a poet."² His fascination with the spoken word is revealed in his system of Corporeal Mime which finds its phrasing, rhythm, articulation and even a certain "intonation" in spoken poetry.

I prefer rhythmic poetry because it seems that in order to create this rhythm one sculpts the verb. I desire that the actor, accepting the artifice, sculpt the air and make us feel where the verse begins and where it finishes.³

Although Decroux regards Mime as a "pure" art in its own right and that it is, moreover, "the essence of theatre,

¹Alvin Epstein, "The Mime Theatre of Etienne Decroux," Chrysalis 11 (1958): 11.

²Decroux, Paroles. p. 29

³Ibid.

which itself is but an accident of mime;"¹ he is deeply concerned with the Mime's place in the spoken theatre.

In "The Dosage of Mime for the Speaking Actor," Decroux draws a parallel between "diction," which he regards as a type of "vocal Mime," and Corporeal Mime.

Because diction . . . is a species of Mime--a type of vocal Mime, isn't it a good idea to reflect upon it in order to approach the study of Mime properly speaking along a similar path?²

Decroux outlines four basic elements that are common to both diction and Corporeal Mime: "inflection," "speed," "force," and "expression." "Inflection" has to do with the "pitch" of the voice as it ranges over a scale from low to high, and vice versa. Decroux states that, "the voice follows a line of inflection. It is a curve, sometimes concave and other times convex."³ The voice actually appears to be able to "sculpt" space through variations in range. The "speed" or "rate" of the spoken words has to do with the slowness or quickness of the word flow and the duration of silences. "Force" is similar to "volume" (the loudness or softness of the voice) and when combined with "speed" can produce a range of expression from a "light, slow, sustained quality" to an "explosion." He explains the concept of "force" with the example of a child's parachute which is thrown forcibly into the air (explosion/loud/high) and then descends with a light gliding motion.

¹Ibid., p. 34.

²Ibid., p. 55.

³Ibid., p. 52.

Decroux does not make clear what he means by "expression" with regard to "diction," but it appears to have something to do with the particular vocal instrument of the actor and the way in which he employs the elements of "inflection," "speed," and "force." It is essentially the ability of one actor to make us cry and the other to make us laugh with the same phrase.

Diction finds its equivalent in movement in the system of "Effort" as set forth by Laban--which comprises the "motion factors" of "time," "space," "weight" and "flow." The importance of Effort in Corporeal Mime can be seen in Epstein's discussion of the three basic qualities that characterize Mime movement: "design," rhythm," and "intensity." The "design," according to Epstein, is the trajectory through space that a movement follows, beginning at a certain point, passing through others and concluding at still another point.¹ "Design" is analogous to "intonation" in diction. Looked at from the standpoint of Effort, "design" finds its counterpart in the concept of "space"--the direction a movement takes with regard to imaginary lines and planes. "Rhythm," which basically involves variations in "rate" (but also includes the element of "force"), is defined by Epstein as "the varying lapses of time between the points" on the

¹Epstein, "The Mime Theatre of Etienne Decroux," p. 9.

"path" of a movement.¹ In Laban terminology, this would be equivalent to "time"--the variations of slowness or quickness of a movement combined with stops of varying lengths. "Intensity," which is analogous to "force" in diction, is produced through a combination of "weight," the lightness or heaviness of a movement, and "flow," the amount of tension in a movement.

Effort qualities underly all movements in Mime; however, it is the combination and dosages of the various Effort qualities, coupled with the particular organs that are utilized, which create the unique meaning of each Mime posture and gesture. Decroux has often said that Mime is plagued by "homonymns." Two gestures or postures may appear to have the same meaning; however, it is the difference in the Efforts which comprises the seemingly identical postures and gestures which differentiate them from one another.

While Corporeal Mime incorporates Effort in an manner analogous to "diction" in spoken language, it does not seek to create gestural "signs" which point specifically to concrete phenomena, nor does it substitute gestures for words as in Classical and Romantic Mime genres. Decroux states:

I renounce all signs, I desire that my spectator be moved by analogy between my mime's action and a

¹Ibid.

certain thing which he remembers. Analogy is not a sign.¹

Through the use of raccourci and geometrically stylized postures and gestures, the Corporeal Mime performer attempts to create "images" which distill a thought or emotion into postures and gestures which are grounded in the portrayal of agents acting upon one another from the phenomenal world. These images are comparable to word clusters or poetic metaphors, which while they denote concrete phenomena, operate primarily on the meaning created by words as sounds. The "tone" produced by the variations of the elements of "diction" which are contained in the word choice and their juxtaposition, evoke an "emotion" or attitude that exists above and beyond the meaning of the words themselves. In Corporeal Mime a postural and gestural image operates in a similar manner. While the image may denote concrete phenomena, its primary function is to convey an attitude through the juxtaposition of postures and gestures which project Effort qualities: in their formal geometric shapes and paths as they move through space; in the tension of their held forms; and in the variation of their design, rate and intensity as they unfold. While Corporeal Mime may appear to be only a stylization of reality, it is in fact, an evocation of both the inner world of the performer as well as a world that lies above and beyond reality. Its true

¹Lust, "Etienne Decroux, The Father of Modern Mime," p. 17.

essence lies in the creation of abstract visual metaphors whose suggestiveness does not engage the spectator in matching meanings, but rather, triggers his own personal reverie--sparked by the postural and gestural images of the performer.

Corporeal Mime pieces are constructed from "phrases" of movement, which like the spoken phrase of subject-verb-object, manifest a tripartite structure. This is seen most clearly in the movement phrase for the counterweights. For example, the verb "to press" is broken down into three broad phases of "preparation," "movement proper" and "attitude" (posture). The preparation is the "subject," the "movement proper," which consists of a gesture, conveys the "verb" of the action "to press" and the "attitude" (posture) is the "object," which expresses the sense and significance of the phrase. Decroux includes a fourth element in the counterweight exercises which consists of a "relaxation"--or return to a neutral position following the "attitude." Each of the three elements which make up the phrase can be broken down further into similar tripartite units.

Within these larger and smaller phrases, the "attitude" (posture) is the "punctuation" which clearly separates one phrase of movement from the next. Decroux states, "might one say that Mime is an art of movement in which the attitude is but the punctuation?"¹ Corporeal

¹Decroux, Paroles, p. 124.

Mime phrases are often highly abstract and their meaning many not be readily discernable to a spectator. However, the meaning is made apparent through the both the punctuation of the "attitude" as well as through the postural "articulation" of the performer's body as it facets brightly detached images in time and space.

The poetic nature of Corporeal Mime can best be seen in a short exercise from studies in "mobile statuary" called "The Bellringer." While the gestures involve the mimesis of the actions of pulling the rope of a large church bell, these are essentially metaphors for the spiritual awakening of man. The actions of rope pulling (which are counterweights) are presented in three broad phases: the awakening, awake and sleep. The piece begins with the mime in a posture prepared to pull the bell's rope. Commencing with a quick spasmodic movement, which expresses the initial resistance of the rope, the performer begins to pull softly using light, slow, sustained and bound movements. Decroux says of this first phase, "one is asleep, the movements are very slow and lazy. It is not work yet."¹ Throughout the action of pulling, the body retains its attitude of semi-repose with the head inclined to the side and forward. Each phrase of the "awakening" segment of the piece manifests the tripartite movement of preparation, "attitude" of pulling, release and relaxation. The "rhythm" of this

¹Decroux, 1976 Class Lecture.

phase is created by the increasing tempo of the spasmodic diphthong of the initial "pull" alternating with the tense, bound continuation of the downward pull and the light upward swing of the body as it is pulled up by the rope. The second phase expresses "work, excitement and activity" characterizing man in his spiritually "awakened" state.¹ Decroux uses the metaphor of "fishing" (which is implied in the activity of rope pulling) to describe the significance of this phase, stating, "man fishes god and is fished by him."² The "awake" phase is characterized by increased rapidity of motion and an alteration in the postural tonus of the body which manifests the attitude of "wakefulness," in contrast to the sleepy, relaxed attitude of the preceding phase. The third and final phase of the piece represents man "going slowly back to sleep."³ It follows the opposite progression from that of the first phase--the rapid energetic movements become increasingly slower until the performer reaches the final posture of "sleep." At this point the "tolling" of the bell is symbolized by slow, evenly-spaced "tucks" of the head followed by resonating oscillations. As in the first phase, the "awake" and "sleep" phases manifest a tri-partite structure. Decroux says of the movement for "The Bellringer" that it "should not be run together, but should be separated like the facets of a crystal ball."⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Summary

The Corporeal Mime of Etienne Decroux presents a clear example of the articulation of attitudes through posturally-based gesture. The technical grammar of Corporeal Mime is based in the isolation and independence of the organs of the body, in which the whole or parts of the body are fixed in space to serve as a platform for the unfolding of gesture. This system, which allows the performer to play upon his body like a "keyboard," is a practical realization of Craig's conception of the Über-marionette--the ideal actor who is at once obedient, impersonal, calculated and symbolic.

The key difference between Corporeal Mime and earlier forms of Mime is that it is based in a new technical "grammar" which allows the mime to continually create new symbols of expression. While performers and critics of Corporeal Mime state that it marks a divergence from the past because it eschews realism, anecdote, linear narrative, verbal equivalency and character enactment to concentrate instead on the abstract, universal and impersonal expression of the inner movements of thought and emotion; this merely marks a rediscovery and deepening of trends that have always been present in Mime from its earliest beginnings in ritual. Corporeal Mime is still based in the mimesis of the characteristic traits of phenomena, however it has adopted abstraction, cubism and

symbolism as the inspirational sources behind its style, rather than representational realism. Decroux's work in the area of "abstract" or "subjective" Mime involves paring down gesture to its barest traits of form, line and dynamism and then stylizing it according to the principles of geometry and kinetic architecture.

The raccourci, which distills several phases of movement into a designed postural form, is a key aesthetic device in Corporeal Mime. It allows for the creation of visual metaphors by means of postures, that while immobile or transported through space, embody the dynamism of movement. Comparable to poetic images, they summarize the essence of a movement phrase through a designed gestural image. As in poetic language, Corporeal Mime involves the juxtaposition of images, which are clearly separated into phrases of movement by the punctuation of momentarily held poses. Through experimentation with new expressions of dynamism in gesture, Corporeal Mime attempts to convey the essential attitudes contained in gestural imagery through subtle variations in Effort which are analogous to "diction" in spoken language. Thus, while it may appear that Corporeal Mime is not based in linguistic models, it is in reality a rediscovery of the gestic, symbolic and mythic qualities that form the root of man's earliest expression in languages of personal metaphor.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

It has become apparent from our examination of the Mime of the possessed devotee and shaman; the Mime-dance of the Japanese Noh; the Roman Pantomime; and the Corporeal Mime of Etienne Decroux, that there are similarities in underlying creative process and style that can be attributed to the expression of attitude by means of posture. While "movement" is an essential element of Mime, it is the "postural" element of the localization of the body or parts of the body in space as a platform for the unfolding of gesture that forms the basis of Mime style. We can now isolate six statements pertaining to the concept of attitude which describe the principle elements comprising the art of Mime.

1. Mime is based in the expression of attitudes.

Mime expresses the performer's mental/emotional state (i.e., a complex of instinct, feeling, and thought deriving from the various layers of the psyche) by means of posture and gesture. According to Nicoll, Mime is the pure example in dramatic art of Aristotle's theory of mimesis. Mimesis, as Fergusson and Butcher make clear, is essentially the reproduction of "an inward process, a

a psychical energy working outwards."¹ This "psychical energy" or "movement of spirit," as Fergusson calls it, is the dynamic tension or energy associated with attitudes. In ritual Mime, formalized gesture functions primarily as an "articulation of feeling." According to Langer, "the ultimate product of such articulation is not simple emotion, but a complex, permanent attitude."² In the Noh Mime-dance, the deeply felt attitudes of the central character (shite) are conveyed through a clearly codified language of posture and gesture, while in Corporeal Mime thought and emotion are articulated through a rigorous technique based in a codified "grammar" of Mime.

2. Attitudes in Mime are metaphorically embodied in images.

Images, which are a product of the body's intussusception of the "gestic" attributes of phenomena, serve as metaphors for attitudes. The creative imagination is founded on an "animistic" mode of perception, which according to Gaston Bachelard mixes:

desire and vision, internal impulses and natural forces . . . and which places in first rank . . . natural images, those which stem directly from nature, and which follow at the same time the forces of nature and the forces of our nature, those which take the matter and movement of natural elements, the images which we sense as active in ourselves, in our organs.³

¹See above p. 41, n. 1.

²See above p. 85, n. 2.

³Gaston Bachelard, L'eau et les rêves (Paris: Librairie Jose Corti, 1942), p. 247.

The physical contact with and enactment of images through the vehicle of the body--releasing strong emotions--lies at the heart of the Mime performer's creative process.

The dynamic tensions associated with an attitude are primarily expressed through the mime's portrayal of the "gestic" attributes of the image. According to Marcel Jousse, the cosmos performs "an immense mimodrama" consisting of myriad interwoven tripartite actions of agents--acting upon--other agents. An agent possesses a "characteristic gesture" and in turn performs "transitory gestures" upon other agents and so the process continues. Each agent and action in the universe is animated by a particular blend of Effort, which gives sense and significance to its gestures and which animates its characteristic shape or form. The characteristic and transitory gestures of a phenomenon represent its essential "attitude," according to Jousse.¹ In mimetic expression the "gestic" traits of phenomena serve as metaphors for the expression of attitudes.

Possessing deities in ritual mimetic enactment, which are generally the figurative embodiments of natural phenomena, represent attitudes latent in the individual and the society as a whole. Each deity has a set of gestures, whose underlying Efforts mirror a latent attitude. Similarly in the Noh, which reveals close connections to ritual, the shite roles, many of which are modeled on natural phenomena, represent basic attitudes of the individual

¹See above p. 58, n. 2.

in medieval Japan towards the world. The Noh actor portrays modulations in the character's emotions through realistic and symbolic movement patterns (kata), which both suggest the psychic state of the character while evoking natural images in the accompanying song. The Roman pantomime translates images in the canticum by discovering equivalents in corporeal expression which derive from images in his memory embodying his own personal interpretation of myth. The Corporeal Mime performer tends to work from a "universal" image deriving from an archetypal attitude, such as "love and parting" whose development is prompted by impulses from the subconscious which are filtered through technique. He also employs images deriving from work and the struggle with matter which serve as metaphors for thought and emotion. Angna Enters, who began performing in America in the early part of this century before Mime was in vogue states, "it is as though images in the creator's memory or flashes of vision acting as catalytic agents, suddenly decide to have a being of their own."¹ Her work consisted primarily of character studies of women based in the mimesis of their basic Effort qualities as reflected in characteristic postures and gestures, such as the "feline woman."

The metaphor, which links the concrete world and the performer's inner world of thought and emotion, is

¹Angna Enters, On Mime (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1965), p. 3.

the basic vehicle by which the image is conveyed. Daniel Stein, a Corporeal Mime performer states:

The metaphor must be the key: transposing reality with line and transposing daily activities with rhythm; putting the thought to rhythm and hence, the line to poetry. All the images, as diverse as they may seem, sprout from a germ of thought that needed to manifest itself visually and not in words.¹

The use of concrete imagery as metaphors for attitudes can be found in statements by the Comediantes Pantomima-Teatro of Mexico concerning their working process.

For example, fire has a specific form, color, sound, etc. It makes us feel safe and warm on a cold, rainy night. It can also give us a sense of fear because it so easily can get out of control; it is so potentially destructive and deadly. To represent fire we not only want to imitate the external vision, but also to instill the emotional and personal response to fire which differs with each human being and his personal vision.²

While representing the "external" gestic aspects of the image, the Comediantes performer also conveys the personal response that the images elicits in the muscles and organs of his body.

3. "Mime is performed from a state of active, creative reverie characterized by identification and transformation."

Contact with and expression of imagery appears to involve a complex psychological process in which the performer must "free-up" his subconscious in order to allow

¹Daniel Stein, "Daniel Stein: Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Paris, France," The Mime Journal 1980-82, p. 163.

²Ariel Ashwell and Sigfrido Aguilar, "Comediantes Pantomima-Teatro: Guanajuato, Mexico," The Mime Journal 1980-82, p. 37.

images to surface and affect his body. The mime generally creates from a state of active, creative "reverie," similar to a waking dream, in which he is able to experience images as having tangible presence. In ritual, the performer seeks a state of dissociation through the vehicle of the trance, which can involve anything from a deep trance, with total loss of consciousness and control by the devotee over his actions, to a dream-like state of reverie in which he is able to direct and control his actions while allowing his inner dream world to unfold. The trance frees the ritual performer from the habitual attitudes that comprise his everyday personality allowing latent half-acted attitudes to surface and take on a life of their own. In the Noh drama, the narration of the shite is believed to occur in the Monk's (waki) dream. The Noh actor enters into the dream world of the play and makes contact with his character image in a ritual performed in the "Mirror Room" which is analogous to possession. The placing of the character mask over his face serves to distance the actor from his everyday personality allowing him to meet the character image with an attitude latent within himself. The goal of the Noh actor's art lies in the attainment of a state of "non-imitation" in which the performance appears to flow effortlessly from the subconscious. The Corporeal Mime performer works primarily from "universal" or "archetypal" images which are stored in the subconscious memory. The performer's access to and effective presentation of

these images lies in effacing the personality or the particular and limited attitudes exemplifying the ego. Unlike traditional forms of Mime, the Corporeal Mime performer does not express latent attitudes through character enactment, rather he employs pure impulses embodying thought and emotion which express themselves through Corporeal Mime "grammar."

Frequent reference to the importance of reverie in the creative process can be found in statements by contemporary Mime artists. Maximilien Decroux believes that "the dream, formally represented or not has always been a predilection for the art of mimes."¹ The Polish mime, Stefan Niedzialkowski, who lives and performs in the United States, says Mime "should speak beyond words--dreams, emotions and fantasy are its subject matter."² Similarly, Marcel Marceau states that Mime involves "a creative process which roots in instinct and reminiscence, interior dreams, interior music which are expressed in silence."³

Dissociation, or the freeing up of the subconscious through diminishing the influence of habitual attitudes, is frequently affected by the assumption of a mask or mask-like expression. During the trance, the ritual performer's

¹M. Decroux, Ecrits, p. 25.

²Niedzialkowski, Mime-dance Lecture-Demonstration, New York City, 16 July, 1981.

³Marceau, quoted in Norma McLain Stoop, "The Interior Music of Marcel Marceau," Dance Magazine 49 (July 1975), p. 36.

face often assumes the "blank" expression of a sleepwalker signifying a loss of consciousness. Other performers wear a mask, paint their face, or cover it with a cloth in order to cut themselves off from the influence of the outside world and to "absent" their everyday identity.

The use of the mask as a vehicle for dissociation can be found in the work of many of today's performers who employ "neutral masks," or as in the case of Corporeal Mime, maintain a "neutral expression" while performing. Jacques Lecoq, a teacher based in Paris who uses Mime as a part of a global training method which includes clowning, juggling, acrobatics, spoken text, dance, and the plastic arts--all related to the body in movement, believes that the neutral mask "erases the past," allowing the performer to return to the precognitive where he is free to gather new impressions.¹

Freed from the habitual restraints of the ego, the performer is able to actively "identify" with imagery bubbling up from subconscious layers. Identification is a form of muscular empathy in which the mime senses the dynamic "gestic" qualities of the image within the muscles and organs of his body. In ritual, the devotee and shaman, through the vehicle of the trance, frequently become "possessed" by images--which take partial or total control of the body. They not only "become" images of the

¹Jacques Lecoq, quoted in Felner, "Born in Silence," p. 196.

deities but actively identify with externally projected imagery which is superimposed on reality. In the Noh, the concept of imitation (monomane) contains the principle of identification. According to Zeami, if the actor gives himself up to the principle of identification and truly becomes one with the object his performance will neither be coarse nor weak. When the actor puts on the shite mask he gradually comes to identify the image in the mirror with one of the many forms of his latent subconscious. In the Roman Pantomime, the performer, according to Lucian, "became" what he imitated.¹ Like the mythical mime Proteus, he was able to actively identify which character images as well as other concrete phenomena.

Today's Mime artists frequently employ the term "identification" in descriptions of the Mime performer's creative process. According to Niedzialkowski, "the mime must be able to identify with everything--feelings, space, water."² Marceau states, "Mime is the art of man identifying with the elements, people, nature that surrounds us."³ according to him, the Mime performer's identification with imagery comes close to Zen's complete involvement. The performer "cannot miss the target because he has become the target himself. When the mime struggles with the wind he

¹See above p. 183, n. 1.

²Niedzialkowski, Mime-dance Lecture-Demonstration, New York City, 16 July.

³Marceau, Lecture on Mime, Brooklyn College, 1978.

is the wind."¹ Jacques Lecoq, who uses exercises involving identification as a part of his training program states:

Man understands that which moves by his ability to "mimic" it; that is, to identify himself with the world by re-enacting it with his entire being. Beginning in the silent body of man the impulses toward expression take shape--dramatic impulse and then dramatic creation.²

Lecoq leads his students through a series of exercises in which they discover the shape and gestural qualities that are unique to different phenomena such as air, fire and water. Based on the premise that "all matter moves," the exercises involve identification with the "gestic" aspects of phenomena, or, as Felner puts it, "the inner rhythm of matter."³

Identification with imagery manifests itself in a transformation of the Mime performer's body, as well as the surrounding space which becomes the imaginary locus of enacted events. The most characteristic usage of transformation in Mime involves the enactment of agents through a process analogous to "mimicry." Human mimicry puts into play mechanisms of imitation which affect the attitudes of the performer making that which is present (the performer) appear absent and that which is absent (the object or agent) appear present. According to Roger Bastide, ritual "possession could best be defined as a transformation of the

¹Ibid.

²Jacques Lecoq, "Mime, Movement, Theatre," p. 151.

³Felner, "Born in Silence," p. 198.

personality. The face metamorphoses and the entire body becomes the simulacra of the god."¹ In the Noh, the actor undergoes several transformations into characters, the external transformation effected by costume, mask and characteristic posture reflecting the "inner transformation" in the attitudes of the performer. The art of Roman Pantomime consisted of the rapid transformation from one character into another which was assisted by changes of costume and mask. Transformation, which has historically formed an important element of the Mime, can be found in the work of many twentieth century mimes.

The performer's transformation into an agent is frequently effected by the assumption of a facial mask or a fixed facial expression which represents a microcosmic condensation of the attitude characterizing the agent. In ritual, the presence of the incarnating deity in the body of the devotee is frequently signified by the transformation of the individual's facial expression or by the wearing of a mask. In the Noh, masks are carved to represent basic character types as well as subtle emotion and are the chief vehicles affecting the transformation of the actor into his role. Jacques Lecoq has his students experiment with the "expressive mask," which he believes represents a fixed physiological character, e.g., the idiot, the haughty, the old man.² If the mask is used properly,

¹See above p. 107, n. 1.

²Felner, "Born in Silence," p. 205.

"it should cause the body work and emotion to conform to the attitude of the mask. . . . The mask is based on the concept of the external physical manifestation acting upon the psyche to create an internal state."¹

While the work of many of today's performers involves the enactment of agents, other performers eschew character work. Many modern mimes attempt to go beyond the portrayal of character, preferring to work instead from a "neutral" body instrument from which all traces of personality or character have been effaced. These same mimes avoid "showing" themselves through their art. Thomas Leabhart, a teacher and performer of Corporeal Mime, believes that Mime requires the rigorous subordination of the personality of the performer.² Mimes such as Leabhart, Pitt and the contemporary French performer Yves Lebreton seek to portray "universal" ideas and emotions that are not bound to the particular limitations of character. Lebreton states:

The actor is no longer the representation of a character registered within the limits or particularism, but he becomes the physical expression of the internal thought that impells him.³

Leonard Pitt, a Corporeal Mime performer who studied with Decroux states:

¹ Ibid.

² Thomas Leabhart, "Corporeal Theatre: Claremont, California," The Mime Journal, 1980-82, p. 50-51.

³ Yves Lebreton, quoted in Dominique Bourquin, "To Talk of Mime," in Mimes on Miming, p. 4.

In corporeal mime the emphasis is on a universal expression; universal in the sense that even though the emotions being expressed are concrete, such as fear, joy, sadness, frustration, they are not expressed through an individual character, nor are they placed within the context of a specific situation. Instead, the focus is on externalizing the inner rhythms of the emotions as they are common to all people.¹

Corporeal mimes express attitudes through postures and gestures that are based in an impersonal and often "abstract" language grounded in a new technical grammar. The corporeal mime's body becomes the material of his art in which the agent is none other than the controlling "will" of the performer, which directs the shaping of impulses stemming from the various layers of the psyche.

The mime projects his inner dream world outwards as superimposed upon reality effecting a transformation of time and space into the imaginary locus of enacted events. In ritual mime, the performers interact and enter into dialogue with images that are invisible to the spectator. Large amounts of time and vast distances may be compressed into a single gesture or step, and props are frequently transformed into objects and agents of the drama. In and through his various transformations, the Noh actor is able to expand, contract, overlap and invert the spacial and time modes of the play. Moreover, he frequently transforms props, such as the fan, into various objects--such as a tea cup, a moon, a butterfly, etc. There is evidence

¹Leonard Pitt, "Leonard Pitt: Berkeley, California," The Mime Journal, 1980-82, p. 131.

that the Roman pantomime was actually able to make his audience "see" the imaginary events he was enacting. He also appears to have used props (such as a cloak) which he was able to transform into various phenomena. This century has seen the development of "objective" Mime which is primarily based in the creation of illusion. Marcel Marceau, the most well-known performer of this genre states, "the task of the mime is not to show reality, but to recreate reality,"¹ according to him, "mime, an art of illusion, makes visible the invisible and concrete the abstract, and the audience identifies with the very trickery of it."²

The mime's primary vehicle for the creation of illusion lies in the sense of "touch" which endows space with tactile qualities. The mime both touches and is touched by the forces, objects and agents which people his imaginary world. Jean-Louis Barrault states:

Touch is the "perforative" sense. It allows us to "see" the other side of things, brings us into contact with the unknown, makes us glimpse the invisible. It is the sense whose range reaches "beyond the limit." Before all else, the mime must become aware of this unlimited contact with things.³

The mime's gestures give tactile qualities to space and like the art of sculpture make tactual space visible.

¹Marceau, quoted in Marianne Simmel, "Mime and Reason: Notes on the Creation of the Perceptual Object," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 31 (Winter): 193-94.

²Marceau, quoted in Bari Rolfe, "Mime-Paradigm of Paradox," Impulse, 1969-70, p. 37.

³Jean-Louis Barrault, "The Tragic Mime," in Dorcy, The Mime, p. 95-96.

Marceau states, "dancers fill space" while mimes "sculpture space."¹ Consider, for example, Marceau's Mime piece "The Cage." What makes it believable is the strain in the prisoner's hands and arms as he pushes against invisible walls and then suddenly releases as he encounters an opening. The mime creates illusions, such as "walls," primarily through subtle variations in the Effort qualities which underlie his gestures. Modern mimes also employ objects whose given identity they are able to transform. For example, Charlie Chaplin in "The Gold Rush" mimed a ballet with dining table accessories--actually reproducing the various movements of a classical ballerina's legs.

4. Mime is a posturally-based art of gesture.

The Mime performer both reacts to and enacts imagery through a psychophysical process grounded in "posture." Attitude psychology reveals that the preliminary stage of every kind of action is attitudinal, that is, "postural" with orienting tensions. Both the mime's reaction to and enactment of imagery is characterized by the maintenance of a posture as a basis for the unfolding of gesture. The posture, shaped by the underlying Efforts which animate it, represents a crystallization of the essential "energies" characterizing the attitude embodied in an image. Posture in Mime manifests itself in three important stylistic devices:

¹Marceau, quoted in Stoop, "The Interior Music of Marcel Marceau," p. 36.

first, in the maintenance of a base bodily posture indicating character; second, in the momentarily held pose of the entire body; third, in the "fixing" of the body or parts of the body in space as a platform for the unfolding of gesture.

The most typical use of posture in Mime lies in the portrayal of human and non-human agents through the assumption of a "bodily attitude," which is generally accompanied by characteristic gestures. Both the posture and gestures are animated and shaped by the Efforts or mental tensions characterizing the "habitual mental attitude" underlying the role. The transformation of the performer's postural tonus into the simulacrum of character represents a "mask" of the body. It is frequently accompanied by the assumption of a facial mask or expression. Huston states:

We commonly think that attitudes are mental phenomena but masks remind us that attitudes are dispositions of the body; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that attitudes are physical dispositions [postures] perceived psychologically. In preparing the body to support a character mask, we form the body into a character attitude [posture].¹

The mime portrays emotion through a momentarily held pose of the body. Human feelings express the modifications of the internal state of the individual and his relation to what surrounds him. According to attitude psychology, emotion manifests itself in the steady maintenance of a posture, which serves to prepare for an action.

¹Huston, "Dimensions of Mime Space," p. 72.

According to Alfred Binet, "The emotions are attitudes, that is, actions in preparation which for one reason or another are deferred or suppressed. The emotion exists when the attitude is actualized."¹ Jacques Lecoq has developed a series of exercises based on the premise that a physical disposition or "attitude of the body is related to an internal attitude of mind."² He has his students isolate various parts of the body and position them differently, noting that as one angles the head or torso, or lifts an arm, a change in the emotional state accompanies the shift. Emotional reactions such as "fear" and "rage" to real or imagined phenomenon have traditionally been portrayed in Mime through stylized postures and gestures.

The task of the mime consists in the articulation of attitudes contained in imagery through momentarily held "poses" or postures of the body. The underlying tensions associated with an attitude which shape the postural tonus of the body are metaphorically embodied in the Efforts contained in the "gestic" traits of images. The posture in Mime is never a static pose but a dynamically charged symbol which contains the Effort qualities in the movement preceding it and those of the movement which will flow out of it.

The Noh kata, which consist of realistic and symbolic movement patterns, convey the inner emotional landscape

¹See above p. 51, n. 1.

²Lecoq, "Mime, Movement, Theatre," p. 152.

of the character through posture and gesture. Each kata consists of a pose and progression, the movement begins in the stillness of a held postural pose, evolves into gesture, and culminates in a brief pose that epitomizes the essence of the movement pattern. The "attitude" or postural pose in Corporeal Mime is a frozen instant of movement, which serves to punctuate or highlight the essence of a movement phrase through a distilled gestural image. Dorcy states, "a successful attitude [posture] is like a condensed drama; perfect, complete, it is an image epitomizing identity, origin, destination, and intent."¹

Throughout history Mime postures have been modeled on the poses of sculpted or painted figures in the Fine Arts. While the sculptor has often attempted to portray the essence of movement in a figure by indicating the movement which has just ended and the movement that is just beginning, the Mime performer has striven from the immobile quality of sculpture. Charlie Chaplin is quoted as having said, "mime is immobility,"² and Jacques Lecoq states, "All that is great tends towards immobility (immobility is also a gesture)."³ The postures in the Noh, which indicate character as well as express the essence of the kata, have frequently been compared to sculpture. The basic standing

¹Dorcy, The Mime, p. 33.

²Charlie Chaplin, quoted by Etienne Decroux, Class Lecture, 1976.

³Lecoq, "Mime, Movement, Theatre," p. 153.

position (kamae) in the Noh is not the basis of movement but of the acquisition of the technique of non-movement. The gliding walk of the actor serves to "transport" the immobile trunk through space like a sculptured effigy. Evidence suggests that Roman pantomime employed postures modeled on statuary and painting to portray character, action and emotion. In this century, Etienne Decroux has borrowed stylistic elements from classical statuary in creating figures based in "mobile statuary." These figures consist of designed postures which, as in the Noh, are moved through space by rotational and translational movements of the performer's legs--an aesthetic device which Decroux refers to as "transported immobility." Today, many modern performers continue to attest to the importance of "attitude" (posture) as an integral component of their styles. And while a recent critic contends that Mime has moved away from the static elements of posture based in classical statuary,¹ it is nonetheless according to Patrice Pavis, "made up more of attitudes and poses than of movements."²

The fixing of the body or parts of the body in space provides a "platform" for the unfolding of gesture. The emotion and thought representing an attitude are crystallized in the muscles and joints of the performer's body--manifesting itself as "movement held up from going

¹Anna Kisselgoff, "Is Mime Moving Closer to Dance?", The New York Times, 1 January 1984, p. H:12.

²Pavis, Languages of the Stage, p. 53.

into action." Mime gesture, which involves the movements of peripheral or isolated organs of the body, serves to "articulate" and "release" the tension held up in the joints. The articulation and independent movements of parts of the mime's body is analogous to the movement style of the marionette. In ritual mimetic enactment, the movement of the possessed devotee has been compared to that of a marionette. The performer seems to be "pinned together" at the joints and his gestures are characterized by unitary and isolated movements which appear to be moved by an unseen force. Gesture in the Noh unfolds from an immobile torso, which serves as the energy nexus from which the arm and leg movements generate. Movement in the Noh, which grows out of a postural base, evolves into the immobility of posture. The essence of the Noh Mime-dance lies in stopping each movement just at the moment when the muscles are tensed. Gesture in Mime is characterized by "bound flow" which produces the impression of "tension" and "resistance" in a movement. The quality of bound flow in gesture is intimately bound up with posture--the struggle of the attitude held up from going into action which, when finally released presents itself as resistance to freedom of "flow" in the execution of gestures.

The "grammar" of Corporeal Mime is based on the articulation or interdependence of isolated elements of the body, which allows the performer to use his body as a "keyboard" to express his inner world of thought and emotion.

The technique of many modern Mime performers has been influenced by Corporeal Mime grammar. Marcel Marceau uses posturally based gesture to create "objective" mime pieces which reveal "how man does things." The creation of illusion primarily involves gestures high in the Effort factor of "bound flow" and the use of the body as a platform for isolated movements of parts of the body. David Lindner, a mime performer, states that the highly stylized technique of the mime which is based in exercises involving, "isolations of not only the limbs and head, but the parts of those extremities as well as the parts of the torso," creates the impression of "expertly self-controlled human marionettes."¹

5. The poses and posturally-based gesture of the mime performer are important vehicles not only for conveying the attitudes of the performer but his underlying 'will' and 'control'.

In order to effectively articulate attitudes through a language of posture and gesture the mime must be possessed of a prodigious technique and be able to exercise "control" over all aspects of his performance. The controlling mind or "will" of the performer is analogous to the marionettist, and the performer's attitudes are analogous to the "strings" which articulate the marionette's various segments. In ritual, the possessed individual, who loses all consciousness and control over the possessing spirit, appears to be

¹David Lindner, "Mime; Part 1," Dance Life 2 (Summer 1976): 10.

"jerked around" by his inner attitudes. However, other individuals are able to maintain a partial or total control over the possessing spirits and retain an awareness of their performance and its effect on the audience. The shaman, who is the prototype of the solo mime performer, is able to "double" his consciousness. In other words, he retains a rational control and knowledge of self while allowing images not only to take over his body but to appear in the surrounding space. The Noh actor, even though he becomes fully identified with his object of imitation, must be able to maintain an awareness of the effect of his performance on the audience. He must "stand at a distance" as it were from himself--viewing his performance from the vantage point of the spectator ("detached view"). The Noh actor's mind, which Zeami compares to the strings of a puppet, is embodied in the concept of kokoro, which refers to the unconscious mind in which the actor is unaware that he is acting; and a rational or conscious mind, which is aware of what and how the styles and effects are produced. In the Roman Pantomime, according to Lucian, "there is a display of mind in the performance as well as expression of bodily development, and the most important part is the wisdom that controls the actions, and the fact that nothing is irrational."¹ In Corporeal Mime, the performer's controlling will and creative subconscious ideally command a perfectly trained and articulated instrument which should

¹Lucian, Saltatio, Loeb Classical Library, p. 273.

present itself as an "ideal marionette." The instincts, motor reactions, emotions and thoughts which arise from the various layers of the psyche are shaped and honed by the Corporeal mime's controlling will which filters them through a highly stylized technique:

The gesture of the Mime is neither a natural impulse nor a physiological reflex; censored and elaborated by the intellect, as by an architect, it therefore offers us sharply defined images.¹

The element of will and control is seen most clearly in the Mime in the moments of "no action" characterized by a dynamically charged pose. The mime never "rests" during a moment of immobility. He must continue to animate his held postural form with all of the energies of his body and mind in order to project the underlying attitude outwards. The shaman frequently recounts his spiritual voyage while remaining in an immobile posture from which he must project the internal reenactment of events outwards to his entourage. This same technique is also found in the Noh drama in the moments of "no action" in which the depths of the play are enacted in the "heart" of the performer. The Noh actor animates his held postural form through a form of energy called ki which he imagines as lines of force emanating from his solar plexus into all directions in space. The projection of this energy creates the impression that the actor is an animated marionette or statue which is moved by an unseen force. In Corporeal

¹Dorcy, The Mime, p. 34.

Mime the briefly held poses, as well as the more lengthy moments of immobility, "push" on space exerting a counter-force to the tensions holding the movement in check.

Many twentieth century mimes attest to the importance of energy in directing, shaping and controlling movement. The Polish Mime artist and choreographer Tomaszewski calls the energy that animates the Mime "current:"

Everything in pantomime begins with current. . . . The current is our anatomical and mental disposition which forces the body to perform a definite action. It is something like an inward order: Begin! Thus the current is a kind of physical and spiritual mobilization which finds expression in the concentration and readiness of both body and mind. Physical readiness manifests itself, among other things, by the tension of muscles in the area of the solar plexus, although the tensing of muscles alone is still not current. . . . Current is basically that which organizes the mime's movements and maintains him in a state of tension.¹

The Comediantes Pantomima-Teatro also attest to the importance of energy as an integral element of their creative process:

There is always a consciousness of energy around us--in objects, in people and in abstract space. The interior energies created by muscle work extend out into the geometric space forming lines of forces. By feeling and projecting these lines of forces through the muscular and skeletal structure we can give every movement significance. The significance is not necessarily intellectual, but often emotional or aesthetic.²

These energies which radiate outward from the performer's body give shape and dynamism to the space convey both the controlling will of the performer as well as the Efforts

¹Tomaszewski, quoted in Mimes on Miming, p. 166-67.

²Ariel Ashwell and Sigfrido Aguilar, "Comediantes Pantomima-Teatro," p. 35.

residing in imagery, which are the metaphorical embodiments of bodily and mental tension characterizing an attitude.

6. The syntax and semantics of Mime language is analogous to that of spoken poetry.

Many theorists believe that Mime was man's first language and that gestural metaphors produced by the body were later translated into lingual metaphors in which the gestures produced by the tongue, lips and vocal chords are the microcosmic reproduction of global corporeal postures and gestures. Antonin Artaud states, "there is an identity or origin between words and gestures, it is plastic movements which have given them [words] birth."¹

From its earliest origins the gestural language of the mime has been intimately linked to the spoken word. In ritual, the mimetic enactment of the possessed devotee and shaman is frequently accompanied by a verbal recitation or dialogue, in which gestural metaphors tend to serve as equivalents for lingual metaphors. Ritual mimetic enactment springs from spontaneous primary gesture. However, with time, these gestures become codified into a language of "signs" which, like words in spoken language, have fixed and repeatable denotative and symbolic meanings.

The Mime-dance of the Noh possesses a codified language of movement patterns (kata) which serve as verbal equivalents for meanings in the sung text. There are

¹Antonin Artaud, quoted in Veinstein, La Mise en Scène Théâtrale, p. 34.

three types of kata in the Noh: realistic (descriptive), symbolic and abstract. The realistic patterns are mimetic in nature and portray everyday activities through highly stylized postures and gestures. Symbolic movement patterns express the essence of an action or emotion through suggestion in which the posture and gesture relate indirectly to the signified. Abstract movement patterns, which are included in the Mime-dance as "design" elements, are purely "formulaic" having no intrinsic meaning of their own. However, they appear to take on concrete meaning when juxtaposed with words and phrases in the text. The realistic and symbolic kata function as equivalents for meanings in the text and are generally timed to coincide with the phrases they accompany. The highly stylized, abstract and subtle nature of the Noh kata, which serve both to translate the inner world of the central character, as well as suggest meanings in the text, makes their function analogous to metaphors or poetic images.

The term "Mime" in ancient Greece meant to represent a phenomenon by means of its "species characteristic traits,"--those elements of sound or gesture which separated it from other classes of phenomena. While the mime's portrayal may have involved portraiture or the exact duplication of a phenomenon, his performance primarily entailed "abstracting" the pertinent traits of a phenomenon while effectively suppressing all non-essential detail. The Roman Pantomime, by all accounts, consisted

of a codified language of signs which served to translate words and phrases in the accompanying canticum into gestural images. As in the art of oratory, the performer employed a large number of "hand signs" which were probably similar to those employed in various types of deaf-mute languages. The Roman Pantomime, in all likelihood, possessed three types of gesture: "indicative" or "descriptive", those which pointed to objects actually present, or described absent objects; "imitative," which indicated an object by singling out formal (shape) and/or dynamic (gestic) species characteristic traits in which there was a direct connection between signifier and signified; and "symbolic", in which the traits of the object imitated served as a sign for an idea or concept. While little is known about the way in which gestures functioned in relation to words in the canticum, it appears that many of the postures and gestures served as word equivalents, while others served a more poetic function of "suggesting" or "evoking" words and phrases through "symbolic" signs.

Codified pantomimic language has continued to form an integral part of the ballet, where it is used to "tell a story" or as dialogue between two dancers. Until the early part of this century, the art of Pantomime in the West consisted of a codified language in which postures and gestures served as verbal equivalents. Charles Aubert has recorded one of these languages, extant in late nineteenth century France, which appears to have been remarkably

similar to the language of Roman pantomimes:

A dramatic expression to be complete requires at the same time; posture, facial expression and gesture. Characterization consists mostly of postures. Portrayal of emotion is produced mainly by facial expressions. Descriptive or speaking action consists mainly of gestures made with the hands.¹

His book, The Art of Pantomime, contains drawings of the various signs that can be produced by the hands and body, along with their possible verbal equivalents. In addition, there is a discussion of the seven parts of speech and how they may be translated into the language of Pantomime to form sentences. While the Roman pantomime did not use facial expressions, because he was masked, the language of nineteenth-century Pantomime appears to have been similar to its classical counterpart in its use of a codified language of signs which served as equivalents for words and/or phrases.

Twentieth-century Mime and Pantomime mark a divergence from the codified languages of the past. Today, Mime, as a pure art of posture and gesture, can be divided roughly into two styles: "objective" or ("concrete") and "abstract" or ("subjective"). Many performers use a combination of these two styles, which represent a continuum involving signs which directly "denote" phenomena within the realm of the viewer's experience ("objective") to those in which the connections with concrete denotata appear to be remote

¹Charles Aubert, The Art of Pantomime, trans. Edith Sears (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1970), p. 4.

or absent ("abstract"). While the work of twentieth-century performers is still based in abstracting the essential traits of phenomena, the signs employed by the performer are not a part of a codified language in which postures and gestures can be matched with verbal equivalents. Performers today possess codified "grammars" consisting of the independence and articulation of the various organs of the body which can be moved singly or in combination.

"Objective" Mime is closely bound up with the creation of "illusion" in which the performer actually seems to make invisible phenomena "present" before the spectator's eyes. It is more concerned with expressing the traits of concrete phenomena than with the more abstract portrayal of the inner world of thought and emotion which is the predilection of performer's whose work is based in "subjective" Mime. "Objective" Mime is similar to traditional forms of Mime and Pantomime in its use of "realistic" or "mimetic" signs which instantly "denote" phenomena and make the spectator actually believe the performer is doing exactly what we do in everyday life. However, the mime's work consists in "abstracting" characteristic traits of phenomena in representing them and not in "duplication" or "copying" phenomena. According to Nelson Goodman,

The action of a mime . . . is not usually among the actions it denotes. He does not climb ladders or wash windows but rather portrays, represents, denotes the ladder-climbing and window-washing by what he does. His miming may indeed exemplify activities involved in climbing or window-washing, as a picture may exemplify the color of a house it represents; but the

picture is not a house, and the miming is not a climbing.¹

Many modern mimes, most notably those inspired by the work of Decroux, attempt to go beyond semblance and the illusory recreation of reality. Decroux insists that Mime must abandon realistic movement or the conveying of phenomena through realistic imitation. On the other hand, it must not go to the opposite extreme and recur to symbols and signs to portray concrete objects and events. Influenced by the Noh Mime-dance and various other forms of dance, the work of Copeau, abstract cubism and the discoveries of modern psychology; Decroux and other mimes are more concerned with the "subjective," non-figurative portrayal of the "inner world" of thought and emotion.

All Mime, whether subjective or objective, abstract or concrete is concerned with revealing the inner imaginative world of the performer--and it does this through stylized postures and gestures which are based in "images" stemming from the material world. The difference between traditional and "objective" forms of Mime and modern "abstract" forms is that in the latter the Mime signs have been stripped of the denotational elements that would readily signify their counterparts in reality. While the postures and gestures of "abstract" Mime are based in the same images and their correlative attitudes that are found in more traditional forms of Mime, they are expressed

¹Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co., 1976), p. 63-64.

through a kind of mobile geometry in which concrete phenomena are reduced to their barest traits of line and dynamism.

Decroux, and many of the performers that have grown out of his work have developed vocabularies built out of moving volumes and lines which are animated by variations in dynamisms (Efforts). Like abstract art, these Mime pieces consist of geometric expressions of the essential characteristic formal and gestic traits of phenomena. Using lines, inclinations, rotations and translations--much in the way an artist uses color or a musician notes--the mime creates a highly abstract portrait of an inner attitude. Daniel Stein, in a discussion of the Corporeal mime's working process, states:

We no longer follow the model; we extract the tendencies of the model, and through simplification and amplification of those tendencies we approach the essence. . . . Architectural and dynamic rhythm become the keystones for the actor in the ediface created with the gymnast's body.¹

The Comediantes Pantomima-Teatro troupe, whose members received no formal training, work in a similar manner:

Beginning with a natural movement from daily life, the mime begins improvising, bringing the movement from specific to abstract and searching for the essence of the movement idea. Once captured, it is returned to its natural spontaneity, deleting that which is common and emphasizing the form, the line, and the deeper emotional design.²

¹Stein, "Daniel Stein," p. 156.

²Ashwell and Aguilar, "Commediantes Pantomima-Teatro," p. 35.

The end product of more abstract forms of Mime is the creation of pieces that at once "denote" concrete phenomena as well as "suggest" thought, idea and emotion. According to the Comediantes:

The result is an aesthetic, clearly precise movement study which is immediately comprehensible to the public, and yet abstract enough to allow free personal interpretation and associations by each spectator.¹

Mime languages, whether codified or not, concrete or abstract, are composed of gestural images or "metaphors" which are analogous to verbal poetic imagery. Even classical forms of Mime, which consist of conventional languages of gesture, must create the semblance of events lived and experienced that is the essence of poetic art, otherwise they would be little more than deaf-mute languages. According to Susanne Langer:

The poet's business is to create the appearance of "experiences," the semblance of events lived and felt, and to organize them so they constitute a purely and completely experienced reality, a piece of virtual life. That illusion of life is the primary illusion of all poetic art. It is at least tentatively established by the very first sentence, which has to switch the reader's or hearer's attitude from conversational interest to literary interest, i.e., from actuality to fiction.²

The Mime artist functions in a manner analogous to the poet. His first actions must switch the spectator from the conventions or norms of everyday gesture to a "new modality" in which what follows must be interpreted by a "key." According to Pavis, "This key indicates the

¹Ibid.

²Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 212-13.

modality of the body in action, the distance separating normal gesture (ours, the one we normally experience) from the gestural mode in which what follows must be "read."¹

As in poetry, meaning is created in Mime through the juxtaposition of images. Gestural narrativity is organized syntactically, rather than semantically, as phrases consisting of posture and gesture. Barrault, in the preface of his edition of Racine's Phaedra, states:

Exactly like the spoken language, the language of gesture has its syntax and its metrics. Every gesture, indeed, is a phrase. The "attitude" one takes up, the "movement" one makes, and the "pointing out" of something into which the movement is decomposed, do these three phases not recall to our minds "subject," "verb," and "object."¹

The subject is "the attitude" (designed posture), the predicate is "the movement proper," and the object is the sense and significance of the movement. This syntax of the gestural phrase is parallel to the Joussian model of agent--acting upon--another agent. The subject is the agent, who is indicated by a characteristic posture and Efforts as well as a transitory posture indicating readiness to perform an action. The transitory "gesture" performed by the agent is the active expression of the initial posture and is analogous to a verb. The action is generally performed on another agent or object and the completion of the movement constitutes the "object" of

¹Pavis, Languages of the Stage, p. 55.

²Jean-Louis Barrault, "Pantomime," in Actors on Acting, ed. Toby Cole and Helen Chinoy (New York: Crown, 1949), p. 248.

the phrase. In addition, each segment can be broken down into a smaller tripartite unit of preparation or beginning, movement proper and relaxation.

Each of the three parts of the phrase tends to be highlighted or "epitomized" by a posture of varying duration. Decroux states that "attitude" (posture) is the "punctuation" in Mime.¹ Dorcy echoes this by stating:

In Mime, the outline--or path taken by the gesture--is incisive and direct. Preceded by an opening sign, it ends in a punctuation pause which prevents the gesture from melting into space. Thus defined, the gesture is thrown into relief, stands out from the rest.²

Decroux has compared the Mime to a series of "photographs" or "clicks", an idea which Pavis develops as follows:

Mime lends itself to being captured by the photographic lens, for it is made up more of attitudes and poses than of movements; like the eye of the camera, the human eye chooses privileged moments when the body, even in the midst of agitation and transformation, discovers flashes of eternity.³

The syntactical and grammatical devices found in Mime are bound up with the "articulation" of attitudes which underlie language. Throughout history Mime has borrowed stylistic devices from rhetoric in order to convey messages that can be clearly "read" by the spectator. However, the more a Mime piece does not attempt to explain itself through connectives, enclitics, tools of syntax and other directives for understanding, the more the line is difficult

¹Decroux, Paroles, p. 124.

²Dorcy, The Mime, p. 34-35.

³Pavis, Languages of the Stage, p. 53.

to read--this very characteristic arouses the sensual imagination.

In poetry, the words are themselves "double constructions"--they have denotational meaning but beyond this they have additional meaning created by their "sounds." The tone or mood which is created by the careful selection and juxtaposition of word sounds hovers over the poem altering its denotational meaning. In Mime, the "Efforts" or tensions in postures and gestures are analogous to the "sounds" of words in poetry. They not only convey the underlying attitude of the performer but contribute to the meaning of the Mime phrase.

Like poetry, Mime projects the illusion of experience as "virtual memor_." ¹ The silent actions of the Mime, which unfold before the spectator's eyes, only serve to indicate a poetic and dream-like vision of an absent reality. According to Cole, the actor's art consists in making imaginary truth "present" before an audience. ² The important difference between the illusion presented by the mime and the actor, is that the former presents "absence" rather than "presence." Like the shaman, the mime carries us into the deepest realms of the dreaming imagination, while he is present before us everything he does makes us think of that which is absent. While the mime appears to move forward in time, he leaves a trace and it is that

¹Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 306.

²Cole, The Theatrical Event, p. 6.

trace which we dwell upon. The dramatic illusion, according to Langer is "a present filled with its own future."¹ The paradox of the Mime is that it is the present filled with its own past.

In sum, this study concludes that the following creative and stylistic principals are integral to an aesthetic of Mime. Mime is rooted in the expression of attitudes, which are metaphorically embodied in concrete imagery. The performer effects contact with imagery through a state of active, creative reverie characterized by identification and transformation. The aesthetics of this creative process are similar to those of the marionette. The performer uses his body as the "material" of his art, exercising will and control over all means of expression, in order to clearly "articulate" images. The primary stylistics of Mime languages lies in the use of posturally based gesture, in which the whole or parts of the body are fixed in space as platforms for the unfolding of gesture. This allows the performer to facet brightly detached phrases of movement, made up of posture and gesture. These phrases constitute "gestural images" which exhibit similarities to the grammar and poetry of verbal images.

¹Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 307.

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