INTRODUCTION

THE HYPOCRITICAL SELF

F OR A BOOK THAT IS FILLED WITH ANECDOTES, IT SEEMS APPROPRIATE
to begin with an anecdote of my own, and so here it is.

Like many children, I was afraid of clowns. I remember the moment
vividly when, as a seven-year-old, I was finally able to articulate the basis
of this fear. My grandparents had taken my brother and me to the circus,
and since we had arrived early, we were sitting and watching the roust-
abouts set up the equipment. A clown spotted us and approached me
and my brother. As he drew closer, I was able to get a good look at him.
He asked us if we wanted to be in a procession during the show with a
bunch of other kids, some animals in cages, and – of course – a whole
host of clowns. I said no, shrinking back into my seat. He was surprised
and looked at my grandparents, asking whether I was sure I didn't want
to be part of the fun procession. They smiled and said that I was shy, and
the clown retreated, seeking out other children among the early-comers.
But I suddenly understood my fear: the clown had a big smile painted on
his face, but the real mouth underneath the painted smile *wasn't smiling*.
Clowns could go through a whole performance without ever actually
smiling, I realized. Clowns could actually be evil, and you'd never know
unless you got up close. And by then it would be too late.

The uneasiness that many people have felt throughout the ages with
theatrical impersonation provided the genesis of this book. The disso-
nance between actor and character, or actor and mask, in the case of the
ancient world, has often provoked uncertainty about actors as a class of
people and acting as an activity. What follows is an examination of Greek
and Roman attitudes toward actors and acting, the anxieties and desires
that theatrical impersonation aroused, at different moments in Greek
and Roman history. Numerous Greek vase-paintings show actors hold-
ing their masks, sometimes studying them intently, sometimes carelessly

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dangling them from a hand; the artists often depict the actor's face and the mask as identical.[1] On the other hand, there are late Roman ivory carvings of theatrical masks that carefully show the actor's eyes, lips, and teeth behind the eye-holes and mouth-hole of the mask.[2] Are these images of terror, as they would have been to my seven-year-old self, or of fascination, even admiration? I mention desires, as well as anxieties; the conclusion of my circus story is that I watched the procession of exotic animals, children selected from the audience, and clowns, and despite feeling that I had narrowly escaped some horrible fate, I was envious of the children in the spotlight. I secretly wished the clown would come back and give me a second chance.

While drama enjoyed great popularity during many periods in the ancient world, theatrical impersonation was an activity that was viewed with a great deal of ambivalence at both the moral level and the practical level. On the moral level, some people questioned the ethical status of impersonation: was it essentially lying? What effect did it have on the people who engaged in it, and what effect did it have on the spectators? On the practical level, some people wondered how acting worked: was acting the use of a set of skills, or was it a submersion of the self through some mysterious process into the character(s) played?[3] Both sets of questions have to do with the ontological status of the self – that is, with the effect of mimesis on identity. Both sets of questions had profound implications for the way society viewed not just actors, but all selves.

For the purposes of this study, I am defining mimesis as the act of theatrical impersonation,[4] and identity as the sense of possessing a self that is an integrated whole, consistent over time and in different settings. Scholars who study the history of ideas differ about what term to

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[1] Bieber (1961) 82 (actors studying masks); Pickard-Cambridge (1988) 187 (on what he calls the "melting" of the actor's face and character's mask); see also the famous Pronomos Vase for a satyr-chorus in various stages of getting into or becoming one with their costumes, including one actor whose face seems to resemble the female mask he is holding.

[2] Bieber (1961) 243.

[3] Wiles (1991) 110 describes anecdotal and artistic representations of actors studying their masks in attitudes of "observation rather than immersion" and argues that this is necessitated in a theatrical tradition where actors play multiple roles, but there is abundant evidence for the "immersion" theory as well; see chapter 5 below on Clodius Aesopus.

[4] Rather than defining it more broadly as the imitation of "real life" in literature, as Auerbach does in his classic work *Mimesis* (1974).

use to describe the notion of identity in antiquity, though they tend to agree that a fundamental divide separates us from the ancients. Sometime between the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, the story goes, people became self-conscious, and the modern sense of self was born, now usually termed "subjectivity."[5] The ancients, on the other hand, were not blessed (or cursed) with this anxious self-consciousness, and so their sense of identity was more communal, more rooted in family, clan, gender, age, and status than in a Romantic or post-Romantic sense of possessing a unique individuality.[6] The philosopher Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, for example, traces four distinct stages in the development of the sense of identity of persons. She labels the unreflective, reactive people contained within Homer and other ancient literary and philo-sophical texts "characters"; she describes later ancients and medievals as "persons" (based on the ancient use of the term *persona* in both theater and law), because they played a variety of roles and were held individu-ally accountable for their actions; she defines as "selves" the people who lived after the advent of capitalism and the social mobility (and consequent shifts in the basis of identity) it enabled; and finally, she describes self-conscious, late-capitalist, post-Romantic folk like us as "individuals."[7] The literary critic Lionel Trilling has a simpler system, speaking of per-sons living after the early sixteenth century as having a sense of self where *sincerity* was the ultimate measure of value, while modern persons have a sense of self where *authenticity* is the ultimate measure. Persons living before the sixteenth century, he says, simply were not "individuals" in

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[5] Rorty, "Introduction," in Rorty (1976), locates the origin of the contemporary sense of identity in three major components: the philosophical component is the develop-ment of the sense of self from the Cartesian "I" through the works of Locke, Hume, Kant, Sartre, and Heidegger; the historical component is the advent of the Refor-mation and its push toward individual responsibility; the cultural component is the influence of Romanticism and the invention of the novel of first-person sensibility. Other scholars might include the Renaissance's insistence on individual authorship of literary and artistic works.

[6] See, for example, Blondell (2002) 60; Csapo (2002) 139–40.

[7] Rorty, "Postscript," in Rorty (1976). Rorty acknowledges that her system is far tidier than any application of it to reality. It should be noted that she does not seem to envision only literary characters as "characters," though this is not exactly clear, and that her discussion of "persons" is shot through with a good deal of Christianity: the person is the legally liable subject, but this becomes the moral agent accountable to God for his actions. These two factors make her historical perspective on personal identity less useful for examining the ancient world than for contrasting the modern world with the ancient one. On Rorty's fourfold division of personal identity, see Alcorn (1994) 7–11.

the modern sense.[8] As with Rorty's history of personal identity, the distinction Trilling draws is between external and internal evaluation of the sense of self, with a historical development from external to internal – corresponding roughly to the transition between what anthropologists call "shame cultures" and "guilt cultures," and sometimes used as a code for referring to the supposedly natural and inevitable development of Protestantism.[9]

It should be noted that these schemas have a pronounced evolutionary aspect to them, which might make us question them.[10] If we attempt to put aside the twentieth-century evolutionary model of psychic development represented by Rorty's and Trilling's theories when we look at the ancient evidence, a somewhat different picture of ancient selfhood emerges. The various media which provide our evidence for ancient conceptions of identity – literary, historical, philosophical, medical, and rhetorical texts, funerary and other inscriptions, letters, law, portrait sculpture – present rather different views of the sense of self in antiquity, depending on their target audience, level of sophistication, and degree of self-consciousness as sources. There is evidence from the ancient world that could be used to suggest the existence of a postmodern conception of subjectivity as fluid, fragmented, constructed, or contingent: Hesiod's account of the literal construction of woman in the creation of Pandora in the *Works and Days*, for example, or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with its interest in physical change, dissolution of ego boundaries, and instability of gender.[11] The general ideal, however, was closer to what we would call a modern sense of identity rather than a postmodern sense of subjectivity,

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[8] Trilling (1972) ch. 1. Trilling's concern is with literary characters, not with historical persons: "The sincerity of Achilles or Beowulf cannot be discussed: they neither have nor lack sincerity" (2). We might wonder what he thought of Cicero, on the other hand. It is interesting to note that both Trilling's and Rorty's systems are haunted by the concept of authenticity; this seems to be "our" problem, as moderns.

[9] Rorty and Trilling (and many others) rely heavily on Mauss' schema of the evolution of the concept of the person, which connected the sense of interiority which defines the "person" to the advent of autobiography in Augustine's *Confessions*. For an excellent analysis and critique of this schema, see Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes, eds. (1985), especially the essays on the ancient world by Hollis and Momigliano.

[10] Alcorn (1994) 10; see also Lape (2004) 97.

[11] The fact that certain postmodern literary theories have been applied with great success to these authors – structuralism and semiotics to Hesiod, Lacanian psychoanalysis to Ovid – is a hint that these authors' theories of the self mesh fairly comfortably with postmodern theories of subjectivity. On Hesiod, see, e.g., Pucci (1977); on Ovid, see, e.g., Murray (1998).

stressing consistency (over time, among different aspects of the self, and between soul and body), self-control, and unity; Ruby Blondell has recently labeled this ideal in ancient thought "harmonious homogeneity."[12] Some scholars would add that the ancient sense of self was not modern in terms of its relative lack of "inwardness"; the ancients, unlike us, were not concerned with self-scrutiny.[13] This seems to overstate the case; after all, one of the most famous inscriptions from the ancient world was the inscription at the Oracle of Delphi, symbolic center of the Greek world: ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ, "Know thyself." This motto (or mandate) presumes the existence of a self to be known, and a capacity for inward scrutiny in order to know it. It is another expression of the ancient conception of the ideal self.

We see this ideal expressed to different degrees in different media from the ancient world. If it is possible to generalize so broadly and so diachronically about the different kinds of evidence, most ancient literature is concerned to represent personal identity as coherent, stable, and often distinctive, with a character's appearance usually matching his or her inner nature.[14] Ancient histories and biographies tend to be interested in drawing the moral character of their subjects, which is usually seen as developing through childhood and more or less fixed and coherent by adulthood.[15] Philosophical writings on identity are the most prescriptive

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[12] Blondell (2002) 60.

[13] See, e.g., Di Vito (1999). Foucault (1986) 41–3 discusses the older scholarly view that a sense of "individualism" began to develop in the Hellenistic period and was brought to full flower in the Roman Republic and Empire; Foucault both critiques and nuances this view with his discussion of the "care of the self" enjoined and practiced by certain Roman philosophical elites, notably the Stoics: 37–68 and *passim*.

[14] The "high" literary genres, such as epic and tragedy, have as one of their projects the revelation of the protagonists' characters. Some of the "low" literary genres, such as comedy, are uninterested in this project; there is no emphasis on consistency of character in Aristophanes, for example, or much of a sense of individuality in Plautus or Terence. (On the question of apparent individualism in Menandrian comedy, see Lape (2004, 96–9.) But other "low" genres, such as satire and epigram, do share this focus on depicting a stable character whose appearance matches reality. To those like Rorty who would exclude the earliest ancient literature, that is, Homer, from this description, one could point to the depiction of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, who maintains his essential nature through many deceptions and disguises. See Murnaghan (1987).

[15] This is clearest in moralizing biographers such as Plutarch and Suetonius, but is also evident in the "serious" historians, as in Thucydides' depiction of Nikias, or in Tacitus' *Agricola*. See Gill (1983). This tendency is also evident in the *Vita* tradition, which assumes that the poet's personality is expressed through his work.

of all ancient sources, and they overwhelmingly depict the goal of a coherent, stable, integrated self subjected to reason.[16] Ancient medical texts treat identity as consisting purely of the basic social categories of sex and age, with each category requiring a certain balance of temperature and moisture, or a certain balance of the humors.[17] Rhetorical texts are exceedingly concerned to depict identity as coherent and stable, and therefore predictable and legally responsible, as are legal texts.[18] Epideictic rhetoric too focuses on the praiseworthy individual, and in this resembles biography.[19] Funerary inscriptions speak to a sense of personal identity informed by the broadest social categories − class, status, age, gender, ethnicity, familial relationships − but occasionally, they provide a glimpse of the dead person's sense of him- or herself beyond these broad categories.[20] Letters are coming under scholarly scrutiny now for what they reveal about new ways of imagining identity in relation to other people: the letter can replace the physical presence of the correspondent; correspondence can create "imagined communities," to borrow Benedict Anderson's phrase; the self authoring the letter is highly aware of its own self-presentation and willing to present different personas to different correspondents.[21] And portrait sculpture in the ancient world shows a fascinating mix of descriptive and proscriptive elements which could be taken to indicate a sense of identity as constructed, but which in fact indicates the same focus on moral character and role modeling that we see in ancient biography.[22]

Most sources from the ancient world, then, point − in both a descriptive and a proscriptive way − to a sense (an ideal) of personal identity as

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[16] Gill (1983) 480: "In ancient ethical theory, excellence of character is often conceived as a kind of psychological stability or consistency, including the capacity to keep emotions in line with what reason approves, regardless of the impact of circumstances, which often invite rather different emotional reactions." The model of the "pagan notion of the person" as "benevolent dualism" of body and soul, described in Brown (1988) 26−34, is heavily influenced by pagan philosophical writings on the soul, especially Plato and the Stoics.

[17] See, for example, Dean-Jones (1992).

[18] Both theoretical treatises on oratory, like Aristotle's *Rhetoric* or Cicero's *De Oratore*, as well as forensic speeches, like Lysias 1 or Cicero's *In Catilinam* 1.

[19] Beck (2000) 15.

[20] We could say the same about victory and dedicatory inscriptions. For an interesting example of complicated self-presentation on a funeral monument from Roman North Africa, see Groupe de Recherches sur l'Afrique Antique (1993).

[21] Anderson (1991); on letters, see, e.g., Ebbeler (2003).

[22] See Blondell (2002) 60−61; D'Ambra (1996).

the possession of a stable, coherent, integrated self where appearance matches essence. A conception of identity as fluid or constructed, in particular, was something the ancients often attributed to actors, and not admiringly. For these reasons, I use the term "identity" rather than "subjectivity," because I am emphasizing the ancients' investment in the concept. We will see that there are places and moments and people in the ancient world who challenge this sense of identity as stable and coherent, just as there are others who reaffirm it. These challenges to the ideal were often made by the actor, whose occupation – pretending to be a variety of fictional selves – could be seen to call personal identity into question. Lucian relates an anecdote in his discussion of pantomime (*On Dance*) in which a barbarian saw a pantomime actor laying out the masks of the five characters he was about to play in his performance. The barbarian exclaimed, "My friend, I didn't realize that although you have one body, you have many souls!" ("ἐλελήθεις," ἔφη, "ὦ βέλτιστε, σῶμα μὲν τοῦτο ἕν, πολλὰς δὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ἔχων"; *De salt.* 66.) The joke in this anecdote is that the barbarian (naively? mock-naively?) assumes that the actor, like everyone else, should have one soul for his one body; his reaction, displaced onto a foreign, uncultured "other," is actually the voice of Greek and Roman ideology: bodies and souls are distinct, but they should match each other. Lucian's anecdote could be taken as one ancient definition of identity.

Thus it makes sense to begin a discussion of acting and identity with the body. The body is the most obvious candidate for the source of a sense of identity, whether identity is defined by the qualities of integrity, coherence, continuity, consciousness, or use of language. It is our first world as infants, and it can serve as a metaphorical map for all other bounded systems.[23] The body thus seems to present a reasonable ground for an essential, stable identity, and in particular, the ground of a sexed identity. If the body is the ground of an essential identity, it may be assumed to reflect that identity; we see this assumption at work in the ancient "science" of physiognomy, for example, which claimed to read a person's inner nature by examining his or her body.[24] Yet many problems arise with this assumption.[25] The body can harbor an inner nature that diverges from its outward form; the body can misrepresent its inner nature,

[23] Douglas (1984) 114–15.
[24] On ancient physiognomy, see Gleason (1995) chs. 2–3; Edwards (1993) 89–90; Evans (1935).
[25] Rorty (1976) 9 points out one problem: "We are, after all, bodily continuous with our corpses; and indeed with their decay or desiccation. If we were to treat bodily

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whether through clothing, adornment, cosmetics, disguise, deformation, or a host of other means. The body, in this mindset, can lie.[26] One of the earliest examples of this concept in literature is Paris in the *Iliad*.[27] Hector comments on the discrepancy between Paris' looks and his behavior after Paris shrinks from battle with Menelaus:

> Δύσπαρι, εἶδος ἄριστε, γυναιμανὲς ἠπεροπευτά,
> αἴθ᾽ ὄφελες ἄγονός τ᾽ ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ᾽ ἀπολέσθαι.
> {καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν}
> ἢ οὕτω λώβην τ᾽ ἔμεναι καὶ ἐπόψιον ἄλλων.
> ἦ που καγχαλόωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί,
> φάντες ἀριστῆα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὕνεκα καλὸν
> εἶδος ἔπ᾽, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή.

> Evil Paris, beautiful, woman-crazy, deceiving,
> would that you had never been born, or been killed unmarried.
> Truly I would have wished it, and it would have been much better
> than for you to be a disgrace in this way and viewed with
>   suspicion by others.
> Surely the long-haired Achaeans laugh out loud
> thinking you are our foremost man, because you are beautiful;
> but there is no strength in your breast, nor any courage.

<div align="right">(Iliad 3.39–45)</div>

At the very beginning of the Greek (and Western) literary tradition, a central character displays the ominous consequences of a mismatch between appearance and inner nature: Paris *looks* like a brave warrior, but he *acts* like a coward – with fatal results for his people. Paris' mismatch between appearance and inner nature is seen by his brother not merely as an unfortunate example of cognitive dissonance, but as "deceiving" (ἠπεροπευτά); it is a moral problem. Already at the beginning of recorded Greek thought, we see the concept of the body as the basis of personal identity, and with it, the moral ideal of the body – that is, appearance – matching the inner nature. In Paris' case, these concepts are honored in the breach.

continuity bold and bare, our life histories would continue behind the horizon and beyond the grave." Yet we *do* treat our bodies as continuous with our corpses, at least to some extent – otherwise, we would not make grave markers for them. Montserrat's essay in Montserrat, ed. (1998) deals with mummies as liminal bodies, somewhere between living and dead, sexed and unsexed, subject and object.

[26] See Montserrat, ed. (1998).
[27] See Dyck (2001) 121.

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The body of the warrior is what makes battle possible; the body of the actor is what makes drama possible. In fact, drama has been called both "the adventure of the human body" and "the misadventure of the human body."[28] It is the capacity of the body to "lie" – to appear other than what it "really" is – that enables mimesis to occur. Acting, not surprisingly, has thus aroused a great deal of anxiety throughout its history in people who oppose "lying" and wish appearance and reality to match exactly; they see the actor as a deceiver, pretending to be who he or she is not. Yet paradoxically, the *inability* of the actor's body to disappear entirely behind or into the character's costume has also proved to be a source of uneasiness. Jonas Barish, discussing the antitheatrical prejudice in D. H. Lawrence's *The Lost Girl*, puts his critical finger on one source of this uneasiness. Lawrence's novel is set during the period in the early twentieth century when movies were becoming popular enough to draw audiences away from traditional theater. Barish summarizes people's preference for movies in Lawrence's novel:

> In short, the very element of confrontation between performer and spectator that creates excitement in the theater, the human fire that attracts Alvina [the novel's protagonist] to the actors, disturbs her towns- people, who prefer not to be hotly scorched. It requires the onlooker to take account of another human being, distinct from himself, with a prickly otherness that can never be entirely soothing, as the image on the screen can be soothing, over whose unresisting flicker the watcher may pour without hindrance whatever he will of his own feelings . . . If Alvina is right, audiences sense this underlying self-assertion on the part of the players, and though exhilarated by it, find it alarming.[29]

At a fundamental level, theater is a confrontation between the actor and the spectator. No matter how well the actor plays the role, the spectator retains a sort of awkward awareness of the actor's "otherness," his or her body beneath and behind the costume.[30] Even in a theatrical tradition that uses full-head masks and full-body costumes, like ancient Greece, this confrontation between the audience and the actor's "underlying self- assertion" can produce uneasiness in some spectators.

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[28] The first quotation is from Y. Belaval, "Ouverture sur le spectacle," 3–16, quoted in Zeitlin (1996) 349 n.18; the second quotation is Zeitlin's (349), modifying Belaval's quotation to describe tragedy in particular.

[29] Barish (1981) 398–9.

[30] See Ubersfeld (1980) 11–12; on the audience's "double consciousness," see Wiles (1991) 11, 26.

Another reason for that uneasiness may be the way in which theater makes the socialization process of a given society apparent and transparent. A society pressures its members to conform to norms of gender, class, age, and status, but makes its pressures seem to be the workings of a natural and inevitable development;[31] a play, on the other hand, shows actors reproducing those norms through conscious study and imitation. Gender norms are one especially interesting and transparent case of this necessary display. Karen Bassi, building on Judith Butler's theory of gender as *only* performance,[32] argues that "theater is precisely the place where the political regulations and disciplinary practices that produce an ostensibly coherent gender are effectively placed in view."[33] This is especially so in plays that address violations of gender norms, such as cross-dressing, or in theatrical traditions (ancient Greece and Rome, Elizabethan England) that use male actors to play female characters. If, as Rorty maintains, the ancients' sense of identity was much more confined to a sense of occupying a particular position within a series of broad categories – age, class, status, ethnicity, as well as gender – then we can generalize Bassi's observation a bit: theater is the place where the political regulations and disciplinary practices that produce an ostensibly coherent *identity* are placed in view. This effect of theatrical impersonation gets at one large component of the antitheatrical response in antiquity: it is motivated by a fear of upward social mobility, which theater is seen as somehow enabling. Trilling argues that the development of the concept of sincerity in the early sixteenth century was motivated by a rise in social mobility, which in turn produced anxieties about people from the lower orders dissembling or flattering their way up the social ladder; thus the character of the "villain" was born – originally the *villein*, or serf.[34] But earlier ages and other cultures also fretted about social mobility, including Athens and Rome. The chapters that follow will have much to say about this anxiety.

A third reason for the spectator's uneasiness with theatrical impersonation is the "deception" practiced by the actor. I place "deception"

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[31] See Bourdieu (1977) 78–87 on the *habitus*.

[32] Butler (1990) *passim*, esp. 25, 128–41. I should note that I do not fully support Butler's theoretical position; I am unwilling to deny *any* biological ground to identity, even to gender identity, but Bassi's refinement of Butler's theory in terms of the reflective, representational aspect of theater is quite useful.

[33] Bassi (1998) 41.

[34] Trilling (1972) 14–16.