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THE MASK OF ASTYANAX AND THE PANTOMIME LIBRETTIST*



Just over 100 years ago what was then described as a ‘marble head’ was found in the northern part of the city of Thessaloniki. This marble head was lying on the ground at the school of the Sultan. Its ultimate provenance is unknown. In a publication dated 14 August 1907 the curator of the Archaeological Museum in Thessaloniki, P. N. Papageorgiou, called it “Head of Thessaloniki (Astyanax).” The head remained almost unnoticed during the rest of the twentieth century until it was included in the recent edition of the Museum Catalogue of Sculptures, which contains a full description of the object and a discussion of some of its unique features.

According to the new catalogue,¹ on which this description is based, the object is a coping “tile,” the front of which is entirely covered by a mask. The mask has a Phrygian bonnet and this bonnet is inscribed with the name Astyanax. Thus in the new catalogue the object has been correctly identified. It is not a head but a theatrical mask. Theatrical masks are found as architectural decorations in theatres in Greece and Asia Minor in the Hellenistic period but at that date they are rare.²

By the second and third centuries AD such decorations had become common. They appear not only on theatres but on all types of public buildings

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1. Despimis in G. Despimis, T. Stefanidou-Tiveriou, and E. Voutyras, *Κατάλογος γλυπτών του Αρχαιολογικού Μουσείου Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessalonike: MIET, 1997), no. 201, pp. 65–67, 331, figs. 509–510. I am grateful to Prof. Gregory Sifakis for a copy of the catalogue entry and to the Director of the Archaeological Museum, Dr. Polyxeni Adam-Veleni, for the photographs and for permission to publish them.
2. Jean-Charles Moretti, “Des masques et des théâtres en Grèce et en Asie Mineure”, *REA* 95 (1993) 207–23.



Figs. 1-2. Marble coping-tile from Thessaloniki representing a pantomime mask, inscribed with the name Astyanax.

throughout the Greco-Roman world. By this time they normally have no specific reference to actual theatrical productions. This coping tile was probably on the corner of a public building in Thessaloniki, perhaps the small Roman theatre, or rather Odeon, which has been found there. However it could have served as an antefix on any prominent public building in the city.³ The tile with its mask was of white thick-grained marble, probably from Thasos. The mask is 41.5 centimetres high and 32 centimetres deep. On the Phrygian cap the name Astyanax is clearly written. Most of the letters vary between 2.5 and 2.7 centimetres in height while the upsilon in the centre of the inscription, above the nose, is 3.5 centimetres high. The stylistic emphasis on the central letter, the upsilon, is an indication of the monumental aspect of the inscription. The second letter, the sigma, is written retrograde and at the beginning of the inscription, before the alpha, is an ivy leaf. The lettering suggests a date in the second century AD. The nose, lips and chin of the mask are badly damaged, while there is some slight damage to the cheeks and a minor scratch on the forehead. The Phrygian cap also shows minuscule damage. A section of the catalogue entry, provided by Professor G. M. Sifakis, identifies the mask as a pantomime mask.

The Phrygian Cap

The Phrygian cap, one of the prominent features of the mask, perhaps needs some comment. In Greek art the Phrygian cap distinguished people from Asia Minor from the Greeks of mainland Greece. In addition to being a general mark of 'otherness,' it was worn by a number of Gods and mythical heroes: by Mithras or Attis and their priests, by the Arimaspes, who according to mythology were a Scythian tribe who fought with the legendary Griffins, by Ganymede, Paris and Trojans in general, and possibly, in a scene from tragedy, by the youthful Astyanax. On the tomb monument of P. Numitorius Hilarus is a scene from tragedy in which is pictured a young child wearing the Phrygian cap. The tragedy was probably performed at Numitorius' funeral. The monument is from Rome and has been dated to the first century BC. Bieber suggested that the scene was taken from the Astyanax of Accius and featured Andromache with her maids, Astyanax and Odysseus.⁴ Webster disputed this on the grounds that the male figure

3. *LIMC* II 1, p. 935, with an illustration in *LIMC* II 2, p. 686, n. I. 36.

4. Margarete Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* (Princeton, 21961), pp. 162-63 and fig. 588.

was too old to be Odysseus and seemed to be bringing distressing news rather than attempting to seize the child. However he accepted that the scene was from a play performed at the funeral, and emphasised the Phrygian cap on the child. He did not identify the play.⁵ Odysseus or not, it is tempting to identify the woman and child in the Phrygian cap as Andromache and Astyanax. If this identification is correct then we have Astyanax wearing a Phrygian cap in a tragedy which predates by at least two centuries the pantomime mask from Thessaloniki. Until the discovery of the Thessaloniki mask the only individual wearers of the Phrygian cap directly associated with pantomime were Paris and Attis. There are a number of references to stories involving Paris among the known lists of pantomime themes⁶ but no masks identified with him have survived. There are however a number of masks of Attis. They appear on a series of oscilla in Italy dating from the first century AD.⁷ A third wearer of the Phrygian cap identified with pantomime can now be added to the list, Astyanax.

The Name Astyanax

The mask from Thessaloniki is unique. It is identified by a name. No other surviving representation of a mask, no tragic mask, no comic mask, no satyric mask and no pantomime mask bears a name. So to what or to whom is the name applied? Is it the name of the mask, is it the name of the wearer of the mask or is it the name of a character danced by the wearer? Or even is it the title of a *fabula* danced by the wearer? The fact that the mask so prominently displays the name, Astyanax, and the symmetry with which the name is displayed shows that it is not merely a piece of general architectural decoration. Whoever commissioned it did so specifically to honour and preserve the memory of the name Astyanax.

Is Astyanax the Name of a Mask?

Most of what we know about ancient theatre masks is derived either from a literary source, the *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux, or from the works of T. B. L. Webster and J. R. Green. Professors Webster and Green have col-

5. T. B. L. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating Tragedy and Satyr Play*, *BICS* Suppl. 20 (21967), p. 103, IT 7.

6. *RE* XVIII 2 849, s.v. Pantomimus (Wüst).

7. Glenys Elizabeth Wootton, "A mask of Attis. Oscilla as Evidence for a Theme of Pantomime," *Latomus* 58 (1999) 314–35 (plus plates).

lected the archaeological evidence for monuments illustrating dramatic performances, among them the masks, and have attempted to categorize these masks according to Pollux' lists. Pollux lived in the second century AD, but his sources date from the Hellenistic period. He begins his section on masks with the masks of tragedy. He describes twenty-eight different masks and divides them up into four categories, those of Old Men, Young Men, Slaves and Women. To none of the masks does he give the name of a character in a drama. He treats New Comedy masks in a similar way, describing them and dividing them up into categories, this time of Old Men, Young Men, Slaves, Old Women and Young Women. Again no mask has the name of a character. After the tragic masks and before the comic masks he describes a few "special masks," *ἔκσκενα πρόσωπα*.⁸ This list of special masks includes named mythical individuals with unusual physical characteristics such as Actaeon horned or Phineus blind; Thamyras with one eye blue and the other black; Argos with many eyes; Euhippe ... changing into a horse in Euripides, or Tyro with vividly bruised cheeks in Sophocles ...; and Achilles shorn in mourning for Patroclus.⁹ There is no suggestion that the masks are inscribed with a name. The Astyanax mask has no unusual physical characteristic. The probabilities then are against Astyanax being the name of what Pollux terms a "special mask" or indeed of any mask.

Is It the Name of a Dancer?

Some of the most famous dancers took their names from heroes of Greek mythology, including the first promoter of pantomime in Rome, the famous Pylades, and the number of later pantomimes who assumed the same name up to the third century AD. There is also the notorious Paris of Nero's time whose name was again later taken by others. But not all dancers' names are taken from mythology, Bathyllus, equally responsible with Pylades for promoting pantomime at Rome, is a case in point, as is Theoros, a prominent

8. 4.141. For a discussion of the 'special masks' see Dana F. Sutton, "Pollux on Special Masks", *Ant. Class.* 53 (1984) 174-183.

9. The mention of Sophocles and Euripides and the place of 'special masks' in his account, after tragic masks and before comic masks, shows that in his brief discussion of these masks Pollux is thinking of 'special masks' which were used in used in tragedy. Included in the list are also masks of personifications of natural geographical features such as a river or a mountain, personifications of emotions such as Fury, Rage, Madness, Dread, Hubris, and Envy, a number of mythical creatures such as a Centaur, a Triton, a Giant, and a Gorgon, together with personifications of abstracts such as Justice, Death and Drunkenness.

contemporary and competitor of Pylades from the Augustan period. Within a short time Apolaustus, another name without associations with mythology, became the first of many to adopt that name. In short we know many more pantomime names that are not taken from mythology than the three or four that are. However the pantomime names Pylades and Paris make it again impossible to rule out Astyanax as the name of the dancer.¹⁰ But the balance of probabilities is once more against that interpretation.

Is It the Name of a Pantomime Role or Libretto?

I have earlier stressed that this mask is not just a piece of architectural decoration but has been specifically designed to commemorate the name Astyanax, so for comparison we should perhaps look at other pantomime monuments which commemorate names known from mythology and look at the circumstances surrounding their mention.

THEOCRITUS PYLADES. A well known funeral altar found at Lodi, near Milan and dated to the late second or early third century AD honours the pantomime Theocritus Pylades.¹¹ As the face of the altar declares it was set up by the *grex Romanus*, a group probably made up of the chorus and musicians who accompanied Theocritus Pylades' performances when he was in Rome.¹² The inscription shows that Pylades was a freedman of joint emperors, probably, but not certainly, Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius,¹³ and that he had been honoured by a number of Italian communities with the privileges accorded to decurions, or members of the local Senate. On the rectangular sides of this altar two figures are engraved. On the right side

10. For discussion of pantomime names see Hartmut Leppin, *Histrionen* (Bonn, 1992) 181–183, Jean-Yves Strasser, “Inscriptions grecques et latines en l'honneur de Pantomimes,” *Tyche* 19 (2004) 198–201, I. E. Stefanis, *Διονυσιακοὶ τεχνῖται* (Herakleio, 1988) 592–3.

11. A full history and analysis of the monument can be found in Matteo Cadario, “L'immagine di una vedette del pantomimo: l'altare funebre di Teocritus Pylades (CIL V 5889) tra Lodi e Milano,” *Stratagemmi, Στρατηγήματα. Prospettive teatrali* 9 (2009) 11–62. I have not had access to Claudio Zaccaria, “Testimonianze epigrafiche di spettacoli teatrali e di attori nella Cisalpina romana,” in *Spettacolo in Aquileia e nella Cisalpina romana. Atti della XXIV settimana di Studi Aquileisi*, 24–29 aprile 1993 (*Antichità altoadriatiche* 41, Udine, 1994) 69–98.

12. Cf. the *grex gallicus* of Memphis and Paris, *ILS* 5203, who were probably a local troupe employed by the two stars who dominated the stage in Rome under Verus, when they visited the province.

13. Cadario, *op. cit.* (n. 11) 32 ff.

a figure holds a mask in the right hand. Above the figure is the inscription 'Iona' representing in all probability the theme of one of the pantomime *fabulae* for which Pylades was famed. De Marchi identified the figure as that of Creusa, assuming that the Ion referred to was the well-known *Ion* of Euripides where Creusa is the only female who plays a prominent part. As far as I know all subsequent scholars have accepted this identification. But as we shall see De Marchi's assumption that the reference is to Euripides' version of the story of Ion may not be correct. For the moment let us leave the question open.¹⁴

On the other side of the altar another figure is depicted. This figure holds a spear and a shield in the left hand and in the outstretched right hand a mask which De Marchi, again followed by subsequent commentators, identified as Athene. Here there seems little doubt that De Marchi has made the correct identification since the figure and the mask have the unmistakable attributes of the Athenian Goddess, the shield, the spear and the feathers on the helmet. Above the figure is written the word *Troadas*, again pointing to a pantomime piece for which Pylades was renowned and *sui temporis primus*, a phrase used on the records of a number of successful pantomimes as well as other public performers such as *archimimae*, charioteers and orators.¹⁵ To return to the masks, Cadario suggests that the masks of Creusa and Athene recall roles in Pylades' career for which he was particularly famous.¹⁶ Pylades, or rather his supporters, used these masks to celebrate his achievement. Almost certainly the dedicator of the mask from Thessaloniki used the mask of Astyanax for the same purpose.

THE INTERVENTION OF A LIBRETTIST. The usual assumption has been that the "Troades" mentioned on the inscription, like the *Ion*, is the *Troades* of Euripides. Yet if we look at the role played by Athene in Euripides' *Troades* we are surprised at how insignificant it is compared with the

14. A. De Marchi, *Le antiche epigrafi di Milano* (Milano, 1917), 58-59.

15. Edward John Jory, "The Drama of the Dance," in William J. Slater (ed.), *Roman Theatre and Society* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 18 n. 56. *CIL* IX 344 = *ILS* 5188; XIV 2113 = *ILS* 5193, XIV 2977 = *ILS* 5194, XIV 4254 = *ILS* 5191; *Eph. Epig.* 8.369 = *ILS* 5186; Orelli 2626; *The inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, 606, etc. The same phrase is also used of *archimimae*, *CIL* 6 10106-7 = *ILS* 5211-5212, of a charioteer who was also *dominus ... factionis russatae*, *CIL* 6 33939 = *ILS* 5297, and of an orator, *CIL* VI 31758, for which compare Seneca, *Controversiae* 13: "*Passienus, vir eloquentissimus et temporis sui primus orator.*" For its use of actors in inscriptions cf. Hartmut Leppin, *Histrionen*, (Bonn, 1992) 101 and 124.

16. Cadario, *op.cit.* (n. 11), 56.

powerful roles of Hecabe, Cassandra, Andromache and even Helen. At the opening of the play Poseidon is on stage lamenting the destruction of Troy, his favourite city, a destruction that was caused by his fellow-god Athene. Then Athene arrives and asks for his help to avenge the insult offered to her by the Greeks when they seized Cassandra from Athena's sanctuary. Poseidon rather surprisingly agrees, citing the family ties between them, and they both depart, never to return. In the meeting between Poseidon and Athena, Euripides gives Athena a mere 25 lines to speak. After that the real action of Euripides' play begins with Hecabe's soliloquy. A third of the speaking in the play is done by Hecabe, over 400 lines of text, with substantial parts given to Cassandra, Andromache and Helen. It seems inconceivable that Theocritus Pylades could have danced the small role given to Athena in a way that would have won the acclamation of the spectators, the admiration of his *grex*, and possibly victory in a competition. So could we be wrong in assuming that the "Troades" of the pantomime dance was the *Troades* of Euripides? And if so what are the implications for our understanding of Pantomime?

As we have suggested, if the role of Athene did play so important a part in Theocritus' success it could not have been the role as it is found in Euripides. It must have been a more central, and more dynamic part of the performance. The conclusion seems inescapable, that the significance of the role of Athene was due to the intervention of the pantomime librettist. It was he who either used a different version of the myth from the one followed by Euripides or emphasised the centrality of the role of Athene for the particular dance performance. His ideas therefore contributed to the success of that performance. So we should keep in mind that the recorded title of a pantomime dance can refer to any one of the myths associated with that title. It need not necessarily be the best-known version of the myth. However tempting it might be to identify the title of a dance with a known play by a known author, as in this example the *Troades* of Euripides and earlier the *Ion* of the same author, we must be very careful before doing so. We cannot assume that because we know the content of the play and the story it tells, we also know the content and story of the dance. The play and the dance might be quite different in content or emphasis. We simply do not know enough about pantomime libretti and the activity of the librettists.

Apolaustus Memphius and Pantomime Competitions

L. Aurelius Apolaustus Memphius was also a freedman of the joint emperors Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius. He had been brought to Rome from Syria by Verus. He was thus a contemporary of Theocritus Pylades. Like Pylades he was honoured with the privileges accorded to decurions, probably by the town of Tibur whose senate and people in 199 AD set up a monument to him.¹⁷ He also, like Pylades, had been granted the title of *sui temporis primus*. In addition to this he was *hieronica*, he had taken part and been victorious in at least three sacred contests, that is in the Greek *agones*, known to have been held in both Naples and Pozzuoli in Italy and to have included pantomime contests long before they were accepted in the Greek speaking East. On the inscription from Tibur there are the remains, now barely visible and not reproduced on the photograph, of six agonistic crowns celebrating Apolaustus' victories in pantomime competitions. For the details we have to rely on the readings of G. Kolbe of a hundred years ago, most easily accessible in Jean-Yves Strasser.¹⁸ Inside these crowns are a number of names which indicate the themes or roles in which Apolaustus Memphius was victorious. In each crown are inscribed two lines in Greek. In the first crown we can discern the names of Herakles and Orestes, in the second Tympanistai and *διὰ πάντων*, in the third Troades and Bacchai, in the fourth Hippolytus and *διὰ πάντων*, in the fifth only one or two letters and in the sixth no letters are recognisable. We are not concerned here with the three crowns recording victories in the *διὰ πάντων*, but with the names recording the three victorious pantomime performances, and can therefore leave out of consideration the names Tympanistai and Hippolytus. In the pantomime agones Troades and Bacchae are the names of themes, stories or libretti, while Herakles, Orestes and Hippolytus could be either themes or roles.¹⁹ So Apolaustus was victorious in one agon when he danced the

17. *CIL* XIV 4254. The most recent discussion of this monument is in Jean-Yves Strasser, "L'épreuve artistique *διὰ πάντων*", *Historia* 55 (2006) 317–19 (the whole article, pp. 298–327). The date is confirmed by the mention of the consuls Anullino and Fronto on one side of the inscription which, as A. E. Gordon has demonstrated, is contemporary with the face, *Album of Dated Latin Inscriptions*, vol. 2: A.D. 100–199 (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1964) 175–59, pl. 122, cited by Strasser, pp. 317–18.

18. Strasser, *op. cit.* (n. 17), 318, n. 114.

19. If I understand Strasser (*op. cit.* (n. 17) 318–19) correctly he argues that the Tympanistai and Hippolytus were the subjects of performances in the contest for the *διὰ πάντων* and that these were not part of the contests counting towards the title of *hieronica*.

Heracles and Orestes, in a second agon when he danced the Troades and Bacchae, and the titles of his dance or dances in his victory in the third agon are indecipherable. Since the rules for competition between pantomimes in the agones must have been standardised before the performances were admitted to the contests we can assume that they were the same for all the agones. So we may ask, did the pantomimes compete in dancing stories or in dancing individual roles? The Troades and the Bacchae were themes or stories rather than roles and as we have said Heracles and Orestes could refer to either themes or roles, so we may conclude that the subject of the competitive pantomime performances were pantomime stories and not individual roles. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that to achieve victory in the sacred competitions the dancers had to dance two stories rather than one.²⁰ The decision to demand two dances of two different libretti may reflect the length of the performances, but again we cannot know.

Private and Public

A comparison between the monuments of Pylades and Apolaustus is illuminating. The inscription honouring Pylades was much less formal than that for Apolaustus. Pylades' monument was set up by his associates, the *grex romanus*, Apolaustus' by the senate and people of Tibur. Thus Pylades' monument records both the name of the themes or libretti that he successfully danced, the Ion and the Troades, and also pictured two masks representing the roles in those stories for which the *grex Romanus* particularly remembered him. These roles were those of Creusa and Athena. By contrast the inscription honouring Apolaustus was set up by public officials who recorded his official victories by name. All those records seem to have been victories designated by the themes or story of the drama danced. Individual roles find no place.

Let me repeat what I have argued. Our inscriptions show that in these agones the pantomimes competed with each other in their dancing of themes, stories or libretti, rather than in their portrayal of individual characters. What can we deduce from this about the name on the Astyanax mask? Obviously that it could celebrate either a theme, the story of Astyanax, or a role within that story, the role of Astyanax, probably both.

20. Strasser also argues that in the agones auletes, comedians and tragedians also presented two pieces, op. cit. (n. 17) 311–19.

Astyanax as a Subject of Pantomime

Unsurprisingly, stories from Homer's epic about the Trojan war were common in pantomime, and the Homeric characters of Hector, Andromache and Helen were well known to the pantomime stage. Yet there is no literary or epigraphic record of a role for Astyanax. Despite this Astyanax was not a stranger to the context of pantomime. When, at a performance in Antioch, a very tiny dancer came on stage to dance the role of Hector, the audience shouted in chorus 'Hey Astyanax! Where's Hector?' Whether the audience was actually expecting to see Astyanax in that particular performance in Antioch is unclear. What is clear is that they were well aware of the significance of a young Astyanax to a story involving Hector. In all likelihood their mention of Astyanax arose either from a pantomime that they had already seen or, even more probably, because they knew the story of how Astyanax, called Scamandrius by his father, was hurled to his death from the walls of Troy by Neoptolemus or Odysseus. Lucian (*De saltatione*, 76.6–8) is the source of the anecdote about the audience at Antioch and the incident therefore occurred before pantomime competitions were admitted to the sacred agones in Greece between 175 and 180 AD. But by this time the story of Astyanax was part of popular folklore in all areas of the Greek speaking world.

Indeed there is little more moving in the myths of the ancient world than the Homeric story of the young Astyanax and his dramatic end. It was a story that was eminently suitable for a pantomime performance, since these performances relied on the arousal of emotions to create their effect. In the *Iliad* we first meet Astyanax as a young child in his nurse's arms, frightened of Hector and his shining helmet when Andromache was attempting to persuade Hector not to go out to battle the Greeks. Hector took the child in his arms and uttered the ill-fated prayer "Zeus and you other Gods, grant that this my son may become, as I have been, preeminent among the Trojans, as strong and brave as I, and MAY HE RULE IN STRENGTH OVER ILIUM" (*Iliad* 6. 465ff., Hammond's translation). This was the fate for which the Trojans had named the boy Astyanax, 'Lord of the city', instead of using the name given to him by Hector, Scamandrius, and it had fateful consequences. In the final scenes from the *Iliad* Andromache has a foreboding that Hector's appeal to the Gods about Astyanax would be in vain, when in mourning over his corpse she addresses Astyanax, saying "And you, child, you will go where I go, where you will be put to shaming work, slaving for a cruel master. Or some Achaean will catch you by the arm and fling you from the

walls to a miserable death..." (*Il.* 24.732–35). In this last prediction Andromache was soon to be proved correct, according to later classical versions of the story. In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Andromache at first thinks that Astyanax will accompany her into captivity, but Talthybius arrives to tell her that his fate is sealed. He is to be thrown from the walls of Troy. So it happened and the play concludes with Hecuba presiding over his funeral rites. The same fate for Astyanax is found in Euripides' *Andromache*. The tragic death of Astyanax became a favoured theme of Greek mythology. It is echoed in the Roman world by Vergil, in the *Aeneid* (3.490), Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses* (13.415), Seneca in the *Troades* (1119) and in the work of Hyginus in the second century AD (*Fabulae* 109). That the audience in Antioch knew of it and assumed a connection with the Hector who danced on stage before them is therefore not surprising.

The Astyanax Story and the Mask

So can this be the story danced by our pantomime from Thessaloniki? The suggestion is tempting because the deep emotional conflicts laid bare in the story would have made it very attractive to the dancers. Unfortunately, however, the answer must be in the negative. This is the tragic story of the death of a young child. The mask from Thessaloniki is the mask of a mature man. How can we explain the apparent contradiction?

ASTYANAX AS A HERO. The harrowing tale which we have just related is the earliest and most well-known version of what happened to the young Astyanax, but it is not the only version. According to a scholium on Homer, and I quote, "Later writers say that he afterwards became the founder of (a new) Troy and other cities."²¹ This is born out in several accounts of what happened to him after the Greeks had destroyed Troy. Perhaps the most surprising is that of Dio of Prusa, who writes of a peaceful end to the war, after which Hector reigned for a long time before handing on the throne to his son Scamandrius (our Astyanax).²² Another account, offered by Hellenicus and preserved by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, tells of Scamandrius' eventual release by Neoptolemus from confinement in Greece and his return to the Troad: "When Scamandrius and the other descendants of Hector,

21. *Scholium vetera* to *Iliad* 24.735b: οἱ δὲ νεώτεροί φασιν αὐτὸν οἰκιστὴν ὕστερον γεγενῆσθαι Τροίας καὶ ἄλλων πόλεων.

22. XI.124 von Arnim. This speech may even have been delivered on the site of the city of Troy, C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Harvard U.P., 1978) 17.

who had been permitted by Neoptolemus to leave Greece, came to him, (Ascanius, Aeneas' son) went to Troy in order to restore them to their ancestral kingdom."²³ Other accounts have the two heroes found and rule over other cities in the Troad.²⁴ We know very little of any other descendants of Hector, but as we are only interested in Astyanax we can for our purpose ignore them. A more detailed and exciting version of what was probably the same story is given by Servius in his commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid* (9.264):

Certain writers say that it was reported by Abas, who wrote a version of the Trojan wars, that after the departure of the Greeks from Troy, Astyanax was made king there. Abas goes on to say that Astyanax was expelled from his kingdom by Antenor, who had allied with himself the neighbouring states, among which was Arisbe. Aeneas did not take kindly to this and took up arms on Astyanax' behalf. After a successful campaign Aeneas restored Astyanax to the throne.²⁵

So there are a number of stories about how Astyanax survived the destruction of Troy and fulfilled the prophecies in Homer about which the Greeks, particularly Odysseus, were so afraid. Behind all the stories is the underlying theme that Astyanax/Scamandrius will return to Troy as its ruler. The tale has the happy ever after ending of which Hollywood would have been proud. As a pantomime theme it would have been even more appealing if the miraculous reversal of fortune for the hero, from young child on the point of death to warrior founder of Troy, was the central feature. The earlier dramatic scenes of Astyanax being thrown from the walls of Troy would have added dramatic tension and pathos to the dance. The outline of an emotive story easily presents itself, a miraculous escape from the fall, capture and release by Neoptolemus, and finally, triumphant after many battles, a long reign over a newly founded Troy. In fact the mask of a mature Astyanax shows us that a new libretto had been written and a new

23. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* I.47.5, 9–11 (= *Hellanicus FGrHist* F1a, 4, F 31.68).

24. Arisbe: *Ἀρίσβη πόλις τῆς Τρωάδος, Μυτιληναίων ἄποικος, ἧς οἰκισταὶ Σκαμάνδριος καὶ Ἀσκάnios υἱὸς Αἰνείου* (Demetrius Gram. fr. 20 = Steph. Byz. 119.3); Skepsis: *ὑστερον δὲ κατωτέρω σταδίοις ἐξήκοντα εἰς τὴν νῦν Σκῆψιν μετωκίσθησαν ὑπὸ Σκαμάνδριον τε τοῦ Ἐκτορος καὶ Ἀσκανίου τοῦ Αἰνείου παιδός· καὶ δύο γένη ταῦτα βασιλεῦσαι πολὺν χρόνον ἐν τῇ Σκῆψει λέγεται* (Strabo 13. 52, 6–9).

25. The frequently reported links between Ascanius and Astyanax are a little surprising given Homer's account of the antagonism between Aeneas and Priam. The jealousy felt by Aeneas for his lack of recognition from Priam clearly did not survive Priam's death. A further account of their collaboration even links Scamandrius, again with Ascanius, to the foundation of Rome!

theme performed and remembered. The dance was not an adaptation of Homer or Euripides' *Troades* or any other existing tragedy. It was telling a new story. The implications are revealing. Pantomime librettists, real poets, capable of original dramatic compositions, were active throughout the time that pantomime dances were popular and audiences, or rather spectators, were not adverse to traditional stories being reinterpreted.

Our mask is that of a mature, and perhaps battle hardened, man, a man who looks as if he was a ruler of a mighty kingdom. This cannot have been a mask worn by dancer impersonating a baby or even a young boy. It could only be the mask of the mature Astyanax, the ruler of Troy. So what happened during the performance? We know that the individual dancer could dance as many as five or six different roles and employ five or six different masks but could he perhaps have used two different masks for the same role, for the boy Astyanax and for the king Astyanax? Cassiodorus tells us that among other things the dancer could portray both an old man and a young man and it is not stretching this too far to include a boy like Astyanax.²⁶ We know so little about the details of pantomime performances that that is certainly a possibility. Our mask bears the name Astyanax but I think that we can exclude the idea that the name was present on the mask of the mature Astyanax during the performance. To assume that a mask needed a name to identify the character would have been an insult to any skilled dancer and that is the reverse of what this monument intends. Why then does the mask have the name of the character, or perhaps rather the theme, of a pantomime dance? Because whoever commissioned it was proud of the performance, proud of the role of the mature Astyanax, and wanted not only for the people to have a permanent reminder of the performance, as in the inscription from Lodi, but also of the unusual version of the Astyanax story.

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26. See Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51.9, for the dancer portraying both an old man and a young man.