Something for Everyone: Plautus and his Heterogeneous Audience

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the work of the late third and early second century B.C. Roman comic poet Plautus, and in particular considers the question of whether any serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes which Plautus might have included in his comedies could have been appreciated by members of his original Roman audience.

In the first two chapters, textual evidence from antiquity and modern psychological theory are used to establish the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience. From these conditions, the case for the appreciation of serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes by members of Plautus' original Roman audience is given strength.

In the final three chapters, interpretative treatments of three Plautine comedies (the *Menaechmi*, the *Amphitruo* and the *Asinaria*) are offered in order to demonstrate the possible existence of serious, sophisticated and thought-provoking themes within Plautus' comedies.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations for the ancient works and authors cited in this thesis conform to those found in:

i) *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (1968-1982, Oxford).

ii) *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edition with supplement), edited by H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, revised by H. S. Jones & R. McKenzie (1968, Oxford).

Other abbreviations in this thesis are as follows:

OCD[3] *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition), edited by S. Hornblower & A. Spawforth (1996, Oxford).

RE *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, edited by A. Pauly, G. Wissowa & W. Kroll (1893–, Leipzig & Stuttgart).

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PARENTIBVS OPTIMIS

ET

E.

"Scholarship is the enemy of romance."

Billy Bragg

INTRODUCTION

It is generally held that the tradition of the *fabula palliata*, or Roman comedy in Greek dress, began in 240 B.C., when Livius Andronicus presented the first Latin adaptations of a Greek comedy and a Greek tragedy at that year's *ludi Romani*. Both the title and the plot of that first *palliata* are lost to us, as indeed is almost all of Andronicus' comic work. Nevertheless, Andronicus deserves credit for initiating a tradition of theatrical translation and adaptation whose direct and indirect influence on the modern western popular comic theatre, from Shakespeare and Molière to the Marx Brothers, is obvious and vital.

As a literary and theatrical genre, the *fabula palliata* continued to thrive even under the Roman Empire[1], but as a phenomenon of popular culture and entertainment and of civic and religious currency, the genre survived only until the late second century B.C. This age of popularity and currency, this "Golden Age"[2] of *palliatae* has yielded virtually all that we possess of the genre, a substantial manuscript tradition which provides a broad basis for understanding the literary nature of the genre, as well as aspects of Roman social history and the development of the Latin language from the late third to the mid second centuries B.C. But in particular, that age has yielded one comic poet whose work looms large not merely on the landscape of *palliatae*, but also on the landscape of western literature. That poet is of course Titus Maccius Plautus.

With his twenty complete or nearly complete *palliatae* and numerous fragments, Plautus has the distinction of composing both the largest dramatic *corpus* and the oldest complete works of Latin literature to have survived from antiquity. Nevertheless, he remains elusive, even to the precise form of his name.[3] Of the scant details which survive

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1 In correspondence with Caninius Rufus, the younger Pliny (*Ep*. 6.21) praises the recently composed comedies (both Old and New) of Vergilius Romanus, and notes that Vergilius' New comedies have been composed in the style of Menander and his contemporaries and are worthy of favourable comparison to the comedies of Plautus and Terence. However, it would seem that Vergilius' comic works were intended neither for popular consumption nor even for full production, since Pliny also describes the comic poet as *paucis legens comoediam*. Nevertheless, it is clear that Quintilian (*Inst*. 11.3.178, 180) is describing the contemporary public production of *palliatae*, when he observes that Stratocles, *maximus actor comoediarum*, portrays to great effect for the *populus* certain stock characters generally associated with *palliatae*: *acres senes*, *callidi serui*, *parasiti*, *lenones et omnia agitatiora.*

2 Duckworth (1994) 39.

3 While "Titus Maccius Plautus" is the generally accepted form, the textual evidence concerning the comic poet's name is inconclusive and hence the issue remains vexatious. Gratwick (1973) offers an excellent examination of the problem.

of his life, only a few escape any lingering doubt.[4] Moreover, for all the abundance of his verse, the true extent of Plautus' literary work and the complete form in which his comedies were originally presented for the Roman public can never be known.[5]

But perhaps the most elusive aspect of Plautus is the true range of his intent in composing his comedies. For we lack the Plautine equivalent of a Livian or Sallustian introduction or indeed the equivalent of the Terentian prologues in which literary and compositional concerns are stated. Certainly, some critics, both ancient and modern, have suggested that Plautus was interested in little more than exacting financial reward from

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[4] There are only two dates in Plautus' life and career which may be taken with any certainty, the production dates of the *Stichus* (performed at the *ludi Plebeii* in 200 B.C.) and of the *Pseudolus* (performed at the *ludi Megalenses* in 191 B.C.), both of which are derived from the *didascaliae* or production notices preserved in the Ambrosian Palimpsest (A). The traditional date of Plautus' birth (254 B.C.) seems crudely based on the date of the *Pseudolus* and on the Ciceronian Cato's observation (*Sen.* 50) that as a *senex*, Plautus *gaudebat Pseudolo*. The date is therefore unsound. The traditional date of Plautus' death (184 B.C.) is founded on an assertion to that effect in Cicero *Brut.* 60. However, Beare (1964) 48 cautions that this date "may have been inferred from the silence of the records as to new plays by Plautus after that year." For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, 184 B.C. shall be considered merely the latter bound of Plautus' literary career. The year of Plautus' first production is essentially indeterminable. Nevertheless, Plautine chronologists throughout the last century and the first half of this century have estimated the year of Plautus' first production variously between 224 and 205 B.C. (Schutter [1952] x-xxx provides a summary of the most significant Plautine chronologies, and in his own chronology [154] concludes that the *Asinaria* was the earliest surviving Plautine comedy, first produced in 212 B.C.)

The only substantial biographical account of Plautus' life is provided by Aulus Gellius (3.3.14), who notes that Varro "et plerique alii" claim that Plautus wrote three comedies while working "in pistrino", having lost "in mercatibus" all the money he had earned "in operis artificum scaenicorum". Such an account clearly cannot be verified and the only element which might reasonably be accepted is the suggestion that before commencing his literary career, Plautus was engaged "in operis artificum scaenicorum". Yet it is unclear as to what form of work in the theatre those four words are describing. Indeed, it may be that Gellius himself is preserving the ambiguity of his sources. The tradition of Plautus' Umbrian origins (Festus p. 275M) is also impossible to verify, although it is often suggested that the reference in the *Mostellaria* to the Umbrian town of Sarsina reflects Plautus' origins:

TR. quid? Sarsinatis ecqua est, si Vmbram non habes? (*Mos.* 770)

(It should be noted that all quotations from Plautus contained in this thesis are taken from Lindsay [1904-1905].)

Leo (1912) 63-86 offers the most thorough examination of the problems relating to the Plautine biographical tradition.

[5] In the first place, it would seem that a considerable number of *palliatae* in antiquity were either incorrectly or fraudulently attributed to Plautus. Gellius (3.3.11-12) notes that in the second century A.D. there were approximately 130 comedies bearing the name Plautus, and that as early as the late second century B.C. Lucius Aelius sought to separate the Plautine from the pseudo-Plautine, finding twenty-five to be genuine. Gellius (3.3.3) also states that in the following century Varro found only twenty-one definitely to be Plautine (perhaps the present twenty plus the fragmentary *Vidularia*) and an indefinite number possibly to be Plautine. Whatever the case, the texts which survive to the present and which are credited to Plautus are essentially the one-dimensional remnant of a multi-dimensional theatrical phenomenon which incorporated word, music and action. As Henderson (1975) 4 notes, "trying to imagine what an actual production of a Plautine comedy was like, is rather like trying to appreciate a comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan with only Gilbert's libretto for guidance."

public officials and attracting thoughtless laughter from the public at the expense of literary aesthetics. Indeed, in this respect Horace remarks unflatteringly of Plautus that

> gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere, post hoc
> securus cadat an recto stet fabula talo. (*Ep.* 2.1.175-176),

while Gilbert Norwood scathingly observes that "the construction of some among [Plautus'] plays is so incredibly bad that even stupidity alone, even ignorance alone, even indifference alone, seem insufficient to explain it. We can suppose that he neither knew nor cared what a drama is, and was concerned with nothing save to amuse an audience that knew and cared not indeed less, but no more."[6]

Yet while it is possible to reject Horace's pecuniary charge as simply the product of his financially well-endowed complacency, and while the charge of Plautus' compositional ineptitude condemns itself as an obvious over-reaction to the presence of "inconsistencies" within his works[7], the charge of Plautus' concern "with nothing save to amuse an audience" has persisted even in forms utterly complimentary to the poet. In his sympathetic and highly influential *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*, Erich Segal defines Plautine comedy as "literally 'festive comedy'", "[giving] rise to a laughter of liberation", "reflecting ... the festive spirit, [banishing] Roman melancholy, turning everyday attitudes and everyday values completely upside down", and further notes that Plautus' "art does not give rise to 'thoughtful laughter' ... For True Comedy should banish all thought — of mortality and morality."[8]

It would of course be absurd to suggest that Plautus as a comic poet was not interested in composing amusing *palliatae* for the festive, liberating and "escapist"[9] enjoyment of his audience. Indeed, Segal's estimation of Plautine comedy is initially attractive, because it is acutely attuned to the contemporary Roman context and to the values of Roman society. Nevertheless, his essential definition of Plautine comedy as a public and

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6 Norwood (1932) 19.

7 Hough (1942) 26. Norwood (1932) is particularly scathing in his comments on the construction of the *Captiui*, noting that that comedy "outdoes all its companions in sheer blockheadedness" (63), and describing it as "a gulf of ineptitude" (89) and as "crass nonsense". (91) But although Norwood's identification of seemingly inept compositional devices within the *Captiui* holds some validity, and although Konstan (1983) 58-59 admits that "Plautus seems singularly inattentive to the devices by which [the two-stage revelation of Tyndarus] is brought about", Konstan nonetheless tempers Norwood's "unusually violent ... denunciation" (Duckworth [1994] 152 n. 32) by providing context for the *Captiui*'s inconsistencies. He states that "it seems best to view these features not as defects in plotting but as economies which leave the fundamental situation of the play prominently visible and do not encumber it with distracting ramifications."

8 Segal (1987) 9, 13, 14.

9 Konstan (1983) 22.

literary foil for Catonian conservatism is narrow and hence ultimately unsatisfying.[10] Moreover, the notion that Plautus' comedies banished all thought and thoughtful laughter seems to push the idea of festive frivolity to an absolute and rigid extreme and seems too narrow an assessment of the capacity of comedy generally. For is it not possible that the amusing, the festive, the liberating, the escapist represented only one highly prominent aspect of Plautine comedy, rather than representing Plautine comedy in its entirety? Could indeed there have been some serious intent in Plautus' compositions, an authorial desire to present for public consumption comedies with sophisticated themes beyond the immediate and obvious comic mayhem of the Plautine universe, a desire to promote thought and thoughtful laughter among his audience?

Such a notion of serious intent, the presentation of sophisticated themes and the promotion of thought and thoughtful laughter within Plautus' compositions is to my mind most compelling and indeed worthy of consideration. Furthermore, many modern scholarly analyses of individual Plautine comedies have lent credence to this notion[11], as has David

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[10] Segal (1987) 10-11 states that "we must constantly bear in mind that the age of Plautus was also the age of Cato the Elder", that "the atmosphere in Rome of this era ... was, without question, conservative in the extreme" and that "to appreciate what Plautus' characters are doing, we must be aware of what his contemporary Romans were supposed not to do." However, Anderson (1993) 143 counters by noting that "the problem with Segal's theory is not with his analysis of Plautus, but with his portrait of Roman society in Plautus' time and then his assumption of how the comedy fits Roman society. ... [He] makes Cato the Censor the symbol of the entire era. Apart from the fact that Cato became censor in the final year of Plautus' life and an important figure in Roman politics only at the start of the second century, a decade at least after Plautus' dramatic career had become successful, it is not valid to think of Rome as a Puritanical society over the entire quarter-century of Plautus' activity. ... That Rome itself, even under Cato, was ever grim and utterly cheerless strikes me as most improbable. After all, Cato himself was famous for his clever wit."

At the same time, Anderson's own estimation of Plautine comedy may be considered equally narrow and again ultimately unsatisfying. For Anderson suggests that "Plautus' comedies have meaning for himself and his audience because they play with a major issue of his age and of centuries to come, the ideological clash between Greece and Rome" and that "Plautus basically confirms the Romans in their superiority, for his plots implicitly enact the conquest and defeat of decadent Greece by earthy, roguish, street-wise characters who cherish no idle illusions, inhabit no dream world, but know only too well how to exploit, with wit and highly contagious humour, the egoistic and corrupt illusion of others." (139-140) Konstan (1995) 77 responds to and effectively undermines this thesis by asking, "could the Romans really have seen 'the ideological clash between Greece and Rome' ... refracted in the tension between impish slaves and dour fathers?" Yet even if the Romans did, Anderson's implicit suggestion that Plautine comedy can be reduced solely to an exposition of such an "ideological clash" seems to confine the genre too severely by rendering it utterly incapable of any political, moral or social comment beyond that clash.

[11] Dessen's (1977) and Haberman's (1981) respective analyses of the *Truculentus* and the *Menaechmi* stand as excellent examples. In fact, they suggest explicitly the deliberate inclusion of serious elements within Plautine comedy. Dessen states in conclusion that "we underrate [Plautus] if we assume that his sole purpose in writing was to entertain his audience" (165), while Haberman notes in introduction that "it is not at all unusual for even the staunchest admirers of Plautus to feel that his plays lack genuine seriousness. ... [For] Plautus' blinding comic skill has so successfully disguised his seriousness that we are prevented from seeing it. ... Plautus' plays are extraordinarily fresh performances, but they succeed in their appeal to humane intelligence, too." (129)

Konstan more generally in his outstanding study *Roman Comedy* by regarding Plautine comedy "as an enactment and resolution of conflicts generated by the system of values", with "intricate and various" stories, "often delicate" resolutions, and "serious" themes.[12] However, there are two problematic issues associated with this notion of serious intent, the presentation of sophisticated themes and the promotion of thought and thoughtful laughter. The first is the theoretical untenability of the idea that authorial intent can be ascertained or reconstructed through the study of an author's work.[13] The second is the difficult question of whether the Plautine theatre in Rome could actually have accommodated the appreciation of any serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes beyond the immediate and obvious comic mayhem of the Plautine universe, or whether such perceived themes can only be the products of imaginative modern scholarly minds. The first of these problematic issues is insurmountable and therefore undermines any attempt to establish an original and intentional "seriousness" to Plautine comedy. However, the second can and indeed will be addressed in the course of this thesis. For by assuming not unreasonably that Plautus' intent in composing his comedies was partly serious and that Plautus introduced into his comedies or retained from his Greek models certain serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes, by examining the theatrical context of Plautine performance, by giving

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[12] Konstan (1983) 17, 23, 25. Gripus' bitter retort to the platitudes of his master Daemones late in the *Rudens* may also lend support to the notion of serious intent, the presentation of sophisticated themes and the promotion of thought and thoughtful laughter, if his words are interpreted as sly and sardonic authorial self-parody. For he remarks,

> spectaui ego pridem comicos ad istunc modum
> sapienter dicta dicere, atque is plaudier,
> quom illos sapientis mores monstrabant poplo:
> sed quom inde suam quisque ibant diuorsi domum,
> nullus erat illo pacto ut illi iusserant. (*Rud.* 1249-1253)

[13] Wimsatt & Beardsley (1954) 5 state that a literary work "is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it", a widely held premise that renders theoretically untenable the idea that authorial intent can be ascertained or reconstructed through the study of an author's work. For once an author's work is "beyond his power to intend about it or control it", the manner in which the public receives and appreciates the work may not necessarily meet the author's aspirations and intent for that work. For that public then to attempt to reconstruct the author's aspirations and intent from its reception and appreciation of his work is rather like trying to put the toothpaste back into the tube — a messy procedure which cannot effectively be done! The observations of Eagleton (1983) 120 on this point are pertinent: "to understand a poem means grasping its language as being 'oriented' [*sic*] towards the reader from a certain range of positions: in reading, we build up a sense of what kind of effects this language is trying to achieve ('intention'), what sorts of rhetoric it considers appropriate to use, what assumptions govern the kinds of poetic tactics it employs, what attitudes towards reality these imply. None of this need be identical with the intentions, attitudes and assumptions of the actual historical author at the time of writing". However, it is important to note that in the course of these observations Eagleton explicitly recognises the existence of authorial intent by referring to "the intentions, attitudes and assumptions of the actual historical author at the time of writing". There can be no valid hindrance therefore to suggesting certain reasonably assumed intentions for a particular author and then testing whether such intentions could have been met in the reception and appreciation of that author's work by his original audience.

consideration to the general nature of intelligence, and by analysing closely certain elements of Plautus' compositions, I shall establish in the first half of this thesis the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience. From these conditions, the case for the appreciation of serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes by members of Plautus' original Roman audience is given strength, since heterogeneous appreciation suggests at a basic level some appreciation of Plautus' comedies beyond the immediate and comically obvious.

In the second half of this thesis, I shall set the notion of the appreciation of serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes on firmer and less theoretical ground by presenting individual (but by no means definitive) interpretations of three Plautine comedies[14], and hence by suggesting that each of the three comedies offered serious, sophisticated and thought-provoking themes which could have been appreciated by members of Plautus' original Roman audience, if not during the original performance, then in subsequent contemplation or during subsequent performances.[15]

In order then to proceed, it is necessary first to consider the circumstances of an original Plautine performance, which in turn will lead us to consider the composition and then the intellectual disposition of the Plautine audience at such a performance.

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[14] Specifically, the *Menaechmi*, the *Amphitruo* and the *Asinaria*.

[15] The repetition of Plautine performances was the consequence of *instauratio*, a ritual phenomenon to be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 1
THE PUBLIC AND COMMUNAL CONTEXT OF PLAUTINE PERFORMANCE IN ROME

The twentieth century has witnessed a revolution in the presentation and reception of popular theatre. The advent of cinema, radio and television within the first half of this century has not only broken the continuous and direct link between performer and audience which live theatre had previously always provided, but has also increasingly fragmented the audience and provided it with constant access to theatrical entertainment. For the expansion of private ownership within the developed world of radio and then television, not just in every house but more and more in every room of the house, has had the effect that both the private audience (or the illusion thereof) and a completely constant access to theatrical entertainment are no longer the reserve of the highly privileged but a fact of rampant economic and industrial development. Paradoxically, attendance at the modern public live theatre has increasingly become a privilege determined by the extent of disposable income. Indeed, the paradox and the deficiencies of popular theatrical entertainment as a private phenomenon are further exposed both by the maintenance of the live audience for many televised situation comedies and by the introduction of recorded laughter and applause for many more, while the perils of popular theatrical entertainment as a constant and indeed highly commercial phenomenon are exposed by the self-perpetuating materialism and the short attention spans which seem to afflict modern society.

But aside from the technological and economic forces which have brought about these circumstances, a Roman in the late third and early second centuries B.C. would not have been able to conceive of this almost complete contraction of popular theatre from public to private domains and this complete expansion of popular theatrical forms to every hour of the day. For the Roman popular theatre during that period was a limited but public and communal phenomenon, linked inextricably to the civic and religious life of the city. Theatrical productions generally and Plautine productions in particular were performed without charge on temporary stages in the open air during select religious festivals which were generically termed *ludi* and which usually combined formal[1] religious practices,

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[1] By "formal", I wish to denote the sacrificial, processional and votive practices within Roman religion which can best be understood by analogy to modern Judeo-Christian religious practice. However, it is fundamentally important not to distinguish the sporting and theatrical aspects of the *ludi* from general Roman religious practice. The contests in the *circus* and the performances in the theatre had ritual significance in their own right. This is evident from the fact that flaws subsequently found in the conduct of the sporting and theatrical events were considered grounds for *instauratio* or ritual repetition no less than those found in the conduct of the other more formal religious rites. Indeed, Cicero (*Har*. 23) notes that if a performer stopped at the wrong time or if an *aedilis* erred in reciting a religious formula, "ludi sunt non rite facti" and *instauratio* was equally

sporting contests and theatrical performances. Moreover, there exists a fundamentally causal relationship between the civic and religious context in which Plautus' *palliatae* were performed and the nature of the composition of the Plautine audience. Therefore, in order to establish an initial impression of the composition of that audience, it is necessary to consider briefly the nature of the *ludi*, their history and development until the end of Plautus' career in 184 B.C.

The *Ludi*

The precise origins of the *ludi* are difficult to define, since they are clouded considerably by dubious and conflicting traditions from antiquity.[2] Moreover, their development is extremely complex, because as with many aspects of Roman religion, the *ludi* were not a simple homogeneous phenomenon, but polymorphous and in many cases mutable in form and motivation. Nevertheless, it would seem that the *ludi* originated in the pre-Republican era under Etruscan influence and that in their simplest form they were *ludi circenses*, sporting carnivals consisting of horse- and chariot-racing and perhaps pugilism, and conducted in conjunction with formal religious practices and often in conjunction with previously established formal religious festivals.

Of all the *ludi* on the Roman calendar, the *ludi Romani* were the most prominent, not only in terms of the civic and religious life of Rome[3], but also in setting the terms of

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required in each circumstance.

[2] Livy, whose annalistic history *ab urbe condita* contains the richest source of information from antiquity concerning *ludi* until 184 B.C., first describes their conduct during the reign of Romulus in relation to the abduction of the Sabine women. He states that Romulus conducted *ludi sollemnes* in honour of *Neptunus equestris* in order to entice the neighbouring communities to visit Rome and hence allow for the abduction of the young women. Moreover, Livy notes that Romulus called these *ludi* the *Consualia*. (1.9.6) However, this account is extremely unreliable. Ogilvie (1965) 66 states his scepticism at length by noting that "the connexion between the Consualia and the Rape has not yet been satisfactorily explained", that "the horse- or mule-races which in historical times accompanied the Consualia were no original feature but will have been added under Etruscan influence", and that "the elaboration of the Consualia by the addition of horse-races which turned it into one of the most spectacular of the early festivals led in its turn to a misrepresentation of the deity in the honour it was held ... the wholly false and un-Roman notion that the Consualia were held in honour of *Neptunus equestris*". For the *Consualia* were more precisely a harvest festival to Consus the god of the granary, which came to be held twice yearly and to incorporate sacrificial rites and equestrian *ludi*. According to the first century A.D. Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.31.2), the *Consualia* continued to be celebrated in a very basic fashion into the Empire. Yet, despite its unreliability, Livy's account at the very least serves as a reminder that some *ludi* maintained very simple and venerable, if not original, forms and motivations throughout the pre-Republican and Republican eras. For this is not the case for all *ludi*, particularly those which would have a profound impact on theatrical performance in Rome.

[3] Their prominence is apparent not only from their regular title, but also from two alternative titles which Livy provides: *ludi magni* (*passim*, but in particular 1.35.9 and 4.27.1) and *ludi maximi* (6.42.12). The term *ludi magni* would later be used to describe the irregular votive *ludi* to

conduct for other *ludi scaenici*[4] during Plautus' lifetime. Dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, they were conducted annually probably from the mid-fourth century B.C.[5] under the direction of the *aediles curules* in mid-September and coincided with the *dies natalis* of Jupiter's temple on the Capitolium, consecrated on the Ides of September, 509 B.C.[6] However, it would seem that these *ludi* were first conducted on an irregular basis before that consecration.

According to Livy, the first *ludi Romani* took place early in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus, Rome's fifth king who traditionally ruled from 616 to 579 B.C.[7] Livy states that after taking the Latin town of Apiolae, Tarquinius personally conducted from the spoils of the war *ludi opulentius instructiusque quam priores reges*, that in the process the site of the *Circus Maximus* was established, and that the entertainment, imported mostly from Etruria, consisted of equestrian contests and pugilism. However, Livy's description of originally pre-Republican *ludi Romani* is unrepresentative of the tradition of the *ludi Romani* to follow. For the tradition presented here by Livy, that of the personal and privately inspired, represents a form of *ludi* which would be suppressed by the establishment of the collective authority of the Republican senate and which would regain only a minor significance during Plautus' lifetime.[8] The *ludi Romani* of 493 B.C. as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus were in fact far more representative.[9]

Jupiter which were established after the *ludi Romani* became an annual fixture. However, the close relationship between the annual and the irregular votive *ludi Ioui* is evident from Livy's description of the latter in 194 B.C. as the *ludi Romani uotiui* (34.44.6).

4 For the purpose of this thesis, the term *ludi scaenici* shall be used to describe any *ludi* which included theatrical performances, whether or not they also included sporting contests.

5 Wissowa (1912) 127 describes the *ludi Romani* as "wahrscheinlich seit Einsetzung der curulischen Aedilität 388 = 366, ein ständiges Jahresfest geworden". (Livy [6.42.14] sets the establishment of the curule aedileship in 366 B.C.)

6 Fowler (1899) 215; Scullard (1981) 183. Scullard further notes that "from this central date [September 13th] they were extended both ways and [in the late Republic] embraced about half the month (5th-19th)".

7 Livy 1.35.7-9. Mommsen (1864-1879) v. 2 44 n. 3 cites *Pseudo-Asconius*' apparent substantiation of Livy's account: "Romani ludi sub regibus instituti sunt magnique appellati, quod magnis impensis dati".

8 The significance of privately inspired *ludi* during Plautus' career should not be overstated. For their institution and conduct did little to affect substantially the general conduct of *ludi scaenici* in that period. Moreover, they are apparent in only a few cases and manifest essentially in only two forms. In the first place, there were the privately funded funeral spectacles, whose development was concurrent with that of major public *ludi* from the mid-third century B.C. The first took place in 264 B.C., when Rome's first gladiatorial contests or *munera* were staged as a spectacle at the funeral of Decius Iunius Pera. Yet although theatrical performances had gained a noteworthy position within funeral spectacles by the early-to-middle second century B.C. (Livy [41.28.11]

Dionysius states that the *ludi Romani* were conducted 493 B.C. as a consequence of the defeat six years previously of Tarquinius Superbus by the Roman *dictator* Aulus Postumius. Indeed, he records that before battle and in response to a growing fear that provisions would be insufficient to support the Roman army, Aulus Postumius ordered the Sibylline texts to be examined and as a result made εὐχαὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως that if the Romans met with success in battle, θυσίαι μεγάλαι would be offered and ἀγῶνες πολυτελεῖς would be conducted. Dionysius also states that these θυσίαι and ἀγῶνες were subsequently decreed by the senate and were conducted ἐκ τῶν λαφύρων in conjunction with a πομπὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου τε καὶ δι' ἀγορᾶς ἄγοντες ἐπὶ τὸν μέγαν ἱππόδρομον.[10]

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states that in 174 B.C. Titus Flaminius set aside four days for his father's funeral games, which included *ludi scaenici*; the *didascaliae* from the A and Σ manuscripts of Terence reveal that in 160 B.C. his *Adelphoe* and *Hecyra* were presented at the *ludi funebres* for Lucius Aemilius Paulus), the evidence to suggest the presence of theatrical performances during Plautus' career at funeral spectacles is less convincing, despite the efforts of Taylor (1937) 299-300 to suggest otherwise. In any case, whatever political benefit for the family or friends of the dead came from the private conduct of funeral spectacles was hardly likely to have come from any theatrical element. For as Gruen (1992) 197 notes, "gladiatorial contests were the main events at elaborate funeral ceremonies; plays were mere sideshows. They would do little to advance the political interests of the deceased's clan." Livy's (41.28.11) description of the gladiatorial contests at the *ludi funebres* for the elder Flaminius as the *magni muneris summa* exemplifies this point.

On the other hand, there were the privately pledged *ludi*, which Livy describes in 205 B.C. (28.38.14, 28.45.12) and in 200 B.C. (31.49.4), pursuant to Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus' respective vows in Spain in 206 B.C. and in Africa in 205 B.C.; in 191 B.C. (36.36.1-2), pursuant to Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica's vow in Spain in 193 B.C.; and in 186 B.C. (39.22.1-3, 8-10), pursuant to the vows of Marcus Fulvius and Lucius Scipio during the Aetolian and Antiochene wars respectively. Only the final two furnish any evidence for the presence of theatrical performances at these *ludi*. Livy states that Fulvius' and Scipio's *ludi* were marked by the presence of *artifices ex Graecia* and *ex Asia* respectively. Yet even if Livy were describing a theatrical novelty distinct from any regular theatrical performance at such *ludi*, the extent of the "exploitation of the dramatic medium to advance private goals" (Gruen [1992] 195) would have been no more pronounced than at regular *ludi scaenici*. For although these *ludi* were sponsored by outstanding individuals within the Roman Republic and although "the celebration of *ludi* seems to [have been] a more effective means of publicizing the name of an individual than the erection of a temple" (Orlin [1997] 70), those individuals did not surpass the *res publica* in conducting their *ludi*. For the conduct of these *ludi* was regulated ultimately by the senate. When Scipio Africanus sought to conduct his *ludi* in 205 B.C., he sought first the authority of the senate, which decreed that these *ludi* should be financed not from general public revenues, but specifically from the moneys which Scipio had furnished the *res publica* from his campaigns. Moreover, when Cornelius sought in 191 B.C. for the senate to provide funding out of general public revenues for his *ludi inconsulto senatu*, the senate reacted to his *nouus atque iniquus* request by demanding that Cornelius fund his *ludi uel ex manubiis uel sua impensa*.

[9] Dionysius' (5.57.5) first description of *ludi Romani* are those conducted in 500 B.C. He states that after the suppression of a conspiracy to restore the monarchy, the senate decided to conduct θυσίαι and ἀγῶνες over τρεῖς ἡμέραι ἱεραί, that these ἱεροὶ ἀγῶνες were ἐπωνύμοι τῆς πόλεως, and that the consul Manius Tullius was killed after falling from τὸ ἱερὸν ἅρμα during ἡ πομπὴ κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν ἱπποδρόμον.

[10] D.H. 6.10.1, 6.17.2-3, 6.94.3, 7.71.2, 7.72.1.

Dionysius' description of these publicly conducted and formulaically pledged *ludi* is indeed consistent with the general nature of the *ludi* which Livy in particular describes henceforth and with the civic, religious and social conditions under which Plautus was ultimately able to present his comedies. For the conduct and development of *ludi* from the early Republic to the early second century B.C. was motivated largely by three often interrelated and overlapping factors: the general popular appeal of the *ludi* themselves, the need for popular distractions in times of civic crisis or panic, and civic-religious piety as manifest particularly in formulaic vows made on behalf of and with the nominal authority of the *populus Romanus*.

The first of these three factors is most clearly attested by Livy's extensive annalistic references to *instaurationes* at the *ludi Romani* and the *ludi plebeii*[11] between 216 and 179 B.C.[12] Indeed, notwithstanding the probability that genuine ritual errors did occur from time to time, causing the ritualistically strict Romans to repeat certain *ludi*, it is difficult not to conclude solely from the repetition of the *ludi plebeii* seven times in both 205 B.C. and 197 B.C.[13] that the popular appeal of the *ludi* was a motivating factor for the "discovery" of flaws and hence for their often repeated conduct during this period.[14]

The second factor in part underlies Livy's description of the major change which the *ludi Romani* underwent in 364 B.C. Livy states that in the previous year Rome was

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[11] The *ludi plebeii* were probably instituted before the traditional date of 220 B.C. and became annual no later than 216 B.C. (The former date arises from Valerius Maximus' assertion [1.7.4] that the *ludi plebeii* were conducted in the *Circus Flaminius*, which was constructed in Rome in that year. Wiseman [1976] 44-45, however, casts considerable doubt on this assertion. The latter date arises from Livy's first reference to their conduct in that year. [23.30.16]) Dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and conducted around the Ides of November under the direction of the *aediles plebeii*, the *ludi plebeii* were largely an analogue of the *ludi Romani* and presumably carried a similar motivation. Plautus' *Stichus* was performed at the *ludi plebeii* in 200 B.C.

[12] Taylor (1937) 292 provides a complete list of citations in Livy of the *instaurationes* at the *ludi Romani* and the *ludi plebeii* during this period.

[13] Livy 29.11.12, 33.25.2.

[14] The need for extended public distractions during the darker periods of the second Punic War is also suggested in part by these extensive references to *instaurationes*. Whatever the case, it is clear that the phenomenon of *instauratio* would have enabled a member of the Plautine audience disposed to consider serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes within Plautus' compositions the opportunity to review a particular comedy and hence gain a better appreciation of any such themes. For although only the *Stichus* can be said with certainty to have enjoyed repeat performance at the thrice repeated *ludi plebeii* in 200 B.C. (Livy 31.50.3), the extent of *instauratio* during Plautus' career comfortably allows the assumption that a significant number of Plautine productions would have been repeated in the days following their original performance. Repeated performances and repeated attendance by audience members at such performances are both suggested in the epilogue to the *Pseudolus*:

> [PS.] uerum sei uoltis adplaudere atque adprobare hunc gregem
> et fabulam in crastinum uos uocabo. (*Ps.* 1334),

if *fabula* is interpreted to mean *fabula eadem*.

struck by a "pestilentia ingens" so severe that a *censor*, an *aedilis curulis* and three *tribuni plebis* died, together with a proportionally large number of the general population. When this scourge continued into a second year, a *lectisternium* or banquet to the gods was unsuccessfully conducted, "pacis deum exposcendae causa". With the failure of *consilia humana* and *ops diuina* to end the pestilence, the population lapsed into superstitious fears. *Ludi scaenici* were therefore instituted, both as an attempt to arrest the *caelestis ira* by *procurandae religiones* and as a distracting novelty for this *bellicosus populus* previously accustomed only to the civic-religious entertainment of the *circus*.[15] Hence, the *ludi circenses* ceased to be the only form of Roman civic-religious spectacle, as Rome largely imported from other parts of Italy and particularly from Etruria unscripted and often improvised forms of theatre. These would be presented at the *ludi scaenici* for over a century until increased Roman contact with and interest in the Hellenistic world enabled Livius Andronicus to introduce his scripted adaptations of Greek comedy and drama at the *ludi Romani* in 240 B.C.[16]

The third factor, however, is the most prominent. Livy's descriptions of early irregular *ludi Romani* and later *ludi magni*, as well as other *ludi scaenici* which developed during the second Punic War, present with varying degrees of detail aspects of formulaic procedures which were manifestations of civic-religious piety and which theoretically defined these prominent *ludi* as public and communal events. A sample of such descriptions follows.

In 431 B.C., having been appointed *dictator* in response to an outbreak of hostilities with the Aequi and the Volsci, Aulus Postumius Tubertus vowed *ludi magni* in

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15 Livy 7.1.7-7.2.3, 7.3.1.

16 The early development of *ludi scaenici* in Rome is thus described in Livy 7.2.4-13. It would be erroneous, however, to assume that 364 B.C. marked Rome's first contact with theatrical performance. Beacham (1991) 2 notes that "it is hardly credible that, whatever instructive example the Etruscans may have set, the Romans were not already familiar with some form of theatrical activity and, indeed, probably had been for a long time. As Aristotle was the first to point out, the impulse towards imitative activity is fundamental ... and will be evident in even the most primitive societies long before its expressions are formalized and defined as 'theatrical art'. ... In a society which greatly venerated its past, and in which literacy was lacking, an oral tradition of storytelling would have been greatly important; a sacred and indispensable practice which we are surely safe to assume would have displayed some form of embryonic dramatization as the narrator used appropriate gestures and vocal 'colouring' to enhance his performance." Furthermore, Beacham suggests a reason for the capacity of Roman society to accommodate theatrical performance as a form of religious rite: "the rituals ... central to Roman worship — the repetition of carefully defined exemplary gestures and verbal formulae — must themselves have formed a repertoire of proto-theatrical acts." It is likely therefore that 364 B.C. marked not the introduction of theatrical performance in Rome, but rather the inclusion of plot-based theatrical performance by the religiously acquisitive Romans within the civic-religious life of their city.

the presence of Aulus Cornelius the *pontifex maximus*.[17] In 360 B.C., after his appointment as *dictator* in response to the on-going Gallic threat, Quintus Servilius Ahala made a vow for the celebration of the *ludi magni* "ex auctoritate patrum, si prospere id bellum euenisset".[18] In 217 B.C., after the disastrous defeat of the Roman forces at Trasimene under the leadership of the *consul* Gaius Flaminius, the newly appointed *dictator* Quintus Fabius Maximus convinced the senate that the defeat occurred not because of the late Flaminius' *temeritas atque inscitia*, but rather his *neglegentia caerimoniarum auspiciorumque*. He therefore moved that the *decemuiri* consult the Sibylline books, which among other measures urged that *Ioui ludi magni* be vowed. The vow having been made, the senate delegated the direction of these *ludi* to the *praetor urbanus* Marcus Aemilius[19] and set aside the considerable sum of a third of a million bronze *asses* for their conduct.[20]

In 213 B.C., in order to stem the growing influence of *sacrificuli ac uates* on an impressionable Roman population made intensely superstitious by the shifting fortunes of the protracted war against Hannibal, the senate ordered the *praetor urbanus* Marcus Atilius[21] to collect *libri uaticini precationesue*. One of these uncovered *libri* contained the *carmina* of a certain Marcius, who aroused *religio noua* among the Romans in the following year and who gained the status of *uates inlustris* because of the accuracy of the first of two prophecies contained in his *carmina*. This first prophecy foretold the overwhelming defeat of the Roman forces at Cannae in 216 B.C. Marcius' second prophecy was therefore regarded with intense interest. For it stated that if the Romans wished to rid Italy of the foreign enemy, they should vow *ludi* to Apollo, that the *praetor urbanus* should direct their conduct *quotannis*, and that the treasury and private citizens should both contribute funds for their conduct. After Atilius had entrusted the *carmina* to his successor, Publius

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[17] Livy 4.27.1.

[18] Livy 7.11.4.

[19] Broughton (1951-1952) v. 1 244 assigns the *cognomen* Regulus and hence distinguishes the *praetor urbanus* of 217 B.C. from the *praetor peregrinus* of 213 B.C.

[20] Livy 22.9.7-11, 22.10.7. According to Livy (27.33.8, 34.44.2), the vow for these *ludi* was in fact fulfilled at least three times. In 208 B.C. at the direction of the senate, the *dictator* Titus Manlius Torquatus fulfilled a secondary vow made by Marcus Aemilius in 217 B.C. to repeat these *ludi* in 212 B.C. Manlius in turn made a further vow that these *ludi* should be repeated after another five year period. However, it is not clear whether this later vow was fulfilled. In 195 B.C., when it was discovered that the rite of the *uer sacrum* had not been performed properly in the previous year, the *pontifex maximus* urged the senate that the rite be repeated together with these *ludi magni*, both of which were originally vowed in 217 B.C.

[21] Broughton (1951-1952) v. 1 263 and 266 n. 2 is adamant although unconvincing in supporting Livy's (25.1.11) attribution of this task to Marcus Aemilius (Lepidus?). See F. G. Moore (1940-1949) v. 1 342 n. 2. on Livy's error.

Cornelius Sulla, they were brought to the attention of the senate, which examined the second prophecy, ordered the *decemuiri* to consult the Sibylline texts, and consequently decreed the *ludi Apollinares* should be vowed and conducted under the direction of Sulla.[22]

However, Livy's description of the *ludi magni* of 191 B.C. at the height of Plautus' career is his most informative account of formulaic procedures towards the conduct of *ludi*. For he states that in that year, upon Rome's declaration of war with Antiochus III, the senate ordered the *consul* Manius Acilius Glabrio to vow *ludi magni Ioui* to ensure the success of that military endeavour. In addition, Livy includes a text of the vow, in which the *consul*, at the prompting of the *pontifex maximus* Publius Licinius, promises that "tibi, Iuppiter, populus Romanus ludos magnos dies decem continuos faciet".[23] Apart from any irregular examination of the Sibylline texts before the instruction of the vow, the essential elements of formulation are all present in this particular account: the senate directs the relevant magistrate to vow *ludi*, the vow is made by the magistrate following a formula dictated by the *pontifex maximus*, and the vow is made on behalf of the *populus Romanus*. Moreover, the politically comprehensive nature of the vow is fundamental testament to the public and communal nature of the *ludi*. As Orlin notes, "the text of the vow clearly indicates that the state would have to fulfill this vow, even though an individual spoke the words. Acilius is clearly making the vow as the representative of the state, and not as an individual; he vowed that 'the Roman people' [would] perform the *ludi magni*, not that he himself would be responsible for their celebration."[24]

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[22] Livy 25.1.6-12, 25.12.2-12. Although Marcius' second prophecy bid annual *ludi Apollinares* and although they were conducted by the respective *praetores urbani* every year from 212 B.C., each on different days of the calendar, they were not considered an annual fixture until 208 B.C. Livy (27.23.5-7) states that in that year a "pestilentia grauis", which brought prolonged illness rather than death, struck the city and the surrounding districts and that the *praetor urbanus* Publius Licinius Varus was ordered by the senate to vow the *ludi Apollinares* on a fixed day in perpetuity. Although Livy (26.23.3) notes that in 211 B.C. on the motion of the *praetor urbanus* Gaius Calpurnius Piso, the senate decreed that the *ludi Apollinares* should be vowed in perpetuity, it would seem that this decree was not carried out. For Livy (27.11.6) describes the *ludi Apollinares* of 209 B.C. as strictly votive, but not those *ludi* subsequent to the decree of 208 B.C. (202 [30.38.10], 190 [37.4.4], 184 [39.39.15]).

It should further be noted that while there is no absolute evidence to the effect, Livy's assertion (40.51.3) that in 179 B.C. the *censor* Marcus Aemilius Lepidus unsuccessfully contracted for *theatrum et proscaenium ad Apollinis* and Cicero's claim (*Brut.* 78) that in 169 B.C. Ennius' *Thyestes* was performed at the *ludi Apollinares* allow comfortably the assumption that theatrical performances were established at these *ludi* late in Plautus' career, if not earlier.

[23] Livy 36.2.2-5. Orlin (1997) 42 n. 27, however, cautions that "we must of course recognize the very real possibility that Livy's purported text of the vow may bear little resemblance to the actual vow. Nonetheless, the manner in which Livy words the vow reveals an educated Roman's perception of its key components. As such, we may at least take it as a reasonable approximation of this type of vow."

[24] ibid. 43.

This responsibility placed on the *res publica* and hence on the *populus Romanus* for the celebration of those *ludi* also included their financial arrangements. For Orlin stresses that "in those instances where the Senate ordered a magistrate to vow *ludi*, especially in those cases where the amount is not specified, it is clear that the Senate must have been the source of funds for the celebration."[25] Moreover, when private moneys were required for such *ludi*, its collection seems to have been the subject of some delicacy.[26]

Hence, there was a pronounced public and communal nature to these *ludi scaenici* as votive phenomena, a nature not diminished by their permanence before or during Plautus' career.[27] For although it is sound to assume that *aediles* and *praetores* supplemented from their own pockets the funds furnished by the senate for the conduct of particular annual *ludi scaenici* and hence used annual *ludi scaenici* as vehicles for their political ambitions[28], the supervision of annual *ludi scaenici* remained a responsibility

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25 ibid.

26 At the *ludi Apollinares* of 212 B.C. which required both private and public funding, the *praetor urbanus* Sulla ordered that the *populus* should contribute *stips* according to individual means. (Livy 25.12.14) Although strictly unrelated to *ludi*, the vowing of the *uer sacrum* in 217 B.C. demonstrates an even greater delicacy in this respect. (Livy 22.10.1-6)

27 In addition to the *ludi Romani*, the *ludi plebeii* and the *ludi Apollinares*, the *ludi Megalenses* were established as annual *ludi scaenici* during Plautus' career. Instituted in 204 B.C. in conjunction with the state entry of the oriental cult of Cybele the *Mater Magna* from Pessinus in Phrygia (Gruen [1990] 5-33 provides an outstanding account of the complex circumstances of Cybele's introduction), the *ludi Megalenses* were conducted in early April as an annual event under the direction of *aediles curules* no later than 194 B.C. In that year theatrical performances were incorporated. (Livy 34.54.3) The *ludi Megalenses* were also noted for the staging of Plautus' *Pseudolus* in 191 B.C., the year of the dedication of the temple to Cybele.

Taylor (1937) 289 states that the *ludi Ceriales* were "probably" annual *ludi scaenici* during the Plautine era. Yet although Livy's (30.39.8) single reference to their conduct in 201 B.C. suggests their regularity, there is no evidence to suggest the presence of theatrical performances until after Plautus' time.

The only prominent *ludi scaenici* to have remained votive during Plautus' career were of course the *ludi magni*. However, it is possible also that the other *ad hoc ludi uotiui* were scenic. The *ludi* most often cited in this respect are the *ludi Iuuentatis*, publicly and singularly conducted in 191 B.C. in conjunction with the dedication of the temple to Iuventas, which was vowed in 207 B.C. by the then *consul* and *dictator* Marcus Livius Salinator. (Livy 36.36.5-7) For in quoting the often unreliable Roman literary historian Lucius Accius and his clearly erroneous observation that Livius Andronicus first presented his *fabulae* in Rome at the *ludi Iuuentatis*, Cicero (*Brut.* 73) establishes at least an impression in antiquity of the presence of theatrical performances at those *ad hoc ludi*.

28 Livy does present some circumstantial evidence to this effect. As a superfluous afterthought to his description of the thrice repeated *ludi plebeii* of 201 B.C., Livy (31.4.7) notes that the *aedilis plebeius* Quintus Minucius Rufus "ex aedilitate praetor creatus erat." Moreover, Millar (1984) 12 observes that "it is impossible not to see [the giving of elaborate shows] as competitive gestures designed to win popular favour and enhance future electoral prospects. Like funeral orations and games, and like triumphs, ... these displays were directed to the public at large — not defined to groups of supporters, but to whatever section of the populace happened to turn up." Only Gruen (1992) 190 seems to dissent from prevailing opinion on the partial political manipulation of the theatre by stating that "the link between aedilician entertainment and subsequent political success is threadbare."

technically delegated by the senate and hence with the nominal authority of the *populus Romanus*.

But aside from formulaic vows, public funding and senatorial delegation, which were theoretical manifestations of the public and communal nature of the *ludi scaenici*, an innovation brought upon the Roman theatre in 194 B.C. was both the result and a concrete manifestation of that public and communal nature. For in that year for the first time since the institution of theatrical performances at *ludi*, the Roman theatrical audience was segregated between the senatorial order and the general *populus*.[29] This is a highly instructive piece of information, not for the fact of the segregation itself, but because it directly implies that in the middle of Plautus' career there was a sufficient desire or sense of obligation within the highest Roman social order to attend the *ludi scaenici* that places needed to be set aside for them and apart from the general *populus*. The various accounts of this innovation therefore confirm in a concrete fashion the public and communal nature of theatrical performance in Rome during the Plautine era, since they provide evidence of a basic social diversity to those members of the *populus Romanus* who attended the *ludi scaenici* and hence those who attended Plautine productions.[30]

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[29] Livy 34.44.4-5, 34.54.4-8; Cicero *Har.* 24, *per* Asconius *Corn.* 61; Valerius Maximus 2.4.3, 4.5.1. Plutarch (*Cat. Ma.* 17.6, *Flam.* 19.4) also provides confirmation of the practice ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ by 184 B.C. It should be noted that the sources disagree at which *ludi* this practice originated and who inspired its introduction. Livy states that the practice was originated at the *ludi Romani*, at the suggestion of the *consul* Scipio Africanus and at the prompting of the *censores* Sextus Aelius Paetus and Gaius Cornelius Cethegus. Cicero states that Scipio introduced the practice at the *ludi Megalenses*. Similarly, Valerius Maximus claims that in conducting the *ludi Megalenses* the *aediles curules* Aulus Atilius Serranus and Lucius Scribonius Libo followed the *sententia* of Scipio. Lenaghan (1969) 121-123 provides a discussion on these discrepancies.

[30] Despite Humphrey's (1986) 70 conviction that Livy's account (34.44.5) of the events of 194 B.C. may be assumed for the *circus*, the evidence does not support it. Beyond Valerius Maximus' obvious use (4.5.1) of the phrase "in theatro", Livy (34.54.6) describes the segregation similarly with the phrase "in cauea". For among other definitions, *cauea* is a theatrical term which in the Republican era could mean the auditorium of a theatre, the theatre itself, the seating in the theatre or even the theatrical audience. However, the breadth of its meaning was distinct from that of the term *circus*. This distinction is most clearly pronounced in Cicero's observation (*Leg.* 2.38) that "ludi publici ... sunt cauea circoque diuisi". Furthermore, Cicero (*per* Asconius *Corn.* 61) uses the term *subsellium*, which as a term for seating had greater resonance during the Republic in a theatrical context than in a sporting context. Consider in particular:

> [ME.] nunc hoc me orare a uobis iussit Iuppiter
> ut conquistores singula in subsellia
> eant per totam caueam spectatoribus,
> si quoi fauitores delegatos uiderint,
> ut is in cauea pignus capiantur togae; (*Am.* 64-68)

In any case, there is distinct tradition for the social segregation of the audience *in circo*. Pollack *RE* III, 2 2576 notes that "Augustus begann auch die Sonderung der Stände, Senatoren und Ritter, vom übrigen Volke, die Claudius und Nero vollends durchführten" and cites as evidence Cassius Dio's remark (55.22.4) that in 5 A.D. "καὶ τὰς ἱπποδρομίας χωρὶς μὲν οἱ βουλευταὶ χωρὶς δὲ οἱ ἱππῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ λοιποῦ πλήθους εἶδον". Briscoe (1981) 118 concurs. Livy (1.35.8) does state that at the original *ludi Romani* of Tarquinius Priscus places were set aside in

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the nature of the *ludi*, the sporting and theatrical festivals at which Plautus presented his *palliatae* in Rome. Furthermore, I have demonstrated through evidence independent of the Plautine texts that the nature of the *ludi scaenici* and hence the context of Plautine performance at Rome was public and communal, and that a basic social diversity among those members of the *populus Romanus* who attended the theatre during Plautus' career was both the result and the most concrete manifestation of this public and communal nature. In the next chapter, I shall examine more closely Plautus' original Roman audience through the internal evidence of the Plautine texts in order to define more precisely the socially diverse composition of this audience and ultimately to establish the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of this audience.

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the *circus* for the members of the senatorial and equestrian orders. However, Ogilvie (1965) 149-150 dismisses this claim as "a post-Sullan anachronism".

CHAPTER 2
THE HETEROGENEOUS PLAUTINE AUDIENCE

It would be easy to be misled by our modern Judeo-Christian notions of religious practice and to assume from Livy's accounts of the origins of the *ludi* and from other relevant observations in antiquity[1] that the Roman theatre during Plautus' career was possessed of a solemnity and a sense of obligation now considered appropriate for an occasion of profound religious moment. However, notwithstanding the remote possibility of a pronounced religious *grauitas* at the performances of tragedies or historical drama[2], this was not the case with the Plautine theatre. Indeed, a distinct lack of solemnity and obligation on the part of those attending performances of Plautine comedies is attested by the Plautine texts themselves.

A lack of solemnity is revealed in the first place by the frequent references within the Plautine prologues[3] to the din of the audience. For the prologists of the *Amphitruo* and the *Trinummus* respectively bid their audiences, "ita huic facietis fabulae silentium" (*Am.* 15) and "adeste cum silentio" (*Trin.* 22), and the prologists of the *Menaechmi* and the *Miles Gloriosus* respectively request *aures benignae* (*Men.* 4) and "ad auscultandum uostra ... benignitas". (*Mil.* 80) Moreover, in both the *Asinaria* and the *Poenulus*, a *praeco* (*As.* 4, *Poen.* 11) is called upon by the prologist to silence the crowd.

A lack of obligation on those attending is revealed by various suggestions of a "take it or leave it" attitude within the Plautine theatre. Late in the *Poenulus*, in order to hasten the action, the *adulescens* Agorastocles breaks the dramatic illusion by bidding Hanno the Carthaginian "in pauca confer: sitiunt qui sedent" (*Poen.* 1224), and hence suggests that impatient members of the audience might leave in order to get themselves a drink.[4]

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[1] In particular, Cicero (*Har.* 24) describes the *ludi Megalenses* as "more institutisque maxime casti, sollemnes, religiosi" in the context of his denunciation of Publius Clodius' disastrous *ludi Megalenses* in 56 B.C. (According to Cicero, these *ludi* were marked by *uis concessusque seruorum.*) However, Cicero also observes with respect to these *ludi* that "si qui liber aut spectandi aut etiam religionis causa accesserat, manus adferebantur", and hence suggests that *spectare* was of more concern to the *liberi* who attended the theatre than *religio*.

[2] This possibility is remote, given that "there is no evidence that there were designated days for tragic performances as opposed to comic ones." (Slater [1992] 137)

[3] Unless otherwise stated, all excerpts from the Plautine prologues quoted in this thesis are assumed to be the original work of Plautus. However, it should be noted that the originality of the Plautine prologues remains a subject for debate. For the prologist to the *Casina* casts doubt on their originality by describing that work as a *comoedia quae uos probastis qui estis in senioribus* (*Cas.* 13-14), and hence by revealing a later origin for sections of its prologue, probably during a Plautine revival in the mid-second century B.C.

[4] The consumption of alcohol in the Roman theatre was not an acceptable practice in the first

Similarly, the prologist of the *Captiui* asks a troublesome member of the audience who is unable to hear his plot summary,

> accedito.
> si non ubi sedeas locus est, est ubi ambules,
> quando histrionem cogis mendicarier.
> ego me tua caussa, ne erres, non rupturu' sum. (*Capt.* 11-14),

and hence implies that that individual is under no obligation to remain in the theatre.[5] However, this lack of obligation is most emphatically expressed by Palaestrio as prologist of the *Miles Gloriosus*:

> PA. mihi ad enarrandum hoc argumentum est comitas,
> si ad auscultandum uostra erit benignitas;
> qui autem auscultare nolet exsurgat foras,
> ut sit ubi sedeat ille qui auscultare uolt. (*Mil.* 79-82)[6]

The extent to which the religiosity of the Plautine theatre differed from modern Judeo-Christianity is therefore evident from the Plautine texts, a religiosity which defies adequate comparison to the modern experience, including even the most lively forms of evangelical Christianity. Yet although it is important to reiterate the religious significance of the Plautine theatre, it must also be acknowledged that the religiosity of that theatre comfortably accommodated the farcical entertainment inherent within and indeed fundamental to Plautine comedy. For, apart from the social butterflies, the political

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century A.D. Quintilian (*Inst.* 6.3.63) recounts an anecdote to this affect concerning Augustus and an *eques* seen drinking "in spectaculis". (Augustus allegedly remarked to the *eques*, "ego si prandere uolo, domum eo", to which the *eques* replied, "tu enim non times, ne locum perdas.") The unacceptability of drinking in the comic theatre of the mid-second century B.C. is perhaps revealed in the revival prologue of the *Casina*. For in discussing the foreign practice of slave marriage, the prologist states,

> id ni fit, mecum pignus si quis uolt dato
> in urnam mulsi, Poenus dum iudex siet
> uel Graecus adeo, uel mea caussa Apulus.
> quid nunc? nihil agitis? sentio, nemo sitit. (*Cas.* 75-78),

and thus suggests not so much a lack of thirst for alcohol within the audience, as a tacit prohibition on admitting to such a thirst.

[5] It is probable that this particular member of the audience was merely a comic invention. Nevertheless, the implication of the prologist's injunction is not diminished.

[6] This distinct lack of solemnity and sense of obligation on the part of the Roman comic audience would become extremely pronounced in the following generation during Terence's career. For the performance of Terence's *Hecyra* would not be successfully completed until a third attempt, probably at the *ludi Romani* in 160 B.C. The second attempt occurred at the *ludi funebres* for Lucius Aemilius Paulus in 160 B.C., while the first attempt was made at the *ludi Megalenses* in 165 B.C. According to the first and second prologues to the *Hecyra* (presumably recited at the second and third performances respectively), the first performance failed because the *populus stupidus* were distracted by a *funambulus* (*Hec.* 4-5) and because of the *pugilum gloria,* the *comitum conuuentus*, the *strepitus* and the *clamor mulierum.* (*Hec.* 33, 35)

attention-seekers and the professionals of various sorts[7] whom crowds usually attract and apart from those whose political positions obliged or encouraged them to attend[8], the Plautine audience went to the theatre, having notionally set aside their *negotium*, primarily to be entertained. Nevertheless, from such a generally homogeneous aspiration it should not be assumed that the Plautine audience were offered homogeneous entertainment. Indeed, Niall Slater suggests a basic heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies, when he states that the *argumentum* within the prologue of the *Poenulus* had to "catch the interest of that portion of the audience more interested in the conventional complications of Roman comedy while holding onto (or generating) the interest of those who [preferred] the sentimental recognition plot which only the second half [of the *Poenulus* would] deliver."[9] However, beyond this basic suggestion, it is possible to establish a strong and sound case for heterogeneous appreciation.

In this second chapter, I shall establish the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience, and shall do so in four steps: by demonstrating through the internal evidence of the Plautine texts the socially diverse composition of Plautus' audience; by demonstrating the theoretically sound connexion between social diversity and intellectual heterogeneity within the Plautine audience; by demonstrating that the notion that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience is unsustainable; and by demonstrating the existence throughout the Plautine *corpus* of comic material which would have tested the bounds of uniform and even universal appreciation within an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience.

The Socially Diverse Composition of the Plautine Audience

The evidence independent from the Plautine texts provides very limited information about the composition of the Plautine audience. For as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the sources from antiquity indicate a basic albeit important social diversity within that audience, the presence of distinct social elements among the *populus Romanus*. We are therefore dependent upon those references within the Plautine texts which cite the audience directly (or at the very least not too obliquely) in order to substantiate the notion of the

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7 Consider in particulat the *scorta exoleta*. (*Poen.* 17)

8 It is probable that those magistrates who directed the conduct of particular *ludi* would have been obliged to attend the theatrical performances at those *ludi*. However, it is also possible that the allocation of seats for the senatorial order in 194 B.C. either reflected an outstanding obligation or presented a new obligation for its members to attend.

9 Slater (1992) 141.

socially diverse composition of the Plautine audience. This evidence is limited. Nevertheless, it is still sufficient for present purposes.

The presence of distinct social elements among the *populus Romanus* within Plautus' audience is reiterated in the prologue of the *Captiui*. For after dismissing that aforementioned troublesome spectator, the prologist fawns upon another section of the audience, stating

> uos qui potestis ope uostra censerier
> accipite relicuom: alieno uti nil moror. (*Capt.* 15-16)

In this way, the prologist addresses those in the audience whose wealth was sufficient for their inclusion in the Roman *census*.[10] Moreover, his comments imply a presence in the theatre of those free-born Romans who could not on account of wealth be included in the Roman *census*.[11] This couplet therefore provides internal evidence of a diversity in Plautus' audience in terms of wealth and hence social standing.

Another aspect of social diversity can be found in the *adulescens* Eutychus' closing remarks of the *Mercator* (*Mer.* 1015-1026). For he states that before the performance concludes, a *lex senibus* should be passed such that whoever over the age of sixty "plays the field" should be considered *inscitus*, and whoever prevents his *adulescens filius* from pursuing a *scortum* should incur a fine greater than the expense of allowing secretly such a liaison. Eutychus notes finally,

> [EV.] haec adeo uti ex hac nocte primum lex teneat senes.
> bene ualete; atque, adulescentes, haec si uobis lex placet,
> ob senum hercle industriam uos aequom est clare plaudere.
> (*Mer.* 1024-1026)

Although Eutychus mentions only *adulescentes* specifically, these remarks indicate clearly a diversity within the audience in terms of age. Moreover, this sting in the tail of the *Mercator* would have been most effective, because it would have allowed for some light-hearted finger-pointing and joking between the *adulescens* and the *senes* in that audience as the comedy drew to its conclusion.

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[10] The *census* was "a national register prepared at Rome, on the basis of which were determined voting rights and liability for military service and taxation" (Derow *OCD*[3] 308) and in particular required Romans "τιμᾶσθαι τὰς οὐσίας πρὸς ἀργύριον" (D.H. 4.15.6) under threat of punishment for inaccuracy. It is generally held that Servius Tullius, Rome's sixth king who traditionally ruled from 578-535 B.C., instituted the first *census*. With the advent of the Republic, the responsibility for the *census* was assumed by the *consul* until 443 B.C., when the office of *censor* was established for that purpose.

[11] These were known by the degrading title of *capite censi* and, as Lintott *OCD*[3] 1253 notes, probably "paid no tribute and were exempt from military service except in an emergency ... when they were issued with armour and weapons."

Although it may be assumed simply from the length and the scope of the wars in which Rome was engaged in the late third and early second centuries B.C. and from the extent of the military terminology and imagery throughout the Plautine *corpus*[12], the texts variously reveal the presence of *milites*, whether active or retired, in the Plautine audience. A few examples will suffice.

Late in the fourth act of the *Bacchides*, the triumphant Chrysalus suggests the presence of *milites*, whose approval he probably gained, when he remarks,

> CH. sed, spectatores, uos nunc ne miremini
> quod non triumpho: peruolgatum est, nil moror;
> uerum tamen accipientur mulso milites. (*Bac.* 1072-1074)

The prologist of the *Captiui* closes by noting,

> abeo. ualete, iudices iustissimi
> domi, duellique duellatores optumi. (*Capt.* 67-68)

Finally, Auxilium the divine prologist of the *Cistellaria* states in conclusion,

> [AV.] bene ualete et uincite
> uirtute uera, quod fecistis antidhac;
> seruate uostros socios, ueteres et nouos,
> augete auxilia uostris iustis legibus,
> perdite perduellis, parite laudem et lauream,
> ut uobis uicti Poeni poenas sufferant. (*Cist.* 197-202)

As with *milites*, the presence of a mercantile core in the Plautine audience can reasonably be assumed from our knowledge of Roman commerce during Plautus' career.[13] Nonetheless, the Plautine texts affirm that presence variously and explicitly. Mercurius, the divine prologist of the *Amphitruo* and indeed the god of *lucrum*, opens that comedy with an entirely contractual mode of expression:

> ME. ut nos in uostris uoltis mercimoniis
> emundis uendundisque me laetum lucris
> adficere atque adiuuare in rebus omnibus,
> et ut res rationesque uostrorum omnium
> bene expedire uoltis peregrique et domi,
> bonoque atque amplo auctare perpetuo lucro
> quasque incepistis res quasque inceptabitis ...
> ita huic facietis fabulae silentium ... (*Am.* 1-7, 15),

while the prologist of the *Menaechmi*, a comedy of errors set in Epidamnus, states,

> si quis quid uestrum Epidamnum curari sibi
> uelit, audacter imperato et dicito ... (*Men.* 51-52)

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[12] MacCary (1969) provides a comprehensive study of military terminology and imagery in Plautus.

[13] A law introduced by the *tribunus plebis* Quintus Claudius in 218 B.C. indicates in part the existence and extent of Roman mercantile practice in the late third century B.C. This law prohibited senators or sons of senators from owning a *maritima nauis* with a capacity of more than 300 *amphorae*. (Livy 21.63.3)

But by far the most concentrated source of information concerning the Plautine audience and indeed the only explicit source with respect to those who were not strictly members of the *populus Romanus* can be found in the prologue of the *Poenulus*. For the prologist of the *Poenulus* refers to both women and various individuals of servile, freed or low free-born status[14] in the course of placing restrictions on their presence. Indeed, he states variously,

> scortum exoletum ne quis in proscaenio
> sedeat ...
>
> serui ne opsideant, liberis ut sit locus,
> uel aes pro capite dent; si id facere non quent,
> domum abeant ...
>
> nutrices pueros infantis minutulos
> domi ut procurent neu quae spectatum adferat,
> ne et ipsae sitiant et pueri pereant fame
> neue essurientes hic quasi haedi obuagiant.
> matronae tacitae spectent, tacitae rideant,
> canora hic uoce sua tinnire temperent,
> domum sermones fabulandi conferent ... (*Poen.* 17-18, 23-25, 28-34),

and at the same time, he advises,

> dum ludi fiunt, in popinam, pedisequi,
> inruptionem facite; (*Poen.* 41-42)

However, none of the four restrictions can constitute an absolute prohibition from the theatre. In the first place, the prologist's remarks provide no serious impediment to the presence of either *scorta* or *matronae* in the theatre, since the restrictions placed on each are relatively light. The *scorta* need only refrain from occupying the *proscaenium*[15], while the *matronae* need only refrain from talking and laughing loudly during the performance.[16] The

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[14] Servile status should not be necessarily assumed for either *scorta* or *nutrices*. With respect to *scorta*, E. Rawson (1991) 513 observes merely that they "would perhaps sometimes be slaves." Bradley in B. Rawson (1986) 202-207 demonstrates the low but not necessarily servile status of *nutrices* in imperial Italy and hence undermines a general assumption of nutrician servility in the earlier period.

[15] Tanner (1969) 96 suggests that the *proscaenium* constituted "the orchestra", the area directly in front of the stage and hence was to be contrasted with the *scaena*. However, the prologist of the *Truculentus* states,

> Athenis †tracto† ita ut hoc est proscaenium
> tantisper dum transigimus hanc comoediam. (*Truc.* 10-11),

to which T. J. Moore (1994) 115 notes, "it is very unlikely that [the prologist] would point out the orchestra rather than the stage itself as the place which is to be transformed into Greece for the duration of the play." In either case, the prologist's restriction in the *Poenulus* against the *scorta*'s occupation of the *proscaenium* cannot represent a prohibition entirely from the theatre.

[16] The threat of noisy *matronae* might well have been genuine, since the second prologist to Terence's *Hecyra* in 160 B.C. cites the *clamor mulierum* (*Hec.* 35) as one cause for the failure of that comedy's first presentation at the *ludi Megalenses* in 165 B.C. That prologist also establishes an extremely reliable tradition for the presence of women in the theatre a generation after Plautus.

prologist's suggestion that *serui* "domum abeant" cannot be taken at face value, because his primary concern is that "serui ne opsideant, liberis ut sit locus".[17] Hence, the suggestion that they should leave the theatre entirely would seem no more than a "throw-away" remark after the fact.[18] The prologist's remarks to the *nutrices* are the closest to an absolute prohibition on their presence in the theatre. For he states that *nutrices* should take care of their *pueri infantes minutuli* at home and not bring them to the theatre, in case their charges should become *sitientes* during the performance and hence either starve to death or else wail in hunger and disturb the performance. However, the double entendre in "ne et ipsae sitiant" is too pronounced for the prologist's injunction against the *nutrices* to be taken seriously. For *sitire* in this respect could mean to be dry, to be unable to produce milk, but it could also mean to thirst and to thirst in particular for wine.[19] Indeed, Gregor Maurach suggests that this remark constitutes "ein Seitenheib auf die notorische Trunksucht der Ammen"[20], which potential "Trunksucht" is attested variously in later antiquity.[21] Hence, it would seem that the prologist's four restrictive remarks constitute not a series of genuine prohibitions from the theatre, but rather a series of comic complaints against the women and the lowly types who are present in the theatre and who irritate or inconvenience before or during the performance.

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17 Ussing (1875-1892) v. 2 232 defines *ne opsideant* as "ne sedilia occupent". Moreover, the rebuke by the prologist of the *Captiui* against "ille ultimus" (*Capt.* 11) indicates that not everyone in the Plautine theatre was seated. As such, "ne opsideant" and "domum abeant" are distinct notions.

18 It is to be noted that in rebuking Publius Clodius for his conduct of the *ludi Megalenses* in 56 B.C., Cicero (*Har.* 26) suggests that slaves were prohibited from the Roman theatre of the early first century B.C. He states that when Clodius' uncle Gaius Claudius and father Appius Claudius conducted the *ludi Megalenses* respectively in 99 B.C. and no later than 91 B.C. (see Broughton v. 2 21, 24 n.8), "seruos de cauea exire iubebant: tu in alteram seruos inmisisti, ex altera liberos eiecisti. Itaque qui antea uoce praeconis a liberis semouebantur, tuis ludis non uoce sed manu liberos a se segregabant." However, as E. Rawson (1991) 513 notes, the term *cauea* here might merely suggest seats in the theatre, rather than the theatre as a whole, and the phrase *uoce praeconis a liberis semouebantur* "could show merely that [slaves] were separated from the free, not banished entirely." Moreover, the prologist's advice that the *pedisequi* (whom Ussing [1875-1892] v. 2 232 describes as "qui dominos in theatrum comitati sunt" but who were probably not servile) go forage "in popinam", suggests that slaves remained in the theatre and were neglecting their duties.

19 cf. "in pauca confer: sitiunt qui sedent." (*Poen.* 1224)

20 Maurach (1975) 134.

21 In particular, Gellius (12.1.17) cites the second century A.D. *philosophus* Favorinus' warnings against the *nutrix temulenta*. The contemporary physician Soranus (*Gyn.* 2.19) also warns against the drinking *nutrix* because she will likely leave her charge unattended while sleeping off her drink and also pass on the alcoholic affects of her drinking to the infant through her milk. However, E. Rawson (1991) 513 alludes to perhaps the true reason for this "Seitenheib": that the *nutrices* "carrying infants, would doubtless at least [have wished] for seats". These *nutrices* would therefore have left others standing and would also have been a potential source of noise much closer to the stage.

The composition of the Plautine audience may therefore be summarised thus. In addition to the external evidence which reveals the presence of distinct social elements among the *populus Romanus*, the Plautine texts imply a diversity of audience in terms of wealth and hence social standing, age and sex. They also imply the presence of soldiers, probably both active and retired, a mercantile core, as well as the presence of slaves and various other individuals of low status. These may seem a very narrow set of parameters by which to define the composition of the Plautine audience. Nevertheless, they are a firm basis upon which to establish theoretically the intellectual heterogeneity of the Plautine audience.

The Intelligence Question

Although used widely, the term "intelligence" defies simple or even accurate definition. The educational psychologist David Pyle notes that if asked to define such a "situation-specific word", "the biologist would stress the ability to adapt to the demands of the environment; the educationist the ability to learn; some psychologists [would] emphasise the measurement of the ability to reason and other cognitive functions, others the development of those functions; and probably the layman would mumble something about 'common sense'!"[22] Yet despite the difficulty generally faced in encapsulating the concept of "intelligence" in a comprehensive and meaningful form, there has been an increasing scholarly tendency throughout the course of this century to abandon the linear notion of "general intelligence" and replace it with so-called "multiple-models" of intelligence. From the early model of Louis Thurstone in the 1930s, to the comprehensive model of Joy Guilford in the 1960s and finally to the succinct and elegant model of Howard Gardner in the 1980s[23], the development of these multiple-models has broadened the scope of intelligence as a concept to the extent that the outstanding classicist, cricketer and cabinet-maker can all be defined theoretically to possess distinct yet qualitatively indivisible

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[22] Pyle (1979) 1, 3. Perhaps also the psychometrician would answer in the manner of Jensen (1969) 8: "intelligence, by definition, is what intelligence tests measure"!

[23] Thurstone (1938) 79-89 defines his initial set of nine "Primary Factors" as *S* (spatial visualisation), *P* (perception), *N* (number), *V* (verbal relations), *W* (verbal fluency), *M* (memory), *I* (induction), and tentatively *R* (restrictive thinking) and *D* (deduction). Guilford (1967) 70-249 establishes through her "Structure of Intellect Theory" some 120 forms of intelligence, each a ternary product of single elements from discrete categories: operation (consisting of cognition, memory, divergent production, convergent production and evaluation), product (consisting of units, classes, relations, systems, transformations and implications), and content (consisting of figural, symbolic, semantic and behavioural). Gardner (1983) 73-276 through his "Theory of Multiple Intelligences" divides the intellectual spectrum into seven basic categories: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and two personal intelligences, interpersonal and intrapersonal.

combinations of intelligences. Furthermore, although these multiple-models have developed to a point of compatibility with fashionable liberal and egalitarian notions by their fostering broader social inclusion in terms of intelligence, they do not diminish the idea of intellectual diversity within a society, which is implicit within the singular notion of general intelligence and its associated discipline of linear psychometrics. In fact, by dividing intelligence into a series of linear indicators, these multiple-models give credibility to the notion that the intellectual manner in which a socially diverse group of individuals approach and respond to any single phenomenon or any finite set of phenomena must generally also be diverse or at the very least non-uniform.

Such theoretical developments on the nature of intelligence are therefore to my mind entirely relevant and fundamentally important to the consideration of the Plautine audience. Indeed, I wish to suggest independently of any evidence from antiquity that the notion of the intellectual heterogeneity of the Plautine audience is made generally sound by these theoretical developments. For, as has already been demonstrated, the Plautine audience represented absolutely a diverse cross-section of Roman society. Therefore, one should expect on a theoretical level a general diversity in the degrees to which individuals within the Plautine audience innately possessed certain intelligences and, specifically through that audience's varied social composition, a general diversity in the experiences which would have influenced the development of certain intelligences. In turn, one should also expect a general diversity both in the manner in which the intellectual activity of theatrical appreciation was undertaken and in the cognitive outcomes of that activity.[24]

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[24] We may define the intellectual activity of theatrical appreciation and in particular the appreciation of underlying themes within a theatrical performance through Thurstone's (1938) model of intelligence as the application of a combination of five factors: *P* (defined as "a facility in perceiving detail that is imbedded in irrelevant material" [81]), *V* ("characterized primarily by its reference to ideas and the meaning of words" [84]), *M*, *I* (characterised by the ability "to find a rule or principle" [86]), and *R* (characterised by "the successful completion of a task that involves some form of restriction in the solution" [88]). We may also define that activity through Gardner's (1983) model as the application of a combination of four intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, intrapersonal (defined as "the capacity to distinguish a feeling of pleasure from one of pain and, on the basis of such discrimination, to become more involved in or to withdraw from a situation" [239]) and interpersonal (defined as the capacity "to read the intentions and desires - even when these have been hidden - of many other individuals and, potentially, to act upon this knowledge" [ibid.]).

It should be noted, however, that I do not wish to suggest that the degree to which a member of Plautus' original Roman audience possessed certain intelligences would have been the sole determining factor in his ability to appreciate serious, underlying themes within Plautine comedy. For individual attitudes and the inclination to consider the issues related to such themes would also have been required. It should also be noted that by suggesting a general diversity in the cognitive outcomes of theatrical appreciation, I do not wish to suggest that every minute aspect of Plautine comedy would or could have been the subject of diverse intellectual dissection by Plautus' Roman audience. After all, sometimes a custard pie is just a custard pie.

However, such a generally sound expectation of intellectual heterogeneity does not, establish adequately the conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation specifically of Plautine comedy. For direct textual evidence is required to demonstrate the existence throughout the Plautine *corpus* of comic material which would have tested during performance certain non-uniform intellectual abilities within an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience, and hence tested the bounds of uniform and even universal appreciation. However, before such textual evidence can be examined, we need to address a school of Plautine scholarship which has tended towards the unsustainable notion that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience.

Everything for Everyone?

Scholarly opinion as to the sophistication of the Plautine audience has shifted considerably during the course of the twentieth century. Indeed, William Beare's various estimations of the Plautine audience over the middle decades of this century alone reflect that shift. For in the first place Beare branded the Plautine public as "an audience whose powers of attention, comprehension, and memory, as far as artistic things are concerned, can hardly be underestimated", and noted also that "Plautus did not aim at subtle effects, and, from his point of view, it would have been a waste of time to do so."[25] Yet he later conceded that "the very existence of plays like the *Captivi* suggests that we should not too readily despise the public for whose entertainment they were written."[26] Beare's later concession, however, does not reflect the true extent of the scholarly shift from the notion that the Plautine audience were "des rustes ignorants et bornés, incapables de goûter les analyses de caractères ou les comédies de mœurs, des amateurs de farces bouffonnes et de grosses plaisanteries."[27] For Barthélémy Taladoire describes the Plautine audience as "un public capable de répondre à des sollicitations ... diverses"[28], Jean-Paul Cèbe states that "[le public de Plaute] était à même de comprendre et d'apprécier des ouvrages difficiles" and "n'est pas essentiellement différent de celui d'Aristophane"[29], and Walter Chalmers observes that the Plautine audience was "intellectually awake and had a robust sense of

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25 Beare (1928) 107, 110.

26 Beare (1964) 175.

27 Cèbe (1960) 101.

28 Taladoire (1948) 14.

29 Cèbe (1960) 101.

humour and a keen zest for life."[30] Yet although these descriptions are all attractive in that they commend not merely the audience, but also the poet and his comedies for appealing to that audience's apparent sophistication, the methodology by which they are reached cannot evade critical comment. For Taladoire, Cèbe and Chalmers all use references within the Plautine texts as an empirical measure of what the Plautine audience knew and was capable of understanding.[31] Such an approach has some merit in that it is able to produce internally consistent models of the intellectual nature of the Plautine audience. However, this approach and its consequent models are also deeply flawed, because they are ultimately dependent upon an unsound assumption that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience.[32] This assumption is most evident in Chalmers' otherwise excellent study, a study which demands closer and careful examination, not only for the use of that unsustainable assumption to achieve its ends, but also because the scholar himself undermines that assumption.

In "Plautus and his Audience", Chalmers seeks "to derive from [Plautus' comedies] information about the audiences who first saw them performed." In order to do so, he establishes early on a methodology whose major flaw is apparent not at first glance, but only upon greater reflection. For in discussing Plautus' life and work in general terms, Chalmers reasonably concludes that the survival of Plautus' *palliatae* and the extent in antiquity of *palliatae* falsely accredited to Plautus "[imply] that Plautus knew how to appeal to the taste of his audience."[33] However, this general notion of Plautus' ability to appeal to

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30 Chalmers (1965) 47.

31 Taladoire (1948) 14 states that "il nous suffira, pour l'instant, de constater que le meilleur y côtoie le pire et que cette richesse essentielle, cette multiplicité de talent qui nous fait passer sans cesse, et de façon assez inattendue, du genre graveleux au genre moralisant, de la farce grossière au comique littéraire, de la caricature à l'observation, de la parade du tréteau à la comédie héroïque ou bourgeoise, de la brutalité à l'émotion ou à la poésie, laissent supposer l'existence d'un public capable de répondre à des sollicitations aussi diverses." Cèbe (1960) 101 notes "sa connaissance des tragédies romaines du temps prouve qu'il [le public de Plaute] était à même de comprendre et d'apprécier des ouvrages difficiles; cette connaissance est attestée par les parodies de tragédies auxquelles se divertit Plaute". Chalmers (1965) 21 reaches his conclusion by assuming it "possible for us to derive from [Plautus' comedies] information about the audiences who first saw them performed".

32 It could be argued that an assumption of intellectual homogeneity within the Plautine audience also underpins Taladoire's and Chalmers' models. However, only Cèbe (1960) 105-106 is explicit in this respect by stating, "il est vain de vouloir dissocier dans la production de Plaute ce qui était destiné à l' «orchestre» et ce qui devait plaire à la *summa cauea*. En fait, le public était plus homogène et plus unanime dans ses aspirations qu'on ne le pense généralement." Monaco (1969) 306 contradicts Cèbe's notion of homogeneity directly and equally as explicitly by noting, "non mi sembra giusto ridurre a uniformità il pubblico romano della fine del III e dell'inizio del II secolo e postularne caratteri e attributi univoci."

33 Chalmers (1965) 22.

the taste of his audience becomes confined in a very strict fashion. After addressing specifically the tradition that Plautus had worked "in operis artificum scaenicorum"[34], Chalmers notes that "it is unlikely that, with [his] professional background, [Plautus] would frequently have indulged in the luxury of making esoteric jokes which could be understood only by a very select minority. It is much more reasonable to assume that he intended what he wrote to be understood and appreciated by at least a considerable proportion of his audience. Moreover in the theatrical conditions of his time, his whole career depended on pleasing the aediles and other magistrates responsible for the presentation of dramatic entertainments, and they, through an understandable desire to influence the electorate, would scarcely have fostered the work of a dramatist who consistently wrote plays which were not adequately comprehensible to his audience. If these considerations are borne in mind, we may feel that we can reasonably expect to learn something about Plautus's audience from his plays."[35]

On a superficial level, these observations do seem entirely reasonable and consistent. After all, Plautus was apparently a professional and accomplished comic poet whose success, revival and ultimate survival are all indications of his ability to appeal to the taste of his audience. It is therefore reasonable to suggest the unlikelihood that Plautus "would *frequently* [my emphasis] have indulged in the luxury of making esoteric jokes which could be understood only by a very select minority", and reasonable also to suggest that "the aediles and other magistrates ... would scarcely have fostered the work of a dramatist who consistently wrote plays which were not *adequately comprehensible* [again my emphasis] to his audience." However, the essence of these two statements and in particular the sense of "frequently" and "adequately comprehensible" become distorted as the assumption that everything Plautus wrote was appreciated and intended to be appreciated uniformly by his entire audience begins gradually to seep into the fabric of this methodologically defining paragraph. Indeed, in stating that "it is much more reasonable to assume that [Plautus] intended what he wrote to be understood and appreciated by at least a considerable proportion of his audience", Chalmers directly indicates a tendency towards that assumption. For it becomes apparent that "what he wrote" is Chalmers' shorthand for "everything he wrote" and that throughout his study "at least a considerable proportion of his audience" will come to mean "his entire audience". Moreover, these subtle (and perhaps unintentional) shifts represent the seeds of the notion that Plautine comedy could neither accommodate any "esoteric jokes which could be understood only by a very select

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34 Gel. 3.3.14.

35 Chalmers (1965) 23.

minority"[36], nor even accommodate "multivalency"[37], the composition of comic material which could be appreciated universally but not necessarily uniformly. In finally remarking that "if these considerations are borne in mind, we may feel that we can reasonably expect to learn something about Plautus's audience from his plays", Chalmers completes the logically unsound transition and hence sets his assumption in place. For throughout the course of his study, Chalmers identifies specific aspects of Plautine comedy and then defines those specific aspects as strictly uniform indicators of the Plautine audience and of its appreciation of Plautine comedy. Indeed, this is the manner in which Chalmers' assumption that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience pervades and underpins his study.

On the prominence of Greek comedy in Rome during Plautus' lifetime, Chalmers observes, "the mere fact that Greek comedies were produced on such a scale may in itself be taken as an indication of discrimination on the part of the Roman audience."[38] Yet need "such a scale" indicate a uniform "discrimination" rather than merely a popular trend

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36 The notion that Plautine comedy could not accommodate any "esoteric jokes" has one notable adherent. For Toliver (1953) 304 offers the patently absurd observation that "a writer of comedy cannot be satisfied with pleasing only a part of his audience, particularly if that audience is as vociferous in expressing disapproval and boredom as the Latin spectators were". Indeed, this observation seems based on an erroneous assumption that a Republican Roman comic poet could not allow his audience's attention to wane even for the couple of seconds it might take to make the occasional esoteric remark, an assumption which can only have been shaped by the double failure of Terence's *Hecyra*. Furthermore, it betrays Toliver's profound ignorance of the nature of comedy. For common sense and certain modern comic models alone dictate that the notion that Plautine comedy (or any form of comedy for that matter) could not accommodate any "esoteric jokes" is utterly unreasonable. Perhaps the most outstanding example of a contemporary comedy which attracts a wide popular audience but for which it cannot be said that every joke and reference presented will be appreciated fully by a majority of that audience is the National Broadcasting Corporation's comedy *Frasier*. For in the broader context of general situation comedy, *Frasier* continues to present comic material dependent to no small extent upon knowledge of literature, psychology, various modern languages, music and opera. Moreover, not all such sophisticated and esoteric material need be appreciated for an adequate comprehension and appreciation of the often farcical situations on which each episode of the programme is based. To illustrate this point, in episode 036 titled "Roz in the Doghouse" (first broadcast 3rd January, 1995), Frasier attempts to find a euphemism to describe the lecherous Bulldog's efforts to seduce his colleague Roz. Frasier's brother Niles comes to his aid by noting that Bulldog wanted to "play Aeneas to your Dido." Laughter from the studio audience ensues. Yet the remark would probably have been considered amusing to most only because it reveals Niles' characteristic pretension. Furthermore, although most would have been able to assume from the context that Aeneas and Dido were some sort of amorously attached couple from literature, it is difficult to believe that the true absurdity of the remark in comparing Bulldog to Aeneas would have been fully appreciated by most in the studio or indeed by the wider television audience.

37 Arnott (1977) 313 defines "multivalency" as "the ability to make a word, a sentence, a speech, an action operate at several levels and for several purposes at one and the same time" and laments further, "I cannot recall any critic ever having talked in these or similar terms about Plautus and his undoubted ability to operate from time to time at several levels simultaneously."

38 Chalmers (1965) 25.

originally set by the "discrimination" of the few? With respect to Plautus' "considerable talent in the handling of metre", Chalmers notes that "it is doubtful whether [Plautus] would have [written *cantica* into his plays] if he had not been able to count on his skill receiving appreciative criticism. This, too, is an important piece of evidence about his audiences. It would appear that ... they were already becoming connoisseurs in the complexities of the very different quantitative metres employed by Plautus in the *cantica*."[39] Yet, even if Plautus required "appreciative criticism" as motivation for his continued use of *cantica*, need such "appreciative criticism" have been uniform? Need his whole audience have become metrical "connoisseurs"? In discussing the presence of passages containing "mythological allusions" within the comedies, Chalmers states that "if Plautus is himself the author of these passages, that certainly is a strong indication that they were intended to be understood by his audiences, but even if he is not himself their originator, ... it is almost impossible to imagine that he would deliberately have retained passages of some length if he had reason to believe that they would be incomprehensible."[40] Yet should it be assumed that an audience necessarily required *every* mythological allusion within such passages to be comprehensible?

This early vein of Chalmers' study can also be found late in the work. With respect to Plautus' references to the Greek artists Apelles and Zeuxis[41], Chalmers observes, "Plautus surely could only have mentioned them if he expected them to be recognized as leading exponents of graphical arts, and this in turn indicates that his audience had begun to take an interest in Greek art."[42] But again this "interest in Greek art" need not have been universal. After all, a member of the audience might still have been able to appreciate Epidicus' and Agorastocles' respective remarks without having any knowledge or "interest in Greek art". Moreover, the very fact that in both references Plautus does not divorce the names of the two artists from their specific art might just as easily indicate that there was not a uniform knowledge of or "interest in Greek art" within the Plautine audience and that Plautus himself did not assume it. The presence of "Roman topicalities" and puns in the comedies again allows Chalmers to suggest the same uniform appreciation by noting

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39 ibid. 26.

40 ibid. 27.

41 EP. e tuis uerbis meum futurum corium pulchrum praedicas,
quem Apelles ac Zeuxis duo pingent pigmentis ulmeis. (*Ep*. 625-626)

AG. o Apelle, o Zeuxis pictor,
qur numero estis mortui, hoc exemplo ut pingeretis?
nam alios pictores nil moro huiusmodi tractare exempla. (*Poen*. 1271-1273)

42 Chalmers (1965) 45.

respectively that "on the whole the Roman topicalities seem to presuppose an audience which was alert and quick-witted"[43] and that "Plautus was able to assume at least a rudimentary degree of literacy on the part of his audience."[44] Chalmers' conclusion that the Plautine audience was in a uniform sense "intellectually awake" is therefore entirely consistent with his analysis of most of the specific aspects of Plautine comedy which he isolates. But for the same reason that his analysis of those specific aspects is affected by his initial assumption, so is his conclusion. Moreover, Chalmers compounds the unsustainability of his assumption and hence his conclusion by his own speculative but nevertheless explicit contradictions.

It is remarkable that Chalmers' earlier and later insistence on a general uniformity of Plautine composition and of the Plautine audience's appreciation of Plautus' comedies should be substantially undermined in the middle section of his study. For he explicitly suggests the possibility of a non-uniformly appreciative Plautine audience by acknowledging a possible diversity within that audience in terms of its knowledge and understanding of the Greek language. In the first place, he notes that "Plautus seems to have aimed at giving his plays short titles, which could be understood, or at least easily remembered, by those whose knowledge of Greek was limited or non-existent."[45] Furthermore, he observes that Plautus "makes no such concessions [to those whose knowledge of Greek was limited] in the choice of names for his characters."[46] This is particularly so for that extraordinary name "Bumbomachides Clutomestoridysarchides" (*Mil.* 14), which Chalmers describes as "almost intrinsically funny, through the onomatopoeic effect of *Bumbo-*, and because of its all but sesquipedalian length"[47], a

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[43] ibid. Gruen (1990) 137-138 incidentally contradicts Chalmers' implicit notion here of the audience's homogeneous appreciation of "Roman topicalities" through his use of the adjective "attuned". For he refers to "the scramble for triumphs [in the early second century B.C. as] a subject for amusement" and remarks that when "the clever slave Chrysalus ... compares his successful deception with military victory ... his words [*Bac.* 1067-1075] are pregnant with meaning for Romans attuned to public affairs in the early 2nd century."

[44] Chalmers (1965) 46.

[45] ibid. 30. Of the twenty-one most prominent titles attributed to Plautus, only six have Greek titles, all of which are derived from Greek characters' names (*Amphitruo*, *Bacchides*, *Epidicus*, *Menaechmi*, *Pseudolus* and *Stichus*). The *Casina* is excluded from these six, since it was originally titled *Sortientes*. (*Cas*. 32). Of the thirty-two other surviving titles often attributed to Plautus, only eleven are Greek (*Acharistio*, *Agroecus*, *Artemo*, *Astraba*, *Boeotia*, *Colax*, *Dyscolus*, *Lipargus*, *Phago*, *Plocinus* and *Schematicus*), with another two having both Greek and Latin elements (*Parasitus Medicus* and *Parasitus Piger*).

[46] Chalmers (1965) 31.

[47] ibid.

description which in fact transcends his initial recognition of a possible diversity in terms of the audience's understanding of the Greek language. For by citing B. L. Ullman's conclusion that "Plautus handled his sources rather freely in the matter of names, using a species of *contaminatio* ... or else going outside the field of New Comedy altogether"[48] and then by alluding to K. Schmidt's conviction that such "Doppelnamen" are "auf plautinischem Grunde erwachsen, unabhängig von griechischer Ueberlieferung"[49], Chalmers seems to favour that name as a Plautine invention. Hence, he suggests that Plautus "took pains to invent a name which made sense in Greek" and which he "could count on being understood by at least some sections of [his] audiences."[50] But by Chalmers' own reckoning of the Plautine audience's understanding of the Greek language, "at least some" cannot constitute "all". Chalmers' remarks therefore are not only a recognition of a diversity within the Plautine audience in terms of what was or was not appreciated within the comedies, but also a tacit recognition of the possibility that Plautus indulged in "multivalency" by presenting an "almost intrinsically" but superficially amusing name with comic meaning on another level.

Chalmers also undermines his insistence on the audience's uniform appreciation and on the uniformity of Plautine composition in his examination of certain elements of "Greek cultural heritage".[51] For although he states emphatically that "Plautus could apparently count on his audience being able to understand references to aspects of Greek culture which one would not have thought likely to make any great impact on them"[52], he is forced to concede explicitly from the perceived subtlety of Gripus' Stratonicus-"oppidum magnum" remark in the *Rudens*[53] "the possibility that Plautus on occasion retained from

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48 Ullman (1916) 64.

49 Schmidt (1902) 622.

50 Chalmers (1965) 31-32.

51 ibid. 42.

52 ibid. 43.

53 In speculating as to what he will do with his freedom, Gripus remarks,

> [GR.] post animi caussa mihi nauem faciam atque imitabor Stratonicum,
> oppida circumuectabor.
> ubi nobilitas mea erit clara,
> oppidum magnum communibo;
> ei ego urbi Gripo indam nomen ... (*Rud.* 932-934a)

The esoteric joke here seems to be Gripus' punning and (on the most esoteric level) erroneous connexion between Stratonicus, the famous and well-travelled Athenian citharist from the fourth century B.C., and the city of Stratonicea in Caria. For Stratonicea was in fact founded in the early to mid-third century B.C. and named after Stratonice, wife of the Seleucid king Antiochus I. (The Romans fought the Antiochene war from 191 to 188 B.C. against Antiochus I's great-grandson,

the original references which were not fully comprehensible to his audience."[54] Although this admission is weak, because it disparages Plautus with the implicit suggestion that he could not have composed with such perceived subtlety and hence must have translated Gripus' remark directly from some Greek original[55], it is still an important, undermining admission, which essentially negates Chalmer's assumption and conclusion.

Chalmers also extends his mild disparaging of Plautus by explicitly suggesting that in some cases the comic poet himself might not have understood elements of his Greek originals, but nevertheless employed those elements in translation. For he states Plautus' reference to clouds and Socrates in the *Pseudolus*[56] "suggests that the original had contained a joke about Aristophanes' *Clouds* which Plautus probably did not himself understand, but which he retained on the assumption that some of his audience had heard of Socrates."[57] Chalmers' posture on this specific reference is quite extraordinary. For he is suggesting that Plautus, whose appeal "to the taste of his audience" is not in question and whose understanding of Greek letters should perhaps not be underestimated, would have deliberately risked placing within one of his comedies a joke which he did not fully appreciate, thus having no guarantee that any of his audience would appreciate it either. Indeed, Chalmers' argument here creaks under the strain, as he seeks to avoid probably the simplest explanation: that Plautus occasionally included within his comedies brief, subtle references which he understood and which he knew only a certain section of his audience would appreciate.

It would be erroneous to assume that the appreciation of Plautus' audience for his comedies did not evolve during the comic poet's literary career. With respect to the

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Antiochus III.) However, it would not have been necessary for an audience member to have comprehended this joke at any particular level in order to have enjoyed more generally the enunciation of Gripus' plans, which are clearly too grandiose to come to anything. Indeed, the words "atque imitabor Stratonicum", which alone explicitly define the joke, would not have represented enough of a distraction for any uninformed sections of the audience to present a problem for a comic poet trying to maintain generally his audience's attention.

54 Chalmers (1965) 44.

55 According to its prologue (*Rud.* 32-33), the *Rudens* was based on an original by Diphilus, the Athenian comic poet who was born c.360 - 350 B.C. and who died, according to Arnott *OCD*[3] 485, "probably at the beginning of the 3rd cent." If the dates for Diphilus and for the founding of Stratonicea are correct, there is a greater possibility that a Stratonicus-Stratonicea joke could indeed have been a Plautine invention and not merely a Plautine translation.

56 CALL. sunt quae te uolumus percontari, quae quasi
per nebulam nosmet scimus atque audiuimus.
SIMO. conficiet iam te hic uerbis ut tu censeas
non Pseudolum, sed Socratem tecum loqui. (*Ps.* 462-465)

57 Chalmers (1965) 44.

audience's capacity for appreciating the intrigue-based plots of some Plautine comedies, John Hough observes that "the Roman audience, in spite of the slurs which scholars have often cast upon it, became, during the literary activity of Plautus, sufficiently familiar with Romanized Hellenistic comedy not to need as much help and explanation in 184 B.C. as it had needed twenty to thirty years earlier."[58] The same may also be said of other aspects of "Romanized Hellenistic comedy" such as mythological and literary references and the use of the Greek language. Indeed, Toliver considers the *fabulae palliatae* an important catalyst for the general spread of Hellenism in Rome.[59] But neither of these propositions adequately supports the position that the Plautine audience necessarily reached a uniform appreciation of everything included in Plautus' later comedies through some collective intellectual alertness, as Chalmers would suggest. Indeed, Chalmers' model of the Plautine audience (among others') is flawed, because in seeking rightly to reverse negative opinions of the Plautine audience and to elevate its position in scholarly estimation from an impression of uniform unintelligence, and in isolating correctly the relevant elements in Plautus' composition to achieve these ends, Chalmers seems unable to relinquish notions of uniformity and hence transfers estimation of the Plautine audience from one extreme to another. Yet neither extreme is more credible than a middle position, the notion of an intellectually heterogeneous and indeed heterogeneously appreciative audience and of a comic poet occasionally mixing the esoteric and the multivalent with the intrinsically funny. However, the present negation of Chalmers' assumptions and methodology is necessary but not sufficient to establish evidence for such a middle position. For although the notion that the Plautine audience was intellectually heterogeneous is theoretically sound, further textual evidence is still required to demonstrate the existence throughout the Plautine *corpus* of comic material which would have tested during comic performance certain non-uniform intellectual inclinations within an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience and hence tested the bounds of uniform and even universal appreciation by an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience. For this will in turn establish fully the conditions which suggest that Plautus' comedies met with heterogeneous appreciation by an intellectually heterogeneous audience and hence give strength to the notion that any serious,

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58 Hough (1939) 435.

59 "There is no way of estimating the degree to which any particular agency contributed to the spread of Greek influences [in Rome]. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to suppose that the theater, reaching as it did all classes of society ... and borrowing much from Greek, legend, and mythology, must have had a great deal to do with fostering philhellenism. It may be further assumed that *fabulae palliatae*, which were so closely modelled upon Greek plays, would be especially likely to arouse among Roman spectators an interest in Greek life and culture." Toliver (1953) 303.

sophisticated or thought-provoking themes which Plautus might have introduced to his comedies or retained from his Greek models could have been appreciated by members of his original Roman audience.

The Textual Evidence for Heterogeneous Appreciation

In the previous section, I demonstrated that Chalmers' assumption that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience and hence his conclusion that the Plautine audience was collectively possessed of an intellectual alertness are unsustainable and are furthermore undermined by his own counter-examples. However, the means by which those counter-examples undermine Chalmers' assertions are based on another assumption, that it is possible to isolate certain literary, historical and linguistic references within Plautus' comedies and to define a clear boundary beyond which one can be certain that such material could not have been appreciated (or appreciated at all levels) by the entire Plautine audience. So it is with the name "Bumbomachides Clutomestoridysarchides" in the *Miles Gloriosus*, so it is with Gripus' Stratonicus-"oppidum magnum" remark in the *Rudens*, and so it is with Simo's Socrates reference in the *Pseudolus*. However, defining such a boundary is an exercise fraught with considerable danger. For although the notion that the Roman audience could appreciate every mythological, literary, historical, philosophical and linguistic reference within the Plautine texts uniformly is unsustainable, the notion that certain such references were fully appreciated by only parts of the Plautine audience is not supported by vast amounts of convincing textual evidence. It would be tempting to list from the Plautine texts a lengthy series of mythological, literary, historical, philosophical and linguistic references and to argue from a position of "reasonability" that the notion of heterogeneous appreciation within the Plautine audience is thus made sound. Nevertheless, temptation in this respect must be resisted for reasons relating particularly to the theatrical, literary, educational and linguistic climate in Rome during Plautus' career, reasons which we shall now briefly consider.

When Plautus began adapting Greek comedies for the Roman stage, the Roman public had been exposed to two generations of adapted Greek tragedy. When Plautus' career ended, presumably in 184 B.C., *fabulae tragoediae* remained prominent. Indeed, the titles which survive from the fragments of tragedies adapted by Plautus' dramatic predecessors and contemporaries are sufficient to demonstrate the extent to which the Roman public was exposed to Greek tragedy and hence exposed to the myths and legends

central to that genre.[60] As Tenney Frank notes in language so characteristic of the 1930s, the Romans in the theatre "learned the stories of a large number of the plays of Euripides and Sophocles as easily as our working classes learn, without opening a book, about Arab sheikhs, Long Island drawing rooms, Roman chariot races, and Cleopatra's wiles."[61] Therefore, when the *senex* Nicobulus in the *Bacchides* cries foul and exclaims,

> NI. deceptus sum, Autolyco hospiti aurum credidi. (*Bac.* 275),

it would be utterly unsafe to assume that only a minority in Plautus' audience could make sense of this joke and its reference to the crafty Autolycus, the grandfather of Odysseus. Moreover, beyond the strictly theatrical, the effects of oral story-telling and of iconographic representation[62] in the dissemination of Greek myth and legend in Rome cannot be underestimated. The same should also be said of the dissemination of Greek history among the Romans. For the probability that historically based stories were circulated in Rome orally by soldiers returning from southern Italian and eastern campaigns and perhaps iconographically through the presence of Greek coinage[63] makes unsafe the assumption that only a minority in Plautus' audience would have appreciated, for instance, Palaestrio's description of the *miles gloriosus*:

> PA. isque Alexandri praestare praedicat formam suam
> itaque omnis se ultro sectari in Epheso memorat mulieres. (*Mil.* 777-778)

The extent to which the Plautine audience would have been able to appreciate Plautus' use of the Greek language in his comedies is not obvious. This is partly because knowledge of the Greek language in Roman society during Plautus' career was not

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60 Ten tragic titles are generally accredited to Livius Andronicus (*Achilles*, *Aegisthus*, *Aiax Mastigophorus*, *Andromeda*, *Antiopa*, *Danae*, *Equos Troianus*, *Hermiona*, *Ino* and *Tereus*), seven to Naevius (*Andromache*, *Danae*, *Equos Troianus*, *Hector Proficiscens*, *Hesiona*, *Iphigenia* and *Lycurgus*), twenty to Ennius (*Achilles*, *Aiax*, *Alcmeo*, *Alexander* [*Paris*], *Andromacha*, *Andromeda*, *Athamas*, *Cresphontes*, *Erechtheus*, *Eumenides*, *Hectoris Lytra*, *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia*, *Medea*, *Melanippa*, *Nemea*, *Phoenix*, *Telamo*, *Telephus* and *Thyestes*) and thirteen to Plautus' very late contemporary Pacuvius (*Antiopa*, *Armorum Indicium*, *Atalanta*, *Chryses*, *Dulorestes*, *Hermiona*, *Iliona*, *Medus*, *Niptra*, *Pentheus*, *Perioboea*, *Protesilaus* and *Teucer*).

61 Frank (1930) 75.

62 Menaechmus' question to the *parasitus* Peniculus in the *Menaechmi* suggests the presence of iconographic representations of Greek myths and legends in Plautus' Rome:

> ME. dic mi, enumquam tu uidisti tabulam pictam in pariete
> ubi aquila Catameitum raperet aut ubi Venus Adoneum? (*Men.* 143-144)

63 The presence of Greek coinage in Rome during Plautus' career is suggested in the first place by Plautus' pervasive references to *minae*, *talenta* and most notably *Philippei*, coins minted by Philip II of Macedon. For example, in the *Trinummus* the *senex* Callicles reckons his neighbour's hidden treasure at *nummorum Philippeum tria milia.* (*Trin.* 152) Livy also refers variously to the presence of Greek coinage in Rome. In particular, he notes that during the three-day triumphal precession for the *consularis* Titus Quinctius Flamininus in 194, 84000 silver "tetrachma" and 14514 gold "Philippei nummi" were presented. (34.52.6-7)

necessarily the mark of a formal education. As G. P. Shipp notes, "in the modern world the general tendency has been for the borrowing of foreign words to be an affectation of the upper classes. In Rome it was not so."[64] For soldiers would certainly have acquired rudimentary Greek in their campaigns against the Carthaginians in the Greek cities of Sicily and southern Italy and against Philip and Antiochus in Greece proper[65], as probably the mercantile sector in Rome would have in the course of much of its business. Moreover, a significant proportion of the burgeoning slave population in Rome would have had Greek as its native tongue and would have contributed to the partial transmission of Greek into mainstream Roman life.[66]

Our modern inability to determine the extent to which Plautus' Graecisms were appreciated by his audience is also a result of their ambiguous application by Plautus. For on the one hand, Plautus often employs terms derived from Greek so liberally that they appear to be part of an urban vernacular. In this respect, we may consider such terms as *badizare* from βαδίζειν (*As.* 706), *cantharus* from κάνθαρος (*Men.* 187, *Per.* 801b, *Rud.* 1319, *St.* 693), *myropola* from μυροπώλης (*Cas.* 226, *Trin.* 408), *syngraphus* from σύγγραφος (*As.* 238, *Capt.* 450) and *tarpezita* from τραπεζίτης (*Capt.* 193, *Cur.* 341, *Ps.* 757, *Trin.* 425). There are also terms in the Plautine texts which have been transmitted in Greek script and are not accompanied by any additional explanation. Consider in particular the *seruus* Stasimus' exasperated remarks in the *Trinummus* at his young master Lesbonicus financial carelessness:

> ST. ratio quidem hercle apparet: argentum οἴχεται. (*Trin.* 419)

On the other hand, there are occasions when Plautus seems at pains to ensure that certain Graecisms are understood by his audience. In the prologist to the *Miles Gloriosus*, Palaestrio notes,

> [PA.] Ἀλαζών Graece huic nomen est comoediae,
> id nos Latine 'gloriosum' dicimus. (*Mil.* 86-87)

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64 Shipp (1953) 112.

65 In this respect, Frank (1930) 70 draws an elegant modern comparison by noting the Roman soldiers would have acquired some Greek "in the same way that American boys acquired not a few French phrases some years ago in their one brief campaign overseas." However, on this point Hough (1934) 350 n. 8 warns "the familiarity which we assume the soldiers had with these words does not prove that they had lost all their Greek flavor. Words learned by American soldiers in France during 1917-1918 may have a place in our dictionaries and in our speech and still not sound as ordinary English to us. Words may be familiar and still be foreign."

66 Bradley (1987) 14 notes that "as a result of [the great Republican wars of expansion, first in Italy and then in the Mediterranean world at large] huge numbers of war captives were brought to Italy as slaves for use predominantly in agriculture and pastoral farming but also increasingly for domestic service".

Early in the *Truculentus*, the urban *adulescens* Diniarchus laments his devotion to the *meretrix* Phronesium and hence translates her Greek name by stating,

> DI. nam mihi haec meretrix quae hic habet, Phronesium,
> suom nomen omne ex pectore exmouit meo,
> Phronesium, nam phronesis est sapientia. (*Truc.* 76-78a)

In the *Mercator*, the *senex* Lysimachus offers a partial translation of the *meretrix* Pasicompsa's name by observing, "ex forma nomen inditumst." (*Mer.* 517) Finally, in the *Stichus* the term *prothymia* from the Greek προθυμία is used twice in the company of Latin synonyms:

> [GE.] uiden? benignitates hominum periere et prothymiae.
>
> [ST.] pro di immortales! quot ego uoluptates fero,
> quot risiones, quot iocos, quot sauia,
> saltationes, blanditias, prothymias! (*St.* 636, 657-659)

It is clear therefore that random Graecisms found in the Plautine texts cannot be used as evidence of material which would have defied uniform appreciation. As Hough notes, "it is impossible in any way to determine accurately what proportion of the audience might be familiar with this or that word. In all probability one would understand where another might not."[67]

Plautus' references to literacy also cannot be used indiscriminately as indicators of non-uniform appreciation within the Plautine audience. For although William Harris estimates that no more than ten per cent of the male Roman population in the middle Republic were literate, he also suggests that "a still greater number was in possession of varying degrees of semi-literacy."[68] Moreover, the potential for individuals to acquire in day-to-day life the type of rudimentary literacy skills necessary for the appreciation of some

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[67] Hough (1934) 350. Nevertheless, a certain amount of speculation is not unwarranted with respect to knowledge of the Greek language within the Plautine audience. For it seems not unreasonable to suggest that those in the audience who did not acquire Greek from birth or from formal education would first and foremost have acquired some mastery over useful concrete nouns, certain interjections and some essential verb formations before acquiring any mastery over abstract terms. The four Graecisms cited above, to which Plautus adds translations seemingly in an effort to ensure his audience's understanding, are all based on abstract terms. I wish therefore to suggest that if any Graecisms used by Plautus were to have escaped his audience's uniform appreciation, they would probably have been abstract terms. For instance, early in the *Persa*, the *seruus* Toxilus is exultant in conversation with his fellow *seruus* Sagaristio:

> TO. basilice agito eleutheria.
> SAG. quid iam? TO. quia erus peregri est. (*Per.* 29-29a)

The word *eleutheria* is of course a direct transliteration of the Greek term which most closely resembles the Latin *libertas*. The extent therefore of the audience's familiarity with such a term should not perhaps be overstated. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that those in the Plautine audience unfamiliar with the term would still have been able to appreciate some sense of the term through Toxilus' exultant movement. For it seems unlikely that a character in Toxilus' situation would have remained static.

[68] Harris (1989) 173.

of Plautus' literacy-based jokes should not necessarily be underestimated. For instance, it would be unsafe to assume that only a minority of the Plautine audience would have appreciated the following joke between the *senes* Demipho and Lysimachus in the *Mercator*:

> DE. hodie eire occepi in ludum litterarium,
> Lysimache. ternas scio iam. LY. quid ternas? DE. amo. (*Mer.* 303-304)

Therefore, in examining the Plautine texts and in isolating comic material which suggests heterogeneous appreciation, we need largely to consider jokes and remarks which are not so much dependent on the knowledge of particular facts, but rather those which present particular facts in an oblique fashion and which are therefore dependent on an individual's intellectual capacity to draw meaning from the forms with which Plautus has presented such facts. This material is not plentiful. Yet it can be located throughout the Plautine *corpus*. The following therefore is a selective identification and appraisal of such material.

Amphitruo

The *Amphitruo* constitutes Plautus' only surviving venture into mythological comedy, addressing as lively farce the circumstances of Hercules' conception and birth. Needless to say, the existence of this comedy is a very pronounced manifestation of the extent to which the mythology of Hercules had pervaded the mainstream Roman consciousness by the late third century B.C. Such mainstream pervasiveness is evident also in the repeated and essentially stock use of the exclamatory term *hercle* throughout the Plautine *corpus*.[69] Nevertheless, Plautus seems to construct in the *Amphitruo* a clever sequence of multivalent remarks based on this stock exclamatory term, a recurring yet developing joke which is so simple and so subtle as to be almost breathtaking.

Although the *Amphitruo* deals with the circumstances of Hercules' conception and birth and although Hercules' birth and subsequent strangling of *angues duo* are described by the *ancilla* Bromia (*Am.* 1088, 1107-1119), Hercules is never named directly during the course of the comedy. However, the exclamatory term *hercle* is used some seven times. This recurrent use of the term is remarkably clever and strongly suggests an example of comic material whose various levels would not at all times have been fully appreciated by

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[69] The term is used in Plautus' twenty surviving comedies on 644 occasions, on average over thirty-two times per comedy, in six instances (*Asinaria*, *Menaechmi*, *Mercator*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria* and *Poenulus*) over forty times and in the *Rudens* some fifty-four times. In addition, there are another seven more verbose appeals to Hercules (e.g. "Hercules dique istam perdant" *Cas*. 275). It is perhaps worth noting also that appeals to Hercules are slightly more numerous throughout the twenty comedies than those other stock appeals to Pollux, *pol* and *edepol*, which together number some 608.

the entire audience, because it requires the audience to "see the wood for the trees"; that is, to consider a fleeting stock term, to recall its true derivation and to appreciate the underlying humour of its particular occurrences within the broader context of the work. The care and control with which Plautus seems to insert the term into the comedy can be seen in both the distinct sparsity of its use[70] and the gradual stacking of levels at which the term operates, first incongruity, then irony and finally absurdity.

The first four occurrences of the term are assigned to Amphitruo's hapless *seruus* Sosia and on each occasion are used as oaths expressing fear, pain and some defiance in Sosia's quest to guard and preserve his identity from the mischievous and identical *deus* Mercurius.

> [SO.] oppido interii. opsecro hercle, quantus et quam ualidus est!
>
> ME. onerandus est pugnis probe.
>
> SO. lassus sum hercle e naui, ut uectus huc sum: etiam nunc nauseo;
>
> [SO.] uerum, utut es facturus, hoc quidem hercle hau reticebo tamen.
>
> [SO.] non loquor, non uigilo? nonne hic homo modo me pugnis contudit?
> fecit hercle, nam etiam <mi> misero nunc malae dolent.
>
> (*Am.* 299, 328-329, 397, 407-408)

It is possible that Sosia's repeated use of the term *hercle* was sufficient to ensure ultimately a universal appreciation of the underlying humour of its use. However, these references are taken from a lengthy exchange which is filled with physical action and other verbal play, as the two identical characters fight in every sense for the rights to the name Sosia. It is probable therefore that the comic incongruity of Sosia's fleeting and almost throwaway oaths to an as yet unborn demi-god would have escaped at least initially a considerable proportion of the audience whose associative skills were not well-developed, who were more absorbed in the broader conflict at hand, or who were accustomed to hearing that term all too regularly both within and without the theatre. It is especially likely that the first occurrence of the term would have received limited appreciation, since it is followed immediately by a truly laughable remark by Sosia, who comments on the relative size and strength of the identical Mercurius.

In the next two occurrences, the force of *hercle* shifts from the merely incongruous to the additionally ironic, since the term is assigned to Amphitruo, in effect Hercules' future step-father.

> [AM.] iam quidem hercle ego tibi istam
> scelestam, scelus, linguam apscidam. SO. tuos sum ...
>
> AL. immo mecum cenauisti et mecum cubuisti. AM. quid est?

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[70] By comparison, the next three most sparing uses of the term *hercle* occur in the *Captiui* (thirteen), in the particularly damaged *Cistellaria* (fifteen) and in the *Epidicus* (nineteen).

AL. uera dico. AM. non de hac quidem hercle re; de aliis nescio.
(*Am.* 556-557, 735-736)

Indeed, of the two, the second is clearly the more ironic. For it is occurs in the context of Amphitruo's emphatic and perhaps fearful denial of his wife's truthful claims of her sexual liaison the previous night with Jupiter-as-Amphitruo, which liaison would of course produce Hercules. Yet although the sixth of a sequence of seven, it is probable that those more inclined to follow the complicated domestic situation unfolding at this point would have been less inclined to consider the ironic implications of this penultimate occurrence.

The final occurrence is assigned to Mercurius, who turns to the audience and asks,

[ME.] nam mihi quidem hercle qui minus liceat deo minitarier
populo, ni decedat mihi, quam seruolo in comoediis? (*Am.* 986-987)

In addition to the incongruous and the ironic levels on which the term here operates (Hercules will after all be Mercurius' half-brother), this particular reference operates on a supremely absurd level. For an exasperated and divine Mercurius is lamenting his condition with an oath to Hercules, an as yet unborn demi-god who will therefore hold a lower status in the divine "pecking-order". However, unlike the previously incongruous and ironic usages of the term, the absurdity of this final occurrences is not re-iterated for the audience, leading one to speculate on its general appreciation on all three levels.

Aulularia

The first scene of the *Aulularia* concludes with a joke which represents evidence for heterogeneous appreciation, not in terms of its levels of meaning, but rather in the degrees of swiftness with which the audience would have appreciated it. For the joke is delivered in two stages, an oblique comment representing the joke proper and then a more full explanation, and occurs as the *anus* Staphyla laments her plight, uncertain as to how she will conceal the pregnancy of her master's unmarried daughter Phaedria:

[STA.] neque quicquam meliust mihi,
ut opinor, quam ex me ut unam faciam litteram
†longam, laqueo† collum quando opstrinxero. (*Aul.* 76-78)

The joke proper is oblique here, because it requires the audience to associate a rudimentary but not necessarily universally obvious fact of literacy with Staphyla's dejected state of mind in order to derive a suggestion of suicide by hanging. In the context of delivery before an intellectually heterogeneous audience, it is clear that some would have been able to make this association. However, the subsequent explanation is in itself evidence that this association would not have been obvious to all or even to most of the audience, regardless of the levels of profound illiteracy which would have prohibited understanding of *littera longa*. Indeed, assuming Lindsay's preferred reconstruction of the text is correct, I suggest

that a murmur of laughter occurred after "longam" and more general laughter occurred after "opstrinxero".[71]

Bacchides

The *Bacchides* provides a reference to Greek culture, whose multivalency is grounds to suspect heterogeneous appreciation. For after following his charge the love-struck *adulescens* Pistoclerus to the house of the *meretrix* Bacchis, the *paedagogus* Lydus remarks,

> [LY.] namque ita me di ament, ut Lycurgus mihi quidem
> uidetur posse hic ad nequitiam adducier. (*Bac.* 111-112),

and thus criticises the unseemly neighbourhood surrounding that establishment for its capacity to corrupt even Lycurgus. However, the identity of this Lycurgus seems neither fixed nor singular. John Barsby, Paul Nixon and Johan Ussing among others instinctively and emphatically define the Lycurgus of this reference to be the legendary founder of the Spartan constitution.[72] Luigi Alfonsi extends the scope of the reference to include equally the fourth century B.C. Athenian politician of the same name, a contemporary of Demosthenes, noting that "entrambi esempi insigni di integrità morale."[73] Both the Spartan and the Athenian Lycurgus are therefore entirely appropriate in the context and would probably have entered the Roman consciousness at least in some small way by the time of Plautus' writing, as had other Greek sages and statesmen.[74] However, there is a third Lycurgus whose identity is entirely appropriate within the context of Lydus' remarks, and who had definitely entered the Roman consciousness by that time. This Lycurgus is the son of Dryas and king of the Edones in Thrace. Versions of the myth relating to the son of Dryas vary.[75] Nevertheless, the Romans had been introduced to the elements central to the myth (Lycurgus' vehement opposition to Dionysus and his Bacchants, who were passing

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[71] It is unfortunate that Nixon (1916-1938) v. 1 243 performs a profound disservice to this joke by reversing its order and translating, "there's nothing better for me to do, as I see, than tie a rope round my neck and dangle myself out into one long capital I."

[72] Barsby (1986) 106; Nixon (1916-1938) v. 1 343 n. 1; Ussing (1875-1892) v. 1 330 in particular notes, "Lycurgum ... qui severissimarum legum Spartiatis auctor fuit, Romanis quoque pro severitatis exemplo fuisse facile intelligitur".

[73] Alfonsi (1973) 65.

[74] Plautus' references to Solon (*As.* 599), Thales (*Bac.* 122, *Capt.* 274, *Rud.* 1003), Socrates (*Ps.* 465) and perhaps even in jest the Athenian orator Demosthenes (*As.* 866) demonstrate that certain famous names from Greek philosophy and politics had to some extent entered the Roman consciousness.

[75] Variations on the myth may be found in Homer *Il.* 6.130-143, Diodorus Siculus 3.65 and Apollodorus 3.5.1.

through Thrace, and his subsequent state of madness rendered by the victorious Dionysus). For Plautus in the *Captiui* refers to Lycurgus in a list of other familiar characters from Greek mythology who were sent mad[76], and Naevius composed a tragedy titled *Lycurgus*, of which fragments remain and from which the opposition of the king and his army to Liber (Dionysus) and his Bacchants is apparent:

> [?] alte iubatos angues in sese gerunt.
> [?] ... quaque incedunt, omnis aruas opterunt.
> [?] iam ibi nos duplicat aduenientis Liberi timos pauos.
> LY. ne ille mei feri ingeni atque animi acrem acrimoniam.
> (*Trag.* 25W, 26W, 40W, 49W)

The identification of the son of Dryas is therefore entirely appropriate within the context of Lydus' remarks, because the *paedagogus* is standing with Pistoclerus in front of the house of a *meretrix* whose name Bacchis has already been the subject in the previous scene of a punning remark with respect to the Bacchic cult from the initially resistant *adulescens*:

> [PI.] non ego istuc facinus mihi, mulier, conducibile esse arbitror.
> BA. qui, amabo? PI. quia, Bacchis, Bacchas metuo et bacchanal tuom.
> (*Bac.* 52-53)

It is possible to conclude therefore that Lydus may be criticising the neighbourhood surrounding Bacchis' establishment for its capacity to corrupt not only those who are generally upright (such as the Spartan or Athenian Lycurgus), but also those specifically resistant to manifestations of the Bacchic cult (such as Lycurgus, the son of Dryas). It seems clear therefore that this reference to Lycurgus probably worked on a number of levels and stands as an example of a Plautine reference which would have been the subject of heterogeneous appreciation. For those in the audience who were more capable of applying their memories, their associative skills and their general knowledge of Greek affairs and mythology would have been able to grasp the full extent of the apparent multiplicity of meaning within Lydus' remarks.

Casina

The *Casina* contains a joke who structure is similar to that of Staphyla's suicidal remark in the *Aulularia*. For this present joke is delivered in two stages, the oblique comment representing the joke proper and then the more full explanation, thus suggesting degrees of swiftness of appreciation by the Plautine audience. For at the drawing of lots to determine which of two *serui*, Olympio or Chalinus will have Casina's hand in slave-marriage, the older Olympio expresses the wish to his younger rival,

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76 [TY.] et quidem Alcumeus atque Orestes et Lycurgus postea
una opera mihi sunt sodales qua iste. (*Capt.* 562-563)

[OL.] utinam tua quidem <ista>, sicut Herculei praedicant
quondam prognatis, in sortiendo sors deliquerit. (*Cas.* 398-399)[77]

The allusion here to *Herculei prognati* is to the sons of Aristodemus, Hercules' great-great-great-grandsons, who lost Messenia by lot to Aristodemus' brother Cresphontes in a mythical division of the Peloponnese. For Temenus, Aristodemus' other brother, placed two lots in an urn to decide possession of Messenia. His nephews' lot was sun-dried clay and hence dissolved in the urn, while Cresphontes' was kiln-fired and hence became the winning lot. The extent of the generational leap from Hercules to his great-great-great-grandsons which an audience member would have been required to make in order to appreciate this mythological allusion may suggest its significant obscurity to most in Plautus' audience. However, it is clear that Ennius composed a tragedy titled *Cresphontes* which describes the vengeance of Cresphontes' death by his son and in which the division by lots is mentioned:

[?] ... an inter sese sortiunt urbem atque agros? (*Trag.* 133W)

Hence, even if the *Casina* preceded the *Cresphontes*, it would be unsafe to suggest that only a minority of the Plautine audience appreciated the reference, once the explanatory phrase "in sortiendo sors deliquerit" was delivered. But as with Staphyla's remark in the *Aulularia*, the relevant point is the extent of appreciation which the remark would have enjoyed within the Plautine audience before that explanatory phrase was delivered. Given the structure of the remark and the necessity for explanation, it would seem that such appreciation was significant but by no means overwhelming.

Epidicus

The *Epidicus* is rich in mythological-literary allusions, which in some cases are so oblique that they defy consensus among modern scholars as to their meaning. These allusions again suggest heterogeneous appreciation simply because their obliqueness would have required careful thought from the audience in order to elicit their meaning or range of meanings. As a counterpoint to these allusions, Plautus does provide some obvious references which would have required little thought by the audience to be appreciated. In this respect, consider the *senex* Periphanes' comment on life with his late wife:

[PE.] Hercules ego fui, dum illa mecum fuit;
neque sexta aerumna acerbior Herculi quam illa mihi obiectast.
(*Ep.* 178-179)

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[77] As with Staphyla' remark in the *Aulularia*, Nixon (1916-1938) v. 2 45 again disappoints by reversing the order of the remark in his translation: "Oh, if that lot of yours would only melt away in the drawing, like the one in that old story of Hercules's descendants."

However, consider in contrast the *miles*' comment to Periphanes when it is revealed that the *senex* has been swindled and the *fidicina* in his charge is not, as he had been led to believe, the *fidicina* Acropolistis:

> [MI.] nam pro fidicina haec cerua supposita est tibi.
> senex, tibi os est sublitum plane et probe. (*Ep.* 490-491)

The allusion here is "innegabile il riferimento al sacrificio di Ifigenia"[78], which sacrifice would have been reasonably familiar to the Romans, as the work of Naevius and Ennius alone attests. However, the allusion to this sacrifice is manifest merely in the two words "cerua supposita" and hence would have required a particular level of conceptual association to link the two words with the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

Later in this comedy, Periphanes bids the *mulier* Phillippa to go inside his house and attend to Acropolistis by stating,

> [PE.] abi modo intro atque hanc adserua Circam Solis filiam. (*Ep.* 604)

Thus the *senex* compares Acropolistis to Circe, the daughter of Sol (Helios) and the *uenefica* who features prominently in the *Odyssey*. The reference therefore would not necessarily have been esoteric. However, the allusion is oblique and perhaps has meaning on two levels. George Duckworth states that "Periphanes probably refers to Acropolistis as Circe because Circe was a *uenefica*"[79] and because Periphanes describes her as *uenefica* in an earlier scene:

> [EP.] ea praestolabatur illum apud portam. PE. uiden ueneficam? (*Ep.* 221)

On the other hand, Nixon among others notes that like Acropolistis, Circe "knew neither her father nor [her] mother."[80] So again a Plautine character makes an oblique mythological reference. However, unlike the previous allusion to Iphigenia, the reason for citing the name of this mythological character, rather than the name itself, is obscured. Given therefore the two modern explanations for the reference to Circe which could readily have occurred to a mythologically alert member of the Plautine audience, this reference would probably have been appreciated neither universally nor uniformly by an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience.

The last allusion to be considered from the *Epidicus* is also the first in the play and certainly the most obscure. This allusion is found in the simple phrase "quia ante aliis fuit" and occurs in the wider context of the *seruus* Epidicus' questions to his colleague Thesprio about the military exploits of their soon-to-return young master Stratippocles:

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78 Fraenkel (1960) 77.

79 Duckworth (1940) 371.

80 Nixon (1916-1938) v. 2 343 n. 1.

EP. ubi arma sunt Stratippocli?
TH. pol illa ad hostis transfugerunt. EP. armane? TH. atque quidem cito.
EP. serione dici' tu?
TH. serio, inquam: hostes habent.
EP. edepol facinus inprobum! TH. at iam ante alii fecerunt idem.
erit illi illa res honori. EP. qui? TH. quia ante aliis fuit.
Mulciber, credo, arma fecit usque habuit Stratippocles:
trauolauerunt ad hostis. EP. tum ille pronatus Theti
sine perdat: alia adportabunt ei Neri filiae. (*Ep.* 29-36)

The phrase "quia ante aliis fuit" would almost certainly have been the subject of heterogeneous appreciation simply because it is expressed with such complete obliqueness, providing no hints whatsoever as to what its precise meaning or possible range of meanings is. For although A. Kiessling suggests a link between the phrase and its succeeding three lines by noting "Sinn und Verstand scheinen mir diese Späße erst zu erhalten, wenn wir lesen ... quia ante *Achilli* fuit"[81], Duckworth notes, "a definite reference [in this phrase] to the hero was felt to be lacking."[82] Indeed, the succeeding three lines with their references to Achilles would seem to represent not a continuing thread of the phrase, but a complete change of emphasis within the context of the wider subject.

Menaechmi

There are some very obscure references in the Plautine *corpus*. Stratippocles' reference in the *Epidicus* to an individual with *pedes plumbei* (*Ep.* 627) and the *leno* Labrax's observation in the *Rudens*,

[LA.] edepol, Libertas, lepida es quae numquam pedem
uoluisti in nauem cum Hercule una imponere. (*Rud.* 489-490)

continue to defy simple and sound modern scholarly explanation. Yet at the same time, their present obscurity is no indication of their obscurity in antiquity. However, there is one overt mythological reference in Plautus' comedies which almost certainly was sufficiently obscure to defy universal appreciation within the Plautine audience. That reference can be found in the *Menaechmi* and occurs as Sosicles is being confronted and verbally accosted by the *matrona*, the wife of his lost twin brother Menaechmus. Of course, neither is aware of the other's identity, the wife believing that she is speaking to her husband, Sosicles unaware that his lost twin brother is actually living in Epidamnus, the latest stop on his lengthy search to find that brother. Sosicles therefore tells this strange but loud *matrona*, who will soon be joined by her father,

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81 Kiessling (1869) 119.

82 Duckworth (1940) 125. Although not committing himself to an explanation for this allusion, Duckworth also cites a number of modern scholarly explanations which cross mythological-literary and historical boundaries.

> [SO.] ego te simitu noui cum Porthaone.
> MA. si me derides, at pol illum non potes,
> patrem meum qui huc aduenit. quin respicis?
> nouistin tu illum? SO. noui cum Calcha simul: (*Men.* 745-748),

and in effect denies that he knows either of them by his use of these "mytho-hyperbolic"[83] references. But although the second reference to the seer Calchas would probably have been appreciated by a large proportion of the Roman audience, given the prominence of Calchas in the Trojan myths and given also a second Plautine reference to him in the *Mercator* in which his ability as a seer is implied[84], the first reference to Porthaon seriously tests the bounds what one might expect to have been general knowledge among the Romans. For Porthaon was the paternal grandfather of Hercules' last wife Deianeira and was therefore "the very type of someone utterly obscure!"[85] Indeed, if a common core of Greek mythology embedded in the Roman consciousness during Plautus' lifetime can be imagined, it is extremely difficult to conceive of the presence within that core of such an obscure figure as Hercules' final paternal grandfather-in-law. It seems more than sound to suggest that the mytho-hyperbole of the first reference was concealed from most in the Plautine audience by the very obscurity of the reference, while the second reference to a more identifiable mythological figure was more inclusive and hence would have revealed more readily its own mytho-hyperbole as well as that of the first reference.

Persa

The *Persa* features fleetingly a reference to Greek philosophy which would almost certainly have defied uniform appreciation. It occurs as the free *parasitus* Saturio is denying his servile benefactor[86] Toxilus a desperately needed loan of six hundred *nummi*. For Saturio claims that a *parasitus* with money is his own worst enemy because of a natural tendency to consume to his own wealth, and states further,

> [SAT.] cynicum esse egentem oportet parasitum probe:
> ampullam, strigilem, scaphium, soccos, pallium,
> marsuppium habeat, inibi paullum praesidi
> qui familiarem suam uitam oblectet modo. (*Per.* 123-126)

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83 Segal (1996) 232.

84 CH. hospes respondit Zacynthi ficos fieri non malas.
EV. nil mentitust. CH. sed de amica indaudiuisse autumat
hic Athenis esse. EV. Calchas iste quidem Zacynthiust. (*Mer.* 943-945)

85 Gratwick (1993) 207. Indeed, Segal (1996) 231 goes so far as to suggest that by citing Porthaon, Plautus was "showing off his erudition".

86 One of many absurdities in the "topsy-turvydom" (Slater [1985] 38 n. 3) of the *Persa*.

These remarks possess an immediate comic absurdity on a couple of levels. In the first place, Saturio is suggesting the possibility of the existence of a *parasitus* with money, even though such a *parasitus* is an absolute contradiction in terms within the Plautine universe. Secondly, by stating that it would be better for such a *parasitus* to cast off his own wealth and to retain the mere essentials of life, just enough to pursue a life of poverty and simplicity, Saturio is suggesting that a *parasitus* should swap a life of regular meals for a harsh life of only occasional sumptuousness in order to be true to his nature as a *parasitus*. Such comic absurdity would probably have been appreciated and enjoyed generally throughout the Plautine audience. However, Saturio's remarks have an additional dimension in his use of the word "cynicum". For the *parasitus* is suggesting that he should pursue not just any life of poverty and simplicity, but specifically a life of Cynic poverty and simplicity.

Given the immediate comic absurdity of Saturio's remarks, Saturio's reference to Cynicism is redundant in terms of the audience's general appreciation of the passage. Metrical concerns aside, the word "cynicum" could be removed and the passage would still be amusing. It is clear therefore that if a member of the Plautine audience did not understand the reference to Cynicism, he would not find himself losing the thread of the comedy or indeed the immediate comic absurdity of Saturio's remark. However, it should not necessarily be assumed that Cynicism was completely unfamiliar to the Plautine audience. For this reference and another in the *Stichus*[87] describe essentially stereotypical manifestations of Cynicism. On the other hand, it is unlikely that most in the audience would have had a deeper understanding of Cynicism beyond such stereotypes. For there is a profound difference between popular appreciation of outward and stereotypical manifestations of a philosophy and popular (as opposed to educated) appreciation of its true tenets.[88] Moreover, as Donald Dudley demonstrates, Rome did not exactly need to have a profound understanding of Cynicism at the time. For he states that "admittedly certain features of the Hellenistic age which had provided material for the preachings of Cynicism, a great increase in luxury, and gross inequality in the distribution of wealth — were just as prevalent in Republican Rome. But Rome had her own contrast to those in the 'antiqua virtus', without calling on the material of the Cynic. Why cite Diogenes as an example of

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87 STI. nimium lepide in mentem uenit quam potius in subsellio
cynice [hic] accipimur quam †in lecticis†! (*St.* 703-704)

88 To make a modern analogy, most in western society would be aware of Islam and would be able to cite abstention from alcohol as a mark of that religion. However, very few would be able to provide detailed and accurate information on the nature of Islam beyond the basic or stereotypical.

virtuous poverty when Cincinnatus and Cato lay to hand?"[89] It would seem likely therefore that only the philosophically attuned within the audience who through education or personal experience had a slightly deeper understanding of Cynicism would have appreciated the additional level on which Saturio's remarks operate. For his parasitic notions of *egestas* are an utterly comic perversion of Cynicism. Saturio is musing that it would be better for a parasite to indulge his parasitical tendencies at a trough filled at anyone's expense but his own. Yet a true Cynic would not even go near the trough. Given also that Saturio's reference to Cynic poverty would have been a source of humour for those in the audience who found such strange Greek ways inherently amusing, it seems clear that Saturio's remark would have represented multivalent material which could have been appreciated heterogeneously by the Plautine audience.

Poenulus

As I have already noted in this chapter, the extent to which the Plautine audience would have been able to appreciate Plautus' use of the Greek language in his comedies is not obvious. This prevents any identification of Graecisms in Plautus' comedies as instances of material which would have defied the uniform or universal appreciation of the Plautine audience. However, Greek is not the only language in addition to Latin to be found in Plautine comedy. For the fifth act of the *Poenulus* contains one lengthy and several shorter passages which rely on the use of Punic.[90] These Punic passages are some of the most disputed in Plautine comedy.[91] Yet unlike the numerous Graecisms found throughout Plautine comedy, it is probable that these Punic passages would have received heterogeneous appreciation by the Plautine audience for the simple reason that only a small minority of Romans would have been sufficiently fluent in Punic to understand them. For although Rome was consumed for most of the third century B.C. in a struggle with Carthage for control of the western Mediterranean and therefore had considerable contact with the Carthaginian world during this period, Punic culture did not sit beside Hellenistic culture as a target for the aspirations of the increasingly worldly Romans. After all, Greece was Rome's yard-stick, Carthage was her nemesis. Indeed, the Catonian position that

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[89] Dudley (1937) 119.

[90] *Poen.* 940-949, 994, 995, 998, 1001, 1002, 1006, 1010, 1013, 1016, 1017, 1023, 1027, 1141-1142, 1152. Moreover, it is now generally held that the Punic of *Poen.* 930-939 and the Latin of *Poen.* 950-960 represent respectively an attempted repair and a translation of *Poen.* 940-949 from later antiquity.

[91] Gratwick (1971) 25-26 observes that "there have been at least ninety opuscules on the Punic passages in Plautus' *Poenulus* since Scaliger ... in 1598" and that among these is the scholarship of charlatans, frauds and dupes.

"Carthago delenda est" is probably a sound indication of the generally lesser esteem in which Rome held Punic civilisation in comparison with Hellenistic civilisation. Therefore, although Rome's military, political and commercial contacts with the Carthaginians strongly suggest some fluency in Punic within the socially diverse Plautine audience, such fluency should probably not be overestimated to the point of equation with the indeterminate yet significant popular familiarity with the Greek language.[92]

The Punic elements in the *Poenulus* which best indicate heterogeneous appreciation occur after the *adulescens* Agorastocles and his *seruus* Milphio (both long ago snatched from Carthage and brought to Calydon) cross paths with Hanno, whose dress marks him as Carthaginian. A conversation ensues, in the course of which Milphio's confidence that time has not diminished his Punic[93] is proven to be utterly ill founded:

> HA. lechlachananilimniichot. AG. quid nunc ait?
> MI. ligulas, canalis ait se aduexisse et nuces:
> nunc orat operam ut des sibi, ut ea ueneant.
> AG. mercator credo est. HA. assam. MI. aruinam quidem.
> HA. palumergadetha. AG. Milphio, quid nunc ait?
> MI. palas uendundas sibi ait et mergas datas,
> ad messim credo, nisi quid tu aliud sapis,
> ut hortum fodiat atque ut frumentum metat. (*Poen.* 1013-1020)

This exchange is comical for the simple reason that Milphio's Punic has been so diminished over time that he merely latinises Hanno's Punic with obviously absurd results. Clearly, the nonsense which Milphio spouts would have been a source of amusement to the general Plautine audience who lacked knowledge of Punic. However, Milphio's linguistic ineptitude would have offered comedy on an additional level for those who were able to understand Hanno's remarks. For it is one thing to appreciate Milphio's linguistic ineptitude through the absurdity of his translations. It is another to appreciate through knowledge of the language the true extent to which Milphio errs in his translation. There is strong evidence therefore to suggest that heterogeneous appreciation of this passage occurred within the Plautine audience.

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92 Despite the probable inability of a majority in the Plautine audience to understand Punic, it does not follow necessarily that those who lacked Punic would have lost the thread of the *Poenulus* when the *poenus* Hanno enters at the start of the fifth act to deliver ten lines (*Poen.* 940-949) of *iambic senarii* in Punic. As Gratwick (1971) 33 notes, "[Hanno's] identity is clear from his appearance. His purpose is known from the prologue; when he begins to pray, it will at least be clear that he is praying, even if the purpose of the prayer is misunderstood. His voice and his stance will communicate this. ... His immediate intentions will be clear from his production of the guest-token ... the important symbol of communication is not what Hanno says but the sight of the guest token". Moreover, Gratwick concludes that "it is wrong to suppose that because the audience [were] not Phoenician scholars they [could not] understand what [was] going on."

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> MI. uin appellem hunc Punice?
> AG. an scis? MI. nullus me est hodie Poenus Poenior. (*Poen.* 990-991)

Pseudolus

The Greek proverb γνῶθι σεαυτόν, which featured prominently at the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, is central to an exchange in the *Pseudolus*, and as in earlier instances, the structure of this exchange suggests degrees of swiftness in its appreciation by the audience and hence suggests heterogeneous appreciation. The exchange occurs as the *seruus* Simia, who is in collusion with the concealed but aside-offering Pseudolus, seeks to dupe the *leno* Ballio. Dressed in a *chlamys* or military cloak, Simia pretends to be the slave of a *miles* wishing to transact business with the *leno* and knowingly approaches Ballio under the pretence of looking for his establishment.

> SIMIA. ecquem in angiporto hoc hominem tu nouisti? te rogo.
> BA. egomet me. SIMIA. pauci istuc faciunt homines quod tu praedicas,
> nam in foro uix decumus quisque est qui ipsus sese nouerit.
> PS. saluos sum, iam philosophatur. (*Ps.* 971-974)

It is of course impossible to determine whether the phrase γνῶθι σεαυτόν had pervaded the Roman consciousness to the point of the proverbial[94] by 191 B.C., when the *Pseudolus* premiered at the *ludi Megalenses*. However, knowledge of the phrase or of its origins would not have been necessary to enjoy this exchange. For it is clear that Pseudolus' aside would have had a generally amusing effect, given that the verb *philosophari* is used in Plautus as a by-word for offering pretentious, fulsome or fatuous abstract observations.[95] Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Pseudolus' aside is not the primary joke in this exchange. Pseudolus' aside merely illuminates finally and fully Simia's clever and comical re-interpretation of Ballio's reply "egomet me" from an expression of knowledge of his own residence within the particular *angiportum* to an abstract expression of self-knowledge. For the illumination occurs in three stages, first in Simia's abstract comment "pauci istuc faciunt homines quod tu praedicas", secondly his partly clarifying remark "nam in foro uix decumus quisque est qui ipsus sese nouerit", and

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[94] Nevertheless, the possibility should not be dismissed, given the number of seemingly proverbial expressions within Plautine comedy. In this respect, we may consider

> [PA.] ... flamma fumo est proxuma; (*Cur.* 53)
> [TR.] simul flare sorbereque hau factu facilest. (*Mos.* 791)
> [LY.] utquomque est uentus exim uelum uortitur. (*Poen.* 754)
> [STRAT.] pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem; (*Truc.* 489)

Beede (1949) offers a general study of proverbs in Plautus.

[95] Consider in particular the *seruus* Tyndarus' aside in the *Captiui*, as he observes his master Philocrates at play with the *senex* Hegio:

> HE. quid pater? uiuitne? PHILOC. uiuom, quom inde abimus, liquimus;
> nunc uiuatne necne, id Orcum scire oportet scilicet.
> TY. salua res est, philosophatur quoque iam, non mendax modo est. (*Capt. 282-4)*

finally of course in Pseudolus' fully clarifying aside. Given this gradual illumination, it is therefore entirely appropriate to identify this exchange as a probable instance of comic material which would have been appreciated in stages by the Plautine audience and hence where the individual remarks within the exchange would not have received uniform or even universal appreciation. For the instinctively quick-witted who were familiar with the Greek proverb would have been alert to Simia's re-interpretation earlier than those others in the audience more concerned with the obvious trickery at hand, and hence would have responded accordingly and in a manner distinct from those others.

Rudens

The *Rudens* contains another Plautine joke divided into two parts, an oblique comment representing the joke proper and then a more full explanation. It occurs late in this longest of Plautine comedies, when the *leno* Labrax asks the *seruus* Gripus,

> LA. quid fit?
> GR. uerum extergetur. LA. ut uales? GR. quid tu? num medicus, quaeso, es?
> LA. immo edepol una littera plus sum quam medicus. GR. tum tu mendicus es? LA. tetigisti acu. (*Rud.* 1303-1306)

The joke is of course the pun between the terms *medicus* and *mendicus* and, as in the *Aulularia* and the *Casina*, its structure suggests degrees of swiftness in its appreciation by the audience. This is confirmed by the fact that the *medicus-mendicus* pun is dependent to some extent on verbal visualisation. For altering *medicus* to *mendicus* requires not only the addition of the letter *n*, but also requires the lengthening of the *i* in the middle syllable and hence a shift in stress from the first syllable to the second syllable. Consequently, there is a profound contrast between the sounds of the two words. Therefore, those in the audience whose literacy was not well-developed would probably not have been able to appreciate the joke before Gripus explains it. Indeed, I suggest that a smattering of laughter would have followed Labrax's "riddle"[96] and more general laughter would have been induced by the next line when Gripus solves that riddle for the whole audience in the clearest of terms.

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter and the previous chapter, a number of diverse aspects of Plautinity have been drawn together to establish the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience. The socially diverse composition of the Plautine audience has been

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[95] Fay (1969) 168.

demonstrated not only from external evidence, which shows that social diversity within the audience was a natural consequence of the public and communal context in which theatrical performance in Rome was conceived, but also from the internal evidence of the Plautine texts. The theoretically sound connexion between social diversity and intellectual heterogeneity within the Plautine audience has been demonstrated by considering briefly the general nature of intelligence. The notion that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience has been shown to be unsustainable principally through the close examination of an often cited but ultimately flawed study of the Plautine audience. Finally, the existence throughout the Plautine *corpus* of comic material which would have tested the bounds of uniform and even universal appreciation within the intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience has been made evident. The combined weight of these demonstrations provides sound evidence that Plautus' comedies were the subject of heterogeneous appreciation by sections of the Plautine audience, and hence a strong case that any serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes which Plautus might have introduced to his comedies or retained from his Greek models could have been appreciated by members of his original Roman audience.

However, this study would be entirely academic, if the Plautine comedies themselves did not appear to yield through interpretation serious, sophisticated and thought-provoking themes beyond their immediate comic mayhem. Therefore, in order to set the notion of the appreciation of serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes on firmer and less theoretical ground, I shall consider in the following chapters three Plautine comedies, the *Menaechmi*, the *Amphitruo* and the *Asinaria*, and suggest through my own interpretations that these comedies would have offered various serious and underlying themes for the consideration of their original Roman audience.

CHAPTER 3
THE BIGGER PICTURE:
MICROCOSM AND MACROCOSM IN THE *MENAECHMI*

The *Menaechmi* is one of the more renowned and one of the more influential[1] Plautine compositions. For it is the consummate comedy of errors, Plautus' sole surviving excursion into that comedic sub-genre, and indeed the oldest surviving literary exposition of the multiculturally ubiquitous tale of the two brothers.[2] It is an improbable comedy in which the identities of the twin protagonists Menaechmus and Sosicles[3] are the subject of a confusion not mitigated as quickly as one would realistically expect[4], all to great comic effect. Indeed, the *Menaechmi* is such an enjoyable farce that it is possible to consider its action in an entirely superficial manner and to conclude that it is merely a benign comedy of errors, that it is, in the words of its first English translator, "the least harmfull [*sic*], and yet most delightfull [*sic*]"[5] of all the surviving Plautine comedies. However, to define the *Menaechmi* so simply underestimates severely a thematically serious quality apparent within the work. In this third chapter, therefore, I shall offer an interpretation of the *Menaechmi* and hence suggest that Plautus' sole surviving comedy of errors deals with serious issues of propriety and personal conduct, that it leads its audience to question the nature of its protagonists and the forces which motivate their conduct, and that it ultimately permits an ambivalence towards the twin brothers in spite of their comic reunion.

The *Menaechmi* is set in the western Greek port city of Epidamnus and immediately in front of the neighbouring houses of the *meretrix* Erotium to the left and the *adulescens*

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1 The *Menaechmi*'s direct influence on Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors* is sufficient proof in this regard.

2 Hansen (1977) 385-386 effectively summarises the typical structure of the two brothers tale. However, Ranke (1934) remains the most comprehensive study of the tale, addressing both its variant versions and its ubiquity.

3 For the purpose of this chapter, I shall eschew the general scholarly convention of naming the twins Menaechmus I and Menaechmus II, preferring for simplicity their original names, Menaechmus and Sosicles.

4 In this respect, Jones (1918) 7 notes that "apart from the unlikelihood of a resemblance, even between twin brothers, so close as to deceive the most familiar intimates [*Men.* 19-21], [Sosicles], seeing that he was actually searching for his brother when he found himself accosted by strangers as Menaechmus and obviously mistaken for some one else, would surely in real life have correctly guessed the identity of his unknown double". Nevertheless, the improbability of the *Menaechmi* should not be regarded as a flaw. For this improbability adds absurdity to the general comic effect.

5 Warner (1595) i.

Menaechmus to the right.[6] Its action represents the closure of the separated lives of utterly identical twin brothers originally from Syracuse. Moreover, the circumstances of their separation are provided in the highly informative prologue (*Men.* 1-76).

At the age of seven the twin originally named Menaechmus was taken by his merchant father to Tarentum on business. Upon their arrival, the father and son attended a festival, during the course of which Menaechmus wandered away and became separated from his father. A childless merchant from Epidamnus also in attendance abducted the young Menaechmus to Epidamnus, and as a result of this abduction, the father died of grief while still in Tarentum. When news of the abduction and the death returned to Syracuse, the twins' grandfather renamed Sosicles Menaechmus in memory of the lost twin. This renaming would of course contribute greatly to the subsequent confusion in Epidamnus, since the twin originally named Sosicles would thereafter identify himself always as Menaechmus. Now as *adulescentes*, Menaechmus the Epidamnian twin is married to an *uxor dotata* and is the sole heir of his late[7] abductor-adopter's estate, while Sosicles the Syracusan twin is conducting a lengthy search for his lost brother. His arrival in Epidamnus therefore leads to the ensuing and purely accidental series of errors.

In the first act (*Men.* 77-225), the *parasitus* Peniculus meets up with his *patronus* Menaechmus, who is completing a squabble with his off-stage wife, the unnamed *matrona.* Menaechmus has also stolen a *palla* from his wife to give to his mistress, the neighbouring *meretrix* Erotium. The two men proceed to Erotium's house and, after delivering the *palla*, are promised lunch. Menaechmus and Peniculus pledge to return, once they have completed some business in the *forum*. Erotium closes the act by sending the *cocus* Cylindrus away to purchase and prepare the meal.

The second act (*Men.* 226-445) opens with the arrival in Epidamnus of Sosicles and his *seruus* Messenio. Shortly afterwards, Cylindrus returns from his shopping and strikes up a conversation with Sosicles under the mistaken belief that he is Menaechmus. The two speak at cross-purposes, with Sosicles ultimately concluding that Cylindrus must be insane. After Cylindrus enters Erotium's house, the *meretrix* emerges to speak to the returned "Menaechmus". More confused conversation occurs, and although initially wary

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6 As was the convention in *palliatae*, the *portus* is off-stage to the audience's left, the *forum* off-stage to the right.

7 The circumstances and the damning tone of the description of the abductor's death are particularly worthy of note. For the prologist states,

> nam rus ut ibat forte, ut multum pluerat,
> ingressus fluuium rapidum ab urbe hau longule,
> rapidus raptori pueri subduxit pedes
> apstraxitque hominem in maxumam malam crucem. (*Men.* 63-66)

of her advances, Sosicles eventually retires with Erotium, convinced that he can take advantage of her without harm to himself. He orders Messenio to return from the *portus* before night falls.

Some time elapses before the start of the third act (*Men.* 446-558), when Peniculus returns. He laments losing Menaechmus in the *forum* and fears having missed his lunch. Sosicles then emerges from the *meretrix*'s house garlanded and with the *palla*, having falsely promised to have it embroidered for Erotium. Peniculus accosts Sosicles for dining without him, and once again confusion ensues. Finally, Peniculus storms off into Menaechmus' house intending to expose the affair to Menaechmus' wife. While Sosicles is shrugging off this latest incident, Erotium's *ancilla* emerges, hands him her mistress' *spinter*, which Menaechmus originally stole from his wife, and asks him to have it reworked by a goldsmith. Sosicles deceitfully accepts the commission and departs for the *portus*.

At the start of the fourth act (*Men.* 559-700), the *matrona* emerges with Peniculus, outraged at the *parasitus*' allegations. Menaechmus then returns from the *forum*, lamenting the time lost defending a *cliens*. After an incriminating and overheard soliloquy, the *matrona* and the *parasitus* set upon Menaechmus. The *matrona* demands the return of the *palla* before allowing her husband back into the house, and at the same time denies her informant any culinary reward. She then retires and Peniculus departs, having literally worn out his welcome, never to return. In the light of events, Menaechmus proceeds to Erotium's house and asks for the return of the *palla*. The *meretrix* reminds him that he has the *palla*, as well as the *spinter*. A spat ensues and Menaechmus is shut out. He then limps off to the *forum*.

The final and longest act of the *Menaechmi* (*Men.* 701-1162) opens with the return of Sosicles from the *portus*, *palla* still in hand, having failed to find Messenio. The *matrona* emerges and proceeds to abuse Sosicles. Denying both her and her charges, he returns the abuse. She therefore sends for her father, the unnamed *senex*. Upon his arrival, the father initially criticises his daughter for being too harsh on her husband. But when Sosicles denies any knowledge of both father and daughter, the *senex* concludes that his "son-in-law" is insane. Sosicles responds by feigning insanity to rid himself of the two. The *matrona* flees to her father's house, the *senex* goes to fetch a *medicus*. Sosicles then departs for the *portus*. After the *senex* appears with the *medicus*, Menaechmus returns from the *forum*. The *medicus* quickly and comically diagnoses the uncooperative Menaechmus as insane and then departs for his establishment near the *forum*. The *senex* proceeds to the *portus* to gather some orderlies to subdue Menaechmus, who remains on-stage, expressing his utter confusion at the day's events. Although unaware of each other's presence,

Messenio now joins Menaechmus on stage, having returned from the *portus* at the designated time, and states in soliloquy his servile *credo* of virtue and his desire for honorable manumission. When the *senex* and four orderlies confront Menaechmus, a melee ensues, and Messenio, thinking Sosicles is being assailed, fends off the attackers. Menaechmus expresses his gratitude and so Messenio asks for his freedom, which is apparently granted by Menaechmus' denial that he is Messenio's master. Messenio pledges to return with his "ex-master's" belongings, and in the meantime, Menaechmus enters Erotium's house in a second unsuccessful attempt to retrieve the *palla*. Sosicles and Messenio, having met off-stage, finally return from the *portus*. Menaechmus then emerges from Erotium's house. With much amazement, Messenio sees his master's *speculum*. A lengthy recognition sequence takes place, in which identities are confirmed, events are understood and a certain amount of joy is expressed. The two brothers set out for Syracuse and the now freed Messenio closes with a notice of auction of Menaechmus' Epidamnian property, including his wife. But so much for the scenario and action of the *Menaechmi*.

Plautine scholarship has produced in recent decades some noteworthy studies which have peered through the benign veneer of the *Menaechmi* to find within "a serious comedy".[8] However, it is perhaps an irony that Erich Segal, the very scholar whose work

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[8] Haberman (1981) 129. Haberman's study is the most worthy of note for its definition of "the joyous quest for freedom" (137) as a major theme of the *Menaechmi*. For Haberman distinguishes between "illusory freedom", the "comfortable prison" (130) which many of the lesser characters pursue during the course of the comedy, and the higher and truer levels of freedom, which Messenio and Sosicles are actively seeking (the former from the chains of slavery, the latter from the burden of his search, from an existence without his brother and from his existence as *pseudo*-Menaechmus). In this manner, he intelligently addresses the *Menaechmi* beyond the narrow perspective of the immediate Epidamnian setting, and therefore his study is to some extent apposite to this present chapter. However, I dissent from Haberman's conviction that Menaechmus' quest for freedom can be equated with that of Sosicles and Messenio, that Menaechmus is seeking "the human condition in some larger sense of freedom." (130) For throughout the course of the *Menaechmi*, Menaechmus is merely seeking the "comfortable prison" in the form of Erotium, whose walls can free him only temporarily from wife and clients. Indeed, although a higher level of freedom is ultimately handed to Menaechmus through his rediscovery of Sosicles and through his subsequent departure from Epidamnus, it is clear, as I shall demonstrate during the course of this chapter, that the seeds of initiative towards "the human condition in some larger sense of freedom" were always within Menaechmus but were never sown.

Jocelyn's (1983) study is another recent and noteworthy examination of serious issues within the *Menaechmi*. Jocelyn does not present an original thesis *per se*, but rather presents an effective survey and re-evaluation of a school of Plautine scholarship from the 1970s (exemplified by Steidle [1971] and Hoffmann in Reinhardt & Sallmann [1974] 131-140) which suggested that "an increasing general disdain for Greeks in the Roman populace caused Plautus to alter both the plot structure and the characterisation of his original." (1) Indeed, Jocelyn diminishes the hypothesis that the *Menaechmi* is a reflection of a particularly Roman sentiment against Greeks by stating that "if Plautus' *Menaechmi* holds Syracusans and Epidamnians up to ridicule and moral condemnation the cause may lie as much in Athenian hostility to a certain group of fellow Greeks as in Roman hostility to all Greeks" (5) and that "in any case the particular admiration which the commissioners of Plautus' translations [*sic*!] had for Athenian literary culture must [have counted] as a much stronger influence on the Latin poet than the general feelings diffused through the Roman community about the low standards of Greek morals." (12) But most convincingly, Jocelyn cites

has been so antithetical to the "serious school" of Plautine scholarship, should identify a serious theme within the *Menaechmi*: the conflict between obligation and self-gratification.[9] This is not to say that Segal himself regards this theme as serious.[10] He merely examines the theme on a microcosmic level and in a manner entirely consistent with his notion of Plautine comedy as strictly festive comedy. Nevertheless, I intend to examine this theme on a macrocosmic level and with particular respect to that most Roman of values, *pietas*.[11]

Conflict, however trivial, is an unmistakable feature on the landscape of comedy. From the pathetic mime desperately trying to walk against the wind to the chocolate

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the presence within the *Menaechmi* of Messenio, Sosicles' virtuous and above all Greek *seruus*, as the greatest obstacle to this hypothesis: "no Roman could ask for a better slave. What is more, [Messenio] displays a severer and more prudent attitude to the moral temptations of Epidamnus than does his owner." (10-11) Yet while it is appropriate that Jocelyn should diminish the force of this contentious scholarship which has sought to define the *Menaechmi* (and, in the case of Anderson [1993] 133-151 most recently, the entire Plautine *corpus*) as an exposition of particularly Roman sentiment against the Greeks, it should nevertheless be noted that Jocelyn does not undermine the essential, underlying thesis of those other scholars that there exists a serious moral tone within the *Menaechmi*.

9 Segal (1969), (1987) 42-51 and (1996) xxvii-xxx presents essentially identical theses as to the thematic nature of the *Menaechmi* in his three studies. Although some variations of expression are apparent, Segal does not contradict himself from one study to another. I shall therefore use them interchangeably.

10 Nor indeed does Segal (1996) xxviii recognise the possibility that this theme of conflict and its allegorical representation on the stage are deliberate. For he boldly but not untypically asserts that "Plautus, of course, intends no allegory; he never intends anything but entertainment."

11 *Pietas* is most commonly defined as the respect, devotion, submission and compliance required and expected of a Roman with reference to the gods, his *pater* and *maiores*, and his *patria*. This common conception is conveyed by Cicero, who regards *pietas* as an element of *naturae ius*, and notes that it warns the Roman "erga patriam aut parentes aut alios sanguine coniunctos officium conseruare". (*Inv.* 2.65-66) Elsewhere, he states that *pietas* can placate the *mentes deorum*. (*Clu.* 194) *Pietas* is epitomised in Roman literature by Vergil's characterisation of *pius* Aeneas and in particular by the image of Aeneas' bearing his father Anchises over his shoulder at the fall of Troy. (*A.* 2.707-708) However, Saller in B. Rawson (1991) 146 is correct in emphasising the reciprocity of *pietas* beyond the common definition of submission before "higher authorities". He notes that "*pietas* in the *Aeneid* is not just a filial virtue or a matter of obedience: Aeneas' *pietas* extended down to [his son] Ascanius as well as up to Anchises." The reciprocity of this distinctly Roman value is also emphasised in the *quasi-* (or perhaps even *pseudo-*) Hellenism of the Plautine universe. In the *Curculio*, Planesium prays to the divinity *Pietas* when on the verge of discovering her lost brother Therapontigonus:

PL. <o> Pietas mea,
serua me, quando ego te seruai sedulo. (*Cur.* 639-640)

The Carthaginian Hanno in the *Poenulus* cites the efficacy of *pietas*, after recognising his lost daughters:

[HA.] ... nostram pietatem adprobant decorantque di inmortales. (*Poen.* 1255)

Moreover, his daughter Adelphasium praises Hanno's paternal *pietas*, manifest in his search for the two girls:

ADE. mi pater, tua pietas plane nobeis auxilio fuit. (*Poen.* 1277)

But reciprocity notwithstanding, my concerns in this chapter are specifically with respect to the submissive filial and patriotic aspects of *pietas*.

vending machine which refuses Homer Simpson's crumpled dollar bill[12], comedy thrives on conflict in its varied form. Segal's definition of the *Menaechmi* as an exposition of the conflicting forces which pull and stretch Menaechmus in opposing directions is therefore thoroughly convincing. For he states that "the action [of the *Menaechmi*] takes place in a magnetic field between poles of restraint and release"[13], that the *Menaechmi* "presents the conflict of *industria* and *uoluptas*, holiday versus everyday, or, as Freud would describe it, the reality principle versus the pleasure principle"[14], and that Menaechmus is caught between the "inimical ... worlds of business and pleasure."[15] Moreover, Segal establishes the conflict as a physical allegory by stating that in particular "the two houses on stage represent the conflicting forces in the comedy."[16] For *uoluptas* is clearly represented by the house of Erotium, while *industria* is represented by Menaechmus' own house and additionally by the *forum*.[17]

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12 As occurred in episode 8F09 of *The Simpsons,* titled "Burns Verkaufen der Kraftwerk" (*sic*), first broadcast on the Fox Network on 5th December, 1991.

13 Segal (1996) xxvii.

14 Segal (1987) 44.

15 Segal (1969) 87.

16 Segal (1987) 43.

17 In the first place, *industria* is defined explicitly within Menaechmus' relationship with his wife. When the Epidamnian twin first appears, he is enjoying a lengthy last word in an argument with his off-stage wife and identifies her activities by stating,

> [MEN.] nam quotiens foras ire uolo, me retines, reuocas, rogitas,
> quo ego eam, quam rem agam, quid negoti geram,
> quid petam, quid feram, quid foris egerim. (*Men.* 114-116)

The *retinendum*, *reuocandum* and *rogitandum*, which incur Menaechmus' censure, are subsequently described with the general and generally neutral term, *industria*. However, Menaechmus turns the term into a pejorative in the context of an apparent taunt, which is in fact a genuine statement of intent:

> [MEN.] atque adeo, ne me nequiquam serues, ob eam industriam
> hodie ducam scortum ad cenam atque aliquo condiciam foras. (*Men.* 123-124)

The term is again used with respect to the conduct of Menaechmus' wife, when the *senex* first appears at her behest and issues his immediately prejudiced criticism:

> MA. at enim ille hinc amat meretricem ex proxumo. SE. sane sapit
> atque ob istance industriam etiam faxo amabit amplius. (*Men.* 790-791)

Industria is also represented implicitly in the *forum*, where Menaechmus finds himself bound to civic obligation and from his rendezvous with Erotium:

> [MEN.] sicut me hodie nimi' sollicitum cliens quidam habuit neque quod uolui
> agere aut quicum licitumst, ita med attinit, ita detinit. (*Men.* 588-589)

Indeed, Segal (1969) 88 effectively draws together this dual representation of *industria* by considering Plautus' terminology and hence noting that "citizenship, like marriage, places certain restraints upon a man. Menaechmus has been 'tied up' in the forum on business. To emphasize the 'tenacity' of these restrictions, Plautus employs three variations of the verb *tenere*. First *retinere* (line 113) in reference to the hen-pecking wife, and ... *attinere* and *detinere* (line 589) to describe the clinging client. Both ties prevent Menaechmus from following his instinct, *agere quod*

Segal's definition of the conflict within the *Menaechmi*, both abstractly and allegorically, is generally sound. Indeed, it is clear that the stage representation of this conflict, as Segal defines it, possesses inherent comic value in the unwitting success of Sosicles and the thwarted failure of Menaechmus to be pleasured. However, Segal's treatment of his definition of conflict within the *Menaechmi* is problematic in two related respects. In the first place, Segal undermines his whole scholarly exercise by adopting an extreme, almost absurd position as to the nature of Sosicles. For he embeds the fantastic within the dramatic reality and hence suggests that although Sosicles is free to enjoy the pleasures which Menaechmus has engineered, "he is also non-existent. He is the creature of someone's imagination — specifically, [Menaechmus']. The fantasy fulfilled is that of a workaday Roman, caught up in the *forum*, dreaming of getting away — from everything and with everything."[18] Such a definition of Sosicles ultimately as the non-existent creature of Menaechmus' imagination is clearly both unsatisfying and unsatisfactory[19], and seems an unfortunate confusion between fantasy and the improbability of the dramatic reality. Moreover, it is a symptom of the second problem with Segal's treatment of the conflict, his inability to consider "the bigger picture" within the *Menaechmi*, to recognise adequately the reality of Sosicles' universe and what that universe represents and requires of the individual, to distinguish between the microcosm of Epidamnus and the macrocosm which incorporates both Epidamnus and Syracuse. For Segal states that with the recognition complete in the final scene, the twin brothers "will return to Syracuse, and the family business. *Voluptas* today, but *industria* tomorrow."[20] He therefore draws no distinction between microcosmic obligation and macrocosmic obligation. Yet this distinction may be regarded as fundamental to a broader appreciation of the *Menaechmi*. For although the representation of the microcosmic conflict is important aspect of the *Menaechmi* strictly as a comedy, it is within the macrocosm which incorporates both Epidamnus and Syracuse that the theme of the conflict between obligation and self-gratification is extended and developed into a more subtle and sophisticated form. Indeed, the representation of this conflict within the macrocosm possesses inherently serious overtones, is utterly devoid of comedy and

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licitumst."

18 Segal (1996) xxx.

19 It is difficult to conceive that a member of the Roman audience would have drawn such a conclusion. Moreover, Sosicles as the non-existent creature of Menaechmus' imagination essentially renders Messenio into a similar state. Yet given the unmistakable moral foil which Messenio represents within the *Menaechmi*, it is clear that on this point Segal is unacceptably wide of the mark.

20 Segal (1969) 92.

lacks a satisfactorily comic resolution. For it is marked especially by a violation of *pietas* unlike any other in the Plautine *corpus*[21], a violation which is neither temporary, nor festive, nor even unconscious, but rather a deliberate and enduring act on the part of Menaechmus. But in order to place the nature of this act in context, we need first to consider the contrast of Sosicles' early conduct.

The Sosicles who first arrives from the *portus* at the beginning of the second act is a determined individual. Despite the complaints of his *seruus* Messenio that the continuing search for his lost brother is lengthy, pointless and financially exhausting[22], and despite his very first utterance, the context of which belies his future conduct[23], Sosicles is fixed in his resolve to find his brother. For he states in the most emphatic of terms,

> SO. ergo istuc quaero certum qui faciat mihi,
> quei sese deicat scire eum esse emortuom:
>
> uerum aliter uiuos numquam desistam exsequi.
> ego illum scio quam cordi sit carus meo. (*Men.* 242-243, 245-246)

This determined search is not merely a six-year-long obsession. It represents the final logical step beyond his father's and grandfather's immediate reactions to the abduction of Menaechmus. For within the father's death there was the most profound grief, within the grandfather's renaming of Sosicles there was remembrance, and within the search by Sosicles there is the need and desire for resolution. Moreover, Sosicles' determination to complete this final step and to resolve the past is consistent with *pietas*. For through this search he has assumed wholeheartedly a duty, a personal and financial burden which both his father and his grandfather would have wished fulfilled, through this search he is attempting to repatriate what has been wrongfully taken from his native Syracuse and to restore the integrity of his family. Yet although the final scene sees the duty fulfilled and the

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21 Violations of *pietas* within the Plautine universe are usually manifest in the unilateral actions of *adulescentes* to pursue amorous relations or lives of dissipation against good judgement and to the financial detriment of their fathers. The actions of Philolaches in the *Mostellaria* and of Lesbonicus in the *Trinummus* are prime examples in this respect. However, in those two cases and indeed in most others, the filial *pietas* is restored in a comically satisfactory manner with some expression of regret or remorse. However, this is not the case in the restoration of *pietas* in the *Menaechmi*.

22 [MES.] hic annus sextus est postquam ei rei operam damus.
hominem inter uiuos quaeritamus mortuom;
quom inspicio marsuppium,
uiaticati hercle admodum aestiue sumus. (*Men.* 234, 240, 254-255)

23 Sosicles' very first word upon his arrival in Epidamnus is *uoluptas*:
SO. uoluptas nullast nauitis, Messenio,
maior meo animo quam quom ex alto procul
terram conspiciunt. (*Men.* 226-228)
However, the *uoluptas* of which he speaks differs from the *uoluptas* in which he will soon indulge.

burden lifted through the reunion of the twin brothers, the action of the *Menaechmi* also represents for Sosicles the ebbing of his integrity of person and integrity of purpose, until he eventually resembles his twin brother, not only in *facies* but also in *factum*.

The determined Sosicles is initially wary of potential threats from his new surroundings, taking note of Messenio's warnings about Epidamnus and her inhabitants:

> [MES.] in Epidamnieis
> uoluptarii atque potatores maxumei;
> tum sycophantae et palpatores plurumei
> in urbe hac habitant; tum meretrices mulieres
> nusquam perhibentur blandiores gentium.
> propterea huic urbei nomen Epidamno inditumst,
> quia nemo ferme huc sine damno deuortitur.
> SO. ego istuc cauebo. (*Men.* 258-265)

Indeed, immediately after his encounter with Cylindrus, Sosicles affirms the apparent truth of Messenio's warning:

> [SO.] edepol hau mendacia
> tua uerba experior esse. (*Men.* 333-334)

Yet despite his caution and indeed before caution turns to aggression against the seemingly insane Cylindrus, Sosicles demonstrates a charitable, albeit also patronising, disposition towards the cook. Thus he reveals a sense of propriety within his character. For he is led by Cylindrus' apparent state of mind to ask,

> [SO.] quibus hic pretieis porci ueneunt
> sacres sinceri? CY. nummeis. SO. nummum a me accipe:
> iube te piari de mea pecunia.
> nam equidem insanum esse te certo scio ... (*Men.* 289-292)[24]

Nevertheless, when Sosicles decides to enter the house of Erotium, such proprieties are abandoned. Curiosity has caused him to remain outside Erotium's house after the encounter with Cylindrus, but it is a pronounced sexual, culinary and material opportunism, an explicit desire for *praeda* which causes him to enter the house, contrary to Messenio's dire predictions:

> [SO.] mulier haec stulta atque inscita est; quantum perspexi modo,
> est hic praeda nobis. MES. perii! iamne abis? periit probe: (*Men.* 440-441)

When Sosicles emerges from Erotium's house, he has been sated both sexually and culinarily. He also demonstrates the results of his first act of theft. For in addition to professing his new found status as a *uoluptarius* and a *potator*, he openly admits to being a *sycophanta* in stealing Erotium's already stolen *palla*:

> [SO.] prandi, potaui, scortum accubui, apstuli

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[24] This encounter with Cylindrus is also significant in terms of the general estimation of Epidamnus. For the cook does not play the *sycophanta* by taking advantage of Sosicles' modest offer under false pretences, even in spite of Messenio's reiterated warning:

> MES. dixin tibi esse hic sycophantas plurumos? (*Men.* 283)

hanc, quoiius heres numquam erit post hunc diem. (*Men.* 476-477)

Indeed, Sosicles' thieving opportunism is again emphasised in a later scene, when he lies to the *ancilla* in order to pocket Erotium's already stolen *spinter* and then tries to extract deceitfully even more gold from that household:

[AN.] redde igitur spinter, si non meministi. SO. mane.
immo equidem memini. nempe hoc est quod illi dedei.
istuc: ubi illae armillae sunt quas una dedei?
AN. nunquam dedisti. SO. nam pol hoc unum dedei. (*Men.* 534-537)

Thus through these various demonstrations of opportunism, Sosicles has "ridden a slippery slope".[25] His integrity of person and integrity of purpose have been diminished and he now fully resembles Menaechmus in many of his guises: the Menaechmus who frequents the house of a *meretrix*, the Menaechmus who steals and who exploits opportunities to steal[26], the Menaechmus who neglects the obligation of *pietas*. Sosicles dons this final guise the moment he sends Messenio away, enters Erotium's house and is thus distracted from his search. Menaechmus demonstrates this guise, his supreme character flaw, *in absentia* and in one of the defining moments of the *Menaechmi*.

Late in the second act, after Sosicles has emphatically denied any knowledge either of Erotium or of the many matters to which she refers, the *meretrix* asks a question which

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[25] The gradient of this slope is made more pronounced by Sosicles' particularly negative comments concerning Messenio. For after Messenio's warning about Epidamnus and her inhabitants, Sosicles suggests that a potential source for *damnum in Epidamno* comes from his own slave:

SO. ego istuc cauebo. cedodum huc mihi marsuppium.
MES. quid eo ueis? SO. iam aps te metuo de uerbis tuis.
MES. quid metuis? SO. ne mihi damnum in Epidamno duis.
tu magis amator mulierum es, Messenio,
ego autem homo iracundus, animi perditi,
id utrumque, argentum quando habebo, cauero,
ne tu delinquas neue ego irascar tibi. (*Men.* 265-271)

Yet as events transpire, it is evident that these comments are totally unfair and completely inaccurate. For in the course of the *Menaechmi*, Messenio proves himself to be an utterly loyal *seruus*, one of the most loyal in Plautine comedy, who manages his master's finances appropriately, who warns his master of potential threats, who endangers his own safety to protect Menaechmus, his perceived master, from attack in the street, and who ultimately possesses the soundness of mind to bring about the recognition.

[26] Not only does Menaechmus steal from his wife, but he is quick to seize upon an opportunity to steal Sosicles' wallet, after Messenio saves him from attack and after he "frees" Messenio:

[MES.] apud ted habitabo et quando ibis, una tecum ibo domum.
MEN. minime. MES. nunc ibo in tabernam, uassa atque argentum tibi
referam. recte est opsignatum in uidulo marsuppium
cum uiatico: id tibi iam huc adferam. MEN. adfer strenue. (*Men.* 1034-1037)

Indeed, it is interesting to note the comic irony of Messenio's description of Menaechmus in the final scene:

MES. illic homo aut sycophanta aut geminus est frater tuos. (*Men.* 1087)

For with all his thieving, Menaechmus is in fact *et sycophanta et geminus*.

literally opens a door of opportunity for Sosicles and at the same time gravely characterises his lost twin:

> ER. non ego te noui Menaechmum, Moscho prognatum patre,
> qui Syracusis perhibere natus esse in Sicilia ... [?] (*Men.* 407-408)

The significance of this question cannot be overstated. For Erotium's question is an admission that Menaechmus is completely aware that he is not Epidamnian by birth, that he is aware that he is Syracusan, and that despite this knowledge of his true origins, he has done nothing to redress the past by attempting to return to Syracuse or at the very least return word to Syracuse. The question reveals that the macrocosmic conflict between the obligation of *pietas* and the self-gratification of being the sole adopted heir to a presumably wealthy yet ultimately wicked merchant, of being an influential citizen much sought after in civic affairs, of having an *uxor dotata* and also a mistress on the side, has easily resolved itself in Menaechmus' mind. In fact, the question reveals that there has been no conflict at all for the Epidamnian twin. Menaechmus has not simply failed to meet the filial and patriotic obligation inherent within *pietas*, he has completely shut that obligation out. His words and his actions may express a discontent with his existence on the microcosmic level, but his existence in Epidamnus has not troubled him sufficiently to sow the seeds of initiative towards acting upon his obligation on a macrocosimc level and towards restoring the integrity of his family. As H. D. Jocelyn succinctly notes, Menaechmus has "preferred to live in Epidamnus enjoying the wealth and status inherited from a kidnapper rather than to seek out his family" and is therefore "a light-minded and worthless fellow by Roman standards if ever there was."[27]

It is important to note that at no point in the *Menaechmi* does Plautus use the term *pietas*. Nevertheless, the final (and recognition) scene is charged with the language of *pietas* through the recurrence of the term *patria*. This term is found only in this final scene, is often coupled with the related term *pater*, and most notably is never used by Menaechmus. Of the six occurrences of the term *patria*, the first and the last are the most significant:

> MEN. Siculus sum Syracusanus. SO. ea domus et patria est mihi.
>
> SO. quoniam haec euenere, frater, nostra ex sententia,
> in patriam redeamus ambo. MEN. frater, faciam, ut tu uoles.
> (*Men.* 1069, 1151-1152)[28]

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[27] Jocelyn (1983) 6.

[28] The other occurrences are as follows. Note the coupling of *patria* with *pater* in each:
> [MES.] nam et patrem et patriam commemorant pariter quae fuerint sibi.
>
> [MES.] ... eandem patriam ac patrem
> memorat.

In the first, Sosicles not only introduces the explicit language of *pietas* into the comedy, but also engenders a clear meaning to the term *patria* by drawing a distinction between it and the term *domus*. The Romans of course understood this distinction. However, Sosicles, a character within the dramatic reality, also demonstrates his awareness of this distinction. Moreover, in the coupling of *domus* and *patria*, another more subtle distinction is made between the two major towns in the macrocosm: Syracuse and Epidamnus are *domus* for Sosicles and Menaechmus respectively, but only Syracuse is a *patria*.

The final occurrence of the term *patria* in the *Menaechmi* is marked by a demonstration of Menaechmus' apathy towards his greater obligation. For although Sosicles states that the reunion of the twins has occurred "nostra ex sententia", this suggestion of the fulfillment of a shared desire[29] is not borne out fully or emphatically by his brother's response. When Menaechmus is finally convinced of the reunion, he describes Sosicles' arrival as *insperatus*. (*Men.* 1132) Moreover, when Sosicles suggests, "in patriam redeamus ambo", Menaechmus completely defers the decision, stating simply "faciam, ut tu uoles", "I'll do what you want." In the isolation of the immediate circumstances, these may seem subdued responses. However, they are consistent with Menaechmus' abiding scepticism during the recognition scene[30] and with his *impius* conduct before and during the course of the *Menaechmi*.

Despite Menaechmus' apathy, it is worth reiterating that the macrocosmic conflict between obligation and self-gratification within the *Menaechmi* is resolved ultimately in favour of obligation. Nevertheless, even in his restoration of *pietas*, even in his compliance to return to his *patria* of Syracuse, Menaechmus does not reject or renounce Epidamnus.

> [MES.] quid longissume meministi, dic mihi, in patria tua?
> MEN. cum patre ut abii Tarentum ad mercatum, postea
> inter homines me deerrare a patre atque inde auehi.
>
> [MES.] quot eras annos gnatus quom te pater a patria auehit?
> MEN. septuennis: (*Men.* 1083, 1090-1091, 1111-1113, 1115-1116)

[29] Nixon (1916-1938) v. 2 485 translates the phrase "to our satisfaction", while Segal (1996) 129 renders it "exactly as we wished".

[30] Even after Sosicles has realised the facts of the matter, Menaechmus fails to be convinced without further proof:

> [SO.] mi germane, gemine frater, salue. ego sum Sosicles.
> MEN. quo modo igitur post Menaechmuo nomen est factum tibi?
>
> [SO.] auo' noster mutauit: quod tibi nomen est, fecit mihi.
> MEN. credo ita esse factum ut dicis. sed mihi hoc responde. SO. roga.
> MEN. quid erat nomen nostrae matri? SO. Tueximarchae. MEN. conuenit.
> (*Men.* 1125-1126, 1128-1131)

By conducting an auction, he will in fact depart Epidamnus with the financial proceeds of his avoidance of *pietas*. It is for this reason that the reunion of the twin brothers and their decision to restore *pietas* by returning to their *patria* is on one level a comically unsatisfying event. For it is half-hearted and therefore permits an ambivalence towards Menaechmus. However, such an ambivalence must extend also to his brother. For the behaviour which has obstructed Sosicles' search for Menaechmus and hence his pursuit of *pietas* is not the result of external factors beyond his control, but rather the result of a trait inherent within both brothers.

It is possible to conclude *prima facie* that the actions of Menaechmus in the long term and of Sosicles in the short term are the result of an external force, the essential wickedness of Epidamnus. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. For although Epidamnus gave birth to Menaechmus' abductor and indeed gives rise to Messenio's fervent warnings to his master, it is clear that the twins' dispositions are inherent. This is not to say that all of the inhabitants of Epidamnus redeem themselves entirely. As Jocelyn notes, Peniculus is "a young man given over to gluttony, willing to abase himself before anyone prepared to feed him, malicious and vengeful when disappointed", the *matrona* is "a young woman loath to accept her husband's authority, eager to believe stories related by his more worthless clients and ready to abuse him in the presence of slaves" and the *senex* is "an old man foolish enough to give his daughter, along with a large dowry, to a husband born outside his community and to overlook this man's continuing debauchery".[31] However, not every individual within the *Menaechmi* is so contemptible. Cylindrus is an affable and hard-working *cocus* who does not take advantage of Sosicles' modest financial offer during their encounter. Erotium is of course a financially minded *meretrix*. But she is not predatory in the manner of Phronesium in the *Truculentus*. Erotium's *ancilla* is entrusted with valuable jewellery and, unlike Sosicles, does not abuse that trust. Even the *medicus*, although something of a "quack", an ancient Dr. Hugo Z. Hackenbush, should avoid censure for his concern for Menaechmus. Moreover, he never discusses his fee! However, the one character who demonstrates that the atmosphere of Epidamnus does not induce wickedness is Messenio. For when Sosicles retires with Erotium and tells his *seruus* to return before dusk, Messenio, who is in possession of his master's wallet, is

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[31] Jocelyn (1983) 7. In their respective defences, however, one could argue that Peniculus is a typical Plautine *parasitus* who only betrays Menaechmus in the belief that he has already been betrayed by his *patronus*, that the *matrona* is no different from the Plautine wife who wishes her husband to respect her and act appropriately, and that the *senex*, although prepared to turn a blind eye to his son-in-law's indiscretions, nonetheless protects his daughter when the moment requires it.

handed a prime opportunity to effect an escape from his master. Yet he does not seize the opportunity. For as he later states in soliloquy, having returned as ordered from the *portus*,

> [MES.] id ego male malum metuo: propterea bonum esse certumst potius
> quam malum; nam magi' multo patior faciliu' uerba: uerbera ego odi,
> nimioque edo lubentius molitum quam molitum praehibeo.
> proterea eri imperium exsequor, bene et sedate seruo id;
> atque id mihi prodest. (*Men.* 977-980)

It is clear therefore that although a series of responses to temptations, whether the temptation of a sexually, culinarily and materially rewarding afternoon with an apparently confused *meretrix*, whether the temptation of swiping the wallet of a "good Samaritan", or whether the temptation of remaining comfortably the sole heir to an abductor, the behaviour which the twin Menaechmi exhibit is caused by nothing other than their own natures. For despite the initial reactions of their father and their grandfather to the abduction, Sosicles and Menaechmus reveal themselves to be naturally disposed to distraction from the obligation of *pietas* and naturally disposed towards the pursuit of self-gratification.[32] Indeed, even when the decision is made to return to Syracuse and hence to restore *pietas*, the impropriety of their actions whether in the short or the long term is recalled not with regret or with gravity, but with distinct levity and with a display of trophies:

> SO. meretrix huc ad prandium
> me abduxit, me sibi dedisse aiebat. prandi perbene,
> potaui atque accubui scortum, pallam et aurum hoc <apstuli>.
> MEN. gaudeo edepol si quid propter me tibi euenit boni. (*Men.* 1140-1143)

The inherent trait of distraction which the twin Menaechmi display gives rise to comedy on the microcosmic level and hence deserves applause. Yet it also hinders a comically satisfying conclusion on the macrocosmic level and hence permits perhaps the greatest element of conflict within the *Menaechmi*, an audience's ambivalence towards Sosicles and Menaechmus.

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[32] This trait of distraction can be found even young Menaechmus' act of straying from his father at the festival in Tarentum. For there is an apparent symbolism in the manner in which the prologist and Menaechmus describe the same event, both with variations on the verb *errare* and both with the phrase "a patre":

> puer aberrauit inter homines a patre.
>
> [MEN.] inter homines me deerrare a patre atque inde auehi. (*Men.* 31, 1113)

CHAPTER 4
"NEC CAUSSAM LICEAT DICERE MIHI": THE MUTED SLAVE IN THE *AMPHITRUO*

The *Amphitruo* readily distinguishes itself as an exceptional Plautine composition. Not only is it the sole surviving mythological comedy from Roman literature[1], not only does it surpass the rest of the Plautine *corpus* and indeed most surviving theatrical literature from antiquity in the extent of its modern influence[2], but it is also the only Plautine comedy which actively and explicitly engages its audience on a level distinct from the strictly comic. For its divine prologist Mercurius describes the work twice as a "tragicomoedia" (*Am.* 59, 63)[3] and hence establishes the *Amphitruo* as fertile ground for the appreciation of Plautine comedy as thematically serious literature. Indeed, despite the dissent of Erich Segal and Niall Slater[4], modern Plautine scholarship has largely embraced the term "tragicomoedia"

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1 The influence of the divine within Roman comedy is not isolated to the *Amphitruo*. The prologues to the *Aulularia*, the *Cistellaria*, the *Rudens* and the *Trinummus* are performed respectively by Euclio's *lar familiaris*, Auxilium, Arcturus and Luxuria (in the company of Inopia). However, the *Amphitruo* represents the only extant Roman comedy which is based on an established myth from antiquity, the *uetus et antiqua res* (*Am.* 118) of Alcumena's innocent adultery with the disguised Jupiter. That that *res* was indeed *uetus et antiqua* in Plautus' time is attested by Pausanias' (5.18.3) description of an iconographic representation of the myth, "ὡς συγγένοιτο Ἀλκμήνῃ Ζεὺς Ἀμφιτρύωνι εἰκασθείς", on the chest of Cypselus, dating from the early sixth century B.C. Apollodorus (2.4.5-11) provides an excellent summary of the wider mythology surrounding Amphitruo and Alcumena.

2 Plautus' comedy is the only surviving theatrical representation of the Jupiter-as-Amphitruo myth from antiquity. Given then the thirty-seven modern stage adaptations of that myth, composed between 1487 and 1950, which Shero (1956) identifies, and such subsequent adaptations as Figueiredo's *A God Slept Here* (1957), it is clear that Plautus' *Amphitruo* "deserves to be rated among the most influential plays ever written." (Shero [1956] 237-238)

3 Mercurius initially informs the audience that a *tragoedia* (*Am.* 51) will be presented. But after acknowledging their apparent dissatisfaction, he promises to transform *tragoedia* into *comoedia* "ut sit omnibus isdem uorsibus." (*Am.* 54-55) Finally, he decides to combine the two genres to form *tragicomoedia* (*Am.* 59), noting that

> [ME.] ... me perpetuo facere ut sit comoedia,
> reges quo ueniat et di, non par arbitror.
> quid igitur? quoniam hic seruos quoque partis habet,
> faciam sit, proinde ut dixi, tragico[co]moedia. (*Am.* 60-63)

4 Segal (1987) 175 and Slater (1985) 151 respectively describe Mercurius' intention to present *tragoedia* as "merely a comic aside" and a "false alarm [which] has the effect of unsettling generic expectations". They then proceed to diminish any generically descriptive significance within the term "tragicomoedia" by suggesting that its use is simply an extension of that "comic aside" and "false alarm". Yet although the mischievous nature of Mercurius' statements regarding *tragoedia* partly suggests a "comic aside", a "false alarm", Segal and Slater underestimate the term "tragicomoedia" as a clarifying description of the *Amphitruo*. For Mercurius employs the term only after issuing his promise to restore *comoedia*. It would therefore seem an unnecessarily laboured and distracting device to employ the term "tragicomoedia" as a means of further "unsettling generic expectations", if the *Amphitruo* were strictly a *comoedia*.

as an accurate appraisal of the work and has judged the *Amphitruo* to be a thematically broad comedy[5] with pronounced tragic overtones. For whether or not the result of more than a generic influence from Greek tragedy[6], "a basic theme of tragedy" is inherent and unmistakable within the *Amphitruo*, since the work in part represents the manner in which "lives can be completely disrupted ... by the caprice of an amoral cosmic force."[7]

The "basic theme of tragedy" within the *Amphitruo* is embodied in the humbling of the victorious yet arrogant *dux* Amphitruo, and most obviously in the ordeal of Alcumena, who is doubly wronged by the double Amphitruones, who is ultimately saved from a tragic fate purely by divine whim, and whom A. S. Gratwick explicitly describes as "a tragic heroine".[8] Yet beneath its principal tragicomic plot and beyond its principal tragicomic

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5 The thematic breadth of the *Amphitruo* is revealed particularly in Galinsky's (1966) examination of the work. For aside from his identification of such general themes as "madness and drunkenness" (218) (see also Stewart [1958] 354-355) and "waking and dreaming" (ibid.), Galinsky argues that "the reason for Plautus' extraordinary artistry and almost solemn concern with the themes of this play ... must be sought in its Roman milieu and setting." (208) By examining, therefore, the "Scipionic overtones" (ibid.) in the *Amphitruo*, Galinsky defines such diverse issues as the "eager pursuit of glory" (219), "the realization of the littleness of human glory" (220), "divine machinations, the impact of Greek religious ideas, the virtues of a Roman matron, [and] the concept of apotheosis" (232) as themes particularly relevant to the contemporary Roman context.

6 It has been suggested variously that the *Amphitruo* bears the particular influence of Euripidean tragedy, whether directly or whether indirectly through its indeterminable Greek comic model. Stewart (1958) 351 favours a direct and conscious Euripidean influence by arguing that "in its setting, in many of its themes, in the development of its action, and especially in its climax the *Amphitruo* is a reflection of the *Bacchae*" and that "the humor of the climactic scene depends in part upon a recognition of that relationship." He further speculates on the possible direct influence of Euripides' fragmentary *Alcmene* on Plautus' characterisation of Alcumena. (358) Siewert (1894) 73-76 merely draws a parallel in both subject and structure between Sosia's account of battle (*Am.* 203-261) and the messenger's account of battle in Euripides' *Heracl.* 799-866. Leo (1912) 134 concurs. However, Sedgwick (1930) 104 contends that Sosia's account of battle is intensely Plautine, noting that "it reads like a passage from a Roman annalist" and is "unlike any conceivable Greek original", while Lelièvre (1958) 124 suggests "the possibility that in this passage of Plautus we are close to the language of early Roman epic".

7 Forehand (1974) 214.

8 Gratwick (1982) 109-110. Yet despite the sound scholarly emphasis upon the tragic in the *Amphitruo* and particularly in the characterisation of Alcumena, Phillips' (1985) concise study on Alcumena reminds us that the *Amphitruo* is still a comedy and that Alcumena is still a comic character. By reasonably speculating that Alcumena was represented physically on the Roman stage as "a woman in the very last stages of a very fruitful pregnancy" (122), Phillips suggests that Alcumena's genuinely noble pronouncements on Amphitruo's *uirtus*,

> [AL.] uirtus praemium est optumum;
> uirtus omnibus rebus anteit profecto:
> libertas, salus, uita, res et parentes, patria et prognati
> tutantur, seruantur:
> uirtus omnia in sese habet, omnia adsunt
> bona quem penest uirtus. (*Am.* 648-653),

are also imbued with "sexual humour" (126), since the term *uirtus* conveys "not only military manliness but progenerative manliness too." (125)

characters and pleasurable comic resolution, the *Amphitruo* offers a generally harsh and particularly un-Plautine study on the nature of servility, a study consistent with the tone of Homeric, Aristotelian, Catonian and Varronian estimations of slavery.[9] For the *seruus* Sosia represents a truly controlled individual, an *instrumentum uocale*, and despite possessing a voice, is characterised throughout the course of the *Amphitruo* as something of a talking mute, beset by an inability to make his audible voice heard. This prevailing inability is in turn severely compounded by the divine intervention central to the action of the *Amphitruo*, an intervention which seals for Sosia an undeserved and essentially tragic fate to be realised in the aftermath of the tragicomic action, once tragedy has been averted and once a comic resolution has been delivered for Amphitruo and Alcumena. In this chapter, therefore, I intend to consider the sorry condition and ultimate fate of Sosia, and hence suggest that beneath the *Amphitruo*'s principal tragicomic plot and beyond its principal tragicomic characters and ultimately comic resolution, Sosia represents the only "comitragic" character in the *tragicomoedia* of the *Amphitruo*.[10]

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9 ἥμισυ γάρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
ἀνέρος, εὖτ' ἄν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἦμαρ ἕλῃσιν. (*Od.* 17.322-323)

... τῶν δ' ὀργάνων τὰ μὲν ἄψυχα τὰ δ' ἔμψυχα ... ἡ κτῆσις πλῆθος ὀργάνων ἐστί, καὶ ὁ δοῦλος κτῆμά τι ἔμψυχον. (*Pol.* 1253b 29, 32-33)

boues uetulos, armenta delicula, oues deliculas, lanam, pelles, plostrum uetus, ferramenta uetera, seruum senem, seruum morbosum, et siquid aliut supersit, uendat. (*Agr.* 2.7)

serui sunt in genere instrumenti uocali. (*R.* 1.17.1)

10 In her outstanding and highly regarded study of Sosia, Barnes (1957) 19 occupies a similar position, asserting that "the truly tragicomic figure [in the *Amphitruo*] is the slave Sosia." Through a close examination of the opening scene, in which Sosia appears to be confronted by himself, Barnes suggests that the *Amphitruo* is in part a treatment of "the problem of self-identity" (ibid.), a representation of "struggle within the self" (22), and hence defines "Sosia's progressive bewilderment" (19), "his continually frustrated attempts to get out of his dilemma" (19-20) and the failure of "his scientific reliance on matter" (20) to be essential elements of a *tragicomoedia* which engulfs the hapless *seruus*. However, my present examination of Sosia differs from Barnes' in that it defines Sosia's primary impending dilemma as physical rather than intellectual or psychological. Moreover, by defining Sosia as "comitragic", I wish to suggest and emphasise that Sosia will ultimately be seized by the tragic and not relieved by the comic which redeems Amphitruo and Alcumena and which on one level provides pleasure for the Roman audience.

Despite the scholarly precedent which Barnes sets by suggesting that Sosia is tragicomic, the notion that a *seruus* could have been considered in a literary sense tragic by members of the original Plautine audience presents a problem. As Steiner (1961) 274 contends, "the assumption that tragic suffering is the sombre privilege of those who are in high places" was repudiated only by Büchner's *Woyzeck* in the 1830s, "the first real tragedy of low life." However, Steiner also states that "ancient tragedy ... touched the lower orders ... as if a spark had been thrown off from the great conflagrations inside the royal palace." Such a spark from the great conflagration of the *Amphitruo* certainly touches Sosia. Furthermore, although that great conflagration is ultimately and comically dowsed, Sosia's spark is not similarly extinguished at the conclusion of the *Amphitruo*. The fate therefore of Sosia is the sole remnant of a tragedy averted. But a tragic remnant is still tragic nonetheless.

The *Amphitruo* is set in the Boeotian city of Thebes and immediately in front of the house of Amphitruo, the *dux* of the Theban army. The action commences with the nocturnal prologue (*Am.* 1-152) of the divine Mercurius, who is standing guard outside Amphitruo's house. He states that Amphitruo is due to return that day from his successful campaign against the Teleboians and that his wife Alcumena is pregnant with his child. However, Alcumena is also pregnant with Iuppiter's child. For while her husband was absent, she was visited by Iuppiter in the guise of Amphitruo, and now as Mercurius stands guard in the guise of Amphitruo's *seruus* Sosia, Iuppiter is with her again, playing her husband, relating the details of her husband's military successes as if they were his own. Moreover, Iuppiter is using his powers to prolong the night in order to extend his liaison. Mercurius informs the audience that he and his father will be distinguished from Sosia and Amphitruo by their headwear, but that only the audience will be able to tell the difference. As the prologue closes, Mercurius readies himself to divert Sosia from the house.

The first act (*Am.* 152-550) opens with the arrival of Sosia, who has been sent from the *portus*[11] by Amphitruo to announce his arrival to Alcumena. With Mercurius lying in wait and adding various asides, Sosia soliloquises and gives a full and, according to Mercurius, an accurate account of the defeat of the Teloboians, noting ultimately that Amphitruo was presented *ob uirtutem* with the *patera aurea* of the defeated king Pteleras. Sosia then moves towards the house, but Mercurius steps forward and confronts him. At first, Sosia believes that he is being attacked both verbally and physically by a nocturnal thief, but Mercurius then claims that he himself is Sosia. The two squabble at length over the right to be Sosia, until Sosia leaves for the *portus*, confused, defeated and in search of his master. Now alone, Mercurius proceeds to offer essentially a second prologue in which he assures the audience that despite Amphitruo's impending confusion and anger with Alcumena, harmony will be restored and Alcumena will soon give birth to twins painlessly. The act concludes with the parting of Alcumena and Iuppiter, who claims that he must return to his army, from which he has secretly absented himself. He presents Alcumena with Amphitruo's *patera aurea* and on his departure bids the long night to come to an end.

Amphitruo returns from the *portus* at the start of the second act (*Am.* 551-860), accompanied by Sosia and angered by his *seruus*' incredible stories of a second Sosia. He

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[11] Although Thebes is an entirely land-locked city, Plautus grants his Thebes a *portus* according to the generic convention of *portus* off-stage to the audience's left and *forum* off-stage to the right. However, it should not be assumed necessarily, as does Sedgwick (1960) 68, that Plautus "unthinkingly retained the normal stage convention" in this respect. It is possible that the creation of a Theban *portus* represents a subtle Plautine joke at that generic convention, a joke to be appreciated by the theatrically and geographically minded in his audience.

delights at the prospect of seeing his wife. However, when Alcumena emerges from the house and does not reciprocate her husband's delight, believing that he has just departed, Amphitruo questions her and eventually discovers that she has been with another man whom she claims to have been her husband. Despite her seemingly miraculous possession of the *patera aurea*, Amphitruo still suspects adultery. As the act closes, Amphitruo departs for the harbour in search of Naucrates, a member of his party and a relative of his wife, so that he may have his unbroken absence from Thebes corroborated and his wife's story contradicted, thus providing grounds for divorce. Sosia and Alcumena enter the house, the latter in despair.

Iuppiter returns at the beginning of the third act (*Am.* 861-1008) in a self-satisfied mood, reminding the audience that Alcumena will be vindicated. When he sees Alcumena emerge, expressing her intent to leave Amphitruo's house unless an apology is rendered, Iuppiter approaches as Amphitruo and offers her an apology. He claims his conduct was in jest and has Alcumena prepare sacrifices and a meal. Iuppiter then summons Sosia and, intent on more mischief, he bids the *seruus* to fetch the *gubernator* Blepharo from the *portus*. Finally, he orders the absent Mercurius to keep Amphitruo from the house. As Iuppiter departs, Mercurius appears and takes himself onto the roof, ready for Amphitruo's arrival.

The fourth act (*Am.* 1009-1052) opens with the return of Ampitruo from his vain search to find Naucrates. Finding himself locked out of his house, he is abused by the elevated Mercurius. Thinking this abuse is coming from a drunken Sosia, Amphitruo issues a series of threats of punishment. The text breaks off at this point, but the fragments[12] suggest the retirement of Mercurius, a second anguished encounter between Amphitruo and Alcumena, the arrival of Blepharo (possibly in the company of Sosia), and a confrontation between Amphitruo and Iuppiter. When the text resumes, the confrontation between Amphitruo and Iuppiter is concluding, and Blepharo soon departs, unable to determine which is the real Amphitruo. Maintaining his guise and with the births imminent, Iuppiter retires to be with Alcumena. Amphitruo tries to force entry, intent on violence, but is struck by a bolt of lightning.

At the start of the final act (*Am.* 1053-1146), the *ancilla* Bromia emerges from the house, in shock at the peal, at hearing the celestial voice of Iuppiter and at Alcumena's miraculously painless confinement. After finding Amphitruo on the ground but still alive, she informs her master that twins have been born, that the infant and unnamed Hercules'

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[12] The surviving nineteen fragments have largely been salvaged from Nonius Marcellus' encyclopaedic dictionary *de Compendiosa Doctrina* and from Servius' Vergilian commentary, both dating from the 4th century A.D. Leo (1895-1896) v. 1 43-44 has set the standard in the ordering and the allocation of these fragments.

has strangled two serpents, and most importantly that Iuppiter has acknowledged his actions and the innocence of Alcumena. Amphitruo decides to consult the *coniector* Teiresias about this turn of events, but Iuppiter as *deus ex machina* forbids this consultation and reiterates the innocence of Alcumena. The *Amphitruo* concludes with the assent of Amphitruo, who retires to be with his wife.

Hazel Barnes contends that in the aftermath of the day's events in Thebes "certain serious questions suggest themselves" with regard to the respective and collective futures of Amphitruo and Alcumena. She asks, "if ... Alcumena was perfectly content with the appearance and outward manners of Iuppiter, then was it really Amphitruo whom she loved, or not?", and cites Alcumena's pathetic remark,

AL. uera dico, sed nequiquam, quoniam non uis credere. (*Am.* 835),

in further asking, "is there any point in knowing the truth if one cannot communicate it to anyone?" Yet while Barnes is correct in noting that "if Plautus had chosen to develop all the implications of his plot in the persons of Alcmena and Amphitryon, he would have risked finding himself with a pure of tragedy on his hands"[13], her questions relating to the nature of Alcumena's attraction to Amphitruo and to their future conception of truth are largely irrelevant. With Iuppiter's revelation of the truth, with Alcumena's vindication and with the restoration of Amphitruo as a triumphant military leader, the *Amphitruo* concludes on a positive note for the couple. In fact, the harmony restored between Amphitruo and Alcumena will prove permanent. For the Iuppiter-as-Amphitruo myth dictates that Iuppiter never again disgraces Alcumena's bed and that Amphitruo sets aside the circumstances of Hercules' conception and years later dies by his step-son's side whilst fighting the Minyans. Moreover, Iuppiter's revelation of the truth and his lack of future amorous intervention define his mischief against Amphitruo and Alcumena as a divine aberration which will not disrupt their future conception and perceptions of truth. However, the *Amphitruo* does not conclude so positively for Sosia, whose future is not bound by any myth.[14] Indeed in Sosia's case, the day's events are resolved less than adequately.

Although the *Amphitruo* concludes with Iuppiter's revelation of the truth, the truth which Iuppiter presents is not comprehensive. Certainly, he informs Bromia and Alcumena behind closed doors that *cum Alcumena clam consueuit cubitibus* (*Am.* 1122), and informs

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13 Barnes (1957) 19.

14 The character of Sosia is of course a later accretion to the myth. However, it is generally held that Sosia is not an entirely Plautine invention. Shero (1956) 204 suggests that Sosia was derived from a Greek model, when he notes that "the impersonation of Amphitryon's servant Sosia ... was presumably derived from the model rather than invented by Plautus." Sedgwick (1960) 67 implicitly agrees in stating that the lengthy opening scene "could have been dispatched in some 80-100 lines, as it probably was in the original".

Amphitruo from his elevated position that *Alcumenae usuram corporis cepit.* (*Am.* 1135-1136) However, it is striking that in his declarations first to Bromia and Alcumena and then to Amphitruo, Iuppiter makes no reference to the intervention of Mercurius and his appropriation of Sosia's identity. The *Amphitruo* therefore concludes with no adequate admission of or explanation for the appearance and conduct of the other Sosia. Consequently, Sosia will have insurmountable difficulty in the aftermath of the day's events in avoiding perhaps the worst beating of his life, if not his very death, as punishment for the actions of Mercurius. For after he is hindered from entering his house and abused by Mercurius at the beginning of the fourth act, Amphitruo describes his apparently uncooperative and drunken[15] *seruus* as *scelestus* (*Am.* 1025), *uerbero* and *ulmorum Accheruns* (*Am.* 1029), and variously threatens,

> [AM.] quem pol ego hodie ob istaec dicta faciam feruentem flagris.
> cum cruciatu tuo istaec hodie, uerna, uerba funditas.
> at ego te cruce et cruciatu mactabo, mastigia. (*Am.* 1030, 1033, frag. I)

Yet although it could be suggested that these are the type of hollow threats found throughout the Plautine *corpus* and expressed by masters against the servants in moments of frustration and anger[16], it is clear that Sosia will be unable to avoid the execution of these threats.

In the first place, Mercurius explicitly states that his hindrance and abuse of Amphitruo will have severe repercussions for Sosia. He informs the audience,

> [ME.] ... optume aspellam uirum
> de supero, quom huc accesserit; faciam ut sit madidus sobrius.
> deinde illi actutum sufferet suo' seruos poenas Sosia:
> eum fecisse ille hodie arguet quae ego fecero hic. quid <id> mea?
> (*Am.* 1000-1003)

Indeed, his brief question at the end is indicative of a profound apathy towards Sosia which the two divinities express throughout the course of the *Amphitruo*. For although Mercurius and Iuppiter express concern for Alcumena and remind the audience that she will be safe and her marriage with Amphitruo will remain intact[17], neither deity seeks to clarify the

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15 Before Amphitruo's arrival, Mercurius states,

> [ME.] capiam coronam mi in caput, adsimulabo me esse ebrium;
> atque illuc susum escendero: (*Am.* 999-1000)

Indeed, Mercurius' pretence of Sosia's state of inebriation is not uncharacteristic. In the course of his encounter with his double, Sosia admits that he spent the battle against the Teloboians "in tabernaculo" consuming a *uini hirnea*. (*Am.* 428, 431)

16 Dunkin (1946) 82 provides a selective list of citations for such threats.

17

> [ME.] nemo id probro
> profecto ducet Alcumenae; nam deum
> non par uidetur facere, delictum suom

day's events for Sosia and hence remove the confusion with which Sosia is profoundly burdened after meeting his double. Moreover, Mercurius elsewhere expresses his disdain for the hapless Sosia verbally by issuing some of the usual insults — *uerbero* (*Am.* 284, 344), *furcifer* (*Am.* 285), *scelestus* (*Am.* 348) and *carnufex* (*Am.* 376, 422) — and even physically by assaulting the *seruus*:

> ME. nunc profecto uapula ob mendacium.
> ergo istoc magis,
> quia uaniloquo's, uapulabis ... (*Am.* 370, 378-379)

At the same time, he never expresses any regret for his treatment of Sosia, treatment which is unnecessary given his simple objective of preventing Sosia from reaching the house and indeed given his divine powers which would have enabled the achievement of that simple objective without any harm to Sosia. Stated simply, Iuppiter's and Mercurius' various actions and inaction reveal their apathy toward Sosia's general condition. Indeed, even beyond Mercurius' presumably infallible prediction of Sosia's impending punishment, it is evident that these two gods cannot be expected to intercede on Sosia's behalf when he is punished.

Sosia will also be punished for Mercurius' actions because Amphitruo is accustomed to threatening Sosia and to turning threat into genuine punishment. When Amphitruo and Sosia return together from the *portus* at the beginning of the second act, locked in conversation as Sosia tries to explain his encounter with the other Sosia, Amphitruo is unmoved by his *seruus*' remarks, and issues a series of violent terms and threats which mirror some of the terms and threats directed towards Mercurius in the fourth act. Sosia is called *scelestissumus* (*Am.* 552, 561), *uerbero* (*Am.* 565), *inprobus* (*Am.* 571) and *carnufex* (*Am.* 588), and is twice threatened physically:

> [AM.] iam quidem hercle ego tibi istam
> scelestam, scelus, linguam apscidam.
> quoius ego hodie in tergum istaec faxo expetant mendacia.
> (*Am.* 556-557, 589)

In the following scene, when the *cistellula signo obsignata* (*Am.* 773-774) used to store the *patera aurea* for the journey home is found to be empty, Amphitruo issues another threat:

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suamque ut culpam expetere in mortalem ut sinat.

> [IV.] ... Alcumenae, quam uir insontem probri
> Amphitruo accusat, ueni ut auxilium feram:
> nam mea sit culpa, quod egomet contraxerim,
> si id Alcumenae †innocenti† expetat. (*Am.* 492-495, 869-872)

Hanson (1959) 65 cites these two passages in order to demonstrate Iuppiter's "[insistence] on his moral responsibility toward Alcumena." However, in asserting that such insistence implies that "the [divine] attributes of goodness, justice, mercy and the like" find "direct expression" in the *Amphitruo*, Hanson reveals his narrow perspective of the actions of Iuppiter and Mercurius in this comedy.

"at cum cruciatu iam, nisi apparet, tuo." (*Am.* 793) The language of threat and violence is therefore an essential aspect of Amphitruo's relationship with his *seruus*. Yet even before these threats are issued, it is evident that such language has previously turned into action. For Sosia describes the extraordinary length of the night by referring to previous punishment:

> SO. neque ego hac nocte longiorem me uidisse censeo,
> nisi item unam, uerberatus quam pependi perpetem; (*Am.* 279-280)

Later he refers to the scars on his back, when comparing himself to his double:

> [SO.] si tergum cicatricosum, nihil hoc similist similius. (*Am.* 446)

These punishments and scars can only have been inflicted under the authority of Amphitruo, since Sosia describes himself (*Am.* 180) and is described by both Mercurius and Amphitruo (*Am.* 179, 1033) as a *uerna*. Given therefore the culture of violence manifest in Amphitruo's relationship with Sosia, given that Amphitruo is accustomed to threatening and punishing Sosia, the threats which Amphitruo directs towards Mercurius-as-Sosia cannot be dismissed as idle, especially since Mercurius' abuse and disobedience occurs in a public domain.

But aside from divine prediction, divine apathy and the culture of violence, the most significant reason for Sosia's impending punishment in the aftermath of the day's events is that the *seruus* will be unable to put forward an adequate defence against the charge that he publicly abused and disobeyed his master and assaulted his authority. Indeed, even if Sosia were subsequently to learn precise details of the intervention and disguise of Iuppiter and hence were able to establish a link between that intervention, his encounter with his double, and any charge of his abuse and disobedience towards his master[18], his words would count for little in the absence of any direct and divine evidence that the abusive and disobedient *seruus* on the roof was in fact Mercurius. For throughout the course of the *Amphitruo*, there is a profound and consistent refusal to listen to Sosia. His audible voice is barely

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[18] Sosia is probably made aware of the charge that he abused Amphitruo. For it is likely that he encounters his master during the missing section of the fourth act, having escorted the *gubernator* Blepharo from the *portus* in accordance with the mischievous request of Iuppiter-as-Amphitruo:

> IV. tu gubernatorem a naui huc euoca uerbis meis
> Blepharonem, uti re diuina facta mecum prandeat.
> SO. iam hic ero quom illic censebis esse me. (*Am.* 967-969)

However, it is likely also, as Leo (1895-1896) v. 1 42 asserts in his reconstruction of the missing section, that any such exchange between Amphitruo and Sosia would have been brief and that the *seruus* would have taken flight. Sosia therefore would have been absent during the miraculous events of the fifth act and ultimately would have lacked any divine point of reference in stating any defence. Furthermore, having adopted Daniel's reading of Servius' note for Vergil's *Aeneid* 8.127 as fragment XIII,

> [AM.] noli pessimo precari.

Leo (ibid.) suggests that this fragment indicates a failed attempt by Blepharo to intercede on Sosia's behalf, perhaps with an alibi. If so, the fragment also indicates Amphitruo's established prejudice against his apparently miscreant *seruus*.

heard, his comments and suggestions are largely ignored, and he demonstrates from his very first utterance on stage his awareness that this condition is inherent to his slavery.

When Sosia first arrives from the *portus* under instructions from Amphitruo to forward news to Alcumena, he is extremely nervous. For it is still dark on account of the divinely prolonged night, and although unaware that Mercurius is lying in wait, Sosia is fully aware of the dangers which the city at night holds. Indeed, he asks,

> SO. qui me alter est audacior homo aut qui confidentior,
> iuuentutis mores qui sciam, qui hoc noctis solus ambulem? (*Am.* 153-154)

Hence, Sosia expresses the fears which any man in his situation would feel, as he walks alone in the dark city. However, his fears soon shift, as he considers his current situation solely with respect to his status as a slave:

> [SO.] quid faciam nunc si tresuiri me in carcerem compegerint?
> ind' cras quasi e promptaria cella depromar ad flagrum,
> nec caussam liceat dicere mihi, neque in ero quicquam auxili
> siet, nec quisquam sit quin me omnes esse dignum deputent.
> ita quasi incudem me miserum homines octo ualidi caedant:
> ita peregre adueniens
> hospitio puplicitus accipiar. (*Am.* 155-162)

Thus Sosia lengthily laments that even if he escapes assault from violent *iuuenes*, as a *seruus* wandering the city at night, he is still at risk of arrest and incarceration by the *tresuiri*, and further risks a severe beating without the opportunity to defend himself. Moreover, in stating, "nec caussam liceat dicere mihi", Sosia is admitting that as a slave, his voice is ineffectual and will not save him, even though he is carrying out his master's wishes. Indeed, the first eight lines which Sosia utters in the *Amphitruo* set a tone for the manner in which other characters consistently respond to his words.

The first character who refuses to listen and heed the statements and arguments of Sosia is of course Mercurius. Indeed, it is to be expected that Mercurius will not listen to Sosia, since he is under instructions from Iuppiter. Nevertheless, in his encounter with Mercurius, Sosia reveals a capacity for critical thought. For although repeatedly confronted with the notion that he is not Sosia or at least not a complete Sosia[19], the *seruus* asks,

> [SO.] quid, malum, non sum ego seruus Amphitruonis Sosia?
> nonne hac noctu nostra nauis <huc> ex porto Persico
> uenit, quae me aduexit? non me huc erus misit meus?
> nonne ego nunc sto ante aedis nostras? non mi est lanterna in manu?
> non loquor, non uigilo? nonne hic homo modo me pugnis contudit?
> (*Am.* 403-407),

and furthermore asserts with almost Cartesian simplicity,

> [SO.] sed quom cogito, equidem certo idem sum qui semper fui.

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[19] Mercurius does not entirely usurp Sosia's identity, but in fact makes a partial concession:
> ME. ubi ego Sosia nolim esse, tu esto sane Sosia; (*Am.* 439)

noui erum, noui aedis nostras; sane sapio et sentio.
non ego illi optempero quod loquitur. pultabo fores. (*Am.* 447-449)

Such displays of critical thought in the presence of Mercurius are ultimately to no avail, as Sosia is rendered incapable of performing his duty and of maintaining the integrity of his identity. However, in the ensuing confrontation between Amphitruo and Alcumena, Sosia again reveals his critical thinking and is again ignored in the process. For although misguided and occasionally far-fetched, Sosia offers a series of explanations for Alcumena's claims of an earlier meeting with husband and *seruus*, explanations which are almost entirely dismissed or ignored.

Sosia first suggests that Alcumena is having some sort of waking dream, a suggestion which initially rouses Amphitruo's interest, but is quickly denied by Alcumena and then dismissed in the pursuit of a separate line of questioning by Amphitruo:

SO. paullisper mane,
dum edormiscat unum somnum. AM. quaene uigilans somniat?
AL. equidem ecastor uigilo et uigilans id quod factum est fabulor.
nam dudum ante lucem et istunc et te uidi. AM. quo in loco? (*Am.* 696-699)

The *seruus* then asks whether he and his master were asleep during the alleged meeting, but Amphitruo finds only disloyalty in this suggestion:

[SO.] quid si e portu nauis huc nos dormientis detulit?
AM. etiam tu quoque adsentaris huïc? (*Am.* 701-702)

Sosia then suggests that Alcumena is a *Baccha bacchans* (*Am.* 703) and bids his master to *opsequare* (*Am.* 705) his wife. However, Amphitruo states that instead he will *obiurgare* (*Am.* 706) Alcumena. When Sosia then warns, "inritabis crabones", "tace" is the reply. (*Am.* 707) To Sosia's second suggestion that she is relating a *somnium* (*Am.* 738), Alcumena replies "uae capiti tuo!" (*Am.* 741) and Amphitruo again order his *seruus*, "tace tu." (*Am.* 743) Thus the scene proceeds with Sosia essentially relegated to the position of noisy but irrelevant by-stander. Indeed, apart from responses to specific questions, which Amphitruo deliberately solicits from Sosia in order to corroborate his own claims and contradict his wife's[20], Amphitruo takes note of only one of Sosia's unsolicited suggestions:

SO. quaeso, quin tu istaec iubes
pro cerrita circumferri? AM. edepol qui facto est opus;
nam haec quidem edepol laruarum plenast. (*Am.* 775-777)

However, it would seem that even this suggestion is merely an extension of Amphitruo's previously established conclusion that "delirat uxor." (*Am.* 727)

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[20] The most striking example in this respect is as follows:
[AM.] audiuistin tu hodie me illi dicere ea quae illa autumnat?
SO. quaeso edepol, num tu quoque etiam insanis, quom id me interrogas,
qui ipsus equidem nunc primum istanc tecum conspicio simul?
AM. quid nunc, mulier? audin illum? (*Am.* 752-755)

After Alcumena produces the *patera aurea* and negates any suggestions as to her insanity, Sosia finally and with unwitting accuracy offers his theory of a second Amphitruo, a theory which neither Amphitruo nor Alcumena entertain or even acknowledge. Indeed, on both occasions Amphitruo specifically responds as if Sosia had never opened his mouth. For Sosia first suggests the existence of second Amphitruo as he is about to open the *cistellula*. Yet Amphitruo is so fixated with the *cistellula* that he completely ignores his *seruus*:

> AM. agedum, exsolue cistulam.
> SO. quid ego istam exsoluam? opsignatast recte, res gesta est bene:
> tu peperisti Amphitruonem <alium>, ego alium peperi Sosiam;
> nunc si patera pateram peperit, omnes congeminauimus.
> AM. certum est aperire atque inspicere. (*Am.* 783-787)

When Sosia again mentions his second Amphitruo theory, it is ignored for a second time by Amphitruo, who is now thoroughly convinced that his wife is under the influence of a *praestigiator*:

> SO. nescio quid istuc negoti dicam, nisi si quispiam est
> Amphitruo alius, qui forte ted hinc apsenti tamen
> tuam rem curet teque apsente hic munus fungatur tuom.
> nam quom de illo subditiuo Sosia mirum nimist,
> certe de istoc Amphitruone iam alterum mirum est magis.
> AM. nescioquis praestigiator hanc frustratur mulierem. (*Am.* 825-830)[21]

Given the accuracy of Sosia's theory, the extent to which Sosia is a talking mute is finally and fully revealed. It is clear therefore that when faced ultimately with the task of defending his back and possibly his life for the misdeeds of a mischievous, malicious and apathetic deity, lacking unequivocal evidence that he did not abuse and disobey his master from the roof-top, Sosia's words will again carry no weight with an Amphitruo intent and probably fixated upon punishment. Consequently, the *seruus* will suffer terribly.

In contrast with other Plautine *serui*, Sosia is not a particularly endearing character. He is exposed as a coward, when he admits that he remained "in tabernaculo" drinking, while his master was gallantly fighting the Teloboians. He is found to be obsequious, when Amphitruo is exposing his wife's apparent adultery:

> [AM.] ain heri nos aduenisse huc? AL. aio, aduenisque ilico
> me salutauisti, et ego te, et osculum tetuli tibi.
> AM. iam illud non placet principium de osculo. perge exsequi.
> AL. lauisti. AM. quid postquam laui? AL. accubuisti. SO. eugae optume!
> nunc exquire. AM. ne interpella. (*Am.* 799-803)

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[21] It is especially striking that Amphitruo does not comment on Sosia's two statements of this theory, even though throughout the previous scene, despite the threats of his master and despite his generally cowardly disposition, the *seruus* asserts the existence of a second Sosia with a profound and foreboding conviction:

> AM. qui, malum, intellegere quisquam potis est? ita nugas blatis.
> SO. uerum actutum nosces, quom illum nosces seruom Sosiam. (*Am.* 626-627)

He is a self-admitted *uerbero*, who has been punished in the past and has most likely deserved his punishments. However, the punishment about to be rendered for the actions of Mercurius is probably unlike any which he has previously received. For on this one occasion, Sosia is not guilty and yet he will suffer for it. Although lowly and generally unworthy, Sosia does not deserve the punishment which he will receive as a result of mischievous, malicious and apathetic divine intervention. Indeed, the unseemly nature of this punishment is made even more poignant by Sosia's realisation of an opportunity for freedom during this confusing day. For having lost the battle with Mercurius to defend the integrity of his identity, Sosia applies his critical thought to his present predicament and realises that from the rubble of his shattered identity he can in fact be free:

> [SO.] nam hicquidem omnem imaginem meam, quae antehac fuerat,
> possidet.
> uiuo fit quod numquam quisquam mortuo faciet mihi.
> ibo ad portum atque haec uti sunt facta ero dicam meo;
> nisi etiam is quoque me ignorabit: quod ille faxit Iuppiter,
> ut ego hodie raso capite caluos capiam pilleum. (*Am.* 458-462)

Unfortunately for Sosia, Amphitruo does indeed recognise him at the *portus* and his hopes of bearing the freedman's *pilleus* are summarily dashed. Moreover, his fall from the rank of near freedman to the rank of *seruus mactandus* is a notably long and sheer drop.

It would be erroneous to suggest that Sosia is not a comic figure. For his desperate but unsuccessful attempts to convince Mercurius that he is Sosia and then to convince Amphitruo that a second Sosia exists have unmistakable and inherent comic value. However, the paradox of his existence as a talking mute, the culture of violence in his relationship with his master, and the unprecedented, inadequately explained and essentially apathetic divine intervention force him into a corner from which there is no escape. Beneath its principal tragicomic plot and beyond its principal tragicomic characters and pleasurable comic resolution, Sosia may therefore be regarded the only "comitragic" character in the *Amphitruo*, a character who unwittingly expresses in the most succinct of terms a lament apposite to his impending fate: "quid mali sum, ere, tua ex re promeritus?" (*Am.* 570)

CHAPTER 5
THE SERVILE *SENEX*:
THE STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE IN THE *ASINARIA*

As an abstract and technical exercise in dramatic composition, the *Asinaria* has not suffered from a dearth of scholarly attention during the course of this century.[1] But as a work of comic literature to be performed before and enjoyed by a Roman audience, the *Asinaria* remains one of the more neglected comedies in the Plautine *corpus* and has yet to be elevated from its lowly position among the "second eleven" of Plautine comedy.[2] Such an elevation is entirely warranted, because the *Asinaria* contains one of the truly outstanding character studies within Plautine comedy, that of the *senex* Demaenetus, who is worthy of comparison to such extraordinary and complex Plautine characters as the *meretrix* Phronesium and the *adulescens* Diniarchus in the *Truculentus*. For in much the same fashion as that worldly and cynical couple, Demaenetus is a character with a well defined history and a well defined future, a character whose present conduct (manifest in a feeble and ultimately vain attempt to gain some influence over affairs within his household) both exemplifies and intensifies his general and permanent condition (that of quasi-servitude). Moreover, as I shall suggest in this chapter, beyond its presentation of an unusual and marvellously comic plot and in addition to its exposition of such varied themes as "materialism"[3] and "sadism"[4], the *Asinaria* offers an underlying and very serious moral

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1 The *Asinaria* has received extensive and partly valid criticism for inconsistencies within its plot, inconsistencies largely related to the location and movement of certain characters during the course of the action and related also to the knowledge of these locations and movements, which others characters manage to possess. As a partial consequence of this criticism, the *Asinaria* has also been the subject of a lengthy and utterly unresolvable debate between so-called analysts and unitarians as to whether Plautus employed *contaminatio*, the technique of combining more than one Greek model, in its composition. (Lowe [1992] represents the most recent contribution to the debate and provides outstanding bibliographic notes for both the *contaminatio* debate proper and the related identification of inconsistencies.) The unitarians have of course maintained that the *Asinaria* represents a unified and generally coherent composition. However, even those inclined to entertain analyst criticism have increasingly conceded that the *Asinaria* is not a "mass of contradictions" (Hough [1937] 19). Konstan (1983) 52 n. 6 acknowledges that the *Asinaria* is "a coherent and intelligible work of art." Lowe (1992) 158 states that the "many inconsistencies and loose ends [which] have been noted in the play ... are more or less superficial ... and do not destroy the essential unity of the plot, although they sometimes obscure it."

2 Although still acknowledging some of the technical problems within the work, only Konstan (1983) 47-56 and Slater (1985) 55-69 in recent years have offered noteworthy interpretative treatments of the *Asinaria*.

3 Konstan (1983) 55-56 notes that "the theme of materialism pervades the [*Asinaria*]. Where money is the basis of authority, customary moral restraints are swept away." Most prominent among these "customary moral restraints" is *pietas*, which is twice corrupted for the benefit of parents and the detriment of their children. When Cleareta forbids Philaenium to meet with the non-paying Argyrippus, Cleareta counters her daughter's reluctance and appeal to *pia Pietas* (*As*. 506)

through its characterisation of Demaenetus: that the man who relinquishes the power ordained by his free birth and abdicates the responsibilities related to that power is and can only ever be a slave.

The *Asinaria* is set in Athens and immediately in front of the houses of the *senex* Demaenetus and of the *lena* Cleareta. Its prologue (*As.* 1-15) contains no *argumentum*, but names the otherwise unknown Demophilus as the author of its original Greek model, the Ὀναγός. The prologue also states that the comedy contains "lepos ludusque" and is a "ridicula res".

The first act (*As.* 16-248) opens with Demaenetus and his *seruus* Libanus in conversation. The *senex* informs the *seruus* that his son Argyrippus has approached him seeking twenty *argenti minae* to pursue an affair with the *meretrix* Philaenium, the daughter of Cleareta. Demaenetus sees the opportunity to gain his son's affection by complying. However, his wife Artemona with the assistance of her *dotalis seruus* Saurea has control of their estate. Demaenetus is forced therefore to recruit Libanus and his fellow *seruus* Leonida to invent a scheme to defraud the household of twenty *minae*. With this premise established, Libanus and Demaenetus set out independently for the *forum*. Immediately after their departure, Argyrippus appears, having been ejected from Cleareta's house due to lack of funds. Thumping the door and demanding re-entry, he protests at length this ill-treatment, alleging past generosity. When the *lena* finally emerges, she is unmoved by his complaints and states her strict policy of present favours for present payment. Argyrippus then claims that he can scrape together some funds and strikes a deal for a year's exclusive access to Philaenium for the sum of twenty *minae*. Cleareta agrees and then retires. Argyrippus heads for the *forum* in search of the funds.

Libanus returns from the *forum* at the start of the second act (*As.* 249-503), concerned about his lack of progress at the task at hand. Leonida then arrives, also from the *forum*, and after considerable irrelevant comic action, he informs Libanus that an opportunity to obtain the money has opened. Leonida states that when he was earlier *in tonstrina*, he met the assistant of a *mercator* to whom Saurea had previously sold some

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by asking,

CL. hoccine est pietatem colere, matris imperium minuere? (*As.* 509)

Later, when Demaenetus is lying with Philaenium and asks whether Argyrippus is concerned, the son replies,

ARG. pietas, pater, oculis dolorem prohibet. (*As.* 831)

4 Wright in Luce (1982) v. 1 507 states that "if there is any unifying theme to the [*Asinaria*], that theme is sadism, with one character after another alternately playing the role of torturer and victim." Indeed, the prominent use of violent language and violent imagery within the work bears this theme alone. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Wright's conviction that "the focus of the [*Asinaria*'s] plot is poor" leads him to define "unifying theme" so narrowly within the work.

asses. The assistant informed Leonida that he had come to pay Saurea the twenty *minae* for the asses. He also noted that while he had previously met Demaenetus, he was not acquainted with Saurea, and was therefore looking to pay the *senex*. At this, Leonida not only stated that he was Demaenetus' *seruus*, but also claimed to be Saurea himself. However, the assistant was adamant that he would hand the money only to Demaenetus. Leonida therefore falsely promised to fetch his master so that payment could take place in front of the house. With this account related, the two *serui* agree to continue the masquerade of Leonida-as-Saurea in an attempt to acquire the twenty *minae* without the involvement of Demaenetus. However, despite their best comic efforts, during which Saurea is characterised as a ruthless and brutal *atriensis*, Libanus and Leonida are unable to convince the assistant upon his arrival to pay them and are therefore forced to escort him to the *forum* where Demaenetus is to be paid.

At the beginning of third act (*As*. 504-745), Cleareta and Philaenium emerge from their house. The mother employs her *imperium* and abuses her daughter's *pietas* in forbidding her to see Argyrippus without financial compensation. Philaenium reluctantly agrees and the two retire. The exultant Libanus and Leonida then return from the *forum*, cash in hand and describing Demaenetus' savvy with respect to Leonida's pretence. With the two *serui* still on-stage, Philaenium and Argyrippus[5] emerge from Cleareta's house,

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[5] In summarising the plot of the *Asinaria*, I have avoided noting the valid but minor inconsistencies which have been identified within the work. Nevertheless, the emergence of Argyrippus from Cleareta's house in the company of Philaenium (*As*. 585-586) cannot escape comment. Argyrippus is last seen on-stage at the conclusion of the first act, as he heads for the *forum* in search of twenty *minae*. Clearly, there exists a problem with the plot to have Argyrippus emerge from Cleareta's house without any proper explanation of how he came to be there. (Libanus motivates Argyrippus' appearance by stating that the *adulescens* is inside Cleareta's house [*As*. 329], but does not explain how he came to be there.) Various solutions have been suggested, of which Havet (1907) 94-97 offers the most ingenious: that the *amator exclusus* in the first act is not Argyrippus, as the manuscript suggests, but rather Diabolus. This suggested emendation has gained extensive support, particularly from Bertini (1968) 79 in his outstanding and highly regarded edition, and most recently from Konstan (1983) 55 n. 7. However, Diabolus as the *amator exclusus* is extremely problematic. For that *amator* is never mentioned by name, and since the opening scene of the *Asinaria* establishes the woes of Argyrippus, it would be natural for an audience to assume that the *amator exclusus* in the following scene is in fact Argyrippus. Such an assumption would clearly be compounded by the references to Argyrippus in the first scene of the third act between Cleareta and Philaenium With the identification then of Argyrippus as he emerges with Philaenium from Cleareta's house, a confusion would be established and not resolved properly until the reappearance and identification of Diabolus at the start of the fourth act. Thus the emendation from Argyrippus to Diabolus would only be reasonable if the *Asinaria* were intended solely to be read and not performed before an audience. It is therefore an unacceptable emendation.

I believe that the problem of Argyrippus' location and movement can best be resolved by removing the necessity that the first act represent a strict temporal sequence, by having the action of the *amator exclusus* and the Argyrippus-Cleareta scenes occur temporally but not dramatically before the opening scene. These "later" scenes would therefore serve as a form of "flash-back" sequence which would re-enforce the premise established in the "earlier", quasi-prologue scene. This would in turn allow Argyrippus to go to the *forum*, fail in his attempt to obtain twenty *minae*, return home, approach his father with his problem, inform Libanus of his intended whereabouts,

threatening suicide and generally lamenting their plight. Libanus and Leonida then make their presence known and are informed by Argyrippus that he cannot find twenty *minae* and that a rival named Diabolus has appeared with that sum, promising to pay for exclusive access to Philaenium for a year. Holding the twenty *minae* over the lovers' heads, the two *serui* proceed to tease and demean Argyrippus and Philaenium at length. In the end, they hand over the cash, but on one condition: that Demaenetus be permitted *nox et cena* with Philaenium. Acknowledging the agency of Demaenetus in supplying the funds, Argyrippus agrees and is informed by Leonida that Demaenetus is already waiting inside Cleareta's house, having entered secretly to avoid his wife's detection. The lovers then retire inside Cleareta's house, the *serui* inside Demaenetus'.

Diabolus appears at the start of the fourth act (*As.* 746-827) with his *parasitus*, ready to pay for Philaenium. Before entering Cleareta's house, the *parasitus* reads and amends according to his patron's wishes a comically hyper-legalistic contract designed to ensure Diabolus' exclusive access to the *meretrix*. However, upon entering, the two quickly re-emerge, having caught Demaenetus carousing with his son and Philaenium. Diabolus pledges to inform Artemona, but the *parasitus* offers his service in this regard. Diabolus agrees and returns home, leaving the *parasitus* to search for Demaenetus' wife.

At the beginning of the fifth act (*As.* 828-947), the party inside Cleareta's house is revealed for the audience. Eating, drinking and dice playing occur. Demaenetus and Philaenium share the same couch, while Argyrippus is forced to concede his girlfriend to *pietas*. Artemona soon emerges from her house, accompanied by the *parasitus* and incredulous at his accusations of Demaenetus' infidelity. The two spy on the carousing and in particular listen to Demaenetus insult his wife *in absentia*, until Artemona can tolerate no more. She barges in on the scene, and simultaneously the *parasitus* absents himself, promising to return with his patron tomorrow to negotiate a "time-sharing arrangement"[6] for Philaenium. While Argyrippus and Philaenium are not hindered in their activities, Demaenetus is led home in disgrace and with the threat of *magnum malum*. The comedy concludes with an epilogue from the *grex*, who excuse Demaenetus' voluptuous actions as common and ask for applause *ne senex uapulet*.

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somehow gain re-admission into Cleareta's house, and remain there, presumably in hiding, until he finally steps out with Philaenium. At the same time, it would allow Diabolus to intervene as a rival after Argyrippus' ejection but before the start of the opening scene. The combined effect of these occurrences would also resolve some of the minor inconsistencies within the plot, and in particular the fact that Demaenetus is aware that twenty *minae* are required, before Cleareta quotes that price to Agryrippus.

6 Slater (1985) 67.

Demaenetus is not the only prospective senile adulterer within the Plautine *corpus* whose amorous intentions are ultimately thwarted.[7] In both the *Casina* and the *Mercator*, the attempts of the *senes* Lysidamus and Demipho to pursue illicit affairs with *ancillae* are exposed. However, neither suffers any lasting humiliation or diminution of authority within his household as a result of these exposures. For on the one hand, Cleustrata forgives her husband Lysidamus, even though she is aware of his desires throughout the action of the *Casina*, and on the other, Demipho's remorse allows the knowledge of his amorous pursuits to be protected from his wife by a male code of silence.[8] Only Demaenetus is led away by his wife, disgraced, humiliated and with the unspecified but unmistakably physical threat of *magnum malum* (*As.* 936) hanging over his head. The conclusion of the *Asinaria* therefore represents a paradigm entirely distinct from that of restored domestic harmony in the *Casina* and the *Mercator*. Yet the concluding paradigm of the *Asinaria* is not unique. For Demaenetus' ultimate condition of requiring intervention in order to avoid physical punishment resembles the condition of three prominent Plautine *serui*, whose actions undermine and hence offend figures of authority: Tyndarus in the *Captiui*, Epidicus, and Tranio in the *Mostellaria*.[9] When the *grex* of the *Asinaria* therefore state in conclusion,

> nunc si uoltis deprecari huic seni ne uapulet,
> remur impetrari posse, plausum si clarum datis. (*As.* 946-947),

not only is the audience cast as "an essential participant in the play"[10], as an intervenor on Demaenetus' behalf, but the *senex* is also cast in the role of the powerless *seruus* requiring intervention. However, this servitude is not a newly assigned role for Demaenetus at the

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[7] There are in fact no successful senile adulterers within the Plautine *corpus*. The *senes* Nicobulus and Philoxenus in the *Bacchides* are ultimately enticed against their better judgements into a *ménage à six* with their respective sons and the *meretrices* Bacchides. However, neither give any indication that their wives are still alive, and hence cannot be considered successful senile adulterers, merely successful *senes amatores*. The only successful Plautine adulterer is the *adulescens* Menaechmus. However, the *adulescens* Diniarchus in the *Truculentus* expresses his intention to become an adulterer after his impending marriage by telling the *meretrix* Phronesium, "operae ubi mi erit, ad te uenero." (*Truc.* 883)

[8] LY. non irata's? CL. non sum irata. LY. tuaen fide credo? CL. meae. (*Cas.* 1007)

> [DE.] quin loris caedite etiam, si lubet.,
> LY. recte dicis. sed istuc uxor faciet, quom hoc resciuerit.
> DE. nihil opust resciscat. ... [EV.] non resciscet, ne time. (*Mer.* 1002-1004)

[9] Tranio is the most prominent in this respect. The *adulescens* Callidamates begs the *senex* Theoprodies no less than six times (*Mos.* 1168-1169, 1172, 1175, 1176, 1176-1177, 1180) before Tranio is spared his master's *uerberes*.

[10] Slater (1985) 68.

conclusion of the *Asinaria*. For just as the concluding paradigm casts Demaenetus as *seruus*, so does the paradigm of the opening scene.

The opening scene of the *Asinaria* constitutes a remarkably clever exercise in metatheatrical[11] deception, an exercise which serves to emphasise for the audience the atypical form of the *Asinaria*'s plot and the atypical positions of its characters. For Demaenetus and Libanus initially lead their audience into a false plot by positioning themselves in a manner not inconsistent with generic expectation, as a *senex* and his *seruus* already engaged in a conversation about the well-being of the *senex*'s only son, the *seruus* poised to ask a question, presumably about the son, and hence fearful of the *senex*'s power to punish. All of it suggests a typical comic exposition of the pursuit of young love. However, before Libanus is given the chance to ask his question and the chance to become the *seruus callidus* who will aid the son against the father in an intrigue, Demaenetus "suddenly ... wrenches control of the scene away"[12] with the phrase "redde operam mihi" (*As.* 46), and the comedy in effect starts over in an atypical direction, a direction highlighted for the audience's benefit by Libanus' distinctly metatheatrical incredulity:

LI. quid istuc noui est?
demiror quid sit et quo euadat sum in metu. (*As.* 50-51)

Demaenetus then reveals that he will not play the obstructionist *pater*, that he is aware of Argyrippus' pursuit of Philaenium, that he is grateful to Libanus and Leonida for their efforts in assisting the *adulescens*, and that most significantly and surprising of all,

[DE.] ... me hodie orauit Argyrippus filius
uti sibi amanti facerem argenti copiam;
et id ego percupio opsequi gnato meo: (*As.* 74-76)

Such an obliging position is not entirely unique for a Plautine *senex*. The *senex* Periplectomenus in the *Miles Gloriosus* also actively and willingly assists an *adulescens amator* in overcoming the obstacles to love. However, there are two very important distinctions to be made between Demaenetus' efforts for Argyrippus and Periplectomenus' efforts for Pleusicles in winning back Philocomasium from the clutches of the *miles* Pyrgopolynices. In the first place, Periplectomenus does not play a guiding role in deceiving Pyrgopolynices. His is a subordinate role under the coordination of the *seruus* Palaestrio. Secondly, in the pursuit of the intrigue, Periplectomenus is not seeking to undermine a figure who holds authority over him. He is seeking merely to humiliate a *miles* who is *deridiculus omnibus* (*Mil.* 92). On the other hand, Demaenetus does play the

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[11] In employing this term, I am adopting Slater's definition of metatheatre: "theatrically self-conscious theatre, i.e., theatre that demonstrates an awareness of its own theatricality." ibid. 14.

[12] ibid. 57.

coordinating role in the intrigue of the *Asinaria*, even though he delegates much of the responsibility to Libanus and Leonida. Moreover, he is operating against the established authority within his own household. Demaenetus therefore is acting not within the strict parameters of the role of the *pater familias*, but rather in the manner of such *serui callidi* as Chrysalus in the *Bacchides*, Epidicus, Palaestrio and Tranio, all of whom act on behalf of *adulescentes* in undermining figures who hold authority over them. Therefore, by approaching his father and enlisting his support to coordinate an intrigue to the financial detriment of the household, Argyrippus is in fact casting his father in the role of *seruus callidus*, a role for which Demaenetus is a natural. For throughout his married life, Demaenetus has been a virtual *seruus* under the figure of authority in his house, whom he is now being commissioned to undermine. That figure of authority is of course his wife, Artemona.

It is not initially obvious that Demaenetus lives in the shadow of his wife, when Libanus first alludes to her as "quam tu metuis". (*As.* 19) For although this proves to be an accurate assessment of Demaenetus' relationship with his wife, it is an assessment heavily obscured by the *Asinaria*'s false start. Indeed, Libanus' initial remark regarding Artemona resonates with the generic tone of complaint against the Plautine *uxor*.[13] But when the metatheatrical deception is exposed and when the plot of the *Asinaria* is shown to be an atypical comic exposition of the pursuit of young love, Libanus' initial remark regarding Artemona is revealed gradually to resonate with anything but a generic tone of complaint. As the plot proceeds in its true direction, the facts of Demaenetus' relationship with his wife emerge. Initially, these facts are obscured by Demaenetus' euphemisms:

> [DE.] uerum meam uxorem, Libane, nescis quali' sit?
> LI. tu primus sentis, nos tamen in pretio sumus.
> DE. fateor eam esse inportunam atque incommodam.
> LI. posterius istuc dicis quam credo tibi. (*As.* 60-63)

However, they gain a greater clarity as the scene progresses, until it is ultimately evident that an unusual and utterly perverted power structure exists within Demaenetus' household, a power structure based on the brute financial force of Artemona's dowry:

> [DE.] quamquam illum mater arte contenteque habet,
> patres ut consueuerunt:
>
> [LI.] dotalem seruom Sauream <huc> uxor tua
> adduxit, quoi plus in manu sit quam tibi.
> DE. argentum accepi, dote imperium uendidi. (*As.* 78-79, 85-87)

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[13] Marriage and wives are often a source of complaint for even the most honorable and gentlemanly Plautine *senes*. Consider the following exchange between the *senes* Callicles and Megaronides in the morally uplifting *Trinummus*:

> CA. ualen? ualuistin? ME. ualeo et ualui retius.
> CA. quid agit tua uxor? ut ualet? Me. plus quam ego uolo. (*Trin.* 50-51)

For not only is it revealed that Artemona acts as the father figure within the house, not only is it revealed that Artemona is able to maintain exclusive control over her *dotalis seruus* Saurea and hence able to overturn her status as *uxor in manu*[14], but it is also revealed that this domestic structure was created by Demaenetus' deliberate decision to relinquish the *imperium* naturally endowed by his free birth for the financial gain of a dowry. This admission is as much an indictment on Demaenetus as it is on the dowry system.[15] However, Demaenetus' act of selling his *imperium* for financial gain should be regarded as more than merely a marriage to a comically domineering wife with a well-developed sense of financial and physical empowerment.[16] Indeed, Demaenetus' act has a remarkable and highly relevant parallel in Roman slavery law.

According to Justinian's law in the sixth century A.D., a *proclamatio in libertatem* was generally refused under *ius ciuile* to a *homo liber* over the age of twenty who deliberately allowed himself to be sold as a slave "ad pretium participandum".[17] The precise origins of this statute are difficult to determine. W. W. Buckland favours its origin as a "praetorian *actio in factum*" late in the second century B.C.[18] However, it may reasonably be argued that the practice prohibited by the statute was addressed in law or at the very least considered highly improper in Plautus' time. For in the first place, the *parasitus* Saturio and

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[14] Treggiari & Nicholas *OCD*[3] 920 define matrimonial *manus* as "the power (akin to *patria potestas*) which a husband might have over his wife", a power which included "control of property". Artemona's control over her *dotalis seruus*, as defined by Libanus (*As*. 85-86), initially suggests that she is an *uxor sine manu*. However, Libanus' remarks imply that under normal circumstances Saurea should be *in manu* to Demaenetus. It is clear therefore that Artemona is an *uxor in manu*, albeit only nominally. Indeed, Demaenetus' *manus* over his wife has been so effectively diminished that not only has Artemona been able to maintain exclusive control over Saurea, but she has also been able to install him as the *atriensis* (*As*. 264) of the estate. (It should be noted that Libanus' use of the term *manus* in *As*. 86 relates not to matrimonial *manus*, but the control of a master — or mistress — over a slave. If Saurea as *dotalis seruus* were *in manu* to Demaenetus, then consequently Artemona would be an *uxor in manu*.)

[15] Criticism of the dowry system is not uncommon within the Plautus *corpus*. The most explicit and extensive attack on the subject is offered in the *Aulularia* by the *senex* and prospective husband Megadorus, who summarises his criticism effectively in conclusion:

> [ME.] nam quae indotata est, ea in potestate est uiri;
> dotatae mactant et malo et damno uiros. (*Au*. 534-535)

[16] Artemona expresses an awareness of her own empowerment, after Demaenetus is caught in the act:

> ART. ... faxo ut scias
> quid pericli sit dotatae uxori uitium dicere. (*As*. 897-898)

[17] *Inst*. 1.3.4. Other references to this statute include *Dig*. 1.5.5.1 (Aelus Marcianus *Instituton* 1); 4.4.9.4 (Domitius Ulpianus *ad Edictum* 11, citing Aemilius Papinianus); and *Dig*. 40.13.3 (Sextus Pomponius *Variarum Lectionum* 11).

[18] Buckland (1908) 433. Moyle (1912) 111 concurs.

his free-born daughter in the *Persa* both express independently an initial resistance to the suggestion of the *seruus* Toxilus that the daughter be the subject of a mock-sale.[19] Secondly, Livy cites a clear instance of a legal measure in 177 B.C. which indicates Rome's desire to prohibit forms of fraudulent enslavement and manumission.[20] Demaenetus' act of selling his *imperium* "ad pretium participandum" may therefore be regarded in symbolical legal terms as an act of personal and permanent enslavement, an act whose effects Demaenetus seeks feebly and ultimately vainly to overturn during the course of the comedy.

When Demaenetus admits that Artemona acts "patres ut consueuerunt " and that he sold his *imperium*, he indicates his complete awareness of his status within his own house. Moreover, there exists beyond these admissions an element of resignation regarding the *senex*'s position. For Demaenetus displays no inclination to assert himself within his household or even to extricate himself from his marriage, albeit to his financial detriment[21], by invoking a Plautine divorce formula.[22] Nevertheless, throughout the *Asinaria* Demaenetus reveals an essential desire for importance and influence, manifest in his habit of overstating the extent of his own importance and influence.

19

TO. tum tu me sine illam uendere.
SAT. tun illam uendas?

[SAT.] uenibis tu hodie, uirgo. VI. amabo, mi pater,
quamquam lubenter escis alienis studes,
tuin uentris caussa filiam uendas tuam?

SAT. quid? metuis ne te uendam? VI. non metuo, pater.
uerum insimulari nolo. (*Per*. 134-135, 336-338, 357-358)

20 Livy (41.9.11) states that a *senatus consultum* was approved in 177 B.C. which required those manumitting slaves to give a *ius iurandum* that the manumission was not sought "ciuitatis mutandae causa". According to Watson (1967) 165, this measure was "intended to prevent a dodge used to enable Latins to become Roman citizens."

21 Roman husbands seem always to have reserved a limited right to divorce their wives. Treggiari (1991) 441 notes that "if a husband divorced for any other reason [than matrimonial offences], his property was forfeit". This convention was undermined around 230 B.C. by Carvilius Ruga, who was able to divorce without any financial penalty on account of his wife's inability to bear children. Nevertheless, it is hardly likely that Demaenetus could extricate himself from his marriage without a diminution in the quality of his life. For although in the context of the lengthy deception against Pyrgopolynices, Plautus defines a convention in the *Miles Gloriosus* whereby an arbitrarily divorced Plautine husband is forced to leave the *aedis dotalis*:

[PA.] hasce esse aedis dicas dotalis tuas,
hinc senem aps te abiisse, postquam feceris diuortium:
ne ille mox uereatur introire in alienum domum. (*Mil*. 1166-1168)

It seems less likely therefore that an arbitrarily divorcing Plautine husband could maintain residence in what presumably is also an *aedis dotalis*.

22 For instance, "ualeas, tibi habeas res tuas, reddas meas" (*Am*. 928) or "i foras, mulier." (*Cas*. 210-2)

In the opening scene of the comedy, after delegating the responsibility of acquiring the twenty *minae* to Libanus, Demaenetus instructs his *seruus* to obtain that sum in the simplest of term: "me defrudato." (*As.* 91) This instruction suggests that Demaenetus has some control over his financial affairs and is met with appropriate derision:

> LI. maxumas nugas agis:
> nudo detrahere uestimenta me iubes.
> defrudem te ego? age sis tu, sine pennis uola.
> ten ego defrudem, quoi ipsi nihil est in manu
> nisi quid tu porro uxorem defrudaueris? (*As.* 91-95)

Yet although Libanus' derision causes Demaenetus to modify his instructions in order to reflect the reality of his situation, the modification is only slight. Moreover, it is followed by a promise to Libanus, which Demaenetus cannot keep and which he knows that he cannot keep:

> DE. qua me, qua uxorem, qua tu seruom Sauream
> potes, circumduce. aufer; promitto tibi
> non offuturum, si id hodie ecfeceris. (*As.* 96-98)

Towards the end of the opening scene, Demaenetus again lapses into his habit of overstating the extent of his importance and influence, when he informs Libanus that he will be waiting "apud Archibulum ... argentarium." (*As.* 116) This may be considered another case of overstatement, because Demaenetus has no business with an *argentarius*, having no authority within his house. Indeed, if Demaenetus in fact had any business with Archibulus, he would not be in the financial position of being forced to press his minute coterie of subordinates for support in the venture at hand. Of course, it does not follow necessarily that Demaenetus is unacquainted with Archibulus. However, the evidence indicates that Archibulus' establishment can be little more than a "hang-out" *in foro*, where Demaenetus might at least feel, if not actually be, important and influential.

It is evident in the final act that Demaenetus' habit of overstating the extent of his importance and influence is long standing and well established. For when Artemona spies her husband's carousing, she reveals and then pours scorn upon his claims of influential occupation:

> ART. hoc ecastor est quod ille it ad cenam cottidie.
> ait sese ire ad Archidemum, Chaeream, Chaerestratum,
> Cliniam, Chremem, Cratinum, Diniam, Demosthenum:
> is apud scortum corruptelae est liberis, lustris studet.
>
> eum etiam hominem <aut> in senatu dare operam aut cluentibus,
> ibi labore delassatum noctem totam stertere! (*As.* 864-867, 871-872)

Of course, Artemona's suggestion that Demaenetus' present infidelity indicates a general habit of infidelity is probably unfair. Nevertheless, considerable doubt must be cast on Demaenetus' reported grand claims of nightly dinner engagements and of occupation with

clientes for two reasons beyond his earlier bravado. In the first place, Artemona's comments suggest that Demaenetus has never hosted any of these Athenian gentleman himself. Therefore, if Demaenetus' claims of dining out nightly were accurate, the *senex* would seem not so much a member of some dining circle where hospitality is reciprocated, but rather something of a *parasitus* who seeks dinner in any other place than his own home in order solely to get away from his wife. Secondly, although Demaenetus' claims of attending the *senatus* need not be false, his claims of assisting *clientes* stretch credibility, given the not insignificant element of financial dependency inherent within the *patronus-cliens* relationship. Demaenetus' grand claims would therefore seem for the most part to be little more than lies or at best heavily embellished truths which are blindly accepted by a powerful woman who reveals herself to be generally ignorant of her husband's character:

> ART. at scelesta ego praeter alios meum uirum frugi rata,
> siccum, frugi, continentem, amantem uxoris maxume. (*As.* 856-857)

Given then Demaenetus' habit of overstating the extent of his importance and influence and the desire therein for influence within the accepted confines of his position within his household, it is entirely consistent that Demaenetus should accept Argyrippus' commission. However, the limited form of influence which Demaenetus has in mind when he accepts that commission is ultimately surpassed, particularly when he learns through personal experience "uiginti minae quid pollent quidue possunt". (*As.* 636)

In the opening scene, Demaenetus reveals his very narrow expectations from the task at hand. He cannot obtain *imperium* over his affairs without a considerable financial loss. He therefore aims his sights significantly lower. He wishes merely *amari a suis* (*As.* 67) and he wishes the opportunity to act according to the only form of *mos maiorum*, which his unempowered circumstances allow:

> [DE.] uolo me patris mei similem, qui caussa mea
> nauclerico ipse ornatu per fallaciam
> quam amabam abduxit ab lenone mulierem;
> neque puduit eum id aetatis sycophantias
> struere et beneficiis me emere gnatum suom sibi. (*As.* 68-72)[23]

However, Demaenetus initially has no intention of becoming as actively involved in his son's scheme as his father did in his scheme to obtain a woman whom he clearly did not marry. Instead, he delegates the final details of defrauding the household to Libanus and Leonida, and then hides *in foro* in order to avoid any potential implication. That Libanus and Leonida should strike such an adamant individual in the *mercator*'s assistant and that

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[23] A noteworthy passage which indicates that trickery in the Plautine universe is not confined within the strict temporal limits of on-stage comic action.

Demaenetus should then be forced to play the *nauclericus*, as it were, is entirely unexpected. Nevertheless, Demaenetus rises to the task:

> [LE.] edepol senem Demaenetum lepidum fuisse nobis:
> ut adsimulabat Sauream med esse quam facete!
> nimis aegre risum contini, ubi hospitem inclamauit,
> quod se<se> apsente mihi fidem habere noluisset.
> ut memoriter me Sauream uocabat atriensem! (*As.* 580-584)

Moreover, after the undoubtedly exhilarating and empowering experience of chastising the *mercator*'s assistant, Demaenetus realises that obtaining the twenty *minae* enables him to extend his expectation of what he can draw from his relationship with his son.[24] For beyond fulfilling a desire to be loved and a desire to act according to *mos maiorum*, he is able to attract a particularly perverted form of *pietas* from his son through the granting of *nox et cena* with Philaenium:

> DE. numquidnam tibi molestumst, gnate mi, si haec nunc mecum accubat?
> ARG. pietas, pater, oculis dolorem prohibet. quamquam ego istanc amo,
> possum equidem inducere animum ne aegre patiar quia tecum accubat.
> (*As.* 830-832)

Yet although it leads to temporary success and satisfaction, the *senex*'s decision to indulge himself fleetingly with Philaenium as a means of establishing the existence of *pietas* within his relationship with his son proves ultimately to be his downfall. For after subverting the order of the house through the diversion of funds and the corruption of the *filius familias* without detection, he squanders an excellent opportunity to forge a strong bond with his son for the purpose of overturning the unnatural order which exists within his house. Instead, he extends that subversion through his wanton infidelity against the authority figure within his house, and in the process angers Diabolus and alienates himself from his own son. For on the one hand, Diabolus is inspired to play the informant against Demaenetus not because of his apparent loss of Philaenium, but rather because his outrage at the sight of the unfaithful *senex*:

> [DI.] ain tu? apud amicam munus adulescentuli
> fungare, uxori excuses te et dicas senem?
> suspendam potius me quam tacita haec tu auferas. (*As.* 812-813, 816)

On the other hand, despite the son's recognition of Demaenetus' agency in the affair and his overt invitation for his father to join him and Philaenium:

> ARG. iube aduenire, quaeso:

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[24] This realisation is not directly represented on stage. However, it is represented in kind by the teasing which Libanus and Leonida perpetrate against the young lovers, when the two *serui* realise the power of the twenty *minae* in their possession:

> LE. uin erum deludi? LI. dignust sane.
> LE. uin faciam ut me Philaenium praesente hoc amplexetur?
> LI. cupio hercle. Le. sequere hac. (*As.* 646-648)

meritissumo eiius quae uolet faciemus, qui hosce amores
nostros dispulsos compulit. (*As.* 736-738),

Argyrippus fails to defend Demaenetus, when Artemona discovers her husband at play. In fact, the *adulescens* deliberately points a finger of blame at his father in order to protect his own interests and deflect attention from his own affair:

ARG. ego dissuadebam, mater. ART. bellum filium!
ARG. dicebam, pater, tibi ne matri consuleres male. (*As.* 931, 938)

Demaenetus' decision therefore to extend his activities to infidelity has only a fleeting benefit and ultimately is permanently destructive. For in the aftermath of the day's events, Artemona will no longer control the house oblivious to her husband's lack of personal integrity. She will control it in the full knowledge of his capabilities, and thus further reduce his status within the house. Moreover, Demaenetus' decision is entirely indicative of his resignation with respect to the permanence of his condition. For it would seem that his life of quasi-servitude within his own house has dulled his expectations of what he can achieve as the man of that house without losing the financial security of his marriage. Indeed, he seems so resigned to the reality of his position that he indulges his ego with fantasy by overstating the extent of the importance and influence which he holds within his household and within his community, and at the same time fails to identify a prime opportunity to cultivate a strong relationship with his son, albeit through means underhanded and inappropriate for a *pater*, an opportunity of wresting himself from his lowly and unnatural position.

It is remarkable that Konstan should interpret the conclusion of the *Asinaria* as a restoration of the natural order within Demaenetus' house. For he notes that this conclusion resolves "the matter of Demaenetus' abdication of his parental responsibilities: He must now, according to the conventions of this story, mend his ways and take up his proper position in his house. ... His humiliation is intended to bring him to his senses and make him play the role, at least, of a Roman head of household."[25] However, this is unacceptable, because Konstan seems to suggest that after participating in a venture to secure a year of unrestricted sexual gratification for his son, Demaenetus can somehow hereafter be trusted with the paternal role which his wife has always held. Konstan does grudgingly observe, "to be sure, Artemona still has her dowry, if we wish to be sticklers on the point." But surely that is the point. The weight of the dowry has been the major factor in the existence of the unnatural domestic order in Demaenetus' house. With the maintenance then of that financial arrangement at the conclusion of the comedy, this unnatural domestic order is ultimately unaffected. The conclusion therefore of the *Asinaria*

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[25] Konstan (1983) 51.

represents not change and resolution, but continuity and permanence. Demaenetus has been a slave ever since he relinquished the power ordained by his free birth and ever since he abdicated the responsibilities related to that power purely for the financial gain of the dowry. Moreover, he can only ever be a slave, since his low personal expectations, which are the result of that initial decision to relinquish his *imperium*, in turn lead to decisions which ultimately intensify and perpetuate his general condition.

CONCLUSION: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The appreciation of particular forms of comedy varies from individual to individual. It is possible (as I do) to love the Marx Brothers but generally loathe the Three Stooges. Yet even within their frequently laboured scenes, I must admit that Larry, Curly and Moe can occasionally attract my attention and even my laughter on some level. This is the mark of good comedy, the ability to attract a wide audience by offering entertainment which consists of various forms and which often operates on various levels, the ability to provide "something for everyone". This thesis has been written in sympathy with the notion that Plautus did indeed provide something for everyone in his audience and in particular provided comedies which contained serious, sophisticated and thought-provoking themes beyond the immediate and obvious comic mayhem of the Plautine universe. However, the purpose of this thesis has not been to establish whether Plautus introduced into his comedies or retained from his Greek models such themes for the appreciation of his original Roman audience. Its purpose rather has been to provide a strong case for the notion that any serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes which Plautus might have included in his comedies or retained from his Greek models could have been appreicated by members of his original Roman audience, if not during the original performance, then in subsequent contemplation or during ritually repeated performances. This has been achieved by establishing the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience.

In the first chapter, I examined the *ludi* and hence demonstrated from evidence external to the Plautine texts that the context in which Plautus originally presented his comedies in Rome was public and communal and that there existed a basic social diversity among those who attended theatrical performances in Rome during Plautus' career. This examination of the *ludi* served to underpin the following chapter.

In the second chapter, the task of establishing the existence of conditions which suggest the heterogeneous appreciation of Plautus' comedies by members of his original Roman audience was completed in four steps. In the first place, I demonstrated through the internal evidence of the Plautine texts that there existed a social diversity within the Plautine audience in terms of wealth and hence social standing, age and sex, and that this social diversity was compounded by the presence of soldiers, probably both active and retired, a mercantile core, slaves and various other individuals of low status. Secondly, I demonstrated the theoretically sound connexion between social diversity and intellectual heterogeneity within the Plautine audience through modern psychological theory and

specifically through the work on multiple-models of intelligence by Louis Thurstone in the 1930s, Joy Guilford in the 1960s and Howard Gardner in the 1980s. In this way, I demonstrated that the Plautine audience's capacity for undertaking the intellectual activity of theatrical appreciation should in theory have been diverse.[1] Thirdly, I demonstrated that the notion that Plautus composed at all times for a uniformly appreciative audience is unsustainable by examining and dissecting a much cited but ultimately flawed study by Walter Chalmers from 1965, titled "Plautus and his Audience". Finally, I demonstrated the existence throughout the Plautine *corpus* of comic material which would have tested the bounds of uniform and even universal appreciation within an intellectually heterogeneous Plautine audience.

In the remaining three chapters, I removed this study from its academic vacuum and set the notion of the appreciation of serious, sophisticated or thought-provoking themes on firmer and less theoretical ground by offering individual interpretations of three Plautine comedies (the *Menaechmi*, the *Amphitruo* and the *Asinaria*), and hence by suggesting that each of these comedies offered serious, sophisticated and thought-provoking themes which could have been appreciated by members of Plautus' original Roman audience. In examining the *Menaechmi*, I established the conflict between the obligation of *pietas* and self-gratification as a theme in relation to the brothers Menaechmi; in examining the *Amphitruo*, I established the tragedy of the muted individual as a theme in relation to the hapless slave Sosia; and in the *Asinaria*, I established the *pater familias* as *seruus callidus* and the pernicious power of the dowry as themes in relation to the *senex* Demaenetus.

The subject of this thesis and in particular the interpretative treatments of the three Plautine comedies have been influenced heavily by the scholarship of David Konstan and others, who have sought to establish the existence of serious themes within Plautine comedy. This scholarship exists in marked contrast to the view espoused particularly by

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[1] It should be noted that I have not wished to suggest a direct correlation between social status and intellectual ability. Given a random sample of significant size, one should expect on a theoretical level a general diversity in the degrees to which individuals within that sample innately possessed certain intelligences. Social diversity has been important to my arguments, because it suggests a general diversity in the experiences which would have influenced the development of innate intelligences and therefore compounded intellectual diversity generally. Furthermore, it should again be noted that I have not wished to suggest that the degree to which a member of Plautus' original Roman audience possessed certain intelligences would have been the sole determining factor in his ability to appreciate the type of serious, underlying themes which I have defined in the final three chapters of this thesis. For individual attitudes and the inclination to consider the issues related to such themes would also have been required. However, since it may reasonably be assumed that respect for *pietas*, concern over excessively cruel and unfair treatment of slaves, familiarity with tragedy and the generic characterisation of comic slaves, and awareness of problems relating to the dowry system existed within the socially diverse Plautine audience, the suggestion that those particular themes could have been appreciated by members of that audience is to my mind entirely valid.

Erich Segal, that Plautine comedy should not be considered anything other than "festive comedy". However, in writing this thesis, I have not sought to diminish entirely Segal's general estimation of Plautine comedy. Nor have I sought to project the notion that Plautine comedy can or should be appreciated solely as serious literature. For there are elements of truth in both of these opposing impressions of Plautine comedy, with neither representing Plautus and his work entirely. In fact, these opposing impressions complement each other extremely well. For in essence they represent the opposite sides of the same coin, and together they lend credence to the notion that Plautus did indeed provide "something for everyone".

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