CREDITING PSEUDOLUS: TRUST, BELIEF, AND THE CREDIT CRUNCH IN PLAUTUS' *PSEUDOLUS*

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MOTTOES

Trust was shaken today. Credit depends on trust. If trust disappears, then credit disappears, and you have a systemic issue.
—Thomas Mayer, chief European economist at Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, quoted in the *New York Times*, August 10, 2007, A1

OLD, s.v. *credere*:
2 . . . To lend (money) to; . . . to make loans, give credit.
4 . . . To give credence to, believe in (a person, report, etc.).
5 b [T]o assume the reality or existence of, believe in.

AS A LONG-STANDING ADMIRER of George Walsh's *The Varieties of Enchantment*, I was honored to receive the invitation to deliver the Walsh Lecture for 2007–8 at the University of Chicago's Department of Classics. I was especially pleased because I had in mind to use the opportunity of the lecture in order to develop some ideas about the way that Plautus works enchantment upon his audience. Since Walsh's subtitle is *Early Greek Views of the Nature and Function of Poetry*, it is perhaps no surprise that he does not have Plautus in his index, but it seemed appropriate to offer a paper that presented a Latinist's take on the issues that had so productively intrigued him. The leading idea of the lecture was to be that in *Pseudolus* Plautus used the concept of financial credit as a key trope for configuring the kind of belief that the audience grants to the stage event. By the time of the lecture itself in October 2007, ten months after the invitation, the topic of financial credit had become disturbingly topical, as the U.S. subprime credit crisis of that late summer sent its ripples out all over the world and the British bank of Northern Rock turned into Northern Sand before our very eyes. At the time of writing up the lecture for publication,

My warm thanks to the University of Chicago Department of Classics for their invitation, and for their very stimulating questions and comments; I must also thank the Center for the Ancient Mediterranean at Columbia University, who heard a version of this paper and gave me a great deal to think about. I owe a special debt to Brent Shaw for many tutorials on Roman money; I could not have written this paper without his wise guidance through this new terrain.

All references to *Pseudolus* follow the text of Willcock (1987). All translations are mine, unless otherwise specified.

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the topic of financial credit still has the power to disturb, and I shall argue that we would do well to read *Pseudolus* in a state of intrigued anxiety about the operation of credit.

I begin on familiar terrain, with the peculiar challenge posed to the theatrical illusion by the powerfully metatheatrical nature of Plautus' stagecraft—a challenge more aggressively posed by *Pseudolus* than by any other Plautine play. All of Plautus' plays are metatheatrical and self-referential to one degree or another, drawing attention to the fact that they are plays and challenging the kind of belief we have in the drama by continually reminding us that we are an audience watching a performance, on a stage, with actors.[1] Of all his plays, however, the two that are most radically and systematically invested in this metatheatricality are *Amphitryo* and *Pseudolus*; and of these two, ever since Marino Barchiesi held up *Pseudolus* as the gold standard in his pathbreaking article on Plautine metatheatricality in 1970, it has been this play that scholars have invariably picked out as being the most flamboyantly intent upon reminding the audience that the stage event is a staged event.[2] Further, it is the lead character of Pseudolus who has come to be the definitive metatheatrical Plautine creation. Pseudolus is, as William Anderson puts it, "the most self-conscious of any clever Plautine slave."[3] It was inevitable, as Niall Slater finely points out, that Pseudolus should be the name of the Zero Mostel character in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.[4]

A preliminary synopsis of the play is in order, so that we can follow the way the plot turns cater to the self-referentiality of the entire stage event, involving us continually in confronting the strange kind of belief we are investing in the performance, and so that we can also follow the way the plot turns foreground the crucial importance of credit—the other kind of belief—in the financial exchanges between the characters.

The fundamental plot resembles virtually every other Plautine plot—boy has met girl but cannot have her, but finally does get her thanks to cunning slave. In our play, the boy is Calidorus, the girl is Phoenicium, and the cunning slave is Pseudolus. Phoenicium is owned by Ballio, who is Plautus' pimp to beat all pimps, a hyperpimp of phenomenal outrageousness and zest.[5] In the first scene Pseudolus reads out a letter from Phoenicium to Calidorus that explains that a Macedonian officer has paid fifteen minae toward buy-

1. Valuable overviews are in Slater (1985, 168–78), Frangoulidis (1997, 1–4), and Moore (1998, 1–3); see also Slater (2002, 1–8) for a survey of the terminology and issues of metatheater, focalized through Aristophanic comedy.

2. Barchiesi 1970, 127–29. See also Taladoire 1956, 138: "Aucune pièce de PLAUTE ne contient d'aussi nombreux appels aux spectateurs, ni surtout d'aussi désinvoltes"—Plautus wants to show the audience "*comment se fait une comédie*" (original emphasis); Slater 1985, 146: "Theater celebrates itself in the *Pseudolus* as it does nowhere else in Roman comedy"; Moore 1998, 92–107; Sharrock 2009, 283: "the most metatheatrical (as well as the funniest) of Roman comedies." On the metatheatrical power of *Amphitryo*, see Dupont 1976.

3. Anderson 1993, 101; see also Petrone 1983, 5: "Il più famoso portavoce di questa 'poetica della menzogna' è il personaggio di Pseudolo."

4. Slater 1985, 118.

5. Petrone 1983, 113.

ing her, with five still to pay. The officer has left a token in the form of his image sealed in wax, and when he sends a man with the balance and with the same seal, that will finish the deal: today is the day for the man to arrive (lines 51–60). Pseudolus promises to get the money somehow (104–5) and warns everyone in the audience not to extend him any credit (125–28). When the pimp Ballio emerges from his house, Pseudolus and Calidorus talk to him to try to get him to wait a few days until they can raise the money. Ballio suggests that Calidorus raise money on credit, but the young man says he is too young to borrow (294–304); Ballio likewise refuses to extend credit to Pseudolus (315–19) and says the girl is not for sale (325), before exiting to get what he needs to celebrate his birthday. Pseudolus tells his young master that he is going to need a sharp, intelligent man (385–86), and Calidorus goes off to get a friend who will fit the bill (evidently he himself does not).

Pseudolus delivers a soliloquy likening himself to a playwright, saying that he will find the twenty minae, which are currently nowhere on earth, just as the poet finds material that is nowhere on earth (394–405). As he sees Calidorus' father Simo approaching, together with his neighbor Callipho, he declares that he will dig the money out of Simo (410–13) and withdraws to eavesdrop (414). Simo tells Callipho he knows what his son is up to (415–22), and Pseudolus laments that he cannot get the money from Simo now (422–26). Pseudolus is discovered, and even though Simo says he will not give Pseudolus and Calidorus any money (504–5) and warns everyone not to give Pseudolus any credit (506), Pseudolus says that he will get the money from Simo himself (509–10), warning Simo to beware (511–17). Simo makes a formal promise, a *stipulatio* or *sponsio*, that he will give Pseudolus twenty minae if he can actually succeed in getting the girl out of Ballio's house (535–46): this form of oral contract is part of Roman law, not Athenian, and therefore must be Plautus' own invention.[6]

The old men go off; Pseudolus talks to the audience and says he will nip backstage while the musician plays a tune (562–73). He reappears with a mighty soliloquy saying that he has excogitated a brilliant plan (574–91), but we never find out what the brilliant plan is because the Macedonian officer's slave turns up, wearing nice military rig; he has the officer's token and the balance of the money to pay Ballio (598), and Pseudolus starts to improvise (601–2). Pretending to be a slave of Ballio's, he says Ballio is out and asks for the money, but the Macedonian officer's slave, Harpax, will not be tricked into handing over the money (625–47); he does, though, give Pseudolus the letter with the officer's image (647–52), and then he goes away saying that he will come back later.

The young master Calidorus now returns, with a friend, Charinus, the sharp, intelligent man Pseudolus had asked for earlier. Pseudolus asks Charinus for a loan of five minae (732–34), together with military clothing like that of Harpax (735–38), and also for a clever, tricky slave to borrow (724–28):

6. Willcock 1987, 17; Lefèvre 1997, 24–26. In the Greek original there must instead have been a wager between Simo and Pseudolus: Lefèvre 1977, 443–44; Willcock 1987, 17. As well argued by Lefèvre (1977), Plautus' innovation here allows him to have Pseudolus triumph over his master as well as over Ballio.

Pseudolus is going to be the director as he rehearses this other slave in the role of Harpax (764–65). Charinus' tricky slave is called Simia, which is the perfect name for an actor: just like the "monkey" that the name evokes to a Latin ear, an actor is a clever little fellow who cannot really be trusted, good at tricks and at imitating human beings.[7] An elaborate sequence follows, introduced by perhaps the weirdest scene in Plautus, as an ugly boy emerges from Ballio's house and bemoans the fact that he won't be able to get Ballio a birthday present because he is so ugly no one will pay him for sex (767–87). There ensues an interlude with Ballio and a cook, who has been engaged to prepare the food for Ballio's birthday party (790–891). The cook is himself a second metatheatrical double for the playwright, along with Pseudolus, for his grandiloquent claims to be able to cook up wonders by adding spicy elements to unpromising native material align his skill with the inventive and transformative power of Plautus himself, as does the continual foregrounding of the problem of belief posed by his extravagant boasts about his hyperbolical performance:[8] just before he exits, the cook even exposes his routine by saying to Ballio, "Maybe now you don't believe what I'm saying" (*fortasse haec tu nunc mihi non credis quae loquor*, 888). Before exiting himself, Ballio says that he has been warned by Pseudolus' old master, Calidorus' father Simo, to beware of Pseudolus and not have faith in him (896–99), and then he goes inside his house to warn everyone not to believe/credit Pseudolus (903–4).

Pseudolus comes onstage, keeping an eye out for Simia, and then on comes Simia, looking exactly like Harpax, the Macedonian officer's slave (905–12); this is the second time we have seen Pseudolus standing outside Ballio's house as someone turns up wearing nice military rig. After a bit of coaching and rehearsing (915–41), Pseudolus hides and Simia knocks on the door and talks to Ballio, pretending to be Harpax. He has the five minae borrowed from Charinus, ready to hand over; there is a major scare when Ballio asks Simia what his master's name is, and Simia does not know it (984–85), but he brilliantly extricates himself (985–91), and the two of them go into Ballio's house (1016). Pseudolus has palpitations outside, for Simia is as cunning as he is and might run away with the plot (1017–27), or else Simo or the real Harpax might turn up (1028–31); but out comes Simia with the girl, and they march off with Pseudolus (1038–51).

Ballio comes out of his house, delighted that he has evaded Pseudolus and gotten rid of the girl to the rightful owner (1052–62), and then the old master Simo arrives. Ballio brags about how the Macedonian officer's slave has come and paid the balance and the girl is gone (1089–98); he is so confident that he has Simo accept a formal *stipulatio* that Ballio will pay him the full twenty minae if Pseudolus actually gets Phoenicium (1070–78).[9] At

7. See Connors (2004, 189–98) on the simian figure in Plautus, esp. 190 on this Simia, with further references to his punning ape-like name; see also Slater 1985, 136–40.

8. Finely argued by Gowers 1993, 93–107; Hallett 1993.

9. Once again, as with the *stipulatio* in 535–46 above, this is Plautus' innovation on the original Greek plot: Lefèvre 1997, 26–27.

this juncture, for the third time, someone wearing nice military rig comes marching onstage and heads up to Ballio's door (1101–2). This time, of course, it is the real Harpax, but Ballio is sure he is a stooge of Pseudolus' (1162–63), and it takes a long time for the scales to fall from his eyes as he realizes that he has been taken in (1220–21). He says he will take Harpax to the forum to get twenty minae to pay back the Macedonian officer (1230); tomorrow he will give Simo the twenty minae he has just promised him.

The final act is soon over. Pseudolus comes onstage drunk as a lord from a celebratory party at Charinus' house (1246);[10] he bangs on Simo's door (1284), and Simo eventually hands over the twenty minae he formally promised earlier in the play (1326). Pseudolus, after enjoying his moment of triumph to the full, promises to return half the money, or more, to his old master (1328–29) and invites him back to the party (1327, 1332): in a final joke on illusionism, Simo asks if Pseudolus wants to invite the spectators too (1332), and Pseudolus replies that they never invite him anywhere, but he turns to the audience and says that if they clap he will give them an invitation for tomorrow (1333–35).

There is, then, an enormous amount of deceit and disguise featured in this play, with a great deal of opportunity for metatheater and self-reference, as plots are generated onstage and characters take on roles and accept "direction" from Pseudolus. A number of characters are given lines that carry metatheatrical freight.[11] The young master Calidorus, urged by Pseudolus to think sensibly, replies, with self-consciousness of his dramatic role, "It's only funny if the lover acts like an idiot" (*non iucundumst nisi amans facit stulte*, 238). Ballio tells Simo that he was given a hard time by Pseudolus: "Rubbish from the theater; insults that are always said to the pimp in comedies, kids' stuff: he said I was 'bad' and 'wicked' and a 'liar' " (*Nugas theatri; verba quae in comoediis / solent lenoni dici, quae pueri sciunt: / malum et scelestum et peiurum aibat esse me*, 1081–83). The old master, Simo, is given some wonderful lines—posing as the magistrate overseeing the games (546);[12] confessing to Ballio that he has no more idea of what is going on than "the dumbest [in the audience]" (*iuxta cum ignarissimis*, 1161); announcing that his reception of Pseudolus will be different "from what happens in other comedies" (*alio pacto . . . / quam in aliis comoediis fit*, 1239–40); and asking Pseudolus at the very end if he is going to invite the spectators to the party too (*quin vocas spectatores / simul?* 1332–33).

The challenge to conventional theatrical belief is posed more vigorously by Pseudolus than by any other character, however, for he goes further than the other characters in puncturing the theatrical illusion; his reminders that the stage action is not "real" are insistent and pervasive. When Pseudolus has just been explaining to his young master Calidorus that he has gotten the token from Harpax, Calidorus asks, "How did you do that?" and Pseudolus replies,

10. Here following Willcock 1987, 135.

11. See Moore (1998, 96) for discussion of some of the following passages (238, 1239–42), with others.

12. This metaphor is picked up half a dozen lines later by his neighbor Callipho, who says he is going to enjoy watching Pseudolus' *ludi* (552).

"Look, this play is being put on for *these* people, the audience: they know because they were here; I'll tell you about it later" (*Horum causa haec agitur spectatorum fabula. / hi sciunt qui hic adfuerunt; vobis post narravero*, 720–21). In a related gag earlier in the play, when Calidorus asks him what his plan is going to be, Pseudolus tells him, "I'll let you know in good time. I don't want to go over it twice; plays are long enough as it is" (*Temperi ego faxo scies. / nolo bis iterari; sat sic longae fiunt fabulae*, 387–88).[13] In particular, Pseudolus is the only character in the play who breaks the fourth wall, reaching out over the invisible line between us and him in order to speak to the audience, in soliloquy. Sander Goldberg has well reminded us of the intimacy of the original performance venue on the crowded steps of a temple, which encouraged such an "easy and informal relationship" between actors and audience;[14] even by these different performance standards Pseudolus stands out, with seven soliloquies, more than any other Plautine character.[15] This is very telling in an author with whom any soliloquy is likely to burst the bubble by sparking a comment from another character along the lines of "What's that guy doing standing there talking to himself?"—note, in our play, how a "conventional aside" from Pseudolus during his conversation with Harpax triggers the comment from his interlocutor, "What's he saying all alone to himself?" (*Quid illic solus secum loquitur?* 615).[16] In a genial moment of condescension, Pseudolus takes the audience into his confidence after he has gotten Simo to pledge him twenty minae if he gets Phoenicium from Ballio, saying that he suspects we suspect he is promising this mighty deed just to please us as he keeps the play going to the end (*quo vos oblectem, hanc fabulam dum transigam*, 564).[17]

The most conspicuous moment of metatheatricality in the play comes in a soliloquy—one that is of course announced as *being* a soliloquy: "Now that he's taken off, there you are standing *alone*, Pseudolus" (*Postquam illic hinc abiit, tu astas solus, Pseudole*, 394). This is the famous speech in which Pseudolus compares himself to a playwright as he wonders how he is going to get the money he needs to buy Phoenicium from Ballio (401–5):[18]

> sed quasi poeta, tabulas cum cepit sibi,
> quaerit quod nusquamst gentium, reperit tamen,
> facit illud veri simile quod mendacium est,
> nunc ego poeta fiam: viginti minas,
> quae nusquam nunc sunt gentium, inveniam tamen.
>
> But as a poet, when he takes up his tablets, seeks for something that is nowhere on earth and still finds it, and makes something that is a lie like something real, so now I'll become a poet: the twenty minae, which are now nowhere on earth, I'll manage to find.

13. On these two gags, and especially on their concern with dramatic time, see Moore 1998, 100–101 (see also 13–14 on the general Plautine principle of explicitly marking the importance of not boring the spectators).

14. Goldberg 1998, 16.

15. Petrone 1983, 67; Moore 1998, 94 (with 8–14 on Plautine monologues in general).

16. See also 445, where Pseudolus says something in soliloquy, observing Simo from the wings, and the old man says, "Who's that talking?" (*Quis hic loquitur?*).

17. See Sharrock (1996, 167) on this moment.

18. As pointed out by Slater (1985, 12), elsewhere in the corpus there is only one other explicit correlation of a character with the playwright (*Asin.* 748).

It is a vertiginous moment when a character compares himself to a playwright, and it is even more vertiginous if we contemplate the possibility that the character of Pseudolus was played by Plautus, for then we would have the playwright playing the part of someone saying that he was going to become a playwright.[19] Pseudolus' very name aligns him with the nature of poetry, for the poet's notorious ability to "make something that is a *lie* like something real"—going back to the Muses' claim to Hesiod that they know how to "say many lies like true things" (*Theog.* 27)—points to a translingual pun, from Latin *mendacium* to Greek ψεῦδος: the lying power of poetry is written into *Pseud*-olus' name.[20] In fact his name is "Lie-trick," for the second half of his name evokes δόλος, a Greek word that was domesticated into Latin as *dolus*—the Romans loved the idea that Latin had no word for "trick" and had to borrow it from Greek, along with other culturally revealing words such as those for "bastard" and "catamite."[21]

Pseudolus' poetic self-reference goes further yet. He does not just announce that he will create lies like the truth, the way poets do; he also knows that poetry achieves this verisimilitudinous aura through stunning effects of amazement and through lulling effects of pleasure, and soon after the soliloquy just discussed, Plautus is deploying self-referential literary-critical jargon to highlight his and Pseudolus' control of such devices. In the next scene Pseudolus says to Simo and Callipho, "Do you want me to say something that will make you even more amazed?" (*Vin etiam dicam quod vos magis miremini*? 522), playing on the amazement that grips the spectators of drama;[22] at the close of the scene, in a soliloquy already quoted above, he tells the audience that he knows we are thinking his show is all for pleasure (*quo vos oblectem*, 564).[23]

As Alison Sharrock has acutely pointed out, Pseudolus' famous "playwright soliloquy" is playing not just on the idea of performance, but on the idea of a text.[24] The speech is not just saying, "This is really a performance"; it is also saying, "This is really a *script*." It is one thing to remind the audience

19. So Slater 1985, 145–46; Hallett 1993, 25–26; see also Fitzgerald 1995, 57.

20. See Pascucci 1961 for the way the name's formation implies someone with the vocation of deceiving. See Sharrock 1996, 154, on how this passage evokes the ancient recognition of the power of poetry to create illusions, or "lies," as a more hostile witness might put it: she refers to such canonical passages as Hes. *Theog.* 27, Pl. *Resp.* 377D–403C, and Callim. *Hymn* 1.64; for further discussion of this critical background to the soliloquy, see Hunter 2006, 82–83, and for general background, Walsh 1984, 26–28; Feeney 1991, 13.

21. On such borrowings, see Adams 1982, 228, and 2003, 405; Farrell 2001, 30–32, referring to Quintilian's citation of Cato on the absence of a native word for "bastard" in Latin (Quint. 3.6.97 = Cato frag. 239 Malcovati). On the name's play with *dolus*, see Schmidt 1902, 381; Sharrock 1996, 167 (with suggested added play on δοῦλος, *doulos*, "slave"). For puns on Pseu-*dolus*' *doli* within the play, see lines 527, 528, 614.

22. On this effect (labeled in Greek ἔκπληξις or τὸ θαυμαστόν), see Brink 1971, 352; Walsh 1984, 92, 154 n. 12; Feeney 1991, 28, 52.

23. For ἡδονή (pleasure) as a master term in ancient criticism, see Brink 1971, 352–53; Walsh 1984, index, s.v. "pleasure"; Feeney 1993, 235–36. The point is taken in this scene by both Callipho (*ted ausculto lubens*, 523a; *lubidost ludos tuos spectare, Pseudole*, 552) and Simo (*nam satis lubenter te ausculto loqui*, 523b). The play's continual concern with the theme of providing pleasure is well brought out by Moore (1998, chap. 5). See Hunter 2006, 82, for further suggested resonances in the soliloquy with the technical language of literary criticism.

24. Sharrock 1996, 156: "Pseudolus is (*a*) a character in a story (the theatrical level); (*b*) an actor playing with his audience (the metatheatrical); and (*c*) an author playing with his readers (the metacompositional)."

that the people they are looking at are just actors, but to remind them that the people they are looking at are actors *following a script* is an extra twist; the people up there look like free agents, but they are not.[25] The importance of writing in imagining the work of Plautine dramaturgy is picked up in the immediately ensuing scene, when Pseudolus says to Simo that if he has been conniving with Ballio, then Simo can beat him with elm rods, using a bizarre writing simile (543a–545):

> Si sumus compecti seu consilium umquam iniimus,
> aut si de ea re umquam inter nos convenimus,
> quasi in libro cum scribuntur calamo litterae,
> stilis me totum usque ulmeis conscribito.
>
> If we have made any plot or entered any plan or ever made any agreement about this, then just as when letters are written with a pen in a book, so you can write all over every inch of me with nibs made out of elms.

Pseudolus would now, in this scenario, be the *object* of writing; if he lost control then Simo would be the author, not him.[26]

In this crucial soliloquy, then, Pseudolus reminds us that he is the creature of a script, a work springing from the imagination of a playwright, a work that conforms to techniques identified by literary-critical analysis. But from beginning to end Pseudolus is calling attention to his status as a creature of the theater: he is an actor delivering soliloquies; he is a director coaching his star actor, Simia; he is a costume man getting the props right.[27] He is a master of disguise and deception, organizing the tricks by which the real and the fake become confused before our very eyes: the greatest twist in this brilliant play is the fact that there are *three* identical moments where a man comes along dressed in nice military rig and heads to Ballio's door, and twice the man is "real," while once he is a "fake."[28] As Gianna Petrone has demonstrated, the idea of deception underlies all Plautus' plots, and the idea of deception is also the engine that makes the theatrical illusion work: deception is radical in the action on the stage (*fallacia*) and in the trick being played on us, as we are conned into taking the *fabula* for real.[29]

This is a very mysterious operation. Pseudolus keeps reminding us that he is not a real character, that he is only the product of a script. But the paradoxical effect is that the more the character plays up this whole issue, the more characterful and believable he seems to be to the audience, because

25. This reminder that the actors are following a script is in interesting tension with the atmosphere of improvisation that is so important in Plautus, but it is an *atmosphere* of improvisation that is at issue: here I agree fully with Slater (1993, 118 n. 10), Barsby (1995, 62–63), Goldberg (1995, 36–37), Lefèvre (1997, 9–10), and Jenkins (2005, 360), as opposed to Marshall (2006, chap. 6), who thinks rather in terms of actual improvisation.

26. See Fitzgerald (2000, 46–47) on the way Simo's mastery is glancingly reasserted in this image.

27. For Pseudolus as director and costume man (esp. in 751–65), see Wright 1975, 413–14; Slater 1985, 118–19, 144–46; Muecke 1986, 219.

28. To the sheer comic value of repetition (Sharrock 2009, 190–93) is added the thrill of seeing the same repeated stage action mean two completely different things, one "true" and one "false"; Petrone 1983, 70; Muecke 1986, 221.

29. Petrone 1983, 5–15; see also Blänsdorf 1982; Gratwick 1982, 115; Sharrock 1996 and 2009, 2–5.

his zestful glee in puncturing the dramatic illusion is vividly mimetic in its evocation of a certain kind of Zero Mostel energy and élan that we find captivating. The more the figure onstage says, "Look, I'm only an actor in a play following a script," the more we find ourselves believing in him, giving ourselves over to him in all his outrageous chutzpah. I vividly remember seeing an example of this effect in action, in Christopher Hampton's play *Tales from Hollywood*. The play presents a gallery of German and Austrian exiles from Nazism in Hollywood during the war—Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bertolt Brecht—all in various states of depression about their countries' and their own fate, appalled at the kitschy shysters by whom they find themselves surrounded. The linkman throughout the play is Ödön von Horváth (unhistorically, since he had been killed by a falling tree branch in Paris before the war). As part of Hampton's running gag about Brecht, he is introduced by Horváth upon his first entrance with the following words: "Brecht always liked people to be aware that they were in a theater. I said to him more than once, but Brecht, what makes you think they think they're anywhere else?"[30] This is a deft joke on Brecht's famous *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect or distancing effect), a word he used to describe his continual effort to break the theatrical illusion. Every time the character Brecht turns up in the play, he is doing something or other that furthers this *Verfremdungseffekt*. The first time he appears he comes on not through the wings but down the steps of the auditorium, peering at the audience; he rattles one of the flats to remind the audience it is not a real wall;[31] and then he leaves through the auditorium again, instead of through the wings.[32] The next time he appears he is carrying "a square of green linen, which he arranges carefully on the forestage," and then he puts by it a little sign, saying "brecht's garden."[33] The key point is that all of these antics actually make the character Brecht *more* believable, because they capture the truculence and refusal to play along of the historical Brecht: these antimimetic gambits do not straightforwardly puncture our illusion by reminding us that we are really in a theater the whole time, for they make the character that the actor is playing feel more believably real.

The plot of *Pseudolus* goes further than that of any other play by Plautus (except perhaps *Amphitryo*) in getting at this issue of our belief or disbelief in what we see onstage. We see Pseudolus repeatedly stand up and tell us that the whole thing is a lie, it never happened anywhere on earth, he is only an actor wearing a funny mask, and this is just a play, with a playwright and a script and a director and actors and props. But, of course, things are not so simple, because we keep watching, we keep wanting to know what happens

30. Hampton 1983, 40.

31. Hampton 1983, 40.

32. Hampton 1983, 43. I do not find this moment in the published script, but I am certain that when I saw the production in London in 1983 there was a very funny moment of play with the stage props: as Brecht entered through the auditorium, stagehands started removing from the stage all the sofas and tables and so on, and when he was making his exit through the auditorium the stagehands started bringing all the props back on again, prompting Brecht to turn around and declare to the audience, "Look, I'm not even out of the auditorium and they're bringing all this bourgeois rubbish back onto the stage again."

33. Hampton 1983, 47.

next, enthralled as we are by the characterful performance. Pseudolus, just like Hampton's character Brecht, disarms us and draws us in precisely through his exposure of the belief game he and we are playing: as Sharrock well puts it in discussing Pseudolus' first lecture to the audience, in which he tells us that we should not give him any credit (125–28), "For the audience this makes a double bluff, and actually puts us less on our guard against him because of the way it draws us to him."[34]

The play turns on these questions of belief and faith. The Latin word for "believe," *credere*, is a crucial word in the play, for it embraces more than one kind of credit. *Credere* is used very broadly for belief and credit of all kinds. In particular, as may be seen from the *OLD* entries quoted at the beginning of this paper, in Latin you use the same word, *credere*, for extending financial credit to someone and for extending belief-type credit to someone. These are very closely linked ideas, given the personal nature of Roman banking: "No credit could exist without a relation between the persons giving and receiving credit."[35] The same permeability of reference is observable in the Latin noun for "credit": "The Latin word for credit was *fides*. *Fides*, however, was also a function of the trust and authority one was able to command in the sphere of personal relations."[36] The *OLD*'s fourth definition of *credere*—"To give credence to, believe in (a person, report, etc.)"—is necessary for the second definition: "To lend (money) to; . . . to make loans, give credit."[37] Only if you believe in a person will you lend them money. One kind of credit depends on the other.[38] It still does, as shown by the other quotation at the beginning of this article, the remark of Deutsche Bank's chief European economist, Thomas Mayer, uttered as the U.S. subprime market crisis led to a worldwide credit crisis in August 2007: "Trust was shaken today. Credit depends on trust. If trust disappears, then credit disappears, and you have a systemic issue." We may illustrate the point by quoting one of Cicero's best puns, playing on this double meaning of *credere*, as he relates to Atticus the discomfiture he inflicted on Clodius after his acquittal in the Bona Dea trial (Cic. *Att*. 1.16.10):

> "domum" inquit "emisti." "putes" inquam "dicere 'iudices emisti.'" "iuranti" inquit "tibi non crediderunt." "mihi vero" inquam "XXV iudices crediderunt, XXXI, quoniam nummos ante acceperunt, tibi nihil crediderunt."

34. Sharrock 1996, 163; see also Slater 1985, 131–32 on lines 562–65: "He is standing outside any illusionistic space at the moment, but paradoxically his assertions seem charged with more fervor, more weight, and more 'reality.'"

35. Tilly 2008, 5.

36. Bang 2008, 259; on the crucial importance of *fides* in Roman business, see Meyer 2004, chap. 6, esp. 148. In Greek, πίστις has the same double reference as *fides*: see LSJ, s.v. πίστις, "1. *trust* in others, *faith* . . . ; 3. in a commercial sense, *credit*."

37. In the collection of Plautine passages on credit in Bekker (1861), he goes through various categories of credit hinging on the verb *credere* (money being lent, people being entrusted to other people's care, words and thoughts being entrusted, money being promised on credit without being physically handed over); then he has a catch-all category: *interdum credendi verbo et generalis magis vis est, vel certe ad quam speciem referendum sit non liquet* (18). He adduces two passages here from *Pseudolus* (125–28 and 903–4) and one each from *Persa* (477–86), *Cistellaria* (760–61), *Asinaria* (572), and *Curculio* (10).

38. See Thomas (2009, 176), speaking of conditions in Britain: "By the later seventeenth century . . . every household in the land was enmeshed in a web of credit dealing, most of it based on personal trust."

"So you've bought a house," said he. I rejoined, "One might think he was saying that I had bought a jury." "They didn't credit you on oath." "On the contrary, 25 jurymen gave *me* credit and 31 gave *you* none—they got their money in advance!" (trans. Shackleton Bailey)

The kind of theatrical credit that Pseudolus toys with is only one of the two kinds of credit that really matter in this play, because the play also deals extensively with the other kind of credit, the personal credit that leads to financial credit. Plautus and Pseudolus are playing with both meanings at once: Pseudolus is expending all his energy in getting people to "credit" him—with money and with belief. This is all very well, but Plautus goes further, for the most outrageous confidence trick in the play is that Pseudolus exposes his claims to financial credit as brazenly and nakedly as he exposes his claims to the other kind of credit, the belief we are meant to have in him as a character. Just as he is continually telling the audience, in all the ways we have been examining, not to extend to him the credit of taking him for real, similarly he is telling the other characters not to extend to him this other kind of credit, the financial kind.

His most flamboyant self-exposure comes in the first scene, when he announces that he will get the money his young master needs to buy Phoenicium (125–28):

nunc, ne quis dictum sibi neget, dico omnibus,
pube praesenti in contione, omni poplo,
omnibus amicis notisque edico meis,
in hunc diem a me ut caveant, ne credant mihi.

Now, so no one can say he wasn't told, I say to everyone, all adults here present at the meeting, to the whole people, to all friends and acquaintances of mine I proclaim that for this day they should beware of me and not give me credit/believe in me.

Here he is simultaneously telling anyone in earshot not to extend him financial credit and, as Slater puts it, giving the audience "a conjurer's challenge: with nothing up his sleeves, Pseudolus dares the audience not to trust him, and then goes right ahead and traps their imagination with his."[39] Both types of credit are at issue here, theatrical and financial, and they are intextricably bound up with each other.

Pseudolus is soon looking for credit from Ballio, and the credit he wants is both personal and financial, indistinguishably (315–19):

PS. Face hoc quod te rogamus, Ballio,
mea fide, si isti formidas credere. ego in hoc triduo
aut terra aut mari alicunde evolvam id argentum tibi.
BA. Tibi ego credo? PS. Quor non? BA. Quia pol qua opera credam tibi,
una opera alligem fugitivam canem agninis lactibus.

PS. Do what we ask you, Ballio, on my faith, if you are afraid to credit him [Calidorus]. Within three days I'll dig out this money for you from somewhere on land or sea.
BA. I credit you?

39. Slater 1985, 122.

PS. Why not?
BA. Because by god I'd as soon give you credit as tie up a runaway dog with a rope of lamb's guts.

As the play unfolds, Pseudolus and the other characters keep repeating his warning from the first scene, telling everyone not to "credit" him. Simo mimics Pseudolus' own language, saying he will proclaim to everyone that they should not credit him, and Pseudolus tells him to beware, since Simo will actually give him the money (504–19):

SI. Quid nunc agetis? nam hinc quidem a me non potest
argentum auferri, qui praesertim senserim.
ne quisquam credat nummum, iam edicam omnibus.
PS. Numquam edepol quoiquam supplicabo, dum quidem
tu vives. tu mihi hercle argentum dabis;
abs te equidem sumam. SI. Tu a me sumes? PS. Strenue.
SI. Excludito mi hercle oculum, si dedero. PS. Dabis.
iam dico ut a me caveas. . . .
SI. Egon ut cavere nequeam, cui praedicitur?
PS. Praedico ut caveas. dico, inquam, ut caveas. cave.
em istis mihi tu hodie manibus argentum dabis.
CA. Edepol mortalem graphicum, si servat fidem!

SI. What are you going to do now? For no money can be got out of me at any rate, especially now that I've been put on the alert. I shall now proclaim to everyone that no one should credit you a penny.
PS. By god, I won't go down on bended knee to anyone else, so long as *you* are alive. *You* will give me the money; I'll get it off *you*.
SI. *You* will get it off *me*?
PS. You bet.
SI. My god, you can knock out one of my eyes if I give it to you.
PS. You will. Now I tell you to beware of me. . . .
SI. So I can't beware of you, now that I've been forewarned?
PS. I am forewarning you to beware. I'm telling you, I say, to beware. Beware. Look, with those two hands of yours you will give me the money today.
CA. Ye gods, a perfect specimen, if he keeps faith!

Ballio reports that Simo has warned him to beware of Pseudolus, and not to have faith in him (*opere edixit maxumo / ut mihi caverem a Pseudolo servo suo, / ne fidem ei haberem*, 897–99); Ballio says he is going to go inside and warn everyone in his household not to give any credit to/believe in Pseudolus (*nunc ibo intro atque edicam familiaribus, / profecto ne quis quicquam credat Pseudolo*, 903–4). After he has been tricked, Ballio is reminded by Simo of all his warnings (*dixin ab eo tibi ut caveres, centiens?* 1227).

All the way through the play, then, everyone—including Pseudolus—is warning everyone else not to give Pseudolus any credit; and all the way through, in terms of metatheater, the actor playing Pseudolus is standing up there saying, "Don't believe in me: it's only a play," but we are tricked by the lies and deceit of dramatic art into staying put to the end to see what happens. The play is an immense confidence trick: Simo is conned, Harpax

is conned, Ballio is conned, and *we* are conned—as we learn at the end of the play, we cannot even go and join the actors for a drink backstage.

In order to contextualize the play's interest in these different kinds of intertwined credit, financial and theatrical, we need to take stock of the current debate on credit in the Roman monetary system. Whereas the still-authoritative work of Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, avers that "there was not . . . any machinery for the *creation of credit*," and that "money was coin and nothing else,"[40] a number of recent studies have opened up the question anew.[41] Inevitably discussion centers on the early Empire, where the evidence is more plentiful. In this context, William Harris and Peter Temin are convinced that the sophistication of the Roman imperial monetary system and the crucial importance of credit have been seriously underestimated in the scholarly literature. Temin compares conditions in Rome in the early Empire with conditions in eighteenth-century Europe, and he concludes: "The surprising result is that financial institutions in the early Roman Empire were better than those of eighteenth-century France, albeit not as developed as those of eighteenth-century England and Holland."[42] The crucial difference from England in particular is in the lack of government borrowing and the lack of the concept of a national debt, which was pioneered in England in order to pay for the navy.

Certainly, the Romans did not have token money or paper money,[43] nor did they have central banks, government bonds, or ten-year T-notes. But they had paper transfers, not just bullion transfers,[44] and they were able to use credit: at a certain level they knew that financial transactions regularly had a fictional dimension. As Harris and Temin have shown, money was more for them than lumps of bullion or caches of coin; the entire Mediterranean monetary system depended ultimately on *fides* (faith, credit).[45] Temin very tellingly quotes Cicero's description of the financial collapse after Mithridates' invasion of Asia in 88 B.C.E. (*Leg. Man.* 19)—a passage with an eerie contemporary resonance:[46]

> nam tum, cum in Asia res magnas permulti amiserant, scimus Romae solutione impedita fidem concidisse. non enim possunt una in civitate multi rem ac fortunas amittere, ut non plures secum in eandem trahant calamitatem. a quo periculo prohibete rem publicam et mihi credite, id quod ipsi videtis, haec fides atque haec ratio pecuniarum, quae Romae, quae in foro versatur, implicata est cum illis pecuniis Asiaticis et cohaeret; ruere illa non possunt, ut haec non eodem labefacta motu concidant.

40. Finley 1973, 141 (original emphasis), 166.

41. Among the many important new contributions to the debate over how important credit was in the monetary system of ancient Rome, I have found the recent interventions of Temin (2004) and Harris (2006) particularly valuable. See also the chapters of G. Campodeca, A. Petrucci, and D. Rathbone in Lo Cascio 2003; Saller 2005; Harris 2008, chap. 9.

42. Temin 2004, 729. On the general problems involved in the primitivist/modernist debate conducted over the ancient economy, see Schiavone 2000, 46–52, 176–77; Saller 2005; Bang 2008, 19–36.

43. See Seaford 2004, 144, for how the Greeks did not develop token money.

44. Bang 2008, 285–86; see also Barlow 1978, 76–80, on paper transfers in Plautus' day.

45. See Barlow 1978, 269, for *fides* as the basis of the whole structure of the Roman financial system.

46. Temin 2004, 724.

> For at that time, when very many people lost great fortunes in Asia, we know that faith/credit collapsed when payment was suspended. For in a single state many people cannot lose their property and fortunes without dragging down a greater number with them into the same disaster. Defend the republic from this danger, and believe me[47]—you see it for yourselves—this faith/credit and this system of money that operates at Rome and in the forum is intimately tied up with that capital in Asia; the Asian capital cannot come to grief without credit and money here also collapsing, undermined by the same momentum.

The more scanty evidence for the earlier Republic is collected by Charles Barlow, and the recent work of David Hollander takes the discussion a stage further.[48] Plautus is key evidence for those who argue for the early existence in Rome of a credit-based banking and monetary system.[49] The pioneering study by Ernst Immanuel Bekker, *Loci Plautini de rebus creditis*, already sees contracts of credit as fully established in Plautus' day and in principle reaching back even before then. He refers to a key passage in our play (301–4):

> BA. Eme die caeca hercle olivom, id vendito oculata die:
> iam hercle vel ducentae fieri possunt praesentes minae.
> CA. Perii! annorum lex me perdit quinavicenaria:
> metuont credere omnes. BA. Eadem est mihi lex: metuo credere.

> BA. Buy olive oil on credit and sell it for cash: soon enough, by god, two hundred minae can be made present and correct.
> CA. I've had it! The "Under 25 Law" is killing me: everyone's too scared to give me credit.
> BA. Same law applies to me: I'm too scared to give you credit.

Here I am following Malcolm Willcock's interpretation of the difficult line 301: "Buy olive oil on credit and sell it for cash"—in other words, get real money generated out of nothing by credit.[50] Bekker adduces this passage as proof of how early in Rome was the idea that credit could involve not just depositing something with someone on trust and then getting the exact same thing back, but also giving someone a commodity in advance of payment, or getting money in advance of receiving a commodity.[51] Ballio's sarcastic advice to the *adulescens* is in fact the germ of the idea that Pseudolus expounds shortly afterward in his famous soliloquy, of making something out of nothing. If we look again at that crucial passage, where Pseudolus says that he will behave as a poet does, "when he takes up his tablets, [and] seeks for something that is nowhere on earth" (401–2), then we can see that Pseudolus is not just acting like a playwright; he is acting like a banker.

47. This is practically a pun: at the moment that Cicero wants the audience to understand the importance of credit, he asks them to credit his authority on the point—*mihi credite*.

48. Barlow 1978; on the question of credit in particular, see Hollander 2007, 52, 53, 56, 111, 117.

49. Barlow (1978) relies heavily on Plautus throughout; see also Andreau 1968.

50. Willcock 1987, 109: "Neither *dies caeca* nor *dies oculata* is found elsewhere. But good sense is given if we assume that the former was a phrase in use, meaning 'with no stated date for payment', 'on credit', and that Plautus has characteristically invented its opposite '*dies oculata*', meaning the opposite of 'on credit', i.e., 'for ready cash'."

51. Bekker 1861, 22–23.

Bankers too have their *tabulae*;[52] bankers too make something—in this case, twenty minae—out of nothing.

Why is this issue such a key one in *Pseudolus*? Our play is in fact one of only two Plautine plays that we can date externally: *Stichus* was performed in 200 B.C.E. and *Pseudolus* in 191.[53] The date is potentially important because it puts *Pseudolus* in the immediate aftermath of a serious banking crisis that convulsed Rome and Italy in the years 193–192. Livy discusses the crisis under the year 193 (35.7.1–5), and in the next year he reports prosecutions that resulted from the legislation of 193 (35.41.8–10). What Livy reports in these two passages is the fallout from discovering a credit-based dodge that had been at work for some time. Roman citizens had been getting around the laws capping the amount of interest they could charge on loans by transferring the loans they held to citizens of Italian allied states, who as the nominal holders of the loans could charge higher rates. As Temin says in his discussion of this passage, "Livy reported that prohibitions against higher rates were evaded . . . by transferring the loans to foreigners who were not subject to rate restrictions. This has a modern ring to it both because of the picture of financiers evading regulations by going 'offshore' and because it appears to have been easy to transfer ownership of commercial loans among interested parties."[54]

Without insisting on a push-me/pull-you historicizing explanation, one may still certainly suggest that an exploration of the strange fictive nature of credit would be, at the very least, amazingly topical in the year 191 B.C.E. The particular scam that was uncovered in 193 exploited precisely the fictive nature of credit to achieve its ends, as is well brought out by Barlow's description of how it worked: "A Roman would make a loan to a fellow citizen. To transfer the debt the creditor would have his agent cancel as paid a fictitious loan to him, and he would cancel in his own books the loan he made to the citizen. The agent, when he cancelled the fictitious loan to his employer as paid, would enter a new fictitious loan in the name of the original debtor, with the permission of both his employer and the debtor. In this way the obligation was renewed, but now the debtor owed the money to the agent, who could raise the interest."[55] It has in fact long been suggested that Plautus' sharpened focus on credit within this play may be a result of the credit crisis in the years immediately before his production; some mordant lines of Pseudolus' about the chicanery of bankers have been adduced in particular (296–98):[56]

52. See Barlow (1978, 152, 276) and Meyer (2004, 27, 124, 126) on *tabulae* as the books in which bankers kept their accounts.

53. Buck 1940, 1.

54. Temin 2004, 720–21.

55. Barlow 1978, 79.

56. Kiessling (1868, 417) already suggested that the ongoing prosecutions of usurers might explain the special venom of these lines: he is seconded by Willcock (1987, 109). Barlow (1978, 88), following Buck (1940, 64), connects the frequent denunciations of bankers in the (undated) *Curculio* with the crisis of 193 B.C.E.

> Heus tu, postquam hercle isti a mensa surgunt satis poti viri,
> qui suom repetunt, alienum reddunt nato nemini,
> postilla omnes cautiores sunt, ne credant alteri.
>
> Yeah, after those gents got up from the table once they'd had their share of the drink—
> those who get back their own money, and pay out to no mortal soul what they're owed—
> after that, everyone's been more careful not to give credit to someone else.

If the events of the recent past give real edge to the issue of credit in *Pseudolus*, it remains the case that Plautus in general finds the idea of financial credit intriguing. If we compare Plautus with Terence the point comes home powerfully. As Jean Andreau shows, Terence has no bankers as characters in his comedies and makes no reference to banking or credit.[57] It is tempting to see a connection with the same distinction that we can see at work in the closely related area of metatheater, for Terence differs from Plautus here as well, with practically no overt play with metatheater, and with no interest "in the metatheatrical potentialities of disguise," as Frances Muecke points out in her paper on Plautus and the theater of disguise.[58]

If Plautus in general seems to find the idea of financial credit intriguing, with it being a regular feature of his plays as it is not in Terence, *Pseudolus* still remains distinctively different from his other plays for the way that the idea of credit and faith in finance is linked to the idea of credit and faith in the theater. Other plays have extended discussions of the language of lending and credit and good faith, especially *Trinummus* and *Persa*, but we do not find in those other plays the same games with the belief in the characters that we see in *Pseudolus*.[59] This is especially striking in the case of *Persa*, where there is a lot of talk about financial credit (5–6, 44, 402), with disguises at the heart of the plot, and with metatheatrical references galore to dressing up, getting costumes from the stage manager, and rehearsing parts (148–60, 462–69, 673–74, 727–29). *Pseudolus* takes these concerns further than any other play, linking, as we have seen, the kind of faith we have in credit exchanges to the kind of faith we have in the theater. As the overlapping Latin vocabulary of financial and personal faith reveals, credit is, after all, a disconcertingly chimerical affair: people are behaving as if something is actually there when it is not, and their assumptions proceed as if there were a tangible thing present. There is a fictive game involved in saying that we are going to carry on as if the sums involved are real. So long as everyone proceeds on that assumption everything is fine, but as soon as people lose faith and start trying to call in the supposedly real money that backs up the credit, then everything can fall apart, as we saw with the Bank of Northern Rock the month before my lecture at Chicago in October 2007, and then a year after that—yes, the best brains in the world had a year's explicit warning—with

57. Andreau 1968, 520–23.

58. Muecke 1986, 221.

59. Note the careful distinction drawn by Petrone (1983, 66–67) between the remarkably self-referential language with which Pseudolus tells everyone to beware of him and not to credit him (lines 125–28) and the much more self-contained reference of the scene in *Bacchides* (739–41) where the slave Chrysalus dictates a letter to Mnesilochus for his father, telling him to watch out for Chrysalus' cunning plan: Chrysalus is here trying to get the father to be angry with him in order to further his deception.

the threat of total calamity in the financial industry as Lehman Brothers went under. In *Pseudolus*, the overlaps of this kind of faith with the illusionism of the world of the stage are cashed out, because when you are watching the action on the stage, you are likewise behaving as if something is actually there when it is not: what you see onstage is only a token, a substitution, for some more real thing.[60] And if you do not go along with the pretense that the charade onstage is "real," the whole thing collapses.

The confrontation of these two kinds of credit is fundamental to the play, and it is a confrontation that is evidence for a great sophistication on the part of Plautus and his audience. The attitudes toward fiction and belief that the spectators are asked to deploy and examine attest to a society that was used to dealing with modes of thought that we more naturally associate with a modern society. Here we are materially assisted by research into the semiotic and ideological power of money in noneconomic discourses, especially research associated with the "new economic criticism."[61] We now have a considerable body of work devoted to the semiotics of money in all its guises, exploring the self-referential way that all kinds of literary and nonliterary discourses work with the idea of money as a medium of exchange and a token of substitution. In particular, recent scholars of modern Europe have explored the interaction between credit instruments and the development of modern concepts of fictive literature. Mary Poovey examines crises such as the South Sea bubble of 1720, and the Bank of England's decision in 1797 to suspend its promise to redeem its paper notes with gold, showing how the British public received a rude education in fiction and authentication through these jolts to public faith in financial instruments.[62] The discussion of the "rise of fictionality" by Catherine Gallagher reveals the way that the conditions of the early modern period were conducive to the evolution of the kind of fictionality that we see in the novel: as she puts it, "Modernity is fiction-friendly because it encourages disbelief, speculation, and credit. . . . Such flexible mental states were the sine qua non of modern subjectivity. . . . One thinks immediately of merchants and insurers calculating risks, or of investors extending credit on small collateral and reasoning that the greater the risk the higher the profit, but no enterprise could prosper without some degree of imaginative play. . . . Indeed, almost all of the developments we associate with modernity—greater religious toleration to scientific discovery—required the kind of cognitive provisionality one practices in reading fiction, a competence in investing contingent and temporary credit."[63]

60. One could see a similar interest in the substitutive power of the token in the case of the Macedonian officer's seal, which figures so largely in the plot, for to the Romans and Greeks the seal was "a conveyer of multiple meanings, standing for the identity, authority and responsibility of a specific individual or political body" (Platt 2006, 237).

61. The "new economic criticism" is linked above all with Shell (1978 and 1982): see also Woodmansee and Osteen 1999, and for a very helpful overview see Poovey 2008, 10–14. There is important related work on the semiotics of money in ancient Greece by von Reden (1995), Kurke (1999), and Seaford (2004). Shell (1978) goes from the Greeks straight to the modern world, leaving out the Romans.

62. Poovey 2008.

63. Gallagher 2006, 345–47. A case that is pertinent for our own may be found in Gross 2006, which aligns Shylock's games of belief and credit with those of Shakespeare himself.

There are colossal differences between the worlds of Plautus and of early modern Europe, and this analogy, like any other, breaks down at a certain point. Yet the Romans' use of credit and their ability to inhabit fictional frames for specific purposes are well known. One thinks above all of their deployment of "legal fictions," positing such-and-such to be the case for the purposes of a particular *formula*,[64] while John Richardson has made a powerful wider argument for their ability to be at home in manipulating fictional scenarios such as the pro-magistracy or adoption, where someone was allowed to act " 'as though a consul' " or "as though he had been born to the mother and father" of another family.[65] Their familiarity with such provisional modes of thought gives us confidence that the audience of Plautus could have relished the challenge of comparing one kind of credit with another. Indeed, as we have learned from Walsh's book, what Gallagher calls "a competence in investing contingent and temporary credit" was central to ancient poetics from the very beginning. The issues could be reformatted in all kinds of different guises in all kinds of different societies. Almost all of the poets that Walsh treats in his book were living in a prebanking society, while Homer and Hesiod never so much as handled a coin. But the fundamental issues of fictive belief that engaged Walsh's poets kept redefining themselves as Greek and Roman society adapted to new modes of faith, credit, and belief in the always-changing discourses of poetry, money, and law. When Pseudolus' fiduciary masquerades impinge on the strange fictitious world of financial credit, they afford us one more variation on the inexhaustible varieties of enchantment.[66]

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64. On "legal fictions," see Maine 1861, chap. 2 (18–29)—my thanks to Cliff Ando for suggesting this comparandum and to Ted Champlin for the reference; see also Richardson 1995, 119–21.

65. Richardson 1995, 122, 125.

66. See Moore 1998, 197, on "the enchantment with which Plautus' audience responded to the phenomenon of theater itself."

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