Classical Quarterly **46** (i) 152–174 (1996) *Printed in Great Britain*

THE ART OF DECEIT: PSEUDOLUS AND THE NATURE OF READING

Reading is delusion. In order to read, we have to suspend certain standards of reality and accept others; we have to offer ourselves to deceit, even if it is an act of deception of which we are acutely aware. One way of considering this paradoxical duality in the act of reading (being deceived while being aware of the deception) is more or less consciously to posit multiple levels of reading, whereby the deceived reader is watched by an aware reader, who is in turn watched by a super-reader; and so it continues.[1] The ancient art critics, obsessed as they were with deceptive realism, provide in anecdotal form a good example of such multiplicity of perception when they tell stories of birds trying to peck at painted grapes, horses trying to mate with painted horses, even humans deceived by the lifelikeness of works of art.[2] Such stories act as easy but potent signifiers of 'realism' in ancient art criticism, by showing the reactions of a 'naive reader' (the animals) whose deception the aware reader can enter into but also see exposed. In verbal or visual art parading itself as realistic, the artistic pretence of a pose of reality is, at some level, intended to be seen as deceptive; when it is non-realistic, or anti-realistic, or even stubbornly abstract (which it rarely is), art still demands that the reader suspend ordinary perception. But deception alone is not enough: 'deceit' only becomes artistic when a viewer sees through it, for a work of art which is so lifelike that *no-one* realizes it is not real has not entered the realm of art. The appreciation of deception happens at the moment when the deception is undone, or by the imaginative creation of a less sophisticated reader who has not seen through the deceit. That is what happens in comedy, more overtly than in other artforms, but in the same way.

This article will examine Plautus' *Pseudolus* under the sign of deception. That this is an appropriate—not to say self-referential—sign for comedy will be considered shortly, but first this reading of Plautus should be contextualized. Much has been said about the orality of Plautus and of Plautine texts; about his dramatic ancestry in

[1] That is the briefest possible introduction to my form of reader-response criticism. Standard introductory works on the subject include Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, 1980); J. P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore, 1980); E. Freund, *The Return of the Reader* (London, 1987). An interesting way of looking at reader-response criticism is to watch the debate between Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish. It is, I hope, sufficient for the needs of this paper that such statements apply to texts which are generally accepted as being 'fiction'. The extent to which it would apply to other forms of reading (e.g. of critical discourse) would be a question of considerable interest, but I do not propose to address it here. The following works will from now on be cited by name alone: W. G. Arnott, 'Calidorus' Surprise: A Scene of Plautus' *Pseudolus* with an Appendix on Ballio's Birthday', *WS* 95 (1982), 131–48; G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton, NJ, 1952); E. Lefèvre, 'Plautus-Studien I, Der Doppelte Geldkreislauf im *Pseudolus*', *Hermes* 105 (1977), 441–54; N. Slater, in *Plautus in Performance* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); M. M. Willcock, *Plautus: Pseudolus* (Bristol, 1987); D. Wiles, in *The Masks of Menander: Sign and Meaning in Greek and Roman Performance* (Cambridge, 1991); G. Williams, 'Some Problems in the Construction of Plautus' *Pseudolus*', *Hermes* 84 (1956), 424–55; O. Zwierlein, *Zur Kritik und Exegese des Plautus*, particularly Vol. III: *Pseudolus* (Mainz and Stuttgart, 1991).

[2] See E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven & London, 1979), *passim*, but particularly 43, 82. Examples of such stories may be found at Plin. *N.H.* 35.64, Sen. *Contr.* 10.5.27.

improvised Atellan farce; about his status as 'man of the theatre' rather than of the study (Terence providing that neat counterpart which has seemed to give validity to such oppositions); about his paradigmatic status for the inferiority of Roman culture to Greek.[3] In this corner of Plautine studies, the debate has been strongest among Germanic scholars. The view of Lefèvre and his associates is that Plautus often works independently of his Greek sources, and is to be linked closely with native Italian drama.[4] There are attractive elements in this kind of reading, but it should not be allowed to erect a barrier against seeing Plautus as an early element in a long story of the literary relationship between Rome and Greece.[5] The other extreme in the German debate consists in the work of Zwierlein. This massive project seeks to show that Plautine texts are heavily interpolated by later revisionists and that dramatic infelicities are due to this, not to Plautus himself, who, according to Zwierlein, is far more faithful to his Greek models than many people think. Vast swathes are therefore cut through the texts.[6] At various points in this paper I shall note that lines have been excised by Zwierlein: I personally am left feeling that if so much of the *Pseudolus* should be ascribed to later revisers then they did us a service.[7]

The present essay will be concerned with Plautus as literature, applying to his work critical techniques which are at least similar to those applied to the self-consciously literary poetry of the Augustan age. I claim no particular originality for this, but nevertheless there is considerable resistance in the Classical world to the idea of a highly sophisticated Plautus. However little formal education he had, Plautus is unlikely to have been totally ignorant of literature, but wears his learning lightly and ironically, as a good comic should.[8]

[3] It is not, I concede, often phrased like that. It is perhaps unfair to attack an easy target, but the views of people like G. Norwood (*Plautus and Terence* [London, 1932]) remain influential, at least subliminally. Norwood allows Plautus the credit neither of being an effective translator at the level of entire plays, nor of being an original playwright (99). See also D. Bain, '*Plautus uortit barbare*: Plautus, *Bacchides* 526–61 and Menander, *Dis exapaton* 102–12', in D. West and A. J. Woodman (eds.), *Creative Imitation in Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1979), 33.

[4] See E. Lefèvre, E. Stärk and G. Vogt-Spira, *Plautus Barbarus: Sechs Kapitel zur Originalität des Plautus* (Tübingen, 1991). The implication that the Greek plays provide only a veneer of respectability over what is essentially a form of Atellan farce perhaps characterizes the more recent views of Lefèvre. In his article on the *Pseudolus*, he is still very interested in the Greek original, arguing that the Plautine version is drastically different from the Greek in dramaturgy and characterization (particularly pp. 453–4), and that this is done not through Plautine inadequacy but through a desire to concentrate on the triumph of Pseudolus. This view is I think largely accepted by what might be termed the 'pro-Plautus' faction, with which I would align myself. Discussion then remains as to *how* the play achieves this. There is no need in this regard to take up rigid positions, for it is the power of the comic text that it can achieve its goals in different ways for different people. On this matter see also Wiles, 140–4, and briefly A. S. Gratwick, *Plautus: Menaechmi* (Cambridge, 1993), 16. Stärk has argued, in *Die Menaechmi des Plautus und kein griechisches Original* (Tübingen, 1989), that there is in fact *no* Greek original for the *Menaechmi*. For a similar argument for the *Epidicus* see S. M. Goldberg, 'Plautus' *Epidicus* and the Case of the Missing Original', *TAPhA* 108 (1978), 81–91.

[5] In this regard, the essay of Bain, op. cit. (n. 3), is important, both in itself and in the fact of its prominent position in a volume which expressly aims to investigate the relationship between Greek and Roman culture and which prefigures much later work. See now particularly W. S. Anderson, *Barbarian Play: Plautus' Roman Comedy* (Toronto, 1993).

[6] See also the review by Gratwick of Zwierlein's first volume (on *Poenulus* and *Curculio*) in *CR* 43 (1993), 36–40, which is very helpful not least in pointing out that a difficulty in responding to the thesis is that Zwierlein differentiates little in his rejection of lines which many would regard as suspect and those which most would not even consider doubting.

[7] Important work has been done on Plautine drama as theatrical performance, for example by Slater, and by Wiles, 129–46.

[8] I am particularly indebted to some perceptive comments by Adrian Gratwick here.

It is the poet's role and prerogative to deceive. A tradition ascribing specifically deceptive power to poets goes back at least to Hesiod (*Theog.* 27, Muses speaking), ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα ('we know how to speak many false things as if they were true'); is turned against poets by Plato (*Rep.* 377D–403C); is manipulated by Callimachus when he prays ψευδοίμην ἀίοντος ἅ κεν πεπίθοιεν ἀκουήν ('may I lie/speak fiction in such a way as to persuade the listener', *Hymn* 1.64); and later will be turned on its head by Ovid pretending to try to claim that everything he says about his mistress should be taken as the lies of poets (*Am.* 3.12).[9] Plautus seems well aware of the tradition of lying poets and deceptive realism, when in Pseudolus' *poeta* simile (401–5) he describes the poet's work as *fac*[*ere*] *illud veri simile quod mendacium est* ('[to] make what is false like reality', 403). If, as is considered below, Pseudolus stands for Plautus himself, then his warning to all and sundry that he will deceive them (125–8, discussed further below) might contribute to constituting a claim to poetic as well as dramatic power on the part of the playwright. Such deceptive power is enhanced in the workings of comedy: both 'externally' in the construction of the dramatic illusion, and 'internally' in the ruse around which so many Plautine (and other comic) plays are structured. The one reflects the other.

Drama of its essence involves the playing of roles (and often of roles within roles), the assumption of identities not one's own, and the collaborative construction of a pseudo-reality in the imaginative space between playwright and audience.[10] 'Deception', then, stands at the heart of drama. Moreover, ancient tragedy was to a greater or lesser extent predicated upon the confusion of identity, either within a tragic protagonist or in the form of a mistake about identity (in the broad or narrow sense) which in so many cases is crucial to the tragic plot and situation, Sophocles' Oedipus providing the classic example. In tragedy such mistakes and misunderstandings lead through chaos to destruction; in comedy through a creative, carnivalesque chaos into renewal and affirmation. Add to this the point that the comic trickster is a figure with a tradition ranging from early Greek myth to the modern day. In the late medieval and much of the modern period, these tricksters often get their comeuppance, but in antiquity and most of the middle ages they generally did not, for to trick was the prerogative of the comic hero.[11] The essence of comedy is getting away with outrageous behaviour. Deception, then, is the most powerful signifier of the brand of comedy which Plautus espouses.

Tricksters imply dupes; tricksters and dupes require an audience. Since at least the fourth century B.C., it has often been presented as an orthodoxy of the psychology of laughter that the humour of comedy derives from a sense of superiority engendered in the audience, who look down in indulgent but disdainful amusement on the follies of those poor characters who are unaware of the fact that they are part of a play. Even the clever rogue who thinks he knows he is in a play—and plays with that knowledge for the audience's entertainment—is in the end dependent on the response of the audience which allows him to speak to them across the divide. This superiority theory seems to have been particularly prevalent around the turn of the century during the genesis of modern psychology, when thinkers about humour seem to have felt that there was always something a little bit nasty and even demonic about laughter. Up

[9] See also G. B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* (Chapel Hill & London, 1984).

[10] The notion of the 'play within the play' has a long history in the traditions of drama. For a treatment relating to New and Roman Comedy, see J. Blänsdorf, 'Die Komödienintrige als Spiel im Spiel', *A&A* 28 (1982), 131–54.

[11] See E. Kern, *The Absolute Comic* (New York, 1980), 117–208.

until that time, humour had almost always been rationalized in moral/didactic terms, to the effect that it consists in laughing at the foibles of others in order to correct them in others and ourselves. It's okay to ridicule because it improves the world.[12] When these ideas become psychologized rather than moralized they sound a lot nastier, but the theme of audience-superiority, however valorized, has remained part of the story throughout. It is indeed crucial to the workings of comedy, but it may not always be straightforward. This article will argue that Plautus deceives his audience, and that that's funny. It is hardly original to suggest that audiences or readers can be deceived, but in the case of Plautus, where the author's simplicity or incompetence has been an accepted doctrine, such a reading may serve to question the orthodoxy.

Just as deception is programmatic for comedy, so Pseudolus, slave and play, is programmatic for Plautine deception (and comedy), for Plautus himself is constantly highlighted by the connections drawn between the hero and the playwright, who may have acted the part. This connection is most fully developed by Slater, but there have been other metatheatrical readings as well.[13] Not only Pseudolus, but also his protégé Simia and even the cook have been seen as reflections of Plautus himself. It is hardly surprising that that magnificent piece of Plautine *contaminatio*, the musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, has as its hero (which the character 'Hero' so delightfully and pathetically is *not*) a slave called Pseudolus. In the closely related series *Up Pompeii*, the controlling slave played by Frankie Howerd is clearly 'Plautus'.[14] As the quintessential Plautine trickster, Pseudolus is the perfect paradigm for comic deception.

The deceptive power of playwrights, as of all poets, depends on the power of words.[15] The argument of this article is that the *Pseudolus* achieves its goals by word-power, while pretending to be trying to disguise a weak plot. Hence the apparent artlessness, hence inconsistencies, hence structural problems: they are all part of the wool Plautus/Pseudolus pulls over your eyes, for the big joke in the *Pseudolus* is to *look as if* it's a weak plot and play all held together by words. Furthermore, I suggest, this deception and this pose of improvisation are indicative of a peculiarly Plautine brand of comedy and therefore also constitute a statement of originality. Notoriously, there are 'problems' in the construction of the *Pseudolus*, which reflect the Big Question of Plautine originality and art,[16] for while the identification and

[12] Among the more famous modern theoreticians of the psychology of humour are S. Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, translation of the original 1905 edition by J. Strachey (London, 1960) and H. Bergson, *Laughter: an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (London, 1911). There is an excellent survey of ancient and modern theories of comedy, in which the superiority theory looms largest (with 'contrast' or 'cheating of expectation' coming next) in Duckworth, particularly 305–21. This type of defence of comedy has a long and highly respectable history going back to Aristotle in the lost second book of the *Poetics* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (see for example 4. 1127b33–1128b4), and finds perhaps its neatest formulation in Horace's satiric programme, *ridentem dicere uerum* (*Sat.* 1.1.24). There is an extensive treatment of this and other ancient theories of comedy in K. Freudenburg, *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 52–108.

[13] See Slater, 118–46, J. Wright, 'The Transformations of Pseudolus', *TAPhA* 105 (1975), 403–16, J. C. B. Lowe, 'The Cook Scene in Plautus' *Pseudolus*', *CQ* 35 (1985), 411–16, J. P. Hallett, 'Plautine Ingredients in the Performance of the *Pseudolus*', *CW* 87 (1993), 21–6, E. Gowers, *The Loaded Table* (Oxford, 1993), 93–108.

[14] The musical, originally a stage play by Harold S. Prince, was produced in 1966 by Melvin Frank. *Up Pompeii* was a television series from the same era.

[15] Slater entitles his main discussion of the *Pseudolus* 'Words Words Words'. See also Wright (n. 13) for the importance of 'words' in the play.

[16] J. N. Hough, *The Composition of the Pseudolus of Plautus* (Lancaster, PA, 1931), Williams, 424–55.

confrontation of 'inconsistency' are the mechanisms of particular reading strategies, they may also provide a locus for consideration of another way to read Plautus—and farce. One possible and attractive response to the charges of inconsistency (using that term as a shorthand for the various 'problems' for which Plautine incompetence is offered as a solution), is to say with Walt Whitman 'do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am large; I can contain inconsistencies'. Indeed, people sometimes feel that one is morally obliged not to analyse comedy, only laugh at it, and that the problems don't matter. It is the argument of this paper, by contrast, that difficulties in the text constitute a creative chaos, a deliberately 'weak' plot which is pretending to be improvised, where we are dazzled by the power of words.[17]

At some level, the *Pseudolus* has a fairly simple plot almost entirely concentrated on the glorification of its hero.[18] What is magnificent about the play, it will be argued, is its grandiloquent self-presentation, more Aristophanic than Menandrian, and the outrageous apparent simplicity of the intrigue. It *is* also very complex, however, for it is hard to work out where all the minae go, partly because it sounds complex and partly because it is pretending to be improvised, thereby teasing the audience into feeling that it is being made up and that there is a 'real plot' which Plautus has up his sleeve but won't let out. Which of course, on another level, is true. In so much of what Pseudolus says, in much of what I will argue, it is necessary to respond on a metacompositional level as well as a theatrical and metatheatrical one. 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).

The play gives the impression of having lots of different possible plots: Pseudolus' first plan to play out the proper comic topos of 'touching father' is dropped when he discovers that Simo is suspicious (or is it? for in the end he does indeed get a crucial sum of money from the old man: was he dropping a plan, or pretending to?: see 422–6 but cf. 406–8);[19] the chance arrival of Harpax (at 595; *Fortuna* and *Opportunitas* are apostrophized at 667–93) is good luck on the basis of which Pseudolus improvises, throwing his intermediate plan to the winds. But at a metacompositional level the 'chance' arrival of Harpax has already been written in and *of course* there never was any other plan, just as there are no rooms in the stage-

[17] Lowe opens his article on the *Asinaria* with an excellent history of the debate on originality and *contaminatio*, which I shall not repeat here. See J. C. B. Lowe, 'Aspects of Plautus' Originality in the *Asinaria*', *CQ* 42 (1992), 152–75. In addition to the Zwierlein and Lefèvre schools referred to above (nn. 1 and 4), the range of modern critical approaches includes that of Segal (E. Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (Cambridge, MA, 1968)), who makes Plautus' originality lie in the subversive pleasure created for a Roman audience by a representation of 'Greeking it up', and that of the modern metatheatrists, such as Wiles and Slater, whose concerns could perhaps be characterized as based on an interest in the traditions of drama as it affects the playwright in hand, rather than on the exact relationship between Plautine and New Comic texts.

[18] The theme of Ballio's birthday could be held to be a 'different strand' in the plot, but even that works towards the glorification of Pseudolus, who gets the party at the end. See Lefèvre, and Arnott. I would suggest that many, if not most, Plautine plays contain more complex plots in the sense of more action than does the *Pseudolus*, including for example *Aul.*, *Mil.*, *Men.*, *Bacch.*, *Most.* But perhaps complexity is in the eye of the beholder. Dieterle sees three intrigues in the play (those of Simo, Harpax/his master, and Ballio), but one could see them as all part of the same thing: it is Pseudolus' tongue-twisting self-display (704–6) which creates the sense of triplication. See A. Dieterle, *Die Strukturelemente der Intrige in der griechish-römischen Komödie* (Amsterdam, 1980), 17–18.

[19] There is a considerable problem here with 406–8, when Pseudolus appears to know in advance what is going to happen in the ensuing scene, and to speak of it in the past tense.

houses whose fronts provide the backdrop to the action. Likewise, what Pseudolus 'knows' at any moment must always be subject to such a double-take. When Pseudolus pretends to be improvising, Plautine drama does indeed show its ancestry in improvised Atellan farce and its reliance on an Atellan-type mask which is always threatening to make up its own script.[20] It is eminently probable that Plautine actors really did mess around with their lines—and that's particularly fun when the author acts the part of the controlling character: but what this play-text gives us is a *pose* of improvisation.[21] This produces a paradoxical anti-realist realism, by making you think there is something 'real' behind the mask.[22]

The hero of broad-brush comedy achieves his status by deception, while someone else must be deceived as the audience, feeling themselves 'in the know' along with the hero, look on in amused disdain at the dupes. In our play, the audience is indeed induced to appreciate the action by being manipulated into a sense of its own superiority. Pseudolus draws you in, tells you how to laugh with him at Calidorus the classic *amans et egens*, at Harpax the loyal (therefore stupid) servant, at Simo cheated of his money as we knew he would be (what a fool not to realise that wearing that mask, playing the role of *senex*, he *must* be cheated—or rather, worse still, to realise it and nevertheless to fall for it!), at Ballio the pimp calling down comic nemesis on his own head. This is how Plautine drama works, by making it easy for the audience to laugh from their comfortable position of superior knowledge. So the story goes. As audience and as readers, however, we must split our identity and see ourselves deceived also. What is remarkable about this play is the very knowingness of the dupes; they specifically reject the standard comic plot. Simo is already aware that something is afoot even before Pseudolus makes quite sure that the old man knows, with his oracular responses (483–8) and his overt warning. Then Ballio is put in the picture by Simo, in an informative act outside Pseudolus' control. Everything really is happening out in the open.[23] The point of these knowing dupes is partly to enhance the triumph of the trickster, and also perhaps subliminally to increase the link between the dupes on stage and those in the auditorium (or study...).

Frankie Howerd spends entire episodes of *Up Pompeii* trying to deliver The Prologue, since he knows (on a metacompositional level) that the prologue stands on the boundaries of the dramatic illusion and acts as a commentary on the whole play. Plautine prologues are supposed to tell us the story, the background and an assurance of the ending, so that we can enjoy the play in the comfort of our superior knowledge, but that is not what we get from Pseudolus. We get a two-line throw-away introduction telling the audience to stretch their legs now, as a long play by Plautus is about to start:

> Exporgi meliust lumbos atque exsurgier:
> Plautina longa fabula in scaenam uenit.

You'd better get up and stretch your legs: a long play by Plautus is about to come on stage.

This gives us a signal to begin, but nothing about the play, for a trick that is all done with words can hardly be explained beforehand.[24]

[20] Wiles, 142.

[21] See also Gratwick, op. cit. (n. 4), 15.

[22] 'Mask' here should be taken to stand for all the conventions and workings of a play.

[23] The old man and other dupes are often completely ignorant of what is going on: cf. Euclio in *Aul.*, Pyrgopolynices in *Mil.*, Sosia and, differently, Amphitruo in *Amph.*, Theopropides in *Most.*, to mention but a few.

[24] Willcock, 96, wonders whether there might once have been an expository prologue in place of or in addition to the two lines we have. K. Abel, *Die Plautusprologe* (Frankfurt, 1955), 15–17, defends the two lines as Plautine.

This is not to imply, however, that the prologue has nothing to say: indeed, one might even suggest that the less it says the more it 'says', for—like the play, like comedy—it is delightfully incongruous: the entry of the prologue-speaker, signal that the play is about to start, the mountain in labour to give forth a ridiculous mouse of a prologue; then the excessive, macrological play building up a cloudcuckooland of deception on the basis of very little plot. The prologue 'tells' us that this will be a long play, a play with pretensions, but based on very little substance—just like its hero: it tells that it is a play posing as being artless. The offhand, self-deprecating humour of such a prologue is classically comic: that is precisely what we have when Pseudolus refuses to explain to Calidorus about the token acquired from Harpax, on the grounds that to do so would make the play even longer and risk boring the audience (720–1)—an outrageous cheek given the level of redundancy in his own speech![25]

In a sense, however, the true prologue is the opening scene between Pseudolus and his young master Calidorus.[26] The young man is so busy being mournful he cannot manage to articulate the source of his misery, so Pseudolus takes control of the situation and exposes the plot by exposing Calidorus. This is both more and less realistic than a traditional expository prologue: more, because the exposition occurs naturally; less, because the device serves to place the hero firmly outside the play looking in at the characters as do the audience. Exposing the plot from within the play, Pseudolus thus paradoxically places himself more firmly in control, more clearly outside, than he would by performing the same function in a prologue, which is after all generally seen as 'outside the play', for he is here acting on the metacompositional level even while maintaining his *persona* within the play. Pseudolus, as is his wont, begins with far more words than are strictly necessary to meaning (3–12):

> Si ex te tacente fieri possem certior,
> ere, quae miseriae te tam misere macerent,
> duorum labori ego hominum parsissem lubens,
> mei te rogandi et tui respondendi mihi;
> nunc, quoniam id fieri non potest, necessitas
> me subigit ut te rogitem. responde mihi:
> quid est quod tu exanimatus iam hos multos dies
> gestas tabellas tecum, eas lacrumis lauis,
> neque tui participem consili quemquam facis?
> eloquere, ut quod nescio id tecum sciam.

If from your silence I could find knowledge, master, as to what miseries so mournfully macerate you, I would gladly spare the effort of two men, me of asking you and you of replying to me; but now, since that cannot be, necessity forces me to ask you. Answer me: why is it that for many days now you have been mindlessly carrying writing tablets around with you and washing them with your tears, and not allowing anyone to enter your confidence? Speak, so that I may find out from you what I don't know.

This too is programmatic, for with its grandiloquent emptiness it acts in magnificent stylistic contrast to the comic lowliness of the first two lines (perhaps epitomized by *lumbos*), while also putting on display such Plautine linguistic features as alliteration and repetition, as if to say 'here's Plautus, larger than life'. Instead of asking 'what's the matter?', Pseudolus *talks about* asking, but the speech is self-referentially non-communicative, for while supposedly seeking information it discourses upon silence

[25] Pseudolus' opening speech, which will be discussed further below, is a good example of his exhibitionist verbosity. But on another level his macrological self-expression is not redundant, for it is the point of the play. Perhaps I might suggest, further, that the very use of a slave as the main and controlling character in comedy, and as the sign for the playwright, is itself a piece of self-deprecating humour.

[26] See briefly Abel, op. cit. (n. 24), 16–17; and for a good discussion of the scene Slater, 119.

and knowledge. In reply, all Calidorus can muster is a pathetic *misere miser sum, Pseudole.*[27] It transpires that the source of Calidorus' misery can be found in a letter, which he asks Pseudolus to read. The first action of the plot, then, and the founding moment of the play, depends on a text. Pseudolus is not the author of this text, as he is of the play as a whole, but its reader, its interpreter who takes control of its meaning and mediates that for the audience. The letter introduces a good range of comic ingredients, for it is a note from Calidorus' beloved, a prostitute, saying that she is about to be sold to a Macedonian soldier and that Calidorus must rescue her. How much exposition do you need? What is it to 'know the plot'? With these ingredients, the plot is laid out and we 'know' that Pseudolus will help Calidorus to get the girl, to the discomfiture of father, pimp and soldier, and any other agelast characters who may come along. Pseudolus forces the prologue by claiming not to know the situation, but at the metacompositional level he clearly does know, for what are young men in comedy ever upset about? Love is a fixity of the comic text. Throughout this very funny scene, we as audience are encouraged to read along with Pseudolus and laugh in superior amusement at the folly of the young man, while appreciating Pseudolus' own manipulation of the text into material for humour. He is always in command of the meaning of what he says, and indeed even of what Calidorus says more than the young man is himself. The joke about the letters trying to procreate is an obvious example of Pseudolus' control of meaning.[28] It may prepare us for a more subtle suggestiveness under the farcical raising of Calidorus' hopes when Pseudolus says *tuam amicam uideo*—only to dash them with the explanation that she is lying, even sleeping, stretched out in the wax (35–6). There is an erotic naughtiness about the image which Pseudolus sends out to the audience at Calidorus' expense. Calidorus' response is paratragic (38–9):[29]

> Quasi sostitialis herba paulisper fui:
> repente exortus sum, repentino occidi.

Like grass in summer I was for a moment: suddenly I rose up, and as suddenly died.

Calidorus thinks he is playing the proper part of a suffering lover, but it would be a feeble audience which did not pick up a hint of sexual rising and falling in the lines Pseudolus/Plautus has fed to him. (Not that Calidorus is supposed to realise it.) Pseudolus comes to the scene supposedly not knowing what is going on or is going to happen, but acts throughout as if he were the one with knowledge while Calidorus is not, and for the moment we are privileged to share his superior intellectual position. The trouble with Pseudolus, as I shall say again, is that you never know when he is telling the truth. It is the metatheatrical game of this text to show Pseudolus as claiming more knowledge than he has, and its metacompositional game to pretend that Pseudolus has more knowledge than he is showing—which, in so far as he is Plautus, is true.

How do you know whether Pseudolus is telling the truth, whether Pseudolus/Plautus is making it up as he goes along, except by the fact that this—at the moment of your reading—is a fixed text? Although it in fact costs Pseudolus very little effort to do the comically necessary (get the money, get the girl, triumph over authority), it is the fun of the play that it all *looks* very complicated, so let's take this

[27] Slater, 119–20, helpfully exposes the interplays of comic and paratragic 'misery' in this scene. He too sees Pseudolus' manipulation of tragic, paratragic and generally elevated language as consciously programmatic. Plautus stakes his claim to comic ground, but on his own terms.

[28] 23–4: *ut opinor, quaerunt litterae hae sibi liberos:/ alia aliam scandit.* There might be a pun between *liberos* and *libros* here.

[29] So Slater, 119.

terribly seriously and go through what actually happens as regards the trick. The first thing to remember is that in this game, the exchange rate is one girl equals twenty minae. The one stands quite happily for the other.[30] So: first of all Pseudolus offers to procure for Calidorus one girl or twenty minae. This will do. We may reasonably assume that whoever gets to Ballio with twenty minae first will get the girl: the fact that we have not heard previously of a deal between Ballio and Calidorus is neither here nor there.[31] Next Pseudolus tells Simo he will get the money from him if necessary. He then places a bet with his master, apparently making the terms that Pseudolus will get the money from Simo and cheat the pimp out of the girl, so that Simo will give him—twenty minae, the value of one girl. Before examining that scene further, let us quickly follow the remaining movements of the money: five minae are borrowed from Charinus; because Pseudolus has got the girl (with these five and the letter from the Macedonian soldier), Simo must then give Pseudolus twenty minae; a further twenty minae are to be paid by Ballio to Simo; Ballio must also pay twenty (the original fifteen plus the five brought by the real Harpax) back to the Macedonian soldier; and finally presumably five minae will be paid back to Charinus.[32]

Pseudolus promises Simo that he will pull off two outrageous stunts by his skill and cunning: get the money from Simo and the girl from Ballio. How come, then, Simo gives Pseudolus the money at the end, when only half of the bargain has been fulfilled? (The girl has been got but not the money.) But surely this bet precisely *is* the extortion of twenty minae from Simo. The act of gaining the reward is the fulfilment of the act of deception. Moreover, Pseudolus is cleverly vague about what precisely his side of the bet consists in, although quite clear about Simo's side.[33] Of course, he *appears* to be being quite clear about his side (like all salesmen), when he promises that *effectum hoc hodie reddam utrumque ad uesperum* (530).[34] And this he certainly fulfils. This is a magnificently simple way of extorting the money from Simo—all done by the power of words. The dramatic force of the scene, where Simo is deceived before his own opened but blinded eyes, is reminiscent (at least, it reminds me) of the crucial moment in Euripides' *Bacchae* when Dionysus suddenly takes control of Pentheus with the offer of spying on the women in the hills. With no great effort, with no obvious climax, the controlling character traps his victim and the play in a net of a few words, and from then on there is no escape. Such is the trap set for Simo. Perhaps what makes it so powerfully programmatic a trap is the fact that Simo is so well prepared for having his money taken from before his eyes without his noticing. Even

[30] Twenty minae is a standard price for a girl in comedy. See F. Ritschl, *Opuscula Philologica* II (Leipzig, 1868), 308–9.

[31] See Williams, 427, where this problem is analysed as an indication of *contaminatio*. On the related subject of why Calidorus expresses surprise at hearing Ballio boast of having sold Phoenicium to the Macedonian, when Calidorus must already know about this from the letter, see Arnott, who argues against *contaminatio* here, claiming that Plautus, being, in common with other ancient playwrights, less concerned about realism than about dramatic effect, uses this surprise as a device to convey to any of the audience who missed it first time the necessary but complex information about the prior sale. See also T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy* (Manchester, 1953), 190.

[32] Lefèvre, 444, also remarks on the fact that no further mention is made of the debt to Charinus. His explanation is that it would have been sorted out in the original, but that Plautus has made changes such as this in order to allow near-complete concentration on the triumph of Pseudolus.

[33] See Williams, 435. See also Slater, 130. Lefèvre, 450–1, considers that the deceit of Simo (which he claims is not really a deceit at all) would probably not have been needed in the original, but is a Plautine invention to enhance Pseudolus. He usefully points out the balance between 508–11 and 1313–18, the forging and conclusion of the bet respectively.

[34] The line is excised by Zwierlein, 21–4.

before the confrontation between Simo and Pseudolus, the old man is suspicious about Calidorus' affair and Pseudolus' involvement, and is aware of the tricky nature of the slave. As he says to his friend Callipho, this man will tie you up in his words (464–5):

> conficiet iam te hic uerbis, ut tu censeas
> non Pseudolum sed Socratem tecum loqui.

This man will finish you off with words, until you think you are talking not to Pseudolus but to Socrates.

Then Simo's suspicions are confirmed by a Pseudolus playing the role of Delphic oracle, with his solemn, mock-impersonal response of *ναὶ γάρ* ('yes indeed', or perhaps 'it is so') to each of his master's questions (483–8). Not only would the scene of a Roman pretending to be a Greek pretending to speak from the seat of wisdom be a great deal funnier than a Greek playing that role, but also the authoritative truthfulness which such Delphic responses convey within the 'Greek' world of the play become, in the 'Roman' world of the audience *and of Pseudolus* a joke which shows the power and deceitfulness of the speaker. Pseudolus isn't conveying anything earthshattering here, but he really is the fount of all wisdom within the play. He is the only one who exhibits the most famous of Delphic virtues: know thyself. Simo thinks he has gained a triumph in forcing Pseudolus' confession (489), and to clinch the matter he passes judgement on the slave with the proclamation that no-one is to lend him a single penny (504–6: see further below). Pseudolus immediately counters with the overt threat to get the money from Simo himself (so he won't be asking anyone else). Then comes the great warning: *iam dico ut a me caueas* ('now I warn you to beware of me', 511), repeated a few lines later (unless you follow Zwierlein) with the same in the form of his own proclamation: *praedico ut caueas. dico, inquam, ut caueas. caue./ em istis mihi tu hodie manibus argentum dabis* ('I proclaim that you should beware. I say again, that you should beware. Beware! You yourself will give me the money this very day with your own hands'). If Simo were not forewarned we would need a more complex plot in order to contrive the extortion. As it is, nothing need detract from the magnificence of Pseudolus.

Before this scene, Calidorus has been pushed out of the way by being sent 'to find a friend'. This friend, Charinus, turns out to be not what was wanted (at some level), so the sending for him must, it is often felt, be an intrusion from another original, or a strand in the 'proper' original of the *Pseudolus* which Plautus did not want to follow through but did not bother to remove, or be a sign of general carelessness.[35] While it would be fascinating to know whether and in what manner Plautus is alluding to a Greek play where such a friend was sought (and used? discarded?), we must be content with trying to see how Plautus has used his material creatively. I suggest three motivations, from plot, character, and metacomposition. First, 'plot': Charinus, the friend, will provide both Simia, who will act as Pseudolus' deputy in the deception of Ballio, and the five minae which will enable him to play out his role. Pseudolus, when he sends Calidorus away to find a friend, 'doesn't know' that this is what he will need after Harpax has come along with the letter, of course... When Calidorus arrives with Charinus, Pseudolus has the letter and has changed his plans (or so he claims to us). We do need both Simia and Charinus: one for the trick, the other to provide the money. Next, 'character': everything Calidorus does has to be useless: if he provided Simia himself—and the original request sounds very like what is actually required and what appears in the form of Simia—that would be far too helpful a role for the

[35] See for example Hough, op. cit. (n. 16), 76–9, Dieterle, op. cit. (n. 18), 112 and n. 414, Williams, 432–3; otherwise Slater, 134–5.

adulescens to play. Like everything else, he gets it 'wrong'.[36] This is, after all, a play which exuberantly parades its comic stereotypes. Finally, 'metacomposition': since Pseudolus is—or pretends he is—making up the plot as he goes along, he thinks (at the compositional level) 'let's have the comic ingredient "helper"',[37] and so this 'false start' in composition is only unmotivated in so far as to have such an unmotivated character is an integral part of a deliberately shaky plot. After the duping of Harpax the plan is supposed to have changed, and 'as luck would have it' here is a man from whom one may acquire what is needed. I have used inverted commas here on words for 'luck' and 'knowledge' to indicate the metacompositional level of activity which, I suggest, should be read alongside the quasi-realist level of the 'inside' of the play. The interplay of these levels comes near the surface when Pseudolus refuses to explain what he plans to do with the *homine astuto, docto, cauto et callido* (385), even when asked by Calidorus (387–8):

> CA. cedo mihi, quid es facturus? PS. temperi ego faxo scies.
> nolo bis iterari; sat sic longae fiunt fabulae.

CA. Tell me, what are you going to do? PS. I'll let you know later. I don't want to go through it twice; these plays are long enough as it is.

(Only Pseudolus can use the question-and-answer method of exposing the plot.) The metatheatrical joke about long plays also creates the illusion of quasi-realism on which Pseudolus' deceptive power rests, for we are tempted to think 'what was his plan at this time?'. It turns out he didn't have one—or did he?[38] The play is, after all, only pretending to be improvised. Five minae, an actor and various props are borrowed from Charinus. How convenient...

Pseudolus then manages to procure the girl by means of the letter, Simia (dressed as Harpax) and the five minae. Meanwhile, Ballio and Simo engage in a bet: Ballio will give Simo twenty minae if Pseudolus manages to get the girl (1070–5). This is parallel first to the bet between Pseudolus and Simo, and also to the opening scene where Pseudolus makes Calidorus ask him for twenty minae (equals one girl).[39] Both 'underlings' take pleasure in having the social superior ask him for a favour, but, naturally, only Pseudolus gets away with it. Ballio, unfortunately for him, is so overconfident that he offers double the normal exchange rate: twenty minae and one girl (1075). 'If Pseudolus cheats me I'll give you twenty minae, and you can have the girl.' The offer of the girl as well as twenty minae is excised by Zwierlein, but in this case he is not alone in being suspicious of the line. Willcock offers the possibility that there are not really two offers, but two ways of saying the same thing,[40] or that 'the line may be a Plautine addition, intended to lessen the inconsistency of the ending of the play'. We should remember that at this point in the play Ballio 'knows' he has escaped from Pseudolus, because the girl has already been claimed by the Macedonian's envoy, and so he thinks his offer is quite safe. Of course, it was really Pseudolus' envoy Simia who took Phoenicium, and the audience know Ballio has already been outwitted. The dramatist's aim is not to tie up loose ends (which are only loose if you want them to be), but to create the theatrical effect of Ballio offering as

[36] That is, wrong on the level of reality on which he is working, although right for the ultimate working of the play.

[37] On which see Dieterle, op. cit. (n. 18).

[38] He claims not to have a plan at 366–400 and at 566–7, on which more later.

[39] 114–16 PS. *roga me uiginti minas,/ ut me effecturum tibi quod promisi scias./ roga, obsecro hercle. gestio promittere*; 1070–3 BA. *roga me uiginti minas,/ si ille hodie sit potitus muliere./ siue eam tuo gnato hodie, ut promisit, dabit./ roga, opsecro hercle. gestio promittere.* The parallel is very close. 1071–3 are excised by Zwierlein.

[40] Willcock, 131: he points to a plausible parallel with Pseudolus' promise to Calidorus.

a gift—which a pimp would never do—the girl he has already lost. Only Pseudolus has the right to make offers with confidence, because only Pseudolus 'knows' the script. While it is true that no mention is later made of the gift of Phoenicium, there is the enigmatic response to the complaint of Ballio about Simo's demand that he hand over the money (1224–5):

> BA. auferen tu id praemium a me quod promisi per iocum?
> SI. de improbis uiris auferri praemium et praedam decet.

BA. Would you really take from me the prize which I promised in jest? SI. From wicked men it is right to take both prize and plunder.

The 'prize' and the 'plunder' could be simple Plautine repetition, but it could also be a veiled reference to the money *and* the girl. It suits Roman comic justice that the pimp should lose both.

The result of all this is that Simo has to give Pseudolus twenty minae.[41] This would allow him to repay the debt to Charinus, and have fifteen minae left over. There is no suggestion that Simo objects in principle to Calidorus having the girl, only to disreputable behaviour on the way—and to paying. This should leave Pseudolus and Calidorus with fifteen minae to play with. The fact that they do not expressly celebrate having this amount is an indicator that they are not quite so concerned with the arithmetic of the question as scholars have been. Rather, it is the thwarted characters, Simo and still more Ballio, who have to deal with the details of exact sums of money. Trying to sort out inconsistencies is part of the act of reading, but we have to accept the playwright laughing at us for our pedantry. Perhaps that is the greatest deceptive act of the play—sending the critic on this wild-goose chase through the minae.[42]

And so the play ends in triumph for Pseudolus over the forces of authority and killjoy, while the audience join vicariously in his celebration. We—those with whom we have identified—have come out on top. Of course, 'we always knew they would'. But Pseudolus twice warns us not to trust him, and I think we should take this warning 'seriously'. The first warning comes at the culmination of the opening scene, when Pseudolus has taken on his role for the play by promising to procure the girl for Calidorus (125–8):

> 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 caueant, ne credant mihi.

Now, so that no-one can claim they were not told, I say to all, to all adults present in this assembly, to all the population, to all my friends and acquaintances I declare, that they should beware of me on this very day, and not trust me.

There can be no distinction here between imaginary passers-by on the stage (not that there are any), and the audience out front. Don't trust Pseudolus. And he wants you to be warned, because otherwise you are just a sitting target. But then, 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. The warning comes a second time in even more outrageous fashion, for it is addressed to the primary object of the deceit, the old man

[41] The fact that he is upset at having to do so, when after all he will (or should) get the money from Ballio anyway, may be ascribed to the power-relations between himself and Pseudolus, rather than to financial exactitude.

[42] See also Lefèvre, particularly 443–6. He is even driven to drawing a diagram of the movements of money.

Simo (511ff.). Simo already knows there is something going on, implicates Pseudolus in it, is provided with details to support his suspicion, and finally told to watch out, for Pseudolus will get the money from him today. Simo has just unconsciously echoed Pseudolus' own words (at 125–7) when he says *edicam omnibus* not to lend Pseudolus any money. At the metacompositional level, Simo's problem is that because he didn't write the script, he does not have control over the interactions of words and scenes, and his edict is destined to rebound on him.[43] This warning, I suggest, must apply also to us, as audience.

At this stage in the argument: Enter Callipho. This character, friend to Simo (so balancing Charinus), constitutes perhaps the most problematic of all Pseudolian problems. What is he doing there? Why is he expressly told to hang around, when in fact he is not used again? This looks like a case asking to be analysed as *contaminatio*, in the broad sense of Plautine messing up of Greek plays: he must have had a function in the original of the *Pseudolus* or in some other Greek play, but Plautus either foolishly or carelessly ignored it.[44] Perhaps he did, but there are other explanations, metacompositional and metaphorical.[45] The first is straightforward, and continues a point made above, that Pseudolus is posing as making this up as he goes along. Bring in the stock character of 'affable old man' just in case he is needed. When Pseudolus, acting as internal audience as is his wont, first overhears the two old men talking, he makes the pithy comment *lepidum senem!* (435). Callipho has just been lecturing Simo on the wisdom of not worrying about Calidorus' behaviour, because that's how young men are. Within the play, Pseudolus exclaims 'what a nice old chap!'; on the metatheatrical level, however, he announces to the audience the arrival of the *lepidus senex*, the affable old man.[46] The 'affable old man', less immediately well-known than his angry counterpart but nonetheless important, is a pro-comic character who is on the side of the lovers (and the tricksters), and lives a hedonistic life, but somehow still manages to be respectable.[47] The role Pseudolus/Plautus finds for this stock character, I suggest, is to stand metaphorically for the audience.[48] By encouraging members of the audience to identify with this character, the playwright can draw them into the comic world without placing them in an uncomfortably transgressive situation, as for example too close an association with the clever slave, or even the foolish young man, might cause. The angry old man, by contrast, must be *other* people. There is some subtle people-management going on here: the playwright himself, as we all know, is identified with the clever slave, giving

[43] Ballio also tries to make a proclamation (*edictionem*, 143) to his own slaves that they should celebrate his birthday and generally bring him lots of money. Since he is the villain, his proclamation will rebound on his own head when he loses money and celebration at the end.

[44] See for example Williams, 444, Webster, op. cit. (n. 31), 190, Arnott, 144; all offer variants on the view that Callipho returns as the banker for the various transactions or as the arbiter between Simo and Pseudolus, as is suggested by his support for Pseudolus' cause in 537 and his promise of 553–4 to pay up if Simo refuses to do so. Lefèvre, 446–50, sees the cutting out of Callipho as part of a wider removal of characters who would have been present at the end in the Greek play, but who are eclipsed by the concentration on the greatness of Pseudolus.

[45] My argument here would be by no means incompatible with there also existing a Greek play in which a character who is recognizably our Callipho did indeed have a later part to play.

[46] Incidentally also pointing to the stock nature of Simo's role as *iratus senex*, the angry old man—not that he plays it in a closely conventional way.

[47] See Duckworth, 247–8 on what he terms the *senex* as 'helpful friend'. He also rightly points out that some fathers are indulgent, not angry, and so the *iratus senex* is not in practice as 'stock' as it is in most people's perceptions (ancient and modern).

[48] This suggestion was made by W. Theiler, 'Zum Gefüge einiger plautinischer Komödien', *Hermes* 73 (1938), 269–96, at 275.

him a role which is at once controlling and also (at some level) self-deprecating (identification with a character who would in real life be despised). The playwright's claim for authoritative control, then, is made less threatening by this joking imputation of lowly status to himself. The audience, by contrast, is to identify not with the duped, the foolish, the satirized, nor with the low-class and despised, even if they are the clever characters. Rather, we are to see ourselves as semi-detached observers, comfortable, indulgent, but in the end respectable. Evidence for Callipho's role as audience is not hard to find: *lubidost ludos tuos spectare, Pseudole* ('it's a pleasure to watch your plays, Pseudolus', 552); *studeo hercle audire, nam ted ausculto lubens* ('I'm dying to hear, for I love listening to you', 523a); when Pseudolus is getting Simo to promise the money, Callipho chips in to encourage his friend to agree, just like a pantomime audience. Pseudolus specifically asks Callipho to hang around (and this is the problem), or rather to *dare operam* to him (547) for this one day. He is asking for his audience's attention, as so often at the conclusion of a prologue.[49] The 'audience' says he had thought of going off to the country—the place of work and not-holiday—but Pseudolus persuades him to forget about business for today and to enjoy the holiday and the play. If Callipho does not appear again, that is because the audience is now well hooked.[50]

This play is made of hot air wrapped up in magnificent words, in the spirit, consciously or otherwise, of Aristophanes' *Birds*: the 'cunning plan' is largely fast-talking by Pseudolus. Take the exuberant example of non-communication when Pseudolus 'informs' his master of his success (702–705b):

> Io io te te, turanne, te rogo qui imperitas Pseudolo;
> quaero quoi ter trina triplicia tribus modis tria gaudia
> artibus tribus tris demeritas dem laetitias de tribus
> fraude partas per malitiam, per dolum et fallaciam

Hail, hail to thee, my lord, on you I call who rule over Pseudolus; I seek to give thee happiness thrice earned by triple arts from triple foe three times thricefold triple joys by triple means won by fraud through wickedness, through deceit and trickery.

Pseudolus gives words to pull the wool over the eyes of friends as well as enemies.[51] The crescendo by twos and threes, by anaphora and untranslatable alliteration, all

[49] Zwierlein, 7–13, although not raising the possibility of metatheatrical function in the Callipho scene, nevertheless also argues against *contaminatio* or any other messing, on the grounds that Callipho's role is simply to act as guarantor of the pact between Simo and Pseudolus.

[50] This could all be made explicit by having Callipho exit to sit in the audience, as is suggested by W. Görler, 'Plautinisches im Pseudolus', *WJA* 9 (1983), 89–105, at 98 n. 29.

[51] In this regard, he conforms closely and programmatically to the (non-conformist) model of the hero of Old Comedy. Lack of communication serves as an example of the difference-in-sameness of comedy and tragedy: in tragedy, characters fail to communicate either through wilful manipulation of language to another's (and often their own) tragedy, as for example Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, or, more commonly, through accident and personal blindness, as for example Aeschylus' suppliants in their play, or Sophocles' Deianira in *Trach.*—and these failures result in tragedy. See for example J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York, 1988), ch. 2, 'Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy'. In comedy, by contrast, the hero majestically spurns the ordinary mortal need for straightforward communication—and triumphs. The use of puns and non-words in the *Birds* is a classic case of this, but it can be seen also in, for example, Dicaeopolis' private peace (which takes the form of wine) in *Acharnians* and even his sophistic 'persuasion' of the chorus to his point of view. In the same tradition is Pseudolus' spurning of ordinary turns of speech, for example at 123–4: PS. *de istac re in oculum utrumuis conquiescito./* CA. *oculum? anne in aurem?* PS. *at hoc peruolgatumst minus.* This might even be a programmatic statement of Plautine difference from Menander, whose language is indeed *peruolgatum.*

serve to tell Calidorus nothing at all, or only that Pseudolus is in control. It is so hard to follow the workings of the plot, not because it is a particularly involved plot, but because of all the clever talking, because Pseudolus is pulling the wool over our eyes also. Never more so, I suggest, than when we are least on our guard, when he speaks in monologue, for there is a convention that a character addressing the audience in monologue is by and large telling the truth.[52]

Pseudolus, with magnificent disregard for realism, goes off stage to think up a plan, leaving 'the flute-player here' to entertain the audience (573). He then returns in triumph claiming that he has it all sorted out.[53] Everything is going to be alright, all his worries of the last monologue are set aside and the end is in sight. He will battle down Ballio 'that enemy of mine and of all of you' (584). With such a phrase he both makes explicit the fact that he is addressing the audience and also involves us in the play by eliding the difference between stage action and real life—a pimp is our enemy. (But his song is remarkable for its total lack of detail.) Then in comes Harpax with the letter to claim the girl, and Pseudolus' first plan is thrown to the winds as the 'true' plot of the play gets under way. If one is seeking it, this looks like a classic example of *contaminatio*. But I think it's all a con-trick. Pseudolus is deceiving us into thinking he has a plan. He has no more idea of what to do now than when he went in (and no less: could he have been lying to us then as well?) but he wants us to think he has so that we can see how wonderful he is, and how resourceful when the real plot presents itself. After all, he did warn us to beware of him. The fun of interacting with Pseudolus—I suggest—is that you never know when he is telling the truth. To respond in this way involves a splitting of levels: it is the illusionist (or anti-illusionist) game of the play to tempt us to think about whether Pseudolus 'really' has a plan or not.

We might wonder why Plautus has structured the play like this. He could have had Harpax come along while Pseudolus is still on stage worrying, since the scene where Pseudolus overhears him and immediately improvises would work just as well. It could be because a break is needed, but Plautus is enough of a man of the theatre to make a virtue of a necessity, and indeed Pseudolus could simply have come out saying 'well, I still haven't a ghost of an idea, but I'm sure something will turn up', and in comes Harpax.[54] The reason for the deceit is power. If Pseudolus can deceive even his audience, then he is greatest of all tricksters ever.

The possibility of deceit in his monologue needs investigation from two angles, dramatic and poetic. The dramatist needs a way of communicating it on stage, but with only the merest hint, or it spoils the point, for we have to be able to think (or at least pretend to think) that we are the only one to see the point; or, to look at it another way, simultaneously to see and not to see the deception. A little shrug or a

[52] Duckworth, 105–7; Wiles, 53: 'Everything that happens on the Greek stage is manifestly laid out for an audience's benefit. Characters tell the audience exactly what they are thinking and planning. Motivations are complex rather than concealed or withheld.' I have not been able to consult J. Blundell, *Menander and the Monologue* (Göttingen, 1980); B. Denzler, *Der Monolog bei Terenz* (Zurich, 1968).

[53] Eight lines out of twenty in this song are excised by Zwierlein, but it makes little difference, except to detract from the power of Plautus.

[54] On the possibility of a need for a break here, see R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome* (Cambridge, 1985), 38. He rightly comments that the metatheatricality of the play at this point in particular makes the contrived break and the reference to the flute-player 'stylistically integrated and less surprising than it would be in many other contexts'. Paradoxically, Pseudolus creates the dramatic illusion by breaking it. See also Slater, 132 and n. 19.

wink (or the masked equivalent) should do it. The critic, however, needs more persuasion. One place this may be found is in parallel scenes, for the play, like so many others, is structured around balanced and echoing characters and scenes, and we should not be afraid of using one as a clue to another. Take the scene where Pseudolus tells Calidorus he has a plan and then when the young man goes away confides in the audience that actually he has no idea (381–408). This immediately follows the unsuccessful *flagitatio* against Ballio,[55] on whose departure Pseudolus unexpectedly declares that *illic homo meus est* ('that man is mine', 381). This is the passage referred to above, where Pseudolus refuses Calidorus' request for exposition of the plot—suspiciously, as we might now surmise. As soon as he has got rid of the young man, Pseudolus turns to the audience and admits with apparently total candour that he hasn't a clue how to get the money or the girl.[56] He lied to Calidorus: is he telling the truth to us? Or was the earlier speech true and the later one not true?

The next time we have Pseudolus to ourselves, after the bet-scene with Simo and Callipho, he is even more 'honestly' playful with us (562–8):

> suspicio est mihi nunc uos suspicarier
> me idcirco haec tanta facinora promittere,
> quo uos oblectam, hanc fabulam dum transigam,
> neque sim facturus quod facturum dixeram.
> non demutabo. atque etiam certum, quod sciam,
> quo id sim facturus pacto, nil etiam scio,
> nisi quia futurumst.

I suspect that you suspect that I just promised to perform such great deeds of crime, in order to entertain you while I present this play, and that I am not really going to do what I said I was going to do. I shall not swerve from my purpose. And certainly, as far as I know, how I am going to do it—I haven't a clue, except that it shall be.

He pretends to think we might be thinking he is not going to do what he says he is. We are accused of suspecting him of deceit, forsooth! The speech plays cunningly with the dramatic illusion, since he says we think he has just been saying these things to entertain us for the duration of the play, and not because he really is going to fulfil his promise. Of course, both are true, but at different levels of reality—or rather playishness. He still maintains—παρὰ προσδοκίαν—that he hasn't a clue *how* he is going to work the plot through, but we have just seen him set at least part of it up. The apparent certainty of *atque etiam certum, quod sciam,/ quo id sim facturus pacto*... is undercut by *nil etiam scio,/ nisi quia futurumst*, which is itself undercut by the very overt metatheatricality of the scene. Of course he knows.

To what extent the original audience on their one viewing of the play could be alert to this type of deceit would depend very much on the actual production, and on the audience's expectations, which may not have been so universally naive as is generally now believed. For any repeat viewing/reading, however, once we are alerted we may see subliminal hints or winks of deceit in other statements of Pseudolus. In the celebration monologue before Harpax arrives, Pseudolus says a great deal without telling us anything; but he includes the claim that he speaks relying on 'fraudulent wickedness' (581–2: *fretus*...*fraudulenta malitia*). On the surface, this is just typical Plautine extravagance of language, but could it also hint that this is a deceitful trick, i.e. one that does not exist?

Perhaps the most informative speech (and perhaps the most deceptive), is the one Pseudolus addresses to the audience immediately after Harpax leaves (at 667). He

[55] According to Slater, 125, it is unsuccessful because it is Calidorus' idea, not Pseudolus'.
[56] This passage will be discussed further below.

admits that Harpax's arrival has saved him *ex errore*, from his wanderings (metaphorically). So it wasn't all sorted out before? Then comes the celebration of Fortune (669–73) which was mentioned above:

> namque ipsa Opportunitas non potuit mi opportunius
> aduenire quam haec allatast mi opportune epistula.
> nam haec allata cornu copiaest ubi inest quidquid uolo:
> hic doli, hic fallaciae omnes, hic sunt sycophantiae,
> hic argentum, hic amica amanti erili filio.[57]

For Opportunity herself could not have come to me more opportunely than this letter was opportunely brought to me. For this has been brought to me as a horn of plenty in which is all I desire: here are deceits, here all tricks, here intrigues, here money, here my loving young master's girlfriend.

Having dazzled us with words about a 'chance', which cannot of course really exist in a fixed text, he goes on to claim that he really did have a plot all worked out to his satisfaction (675–7):

> quo modo quicque agerem, ut lenoni surruperem mulierculam,
> iam instituta, ornata cuncta in ordine, amino ut uolueram,
> certa, deformata habebam.

I had it all fixed and fully formed, how I would manage everything, to get the girl from the pimp, all sorted out some time ago, all neatly arranged in order, as I wanted it.

But which plot was it? The praise of Fortune which he then resumes allows him to do 'comic philosophy' in a way that becomes almost self-referential for Plautus himself (681–2):

> bene ubi quoi scimus consilium accidisse, hominem catum
> eum esse declaramus, stultum autem quoi uortit male.

When we know that someone's project came off well, we declare him to be a clever chap, but a fool the man whose plan turns out badly.

All this points us to the creative use Plautus has made of the tradition of improvisation.

So far I have argued for a sophisticated Plautus and a programmatic Pseudolus. The glorification of Pseudolus, I suggest, works towards a statement of poetic aims by Plautus and a claim for originality, within the conventions of poetic decorum.[58] In the history of Plautine scholarship, the most pervading interest has been in the relationship between Roman Comedy and Greek New Comedy.[59] This is right, for one cannot avoid it, however hard one might try to claim that the subject of interest is the Plautine text itself. But the 'text itself' is, like all literature, made up of other texts. Reading Plautus without Greek New Comedy ought to be like trying to read Virgil without Homer. It can be done, if the reader knows nothing about Homer, but you would have a very different Virgil. Once Homer is known, however, you cannot read Virgil without that knowledge, just as you cannot read Dante without Virgil, for the one text becomes a part of the other. I suggest, then, that Plautus and New

[57] The girl, who began the play for Pseudolus lying stretched out in the wax, is now to be found in a letter which is also a horn of plenty. Link this with the silvery/wooden greeting joke (45–8) and Ballio's reference to the silvery girl (347).

[58] By this last I mean, in brief, that by associating himself with a character who is not only a slave but also so extreme as to be comic, Plautus can both claim poetic greatness and obviate the risk of offending his audience by his arrogance. These notions of decorum and the right way to boast come into their own with the Augustans, with their altered political situation and their Callimachean allegiance.

[59] See above.

Comedy be read in the light of intertextuality, not originality and 'originals'. Here, perhaps, *contaminatio* deserves a new lease of life, as a suitably messy, comic way of referring to the practice of allusion in literature, and to the particularly Roman cultural obsession with its relationship with Greek culture without which we cannot understand it. For many readers of Plautus (at least some of the original audience, and critics ancient and modern) *knowing* the Greek, *seeing* the difference, is a significant element in the enjoyment of the *fabula palliata*, just as for some modern viewers of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* spotting the references to ancient comedy and Plautus in particular is part of the fun: in neither case does this at all undermine other ways of responding to the text by other types of readers. In the *Pseudolus*, where so much depends on the impression that it is all being improvised, it makes a huge difference whether there was an original, when it is being followed, and whether the audience is supposed to recognize similarities and differences between the two (if indeed there are two). When Pseudolus, in the monologue between the removal of Calidorus and the confrontation with Simo, says he does not know where the money is going to come from, but like a poet he is going to invent what exists nowhere in the world at the moment (401–5), is he pretending not to know the Greek original, as he pretends not to know all sorts of things?

> sed quasi poeta, tabulas cum cepit sibi,
> quaerit quod numquamst gentium, reperit tamen,
> facit illud ueri simile quod mendacium est,
> nunc ego poeta fiam: uiginti minas,
> quae nusquam nunc sunt gentium, inueniam tamen.

But just as a poet, when he picks up his writing-tablet, seeks something which exists nowhere in the world—and finds it, and makes what is false seem like truth, so now I shall become a poet: those twenty minae, which exist nowhere in the world, I shall nevertheless invent.

Or is he telling us that there is no original, that for this trick at any rate this *is* the original? The joke works either way, but it would be fun to know which is right.[60] Making something false look like the truth is exactly what Plautus does with the play and Pseudolus does within the play. It is also, as mentioned above, what poets do. In the next 'improvisation' monologue, that following the scene with Simo and Callipho, Pseudolus says that if a playwright can't bring something new to the stage then he ought to give place to him who can (568–70).

> nam qui in scaenam prouenit,
> nouo modo nouum aliquid inuentum adferre decet;
> si id facere nequeat, det locum illi qui queat.

For if anyone produces on the stage, it is appropriate for him to bring on something new invented in a new way; if he can't do it, he ought to give place to him who can.

Plautus might be making a claim about the originality of his play and plot—or he might be making a self-deprecating joke acknowledging that the plot is *not* original. Either way he is a skilled literary artist playing with the material at hand.

Everything we know about Greek New Comedy leads us to believe that Plautus has greatly increased the role of the clever slave. Mistakes about identity play a very major role in New Comedy, but deception by a slave does not. This is not to say that there is no hint of the clever-slave role in Greek comedy:[61] in Menander's *Aspis* the

[60] The journal's referee caps this joke, by wondering whether this discussion about originality and poetic invention could itself have come from the Greek original.

[61] Indeed, the increase in the role of the slave is one of those features in late Aristophanes and Euripides which combine to sow the seeds of New Comedy. Lefèvre suggests in passing that in the original the emphasis would have been on the love-theme and the winning of the girl, rather

slave Daos thinks up the plan to deceive Smikrines; in the *Dis Exapaton* Syros is involved in the telling of a false tale to the father about money which should go to him but is at that stage earmarked for use in Sostratos' amatory plans; and in *Perinthia* Daos may play some such role.[62] But all these are fairly minor, and importantly the slave is not, as far as we can tell, the controlling character of the play.[63] Deception by powerful, heroic slaves who are the main focus of the drama is, then, largely a Plautine invention, and is programmatic for a distinctly Plautine comedy and so, in the concentrated form displayed in the *Pseudolus*, constitutes a statement of originality. Under the guise of Pseudolus, Plautus is standing up in front of all the critics then and now who say he is an inferior copier and saying 'this is what I have given to drama: the tricky slave both of himself and in the broader implications that that change has for the nature of my comedy'. Any such programmatic statement would of course be enhanced by the programmatic name of the slave and the play: lying/false slave (Pseu(d)-doulos), lying/false trick (Pseu(d)-dolus).[64] The nature of Plautine comedy is precisely not Menandrian. Consciously *palliata*, consciously deriving from and modelled on Greek New Comedy, it is nevertheless something quite different, something more outrageous and magnificent, comedy with epic pretensions.[65] It is also, I suggest, as 'intellectual' as any, but wears its learning very lightly. This is where all the grandiloquent metaphors of which Plautus is so fond pay dividends.[66] Just before the triumphal final scene, Simo judges Pseudolus' achievement as greater than that of Ulysses and the *dolum Troianum* (1244, excised by Zwierlein).[67] What was needed at Troy was to get a woman from the clutches of the enemy. Pseudolus achieves in one day what took Ulysses ten years. The comparison is not

than the slave's part in it. We might even say that in Plautus' version, by contrast, the love-theme is a hook on which to hang the exposition of Pseudolus.

[62] This example looks the most promising for anyone searching for clever slaves in Menander, since the master is threatening punishment for the slave's trickery, and the slave clearly talks about deceiving his master in a way that looks generically comic. But too little remains to build much on it. A determined case for the presence of something quite like the Plautine clever slave in Greek comedy has been made by P. W. Harsh, 'The Intriguing Slave in Greek Comedy', *TAPhA* 86 (1955), 135–42, but I remain unconvinced that his examples show more than a seed out of which the Plautine tree could be said to have grown.

[63] Duckworth, 28: '[t]he slave [in Menander] takes part in the action but is not the intriguing slave of Plautine comedy.' He rightly says that we do not know either way how other New Comic playwrights used the slave.

[64] A bilingual joke, depending on an audience who knew a bit of Greek and would appreciate it. I think some of them were probably up to it... Play across syllable length is not unknown in antiquity, although I admit this requires a slightly bigger change than between long and short versions of the same vowel. See F. Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca and London, 1985), 15. Recognition of the wordplay with *dolus* goes back at least to K. Schmidt, 'Griechische Personennamen bei Plautus', *Hermes* 37 (1902), 353–90, at 381. A. Barton, *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford, 1990), 155, discussing the importance of names in identity, describes Pseudolus as a 'transparently speaking name' for a 'clever slave who assume[s] a false identity to trick an old master'. She does not, however, expressly say what she thinks the name says. Actually Pseudolus only performs the role she mentions in so far as Simia may be seen as an extension of him, but I am here interested in the power of the name, rather than Barton's particular argument.

[65] Very fruitful work on the otherness and sameness of Plautus and Greek comedy has been done by Anderson, op. cit. (n. 5), particularly the first two chapters and, for the *romanitas* of Plautus' plays, the last.

[66] See E. Fantham, *Comparative Studies in Republican Latin Imagery* (Toronto, 1972). See Slater, 119 for Plautus using programmatic language to define his own work as comedy by opposition to tragedy.

[67] Presumably the reference is to the Horse, expressed like this for the sake of the parallel with Pseudolus' own name. See also Slater, 140.

just there for the sake of the military imagery which has been common in the play (and elsewhere in Plautus), but also, with the further erotic link, to define the status of the play as comedy by opposition to epic, but as comedy in epic mode, and comically to bring the epic down—or is it up?—to the level of the play.

I shall end with a look at that final triumphant scene where Pseudolus comes out for a breath of air from the drunken celebrations within and forces a defeated Simo not only to give him the money he owes, but to load it onto him, so that he is made to perform a servile gesture. In the final act of victory and reconciliation, Pseudolus successfully invites Simo to join the party. It is a common belief that Plautus has substantially changed the ending of the play from the Greek original. As I remarked before, many critics suspect that other characters, including Callipho, were included in the final scenes to tie up all the loose ends, while Arnott goes a stage further by suggesting that the party which in the Roman play is a private piece of debauchery among Pseudolus and his group was in the original Ballio's birthday party, for which preparations have been underway throughout the play, and to which Simo and Callipho, as 'great friends', were invited.[68] I propose to accept that there is enough of an 'original' being alluded to by our play for this to make sense. It is quite possible that there would have been someone coming out of the party to tell the audience all about it, creating something like a descendant of the tragic Messenger scene. Pseudolus, then, is modelled on or referring to that character, who may or may not have been the instigator of any deceit in the Greek play. Coming out at 1246 (the opening of 'Act 5'), Pseudolus plays this role, but he is not simply a messenger such as there probably was in the Greek play (since it is unlikely that the Greek play had a character like Pseudolus).[69] We are meant to notice the difference. It is Pseudolus who invites Simo to come in and join the celebrations, as if he were the master of the house (which he is, on the metacompositional level), in contrast with the situation in the Greek play, according to Arnott's plausible reconstruction, where Simo is the guest of Ballio. This, naturally, makes a big difference to the power-relations at work in the scene. It would be possible for the Greek play to include persuasion of Simo to join in by a character playing a weakened version of Pseudolus, but I suspect it would be so weakened as to be unrecognizable as Pseudolus.[70] It would also be hard to see why the Greek 'Simo' (I am assuming name changes) would be objecting to coming to the party, assuming he had accepted the invitation in the first place, since he has hardly lost out to 'Ballio'; still more hard to see how 'Pseudolus' could be in a position to persuade him. More likely, I think, the persuasion of 'Simo' to enter had no or only a very minor part in the Greek play, while our scene consciously alludes to the type

[68] See Arnott, and Lefèvre.

[69] It is actually not all that common to have someone coming out of the party, since in Roman comedies in particular the main point is to get everyone off stage in order to end the show. That does not mean it did not happen in our hypothesized play, of course. It is possible that when in *Cist.* the epilogue says to the audience 'you needn't expect anyone to come back out again—that's the end' it is a joke on the fact that in Greek plays someone sometimes or often did come back out after the general going in. In that play, at any rate, the business is rather unfinished, and it may be that Plautus is jokingly pointing out that he is not going to 'finish it off' (and follow the Greek?). A similar joke is made through Ballio's last words in our play that he will not be reappearing, perhaps also suggesting that from our knowledge of the Greek original or of Greek plays' story-patterns generally we expect him back.

[70] We might perhaps compare the final act of Menander's *Samia*, where the typical Menandrian slave Parmenon tries unsuccessfully to persuade the sulking Moschion to come in to the party (his own wedding). Finally the father, Demeas, takes control, and, instead of the begging Moschion sought, simply gets on with the wedding so that the young man, looking decidedly foolish, has to comply.

of 'join the party' scene which is important generally in ancient comedy but which is unnecessary for the particular Greek play which the critics (including myself) have constructed for the proto-*Pseudolus*, and perhaps impossible if played by Pseudolus himself. Comedy needs to end with reconciliation,[71] often in the form of a party, but sometimes some characters take a bit of persuading to join in. A classic example from New Comedy is the final act of Menander's *Dyskolos*, where Knemon, the most recalcitrant of old men, is buffeted and forced into joining the party (and so rejoining society) by a slave and the cook (who are not, of course, the hosts). The final defeat of Simo, I suggest, is an allusion to this type of scene.[72] So: in our imaginative reconstruction Plautus/Pseudolus alludes to two Greek play-scenes, a party at the end of the 'Ballio's birthday' play on which the *Pseudolus* is most closely modelled, and a 'persuasion of agelast character to join the party' scene to effect the final reconciliation. Although reconciliation is crucial to all comic endings, the final party (in Menander often it is a wedding) is a more significant and integrated element of Greek plays than of Roman ones, where it is often absent, or is little more than a way of telling the audience that the play is over.[73] By playing up the role of the party, then, Plautus may be pointedly alluding to the Greekness of the scene—and to the differences. I have not been able to find another play where the *host* of the party is a slave and the guest his master.[74] This is *contaminatio* as intertextuality, and we are meant to recognize the allusions in order to recognize how much more powerful is Pseudolus.

Before his confrontation with Simo, Pseudolus describes the merriment inside the house, with the emphasis, naturally, on his own part. After universal indulgence in wine and sex, Pseudolus was persuaded to dance, but finally slipped and fell, much to the amusement of all, himself included. Slater, 145–6, offers a brief reading of this scene which suggests a possible 'farewell to acting' in Pseudolus' fall.[75] I should like to take this further and read Pseudolus' party as a programme for Plautine comedy. Just how far one can take this sort of thing will depend on the individual reader: I offer a few suggestions. The party is consciously 'Greek': Greek comedy old and new can hardly do without its big celebration at the end. Wine and dancing are easy metaphors for comedy, particularly Aristophanic comedy.[76] Part of the programme,

[71] Comic reconciliation can go a long way in these scenes: at the end of Plautus' *Rudens* the pimp Labrax, who (as is his role) has been the bad guy throughout the play, is invited in to supper by the restored father Daemones.

[72] Cf. the end of Plaut. *Bacch.*, where the *iratus senex* Nicobulus is persuaded to come in and drink at the Bacchides' house by the prostitutes and by the rather more *lepidus senex* Philoxenus. *Persa*, a complicated instance to consider because it lacks 'respectable' characters, ends with the pimp knocked about and drummed into the party by slave and prostitute (with help from other disreputables).

[73] That is not to say, of course, that there are not Roman plays ending with parties. Certainly there are, and *Stichus*, for example, ends with a great deal of general and rather chaotic celebration: but a great many do not.

[74] In general terms the closest parallel to the end of *Pseudolus* is that of *Epidicus*, where the master is forced to entreat the slave to allow him to grant him his freedom. While there is undoubtedly humour and play on power-relations there, it is nothing compared to that in our play, for one cannot imagine anyone freeing Pseudolus: he is too powerful. It has been acknowledged that the most Plautine of Plautine slaves are not after freedom but power. See Segal, op. cit. (n. 17), particularly ch. 4.

[75] It works for Pseudolus *as* Plautus even if not for Plautus himself.

[76] For wine, perhaps the best example is *Acharnians* where we have not only the wine-skins as physical peace treaties (and the association between peace and comedy is also very strong) but also the vine prop which injures the anti-comic (and -peace) general Lamachus: the comic Dionysus is against him. For dancing, we might compare the spectacular ending of *Wasps*, with

then, would be to place Plautus' work in a consciously—self-consciously—Greek tradition, but defined as much against Menander as by him.[77] We might take this further with the affair of the cloak. When Pseudolus gets up to dance, he is wearing a *pallium* (1275b). The designation *comoedia palliata* is not, as far as I am aware, attested as early as Plautus (although that does not mean it did not exist), but since a *pallium* is a decidedly Greek sort of cloak Pseudolus' emphasis on the fact that he was wearing one may be intended to point out the Greekness of what he was doing.[78] Pseudolus did his cloaked dance *ludibundus* (the word ends the line): not only is a *ludus* quite clearly a 'play', but it is very much a Latin word for a play (as opposed to *comoedia*, for example). Pseudolus/Plautus, then, is playing around with Greek plays—in a Roman way. The 'audience' applaud, and call for more. Pseudolus (like all artists) 'grudgingly' obliges, but trips—and 'that was the dirge for the performance/game/play'.[79] The fall messes up Pseudolus' cloak to the delight of all (1279–81):

> itaque dum enitor, prox! iam paene inquinaui pallium.
> nimiae tum uoluptati edepol fui
> ob casum.

And so while I was struggling up, whoops! I almost made a mess of my cloak. This fall caused great joy to everyone.

Just how crude a messing is being referred to here probably does not matter: what matters, I suggest, is that Plautus is, jokingly, telling us what he does with Greek plays—he messes them up.[80] This is a comic-programmatic way of saying that he alters them, puts in Roman bits, spoils them: makes his own plays out of the material. The result of this 'messing' is that he has another drink—to reinforce his position in the comic world.[81] Plautus uses Pseudolus, then, to celebrate his own position in the tradition of comedy, writing plays which are self-consciously both Greek and Roman, and which are both earthy and ultimately clever.[82]

Pseudolus is the ultimate tricky slave, but what Pseudolus/Plautus is doing when he deceives all-comers is only a programmatic extension of the function of literature generally, which is to 'deceive' the reader. The agonistic nature of ancient comedy may provide a useful testing ground for the 'struggle for meaning', for that debate has often been formulated as a battle for interpretative authority between the author

modern dances (= comedies) compared with old ones, with the display of the sons of Carcinus, and the leaping vigour of the aged Philocleon.

[77] If there is any justification in the belief that the 'original' of the *Pseudolus* was by Menander himself, then an extra dimension would be added to such a programmatic statement. For the view, 'although we have no direct internal or external evidence', see Webster, op. cit. (n. 31), 189.

[78] In the preceding line, he describes the dances as Ionic: *quippe ego qui probe Ionica perdidici*—an 'immodest' dance, according to Willcock *ad loc.*, but it would be a Greek one also.

[79] *id fuit nenia ludo* (1278b). Slater, 146, makes the useful comparison with the ending of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. *nenia*, a funeral dirge, also means 'trifles' and so is a suitable word for comedy.

[80] On messing as a programmatic term for comic (and particularly Roman comic) composition see Gowers, op. cit. (n. 13), 68, and A. S. Gratwick, 'Drama', in E. J. Kenney (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature II: Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1982), 77–137, at 117.

[81] Later Pseudolus changes his cloak, puts the almost messed one aside, and comes out to sober up. Perhaps, since he is putting aside cloak, dance, and wine, he is indicating the end of the play?

[82] I might go so far as to suggest that the emphasis on Pseudolus' feet in the opening lines of this scene could hint at metrical feet. Plautine lyric metres are notoriously hard to follow: is that because they are drunk? The metres of this canticum are, as Willcock drily remarks, very mixed.

and the reader. Even as Pseudolus/Plautus takes control of the play even down to controlling the audience and deceiving it, so too (on the other hand) it is up to the reader to decide whether Pseudolus is deceiving us, and whether to be amused by it. And so in the end the reader wins. Humour comes from more than a sense of superiority, because we can laugh at ourselves being deceived. But on the other hand the humour only arises when we realise we are being deceived, and therefore we are laughing at our other selves, other readers. We are allowing ourselves to be deceived. As Pseudolus says: *caueat lector*.[83]

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[83] I am grateful to Adrian Gratwick and Richard Hunter for reading and very helpfully criticizing an earlier draft of this paper.