CHAPTER 3

Masks

GREEK MASKS AND THE ROMAN STAGE

Masked performance was a standard feature of Greek and Roman theatre. Masks do not operate in isolation: they are necessarily only components in a larger visual system that presents a complex of relationships that extends in three directions. First, masks relate to one another structurally, as has been shown for comedy and tragedy in the fifth century and later for Merian and New Comedy. Second, masks coordinate with other resources the actor brings to his part: to be effective, a masked actor must use his body and voice in a way that harmonises with the mask. Finally, masks may resonate with the society that produces them, so that when an audience sees a mask, it may make associations with particular individuals (as in the case of the so-called portrait masks of Aristophanes) or with representations of faces in other plays or other artistic media. It is this third, societal, dimension that should make us question any direct continuity of the system of masks used from Greek New Comedy to the Roman New Comedy of Plautus a century later. Just as the script has been freely adapted into Latin, so is there a parallel transposition of the Greek masking tradition.

The mask is one tool available to Plautus’ actors in their performance. Aulus Gellius (Attic Nights 5.7) confirms Roman masks covered the whole head, as was the case in the Greek tradition. Though there are some late and conflicting sources questioning whether Plautus’ actors wore masks, the word persona is already being used by Terence to designate a character, so it should not be surprising that sources centuries later use it to mean ‘masked actor’. Because many scholars writing about masks in antiquity and modern times have not had experience using masks in performance, there are a lot of assumptions about masked acting that are uncritically repeated. It is, for example, simply wrong to assume that the chief benefit of masks was to facilitate the doubling of parts, or the playing of twins: the original performance of Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors instantly provides an effective use of these devices without recourse to masks. It is also wrong to assume that masks imposed a limitation on the actors, preventing them from representing such features as a character blushing (as at Terence, Adelphoe 643). It is precisely the power of the

1 Beare (1964) 186, 309.
2 Terence, Ennius 26, 31, 35. Beare (1964) 193, 309. Dionedes, a late Roman grammarian (p. 489 Kiel), is the best evidence for us masks in the time of Plautus, though his claim that Roscius was the first to use masks to disguise his squat follows no logic, and might be derived from a misunderstanding of Cicero, de Oratore 1.35.221. This fact essentially removes any other ancient objections. Relevant passages are collected by Beare (1964) 303-5.
3 Duckworth (1952) 93, Beare (1964) 187, 310-8. A few small points do need to be made, however, because often the arguments for or against masks are presented with simplistic assumptions. McLeish (1968) 28 presents such a view, and is representative of the complaints often raised. For him, the benefit of masks is that quick changes are possible (in as few as six lines, he suggests), but the drawback is that expressions are fixed, and the text can only give a lame confirmation of denial of what is already obvious to the entire audience. Duckworth (1952) 91 notes the large number of twins on the Plautine stage, an effect that he suggests is only possible with masks. All of these considerations are, I believe, false, and misunderstand how masks work. Second, the notion that a mask has a fixed expression is not borne out by experience. Expression from a masked actor is conveyed by body language and posture: the same mask can be made to look like a king or a slave, depending on how the actor inhabits the mask. What most surprises audiences when they first see a masked theatrical performance is in fact how expressive the mask can be. It is not, then, self-evidently true, as Duckworth (1992) 93 contends, that ‘The remarks in Donatus’ commentary about the expression (subiit) of the characters were obviously intended for readers, not for actors.’ Certainly, the presentation of twins is easily effected by masked performance, and the large number of Avellane titles referring to twins show that this was often done in antiquity in what is known to have been a masked theatrical form, but there is no necessary connection.
4 The example comes from Beare (1964) 193, and see 191 and 206-7, and Duckworth (1992) 93. It is these ‘realistic’ concerns that constitute Chiatini’s objections to masks; see Chiatini (1984) 141-2.
mask to appear to come to life and move and convey emotion, when properly animated by a trained actor. Cicero recognised this, and it is possible to detect some surprise in his description of the counter-intuitive effect masks have on an audience: *quid potes esse tam factum quam versus, quam scena, quam fabulae? tamen in hoc genere sape ipse vidi; ut ex persona mihi arderere oculi hominis histriorum viderentur spondalium illa dicentis...* (Cicero, de Oratore 2.45.193: ‘What could be so artificial as poetry, as the stage, as drama? Nevertheless, in that medium I have myself often seen how the eyes of the man acting seemed to me to blaze through the mask, when he intoned these lines...’). Cicero proceeds to quote passages he has found particularly moving in the theatre, and speculates on their emotional impact on the actor.

Creating such effects is not easy: it requires physical exertion from the actor, with particular demands on the neck. Though he refers only to his trademark ‘neutral mask’, Jacques Lecoq describes a dynamic that is true of full masks generally: ‘Beneath the neutral mask the actor’s face disappears and his body becomes far more noticeable... With an actor wearing the neutral mask, you look at the whole body... Every movement is revealed as powerfully expressive’. Great flexibility is required, as well as training to harmonise properly an oversize headpiece to the actor’s body. But it can be done, as is clearly demonstrated by living mask traditions in Japan such as Kabuki and Noh: ‘formal movement does not prevent the expression of emotion in Noh, but becomes an aid to its controlled release’. Lecoq indeed reverses this dynamic, and defines a successful mask in terms of its ability to allow these effects: ‘A good theatre mask must be able to change its expression according to the movements of the actor’s body’. The precise nature of the physical exertion depends on the type of mask being used: half-masks, as in the commedia dell’arte, require the actor to continue to act with his lower jaw, creating continuity between the leather of the mask and the visible portion of the actor’s face. Full masks, particularly with a wig attached to create a headpiece, require a different sort of exertion. The mask is attached to the head in the same way, perhaps with linen strips. The actor moves more, but need not ‘act’ with his face. He may instead concentrate on vocal delivery and increasing audibility, for the mask may inhibit clarity in an outdoor venue.

In fifth-century Athens, theatrical masks isolated two variables, age and sex. Adults are presented as young, mature, or old and as either male or female: there are therefore six basic mask types, each of which could be clearly identified at a distance by the audience. This does not mean, for example, that every old man on the Attic stage looked identical, or that comic old men looked like tragic old men. Rather, what the audience noticed about any old man mask in tragedy or comedy was, principally, the character’s age and sex. Special masks could be created, but in the late fifth century when this happened, it was the markers of age and sex only that were changed. The actor had other resources available—costume, posture, voice—for the representation of other features, including social position.

The masks of Menander are different. New Comedy does not represent three adult generations on stage, but only two. Fathers are invariably old men (Greek *γερόντες*; Latin *senes*) and sons have invariably just come of age. For men, then, one generation would be represented with white hair and beards, and the other with dark hair and no beards. The mature generation, which had previously been represented with dark hair and beards, is absent. Why this should be can be seen most clearly by examining the list of New Comic masks found in Pollux (Onomastikon 4.143–54), who lists forty-four New Comic mask types, which may be divided into five broad categories:

- old men: masks 1–9
- young men: masks 10–20
- male slaves: masks 21–7
- old women: masks 28–30
- young women: masks 31–44

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9 The word *spondalium* (or *spōndalium*) is found only here and at Dion. The p. 472 (Kiel) fr. P. *spondalium canere* (‘to sing the spondalium’): Lewis and Short’s definition, ‘a sacrificial hymn, accompanied by the flute’, seems over-assured; the word is not in the OED. In any case, Cicero is thinking of lines delivered with accompaniment during a play.


13 Beare (1964) 399.

14 Before the origins of the word *persona* were recognised as coming from the Etruscan *phersu*, it was sometimes held that the Latin derived from *per-sone*, but this is recognisably false because the syllable *are* in *soneare* is short, but long in *persona* (Beare 1964) 22 and 356 n. 8.

15 See Marshall (1999b) 194.

16 I use ‘dark’ to represent any non-white hair shade. While it is sometimes claimed that slaves were red-haired in comedy, the explicit examples of this are few, and are discussed below; see also Duckworth (1993) 89.

17 See Webster (1993) vol. I: 6–51, whose numbering I follow. Brown (1987) 185 says there are more. I suspect that it would be sensible to classify the surviving material into more than 44 types. Wiles (1999) 77 and 110–77 here sees four genera, with the women taken as a single group.
All of the masks with dark beards (masks 22–7) are slave masks; significantly, the one mask Pollux lists in this category with white hair (mask 21) represents a freedman.\textsuperscript{18} For male masks, the introduction of the variable of social status while maintaining the inherited iconographic markers has created a different set of associations in the audience for dark-haired, bearded masks.\textsuperscript{19} For female masks, the representation of only two generations is in fact more easily represented than it had been previously. In the fifth century, white hair represented old women, but the only means to distinguish the young female masks from the mature at a distance was by hairstyle.\textsuperscript{20} The generation to which a New Comic woman belonged could now be signalled to an audience by hair colour alone. It is less essential to represent social position among women particularly since many New Comic plots depend on the ambiguous representation of young (and therefore dark-haired) women, who are often in the position of slaves or 
\textit{meretrixes} and are later discovered to have been freeborn.\textsuperscript{21} It is therefore beneficial to the playwright that the system of relationships represented by the masks obscures this difference. My reading of Pollux privileges these broad categories over the descriptions of individual masks, and consequently suggests that efforts to identify a given mask in the iconographic tradition with an item in Pollux’s list are ultimately misplaced.

All of the characters within a Greek New Comedy can be accommodated into this five-mask scheme, which coincides to a large extent with the \textit{genera} identified by Wiles. There is no regular indication of ‘special masks’ being needed outside of this \textit{schéma}, except perhaps for a divine prologue such as Pan in \textit{ Dyskolos}. Rather, individuals are distinguished within these types by more naturalistic features including skin colour and hairstyle: we know for example, some cooks in Greek New Comedy are represented as African.\textsuperscript{22} In Menander’s \textit{Dyskolos}, the only

\textsuperscript{18} Webster (1995) vol. I, 156; \textit{ο μεν πάππος μίνος τῶν θεάτων κοιλίς ἀπή, καὶ ἄριστος ἀπεργασίων ('The Pappos is the only servant’s mask with white hair, and indicates a freedman').

\textsuperscript{19} Occasional Plautine slaves are called \textit{adultaeiones} (and might therefore have no beard), as in \textit{Captivi}, discussed below.

\textsuperscript{20} Marshall (1990b) 191 and 190 n. 31.

\textsuperscript{21} Wilcock (1995) 20–24 is helpful.

\textsuperscript{22} Sikon from Menander’s \textit{Sainia} appears in a mosaic from the House of Menander, Mytilene, labeled as \textit{mageiros} (a \textit{skilled butcher}, often identified as a ‘cook’) with a black (ethnographically African) mask (Webster (1995), 6D M1.2, vol. II: 469 and see vol. I: 193). Significantly, his neck and exposed left hand are not similarly coloured. The Cicada mask (Τέρτσ: see vol. I, 32) is described by Athenaeus 459 as \textit{ekkonton} (‘foreign’ more likely than ‘extraordinary’) and probably coincides with the mask given to Sikon (Webster (1995) vol. I, 18–2). In my production of \textit{Mitos Gloriosos}, this \textit{mageiros} was used as the model for the mask of Carpo.

\textsuperscript{18} Haddley (1965) 132.


\textsuperscript{20} Poe (1996) 132, and see 131 and 134–5.

\textsuperscript{21} In a masked production of \textit{Rheus} in 2001, many students who had been in the audience were surprised to discover later that each of the choristers had worn identical masks. When placed on the different bodies of the actors, with different hairlines, otherwise identical masks appeared as the faces of individuals. Euripides, \textit{Rheus}, directed by George Kovacs; produced by Modern Actors Staging Classics (St John’s, Newfoundland; October, 2003).

\textsuperscript{22} MacCary (1976) and see MacCary (1969), (1971), and (1972).
Parmeron, Getas and Tibeios. This, however, did not determine his ethos, at
least in the hands of a master like Menander.\textsuperscript{28}

This position is answered by Brown, who asks, 'if the ethos of a character
can change from play to play, what do we gain by regarding him as one
character making eight appearances rather than as eight different charac-
ters who happen to have the same name?'\textsuperscript{29} Such default associations
with masks are not possible in Plautus' Rome, as drama is imported and
adapted for a local audience which does not possess generations of
cultural experience with these characters.

To argue that the mask reveals everything about a figure on stage is
fundamentally to deny that there is any meaningful contribution made by
the actor to the creation of a dramatic character. If we are to see the
ancient actor as anything other than an idealisation of E. Gordon Craig's
über-Marionette, an original contribution by the person behind the mask
must be possible, and that means that whatever the mask contributes, it is
not the totality of the character. Beyond classifying an individual among
one of the five broad categories I have described, the principal benefit to
be realised from two masks from the same category is to allow easy
differentiation between the two in performance.\textsuperscript{30} Poe's conclusion, that
Pollux's list derives from the masks contained by a given troupe, and that
a different troupe would have a similar set of masks manipulating the
same variables but not an identical set, seems virtually certain.\textsuperscript{31}

This, then, is the masking system that Plautus inherited from Greek
New Comedy. With the plays comes an understanding of characterisation
that uses largely overlapping cultural codes to establish meaning. In this
way, Wiles is right to use both Greek and Roman examples in his study of
New Comic masks.\textsuperscript{32} I wish to suggest, however, that in addition to these
Hellenistic mask types, Plautus adapted some mask types to include
elements foreign to the Greek theatrical tradition. Plautus' plays are
populated with stock characters - a term that I will explore more fully
below - and in many cases we can comfortably associate a given character
type with one of the five Hellenistic mask types. In a play such as
Asinaria, it is straightforward to see Argyrippus, Diabolus, the parasitius
and the mercator (see line 337?) as young men, Demeanor as an old man,
Philænium as a young woman, Artemona and Clearata as old women,
and Libanus and Leonida as servii. Plautus can even draw attention to the
artificality of a stage world where there are no free men with dark beards
by having a character ask a slave whether or not he is free, either from a
position of superior knowledge (Mercury asking Sosia at Amphitruo 343)
or ignorance (Harpax asking Pseudolus at Pseudolus 610).

Problems begin to develop, however, with those characters whose
appearance is described most vividly. At Pseudolus 1218–20, the title
character is described in detail:

\[ \text{rufus quidam, ventrioso, crinis suris, submiger,} \]
\[ \text{magnus capite, acutis oculis, ore rubicundo, admodum} \]
\[ \text{magnis pedibus.} \]

Bright red hair, protruding belly,
Rather swarthy, chubby calves,
With large head, ruddy face, sharp eyes.
And utterly enormous feet.

(tr. Smith)

Pseudolus has been on stage for much of the play, and the lines are only
sensible if they coincide meaningfully with what Pseudolus looks like.\textsuperscript{33}
The interest of this description becomes clear in light of another passage in
a different play. In Asinaria, Leonida (who has assumed the name Saturea,
just as Pseudolus had adopted the pseudonym Syrus) is described, again by
an out-of-towner, who has fallen into the snare laid by the slave (400–01):

\[ \text{macilentis multis, rufulus aliquantium, ventrioso,} \]
\[ \text{trunculetis oculis, comoda satura, trivi frone.} \]

Jutting jaw and reddish hair,
Rather fat and flabby;
Average height, with scowling eyes;
Expression grim and crabby.

(tr. Smith)

Hair,\textsuperscript{34} eyes, belly, and expression overlap, sometimes with identical
vocabulary, and none of the details in these descriptions exclude any of
the others. In fact, it is perfectly possible to assume both descriptions

\textsuperscript{28} Gratwick (1985) 105. \textsuperscript{29} Brown (1987) 183.
\textsuperscript{30} Poe (1990) 319. \textsuperscript{31} Wiles (1990) 80–83 notes that the masks on terracotta figurines from Lipari do not map onto Pollux
exactly, but do manipulate the same variables. See also Bernabò-Brea (1988).
\textsuperscript{32} Wiles (1990) 134.
\textsuperscript{33} It is the mention of the large feet that sends the pimp Ballio into apoplexy, and confirms the
identification with Pseudolus. Twenty-six lines later, Pseudolus returns, drunk, singing the fifth of
the play's cantica, which in his staggering stupor is addressed to the oversized feet (Pseudolus 1216–8).
\textsuperscript{34} See Duckworth (1952) 89.
are equally true for each character, and that the two slaves, Pseudolus and Leonida, were represented on stage with the same mask, the same costume, and conceivably were portrayed by the same actor. Indeed, these two are the only explicitly red-headed slaves in Plautus. It is even possible that the word truculentus (Asinaria 401) suggests that the title character of Truculentus bore a similar appearance. Also a slave, Truculentus appears almost as a ‘cameo’: two short scenes of verbal gags, spotlighting this otherwise incidental character (the only one with a Latin name, too). Though this is often considered a late play, the appearance of Truculentus (foregrounded in the play’s title) could indicate the return of a popular character to the stage to help draw crowds.

One further feature of this slave mask can be identified. In antiquity, a wagging eyebrow could signify an omen (as at Theocritus 3:37). In Pseudolus, the title character announces ita supercilium salis (107: ‘thus my eyebrow quivers’). While some might take this as evidence that masks were not worn, most would see it as an antitheatrical possibility that is not fulfilled on stage. Slater even posits, perhaps frivolously, a mechanical eyebrow that could be attached at this point.

Such a device is not necessary, as long as the actor is wearing a certain type of mask. Wiles describes how a mask with an asymmetrical brow appears to offer different expressions when viewed from different angles. Such masks typically present a greater range of emotions since the same face does not clearly depict any one state; it is not accidental that one of Jacques Lecoq’s most successful masks is his ‘Jesuit’, an asymmetrical mask. By wearing a mask with one eyebrow raised and shaking his

head back and forth, the actor presents every section of the audience with a changing eyebrow elevation. By moving the mask only on the horizontal axis, it is possible for the actor to present to the audience what could be taken for a wagging eyebrow. This not only explains the line, but in so doing isolates another feature of the recurring mask.

Eyebrows are one of the features Pollux often identifies on his male masks. Of the twenty-seven males he describes, five have their eyebrows raised, and three explicitly do not have raised eyebrows. As many as six of Pollux’s masks have asymmetrical brows. Pollux does not present a binary polarisation between symmetrical and asymmetrical eyebrows. Instead at least three permutations are isolated: neutral, raised, and symmetrical. Internal (ethical) qualities – busibodiness or evil intentions – are made explicit only for asymmetrical eyebrows (in masks 7 and 17), where the greatest ambiguity exists. The twitching eyebrow effect would be possible with any of the asymmetrically browned masks. Of these, it is natural to associate Pseudolus and Leonida with mask 22 (‘the Leading Slave’), of whom Pollux says σπάσαν ἐγὼ τρίαν πυρρών (‘he has a roll of red hair’). Similarly, Quintilian 11.3-74 writes:

in comedias . . . pauper ille. cuius praecepta partes sunt, quia interim constat interim lens est. altero ereco altero composto est supercilium, atque id ostendere maxime latus actioribus moris est quod cum eis quas agent partibus congruas.

In comedy . . . the father who has the principal role has one eyebrow raised and the other not, because he is sometimes angry and sometimes calm, and the actors regularly turn towards the audience that side of the mask which suits the particular part they are playing.

35 Wiles (1991) 118 connects these descriptions to all Plautine slaves. For a good discussion on the problem of connecting masks with names or even with specific character types, see Brown (1987) 300-309.
36 It is perhaps worth noting the suggestion that the character of Pseudolus (and therefore, by extension, Leonida and Truculentus) was played by Plautus himself (Slater (2000) 119). The evidence for this is slight but is perhaps corroborated by the detail that so captured the pimp’s attention, the big feet. Plautus’ name can be rendered etymologically as ‘Flatfoot’ (see Dakin (1992) 40) and it is reasonable (though by no means certain) to imagine that Plautus’ name reflected this particular physical detail (when he was performing onstage, most likely), though its primary referent remains the barefootness of the Hellenistic–Roman mime. In the prologue of Pseudolus, much scholarly criticism of the speech has focused on the use of Plautus’ own name: Plautina longa fabula in scena est verum (‘A long Plautine play is coming to the stage’; Pseudolus 2). When he mentions himself in his prologues, Plautus sometimes calls himself Maccus (as he does in Asinaria, where the homophone incidunt in line 400 is used in the description of the slave). In Pseudolus, though, it is possible that the name Plautus anticipates this detail later, emphasised.
38 See Wiles (1991) 166-7, figs. 5-6.
39 Lecoq (2007) 16: ‘The mask then becomes a sort of vehicle, drawing the whole body into an expressive use of space, determining the particular movements which make the character appear; ‘The character arises out of the form.’
41 Masks 5, 6, 12 indicate anastaseis το ὄρνος νέας υπος, mask 23 ὑπηρέτος το τούρπος.
42 Mask 10 anastaseis το τούρπος; mask 23 καθισμένος τα τούρπος, and I would include mask 1 ἡμεροτόπος τα τούρπος.
43 Mask 3 (‘The Leading Old Man’) το τούρπος anastaseis τη δεξιά (‘has lifted up his right eyebrow’), mask 7 (‘the Lykomedes’) αναστέπτει τη δεξιά ὄρνος, πολυκομισθευμένον παστεικτάτα (‘lifts up the other eyebrow [and] indicates busibodiness’). Webster also underlines mask 21 (‘the Leading Slave’) anastaseis το τούρπος, συμφέρει το ακοσύνον (he raises the eyebrows [and] contracts the forehead) as a mask with an asymmetrical brow, I believe rightly. If so, mask 8 (‘the Brother-keeper’ or paraskevodos) should also be included, since συμφέρει το τούρπος (he contracts his eyebrows). Mask 27 (‘the Wavy-Haired Leading Slave’) is similar to mask 22 except for the hair, which is ἔλαξισες. Finally, I would include in this category mask 17 (‘the Flatterer’), of which Pollux says ὁ κόλπος, ἀναστέπα το κοσμήσατε το τούρπος (‘the flatterer raises his eyebrows with rather evil intentions’).
44 For the σπάσαν, see Webster (1995) vol. I: 27. Mask 27 is also a possibility.
Quintilian’s first-century experience of performance is different from that of Plautus. While it is not possible to tie each character type to an individual mask (he is thinking of the whole appearance of the character, including costume and the use of typical props, though the immediate context is facial expression), Quintilian does isolate a mask that is not too different from ‘the Leading Old Man’ which possesses an asymmetric eyebrow, and he recognises that it facilitates the presentation of a range of emotion. While Russell’s translation implies a static realisation of these emotions, the verb ostendere could include the full range of movement here described.

I have tied two Plautine characters to a particular mask, and noted the possibility that the mask corresponds (in some respect) to one in Pollux’s list. This does not mean that every slave in Plautus is also to be associated with this same mask, however.\(^46\) Pseudolus and Leonida are exceptional in their appearance, not ordinary. Despite the red hair and asymmetrical eyebrows, it is equally likely they are not to be associated with one of Pollux’s slaves. For, in addition to divisions based on age, sex, and social position, characters may be representatives of stock types. This mask may be associated with one particular stock type, the servus callidus (‘clever slave’). If we had other plays by Plautus (or by his contemporaries) it would not surprise us to find complementary descriptions of this mask. Other descriptions similarly match what is seen in the iconography for other types. \(\text{Mercator}\) 639–40 presents a description of a stock \textit{senex}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{canum, varum, ventrisum, bucculentum, breculum, subnigris oculis, oblongis malis, pannam aliquanum.}
\end{quote}

grey-haired, bow-legged, pot-bellied, jowly, stumpy, rather dark eyes, with a broad jaw, and somewhat splay-footed.

What do we mean, then, by a ‘stock character’? Such a term is often used in a pejorative sense. More constructively, to refer to a clever slave as a ‘stock character’ is to say something about the actors and something about the audience.

Actors played stock characters who ‘lack subtlety and complexity, and they do not grow or develop over the course of the play’.\(^47\) Given the mask as a constant, characters are ‘put on’, ‘taken off’, and transferred from one play to the next. Even if it could be demonstrated that masks were not used in Plautine performance, the point remains: a mask can be anything concealing the actor from the audience. A clown’s make-up similarly can transform an actor.\(^48\) Other masked theatre traditions confirm this experience. Since antiquity the only living masked theatrical tradition in the West has been the \textit{commedia dell’arte}, thriving in Italy, France, and Spain from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Stock character types (e.g. harlequino, brigellina, capitano) perform simple narratives in a style that is very evocative of Plautus: standard gags and predictable plots combine with \textit{fazz} (stock physical routines that can be expanded or contracted by the actors according to audience response, like the running slave so popular in Plautus) to yield an entertaining outdoor masked theatrical form. Some of the stock characters in the \textit{commedia}, such as the Lovers, were performed without any physical mask on the face of the actors; the characters are nevertheless called Masks.

In early comic cinema, the Marx Brothers possess the qualities of a small \textit{commedia} troupe. For all functional purposes, their faces are ‘masked’.\(^49\) whether Groucho is called Otis P. Driftwood, or Rufus T. Firefly, he is always Groucho (just as Harlequin is always Harlequin and a \textit{miles gloriosus} is always a \textit{miles gloriosus}). The same is true of Chico, Harpo, and their regular foil, Margaret Dumont. The mirror scene in \textit{Duck Soup} (1933, dir. Leo McCarey) shows that any individual with painted-on eyebrows and moustache (even the mute Harpo) will be mistaken for Groucho – a joke that can trace its origins back to the Aeacus-scene in Aristophanes’ \textit{Frogs}.\(^50\) When characters are not so ‘masked’, and are played naturally and not individuated and made larger than life – for example, the lovers in \textit{A Night at the Opera} (1935, dir. Sam Wood) played by Kitty Carlisle and Allan Jones – they are no longer memorable in this make-believe world. This is equally true of many early film actors: ‘Chaplin’s “tramp”, Keaton’s “wooden face”, Harry Langdon’s “Baby-face” are fixed and instantly recognizable figures, whatever social or psychological traits they may have to adopt for a particular story.’\(^51\) Another feature of the Marx

\(^{46}\) See Brown (1989) 190–99. \(^{47}\) Duckworth (1952) 270.

\(^{48}\) Johnstonce (1988) 150 tells a story about the journalist Bill Richardson: ‘he’d been asked to take part in a circus minstrel as one of the clowns… Once the make-up was on he became “possessed” and found himself able to tumble about, catch his feet in buckets, and so on, as if he’d been a clown in another incarnation. He stayed with the circus for some weeks, but he never got the same feeling without the make-up.’

\(^{49}\) Similarly, ‘Peking Opera make-up transforms the actor’s face into a veritable mask’ (Barba and Savarese (1994) 156).

\(^{50}\) See Marshall (1953).

Brothers' films is relevant to the relationships on the Plautine stage: while each Brother's appearance, speech mannerisms, demeanour, and relative age does not change from one movie to the next, the relationship between the characters they are playing can change, and does.

Among Plautine slaves there exists at least one instance where the same character recurs (Pseudolus and Astinaria). Different actors wearing the mask might create a different character, but anecdotal evidence from those who work with masks, indicates that completely different actors will produce similar (but not identical) characters when they put on the same mask. To what extent characters, types, or masks were shared among Roman comic actors cannot be identified with certainty.

For the audience, stock characters can evoke a stock response. Theatre composed of stock characters assumes audience familiarity with the types. Whether it is automatically to dislike a banker or a pimp - did the boys in ancient audiences boo stage villains? (Pseudolus 1082) - or to cheer the appearance of the running slave, a stock character or routine that must be identifiable to the audience immediately to have its effect. The appearance of a stock character must connote a specific set of qualities and (more importantly) values, at first sight. This is not to straitjacket the character. These stock types need not be completely predictable, but any individuation of the character is going to be done with these initial audience expectations as a platform: 'the characters are differentiated, rather than individualized'. Lest we fear that such classifications are an exclusively modern preoccupation, we may note the many places listing character types from antiquity. The audience recognised that these were repeated types.

Menander's characters were perceived to be naturalistic. A number of anecdotes from antiquity confirm the opinion that though masked, onstage, and speaking verse, they looked and acted like regular people doing regular things. In contrast, at least some of Plautus' slaves are much more clearly defined individuals, even though that individualism is not tied to a character name or a play. This type of characterisation was probably adapted by the playwright from the fabulae Atellanæ.

The 'Maccius' in Plautus' stage name may derive from the character Maccus of the Atellanæ - 'it is in some sense a nickname, a pseudonym given to or adopted by the playwright for professional reasons'. Every indication suggests that Maccus, a clown and a fool, was the most popular of the Atellan characters. The audience's sympathies are won by this character's vain efforts at self-advancement. It might be possible to connect Maccus the character in Atellan farce, with Titus Maccius our playwright: Aulus Gellius' claim (3.3.14) that Plautus began his career in operis artificium scenicae mean Plautus began his theatrical career as an Atellan actor. To go from playwright to the character type represented by Pseudolus and Leonida is not a much bigger step. Such a claim can only be made tentatively, but it is possible that the physical appearance of the slaves, described so vividly in the text, points not to a description of Pollux's mask 22 (the Leading Slave), but to the Atellan mask of Maccus. Certainly, some blurring is taking place. An audience seeing the Roman version of Pollux's Leading Slave would create some association with the character of Maccus, since Maccus constitutes an element in the 'cultural literacy' of the average Roman theatregoer.

I would press this further: that the mask-maker in Plautus' troupe, and the actor who later embodied the character, could consciously choose to represent certain physical features of Maccus when creating these slaves. The vivid description of these slaves will not correspond either to the particular mask of Pollux, nor to the more general type of generic Greek 'slave' mask (male with dark hair and beard). It is a separate thing, which will be perceived by a Roman audience as partaking of the Atellan character. This is not the mask of all Plautus' servi callidis, and many masks employed will more closely resemble the inherited Greek types. But, when the part represented a particular recurrent callidus who falls short of his own expectations (as Pseudolus and Leonida do), such blurring was possible. It may even be that a Maccus mask was used for these parts, though such an exact correspondence is not needed.

54 In both commedia and the Marx Brothers, masks were typically fixed with their actors. In Italy, a son might inherit a mask and its character from his father. The evidence adduced for doubling in Chapter 2 suggests this was not the case for Plautus.
56 'Most obviously, there is Aristophanes of Byzantium's rhetorical diorama, 'O Menander! O Life! Which of you copied the other?' (Syrinxus, in Hermogenes 2.24). What is lacking from the Greek fragments is a character of the extremes found consistently in Plautus. Menander has clever slaves, but for the most part they behave alike: none is significantly individuated.
57 Grafton (1974) 82.
58 Perhaps a greedy fool, depending on the etymology preferred; see Kean (1951) 92.
59 This can be seen, for example, in the extant titles for (literary) Atellanæ, which include 'Maccus', 'The Twin Maccuses', 'Maccus the Go-between' (sequens, perhaps 'the Trustee?'), 'Maccus the Soldier', 'Maccus the Maid', 'Maccus the Inkeeper', and 'Maccus the Exile'.
60 I appropriate the term 'cultural literacy' from Hirst, Kerr, and Trebil (1987).
to establish that these characters have some connection with the Athenian Maccus.

**The Problem of Plautus’ Pimps**

We are now equipped to look at a particular stock character, the *leno* (‘pimp’), not from any sort of sociological reality, but as an overblown, ridiculous, stock character, who was one shotgun in Plautus’ dramatical arsenal. More than any other type, Plautus’ pimps stand out as individuals, while still partaking of the stock type that revels in the excesses of cruelty, avarice, and power. The *Plautine* corpus contains five pimps, three of whom are described in detail. In a visual medium such as theatre, such description is not strictly necessary, since the audience can see the characters. Descriptions of Pseudolus and Leonida were shown to evoke a possible Athenian influence. The matter is not as straightforward with the pimps.

First is Ballio, the paragon of pimps from *Pseudolus*. His personality is clearly defined over the course of two scenes. In the first, a long *canticum* (133–229), he instructs his household slaves and his ‘girls’ on what they are to do on his birthday (see 165, 253, 775, 1237). The second scene defining his personality is the insult scene, in which Calidorus and Pseudolus, standing on either side of the pimp, hurl insults onto him, which are confidently and even proudly accepted (357–69). Ballio is a friend of long standing with

Pseudolus (233) and possesses his profession’s characteristic obsession with money (265–8). Like Pseudolus, he appears conscious of his obligation to fulfill and exceed the expectations of his stock type.

Ballio’s appearance is distinctive in three ways. First, his beard differs from what may be called the ‘default’ appearance for such a character — Pollux’s description of the *pornobokos* (mask 8) — which, like mask 7, is μακρογένας (‘with a long beard’); Ballio has *hirquina barba* (967, ‘a goat’s beard’), which Webster associates with mask 9, which is σφεντόχυτον (‘with a wedge beard’). Second, when he moves, he steps sideways, moving like a crab (*Pseudolus* 935). Comparison with *commedia* techniques and personal experimentation suggest that if an actor wants to move like a crab, movements are led by the knees. Everybody leads with one part of their body when they move; heroes lead with their chests, glutinous merchants with their belly, and fools with their heads. There are consequences for each of these in other aspects of a character’s physical appearance: for example, speed. To lead with one’s belly slows movement considerably. To lead with one’s knees, like a seedy villain, can lead to rapidly increased movement. If it is fair to apply this to Ballio, the pimp may well have been characterised by rapid, darting movements, and may have possessed a (comparatively) lithe physique. In *commedia*, Pantalone (the lusty old man) also leads with his knees, and Ballio too is a *senex* (190). Quintilian confirms the appropriateness of this for Ballio: *variare supra modum et in stardo deforme est et accedente motu prope obscenium* (‘to place the legs wide apart is unbecoming if one stands still, and almost obscene if one moves in that posture’). The third distinctive feature in Ballio’s appearance is the recalcitrant slave boy accompanying him (see e.g. 249). The comic by-play between these two is immediately suggestive: the sideways-skittering pimp eager to get to the forum, being continually held back by the low-status servant who is supposed to be leading him; this tension between urgency and delay characterises the whole play.

Second is Cappadox, the pimp in *Cecrops*. The least threatening of the Plautine pimps, what seems most striking about his personality is his soft

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64 Compare Chalinus’ line in *Casina*, *imitabar nuprum* (443: ‘I shall imitate a scorpion’). Despite the entries in the OLD and Lewis and Short, *nuprum* here does not refer to a crab’s movement, but suggests Chalinus is heeding up to the stage wall like a scorpion (*nephe*) seeking shelter. This is a position for evading stoppage, as discussed in Chapter 4.
65 Compare Quintilian 11.1.112, discussed in Chapter 2.
67 Marshall (1996) and see Chapter 4.
Cappadox. He has the forma (1306: 'look') of a mendicus (1306: 'beggar'), which no doubt reflects the sea-washed clothes he wears throughout the play (549–50). Nothing distinguishes his beard (769). Before Labrax appears, Pleisippus has asked Daemones, ecquem tu hic hominem crispum, incanum vidiris? (125: 'whether you have seen a gray and curly-headed man here'). Similarly, Trachilio describes Labrax, for whom he is searching (317–19):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ecquem} \\
\text{recabom ac Silanum semen, statutum, ventriolum,} \\
\text{tortis supercilii, contracta fronte?} \\
\text{An old man, balding like Silenus} \\
\text{Sturdy build, protruding paunch,} \\
\text{With crooked eyebrows, forehead furrowed} \\
\text{In a frown...?} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(tr. Smith)

Again, the details are precise. While balding, Labrax can still be identified by his gray curly hair. These features are in fact compatible with Pollux's description of the pornoboskos (mask 8), of which Webster notes that '[t]here is some general resemblance to the Papposilen and it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart'.69 The brows of the pornoboskos may be asymmetrical. Nevertheless, 'all the examples recognised are bald, not 'balding' (ἀναφυλάντας in Pollux).70 Finally, the pot-belly (ventriolum, a word also found in the descriptions of the slaves at Pseudolus 1218 and Asinaria 400) of Labrax is associated with this mask on a number of gems, where the character also carries a stick.71

While Labrax is associated more closely to the Greek equivalent of the leno than is Ballio or Cappadox, other indications associate him with his jaw. Charmides asks (Radens 543–4):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{iam postulabis te, imputata belua,} \\
\text{tobam Siciliam devoratam insulam?} \\
\text{Did you expect, you filthy animal,} \\
\text{To gobble up the whole of Sicily?} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(tr. Smith)

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64 The word crispum can also mean 'wrinkly' or 'veined' (like marble), but Plautus uses it elsewhere only of hair.
65 Webster (1999) vol. 1: 13; the Radens passage is added on p. 16.
Labrax has a wagging tongue (558: _lingua vivet_) and his name is the word for a voracious sea-bass, which gains additional nuance since he has recently suffered shipwreck. All this might suggest that Labrax leads his movement with his jaw. He and Charmides are cold, wet, in skimpy outifts, and are shivering (527–36). Labrax asks, *quid si aliquo ad ludos me pro Manduco locem?* ... *quia pol clare crepito dentibus* (535–6: 'what if I rented myself at some games as Manducus?... since, by Pol, my teeth chatter loudly'). The explicit reference to Manducus from the _Attelanae_ suggests the possibility that the Labrax mask comprises elements evoking both the Atellan Manducus and the Hellenistic _pormobaskos_. The Manducus mask may even have had a hinged jaw that could be opened so the character could swallow stage properties.

Where Pseudolus and Leonida were shown to have a common origin possibly connected with the _Attelanae_, the same is certainly not true of Plautus' three pimps. Each is representative of the stock character of _leno_, but in terms of physical appearance, each is described in detail, and very obviously bears no visual similarity to any other. What is more, in the illustrated Terence manuscripts, 'characters of this order' – Sannio in the _Adelphoe_ and Dorio in the _Phormio_ – wear masks of a new kind: bald with dark hair and a slave-mouth with no beard below it.74 This suggests at least one other look (forma) for the pimp.

How is all this to be reconciled with the _leno_ as a stock character? The description of Labrax corresponds closely with the Hellenistic _pormobaskos_. Nevertheless, the script ties him to the Atellan figure of the jowly Manducus. With Pseudolus and Leonida, it was possible to suggest a connection between them and the Atellan mask of Maccus. Ballio and Cappadox do not correspond to the physical description of Labrax (and the Greek _pormobaskos_) or with each other: that all pimps perhaps lead movements with a different body part produces a number of additional small differences that are hard to isolate except through performance. But these two may also be tied to particular Atellan types.

The Atellan character that most obviously applies to Ballio is Pappus, the mask of an old man. One of the titles of an _Attelana_ by Pomponius is _Sponsa Pappi_ ('Pappus' Fiancée'), and so Pappus could appear in a farce revolving around his virility. While there may be no direct causal connection, Pantalone, the equivalent _commedia_ character, was often presented with a sharp, pointed beard, like Ballio's goatee. Nor are the other old men in this play more 'Pappus-like' than Ballio: the two other _senes_ who appear, Simo and Callipho, are not distinguished physically in any way in the text and appear themselves to be stock representatives of the _senex durus_ and the _senex lepidus_. Tentatively, then, I would suggest that the relationship between Labrax and Manducus (textually explicit) is analogous to the relationship between Ballio and Pappus (textually implicit). Cappadox can also be accommodated into this scheme, and tied to the Atellan character based on the belly, Dossennus.75 A large gut and slow movements are suggested for Dossennus by Horace's description of Plautus himself: _quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis_ (Epistler 2.1.173: 'what a Dossennus he is, among his greedy parasites'). However this line is interpreted, Dossennus is used as an image because of his associations with the stock character of the _parasitus_. The equivalent _commedia_ character, _il Dottore_, happens also to share the foppish appearance with Cappadox: _il Dottore's_ lace trim evokes Cappadox's cutter and tweezers. As with the other pimps, there appears to be a textually implicit association between Cappadox the pimp and one of the Atellan masks, even though the mask is different in each case.

This problematises any sense of one-to-one correspondence between mask and stock character. For what is demonstrably true of the _leno_ is conceivably true of any character on the Plaunist stage. Plautus could create a character that, through a combination of acting style, costume, and mask, could be identified to some degree with a figure from the _Attelanae_. Finally, the _Curculio_ example can be pushed a little further. If Cappadox is associated with Dossennus, who is a glutton that can be tied (albeit two centuries later) with 'greedy parasites', we can wonder where this leaves Curculio in the scheme of things. Within the narrative, he functions as a parasite: at 305–28, he delays in providing the information because he is famished, a stock routine for a parasite. This may suggest that while Curculio is a parasite, he is not connected with the Atellan Dossennus figure and may instead more closely resemble a

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73 Despite Lowe (1989) 159 n. 43, it is not right to see the reference here to 'a masked figure carried in processions' (see Fucus (Paulus) 115 L) 'rather than a character of the _Attelana_'. An uninhabited mask is necessarily a secondary development and a theatrical audience would not make this association.

74 See Juvernal 3.175–6 and Préaux (1964). Hinged jaws are also found on Indonesian frog masks.

75 Préaux (1964) rightly argues against Müller's equation of Manducus with Dossennus. The few extant fragments from the literary period of _Attelanae_ are insufficient for any negative case to be made (contra Lowe (1989) 159 n. 46).

76 See Breeze (1986) 139.

77 For similar elaborate descriptions of old men (Pappus), see Duckworth (1952) 90.
traditional Greek parasite, or indeed some other type. One inference we can draw from the association between Cappadox and Dossennus is that not every parasite was a Dossennus figure, despite Horace and Curculio’s famished routine. Even raising this possibility leads beyond where speculation may reasonably take us, but Curculio’s name is the word for the boll weevil – a different kind of parasite, but one with a very distinctive long, curved proboscis (and many of the characters in the play have animal-derived names: Leaena, Lyco, and perhaps Therapontigonus). It is possible that the character Curculio was in performance not associated with the belly, but instead with his nose, since there was already a Dossennus figure in the play. Such a variation might lead to associations with another Atellan figure (Bucco, for example), but it is just as likely that any rigid categorisations are to be put aside in favour of a more flowing set of relationships between these characters, with each possessing a variety of literary and cultural influences, drawn from a variety of performance traditions. In the end, these can be only suggestions, but they possess sufficient plausibility to demonstrate that Plautus did not simply import his masking tradition. There were innovations, and any description of Roman masks cannot be directly transposed from a Greek model.

INDIVIDUALISED COMIC MASKS

It follows that masks would be, for the most part, individualised. The practical realities of masked acting in the theatre meant that the Roman comic playwrights manipulated the five basic mask types inherited from Greek New Comedy, and the audience’s familiarity with certain stock characters from the Atellanae meant that the playwright could incorporate aspects of their mask types into his masks, thereby enriching the depth of character able to be represented. Other changes were possible during a performance: Miles Gloriosus 791–92 and 872 show that the hair on the mask could at times be altered. Once we recognise that some of the masks may have been individualised, there are consequences for other characters on stage and for the practical considerations of mask-making.

For example, in Pseudolus, Harpax appears seeking Ballio; Pseudolus has intercepted Harpax and pretends to be another of Ballio’s slaves (636–9):

HARP. ... sed quid est tibi nomen?
PSEUD. servus est huic lenoni Syrus;
        cum esse me dicam, Syrus sum.
HARP. id est nomen mihi.
PSEUD. verba multa facimus, etsi si tuos domi est, quin provocus,
        ut id again quod minus hoc sum, quidquid est nomen tibi?
HARP. ... but what is your name?
PSEUD. (to the audience) The pimp has a slave called
        Syrus.
        I’ll say I’m him. (to Harpax) I am Syrus.
        That’s my
HARP. name.
PSEUD. We’re wasting words. If your boss is at home, why not call him out,
        So I can do what I was sent here for, whatever your
name is.

Harpax’s difficulty accepting the Pseudolus’ pseudonym is puzzling. ‘Syrus’ is a typical slave name, and one well established in ancient comedy: characters with the name are found in Terence’s Adelphoe, Heauton Timoroumenos, and as a female, Syra, in Hecyra, in Menander’s Epitrepontes, Dis Exaptatio, Phasma, and Georgos, and elsewhere in Plautus. Chrysalus in Bacchides 649–50 says:

non mihi isti placent Parmenones, Syri,
qui duos aut tris minas afferunt eris.

I don’t care for those Parmenones and Syruses
who steal two or three minae from their masters.

There is no obvious reason for Harpax’s hesitancy in quidquid est nomen tibi. Or is there?

81. This is why Lindsay follows Acidalinus and assigns the clause to Pseudolus. Harpax is the one who is lost, though, and he needs to know with whom he is dealing.
Syrus is a relatively common slave name because its etymology derives from a place of origin, Syria. In *Truculentus* 530, Stratophanes says, *adduxi ancillas tibi eccas ex Syria duas* (‘Look, I brought you two maids from Syria’). Many ancient slave names were produced this way. ‘Thrax’ signifies a slave of Thracian origin; the name ‘Xanthias’ was also given to Thracians because of their blonde or reddish hair; ‘Geta’ is another ethnic name from Thrace. In fact, in a Greek context, Pseudolus himself might be thought to be of Thracian origin; he is described as being *rufus quidam* (‘a certain red-head’, *Pseudolus* 1218), feature common to all the slaves in Pollux’s catalogue except the Cicada.

If Harpax’s hesitancy indicates uneasiness, signalling a joke for the audience, we must ask under what circumstances can this exchange be funny. One answer is that this is an example of ethnographic humour. When a character on the Hellenistic or Roman stage identified himself as ‘Syrus’ he was assuming a name associated with a particular place of origin, and, by extension, with certain genetic characteristics. Masks could identify geographical origins: a mosaic of Menander’s *Samia* shows a black *mageiros* and there is a black nurse called Giddenis in Plautus’ *Poenulus* (1112–13), and an Ethiopian slave girl in Terence’s *Eunuchus* (165–7, 470–71). Similarly, the slave name ‘Syrus’ may here be associated with a particular type of slave mask: one with dark features, almost certainly dark hair, against which the red-headed Thracian would stand out in contrast, and about which no record has survived in Pollux’s catalogue (which is to say that such a mask was not found among the particular collection that Pollux describes).

There is therefore a joke when Pseudolus calls himself ‘Syrus’. The name, however generic for a slave in comedy, is associated with particular ethnographic features, including dark hair. *Truculentus* 530 suggests there were female equivalents of the mask. Pseudolus’ red-headedness is the first detail in his detailed description, is inconsistent with the name he gives himself, and this leads to Harpax’s confusion and why he thinks *verba multa facimus*. In his survey of Menander’s slave masks, MacCary believes ‘the ethnic names – Getas, Sangarios, Syros, Syskos, Tibeios, Lydos – are not rendered appropriate by emphasis in characterization upon any national trait’. There is, however, evidence for the addition of ethnic features to masks, to facilitate audience differentiation between characters. Plautus here uses these details to get a laugh. A black mask seems to have been used in Terence’s *Phormio*: Cicero, *pro Caeceina* 10.27, thinks of the character as being black, though there are no indications of this in the text. This points to an awareness of Terence’s play from the stage, and provides clear if indirect evidence that Terence’s plays were reperformed in the age of Roscius. More relevant to the present point, however, is the inference that features of ethnicity could be added to Roman comic masks without any textual indication. Such markers of ethnicity might even be independent of character names. A similar independence can even be seen employed on South Italian red-figure vases: every ‘Xanthias’ labelled on the vases wears a mask with black hair and beard.

In the absence of any certain artistic representations of Roman masks, we cannot say how much detail was represented on a mask. As an object functioning in the theatre, though, all that is important is what can be perceived at a distance by the audience. Plautus’ troupe is willing to create striking theatrical effects by exploiting audience expectations of the mask. *Menachmi* provides several clues in its design to facilitate the doubling of both brothers until the play’s concluding scenes, when the brothers finally meet. Plautus spends most of the play having an actor wearing one mask play both brothers, only to reveal at the last moment that the troupe all along has had a second identical mask. *Miles Gloriosus* 138–53 suggested that this was the normal means of presenting twins in Roman comedy. Though they are not twins, the sisters in *Batchides* could in practice wear identical (or almost identical) masks and still be distinguishable based on how the mask was animated by the different actors playing the roles.

Much more problematic are the masks of Philocrates and Tyndarus in *Captivi*. Both Philocrates and his slave Tyndarus have been taken captive, and in their servitude, they have switched identities (lines 37–9):

> itaque inter se commutant vestem et nominam:
> illic vocatur Philocrates, hic Tyndarus;
> hucus illic, hic illius hodie fert imaginem.

And so they have swapped clothes and names with each other: That one is called Philocrates, and this one Tyndarus; He has this one’s form today, this one has his.

The prologue expresses concern that this is a matter that could be misunderstood by the audience (14), and we can be grateful for Plautus’

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82 See n. 22.
84 For this account of the development of Pollux’s catalogue, see Poe (1996) 311–12, 314–5.
85 MacCary (1969) 129.
86 Snowden (1970) 314 n. 42.
usual precision with demonstrative adjectives. The question is to what extent this concern is sincere. Might an audience actually be confused by this situation? The answer depends on how we understand 39: *imagem*, the word also used at *Miles Gloriosus* 151 (and see *Amphitryon* 121, 125, and 141).

Both Philocrates and Tyndarus are in their mid-twenties (see *Captivi* 8, 20, 980–82), and, though captive and enchained, Philocrates is freeborn and one would expect that he would appear as an *adulescens*. His mask therefore contrasts with his costume, which through the ruse is that of a slave. Unusually in this play, Tyndarus is not marked as a slave (older, bearded) but is an age-mate of Philocrates. While also a captive, he possesses the *imago* of an *adulescens* when he dons Philocrates’ clothes. There is considerable irony here. As the prologue reveals (17–21), Tyndarus is in fact the long-lost freeborn son of the senex Hegio. By making the characters age-mates, the play allows Tyndarus to appear appropriately for the social position he will hold at the end of the play, once he has been recognised. This is not to deny that he has lived as a slave, and for some reason his freeborn name was Paegniun (984): a slave name in *Persa*, and (in its Greek form) the word for a sexual plaything—not the name of a freeborn citizen. The play works aggressively at blurring the categories of slave and free. The inherited Greek mask system does this already for young women. Here, in a play with no female characters, that ambiguity manifests itself in other ways.

Philocrates, too, is presented ambiguously, as a description of him makes clear (*Captivi* 647–8):

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macilento ore, nazo acuto, corpore albo, oculis nigris,
subrubus aliquidum, crisper, cincinnatus,

thin face, sharp nose, pale complexion, dark eyes,
somewhat reddish-haired, curly with ringlets.
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The reference to his hair, *subrubus aliquidum*, is problematic, since only slaves are red-headed in comedy. Just as Tyndarus’ presentation was made ambiguous by his beardlessness and birth name, so the red hair on an *adulescens* mask blurs a line normally preserved rigorously on the comic stage by combining physical features of slave and free. This probably required a special mask to be constructed for Philocrates. The conclusion that this is a play *ubi boni meliores fiant* (1034: ‘where good men become better ones’) accurately describes the action, but Philocrates’ mask shows that free men captured in battle can assume qualities like any other slave. As *Captivi* engages with philosophical concerns concerning the naturalness of slavery, this mask demonstrates that no clear-cut solution exists. These ambiguities, of stagecraft and ethics, defy easy resolution.

Other possibilities have been raised. Leigh suggests that in performance Tyndarus and Philocrates also changed masks, and it is possible that *imago* can been understood this way. The audience enjoys a position of superiority over all the onstage characters because of the information provided by the prologue, and this knowledge is reinforced by the masks. There is no need to destabilise character identity further by switching masks in this way, and since both are presented as *adulescentes* in any case, little is gained. Moore suggests the characters actually change masks by the end of the play. This confuses the recognition too much, and the audience will be left only with the continuity of the actor (beneath costume and mask) to discern a critical element of plot. There are no instances in ancient comedy of an actor changing masks and not changing identities at the same time. Masks function as the primary marker of a character’s identity, and it is consequently all the more important that each mask uniquely relates to a given character.

Plautus could use the mask system inherited from Greek performance to make an element of his narrative clear to the audience, reinforcing the situation described in the prologue. The audience will always know who was born free and who was born a slave. The same is not true, however, for female characters. The best case for this is the woman who is recognised as being other than she appears during the course of the play, an event that happens in *Cistellaria*, *Curculo*, *Poenulus*, *Rudens*, and in Terence’s *Andria* and *Eunuchus*. It is not always citizenship (and concomitant eligibility for marriage) that is proved, though it may be. In Plautus, the

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87 Lindsay (1900) 114: ‘It was absolutely necessary that the audience should know from the outset that Tyndarus was Hegio’s long-lost son; for otherwise all the delicate irony of the situation in the scenes between Hegio and Tyndarus would be lost upon them, nor could they help being puzzled by the noble traits of the seeming slave’s character.’ While Lindsay underestimates the audience, his basic point is well founded.

88 *Pseudolus* 118, *Aulularia* 400, *Phormio* 31. Pollux’s list suggests that red-headedness was common on slaves: of masks 21–27, all are red-headed except mask 21, the Pappos, who is a freedman, and mask 26, the Cicada, who has black hair and may be African (see note 22). In contrast, *rubiscundus* (‘flushed’) can be used of slave or free: see *Rudens* 354 of an *adulescens*, *Pseudolus* 1239 of a slave, and *Hypneria* 440 in a deliberately confused description of a non-existent character.

true situation is rarely a mystery, since the fact is revealed in a prologue in every instance except Curculio.\footnote{I do not believe this in itself is sufficient reason to believe that Curculio survives in an abridged form and that there was originally a narrative prologue, though that is generally held to be the case; see Fainham (1961) 88-9, Webster (1970) 225.}\footnote{LSJ translates 'a pretended maid' and cites Pollux 4.315. Such would be more appropriate perhaps for Chalinus 'disguise' as a bride in Caecina. See Gilula (1977).} This situation is often associated with the term pseudokore (false maiden?), though the term is found only in Pollux and (given its uncertain etymology\footnote{Wiles (1991) 206, and see 177-84.}) that term is best not used, except in reference to Pollux's catalogue. Nevertheless, in that catalogue two versions of the pseudokore are listed among the female masks, and apparently distinguished only by hairstyle. Wiles suggests this mask represents a young woman whose circumstances are falsely understood, with the other masks used for meretrices who would not be so recognised over the course of the play: 'the mask . . . implies that she is the pseudo-virgin of the plot, the young man's mistress whom he has liberated from slavery, and certainly will marry at the end of the play'.\footnote{Wiles (1991) 177 notes how such a feature does not fit ancient concepts of beauty, but does correspond to the association of animal features with many of the characters in this play.} The question is not entirely moot, since Curculio (as the text stands) and the Terentian plays maintain the suspense of the recognition as the play unfolds. A codified mask system that was inflexible in this regard would have denied a Roman playwright the opportunity to present ambiguity or to create surprise.

Again, it becomes helpful to understand Pollux's list as describing the contents of one particular mask cabinet that he reads in structuralist terms. The order of the list acknowledges the five Hellenistic mask types. A troupe performing a play can use a mask they already possess or make a new one to accommodate the physical details that are found in the text of the play. Sometimes, this will seek a particular effect, as is achieved in the case of the slave girl Planisium in Curculio, whose appearance is marked as being cam norminis oculis (191: 'with owl eyes').\footnote{In our 1996 production, the actor took a cloth the size of a large napkin (with which Curculio had wiped his lips after his feast), and stuffed it in the eyehole of the mask, to create an instant (and very transparent) disguise, that of course was completely effective within the stage world.} The play isolates one feature in an otherwise unmarked mask, and in practice an actor would select whatever young woman mask happened to have the largest, roundest eyes, and that this criterion would override the need to use a (supposed) pseudokore mask.

Curculio has another joke involving the eyes of the mask: Curculio has emerged from the house with a slave, calling back to an imagined Phaedromus within. Only once he has emerged does he see Lyco the banker (390-94):

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{CURCULIO} & \ldots attat, quem quaerebam, sequere me. \\
\textbf{LYCO} & simulabo quasi non noverim. heus tu, te volo. \\
\textbf{CURCULIO} & Unocule, salve. \\
\textbf{LYCO} & quaeso, deriderme me? \\
\textbf{LYCO} & de Coelium prosapia e te esse arbitror, \\
& nam el sunt unoculi. \\
\multicolumn{2}{l}{\textbf{CURCULIO} (to audience)}\tabularnewline & Hey! The man I seek. (to a slave) Follow me. \\
& (to audience) I'll pretend I don't know him. \\
& He puts on an eyepatch. \\
& (to Lyco) I want you. \\
\textbf{LYCO} & Hey you, \\
& Hello, One-eye. \\
\textbf{CURCULIO} & Sir, do you mock me? \\
\textbf{LYCO} & I think you're from the family of the Cyclopes. \\
& They are all one-eyed. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Curculio goes on to brag that the injury was a catapult wound, to which Lyco suggests rather it came from being chased out of the kitchen — and Curculio confesses to the audience that this is indeed the most likely source of his imagined injury (394-8). Curculio adopts an eyepatch disguise, but he is not normally one-eyed (391: simulabo): this is his disguise as the soldier's freedman (libertus). Summanus (413-16, with the joke playing between an obscure god and bedwetting). The question becomes, when does Curculio disguise himself? While it is possible he wears an eyepatch as he appears, this loses the appearance of spontaneity achieved if the disguise is a panicked response to meeting Lyco unexpectedly. He sees the banker, and the character improvises a disguise based on what he has at hand.\footnote{I do not believe this in itself is sufficient reason to believe that Curculio survives in an abridged form and that there was originally a narrative prologue, though that is generally held to be the case; see Fainham (1961) 88-9, Webster (1970) 225.} Whatever solution is adopted, it parallels the staging of Miles Gloriosus 1306-9, where Pleusicles is also disguised as someone with one eye.

Masked acting necessarily involves a paradox, though. While many of the techniques are associated with conveying what is on the surface of the mask, the act of wearing a mask evokes the appearance of unanticipated depth of character. A masked actor is constantly negotiating between these poles, depending on the willing participation of the audience.
this is accomplished is described by an exercise of Lecoq:

After this first experience of masked performance, I ask the performers for the opposite of what the mask appears to suggest. For example, a mask whose face seems to present 'cretin' will at first be performed as just that. The character will be foolish, timid, clumsy. Next we consider what if the character might be knowledgeable, clever, sure of himself, supremely intelligent? Here the actor is performing what we call the counter-mask, revealing a second character behind the same mask, lending it a depth which is much more interesting. In this way we discover that people's faces do not necessarily fit what they are and that for each character there is a depth of field. A third stage can be reached with certain masks: to perform, in the same character, both mask and counter-mask.95

What Lecoq calls the 'counter-mask' is more satisfying for an audience, but requires the actor to know both how his body appears in a given mask, to be aware of that character and its effect on the audience, and to play something opposite to those expectations. Every actor will respond to a given mask differently, and consequently will produce a different character, though the initial 'surface' character of the mask for each actor might share many characteristics. This tension is also present with the half masks of the commedia:

The characters of the Italian comedy are constantly oscillating between two contradictory poles. Harlequin is, at one and the same time, naïve and cunning, the Captain is strong and scared, the Doctor knows everything and understands nothing, Pantalone is both an industrial boss, master of himself and helplessly off his head when in love. This duality, pushed to its limit, is a source of great richness.97

The richness of a masked performance lies in these tensions.

The mental demands of acting in a mask are therefore significant, and, again, the mask cannot function in isolation. Noh acting, like acting in Greece and Rome, rewards versatility, in the actor's ability to play a wide variety of roles,98 which further complicates the task. As the Noh actor Akira Matsui says, 'The art is acting, not mask-wearing.'99 But not any mask can accomplish such effects, and the mask-maker needs to be an artist. Lecoq praises Noh masks, which create the appearance of life through the smallest movements: 'the greatest masks of all are those of the Japanese Noh, where the slightest forward tilt of the head is sufficient to lower the eyelids and convert the gaze from outward to inward.100 How the mask fits on the actor's head is also important:

Like every other mask, a neutral mask should not adhere closely to the face. A certain distance should be preserved between the face and the mask, for it is precisely this distance which makes it possible for the actor to play. It must also be slightly larger than the face. The real dimensions of a face, as found, for example, on death masks, do not help the performer to find the register of play, nor to extend it to those around. This is true of all masks.101

The fact that ancient masks appear to be slightly larger-than-life is therefore not only (or even primarily) associated with increasing visibility for the audience. It is rather a necessary component of the mask design to enable the character to come to life. Performance, as always, is the key: '[t]here is no point in contemplating the mask for hours, with heaven knows what mystic concentration, before performing. It must be jolted into life.'102 This view runs counter to the conventional image in Greek and Roman art of an actor portrayed in contemplation of his mask. It is such images (which may represent only a moment; it is the viewer who assumes the actor has been there a long time) that lead to a misunderstanding of the profession of the masked actor. For only rarely will it be the case that an actor has only one mask.

Finally, we can turn to the practicalities for an actor of wearing such a mask. Phormio 209–12 consists of an exchange that has often been used to 'prove' that Roman comedy did not use masks. For it would appear that Antipho's face changes, offering for evaluation supposedly 'different' expressions to show his father that he is not afraid:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ANT.} & \quad \text{obstrue,} \\
\text{GETA.} & \quad \text{quid si adstimulo satinet?} \\
\text{ANT.} & \quad \text{garris.} \\
\text{GETA.} & \quad \text{voltum contemplanini em} \\
\text{ANT.} & \quad \text{satine sic est?} \\
\text{GETA.} & \quad \text{non.} \\
\text{ANT.} & \quad \text{quid si sic?} \\
\text{GETA.} & \quad \text{propensum.} \\
\text{ANT.} & \quad \text{quid sic?} \\
\text{GETA.} & \quad \text{sat est.} \\
\text{em istuc serva...}
\end{align*}
\]

Ant. No, please; what if I preceded — would that do?
Get. Don’t be silly.
Ant. (trying to look resolute) Look at my face, both of you. Is that all right?
Get. No.
Ant. What about this then?
Get. Nearly.
Ant. Like this then?
Get. That’ll do. Now keep it up. 103

Actual changing expressions are of course impossible on a fixed mask, and consequently some scholars have seen this passage as evidence against the use of masks. 104 Defenders typically invoke the appearance of motion and emotion that is often attested when an actor wears a mask, and skilled performers can indeed make a mask seem to come to life, and express a range of emotions by combining head position with posture, gestures, and vocal inflection. This is not, however, what seems to be the case here.

Terence’s passage has the appearance of very rapid back-and-forth exchanges between the characters: line 210 alone contains six speeches. By calling attention specifically to the face (vultus) and the rapidity of exchange, Terence is not allowing his actor to show the range of expression of which he is perhaps capable. But this does not eliminate the scene’s entertainment value. Humour is achieved by having Antipho call attention to his facial expressions when his mask is immobile. ‘Look at my face . . . Is that all right?’ he asks, indicating his mask’s fixed expression. Geta tells him no, so Antipho quickly turns away, and turns back, displaying what by necessity is the same facial expression, saying ‘What about this then?’ The audience can see that nothing has changed, but this time Geta says ‘Nearly’. Another spin and re-presentation from Antipho — ‘Like this then?’ — receives a confident response from his slave, ‘That’ll do. Now keep it up.’ By calling attention to the unchanging nature of the conventional mask, Terence is able to evoke a sincere metatheatrical laugh from his audience, as Antipho goes to face his father really no better prepared than he was to begin with.

Ainăaria 837–41 present a similar joke, where a character is unable to change the mask’s expression. The comic mechanism is therefore slightly more straightforward, while still calling attention to the mask the character wears. Argyrippus is speaking with his father Damaenetus:

Argy. An tu me tristem putat?
Dem. putem ego, quem videas acque est maestum ut quasi dies si dicta sit?
Argy. ne dixis istuc.
Dem. ne sic fueris: ilico ego non dixerro.
Argy. en aspecta: rideo.
Dem. usinam male qui mihi volunt sic rideant.

Argy. Why? Do you think I’m sad?
Dem. Sad? You look as glum as if
You’d just been hauled before the judge.
Argy. Don’t talk that way!
Dem. Don’t act that way,
And I’ll no longer need to say it.
Argy. Look: I’m laughing. (He gives a weak grin.)
Dem. How I wish
My enemies would laugh so hard! (tr. Smith)

Smith’s stage direction is clearly what the situation expects. But how is ‘a weak grin’ to be accomplished with masks which cover the entire face? One solution, which amounts to the ‘default’ solution in a masked theatre, is to have the actor use the other variables available to him — his posture, vocal tone, hands, the angle light hits the face — to signify happiness in the natural way. I suggest, though, that it would be hard to represent a ‘weak’ smile this way, since any actor’s movements would have to be clear enough to convey the emotion in the first place. A more obvious solution is for the actor to present himself as neutrally as he is able: specifically not to smile, while he says en aspecta: rideo. This would produce a visual joke where the actor’s words are in clear contradiction to his disposition.

Because the mask functions in conjunction with the other resources brought by the actor to the stage, examples such as these begin to blur the distinction between physical aspects of the mask and how it is employed during performance. When successfully worn, the audience does not see

103 Tr. Radice (1976) 336. 104 Gow (1932) 72 dismisses the example.

Personal experience corroborates these claims. When students were shown a mask and asked ‘Who is this?’ or ‘Describe this person’, responses invariably focused not on physical characteristics, but on emotions and psychological states: he is sad; he is angry; he’s a crazy person; he’s been hurt. Even without an actor animating the mask, there is a willingness in the audience to interpret a mask as possessing an inner life. Indeed, this tendency is ridiculed by a fable of Aesop (Fable 27, and see Phaedrus 1.7), in which a fox sees a mask and is surprised that there are no brains inside.
the object, but only the character. Metatheatrical humour can disrupt this, but it is the power of the mask to hold and maintain audience attention: "The wide-eyed gaze of the tragic [or comic] mask does not scatter or divide, but focuses and encompasses, compelling the attention of the entire theatre." The skill of acting in a mask can be learnt, and governs much of the way that we can envision stage action.