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THE STAGECRAFT AND PERFORMANCE OF ROMAN COMEDY

C. W. MARSHALL

CHAPTER I

The Experience of Roman Comedy

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERFORMANCE

Romans enjoyed the *palliatae*. Adaptations of Greek drama constituted one of the principal forms of entertainment at the *ludi* ('games'). *Ludi* were public religious festivals that offered the only opportunity for dramatic performance in Rome.[1] Combining sacrifices and other religious practices[2] with public entertainments such as chariot events at the circus, *ludi* were the significant celebrations in the religious year of Rome. The evidence for the early history of the *ludi scaenici* ('theatrical shows') is confused,[3] but, for the period of Plautus' plays, the situation is relatively stable. There were four major festivals at which comedies could be presented, each administered by magistrates under the authority of the senate. The *ludi Romani*, administered by the curule aediles and held in September, were the first site of Roman literary performance: Livius Andronicus staged a tragedy and a comedy in 240 BC.[4] In 214 the number of days for *ludi scaenici* was fixed at four.[5] The *ludi Plebeii*, administered by the plebeian aediles and held in November, had at least three days for performance.[6] It was here that *Stichus* was performed in 200.[7] The *ludi Apollinares*, administered by the *praetor urbanus* and held in July, were first celebrated in 212 and became annual in 208:[8] they were the first of a wave of new festivals inaugurated during the Second Punic War, reflecting both an increased awareness of the societal value served by *ludi* and a genuine sense that there were theological benefits to be realised from such celebrations. They offered at least two days for *ludi scaenici*.

[1] Taylor (1937), Duckworth (1952) 76–9, Beare (1964) 162–3.
[2] Probably involving processions: see Taylor (1935) 127–8, Hanson (1959) 81–6.
[3] Contrast Bernstein (1998) with e.g. Wiseman (1995) 129–44.
[4] Cicero, *Brutus* 72, Cassiodorus *Chronicle* p. 128M. Livy 1.35.9, 4.27.1, etc., calls the games *magni*, and at 6.42.12 he calls them *maximi*.
[5] Livy 24.43.7. [6] Taylor (1937) 288. [7] *Stichus, didascalia.*
[8] Cicero, *Brutus* 78, assumes these were *ludi scaenici.*

The *ludi Megalenses*, administered by the curule aediles and held in early April, were first celebrated in 204 and were made annual by 194, when for the first time *ludi scaenici* were introduced.[9] The evidence for the number of performance days at this festival is ambiguous, but there were at least two and may have been as many as six, the number it would later have in the empire.[10] It was here that *Pseudolus* was performed in 191, *Hecyra* in its initial appearance in 165, and, likely, *Trinummus* at some uncertain date.[11]

The months in which festivals were celebrated can be misleading. At this time, the Romans used a 355-day year, and therefore required regular intercalations to match the actual seasons. After a period of considerable laxity, efforts to fix the calendar were advanced by a *lex de intercalando* in 191, by which time the calendar was four months ahead of the sun.[12] The April of the *ludi Megalenses* was in Plautus' time experiencing short, cold, wet days typical of December weather; the *ludi Apollinares* were held in March by modern reckoning; the *ludi Romani* were in practice a spring festival celebrated in May, and the *ludi plebeii* were celebrated in the heat of July.

As for other festivals, there is no evidence that the Floralia (the *ludi Florales*, instituted in 238 and made annual in 173) ever included plays, though mime performances did take place. Similarly, while there were seven days for dramatic performances at the *ludi Cereales* by the time of Augustus, there is no evidence for *ludi scaenici* there during the republic.[13] Thus, for the first half of Plautus' career, there were at least nine performance days at three festivals for *ludi scaenici*, and this increased to perhaps fifteen performance days at four festivals in 194. This growth coincides with an increased cosmopolitan sophistication and awareness of Greek drama among many Roman men associated with their military experience in South Italy, Sicily, and Greece.

It is unlikely that these festivals alone could support many theatrical troupes. There were, however, other opportunities to perform in Rome. These were of four types. The first are *ludi magni* ('great games'), which

[9] Livy 29.14.14, 34.54.3. For the introduction of the Magna Mater (Cybele) to Rome, see Gruen (1990) 5–33.
[10] Livy 34.54.3, Taylor (1937) 289–90, Duckworth (1952) 77. The dedication of the temple took place during the celebration of the *ludi Megalenses* in 191.
[11] *Pseudolus, didascalia*; *Trinummus* 990 refers to *novi aediles*, a reference that only makes sense at a spring festival, since the aediles' term of office began on 15 March. See Taylor (1937) 89–91, Duckworth (1952) 77, Slater (2000) 176.
[12] Macrobius 1.13.21. See Briscoe (1981) 17–26, Gratwick (1982) 81, Goldberg (1998) 15. It was still two and a half months out in 168.
[13] Taylor (1937) 289 believes 'there were probably at least two days in the theatre', but this is a guess.

were irregular and not held annually.[14] Held five or ten years following a vow made by a magistrate, these *ludi* were likely theatrical, especially if the length of ten days (mentioned in vows made in 191 and 172[15]) was typical. Second, there were other *ludi votivi* ('votive games'), beginning with those celebrated by Scipio in 205.[16] In this category too may be placed the *ludi Iuventatis*, which, despite Cicero's confusion concerning their date, were theatrical.[17] Plays may have been common at the *ludi* associated with the dedication of other temples, too.[18] Third, there were private *ludi*, and in particular *ludi funebres* ('funeral games'). Four days of *ludi scaenici* were held during the funeral of T. Quinctius Flamininus in 174,[19] and two of Terence's plays were performed at the *ludi funebres* of L. Aemilius Paullus in 160 (this is the only indication we have of a troupe performing more than one play at a given festival, and it is significant that one of them is a revival).[20]

Finally, the institution of *instauratio* complicates the matter further. *Instauratio* was a religious practice, which provided that the day of a given festival would be repeated if a defect in ritual was noticed. The relationship between the entertainments and the more traditionally conceived religious elements of the *ludi* are here bound tightest. Servius describes an instance of *instauratio* avoided, in 211, at the first *ludi Apollinares*:

denique cum ludi circenses Apollini celebrarentur et Hannibal nuntiatus esset circa portam Collinam urbi ingruere, omnes raptis armis concurrunt. reversi postea cum piaculum formidarent, invenerunt saltantem in circo senem quendam. qui cum interrogatus dixisset se non interupisse saltationem, dictum est hoc proverbium 'salva res est, saltat senex'.

Finally, when the circus games for Apollo were being celebrated and Hannibal had been announced to be attacking the city near the Colline gate, everyone grabbed their weapons and ran there. Later, when they returned and were concerned about the necessary sacrifice, they found a certain old man dancing in the circus. When asked, he told them he had not stopped dancing, and so the proverb goes: 'All is well, the old man is dancing.'[21]

[14] Taylor (1937) 296–7. Such games were held in 217 and 207 (Livy 27.33.8), in 203 (Livy 30.27.12), and 194 (Livy 34.44.6, where he calls them *ludi Romani votivi*).
[15] Livy 36.2.2–5, 42.28.8.
[16] Taylor (1937) 297–98. Such games were held in 205 (Livy 28.38.14, 28.45.12), in 200 (Livy 31.49.4), in 191 (Livy 36.36.1–2), and in 186 (Livy 39.22.1–3, 8–10, where the presence of *artifices ex Graecia* and *ex Asia* implies the usual presence of local theatre troupes).
[17] Cicero, *Brutus* 73. [18] Taylor (1937) 298. [19] Livy 41.28.11.
[20] *Ludi scaenici* are not explicitly attested in every account of *ludi funebres* (Livy 23.30.15, 28.21.10, 31.50.4, 39.46.2), and we cannot assume their existence, despite Taylor (1937) 299–300. Nevertheless, plays were performed at some *ludi funebres*.
[21] Servius, *ad Aeneidis* 8.110. See also Taylor (1937) 294–5 and n. 26 citing Festus 436–8 L.

While the connection with *instauratio* is not explicit (though it is when Cicero alludes to the story at *de Haruspicum Responso* 23), the theological benefits resulting from the successful continuation of the celebrations are clear. Because the old man (or a mime imitating an old man?) had not stopped his performance, the need for the expiation that the Romans had dreaded (*piaculum formidarent*) was averted.[22] These stories contrast with the more usual accounts of *instaurationes*, which make one almost suspect *instaurationes* were used as a ploy to extend the length of a dramatic run.[23] Livy documents the large number of *instaurationes* between 216 and 179 leading to additional dramatic performances, which by Taylor's calculations added an average of five performance days per year. Livy only records *instaurationes* at the *ludi Romani* and *ludi Plebeii*, but an *instauratio* could likely be declared at other public *ludi* as well, and Livy may simply be omitting references to lesser festivals.[24]

When *instauratio* was invoked, it is unlikely to have benefited the acting troupe itself. Certainly, the audience had another chance to see the show, but it is unlikely the troupe would receive additional payment for the performance: the contract would have been for the festival, and the voided day would be excluded. If we remove the religious associations of the performance, we can identify plausible motivations for the audience to seek *instauratio*, and perhaps for the magistrates to do so as well (e.g. to increase returns on their investment, and to demonstrate to the people their authority and that of the senate). But to suggest that the magistrates would deliberately spoil an aspect of their own festival overlooks both the religious dynamic and their personal investment (of both finances and prestige). The *ludi* were religious, and it does them a disservice to minimise this, but the spirit of their celebration would no doubt appear to us to be very secular. Even if the religious aspect of the *ludi* were relaxed somewhat, default public morality would expect and support a conservative, pious position.

While the combined benefits of these additional factors cannot be fully assessed, a total of twenty-five to thirty performance days in Rome

[22] Livy 27.23.5–7 shows it was not foolish to associate an epidemic with the failure to hold *ludi*. The ability to maintain one's culture during a military attack no doubt provided a great psychological boost; compare Glenn Miller and his orchestra playing through the bombings in London in the summer of 1944.
[23] See Duckworth (1952) 78; Beacham (1991) 158–9. Pansiéri (1997) 144 ties *Miles Gloriosus* to the year 205 because of the large number of *instaurationes*.
[24] A catalogue of Livy's *instaurationes* can be found at Cohee (1994) 466–8.

annually seems to be a fair guess, and more would not surprise. If these did not offer enough to sustain a troupe, there was always the possibility of travelling to other cities – Diodorus Siculus 37.12 has an Italian actor claiming never to have worked in Rome – or to subcontract oneself for a different kind of performance (as seems to be envisaged by the joke at *Rudens* 535). Such subcontracting need not involve the whole troupe: the troupe's *tibicen* ('piper') could probably secure additional contracts throughout the year. However, even thinking in terms of 'twenty-five to thirty performance days' is to consider the matter from the perspective of the audience. In many ways a more important figure is the number of different plays a troupe would be expected to mount, and the number of plays the magistrates would expect from a successful troupe over the course of a year. Here, too, is guesswork, but thinking in terms of three or four fixed contracts a year, with possibly one to three more for *ludi votivi* or *ludi funebres*, provides a reasonable approximation of the opportunities a successful troupe could be given for dramatic performances in Rome. There will not be many troupes able to flourish under such conditions, but a few could, particularly if these same troupes also provided entertainments for smaller cities in Latium and Campania, which also had flourishing theatrical cultures.

THE BUSINESS OF COMEDY

The administration of the *ludi* was one of the chief responsibilities of certain magistrates, and by this time the aedileship at least was open to patricians and plebeians. There was no admission charge for the plays, and no tickets: the audience was gathered from the assembled festival crowd and had no direct financial investment in the performance. Comedy was, however, a business, and given the limited number of contracts available from a relatively fixed set of funds (all entertainments would come from the same budget, which was fixed for each festival by the senate), each troupe was obliged to seek as many profitable contracts in a year as it could. There is certainly a political dimension to this: the senate controls funds, and, since it was responsible for the regular re-building of the temporary performance spaces, it also exerted ultimate control over artistic matters.[25] But the *ludi* did not provide a venue for overt political

[25] Gruen (1992) 209–10.

campaigning, due perhaps to the social inversion that characterised these events.[26] Consequently, an economic perspective proves more informative.

The economic pressures were different for the different parties involved. The magistrates were concerned to offer a full selection of entertainments, of great variety. It is suspected that they would typically supplement the state allowance for the *ludi* from their private funds, since 'It was a basic tenet of ancient political theory that political influence could be gained or asserted by the provision of spectacles.'[27] In doing so, their cash investment was used to create a different type of capital that nevertheless could prove just as valuable for an ambitious politician.[28] For some playwrights, those not actively involved in the play's production, the number of performance days is of little consequence. A manuscript is sold, and with it came the rights to produce the play. Perhaps a playwright could think in terms of a new play for each festival. Here perhaps lies the reason for the emphasis on new plays in the prologues of Terence (e.g. *Adelphoe* 12), which seem to concern Plautus less – probably, this is because Plautus was part of his troupe.

Still, the language for this dimension of economic activity requires examination. Ovid indicates that in his day there was money to be made: *scaena est lucrosa poetae, | tantaque non parvo crimina praetor emit* (Ovid, *Tristia* 2.507–8: 'The stage is profitable for the poet, and the praetor does not buy these immoralities cheaply').[29] When we are told Plautus sold his comedies (*fabulas solitus ... vendere*),[30] is it a performance that is sold, or merely the manuscript? Confusion has existed because of an apparent inconsistency in the prologues of Terence. *Eunuchus* 20 refers to a time *postquam aediles emerunt* ('after the aediles bought [the play]'). Nevertheless, Ambivius Turpio, speaking the second prologue to *Hecyra* (lines 9–57), claims the plays were 'purchased at my own expense' (57: *pretio emptas meo*).[31]

[26] Gruen (1992) 188–93. Segal (1987) discusses the social inversion of Roman comedy.

[27] Potter (1999) 320.

[28] For the competitive environment at this level, compare the accounts of Millar (1984) 12 and Gruen (1992) 190. Wilson (2000) explores this dynamic among Athenian *chorêgoi*.

[29] We may observe in passing that Ovid specifies the praetor, which points to the *ludi Apollinares*, games which certainly by the Augustan period were celebrated with six days of *ludi scaenici*. They therefore likely represented theatrical contracts of considerable expense.

[30] Jerome, *Chronicle ann. Abr.* 1817; and see Aulus Gellius 3.3.14. It is this language that lies behind Horace's prejudice at *Epistles* 2.1.170–76. Ennius too *fabulas vendavit* (Jerome, *Chronicle ann. Abr.* 1863/64: 'sold his plays'). See Lebek (1996) 31–2.

[31] Different views are given by Carney (1963) 35 n. 57, and Lebek (1996) 32–3, but it will be clear that I find these less convincing. Lebek (1996) 32 associates this disruption with *instauratio*, but without reason. The confusion comes from equating Terence the playwright with the troupe and the actor delivering the prologue in particular. It is the troupe's perspective that is being represented in the prologue. Nowhere is this clearer than in the rival accounts of sums involved, none of which, I

The aediles have purchased the play (that is, a performance of the play) from this troupe. In anticipation of this, Ambivius Turpio has purchased the play (that is, the manuscript from which he can begin rehearsals) from the playwright, because Terence, and Caecilius before him, are not members of the troupe. This represents an initial outlay that Turpio hopes will be offset by the monies gained through the production, and is what he stands to lose.[32] Turpio seems to have made a career of fostering young playwrights and bringing their work to the stage. However, a generation earlier, when the opportunities for performance were considerably fewer, there would be a strong incentive to have a playwright on the payroll as a sharer in the production, rather than as an independent agent requiring an initial financial outlay.

It is probably anachronistic to think of Turpio purchasing production rights along with the manuscript. While today's society is very concerned with abstract rights of intellectual property, the pressures on a performing troupe in the early second century would probably have been much more pedestrian. Without at least one copy of 'the script' (itself a problematical concept) a new play cannot be staged. It is this technical restriction in a world without a printing press that ties ownership of the manuscript with rights of production, and we shall see ways this control could be maintained. After an initial performance, it becomes less easy to control a script, which could lead to unauthorised productions.

A consequence of this financial dimension is that the plays themselves must be flexible in their construction. Since a functioning troupe will be regularly looking forward to future bookings, a playwright in all likelihood does not know at which festival a given play will be produced. If for whatever reason a new play is not contracted at a given festival, work on the play will nevertheless have begun. We cannot know what the lead-in time for a production was at every occasion, but the troupe has an incentive to be ready to perform a new play with minimal time for rehearsals. The *ludi Megalenses* provides the clearest timetable. Since

suspect, may be fully trusted. Turpio does not ask for a high price from the magistrates (*Hecyra* 49, a line written by Terence), but Suetonius, *de Poetis* ('Terence' 3), says it was the highest price ever paid for a comedy. Donatus (*Eunuchus praefatio* 6, Wessner (1902–8) vol. I: 266) believed this represents Terence's take – 8,000 denarii = 32,000 HS, as Wessner (1902–8) notes. Suetonius is however discussing the performance, and this price may be seen to represent the troupe's price from the aediles; Gilula (1985–8) 77 and n. 11 hints at this possibility. *Hecyra* 49 is therefore disingenuous, but it may be that the audience was not concerned with the backroom finances, and such a pose of modesty was considered customary or at least polite.

32 The *Eunuchus* prologue distinguishes the *poeta* in lines 3 and 28, which shows that the speaker represented is not Terence but a member of the troupe; see *Andria* 1, *Heauton Timoroumenos* 2, *Phormio* 1, *Hecyra* 13, *Adelphoe* 1.

aediles began their term of office on 15 March it is implausible that contracts could be drawn before that date. Even assuming this was the first matter addressed by the new magistrates, there is still less than three weeks' time before the *ludi scaenici* at the *Megalenses*. This is less time than an Elizabethan theatre company would have spent in rehearsal,[33] and clearly we must assume that at least the writing of the play is done in anticipation of a contract; probably some of the rehearsals are as well. *Eunuchus* 20–26 seems to envisage some sort of preliminary performance, after the play has been purchased, but before the festival.[34] Whatever the situation, the magistrates were present, as somehow was Terence's enemy Luscius Lanuvinus,[35] whose denunciation was intended to invalidate the dramatic contract. Luscius' motivations remain mysterious, but it may be that his play (or his troupe) had been overlooked by the magistrates selecting plays for the festival. Plays cannot be venue-specific, and, since the celebrations for the different *ludi* were held in different locations, the system required a fair degree of flexibility. With only a minimum effort, each performance site would in the normal course of events be able to house most plays.

Only two extant plays preclude a generic performance space. The Choragus at *Curculio* 462–84 seems to require performance in the *forum Romanum*. The play is, however, easily adaptable. *Curculio* 462–84 could be replaced by another context-specific speech as the venue changed (or, indeed, it could be simply omitted, though that would entail the loss of a powerful scene).[36] The speech as it exists happens to describe one location, but that does not mean that the play was never performed elsewhere, or that another speech never was delivered at this point in the play. The other context-specific play is *Amphitruo*, which requires the actors to stand on the roof of the stage building. Line 1008 is explicit, as Mercurius says he will ascend *in tectum* ('onto the roof') and fragments IV and V make reference to dropping things *in caput* ('onto [Amphitruo's] head'). No other comedy has this requirement.

The troupe is not the only professional group hired by the magistrates. There are other entertainers, of various types. Contracts could be issued for performances of other theatrical genres. Further, seventy-four

33 Potter (1999) 270 discusses some first-century BC occasions where the rehearsal time was as short as a week, but these are not for new plays.

34 Could *occeptast agi* (*Eunuchus* 22) refer to the beginning of the rehearsal period?

35 See Duckworth (1952) 62–5, Garton (1972) 41–72, and J. Wright (1974) 78–9.

36 In my production of *Curculio*, the speech was re-written to accommodate known haunts of students at the university campus where the play was performed.

gladiators fought at the *ludi funebres* of Flamininus in 174 (Livy 41.28.11), and, in other contexts, we hear of events such as chariot races, mimes, Atellan farces, acrobats, boxers, tightrope walkers, and dancing bears.[37] Some of these may not have been paid by the festival, but would be busking, relying on the goodwill of citizens enjoying the atmosphere of the games. Other indirect employment may well have come from food vendors and the like, and we may imagine that much of this secondary activity is focused around the forum, even when the principal entertainment was held elsewhere.

We cannot be certain about the nature of timetabling events, but there is some indication that principal entertainments were presented serially and not simultaneously.[38] The prologues to the second and third performances of Terence's *Hecyra* (lines 1–8, 9–57) provide the best test case.[39] In 165, *Hecyra* was performed at the *ludi Megalenses*. In 160, it was presented at the *ludi funebres* of Aemilius Paullus along with *Adelphoe*. Because both of these performances had been interrupted, Terence felt he could still describe his play as new later that same year, when the play was mounted at the *ludi Romani* (and presumably met its deserved success). The prologue claims audience noise was the problem with the first two performances (*Hecyra* 29–30), in both cases because of rival entertainments.[40] The failure at the *ludi funebres* of Paullus is straightforward (lines 39–42):

quom interea rumor venit datum iri gladiatores, populus convolat, tumultuantur, clamant, pugnant de loco. ego interea meum non potui tutari locum.

But then a rumour arose that there was going to be a gladiatorial show: crowds rushed in, with much confusion, shouting, and fighting for places, and in these circumstances I couldn't preserve my place.[41]

[37] For bears, see Horace, *Epistles* 2.1.185–6, and Macrobius 2.7.12–16; for gladiators in the forum, see Valerius Maximus, *Memorabilia* 2.4.7, Livy 23.30.15 and 39–46. *P. Oxy.* 2707, a sixth-century AD circus programme, includes singing tightrope walkers among the entertainments, and Suetonius, *Galba* 6.1, mentions tightrope-walking elephants; for other performers of 'minor' arts, see Potter (1999) 276.

[38] Duckworth (1952) 81–2 and 173 and Beare (1964) 161 argue for simultaneous performances; Gilula (1978) for serial performances.

[39] See Gilula (1978), (1981), and Sandbach (1982).

[40] We cannot of course know the real reasons for the play's lack of success, which need not be what we are told. Duckworth (1952) 378 n. 41 suggests 'various other factors also were responsible for the rejection of this play by the spectators, e.g., its unusually serious theme and Terence's unconventional treatment of plot and character'.

[41] Text and translation, Barsby (2001) vol. II: 150–51.

As Donatus correctly recognised,[42] *Hecyra* and the gladiatorial combat shared a venue, and the actors felt compelled to leave the stage when those expecting the next event would not listen to the play.[43] The celebration of Anicius' triumph in 167 provides another example of a performance degenerating because of rival entertainments. In this case, musicians began an impromptu mock battle, and were joined by dancers and boxers.[44]

Less clear are the reasons provided for the initial failure of *Hecyra*. The first prologue relates how *ita populus studio stupidus in funambulo | animum occuparat* ('the audience took a foolish fancy to a tightrope walker who claimed their attention', lines 4–5).[45] A fuller account is provided in the second prologue (lines 33–36):

quom primum eam agere coepi, pugilum gloria
(funambuli eodem accessit expectatio),
comitum conventus, strepitus, clamor mulierum
fecere ut ante tempus exirem foras.

The first time I tried to perform the play, I was forced off the stage early; there was talk of boxers – and added to that the promise of a tightrope walker – crowds of supporters, general uproar, and women screaming.[46]

Two rival entertainments interfered with Terence's play. The praise of boxers (*pugilum gloria*) need not mean that they were next on the bill as the gladiators would be in 160, though this remains possible. The audience could be discussing boxers who had performed earlier that day (in the same performance venue, or at another) or indeed at some other time. Gilula insists that the promise of the tightrope walker (*funambuli ... expectatio*) means this performance was next,[47] but this is not a necessary conclusion. Assuming the two accounts are both honestly representing

[42] Donatus, *ad Hecyra* 39 (Wessner (1902–8) II: 200): *hoc abhorret a nostra consuetudine, verumtamen apud antiquos gladiatores in theatro spectabantur* ('This is inconsistent with our custom, nevertheless in olden times gladiators were seen in the theatre'). This position will be refined below.

[43] This further suggests *Adelphoe* was not presented on the same day back-to-back as *Hecyra* as a 'double bill' at the *ludi funebres*, but instead took place at a different time, with the two plays as it were 'in repertory'. This inference is based on the prologue's silence: we may presume that the prologue would mention the successful performance of another of the author's plays immediately preceding *Hecyra*, and it could not have followed immediately, since it is clear that gladiators had been scheduled.

[44] Polybius 30.22, quoted by Athenaeus 615b–d.

[45] Text and translation, Barsby (2001) vol. II: 148–9.

[46] Text and translation, Barsby (2001) vol. II: 150–51.

[47] Gilula (1978) and see Gilula (1981), and Sandbach (1982).

the event, Gilula's hypothesis would mean the distraction (line 4) occurred as he was setting up in the venue where Terence was performing (or that the rope was set up before Terence's play, which seems unlikely if the magistrates were not actively trying to sabotage the performance). It is equally possible that some of the audience could see the *funambulus* performing elsewhere, and that the *expectatio* accompanied an intention to move to that location. The actors left the stage because of the noise and possibly a departing crowd. Regardless, the *Hecyra* prologues demonstrate certainly that gladiators and actors could perform in the same venue (a 'main stage' location) and that perhaps secondary venues existed and secondary types of performance could occur in parallel with main stage attractions.

Also employed were other individuals essential to the smooth running of the games. Indeed, there was a whole section of the urban economy that would cater specifically to those individuals celebrating the *ludi*, the existence of many of whom cannot be recovered.[48] Among these professionals are at least two people specifically concerned with the *ludi scaenici*: the *choragus* and the *praeco*. The Athenian *chorêgos* provided the financial resources for the production of choruses, both dramatic and non-dramatic (dithyrambic). He was, in modern theatre parlance, the producer.[49] In the Roman republic, the Latinised form *choragus* had assumed a very different meaning.

Plautus makes two references to the *choragus*, and at *Curculio* 462–84 introduces one as a character. At *Persa* 159–60, Saturio seeks a source for his daughter's disguise:

SAT. *πόθεν ornamenta?*
TOX. *abs chorago sumito;*
dare debet: praebenda aediles locaverunt.

SAT. Whence the costume?
TOX. Take them from the *choragus.*
He has to give them: the aediles hired him to provide!

Toxilus here makes a metatheatrical joke about the backstage reality of a Roman performance, and this brief mention provides sufficient data to suggest that 'the aediles . . . defrayed the production's extra costs separately and paid the supplier of these extras directly, and this on top of

[48] Potter (1999) 293 describes the great many types of 'hidden' professionals involved in the chariot races in Rome.

[49] The *chorêgia* is discussed in detail by Wilson (2000).

the payment made to the troupe and the poet'.[50] Similarly, at *Trinummus* 858, the *sycophanta* claims of his employer, *ipse ornamenta a chorago haec sumpsit suo periculo* ('he himself got the costume from the *choragus*, at his own risk'). *Suo periculo* suggests that the costumes are rented and that a deposit has been paid against their return, and this is confirmed by the *choragus* in *Curculio*, when he refers to *ornamenta quae locavi* (464: 'the costumes I rented'). Gilula argues that the *choragus* 'belongs to the off-stage fictional setting of *Trinummus*',[51] i.e. that the reference to the *choragus* maintains the dramatic stage world and is not metatheatrical.[52] Rather, this is an entirely typical Plautine blurring of the play's frame of reference, and that any reference to the *choragus* will be understood in the most immediate sense for the Roman audience, the theatrical context.[53]

The *choragus* therefore provides *ornamenta* ('costumes'), which are among the things that may be classified as *choragium*.[54] When it is remembered that in Elizabethan theatre, the costs of costumes and their maintenance was the major expense for a permanent company, the presence of such a professional could greatly enhance the possibility for spectacle for an itinerant troupe. The *choragus* was a professional, no doubt working with a group of employees, and seems to have had contracts both with the aediles as well as with individual performers (it may be that with the performers, only a deposit was required).[55] It is possible in any case that the *choragus*' responsibilities do not end with this. The magistrates had to hire someone to build the stage building itself in the days before the festival. This too may have been the responsibility of

[50] Gilula (1996) 482, with discussion at 481–2.

[51] Gilula (1996) 480, with discussion at 480–81. The claim seems to be contradicted, however, on 482. Similarly, in *Pseudolus* 1184–5 when Simo and Ballio tease Harpax, believing him to be someone claiming to be Harpax, they ask the cost of his cloak (*chlamys*) and blade (*machaera*). I take this to be a metatheatrical reference to the backstage presence of the *choragus*.

[52] Perhaps Gilula believes this because the *Curculio* Choragus says he dealt with Phaedromus, the character, rather than the actor; *Curculio* 467–8. My reading would suggest that Plautus is here deliberately blurring the theatrical reality with the fictional dramatic world.

[53] This also shows that the *choragus* is not normally considered to be part of the troupe (i.e. 'the stage manager' *vel sim.*) – though obviously this is a troupe member playing the role. This seems to be the assumption of Donatus' obscure comment *ad Eunuchus* 967, *choragi est administratio, ut opportune in proscaenium* ('the *choragus* is the management, so that the *proscaenium* runs smoothly', Wessner (1902–8) vol. I: 471), though perhaps the meaning had changed since Plautus' day.

[54] Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 45 L defines *choragium* as *instrumentum scaenarum* ('stage apparatus'). There is no need to assume that the *choragus* is the play's director, or is the stage manager, as is sometimes claimed, following Weinberger (1892) 127; see Gilula (1996) 484 n. 12. Indeed, that he is contracted separately makes this fundamentally implausible.

[55] In this sense he is exactly like his Hellenistic Greek counterpart, the *himatiomisthês*. Sifakis (1967) 81–2 provides the sources for both types of financial arrangements, but does not consider that both might be operating at once.

the *choragus* and his team, and would then constitute his principal obligation to the aediles, and leave him free to make separate contracts with the performers for *ornamenta*. *Captivi* 61–2 demonstrate that the *choragium* of a comedy is different from that of a tragedy, and that the tragic *choragium* allows battles to be presented on stage but the comic one does not.[56] Gilula argues that *choragium* must include the set, interpreting Festus' definition in the broadest possible way.[57] This is a possible but not a necessary conclusion, and it could be that *choragium* and *ornamenta* are synonyms, both meaning costumes. Regardless, someone is building a set, and the set will be used by a variety of troupes, performing a variety of plays (*Menaechmi* 72–6):

> *haec urbs Epidamnus est, dum haec agitur fabula;*
> *quando alia agetur, aliud fiet oppidum.*
> *sicut familiae quoque solent mutarier:*
> *modo hic habitat leno, modo adulescens, modo senex,*
> *pauper, mendicus,*[58] *rex, parasitus, hariolus.*[59]

> This city is Epidamnus, while this play is acted.
> When another is acted, it will become another town.
> Households, too, are typically changed the same way:
> Now a pimp lives here, now a young man, now an old man,
> Poor man, beggar, king, parasite, seer.

While all of the figures listed in line 75 are from comedy, at least some of those listed in line 76 point to figures more often found on a tragic stage. If this passage then is properly interpreted (that the same set building is used for all types of play), then it follows that *Captivi* 61–2 shows that *choragium* and *ornamenta* are essentially synonymous, with *choragium* perhaps being used more broadly to include stage properties.

Rather than undergoing this expense at each festival, the creation of a permanent theatre was contemplated from time to time throughout the second century. Livy 40.51.3 records a contract being let for the construction of a theatre and stage at the *ludi Apollinares* in 179.[60] These

[56] Vitruvius 5.6.9 describes three different kinds of stages, for tragedy, for comedy, and for satyr drama; perhaps this is what he means.

[57] Gilula (1996) 487, and see 479–80, 484–7.

[58] The list of character types in 76 appears to extend beyond the normal range found on the stage into society more generally. In particular, the use of *mendicus* in the same context as *pauper* and *parasitus* points to a comparatively fine economic distinction.

[59] Gratwick (1993) transposes these lines from the end of the prologue to follow line 10, which removes the need for a lacuna of a line or two, which otherwise is likely.

[60] Livy refers to *theatrum et proscaenium ad Apollinis*, and see 41.27.5 for the next attempt in 174.

theatres were always to be wooden constructions (a permanent theatre need not be stone; see Vitruvius 5.5.7); nor is it accidental that the initiative in 179 came during a festival controlled by the praetors, where more elevated political reputations were at stake.

Arising from this was the issue of rehearsal. While we cannot know how long a play would be rehearsed (though, given the regular festival timetable, I expect it was typically only a few weeks), it is improbable there would be opportunity for rehearsals *in situ* – all preparations would take place at other locations, in contexts that will not necessarily bear any resemblance to the final performance space, since (at least in one sense) the venue did not yet exist.[61] There is no evidence concerning the nature of actors' scripts for republican Rome, but a later papyrus and some reasonable inferences drawn from it point to further uncertainty and need for flexibility. *P. Oxy.* 4546 is the remains of a first-century actor's script found in Roman Egypt.[62] The actor played Admetus in Euripides' *Alcestis*. So much about this performance remains obscure to us, but it is clear that the actor had been given a 'part' – only his lines were written down (arguably like the role of the mistress in most of the adultery mime, *P. Oxy.* 413 *verso*), with perhaps a mark to indicate speech divisions. Lacking even his cue lines, this actor apparently learned the lines of Admetus from this text, and worked out the performance dynamics in rehearsal. We do not know that this was the rehearsal technique employed by Plautus' troupe, but it is a good bet that it was. Writing out any lines would constitute an investment of both time and resources for the troupe, and again we can see the pressure to economise. When a troupe bought a play, as did Ambivius Turpio's troupe from Terence, it would have received a single copy from the playwright. Copying parts rather than full scripts streamlines the rehearsal process, allowing a quicker dispersal of lines to the actors, and further provides a safeguard against the unlawful selling of the troupe's investment.[63] It also represents

[61] My actors experienced the same situation as they prepared for the outdoor performances I directed, with the only opportunity to perform at the site being a 'dress rehearsal' the day before the run began. There were always spectators – as with the *ludi*, the location had been selected because it was a high-traffic thoroughfare. The actors at least never felt over-rehearsed. Throughout the run, they availed themselves of new opportunities as they learned to react and respond both to the performance space and to the audience.

[62] Obbink (2001), Marshall (2004).

[63] These motivations also lie behind the use of parts in Elizabethan theatre. Arnott (1967) 44–6 suggests that ancient rehearsals were in fact accomplished without any physical text, but were all learned with the aid of a 'prompter', as is still done in some countries today. Certainly such a technique is possible, and may have been used for those actors not carrying the bulk of the play. It does seem to be the system used in the rehearsal of Greek choruses (Plutarch, *Moralia* 813e).

a financial saving, as the costs of papyrus and of a scribe could accumulate quickly. But it also changes the nature of the interaction between actors, and should at least be considered as a possibility when we try to imagine a Roman stage performance.

The other professionals contracted by the aediles did not operate backstage. Plautus has his prologue address the *praeco* ('herald') twice.[64] The prologue in *Asinaria* 4–5 says,

> *face nunciam tu, praeco, omnem auritum poplum.*
> *age nunc reside, cave modo ne gratiis.*
>
> Now, herald, provide the audience with ears.
> (*The herald delivers his proclamation.*)
> O.K., sit down – and don't forget your fee. (tr. Smith)

In *Poenulus* 11–15, the same joke is extended:

> *exsurge praeco, fac populo audientiam.*
> *iam dudum exspecto si tuom officium scias:*
> *exerce vocem quam per vivisque et colis.*
> *nam nisi clamabis, tacitum te obrepet fames.*
> *age nunc reside, duplicem ut mercedem feras.*
>
> Herald, get up and make an audience of this crowd.
> For a while now I've wanted to know if you knew your job.
> Stretch your voice, through which you live and thrive.
> For, unless you shout, you will silently starve.
> (*The herald again makes an announcement.*)
> Come now, sit back down, if you want your pay doubled.

Both passages make it clear that the *praeco* is sitting during the prologue, that he receives instructions from the prologue speaker to make the audience more attentive, and that he receives a wage.

Praecones were used in many contexts to provide information to large numbers of Romans, and due to literacy levels were presumably more efficient at disseminating information than written notices. Like the *choragus*, the herald's financial arrangements were apparently both with the magistrates and with the troupe. There is at least the pretence that the

However, the metatheatrical comment at *Poenulus* 550–54, where the actors acknowledge they learned their parts together, need not refer to anything beyond the fact that rehearsals took place.

[64] See Gilula (1993) and Slater (2000) 154–5.

fee received for his services came from the company. While the smooth running of the venue is clearly important (*Hecyra* 4–5 and 33–41 describe what happens when things do not go well), the offer of pay demonstrates that the *praeco* was not in the company but was an official appointed by the magistrates. A *praeco* was 'a junior and uncoveted apparitorial post'[65] through which there might be some hope of advancement. It would seem his duties were to silence or at least to quiet the crowd, and in doing so no doubt he also served to help draw the audience to the performance area. Livy 33.32.4 refers to *praeco cum tubicine* ('a herald with a trumpet'), and perhaps the use of a horn assisted in his task. This is likely to have been more than a simple fanfare, which the troupe itself could provide.[66] The presence of an independent contractor with this job suggests not only that under normal conditions the task filled several minutes' time, but also that there were related duties as the *praeco* helped effect the transition from one performance to another. Perhaps he announced the title of the play to the audience (Donatus, *de Comoedia* 8.11, though this passage is confused). He was, in effect, the front-of-house manager, responsible to the magistrates for the smooth running of the *ludi scaenici* or (more likely) of a single performance venue.[67] If this is correct, then we may equally believe that the *dissignator* ('usher,' mentioned only at *Poenulus* 19), who stays near the front of the theatre (19: *praeter os*) and helps people find their seats, works with the *praeco*, perhaps as an assistant. The force of the whole sentence suggests that there would be more than one *dissignator* working with the *praeco*.[68]

PERFORMANCE SPACES

There was no permanent theatre, of stone or wood, in Rome until the theatre of Pompey was built in 55 BC, though several others followed soon afterwards. A number of attempts were made to create a permanent

[65] Purcell (1983) 147. For the *praecones* generally, see Hinard (1976), and Purcell (1983) 147–8.

[66] Further, the use of the *praeco* does argue against the presence of musical overtures provided by the *tibicen*, despite Cicero, *Lucullus* 20 (Moore (forthcoming), ch. 2).

[67] Terence's problems with staging *Hecyra* may therefore have arisen due to a particularly weak or disorganised *praeco*.

[68] The references to the *praeco* jokingly imply that he failed to draw the audience as expected, and dismissively suggest he is a mere employee. In response, the *praeco* may be good-natured, and happily become the actor's stooge (Slater (2000) 155 n. 77). Alternately, any hesitation will serve to make the audience louder, forcing the *praeco* to stand and re-silence them. In contrast, Gilula (1993) 286–7 argues that the individual being addressed is not a real *praeco* (who having done his job is now sitting down), but a member of the troupe playing the part of the *praeco*. This seems to me an odd joke, and one that risks alienating the audience who, we must suspect, can still see the real *praeco* sitting before them (*praeter os*?).

theatre before this, but all were unsuccessful and postdate Plautine production. When theatres were built, they possessed a distinctive shape, with a semicircular orchestra and a long thin stage space in front of a multi-levelled *scaenae frons*. It is unlikely however that the earlier, temporary stages upon which the extant comedies were performed ever had that shape. Part of the reason for this is architectural: temporary constructions made out of wood, constructed hastily in the days before the *ludi*, would possess neither the structural strength nor occupy sufficient space to anticipate the proportions of the later permanent performance venues. There are no indications that the temporary theatres looked like or were used like scaled-down versions of the later ones. Indeed, the topographical discussion below will suggest that the opposite is true, that performances took place in a variety of venues of different shapes. The situation therefore parallels the development of the Greek theatre, where the fifth-century *orchêstra* was not always circular but was usually an irregular polygon.[69]

Those considering early Roman performance venues look to two artistic sources, both of which are problematic. First is the collection of later Roman wall paintings with theatrical motifs. Beacham believes these temporary wooden stages provide a 'missing link' between the stone theatres of Hellenistic Greece and the stone theatres Rome began to build in the first century:[70] these are paintings of actual Roman performance spaces, and the advent of permanent theatres did not affect the visual representation of Roman theatre architecture. This is not credible. The combination of imperial wall painting, incorporating features found on temporary South Italian stages, and employing Greek *trompe l'oeil* painting techniques[71] is too complex a combination to posit without corroboration. It presumes a fixed relationship between audience and performance space over time, which is not supported by the literary or archaeological record. The second source is the illustrations of stages on fourth-century South Italian red-figure vases.[72] Though much earlier than Plautus' plays, these stages show a wooden stage approximately 1 metre high, sometimes fronted with banners (which serve to increase the appearance of permanence), and accessed by a low wooden staircase. It is

[69] See Wiles (1997) 23–62. [70] Beacham (1991) 56–7.

[71] Beacham (1991) 64–7, 69–85, and 227–30.

[72] For a duly cautious sample formulation, see Richardson (1992) 380: 'At first plays were given on simple stages run up for the occasion, and the spectators stood in a crowd before these. This, one gathers, must have been the way the Etruscan dancers were presented when their art was first introduced to Rome (Livy 7.2.3–7) and the way Atellan farces were traditionally performed.'

typically suggested that these South Italian stages are like the temporary stages upon which *phlyakes* and Atellan farces would have been performed, and, following them, the plays of Plautus and Terence. There are three problems with this claim. First, it is no longer believed that these scenes depict the native Italian performance tradition exclusively. As the influence of fifth-century Athenian comedy on these illustrations becomes increasingly apparent, there exists less reason to assume that any Italian traditions used such stages,[73] to say nothing of the chronological disparities. Second, the illustrations depict a performance space that gives access to the *orchêstra*, with steps creating two levels of performance that may be used simultaneously, as on a Greek stage.[74] The demands of Roman comedy are different. All plays are set on a (level) street in front of one, two, or three doors. No play employs a split-level main stage area. Third, the stage on the vases mandates a particular relationship with the audience. Every performance space creates a relationship between *scaena* ('performance space')[75] and *cavea* ('auditorium')[76] – between actors and audience. Consequently, 'We do not know exactly what the stage wall used in Plautus and Terence looked like'.[77] The architecture defines this relationship, and it does so in a way that tends towards an ideal. This claim bears some examination.

Any culture with theatre will create a venue that is ideally suited to the drama it produces. This is not a causative relationship, but a recognition that there exists a nexus around which the venue, the work performed

[73] See Taplin (1993) for these vases and their Athenian connection generally.

[74] As on the 'New York Goose Play' vase: New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 24.97.104 (Fletcher Fund, 1924), *PhV*² 84 (Trendall (1967) 53–4).

[75] Plautus' Latin terms for 'stage' are surprisingly elusive. Properly, *scaena* should be the wooden, temporary backdrop, and *proscaenium* the area directly in front of it. Thus at *Amphitruo* 91, a character recalls what happened *in proscaenio hic* ('on this very stage'), and at *Poenulus* 17, prostitutes in the audience are not to sit *in proscaenio* ('on the stage') – the term is then a straight Latinisation of Greek *proskênion*, about which see Sifakis (1967) 126–30. Even in English, though, there is ambiguity, as 'stage' can mean either the whole performance area, or the raised part of the performance area, between the stage building and the *orchestra* (this is how the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines it). *Captivi* 60 emphasises that battles take place *extra scaenam* (which must mean 'outside of the performance area'). *Poenulus* apparently distinguishes *proscaenium* from *scaena*, but *in scaena* at line 20 could mean either 'before the stage building' (as the etymology of *proscaenium* should suggest) or 'in the performance area' (as at *Captivi* 60). Consequently, neither term can be reduced to a single meaning apart from performance context. Some of these difficulties persist in the Augustan period and afterwards, where there is always an *orchestra* in the permanent theatres. See also Beacham (1991) 60.

[76] *Amphitruo* 66; however, *Truculentus* 931 has an actor speaking *in cavea*, suggesting the term can mean the theatre in general, since the point does not seem to depend on him physically being among the audience (which I believe was not an inconceivable mode of delivery).

[77] Wiles (1991) 55.

(or the playwright), and the performers will collaborate to yield an optimal result for the ideal audience. Experimental theatre will push these limits and in time alter the parameters of performance, thereby creating a new set of audience expectations of what the theatre can do. In republican Rome, all three of these were variables, and any one could be changed according to demands of any other. Shaw's lengthy and detailed stage directions imply an understanding of naturalism that could only be created on the picture-window stage of Victorian England.[78] They imply an acting style that maintains a fourth wall, creating a rigid separation between the audience and the actors. Similarly, the structure of the *agôn* and *stichomythia* and the use of messenger speeches in Greek tragedy presume delivery to a much larger audience by actors wearing masks: these techniques developed as a means to facilitate audience comprehension in the vast Athenian theatre.[79] To alter the intended performance spaces of any of these works – to perform Shakespeare in a proscenium arch or in a black box theatre, for instance – changes the variables and the nature of the performance that is possible.[80] This is not a judgment – it is not 'wrong' to perform a play in a venue for which it was not intended – but it is ahistorical, and requires a number of adaptations ('translations') to the script and its means of presentation to create effective theatre. This is a truism among theatre practitioners, but, since it allows for so many permutations and no clear 'best answer', it is still easily overlooked. Changes may even be introduced subconsciously, as actors and directors work to create meaning out of the text.

Further, one element in this nexus can point to significant features of another. A raised stage, such as is found in the Globe and on the temporary stages seen on South Italian vases, means that at least some of the audience will be positioned below the stage, and therefore will be looking up at the performance. In Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, this creates an area for the (low-paying) groundlings, and keeps sightlines clear for all those in the more expensive seats surrounding the stage. Similarly, if Aeschylus had been writing for a black box, the use of masks is unlikely to have developed as it did.[81] While there will certainly be a period of growth and experimentation, performance practice will quickly realise an ideal means of delivery, which creates a standard with which future texts

[78] One aspect of this is evoked by Bennett (1997) 143–7. [79] Arnott (1961) 87–9.

[80] This is one benefit of the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London; it allows discoveries about the intended performance space that have been forgotten.

[81] Marshall (1999b) 190.

may engage.[82] For any type of entertainment, this nexus of influences will exert itself.

Tacitus attests to a change over time in Roman theatrical venues: *nam antea subitariis gradibus et scaena in tempus structa ludos edi solitos, vel, si vetustiora repetas, stantem populum spectavisse, ne, si consideret theatro dies totos ignavia continuaret* (*Annals* 14.20: 'Before, the games had usually been exhibited with the help of improvised tiers of benches and a stage thrown up for the occasion; or, to go further into the past, the people stood to watch: seats in the theatre, it was feared, might tempt them to pass whole days in indolence').[83] Tacitus' concern is the moral condition of the audience, but he points to a three-stage development in actor–audience relations at Rome. At first, the audience stood. If the performers were to hold the attention of more than two or three rows of spectators, this would require a raised stage to allow for effective sightlines: the audience were at this point like Shakespeare's groundlings, and the actors would need a venue similar to what is seen on the South Italian vases, though perhaps without the staircase and the two levels of performance.[84] The second stage Tacitus describes, with its 'hurriedly built tiered seats and a stage built for the occasion', represents a development whereby the audience can now look down on the performance space. The term *scaena* need not imply a raised stage (rather than just 'performance area' or 'backdrop'). This architectural change would necessarily be associated with a different kind of performance style. The third stage, the 'modern' stone theatres of late republican Rome, lead to a different performance style again.[85] The first two stage types Tacitus describes allow for the creation of intimacy between actor and audience. Only the third, with the audience positioned only on one side of the stage space, leads to a separation between the two – as in the proscenium arch.[86] Indeed, the huge *scaenae frons* and the long narrow stage of the permanent theatre

[82] Similarly, one may look at films in the 1920s and early 1930s and observe that actors are framed as if they were on stage: the audience is shown whole bodies, and faces are restricted to the very top of the screen. This however soon gave way to close-ups and (again) a different style of acting, which was better suited to the new medium.

[83] Text and translation, Jackson (1962) 136–9.

[84] There is no need to infer from this, incidentally, that shows were necessarily short 'sketches'. Modern audiences stand for more than two hours regularly at the reconstructed Globe, myself among them. But when this is the case, both the physical environment and the actors are working to keep the audience members present, and prevent them from wandering off. Vitruvius 5.6.2 suggests Roman stages were never higher than 5 feet, out of consideration for the Roman senators sitting in the front (Goldberg (1998) 19).

[85] Rome was very late in this development, though, and other Roman cities in Italy did have permanent performance venues earlier.

[86] Marshall (2000b) 30–33.

serve to reinforce this separation, and such features have no place in the earlier performance contexts Tacitus describes. They are also not going to foster drama that creates a rapport between actor and audience, such as is accomplished by the metatheatrical plays of Plautus.[87]

Leaving aside the issue of later performances (the venues played by Roscius were no doubt very different from the original locations, and would have required a different performance style and, likely, alterations of the text), even in Plautus' day there is no need to assume a single venue type. Different *ludi* were celebrated in different parts of Rome, and at each occasion a different performance venue might be found. Flexibility becomes central for both plays and players, since a given play may end up in any of a number of performance venues. In fact, the one location where we can feel confident we know a Plautine play was performed corresponds to none of the performance spaces described by Tacitus.[88]

Each festival was associated with a particular part of Rome. The *ludi Romani* and the *ludi Plebeii* were centred on the forum, as apparently were *ludi funebres*.[89] The bulk of the celebrations for the *ludi Apollinares* were probably celebrated on the other side of the Capitoline hill in the Circus Flaminius, and the *ludi Megalenses* were probably celebrated above the Circus Maximus at the top of the Palatine cliff in front of the temple of the Magna Mater.[90] At a minimum, then, we should expect three separate locations for theatrical performances. These places, where the set was constructed (which too might vary by some degree each year), need not be similar in shape to one other. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that they were not.

The situation is clearest for the *ludi Megalenses*. Cicero explicitly refers to those games *quos in Palatio nostri maiores ante templum in ipso Matris Magnae conspectu Megalesibus fieri celebrarique voluerunt* (*de Haruspicum Responso* 24: 'which on the Palatine our ancestors wished to establish and celebrate as "Megalensian" before the temple in the sight of the Great Mother herself').[91] *In ... conspectu* can only mean directly in front of the temple, so that the cult figure housed within can be thought to see the

[87] Slater (2000) and Moore (1998b) 67–90.

[88] Given such flexibility and our ignorance of techniques of ancient actor training, I do not believe we need to accept specific limitations on the ability to project, as, for example, does Goldberg (1998) 17. I prefer to look for indications of the physical dynamics of the performance venues and to assume that actor training in antiquity was capable of producing performers with sufficient histrionic ability to meet the technical needs of the performance spaces.

[89] Gilula (1978) 48–9 n. 11.

[90] Goldberg (1998). The Circus Maximus is also a possible (earlier?) location: Gilula (1978) 47–8 n. 9.

[91] Goldberg (1998), building on the work of, particularly, Saunders (1913) and Hanson (1959) 9–26.

events. The *ludi* were first celebrated in 194, and the temple itself was dedicated on 10 April 191 – celebrations that included performances of Plautus' *Pseudolus*. Excavations demonstrate the nature of the space: '[it] is too small (and probably too irregular) a space to accommodate a complete theatre structure, i.e. both a *cavea* and a *proscaenium*, of any size. A freestanding building, however temporary ... is impossible.'[92] The greatest pressures for space come not from the stage but from the *cavea*, which holds the audience. Goldberg's solution is elegant and convincing: the audience sat on the temple steps, and looked down, not at a raised stage but to the narrow and irregular trapezoidal podium in front of the temple, which constituted the performance area. The goddess is in a position to watch directly, from the same perspective as the majority of spectators, as the play is performed in the temple's forecourt:[93]

> A plausible reconstruction of the original Temple of the Magna Mater ... suggests seven steps, each c. 40 m long in the lower, wider tier and eighteen steps of c. 20 m length in the upper staircase leading directly to the temple ... This yields a crowd of just under 1,300, plus those who might gather on the nearby Temple of Victory or stand elsewhere on or by the podium ... To imagine any audience of over 2,000 gathering for a performance of *Pseudolus* at the dedication in 191 or fidgetting through the beginning of *Hecyra* in 165 therefore becomes very difficult.[94]

I will return to the size of the audience later, but for now we may note that Cicero speaks of *constrictum spectaculis* (*de Haruspicum Responso* 22: 'the small area for the spectators').[95] The performance space at the *ludi Megalenses* bears no real relationship to theatres in Greek cities, but rather is seamlessly incorporated into the landscape of Rome.

A similar venue probably developed for the *ludi Apollinares*. In 179, M. Aemilius Lepidus attempted to construct a *theatrum et proscaenium ad Apollinis* (Livy 40.51.3: 'a theatre and stage-building at Apollo's [temple]'), at the north end of the *forum Boarium*. The archaeology of this site is complex, and there is no way of knowing precisely what existed there in the republic. Lepidus' intended construction was part of a larger building programme, which included among other things the construction of a portico *ad aedem Apollinis Medici* (Livy 40.51.6: 'at the temple of Apollo

[92] Goldberg (1998) 6, incorporating results from the recent excavations at the site by Pensabene.

[93] Tacitus' use of *subitariis gradibus*, improvised tiers of benches, suggests that temple steps had not always been used by theatre audiences, or not exclusively.

[94] Goldberg (1998) 13–14, with illustration on 6, from Praeneste.

[95] OLD s.v. *spectaculum* 3 cites this passage and *Curculio* 647.

Medicus'). While apparently the games were first held in the Circus Maximus,[96] it need not still be used for theatrical performances in Plautus' day. When the Theatre of Marcellus (*theatrum Marcelli*) was built in the Augustan period, the area immediately adjoining the temple of Apollo Medicus was thought to have theatrical connotations, and Livy 41.28.11 confirms that the Circus Flaminius, slightly further to the west, could be used for theatrical *ludi funebres* in 174. It is not likely that Lepidus, as *censor* and *pontifex maximus* (Livy 40.51.1), would be innovating in his selection of a site for theatrical activity, which of course falls under the auspices of the god. Indeed, the *ludi Apollinares* commemorated the date of the temple's foundation, 13 July. At some point, then, perhaps soon after 212 (so the practice could be seen to be accustomed by 179), the site for the *ludi Apollinares* seems to have been moved closer to the area of the temple, near to it but still separate. Space was therefore restricted for the building of either a theatre or a temple in the 170s, but a connection is certainly present in Livy's mind. The site later occupied by the theatre of Marcellus was the obvious place for theatrical activity dedicated to Apollo.

It is tempting in this light to attempt to reinterpret certain passages in Plautus. When a character addresses Apollo, as Euclio does at *Aulularia* 393–5 and Chrysalus does in *Bacchides* 170–73, it is possible that reference is not being made to a stage altar. While it would be natural in a Greek context to have a character address the shrine to Apollo Aguieus that was part of the front of a typical Greek house,[97] this would make no sense in a Roman context. The Latin may point to an aspect of the Greek original for these plays, but the reference would still need to be naturalised in the Roman context. If these plays were performed at the *ludi Apollinares*, the result would be a striking and amusing metatheatrical joke, as the actors evoke the god whose presence can be seen by the audience sitting in the area where the theatre of Marcellus was later built. Indeed, *Bacchides* 170–73 then masterfully blurs the dramatic setting of Athens with the theatrical context in Rome:

erilis patria, salve, quam ego biennio,
postquam hinc in Ephesum abii, conspicio lubens.

[96] Livy 25.12.14, Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.17.27–29. Indeed, whether the Circus Maximus was ever used may be open to question: Macrobius 1.17.29 says merely *in circo*, and it remains possible that in Livy 25.12.14 *ludos praetor in circo maximo cum facturus esset*, the adjective *maximo* represents a false inference by Livy or an interpolator.

[97] Saunders (1911) 93–6.

saluto te, vicine Apollo, qui aedibus
propinquos nostris accolis ...

Land of my master, greetings. It's two years
Since I left for Ephesus, and I rejoice to see you.
I salute you, neighbour Apollo, you who dwell
Beside our house... (tr. Barsby)

The words *vicine Apollo* do not require a physical altar on stage, and emphasise the performance area's proximity to the Roman temple. While it is generally assumed that the stage altar has a 'default' affiliation with Apollo,[98] in fact only one other passage makes such a connection explicit. Dorippa and her 84-year-old slave Syra have arrived home, whereupon Dorippa wishes to make an offering (*Mercator* 675–78):

DOR. *aliquid cedo*
qui hanc vicini nostri aram augeam.
da sane hanc virgam lauri. abi tu intro.
SYRA. *eo.*
DOR. *Apollo, quaeso te, ut des pacem propitius ...*

DOR. Give me something
That I may offer on our neighbour's altar here.
Good – give me this laurel branch. You go inside.
SYRA. I go.
DOR. Apollo, I beseech you, kindly grant your peace ...

In the Greek context, this would be interpreted as an offering at a household shrine. We cannot know what Plautus' source, Philemon's *Emporos*, had at the point corresponding to *Mercator* 675–8. In *Mercator*, however, it may represent the use of the stage altar (in which case we must believe Syra happens coincidentally to be carrying a laurel branch)[99] or it may be another metatheatrical evocation of *vicinus Apollo*. Might we imagine the actor playing Syra actually leaving the performance area, going towards the real altar of Apollo and finding a pre-set laurel bough to be used by Dorippa? Whatever the answer, these passages are not

[98] Duckworth (1952) 83.

[99] Indeed, the exchange between the two characters at 670–75 would suggest that Syra is not carrying anything. Dorippa's question at 673, *quid oneris?*, then sets up the joke answer. Nixon in his translation assumes she carries 'a few parcels'.

enough to warrant maintaining the Greek custom of the Apollo Aguieus altar on the Roman stage.

The third likely location for theatrical performances in Rome is the *forum Romanum*, probably used at the *ludi Romani*, some *ludi funebres*, and possibly the *ludi Plebeii*, with equestrian events celebrated in the Circus Maximus.[100] Where precisely the theatrical activity was located in the forum cannot be determined, but there are good reasons to believe that more than one area could be used: the forum and Rostra were the focal points for *ludi funebres* (Polybius 6.53.1; gladiatorial fights also featured, Livy 23.30.15, 31.50.4, and Cicero, *pro Sestio* 124). The forum was not nearly as built-up as it would be in the Augustan period: 'at the end of the third century BC the Forum Romanum remained an irregular open space marked by nothing more monumental than a handful of average-sized temples' (see Fig. 2).[101] Major constructions were begun after Plautus' active career, including basilicas in 184, 179, and 169, though the burning of many shops had led to the rebuilding of the *atrium Regium* during wartime in 209 (Livy 26.27.2, 27.11.16).[102]

The Choragus' speech in *Curculio* isolates almost a dozen individual locations in the forum.[103] Further, each Roman space is connected in

[100] See Saunders (1913) 94–6 and, for the forum generally, see Coarelli (1983), (1985).

[101] Stambaugh (1988) 110. The illustration comes from Welch (1994) 29, fig. 11. I am grateful to K. Welch and the editors of *The Journal of Roman Archaeology* for permission to reproduce the image, which was drawn by Philip Stinson. K. Welch now believes that numismatic evidence shows that the temple of Vesta was not at this date a columnar tholos but preserved something of its original hut-like character.

[102] Welch (2003) 7 and 17, and see Coarelli (1977) and Welch (2003) 17 n. 47: 'It was only after the first decade of the 2nd c., when money began to flow into Rome after the defeat of Hannibal and the Seleucids, that such large, public projects were undertaken'.

[103] The first five locations follow the northern edge of the forum, from west to east:

1. the Comitium, line 470, attracts perjurers (*periurum*);
2. the temple of Venus Cloacina, line 471, attracts liars and braggarts (*mendacem et gloriosum*);
3. the basilica, lines 472–3, attracts husbands (*damnosos maritos*) and prostitutes (*scorta exoleta*; Moore (1998b) 220 n. 26 demonstrates that they are male); *quique stipulari solent* ('and those who strike bargains') probably refers back to the husbands;
4. the Forum Piscarium ('fish market'), line 474, probably refers to the Macellum, the great food market northeast of the forum; it attracts dining-club members (*conlatores symbolarum*).

The next three locations pass through the middle of the forum, from east to west:

5. the lower forum (*foro infumo*), line 475, attracts rich notables (*boni homines atque dites*);
6. the open culvert of the Cloaca (*in medio propter canalem*), line 476, attracts show-offs (*ostentatores*); it was to be covered by 179 (Richardson (1992) 172);
7. *supra lacum*, lines 477–9, must therefore refer to the Lacus Curtius (not the Lacus Iuturnae); it attracts the confident, the talkative, and the ill-willed (*confidentes garrulique et malevoli*).

Finally, the description proceeds along the south side of the forum, from west to east:

8. the *veterae tabernae*, line 480, attracts moneylenders (*qui dant quique accipiunt faenore*);
9. the temple of Castor, line 481, attracts the untrustworthy (*quibus credas male*);

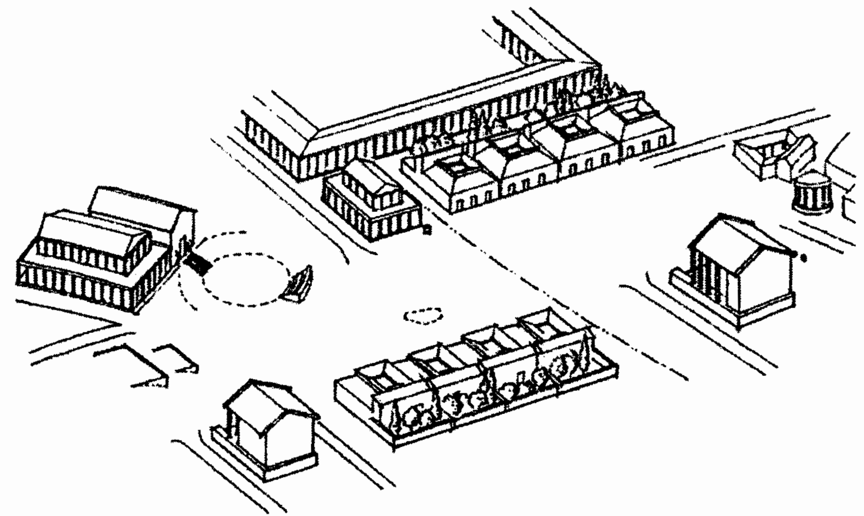

Fig. 2 *Forum Romanum*, late 3rd–early 2nd centuries BC.

some way with the world of Comedy, and this is part of a larger series of references blurring the divisions between the world of the play and Rome itself.[104] Here is Moore's conclusion for the location of the *Curculio* performance:

> The *choragus*'s tour is both restricted and orderly. It includes only places in the immediate vicinity of the forum, east of the western end of the comitium. It is most unlikely that, if the play were performed at some other location, Plautus would have discussed only this small area, or that the *choragus* would have been so careful to lead his spectators from the comitium east along the north side of the forum to the fish market, then back through the middle of the forum to the west of the Lacus Curtius, then along the south side of the forum to the Temple of Castor and Pollux, and finally south a little to the Velabrum. Given, then, that the *choragus* does not mention such places farther west in the forum as the temples of Saturn or Concordia, there is every indication that he speaks from a stage just south of the comitium, facing east.[105]

10. the Tuscan *vicus*, line 482, attracts 'those who sell themselves' (*homines qui ipsi sese venditant*; as in 473 the group of prostitutes is at least partly male);
11. the Velabrum, lines 483–4, attracts various merchants known to cheat – bakers, butchers, and soothsayers (*vel pistorem vel lanium vel haruspicem*).

(Line 485 is deleted as a doublet of line 472.)

[104] Moore (1991) and Moore (1998b) 126–39, 219–22.

[105] Moore (1998b) 137.

Many aspects of this interpretation are convincing, and precisely this location would later be used for the Rostrum Augusti in the first century. However, by suggesting that the actor faces east, Moore places the audience in the bulk of the forum, essentially filling it. He describes how this compounds the joke, as individual spectators are physically positioned in at least some of the locations specified, and incorporated into the world of the play, and indeed, this is how the Rostrum Augusti is generally thought to have been used.[106]

Several factors suggest that Plautus' audience would instead be positioned in the much smaller area to the west, and that an actor delivering the Choragus' speech would face in that direction. This has an effect on the dynamics of the scene: the actor gesticulates beside and behind himself, beginning stage right with the Comitium and with each location pointing further upstage; he refers to directly behind the stage building as he refers to the Cloaca and the Lacus Curtius (476–9), and then points stage left and begins working his way upstage with gestures along the south side of the forum. The chief advantage of this orientation is that the spectators are already facing the indicated direction without having to crane their necks. The Choragus' metatheatrical speech asks the audience to look beyond the limits of the theatre (in some cases over whatever temporary set has been constructed). There are indications that at least part of the audience must be able to see (or at least look in the direction of) the named locations clearly, since, having pointed to the *tabernae veterae* and the temple of Castor and Pollux (480–81), the Choragus then does not continue further east beyond the sightlines possible, but instead points to the road that lies between these two, the Tuscan *vicus* (482–3) which then leads to the Velabrum (line 483).[107] This is the only interruption in the smooth S-curve the Choragus has been following, and it is explained best by taking advantage of the physical position of the entire audience. Even if not every spectator can actually see the road, all know where it is. As discussed below, Lyco the *danista* ('banker') in the scenes framing the Choragus' speech, arrives from stage left, which corresponds with where *Curculio* 480 places moneylenders. If the audience faces east, this limits the area allotted for the theatre space as a whole, and perhaps allows the steps of the temples of Saturn and Concordia to be used for

[106] See Dio Cassius, epitome of Book 74.4.4, for Pertinax's funeral in AD 193, held in the forum. Women sit in the porticoes, men under the open sun, which implies a similar orientation.

[107] For the authenticity of this line, see Moore (1991) 354–5.

audience seating. The forum is not overwhelmed with a single comic performance.

Hecyra 39–42 demonstrated that gladiatorial combats and *ludi scaenici* could share a venue. Jory believes there is 'a certain amount of evidence for gladiatorial combats in the theatres at Rome, that is at venues where *ludi scaenici* were performed'.[108] The reverse is just as likely: that *ludi scaenici* could be performed in venues designed for gladiatorial combat. Temporary wooden amphitheatres were built in the Roman forum:[109]

> The *cavea* of such a temporary wooden amphitheatre could have been supported by a truss-like system of beams (which could have been constructed in a day or two, if the temporary seating for the Palio in Siena today is any indication). If the *cavea* was 5 to 10 m high it could have had between 10 and 20 rows of seats and accommodated up to 10,000 spectators. The audience could still have watched the games from the second storeys of the basilicas . . .[110]

Even if this overestimates the speed of construction (which I suspect it does, despite *subitariis* in Tacitus, *Annals* 14.20), a temporary gladiatorial venue would fill the eastern two-thirds of the forum, with a diagonal stretching from the Rostra to the temple of Castor and Pollux. Such a space would not necessarily be built at all festivals. When constructed, this represented a further significant cost for the magistrates. Plutarch describes how, later in the second century, some administrators attempted to defray these expenses: τῶν ἀρχόντων οἱ πλεῖστοι θεωρητήρια κύκλῳ κατασκευάσαντες ἐξεμίσθουν (*Gaius Gracchus* 12.3: 'Most of the magistrates, having built spectator seats in a circle, were renting them out') – but Gracchus insisted the seats be removed.[111]

If a wooden amphitheatre were in place during the performance of *Curculio*, then the *ad hoc* theatre space could occupy the remaining part of the forum, as described. But it is also possible that the amphitheatre itself could be used for theatre, as at the *ludi funebres* of Paullus in 160. Once the expense of an amphitheatre had been undertaken, it is possible the space would be used for all performances, including *ludi scaenici*. In some ways, this represents the clearest means of explaining what happened to the second performance of *Hecyra*. A temporary *scaena frons* placed within the arena would effectively reduce the seating capacity for a

[108] Jory (1986) 537. This was Donatus' interpretation, *ad Hecyra* 39.

[109] Welch (1994) 69–78. Livy 1.35.8–9 describes temporarily erected bleacher-type seating in Rome's earliest days.

[110] Welch (1994) 76, and see the figure on p. 75.

[111] Welch (1994) 77 associates this passage specifically to the wooden amphitheatre because of κύκλῳ.

play by two-thirds (we can imagine the audience seated along the minor axis of the ellipse on the western side, again facing east, so they are not looking into the afternoon sun). An audience entering such a space with the intention of seeing gladiators – it is an amphitheatre, after all – would indeed cause confusion (*Hecyra* 41: *tumultuantur, clamant, pugnant de loco*) particularly since a gladiatorial audience would expect to be able to fill all the seats, and not merely those at one end. This is speculative, but it does suggest another possible performance venue. It was not used for *Curculio*, however. The presence of the extensive wooden superstructure changes the amount of available space in the forum. Despite the audience being in the centre of the forum, most of the imaginative effects created by the Choragus' tour would be eliminated, since most of the spaces listed lie beneath the sightlines of the seated audience (regardless of where they sit).

In addition, a number of factors point towards the use of the Comitium as a site of theatrical activity within the forum. No archaeological record of the republican Comitium survives, but it seems certain that at this time 'it was a circular amphitheatre of steps, on which the Romans stood in their assemblies, leading up to the curia or the senate on the north side'.[112] There was a speaker's platform, the Rostra, slightly built up, from which magistrates would address the assembly and on which the praetor held his tribunal, facing the Curia (see Fig. 2).[113] The Rostra physically created a barrier that blocked the view of some of the rest of the forum for those present in the Comitium, but its precise dimensions cannot be determined. Perhaps we can imagine a temporary set being built directly in front of the Rostra, connecting two points of the circle of the Comitium, with the performance space facing north to the Curia, where the audience was situated on the steps.[114] This produces a much

[112] Richardson (1992) 170, in light of which it is hard not to recall Tacitus, *Annals* 14.20, *stantem populum spectavisse*. The circular shape is assumed on analogy with Cosa and Paestum, and has led many to comment on the theatrical space created. These cities copied the circular shape of the *ekklêsiastêrion* which served a similar purpose in South Italian Greek colonies. See also Hanson (1959) 37–9, Taylor (1966) 21–3, Russell (1968) 307–8.

[113] That this was the usual orientation is shown in later republican history 'when Licinius Crassus in 145 and Gaius Gracchus in 123 BC made a political issue of the spatial arrangements by turning their backs on the senators in the Curia and speaking directly to the people out in the *forum Romanum*, in violation of parliamentary etiquette' (Cicero, *de Amicitia* 96; Plutarch, *Gaius Gracchus* 5), cited in Stambaugh (1988) 113, though see also Taylor (1966) 23–8.

[114] If so, then we can imagine at least one way that the required second level for *Amphitruo* could be achieved, with the actor physically climbing onto the Rostra, and appearing above the temporary set built on the packed-earth floor of the Comitium. Such a solution is venue-specific, and is not the only possible one; if this were the site, it would be the natural solution. Christenson (2000) 20 suggests 'a ladder behind the façade led to scaffolding near the top' on which the actor could

smaller *cavea*, though it is one largely isolated from forum distractions. This seems to be the situation presumed by Livy 27.36.8: *eo anno primum ex quo Hannibal in Italiam venisset comitium tectum esse memoriae proditum est, et ludos Romanos semel instauratos ab aedilibus curulibus Q. Metello et C. Servilio* ('In that year [208 BC], for the first time since Hannibal had entered Italy, it is recorded that the Comitium was covered, and that the *ludi Romani* were repeated for one day by the aediles Q. Metellus and C. Servilius'). The end of the sentence suggests that the context for the beginning is the *ludi Romani*. This surprising claim is very important, for the covering of the Comitium almost certainly indicates that the space was being used as a performance venue.

The use of *vela* ('sails') as sunscreens becomes standard much later: according to Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 19.23, Caesar covered the whole forum with *vela*.[115] While Livy indicates he has a sure source for the antiquity of the practice, Pliny and Valerius Maximus date the innovation much later, to 69 BC: *Q. Catulus . . . primus spectantium consessum velorum umbraculis texit* (Valerius Maximus 2.4.6: 'Q. Catulus was the first to cover the sitting spectators with a shady awning').[116] This might mean that the coverings provided in 211 were not (technically) *vela* but were made of some other material, or that Catulus reinstated a practice that had again fallen into disuse, or that there is some other distinction to be made. In any case, though it becomes a standard practice in the first century, there is no reason to doubt Livy's claim. Pliny also mentions the bright colours of theatrical awnings, which are also evoked by Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 4.72–84:

> *nam certe iacere ac largiri multa videmus,*
> *non solum ex alto penitusque, ut diximus ante,*
> *verum de summis ipsum quoque saepe colorem.*
> *et volgo faciunt id lutea russaque vela*
> *et ferrugina, cum magnis intenta theatris*
> *per malos volgata trabesque trementia flutant;*
> *namque ibi consessum caveai subter et omnem*
> *scaenai speciem, patrum turbamque decoram*
> *inficiunt coguntque suo fluitare colore.*

stand, with his upper torso appearing above the set. However, the plot of the play is exceptional in so many ways that we may even imagine it was written for a completely non-Roman context – perhaps for a Greek theatre in South Italy, where a *skênê*-roof was part of the theatre architecture?

[115] Welch (1994) 71 rightly relates this to an oversize but temporary wooden amphitheatre in the forum. See also Dio 43.24.2. Several inscriptions from Pompeii attest the use of *vela* with gladiatorial hunts (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 4.1189, 1190, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 5145).

[116] Text and translation, Shackleton Bailey (2000) 158–9. Valerius is evidently Pliny's source.

et quanto circum mage sunt inclusa theatri
moenia, tam magis haec intus perfusa lepore
omnia conrident correpta luce diei.
ergo lintea de summo cum corpore fucum mittunt. . . .

For assuredly we see many things cast off particles with lavish bounty, not only from the depths and from within (as we said before) but from the outermost surface, amongst others colour not seldom. This is often done by yellow and red and dark purple awnings, when outspread in the public view over a great theatre upon posts and beams they tremble and flutter; for then they dye, and force to flutter in their own colour, the assembly in the great hollow below, and all the display of the stage, and the glorious throng of the fathers; and the more the walls of the theatre are enclosed all round, the more all within laughs in the flood of beauty when the light of day is thus confined. Therefore, since canvas throws off colour from its outermost surface . . .[117]

While Lucretius' description is meant to evoke the theatre in his day (and is used to clarify his atomistic theory of colour), many details coincide with what is known of Plautus' theatre, and we are given a fleeting image of the effects of lighting within one of the Roman performance spaces. When linen *vela* were set up, they not only offered shade and protection from the heat for the spectators, but a joyous and festive series of colours that bathed both the audience and the stage space. Modern theatres typically use lighting to separate the audience from the stage, directing attention towards the actors. Lucretius suggests Rome instead separated the whole theatre from the outside world. This was a special space, awash with colour and encouraging a collective response to a comic performance (4.83: *conrident*). Rather than use lighting to create specific effects to complement an aspect of the dramatic narrative, in at least some outdoor venues specific lighting effects were sought to heighten the playful theatricality of the event. The double reference to the wind on the *vela* (4.77: *flutant*, 80: *fluitare*) suggests that the awnings had an acoustic affect as well, perhaps providing a low level of background noise that could dampen other sounds coming from outside of the performance space – a kind of 'white noise' – and conceivably it was something against which actors' voices might struggle.

The awnings in 208 represent an additional expense towards the comfort of the audience. While they were less technologically developed than the later, first-century examples, Livy is referring to something: the

[117] Text and translation, Rouse (1975) 282–3. For the use of awnings generally, see Dodge (1999) 235.

unusual nature of the claim and the presumption that *vela* had also been used earlier make it unlikely Livy is inventing the fact. This suggests that the Comitium too could hold a theatrical audience. In itself, such a conclusion is surprising, and invites two counter-arguments. The Comitium was, formally, a *templum* ('sacred area'; see Cicero, *de Republica* 2.11) and perhaps a dramatic performance would be inappropriate for the sacredness of the place that also served as the political centre of the city. On a more practical level, even as early as Plautus it was customary to dedicate statuary within the *templum*, and this would have affected sightlines. While neither argument can be denied, the clear indication that the Comitium could be covered by *vela* diminishes their force. The theatre of Dionysus at Athens (which was a sanctuary) and the Odeion of Pericles (in which pillars affected sightlines) provide obvious counter-examples from the Greek world, and, further, the seating in a temporary wooden amphitheatre physically would have covered the Lacus Curtius, another sacred location.[118]

There is therefore evidence for many separate venues for theatrical performance at the *ludi* in republican Rome, not all of which were always employed. Locations in front of the temples of the Magna Mater and of Apollo, near the centre of the forum directly south of the Comitium, within a temporary wooden amphitheatre, and in the Comitium itself may all have been used as theatrical venues at various times during Plautus' career. They were all, in essence, 'found spaces': areas not specifically demarcated for theatre most of the year, which became theatrical venues at the appropriate time. Temple steps or places of political assembly could when needed be turned into a *cavea*, with whatever area it faced becoming the stage. While we have no details of seats in the area of the Circus Flaminius, various possibilities exist. Further, there is an idealising tradition of turf seating used in early Rome (Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.107–8), which might be at the Circus Flaminius, but equally this might point to other venues again.[119]

We cannot know the precise spaces in which a play such as *Hecyra* was mounted, but the use of three different venues seems likely. The initial performance at the *ludi Megalenses* would have been before the temple of the Magna Mater on the Palatine, before the sight of a tightrope walker led to the actors being forced offstage. The second performance at the

[118] Welch (1994) 76 n. 41.
[119] Livy 1.35.8–9 presents a different account of earlier theatrical seating. Juvenal 3.173 suggests turf seating was still used outside Rome in imperial times.

ludi funebres in 160 may have taken place in a wooden amphitheatre, built for gladiatorial combats but used for other entertainments as well, including *ludi scaenici*. That too resulted in disaster for Turpio's troupe. A few months later, at the *ludi Romani*, the speaker of the prologue can confidently claim *nunc turba nullast* ('Now there is no mob', *Hecyra* 43). His confidence comes because the play is being performed in another venue again – the Comitium, perhaps, or the west end of the forum – where gladiators were not expected.

Taken as a whole, the importance for flexibility on the part of the performers is clear. The plays needed to be adaptable to any of a variety of venues, each of which will create its actor–audience dynamic in a different way. Barriers could be erected to direct traffic and delineate the performance area (*cancelli* are mentioned in Varro, *Res Rusticae* 3.5.4, Cicero, *pro Sestio* 124.1, and Ovid, *Amores* 3.2.64), but it would be wrong to assume either that there was a clear division between *proscaenium* and *cavea*, or that a theatre audience was ever completely removed from the rest of Rome, despite efforts to isolate the theatre space from the rest of the city. Further, in some passages Plautus has attempted to create the sense of the play being site-specific, a technique that allows the audience to believe that it is seeing something unique to themselves, which in turn reinforces its commitment to the play.

Theatre architecture encourages this commitment from the audience. There were not that many opportunities for dramatic performance in Rome, but when one arose, there was very little that would prevent an individual who wanted to see a play from getting to the theatre. A spectator made no financial commitment, and did not even need to plan to attend, since it was not necessary to claim tickets in advance. Theatrical venues were always situated centrally, in a location appropriate to the god or person honoured at the *ludi*, and so for many, attending a play would not even require any significant travel, as most in the audience would be spending some time (before or after the show) at the other celebrations. Spectators could make a day of it. The theatre space becomes a focal point, concentrating and heightening the spirit of the festival, but this mood spreads beyond the theatre infusing the surrounding area with the spirit of the comedy – as most clearly in Plautus' *Curculio*.[120]

[120] Bennett (1997) 126 describes how 'the milieu which surrounds a theatre is always ideologically encoded' by the presence of the theatre: restaurants are places for meals before or after a performance, etc. In Rome this encoding is bidirectional: the theatre space helps to define the surrounding area as a focal point for the day's events at the *ludi*, but the festival atmosphere contributes significantly to the otherness of the space created for the theatrical event.

SET

Against this diversity, uniformity was provided by the set.[121] The temporary stage structure, whatever its form, could be erected quickly and might serve as the backdrop for a variety of entertainments. The set requirements of Roman comedy are surprisingly minimalistic: the texts rarely provide any hints concerning set decoration, and this points to a simple backdrop. This is not to say that there was no detail on the set. When characters go house shopping in *Mostellaria*, there are references at lines 817–19 to a *vestibulum* ('forecourt'; and see fr. 146L) and *postes* ('columns'; *Asinaria* 425 has *columnis*). While these might be part of the stage set, realised either with actual columns or through a painted backdrop,[122] it is as likely that all such details were supplied by audience imagination.[123] As long as an audience member can imagine an ordinary object from everyday life, verisimilitude in the set building is not required. Similarly, there is no positive evidence for the long, thin stages that become common in the empire: they are a product of a changing dynamic between performers and the audience. Indeed, such a stage shape would not be possible in many of the venues actually used.

The set was of wood, it was temporary, and, depending on the particular venue in which the play was mounted, it may have been set up and taken down in a matter of hours.[124] Everything about the theatre context suggests that the set was generic: constructed by the magistrates for the *ludi* and not by the troupe hired to perform, a given performance area might be used by multiple troupes in a given festival (Livy 41.27.5, in 174 BC). There were three doors (which, as in life, opened inwards[125]) and a *scaenae*

[121] This claim will be corroborated in Chapter 3, with the discussion of role doubling.

[122] Valerius Maximus 2.4.6 indicates the first polychrome stage building was made in 99 BC: *Claudius Pulcher scaenam varietate colorum adumbravit, vacuis ante pictura tabulis extensam* ('Claudius Pulcher applied a variety of colours to the stage, which previously had consisted of unpainted boards'; text and translation, Shackleton Bailey (2000) 158–9). This is unlikely to be true. *Skênographia* ('scene-painting') was apparently used in the Greek tradition in the fifth century (see Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a18), and it would be surprising if it had never been employed in Rome.

[123] When I have directed Plautine comedies, the minimalism suggested by the evidence was taken to an extreme, and only empty doorframes were used to delimit the performance area with no further backdrop. This demonstrated that this limit did not in fact pose any difficulties for the actors or the audiences.

[124] On this question see also Gilula (1996) 486–9.

[125] Beare (1964) 289–90, drawing on *Curculio* 158–61.

frons, which was painted to resemble three generic attached buildings.[126] It was possible to lock a door from the outside; when it is additionally bolted from inside (as at *Mostellaria* 425–6), Plautus emphasises that no one can cross the threshold from either direction.[127]

The two side entrances of the performance area serve to polarise all outdoor offstage locations.[128] Discussions often employ the terms 'left' and 'right' without reference to whether this is from the actors' or the audience's perspective.[129] On the Roman comic stage it seems to be typical for the exit stage left to lead to the urban centre (the forum), and the exit stage right to lead to the harbour and the countryside. Characters appearing stage right come from away (*a peregre*, Vitruvius 5.6.8), as at *Menaechmi* 555–6, when Sosicles (Menaechmus II) attempts to throw off pursuers by throwing a garland stage left (*ad laevam manum*) before exiting towards the harbour stage right. Similarly, at *Amphitruo* 333, Mercurius hears the voice of Sosia to his right (*dextra*), who has returned from the harbour. It is unlikely, however, that a universal convention existed and 'it is hazardous to infer a rule'.[130] In *Andria*, the entrances are reversed. Davus says, *ego quoque hinc ab dextera | venire me assimulabo* (734–5: 'I'll pretend that I too am arriving here from the right') and soon exclaims, *quid turbaest apud forum!* (745: 'What a crowd in the forum!').[131] Confusion exists only because of the assumption that the forum must always exist stage left. It is much simpler to remove the convention entirely: the forum is in whatever direction someone exits when they say they are going to the forum, and the country is the other way, unless the play provides an alternate offstage geography. *Rudens* falls in this category. In this play, the city and harbour are thought to exist on the same side of the stage, with the shore where the shipwrecked Labrax

[126] On set painting see Gilula (1996) 489–92. [127] Barton (1972) and Milnor (2002).
[128] Duckworth (1952) 85–7. See also Beare (1964) 248–55, with his summary of ancient sources and previous discussions.
[129] Since modern theatrical parlance prefers 'stage left' and 'stage right' (i.e. from the actor's position, as he faces the audience), I follow that convention here.
[130] Gratwick (1993) 191; and see *Miles Gloriosus* 1216.
[131] Text and translation, Barsby (2001) I: 134–5. Barsby's convoluted explanation, following Beare (1964) 180–81 and 248–55, requires *ab dextera* to mean 'from stage left': both suggest the actor turns to face upstage 'so that the actors' right and audience's right coincide' (134–5 n. 42, and see Beare (1964) 181 n.). Davus says *quoque* because Chremes is also coming from that direction (his house is there according to lines 355 and 361). Soon Davus wishes to confer with Mysis *ad dexteram* (line 751), which must mean that she crosses past Chremes to meet Davus near the wing he has just used. Beare is determined to demonstrate that the Romans perpetuated the Greek assignments; that claim too is dubious.

and his *meretrices* are washed up on the other. At 855–6, Plesidippus says:

> *abi sane ad litus curriculo, Trachalio,*
> *iube illos in urbem ire obviam ad portum mihi . . .*
>
> Go then, Trachalio, run to the shore, and
> tell them to go to the city and meet me at the port.

Duckworth says the shore is stage left and the city and harbour are stage right, and argues that 'the playwright is following the normal stage setting as closely as possible' given the remote setting of the play.[132] This is special pleading, given that Daemones looks offstage at drowning men: *hac ad dexteram – | viden? – secundum litus* (156–7: 'There they are, to the right – do you see? – along the shore'). In the end, of course, it does not matter for an audience seeking to understand the play in performance. Assuming the actors have been consistent, the audience will already know what the offstage geography is: Arcturus' prologue identifies both *villa proxima propter mare* (34: 'a house right next to the sea') and the direction from which the young man comes onstage, *ad portum* (65); each comment could be reinforced with a gesture. In *Rudens*, all those not native to Cyrene arrive shipwrecked at the shore stage right, while the economic centre of the area is presented stage left. This distinction is maintained consistently throughout the play, and only those expecting a non-existent stage convention have difficulty.[133]

The Roman stage polarises local and foreign, not discriminating whether the traveller comes by road or by ship. Most plays do not indicate which lies in which direction, because, in performance, it is always obvious.[134] It may be that on the Greek stage a consistent convention was employed, with the harbour and urban centre presented on stage left and stage right leading to the country.[135] But even if a Roman audience knew this convention, it could not be followed when the natural distinction for the Roman mind (employed in every play except *Rudens*) was between harbour and city centre. At times the playwright would have

[132] Duckworth (1952) 86, and see p. 83 for the setting of *Rudens* generally (which also applies to *Vidularia*).
[133] The logical difficulty of having a shore in one direction and a harbour in the other, is of a different order. If we must, we can assume the play takes place on a peninsula.
[134] In my experience, any difficulties with the offstage geography become painfully obvious in rehearsal.
[135] See Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.126, though there are inconsistencies in Pollux: 'On any view his account is confused' (Beare (1964) 254).

to rearrange entrances as he adapted his model, but much more significant changes were regularly made.

In addition to the side entrances, it is possible for an actor to access the performance area through one of the doors in the *scaena* that constitutes the backdrop for every Roman comedy. The demands of the plays require variously one, two, or three doors. All doors will have been of equal size, and Beare is surely correct in suggesting the construction will always have had three doors, but at times one or more may not have been used: 'any door which was not required in a particular play was for the time being simply disregarded'.[136] The distance between one door and another was *tres unos passus* (*Bacchides* 832: 'three single steps'), assuming that these are normal-sized steps and are not comically exaggerated. The regularity of comic plots means that a door could represent one of three things: the house of a prominent male citizen, the house of a *meretrix* or *leno*, or a temple. The most common situation calls for two citizen houses: *Casina*, *Cistellaria*, *Epidicus*, *Miles Gloriosus* (where one is the house of the *miles*[137]), *Andria*, and *Eunuchus*. Another common situation has two doors, representing the house of a citizen and of the *meretrix*: *Asinaria*, *Menaechmi*, *Persa*, and *Poenulus*. Terence's *Adelphoe* finds a mid-ground between these two, depicting the houses of Micio (a prominent male citizen) and Sostrata (a female citizen, whose daughter Pamphilia is the beloved of Micio's adopted son Aeschinus). Rarely when only two doors are used one may designate a citizen's house, the other a temple (as in *Rudens*). Against these twelve instances, we may count two where only one door is used, and thirteen where three doors are used. When one door is used, it always represents a citizen's house (*Amphitruo*, *Captivi*). When three are used, two would typically represent citizen houses, and the third may equally be a third citizen (*Stichus*, *Trinummus*, *Heauton Timoroumenos*[138]), a temple (*Aulularia*, *Mercator*,[139] *Mostellaria*,[140] *Vidularia*[141]), or the house of a *meretrix* (*Pseudolus*, *Phormio*, *Hecyra*). The last possibility, where one house contains a citizen, the second a temple,

[136] Beare (1964) 285, and generally see 285–94, Duckworth (1952) 83.

[137] It is possible that there should be a third house representing a temple, but the reference at line 411 to an altar is as likely to be figurative.

[138] It is not clear that Phania's house is onstage. Barsby (2001) I: 194–5 n. 23 argues that it is, based on lines 168–72.

[139] Reference is made to an altar at 676.

[140] While the temple is not used, an altar is required from 1097 to at least 1145.

[141] Though fragmentary, the references in fr. IV *haec myrtus Veneris est* and fr. VIII *nescioqui servos e myrteta prosiluit* demonstrate that there is a 'myrtle grove' of Venus on stage which could be represented simply as a temple with altar.

the third a *meretrix*, is found in *Bacchides*,[142] *Curculio*, and *Truculentus*.[143] One door always leads to the house of a citizen; there are never two houses of *meretrices* or two temples; every other permutation is represented in the extant plays.[144] Wiles suggests that 'no play requires more than two domestic doorways'[145] and in a sense this is correct: there is no play which contains entering characters talking back into three different houses as they emerge (and this is the only means of determining when a door is 'required'). Nevertheless, so many *palliatae* plots naturally presume three doors, that we should assume three doors were always available.

Some plays require an altar in the performance area.[146] Seven plays use three doors and have one designated as the entrance to a temple; six plays use three doors and do not have a temple. It follows that there must have been a means to identify a temple that was separate from the set, and which could be introduced by the troupe. I suggest that in these cases a generic stage altar is positioned in front of the door representing a temple;[147] convention and audience imagination would provide the rest. This is not the only solution possible (minor set dressings for temples or other distinctive houses, such as that of a *leno*, may also have been added by a troupe), but a removeable altar is the most expedient solution. There is no indication of more formal sets of any kind.[148] Altars are not required simply because a character invokes a god or utters a prayer: indeed, I suggested above that prayers to Apollo make best sense in terms of production at the *ludi Apollinares*. The stage altar has no presumed association for the audience with a god until it is provided one during the performance of the play. As with the wing entrances, it remains unmarked until labelled by an actor's speech.

Occasionally, the altar is used as more than an iconographic shorthand for a temple location, and is incorporated into the action of the play.

[142] Reference is made to an altar at 172–3.

[143] Reference is made to an altar at 476. This is an unusual scene, however, blurring the indoor/outdoor distinction (see Duckworth (1952) 127).

[144] This is not to say other combinations were inconceivable. What, for example, was the disposition of houses in Plautus' lost *Lenones Gemini* ('The Pimp Twins')? Perhaps in this play two houses lead to the house of a *leno* (played by the same actor in the same mask?), and therefore each contained a *meretrix*. We cannot know.

[145] Wiles (1991) 55. The only source cited in support is Beare, who believes there were three doors. Indeed, his discussion of *Curculio* (Wiles (1991) 58) requires two (side) doors and an altar to Aesculapius in the centre. Such an altar is thought to be in front of a temple of Aesculapius, from which Cappadox emerges at 216.

[146] See Duckworth (1952) 83–4, Hanson (1959) 86–90, and Saunders (1911).

[147] Duckworth (1952) 83–4.

[148] Wiles (1991) 56.

At *Mostellaria* 1094–1180, the slave Tranio seeks refuge at an altar onstage and is joined by Callidamates. Similarly, at *Rudens* 691–885, Palaestra and Ampelisca seek sanctuary at the altar of Venus. Such sanctuary is inviolable, based on a religious tenet that had been exploited as a dramatic trope since fifth-century Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, a loophole existed: when the girls seek sanctuary at an altar of Venus, Labrax threatens, *Volcanum adducam, is Venerist adversarius* (*Rudens* 761: 'I'll bring Vulcan; he's Venus' opposite'). With an allusion to the divine marriage and Venus' famous adultery, Labrax intends to smoke his quarry away from their refuge. If they leave by choice (because of the heat or smoke), it would seem he has not technically violated their sanctuary (the threat is also made at *Heauton Timoroumenos* 975). Rather than seek to explain this behaviour in religious terms, it is better to see it too as a stock solution to a recurrent problem in New Comedy, one that was well known to Menander as well. In an extant fragment of *Perinthia* ('The Girl from Perinthus'), the servant Daos finds himself being smoked off an altar by his fellow slaves.[149]

There is an ordinariness in the regularity of the set. However exotic or contrived the offstage settings, and whatever name the play happens to give to the town, the setting of the *fabulae palliatae* is, essentially, always the same street. What happens on a stage street goes well beyond real-world practice. Banquet scenes (*Asinaria* 828–914, *Persa* 757–858, *Stichus* 683–775, *Mostellaria* 308–91) and *toilette/boudoir* scenes (*Mostellaria* 157–292, *Truculentus* 449–642) were occasionally taken out-of-doors to comic effect.[150] These were indoor activities for the Greeks and the Romans, yet the inherent artificiality in the stage world of the *palliatae* allows such immodest behaviour. At no point does the audience stop to wonder why Philematium in *Mostellaria* is getting dressed in public (though in performance the fact that she is invites many possibilities for comic business). It is, indeed, symptomatic of the comic exuberance of the Plautine stage world. It would be unnecessarily restricting and no less unrealistic to assume that such scenes must be performed in the *vestibulum* (assuming doors were recessed, which we have seen is unnecessary). While the setting is ordinary, it is not naturalistic.

Equally artificial is how little neighbours seem to know about each other before a play begins, even though neighbours are always thought to share a common wall (this is key to the plot of *Miles Gloriosus*, for example). There is no alley between houses that may provide locations

[149] Arnott (1996a) 472–501. [150] Duckworth (1952) 126–7, Lowe (1995).

from which one may eavesdrop, as is sometimes suggested.[151] The word used in Roman comedy for the street can be *platea* (e.g. *Adelphoe* 574), *via* (e.g. *Mercator* 798), or *angiportum* (*Pseudolus* 960–61), though more usually *angiportus/-um* refers to 'a street in the rear and parallel to the stage, from which a character can reach his house through a garden'.[152] *Angiportus/-um* is never used for a route perpendicular to the stage, though this old idea is perpetuated in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, which defines it as 'a narrow passage, alley, lane'. The *angiportum* is most often used in Roman comedy to explain why a given character does not return to the stage by the same means that he had left it. At *Persa* 444–6, for example, Toxilus tells the *leno* Dordalus,

> *abi istac travorsis angiportis ad forum;*
> *eadem istaec facito mulier ad me transeat*
> *per hortum.*
>
> Go that way to the forum, using the next street.
> (*Toxilus points away from the forum.*)
> Let my woman come to me that same way,
> through the garden.

However we choose to rationalise Toxilus making Dordalus go to the forum 'the long way' (perhaps it is it to avoid the chance of meeting Sagaristio and Saturio's daughter in their Persian costumes, or perhaps it is to provide a petty annoyance for the pimp), Toxilus' instructions mean that the character of Lemniselenis does not appear on stage until line 763, a dramatic revelation at the end of the play. Later, Toxilus tells the disguised Sagaristio, *per angiportum rursum te ad me recipito | illac per hortum* ('come back to my house by the next street, through the garden that way,' lines 678–9). Sagaristio exits by means of a wing at line 710, and when he reappears (following on the heels of Lemniselenis), he does so from the house of Toxilus' master. The *angiportum* may have been a conventional device playwrights used to help smooth the adaptation of Greek New Comedy, or it may have been a means to create stronger entrances for key characters. In either case, it too is part of the stage world defined by the set.

These examples demonstrate that backstage communication existed between all the points on stage. Not only could actors leave by one route

[151] Wiles (1991) 55–6 believes alleyways could exist, but does not consider the requirements of *Miles Gloriosus*.

[152] Harsh (1937), Duckworth (1952) 87, and see 87–8, Beare (1964) 256–63, and Beacham (1991) 61–2.

and return by another, but characters could as well, when the text provided an appropriate explanation. This is what we would expect, but it should be stated since not every possible stage structure would allow this.[153] Given that a Roman troupe could be using any of a number of performance spaces, a uniform set is needed: uniform both as it appears to the audience, but, more importantly, how it functions backstage. The architecturally simplest design (a flat wall with three doors placed in it) is in fact the most flexible set building from the perspective of the actors, and the most versatile for the comic narratives. Its use by Roman performers means it should be possible to discern the mechanics of the stage action even for those plays about which didascalic information (and consequently the precise performance venue) does not survive.

COSTUME

> In fact costume is relatively unimportant in New Comedy.
>
> W. Beare[154]

The genre of *fabula palliata* is defined by its costume.[155] All characters wear a *tunica* ('tunic', Greek *chitôn*) over which men typically place a *pallium* ('cloak', Greek *himation*), women a *palla*. There are of course exceptions to this, and comedy did provide opportunity for outlandish get-ups that would contribute to the humour of a play. The question is whether costuming practices represented custom (and so were flexible in their application) or convention (and thus provided rigid codification). The data concerning comic costume are mostly late, and almost certainly do not refer to second-century performance. Thus, however informative Donatus, *de Comoedia* 8.6–7, and Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.118–20, may seem to be, and however beautiful the miniature illustrations in Terentian manuscripts may appear, 'all of this material is of doubtful

[153] Indeed, Tanner (1969) suggests that the earliest stages were built on streets of Rome and actually used real house doors for the left and right doors, while the central door was 'false' – that it just led to the alley that was perpendicular to the street with the stage. Such a stage would severely limit an actor's possibilities: because any move from a wing to a door would require travelling at least the equivalent of three city blocks (and possibly moving through buildings), many doubling options and narrative options would become impossible.

[154] Beare (1964) 187.

[155] Beare (1964) 264–6. See also Saunders (1909), Duckworth (1952) 88–92, and Beare (1964) 185–92.

value'.[156] While there is no doubt these sources present an account of comic costume, we cannot know if they refer to *palliatae* as originally performed. Pollux seems to be thinking of Greek sources, and Donatus and the Terentian miniatures reflect, if anything, later Roman stage practice. Even if these were found to be applicable to Plautus and Terence, they represent a codification that is unduly rigorous and is not likely to be applicable universally on the comic stage. While *senes* may often have worn white and carried sticks, and *lenones* may have often worn garish, multi-coloured *pallia*, it does not make sense for this to be required, when one of the chief purposes of theatrical costume was to distinguish individuals from each other. When there were two *senes*, one may have had a stick and another not had one.

Some general tendencies may be observed. For the most part, costume coincided with a generic representation of contemporary real-world clothing. The combination of *tunica* and *pallium/palla* is standard: even the shipwrecked, shivering Labrax washes ashore with both items (*Rudens* 549–50; the diminutives *tuniculam et ... misellum pallium* may imply they have been shrunk by the seawater, with the actor wearing clothes that are too small for him). The *pallium* indicated the genre of the play, but otherwise the plays refer to standard items of Roman clothing. Young men and particularly soldiers could wear a *chlamys*, a shorter Greek cloak fastened at the shoulder: Pseudolus declares *etiam opust chlamyde et machaera et petaso* (*Pseudolus* 735: 'I also need a military cloak, sabre, and broad-brimmed hat') for the costume of a soldier's attendant; at the end of *Miles Gloriosus*, Pyrgopolynices has been stripped *de tunica et chlamyde et machaera* (1423: 'of [his] tunic, military cloak, and sabre'); for Sagaristio's costume, Toxilus orders *tunicam atque zonam, et chlamydem ... et causeam* (*Persa* 155: 'tunic and belt, military cloak and Macedonian broad-brimmed hat')[157] the use of Greek names for articles of clothing reflects an interesting transference, as Roman attitudes to Greek costume items (which characterise individuals as foreign, military, and perhaps eastern)

[156] Beare (1964) 184. Compare Jory (1967) 21–2: 'The accounts of comic costume by the Greek Pollux (4.118–20) and the Roman Donatus (*de Comoedia* 8.6) do not tally and may reflect real differences between Greek and Roman stage practice.' For a more favourable account of the value of these passages, see Wiles (1991) 188–92: 'while Pollux is more concerned with isolating a technical vocabulary, Donatus is concerned with what the costumes mean' (189).

[157] The *machaera* was a single-bladed sword (therefore 'sabre') that had recently been introduced to Rome by soldiers fighting in Greece (Ketterer (1986a) 212 n. 13). The combination of *chlamys* and *machaera* (as well as *zona/sona*, 'belt') is adopted by Charinus in *Mercator* 910–27. The *petasus* had a strap so that it could be removed from the head and could hang down one's back, leaving one's hands free. The *causea* was a Macedonian version of the broad-brimmed hat, and therefore also associated particularly with soldiers.

function in the notionally Greek world as symbols for Persia, another foreign, eastern, military power.[158] Here and elsewhere, there are indications that a slave's costume would essentially be like that of his or her master,[159] though Epidicus needs to be given *soccos, tunicam, pallium* (*Epidicus* 725: 'shoes, a tunic, and a cloak') when he is freed.[160] Harpax in *Pseudolus* (and Simia disguised as him) wears the same costume as a soldier. Domestic slaves wore the *pallium*, but on the stage at least it may have appeared more like a modern winter scarf, and consequently was more easily thrown over the shoulder, as in the traditional gesture of the *servus currens* ('running slave'), a stock routine in Greek and Roman New Comedy (*Captivi* 778–9, *Epidicus* 194–5, fr. 178L, *Phormio* 844–5). Varro's claim that men who worked in the countryside wore goatskins (*Res Rusticae* 2.2) may also have been reflected in stage practice.

While costume was not used in specific ways to identify characters (beyond the general practices described above), there were ways items of costume could create specific associations for the audience. The use of the *petasus* funtioned as a shorthand within the stage world to indicate that a character had travelled (or was about to travel) a great distance: it was an iconographic signifier of Hermes the Greek messenger god, who corresponds in many respects to the Roman Mercurius.[161] In *Amphitruo*, Sosia, Mercurius, Amphitruo, and Jupiter all wear a *petasus* with Mercurius and Jupiter disguised as Sosia and Amphitruo respectively. Mercurius addresses the audience (142–7):

> *nunc internosse ut nos possitis facilius,*
> *ego has habebo usque in petaso pinnulas,*
> *tum meo patri autem torulus inerit aureus*
> *sub petaso: id signum Amphitruoni non erit.*
> *ea signa nemo horum familiarium*
> *videre poterit: verum vos videbitis.*
>
> Now, so that you can identify us easier,
> I shall always have this little feather in my hat,
> but there will be a little gold knot in my father's
> hat. This token will not be on Amphitruo's.
> No one in the household can see
> these tokens, but you shall see them.

[158] Similarly, Satúrio's daughter will wear *crepidula* ('Greek slippers', *Persa* 464) as part of her Persian disguise.

[159] When Mercurius complains about *hunc ornatum* ('this costume', *Amphitruo* 116) and his *servili schema* (117: 'appearance as a slave'), he is contrasting it with the special appearance normally reserved for divine characters. There is some distinction between the appearance of slaves and free, however, as discussed in Chapter 3.

[160] Comic footwear generally is either the *soccus* ('slipper': *Cistellaria* 697, *Bacchides* 332, *Trinummus* 720, *Persa* 124) or the *solea* ('sandal': *Casina* 709, *Mostellaria* 384, *Truculentus* 363, 367, 479, 631).

[161] A South Italian comic vase (Oxford 1928.12, *PhV*² 50 (Trendall (1967) 40) shows Dionysus and an actor dressed as Hermes, wearing a *petasus*.

A passage like this demands speculation concerning the nature of comic description.[162] Precise details distinguish two pairs of characters which might enable the audience to tell them apart. But since each role is played by a different actor, this is not a challenge in any case. What then is the purpose of the tokens? Both are presented with diminutives (*pinnulas, torulus*) but they are, of necessity, able to be seen easily by members of a large audience. To serve the narrative function, the tokens must be visible and consequently they cannot actually have been small. The joke lies rather in the tokens' invisibility to the human characters in the play. If Mercurius wore a large ostrich feather in his broad-brimmed hat ('this little feather') and Jupiter's hat had dangling from it a long garish braid ('a little golden knot'), comic benefits emerge: Mercurius gets a laugh with the inappropriate description of his feather; Jupiter gets a laugh when the audience eventually sees his *torulus*; both divine characters wear a silly costume throughout the play that doesn't alter the way they are treated in the stage world, reducing their status, and could increase audience identification with the human characters. Further, the supposedly identical characters are probably distinguishable in any case. This example points to many of the difficulties involved in examining comic narrative for evidence of stage practice. When Curculio complains of *Graeci palliati* (*Curculio* 288: 'cloaked Greeks'), the Roman audience is aware not only that the character is a Greek himself (the play is set in Epidaurus, though Curculio's complaint and prejudices are clearly Roman), but that he, though a parasite, is performing the stock routine of the 'running slave' as the line is delivered; his *pallium* was no doubt distinctively hitched over his shoulder as he says this. Such comments cannot be taken at face value.

As these examples show, many plots of *fabulae palliatae* involve impersonation and disguise.[163] In *Asinaria*, Leonida's impersonation of the household slave Saurea does not require any change of costume, since

[162] Christenson (2000) 164 believes 'apart from the unusually high number of (legitimate) hiatuses in 142–7, there is no certain indication of interpolation'; even if this passage were interpolated, the issues discussed here would still hold true for the performance of the play. See also Beare (1964) 189.

[163] See Muecke (1986).

the merchant deceived has met neither. Within the world of the play, Saurea exists, but he does not appear on stage except through the impersonation. Similarly, Casina does not appear on stage in *Casina* except as played by Chalinus: there, however, Casina is a known quantity and consequently Chalinus is disguised with wedding veils. In practice, a disguise need not be convincing: the audience knows when one character is impersonating another, and so the disguise functions only within the play. In *Casina*, part of the humour stems from Lysidamus being fooled by what is clearly a poor disguise. We know that Chalinus continues to behave in a masculine way (see 840–54) and the humour is maximised if, through the audience's discrepant knowledge, it can see the dual identity that Lysidamus cannot.[164] Perhaps the wedding veils insufficiently cover the slave's beard. It follows that the nature of the plots of Roman comedy will favour a disguise that emphasises the disparity between what the audience sees and what deceived characters perceive.

An eye patch seems to have been a sufficient means to conceal one's identity. Curculio adopts this disguise in his encounter with Lyco, who calls him *Unoculus* ('One-eye'; see 392–400, 543, and 582). This and the name Summanus, who is not a real person in the dramatic world (543–7), permit the deception to last long enough. Because the disguise is particularly ineffective in real terms, it is something that Curculio can hastily don, while delivering 391:

> *simulabo quasi non noverim. heus tu, te volo.*
>
> (*to audience*) I'll pretend I don't know him.
> (*He puts on an eyepatch.*)
> (*to Lyco*) Hey you, I want you.

That the costume is assumed mid-line suggests that it takes only a fraction of a second, which further reinforces its comic success. Similarly, when in *Miles Gloriosus* Pleusicles disguises himself as a sailor, within the play the disguise is perfect: Pyrgopolynices says *nescio quis eccum incedit | ornatu quidem thalassico* (1281–2: 'I don't know this guy coming rigged like a seaman'; Pleusicles repeats the word *ornatu* in his soliloquy, line 1286). Part of this disguise involves an eye patch: *nam ille qui lanam ob oculum habebat laevom, nauta non erat!* (1430: 'Hey, that guy with the wool on his

[164] This does not mean that the male actor playing a male character disguised as a female character cannot attempt female mannerisms to comic effect, as long as the gesture is always affected in a way intended to fool only the character being duped.

left eye – he was no sailor!'; see 1306–10). So common is this deception that it can be alluded to in passing: Demaenetus recollects that in his youth, his father dressed as a sea-captain to help him (*Asinaria* 68–70). By identifying the *senex* as a former *adulescens*, the audience is led to believe he will not function as a blocking character to Argyrippus' schemes, though eventually he does (from 830–941). The passage unusually raises questions that consider the lives of the characters outside of the dramatic narrative. The passage forces at least some in the audience to ask if the woman whom Demaenetus loved is the shrewish wife Artemona he now seeks to undermine. Whether she is or not (it would take the convoluted plot of a *palliata* to explain Artemona's financial position if she began as a *meretrix*), the passage raises questions about the nature of dramatic love that are never answered, but which are intriguing to contemplate.

There was also a political and an economic dimension to costumes on the Roman stage. What degree of ostentation was used in the costumes? The *lex Oppia*, carried in 215, imposed restrictions on women's dress as part of a conservative sumptuary programme, *ne qua mulier plus semunciam auri haberet neu vestimento versicolori uteretur* (Livy 34.1.3: 'that no woman should have more than a half-ounce of gold, nor multicoloured clothing').[165] In particular, women wearing purple were seen as extravagant (Livy 34.7.1–10). The law was repealed in 195 (Livy 34.1–8), which means that it was in effect for all but the last decade of Plautus' career. What was its effect on performance? We do not know how the audience would respond to ostentatious costumes in the fictional Greek world that were forbidden to them in the real world, and it is possible that costumes of female characters observed the same restrictions as Roman women's dress. It might equally be that characters partake of a liberty no longer enjoyed by the Romans: when Sagaristio tries to add 10 minas to the sale price of a supposedly Persian girl *pro vestimentis* (*Persa* 669: 'for her clothes'), at least part of the cost is due to their exotic nature – she is *ornatam . . . lepide in peregrinum modum* (158: 'dressed charmingly in foreign style').[166] In favour of this possibility is the repeated emphasis on the *aurum atque ornamenta* (*Miles Gloriosus* 981: 'gold and trinkets'; see 1127, 1147, and 1302) of Philocomasium. Since the character appears both before and after these

[165] See Johnston (1980).

[166] The passage in which the price for Saturio's daughter is negotiated (*Persa* 661–85) is odd. Once the price of 60 minas is agreed upon (665–7), Sagaristio attempts to negotiate for more money for her wardrobe (669), with no clear resolution, and Dordalus only pays 60 minas (683), and removes the price of the bag that holds his payment (684–5; see also *Epidicus* 632 and Ketterer (1986b) 97–8). The *leno* Dordalus' petty gain is successful, but Toxilus' scheme is not. It is possible that *Persa* 668a–671a are intrusive, reflecting an alternative performed tradition.

four passages, it is unlikely her jewellery was never seen or that all four passages were ironic. Further, the play is generally thought to be early, and, though this should not be pressed, it was probably written while the *lex Oppia* was in effect. The function of the *choragus* may be related to this. Most references in the plays to getting clothing are necessarily understood in a metatheatrical context (*Curculio* 464–6, *Persa* 157–60, *Trinummus* 857–8) or may be so understood (*Pseudolus* 1184–6). We do not know if troupes owned their own costumes, or if they rented some or all of them from the *choragus*, but there does seem to be a mechanism for itinerant troupes to have access to elaborate theatrical resources.[167]

One issue not usually considered is what the Romans wore under this costume. In the Greek tradition, of course, padded body suits simulated the nudity of a grotesque human form: men appeared with a distended belly, padded buttocks, and an oversized phallus. This Greek costume was distinctive, and a key part of the Greek tradition.[168] Over the course of the fourth century, however, the grotesqueness of the form was reduced: the phallus gets increasingly shortened until, by the time of Menander, it is no longer on display beneath the next layer of the character's costume.[169] Since we lack contemporary illustrations, the evidence comes only from the text.

There are hints that in some form, the phallus was preserved as the Greek plays were adapted for the Roman audience. In *Rudens*, the slave Sceparnio has seized and released the *meretrix* Ampelisca (see 424–5), who has appeared from the temple of Venus where she has been taking refuge with a water pitcher (428–9):[170]

SCEP. *quid nunc vis?*
AMP. *sapienti ornatus quid velim indicium facit.*
SCEP. *meus quoque hic sapienti ornatus quid velim indicium facit.*

SCEPAR. What do you want?
AMPEL. (*pointing to her pitcher*) To a person of sense,
This piece of equipment reveals what I want.
SCEPAR. To a person of sense, this piece of equipment
Of mine reveals what I want, too. (tr. Smith)

[167] In an epigram of Lucillius dating from the time of Nero, a tragic actor sells his props to relieve his poverty, which suggests they are his possessions (*Palatine Anthology* 11.189).

[168] Beare (1964) 356–8 n. 2 argues against the phallus in Aristophanes, but without success. *Clouds* 537–9 is funny precisely because the padded bodysuit was a standard component of comedy. See also *Clouds* 731–4, *Acharnians* 590–92, 784–7, and 1118–21, about which see Porter (2004).

[169] Green (2006). [170] Ketterer (1986c) 38–9.

If the actor has a visible phallus, the *double entendre* is reinforced, as the repeated *ornatus* evokes the *ornamenta* of the costume and properites. More oblique is the exchange between the drunk Callidamates and his patient *meretrix* Delphium at *Mostellaria* 324–31:

CALL. *duce me, amabo.*
DEL. *cave ne cadas, asta.*
CALL. *o . . . o . . . ocellus es meus;*
tuus sum alumnus, mel meum.
DEL. *cave modo ne prius in via accumbas*
quam illi, ubi lectus est stratus, concumbimus.
CALL. *sine, sine cadere me.*
DEL. *sino, sed hoc, quod mi in manu est:*
si cades, non cades quin cadam tecum.
CALL. *iacentis tollet postea nos ambos aliquis.*
DEL. *madet homo.*

CALL. Lead me, please.
DEL. See you don't fall. Stand up.
CALL. (*snuggling into her breast*)
You're my-eye-eye darling; I'm your baby, honey.
DEL. Only see you don't first lie down in the street,
Till we sleep together there where the bed is all spread.
CALL. Let . . . let me fall.
DEL. I will, but this, here in my hand . . .
If you fall, you won't fall unless I tumble with you.
CALL. Then someone'll lift up the two of us lying there.
DEL. (*to the audience*) The man is drunk.

The passage contains unusually frank references to sex. Questa accepts Leo's *comcumbimus* ('sleep together') for the *coimus* ('have sex') of the manuscripts (this would be the only use of *coeo* before Lucretius). *Hoc* in 328 refers to Callidamates' penis: Nixon avoids the innuendo in his translation, but like Questa is satisfied to assign the end of 328 to Delphium, so that *hoc* is in her hand; in contrast, Lindsay assigns only *sino* to her, with Callidamates completing the rest of the line. *Cadere* is being used in multiple senses: Callidamates falls to the ground literally in lines 324 and 328; in 329, though, two other meanings are introduced: Callidamates' penis will fall once it loses its erection (*cades . . . cades*; see

Martial 7.18.12), after they have had sex (*cadam*, 'tumble').[171] Neither *hic ... ornatus* nor *hoc* require the actor to be wearing a costume phallus of any size: a well-placed gesture is sufficient for comic effect. But the possibility cannot be ruled out, and it is not acceptable to suggest the joke is an accidental holdover from the Greek original of these plays: we should always assume Plautus recognises the potential for humour in his own plays.

The most explicit *double entendres* occur at *Casina* 902–15, but (since the confusion is being described after the fact) there are no necessary costume requirements. Granting that a phallus may be part of a character's costume, potential references multiply: when Paegnium assaults Dordalus with the phrase *restim tu tibi cape crassam ac suspende te* (*Persa* 815: 'take a thick rope and hang yourself'), it should not surprise that an actor in performance would naturally add a genital gesture; in my experience actors need very little to motivate taking an easy laugh based on bawdy humour. The nature of *double entendre* means that there is no need for a physical phallus as part of the actor's costume, but if it existed, such an accessory would be able to be put to use.[172] A papyrus fragment, *P. Berol.* inv. 13927,[173] lists a mime requiring two prop phalluses. In a fifth-century AD mime, at least, they were not standard equipment and needed to be placed on the prop list for a particular narrative.

Further, the regular description of slaves, old men, and *lenones* as 'potbellied' (*ventriosus*, as at *Mercator* 639, *Pseudolus* 1218, *Rudens* 317), corroborated by visual evidence such as terracotta statuettes, also argues for some form of padding beneath the costume of certain character types. In some cases, artificial padding seems assured: Cappadox in *Curculio* has a belly so grossly distended that *geminos in ventre habere videor filios* (221: 'I seem to have twin sons inside my gut') and Alcumena in *Amphitruo* is actually pregnant with twins, which Phillips argues was represented with exaggerated comic padding.[174] Other padding for female characters may have been common. Antamonides' claims he does not want the company of a *tibicina* ('pipe-girl') because *nescias utrum ei maiores buccaene an mammae sient* (*Poenulus* 1416: 'you don't know which are bigger – her cheeks or her breasts'). Since the distended cheeks of pipers were thought

[171] Adams (1982) 194 gives *Persa* 656 as the only sexual use of *cado*: the *leno* Dordalus sympathises with the maiden pretending to be a *meretrix*, promising her freedom *si crebro cades* ('once you tumble a few times'). In *Mostellaria*, as Delphium switches from the second to the first person, the sense of the repeated verb needs to assume a different meaning.

[172] This question is also discussed at Prehn (1916) 71–81.

[173] See Cunningham in Rusten and Cunningham (2002) 418–21, who present a normalised text.

[174] Phillips (1985).

to be ugly,[175] the humour of this line depends on both cheeks and breasts being large (and both being ugly), and this in turn suggests that comic women would have large breasts.[176] In *Casina*, Olympio uses a diminutive to describe the disguised Chalinus' breast: *edepol papillam bellulam* (848: 'Pollux, what a nice little breast'). He is probably being ironic, or is describing what he expects to see (if this were really Casina) and not the chest evident before him.[177] Chalinus metatheatrically manipulates the same variables usually employed by an actor. Such padding was not universal: there is no indication of padding on *adulescentes*, for example.

One piece of evidence that seems not to have been adduced in this context is Cicero, *de Officiis* 1.129:

scaenicorum quidem mos tantam habet vetere disciplina verecundiam, ut in scaenam sine subligaculo prodeat nemo; verentur enim, ne, si quo casu evenerit, ut corporis partes quaedam aperiantur aspiciantur non decore.

As for stage people, their custom, because of its traditional discipline, carries modesty to such a point that no actor would ever step out upon the stage without a *subligaculum* on, for fear he might make an improper exhibition, if by some accident certain parts of his person should happen to become exposed.[178]

The use of *scaenicorum* demonstrates stage actors are being described. These actors display modesty, despite the loss of political rights associated with being *infamis*. The *subligaculum* provides protection against

[175] This is the traditional reason given for why Athena discarded the *auloi* when she invented them, e.g. Telestes fr. 805a *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Page), Apollodorus, *Library* 1.4.2, Ovid, *Fasti* 6.697–702, Hyginus, *Fabulae* 165, and Plutarch, *Alcibiades* 2.5.

[176] Brown (1993) explores related issues in his discussion of *Eunuchus* 313–17. On the Greek stage, female padding was identical to that of the men: same belly, same buttocks, same sagging breasts: 'to create a female role the actors wore a female mask and female clothing over the top of the standard costume' (Green (1997) 135); such characters 'are not pregnant, but just have the conventional padding'. This means that on the Greek comic stage, it was conceivably customary that the body suits of comic women also would have a phallus, though it was notionally absent and was covered by the more modest female clothing (this has implications for the 'unmasking scene' in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*). For a Greek actor doubling roles, however, the process of changing costumes between sexes does not entail also changing the body suit. While the Roman stage did use padding, there is no indication that the use of the body suit persisted, and consequently a change of roles between sexes may have required more time for the actor to complete. Nevertheless, at least in the case of *Casina*, a good joke exists when a male character disguised as a woman is discovered to have male genitalia beneath the bridal costume (lines 904–13).

[177] At *Miles Gloriosus* 989 and *Poenulus* 347 *bellula* is used to describe an attractive young woman.

[178] Olson (2003) 206, and see 206–7, and see Wilson (1938). See Nonius 42L (29M): *subligaculum est quo pudendae partes corporis teguntur: dictum quod subtus ligetur* ('the *subligaculum* is that by which the shameful parts of the body are covered, so-called because it was "girded from below"').

accidental exposure of the actor's real genitalia.[179] In Cicero's day, at any rate, Roman actors did not wear a padded bodysuit (the leggings of which extend to the ankles). Padding is part of the costume, not a base upon which all other costumes are placed. This does not rule out the possibility of an artificial phallus, but if it existed, it was not represented in the Greek manner. It is more likely, that it was something worn over the *subligaculum* but below the (costume) tunic, perhaps hanging from a leather cord tied around the waist. This is the most likely construction for the two phalluses needed for the mime in *P. Berol.* inv. 13927. This would then explain the implied costume of the title character of Naevius' *Triphallus* ('The Guy with Three Penises').[180] No special construction would be needed; the actor would wear three cords beneath his costume, each with a hanging phallus extending beyond the length of the tunic.

Costume in Roman comedy apparently broke with Greek tradition and did not use padded bodysuits. Additional padding was used for certain roles, typically stock characters such as old men (*senes*), pimps (*lenones*), and slaves (*servi*). In some of these circumstances, an artificial phallus may also have been added, but it was not part of the standard costume for male comic characters. This technique would have been adopted from a local performance convention. Such padding has a necessary consequence for acting styles: 'one could say that padded costume almost invites violent or unsubtle activity: beating, kicking and so on seem to have been commonplace'.[181] The discussion has begun to blur the difference between costume and property, however, and it is worth having a clear understanding of how these terms can helpfully be differentiated.

STAGE PROPERTIES

The term 'prop' or 'stage property' is variously applied to various things. To understand best how properties function within a play, we can distinguish three levels at which a physical object can be used during a performance: as costume, as set, or as a property. The way these terms are used in everyday parlance (in antiquity as today) is blurred, and in particular the application of 'property' can blend into both 'costume' and 'set'.[182] The costume includes all the physical objects that go into

[179] It cannot be an 'apron', as Wilson (1938) 72 notes.
[180] Other titles of comedies by Naevius suggest the use of the phallus: *Testicularia* ('The Testicle Play') and *Appella* ('The Circumcised').
[181] Green (1997) 134, describing Greek padding.
[182] For this distinction, see Ketterer (1986a) 193.

identifying a given character (and in Greek and Roman drama this includes the mask). A staff carried by a *senex*, since its primary signifying function on the Roman stage is to define aspects of his character (that he is old and weak), is better thought of as part of the actor's costume than as a (separable) stage property. As costume relates to character, so set relates to space. The performance space is defined by words, the movements of actors, perhaps in some contexts by painted scenery, and by physical objects that can be labelled stage properties – the altar before the shrines in Roman comedy and its models, while it may physically be touched by actors and indicated by their words, nevertheless constitutes an immobile fixture on stage at least for the duration of the play. Its presence defines an aspect of the play's setting and is part of its set, even though it is not a permanent element of the performance space. Given this, it seems worth reserving the term 'property' for those particular physical objects in a drama that create relationships: objects that are separable from their characters, the movement or transfer of which will be reflected in the dramatic action of the play. The paraphernalia worn by the cook at *Curculio* 251–73 is part of his costume, since it does not relate to the play's action; its purpose is exclusively to identify the character as a cook. This is not true of the supplies brought by the cooks in *Aulularia*, where the lamb is the object of comic business (327–34).[183] Similarly, the writing tablets Calidorus hands to Pseudolus at *Pseudolus* 20 are physical objects that move between characters and, at lines 41–59, give voice to a third.

Properties are necessarily involved in stage action: 'Any time an object must be moved, handed from one person to another, or acted on in any way, the action required will dictate the way the stage picture looks, and the movement attracts audience attention.'[184] What the audience sees, though, is an object that may stand for many things simultaneously. This polyvalence has been examined in detail by Ketterer, who develops an elaborate semiological typology for Plautine props:[185]

[183] This routine was drawn from Greek comedy, where it seems to have been standard, e.g. Menander, *Dyskolos* 393–4.
[184] Ketterer (1986a) 198.
[185] See Ketterer (1986a), (1986b), and (1986c) for this whole paragraph, especially (1986a) 207–10 and (1986c) 61–6. His analysis examines props on a play-by-play basis: *Curculio* (Ketterer (1986a)), *Epidicus* ((1986b) 94–102), *Bacchides* ((1986b) 102–11), *Captivi* ((1986b) 111–18), *Aulularia* ((1986b) 118–28), *Cistellaria* ((1986c) 30–36), *Rudens* ((1986c) 36–44), *Amphitruo* ((1986c) 45–51), and *Menaechmi* ((1986c) 51–61).

I. Individual props
- A. Mechanical ('denotative') functions
  1. Scenic
  2. Causative
     a. Direct
     b. Indirect
- B. Signifying ('connotative') functions
  1. Labelling
     a. To generalise an individual
     b. To specify an individual
  2. Symbolic
     a. Brief appearance
     b. Appearing throughout the play

II. Groups of props

This typology understands stage properties in a wider sense than I do, but it is easy to see where the differences lie. When a property's mechanical function (operating at the level of the actors) is scenic, it is part of the set as I have defined it: the object's purpose is to identify an aspect of the locale. Further, when its signifying function (operating at the level of the dramatic narrative) is labelling, it may be part of the character's costume, as I have defined it: props that label a character may possess no narrative function, and when this is the case, they are an extension of the costume. Ketterer's analysis remains applicable in these cases. The most interesting stage properties are those where the mechanical function is causative, involved in actions and relationships between characters, and where the signifying function is symbolic. The function of a given property may change over time. For Ketterer, the stage altar in *Mostellaria* serves a mechanical function that is scenic, and it serves a signifying function that labels the doorway as a sacred area. At 1094–1180, when Tranio seeks refuge at the altar, its mechanical function is now causative (with the actor on the altar, he is inviolate within the world of the play) and its symbolic function, while still labelling the precinct as a temple, also symbolises sanctuary for Tranio, and an obstacle to be overcome by Theopropides. This example, though applied to a piece of the set, demonstrates three important aspects of any physical object on stage. First, the object's function(s) may change over the course of the play; its

meaning is not static. Second, every stage object must have at least a mechanical function; it may further possess one or more signifying function at any given time. Third, stage objects may have different meanings for different characters simultaneously, and they may mean something else again for the audience. Comedy develops out of this discrepant awareness. There is however a practical distinction that Ketterer does not make, which has an impact on stage performance.

In the same way that the comic mask presents a distorted version of the real human face, there is no need for properties to look exactly like the objects they represent. This is particularly true when, as with the writing tablets in *Pseudolus*, their dramatic import greatly outweighs their real-world size. Exaggerating the size of a physical object can yield comic results. For example, *Miles Gloriosus* 1–78 is an exercise in character drawing: the scene introduces Pyrgopolynices, who will not return until 947, and Artotrogus, his parasite who never returns. The scene's purpose is to instil an idea about the play's chief foil in order to create audience expectation for his return. Much of the humour comes from Artotrogus' imperfect addition (42–7) and the elaborate names that trip from the characters' tongues (such as the general Bumbomachides Clutomistaridysarchides in 14).[186] Like any stage soldier, Pyrgopolynices has a *machaera* (1423), but it is worth considering whether for the actors it is actually a real sword. Certainly it is real within the narrative: Cario might even be holding it when he threatens to cut the soldier in line 1406 (with the threat of castration at 1420–22).[187] But what do the actors hold? There are four possibilities of what it could be, any of which could be true: a real sabre; a prop designed to look like a real sabre; a prop sabre of comically diminished size; or a prop sabre of comically expanded size. For the audience, the first two are the same – it looks like a normal sabre, and is therefore functionally neutral.[188] There are humorous benefits with the

[186] In addition to these two, compare Polymachaeroplagides (*Pseudolus* 988), Therapontigonus Platagidorus (*Curculio* 430), and Thesaurochrysonicochrysides (*Captivi* 285).

[187] He need not hold it, however. Part of the appearance of the cook is a sacrificial knife (*culter*) – *coquom decet* (*Aulularia* 417: 'it suits a cook') – and it might equally be used; see Ketterer (1986a) 208, (1986b) 125, and 134 n. 51.

[188] This is not always the case. At *Aulularia* 327–34, it does matter whether the lamb is real or not. In either case, humour arises for metatheatrical reasons: the audience sees the object both as a thing being manipulated by actors and as an object functioning within the narrative. In performance, problems can arise in a comedy when this distinction collapses. In a scene with a sword, all sorts of flourishes are possible, but if at any time the audience genuinely fears for an actor's safety, enjoyment is likely to change. This provides a reason, especially in the raw theatrical context of Plautus, for props always to be artificial: the audience is trained never to expect genuine risks for the actors.

latter two possibilities, particularly for a blowhard soldier.[189] As with Therapontigonus Platagidorus' sabre in *Curculio*, the *machaera* 'becomes a symbol of the soldier's inability to force his will on anyone'.[190] At times, large props serve a practical function for the actors. When Demaenetus throws dice at *Asinaria* 904–6, it is unlikely that most people sitting in the audience would be able to see the physical objects. For the actors, then, it makes sense either to have oversize dice (producing an easy property to manipulate, which the audience can see) or to mime the dice completely (simplifying what is needed on stage, and producing the same result from the audience's perspective). There are indications that this sort of humour was known in antiquity. While some properties depicted on the comic vases of South Italy are standard in size (ladders, spears, musical instruments, etc.), there are also some props that appear to be oversize for comic effect, such as the enormous writing tablets and stylus on a vase in Leningrad.[191]

Any physical object used in a stage performance creates relationships with the characters and affects relationships between characters. As physical objects, *cruminae* ('moneybags'), pouches worn around the neck and filled (supposedly) with coins,[192] are essentially neutral: they need not have any distinctive size or appearance, since their connotative functions are already overdetermined. Plots of Roman comedy, so often concerning true love, depend on financial transactions. Plots create a 'circuit of exchange', whereby a payment cements relationships, or prevent them from happening.[193] The contents of a moneybag may represent the purchase price for a slave's freedom (e.g. Lemniselenis in *Persa*), or at least the means for a young man to have access to the company of a *meretrix* (e.g. Philaenium in *Asinaria*). Consequently a slave with a *crumina* will be treated with a disproportionate respect, even by his own master (as at *Asinaria* 545–745).

Some properties possess a cash value that is central to the resolution of the plot: unless the object enters into the cycle of exchange, the narrative

[189] In my production of *Miles Gloriosus*, the soldier wielded a small plastic toy sword, but an oversize blade would have made him appear equally preposterous.

[190] Ketterer (1986a) 203.

[191] The egg is on Bari 3899, PhV^2 18 (Trendall (1967) 27–78). The writing tablets are on Leningrad inv. 1661 (St. 1779; W. 1120), PhV^2 33 (Trendall (1967) 34).

[192] In reality, they were not filled with coins, but with lupines (Allen (1959)): actual coins need to be seen by the audience (or mimed?) only at *Menaechmi* 219.

[193] Ketterer (1986b) 120, and see the important discussion of Lowe (2000) 188–221.

cannot progress. In these cases, discrepant understanding of an object's value by characters creates dramatic tension. Nowhere is this more clear than with recognition tokens. A recognition token provides the means to identify a character's true nature – typically the circumstances of the birth of the *meretrix*, which can convey with it citizenship and marriage rights. In *Curculio*, Philaenium's ring serves to identify her as a marriageable citizen, to disenfranchise the claim of the soldier on her hand (since he is the long-lost brother who gave her the ring as a child), and to indict the *leno* Cappadox for trafficking in citizen girls.[194] When the recognition token is held openly, as here, the plot must keep apart characters capable of making the identification. One way around this narrative difficulty is to keep the tokens in a container, such as a *vidulus* ('bag') or *cistella* ('little box'), as happens in *Rudens*, *Cistellaria*, *Vidularia*, Menander's *Epitrepontes*, etc.[195] Some characters know the contents and their value, while others, such as Gripus in *Rudens* or Cacistus in *Vidularia*, can only guess at their prize's worth. Such instances also raise the issue of discrepant value to different characters, particularly when relatively valueless objects provide the means of identification of a character as freeborn. A stage property's symbolic value therefore exists only in relationship to something or someone else. In Aulularia, Euclio's pot of gold possesses a symbolic value that exists because he treasures it disproportionately over his pregnant daughter, Phaedria. In what survives of the play, she does not appear on stage, but is heard giving birth at 691–2. However, when the pot appears at 449, 'the effect is like the first appearance of an important character which we have been waiting to see'.[196] Euclio is shrouding the pot with his cloak, and consequently embodies a pregnant image of his unseen daughter.

Props become a site for the development of comedy. An audience sees objects on stage and invests them with symbolic values that create networks of meaning among the characters that change during the play. These complex interactions help the audience to understand the narrative by emphasising some of what is important, for nothing appears onstage unless someone has decided to bring it onstage. Such decisions are made for a variety of reasons. At one end of the scale might be the clutter associated with a dinner party, which helps characterise the feel of celebration (as at *Asinaria* 830–941 and *Persa* 758–857). At the other end are recognition tokens central to the unfolding of the plot. Sometimes the

[194] In my production, oversize rings were used so that they remained clearly visible to the audience.

[195] See Ketterer (1986b) 128–9 n. 3, (1986c) 40 and 67 n. 8.

[196] Ketterer (1986b) 125.

humour of properties is prepared in advance (as with comically oversize objects), and sometimes the humour rests entirely in the situation depicted (as when Leaena serenades the wine jug at *Curculio* 96–109). The process of putting a play on stage means that a decision needs to be made about every costume and property on stage. While this reality easily slides from the mind as one reads a play, their physical existence means that properties exert a constant influence on the fictional world created.

Finally, though it refers to the performance of a mime, *P. Berol.* inv. 13927 provides important testimony of the role of properties backstage. It preserves information that must be available to every theatrical troupe – a guide for stagehands and actors, so that they might know the order of performances (compare *P. Oxy.* 2707 for the circus), and the resources each scene requires. The document as it survives falls into three parts: a list of seven titles of mimic entertainments; a list of stage properties from a work called *Leucippe* (to which reference is surely lost before the fragmentary text begins); and a list of props from the seven scenes listed at the beginning. *Leucippe* was evidently the main entertainment, and the numbered entertainments were *exodia*. The two lists of properties, called *τὸ ὑπομνηστικὸν χορηγίας* ('the reminder of the stage apparatus'), can only hint at what was in store for the audience. One of the mimes required *φαλητάρια β'* ('two phalluses'), as well as *κώπας* ('oars') and *χόρτον* ('grass'). Titles for the afterpieces include *οὐ χρεία ῥημάτων* ('No Need for Words', a mime that required a cithara, a little pig, a little dog, and soup ladles), *τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου* ('The One with the Sun', which had as its only prop *ἀκτῖνας* 'rays'), and *τὸ τῶν Γόθθων* ('The One with the Goths',[197] which required male and female Goth costumes and apparently a costume for an anthropomorphised green river). Between these last two came *tibia* music accompanied by a maiden, which required no props. The papyrus shows that there was some planning and structure to mimic presentation, and troupes could produce aides-mémoire for backstage. Props, because they are transferable, require particularly careful backstage organisation. Comparable documents must have existed for hundreds of years for all performance genres, never written with an eye to posterity, but intended to ensure the smooth running of a performance.

[197] The papyrus gives two versions of the title: *τά τῶν Γόθθων* ('The Ones with the Goths') in the initial list, but the singular title given above in the properties list. Almost certainly the first instance should be emended to a neuter singular article. This format ('The One with the . . . ') is the pattern for other titles in this programme and the mistake is an easy one for a scribe with no expectation that the document will survive beyond the evening's festivities.

AUDIENCE

The theatre follows the path of least resistance to its audience . . .

Richard Schechner[198]

One final component is essential to the experience of a *palliata* – the audience, without which theatrical experience is impossible.[199] The audience takes an active part in the performance and it is necessary to consider the nature of its contribution: 'Any artistic form depends upon some readiness in the receiver to cooperate with its aims and conventions.'[200] The theatre audience is unlike an audience at the cinema, which is only reactive.[201] Nothing the cinema audience does can have any effect on the performance itself, though audience reaction will have an effect on the experience of the film by other spectators: one is more likely to laugh if others are laughing, and one is more likely to become uninterested if others are walking out. This same passive dynamic exists for the theatrical audience, but with it is the added dimension that the audience's response does affect the actors' performance. An enthusiastic, active, laughing audience can encourage, nourish, and inspire the stage performers.[202] Actors talk about their relationship with the audience, and thinking in terms of a relationship rightly emphasises the sense of mutual dependency that theatre creates. An audience's effect is psychological (actors feel emotions separate from their characters during the performance, and they are aware intellectually that the response is to their performance) as well as physiological (adrenaline is released, accelerating breathing and heart rate, increasing the blood flow to the muscles and brain, and contributing chemically to a sense of exhilaration for the actor).[203] Actors adjust the length and timing of their pauses based upon their perceptions of audience attention and involvement, and feel the resulting rush. And so Palaestrio warns away the unwilling (*Miles Gloriosus* 81–2):

qui autem auscultare nolet, exsurgat foras,
ut sit ubi sedeat ille qui auscultare volt.

[198] Schechner (1969) 35.
[199] See Beare (1964) 173–5, Chalmers (1965), Handley (1975), and Csapo and Slater (1995) 306–17.
[200] Sinfield (1983) 185. [201] Bennett (1997) 75–6. [202] Bennett (1997) 9.
[203] Plutarch, *Moralia* 45 e–f, recognises this in his metaphor describing the role of the ideal listener: *ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ σφαιρίζειν τῷ βάλλοντι δεῖ συγκινούμενον εὐρύθμως φέρεσθαι τὸν δεχόμενον, οὕτως ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων ἔστι τις εὐρυθμία καὶ περὶ τὸν λέγοντα καὶ περὶ τὸν ἀκροώμενον, ἂν ἑκάτερος τὸ προσῆκον αὑτῷ φυλάττῃ* ('just as in playing ball it is necessary for the catcher to adapt his movements to those of the thrower and to be actively in accord with him, so with discourses, there is a certain accord between the speaker and the hearer, if each is heedful of his obligation': text and translation, Babbitt (1927) 244–5).

He who doesn't want to listen should get up and leave
So that he who wants to listen can sit in that place.

It is rare that Plautus has an actor doubt the success of the theatrical enterprise,[204] but the challenge comes early in a long play, immediately following a very funny exchange (lines 1–78). No spectator is likely to leave after such a challenge, and so the actor may continue on the assumption that the entire audience is on his side. Even if one or two individuals should decide to depart at this point, they leave themselves open for comic attacks, and the result is again an audience purged of potentially disruptive elements; again the audience is consolidated.

Audience members are both the consumers of the artistic product, but they also contribute in a very real sense to its success. Bennett describes 'the production–reception contract' that exists between actors and spectators: each side has an obligation to the other, but what unifies the two is not always finances. In fact, the economic basis for Roman comedy, funded through the magistrates, explicitly removes money from the performers' contract with the audience. The obligation of the spectators is to enjoy the show in a sufficiently public way so that the magistrates will offer future contracts to the troupe.

The process of determining the size and composition of a typical theatre audience in an historical context is particularly difficult. A lack of clear, meaningful data and various assumptions lying beneath given estimates (when such assumptions are elaborated) further complicate matters. Academic trends also play a part. When scholarship downplays the size of theatre audiences, this serves as a corrective to previous tendencies to exaggerate audience size in order to magnify the significance of the cultural event.[205] There are similar questions about the composition of the audience. Even the usual claim that Athenian New Comedy

[204] The nature of the joke is very different when Acanthio asks *dormientis spectatores metuis ne ex somno excites?* ('Are you afraid you will wake the resting spectators from their sleep?', *Mercator* 160). Here, the accusation is not directed at an individual, and is funny regardless of audience tiredness, since the joke is motivated from within the play, since Charinus wishes to speak *placide* (159: 'gently').

[205] Dawson (1997), esp. 7–8, argues that the Periclean theatre of Dionysus may have held as few as 3,700 spectators, less than a third of the number normally assumed. Schumacher (2000) develops several arguments which suggest that ticket sales at the Comédie-Française in seventeenth-century Paris present a misleadingly high estimate of actual theatregoers because of repeat attendance.

catered to more refined tastes and privileged a more affluent fraction of the potential audience has encountered reasoned resistance: 'There is no reason . . . to doubt that New Comedy remained mass entertainment, with admission either free or at a modest fee of two obols, hardly enough to keep all but the poorest Athenians from attending.'[206]

The audience of Plautine comedy was composed of individuals from every social station in Rome. Metatheatrical reference by stage characters to the audience provides a reliable gauge: one prologue of *Captivi* addresses *vos qui potestis ope vestra censerier* (*Captivi* 15: 'you who with your wealth are able to be taxed'), which means some spectators were on the citizen rolls. This group is later subdivided (*Captivi* 67–8):

valete, iudices iustissimi
domi duellique duellatores optumi.

Farewell, most just justices
Here at home, and the best warriors of war.[207]

Amphitruo 1–7 assumes that some in the audience have business dealings that are both local and foreign (5: *peregrique et domi*) and *Menaechmi* 51–2 implies that these financial concerns might extend as far as Greece.[208] The call for applause at *Mercator* 1025 isolates the *adulescentes* in the audience. Ballio implies that boys in the audience are particularly interested in *nugas theatri, verba quae in comoediis | solent lenoni dici, quae pueri sciunt* (*Pseudolus* 1081–82: 'theatrical trifles, words which are usually said by the pimp in comedies, as boys know').[209] Cicero, *de Finibus* 5.48, emphasises the rightful place of children at spectacles. A particularly rich source for audience composition is the prologue of *Poenulus*, which addresses prohibitions to prostitutes (17: *scortum exoletum*, 'whoring rent boy'[210]),

[206] Rosivach (2000) 170. He cites a *scholion* to Demosthenes 1.1 which ties the entrance fee particularly to the use of temporary wooden seats: 'the admission fee was intended to cover the expenses of the contractor (*arkhitektôn*) who maintained the wooden bleachers' (170), and might not be in effect when there was an established stone theatre. While some performance venues in Rome would have had wooden bleachers, there is no indication that any in the audience paid an admission fee.

[207] The military metaphors at *Cistellaria* 197–202 and the reference at *Bacchides* 1074 do not require soldiers in the audience to understand them.

[208] The point of the joke involves wordplay with the (supposed) etymology of Epidamnus (see Gratwick (1993) 139–40), not with the exaggerated remoteness of the location.

[209] Kiessling, followed by Leo, deleted lines 1079–86. Though I believe the lines authentic, even if they are an interpolation from later in the second century, they attest to boys in the republican audience. See also Zwierlein (1991b) 49.

[210] The phrase is also found at *Curculio* 473.

lictors (and the magistrates they accompany, presumably: 18[211]), slaves and freedmen (23–4), nurses with infants (28–31), married women[212] and their husbands (32–5).[213] The wording of each warning implies that normally each of these groups would be present to some degree.[214] All levels of society were present at Roman comedy, with no apparent restrictions based on finances, sex, age, or social position. Indeed, so complete is the representation that any omissions (such as female infants and female prostitutes) should be seen as accident rather than exclusion. Yet we must be wary of importing modern demographic distributions to this set. Less than 20 per cent of the population reached age sixty, and three-generation families headed by a grandfather were rare.[215]

We do not hear of foreigners in Plautus' audience directly, and consequently the absence of any positive indications of their presence serves to reinforce the cultural unity of the audience. There are no known restrictions banning them from the *ludi*, and I suspect that they must have been in attendance. This adds a fascinating reflexivity to Curculio's initial entrance, when he pushes his way through the crowd and rails against *isti Graeci palliati* (*Curculio* 288: 'these cloaked Greeks', continuing his deprecations at lines 288–95). On one level Curculio refers to Phaedromus and Palinurus, the two characters in a *fabula palliata* standing on the stage; and an appropriate gesture could make this clear. On another level, though, Curculio could refer to the actual Greeks in the audience wearing *pallia*; this too could be clarified with an appropriate gesture. The detail of Curculio's harangue goes well beyond what the play has established for the stage characters, and this encourages the latter interpretation: the Curculio actor is physically making his way through the audience during this speech, and, on finding a cluster of Greeks, or a single individual who happens to be carrying a book satchel (289: *suffarcinati cum libris*, 'bulging with books'), focuses the character's venom on a single spectator. A clear gesture could exclude either interpretation, but an imprecise movement could equally allow for both

[211] The word order is unusual and perhaps conceals a subtle joke. The prologue fears the *virgae* will produce not *verba* ('words') but *verbera* ('blows'); compare *Epidicus* 25–8, but the humour seems very compressed.

[212] The *clamor mulierum* ('racket of women') is also identified at *Hecyra* 35.

[213] Zwierlein (1990) 206–24 provides the most recent discussion of the textual issues surrounding the prologue. Maurach (1988) does not impugn any of the lines mentioned here. The passage remains valuable even if it is interpolated, since it would still describe second-century practice.

[214] Slater (2000) 155: 'The message of order is made palatable by being directed ostensibly at everyone except the majority of the audience.'

[215] Hansen, in Potter and Mattingly (1999) 27.

interpretations simultaneously. Plautus blends the stage world with the world of the audience, creating the rapport that Moore has thoroughly documented.[216]

Plautus sought to take the diverse individuals in the audience and treat them as a corporate whole, perhaps at the expense of a scapegoat or two, such as a reluctant spectator (*Miles Gloriosus* 81–2), a Greek slave or tourist (*Curculio* 288), or the *praeco* (*Asinaria* 4–5, *Poenulus* 11–15). The magistrates in charge of the festivals had different motivations. They wished to emphasise Roman social stratigraphy. In 194, they deliberately introduced segregation, separating the audience between the senatorial orders and others. Livy 34.54.3–4, 6–8 is passionate about the change:

Megalesia ludos scaenicos A. Atilius Serranus, L. Scribonius Libo aediles curules primi fecerunt. horum aedilium ludos Romanos primum senatus a populo secretus spectavit praebuitque sermones, sicut omnis novitas solet . . . ad quingentesimum quinquagesimum octavum annum in promiscuo spectatum esse; quid repente factum cur immisceri sibi in cavea patres plebem nollent? cur dives pauperem consessorem fastidiret? novam, superbam libidinem, ab nullius ante gentis senatu neque desideratam neque institutam. postremo ipsum quoque Africanum, quod consul auctor eius rei fuisset, paenituisse ferunt. adeo nihil motum ex antiquo probabile est; veteribus, nisi quae usus evidenter arguit, stari malunt.

At the Megalesian Games dramatic performances were for the first time introduced by the curule aediles Aulus Atilius Serranus and Lucius Scribonius Libo [in 195 BC]. At the Roman Games given by these same aediles, the senate for the first time looked on segregated from the common people, and this caused gossip, as every novelty usually does . . . For 558 years, they said, people had looked on from seats chosen at random; what had suddenly happened to make the Fathers unwilling to have the plebians mingle with them in the crowd, or the rich man scorn the poor man as his neighbour at the show? This was a novel and arrogant caprice, never desired nor practised by the senate of any other people. It is reported that in the end even [Scipio] Africanus had repented that in his consulship he had suggested this innovation. So difficult it is to prove the need of any variation from ancient custom; people always prefer to stand by the old ways, unless experience convincingly proves them bad.[217]

[216] Moore (1998b). Here is a representative citation: 'Through monologues and other elements, Plautus encourages in his plays a hierarchy of rapport, as some characters are more successful than others in their attempts to form a bond with the spectators' (p. 33).

[217] Text and translation, Sage (1935) 555–7. See also Valerius Maximus 2.4.3 and 4.5.1. For discrepancies between this and other sources, see Lenaghan (1969) 121–23. Gruen (1992) 204 suggests that the discontent is invented by the later historians. Vitruvius 5.6.2 attests to separate seats for senators in later theatres.

The change came three years before the inauguration of the temple of the Magna Mater and the performance of *Pseudolus*, a time when Plautus was evidently at the peak of his career. The effect of such a division is not slight, but the way Plautus has his actors relate to the audience draws attention away from any such divisions. Plautus reminds them that all may sit – even, at times, the slaves (*Poenulus* 23–4).[218] Plautus encourages the audience to put aside differences and unite behind the action of the play.

There were, to be sure, other ways individuals sought the best seats for themselves. Apart from the reservation of senatorial seats after 194, spectators took their places on a first-come, first-served basis,[219] though Moore may be correct that there were some self-regulating mechanisms prior to this whereby slaves and social inferiors would normally not take seats at the front.[220] The front seats were the most desirable, in part because of audibility (*Captivi* 11–14 are addressed to a spectator in the back row who cannot hear).[221] There exists a tension between the solidarity created when a group of spectators become an audience and the genuine diversity of experience that the spectators possess. While Plautus treats the audience as a unit, he knows that spectators possess an intellectual diversity that makes them crave different types of humour. He caters to this diversity by producing comedy which itself is pluralistic in its humour. Heterogeneous appreciation characterises the audience's engagement and arises directly from its diversity.[222]

Rome produced many audiences, and while the Roman playwright clearly aimed at drawing a diverse crowd, the experience of *Hecyra* demonstrates that the audience for Terentian comedy was different from the audience for gladiatorial fights. Contrary pressures also inform

[218] Despite many of the passages cited above, it remained a question for some time as to whether the second-century Roman audiences stood or sat. The matter is settled by Beare (1964) 171–2, 241–7, and see *Poenulus* 1224: *sitiunt qui sedent* ('those sitting [i.e. the audience] are thirsty'), *Pseudolus* 1–2, *Epidicus* 733, etc. The audience sat in the *cavea* (Livy 34.54.6, Cicero, *Laws* 2.38) on *subsellia* ('benches'; see *Amphitruo* 64–8).

[219] Beare (1964) 174.

[220] Moore (1994) 122, arguing generally for an intense competition for available seating.

[221] Other prestige locations apart from the senatorial seats had been used since the fourth century, but these were for the *ludi* generally and not specifically for theatre: 'Festus, *s.v. Maeniana*, describes the galleries which were first built by Maenius, the censor (318 B.C.), over the shops in the forum, that from them the spectacles of the market-place might be witnessed' (Saunders (1913) 94). Vitruvius 5.1.1–2 describes balconies (*maeniana superiora*) rented out for views; Ps. Asconius, *ad Cicero, Divinatio in Q. Caecilium* 16–50 ties their construction to the Basilica Porcia, built in 184. Such balconies would not be available for every performance venue.

[222] Wilson (1998) 18–54, who engages with Chalmers (1965) and his emphasis of a unified, collective response. See also Bennett (1997) 153–6.

audience composition. It is misleading to think of a theatre audience as a cross-section of the population: the ratios are necessarily wrong. 'There is always a diversity of publics',[223] and that of the *palliata* was for the most part urban, with the level of sophistication that entailed. There was a worldview and ideology defined by class, material situation, education, levels of culture, age, sex, attitude to the arts, previous experience with the theatre, etc., which pre-existed whatever happened on stage.[224] All of these factors help to unify an audience, and necessarily temper claims of heterogeneous appreciation. The Roman audience brings to the performance common interpretative strategies, some of which are created by the experience of comedy itself:

> [A play] promises the audience two performances: one of the show itself and the other is the experience of being in the theatre. To both performances is attached the expectation of pleasure.[225]

Both of these are at work in the imaginations of each spectator. The distinction is important, because one can enjoy the experience of attending the theatre without necessarily liking the play. Ovid hints at these dual motivations (allusively and in an erotic context) when he describes the women at the theatre: *spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae* (*Ars Amatoria* 1.99: 'They come to watch, they come to be watched themselves').

The size of an audience is difficult to determine. Goldberg calculated that the seating at the *ludi Megalenses* allowed for fewer than two thousand spectators, leading him to ask, 'Is it possible that the audience was in fact so small?'[226] For almost any live performance tradition other than Athenian drama, an audience of one or two thousand would be considered substantial. Larger audiences attended Roman circus events (as they do at modern rock concerts and sporting events), but there is no reason to deprecate a crowd size of one or two thousand spectators, and modern notions of 'mass entertainment' (conditioned particularly in a world of cinema and television broadcasts) must be put aside. Roman comedy makes claim to elite cultural values, and, whatever the truth of the claim, it did not appeal to everyone, despite the playwright's best

[223] Bennett (1997) 94. [224] Naumann (1976) 121.

[225] Bennett (1997) 118, and see 82–3, where she cites Ellis (1982) 26, who distinguishes going to the cinema (the whole experience) and seeing a film (the projected narrative).

[226] Goldberg (1998) 14.

efforts. The weather also is a factor, and the lack of a regularised calendar means that many festivals occur at colder parts of the year.[227]

Since venues were temporary, it is difficult to get a clear sense of their sizes. Previously we saw that Welch believes a temporary wooden amphitheatre built in the forum could hold 10,000 spectators,[228] and I suggested less than a third of this space would probably be available for a theatrical performance, yielding a maximum audience of c. 3,400 in the largest of the temporary performance venues available to republican Rome.[229] In comparison, the roughly contemporary stone theatre at Pompeii seats 5,000.[230] Any calculation assumes ideal seating arrangements, without regard for varying concerns for personal space, individuals holding seats for friends who may or may not appear, the gradual influx of spectators to a partially filled venue, etc. Seats were not assigned (it would be difficult to do so without entry tickets), and I suspect that these factors would further diminish the seated audience size by more than 10 per cent, and it is unlikely those standing would recover this amount. Different performance spaces would have different seating capacities and conventions. While all elements of society were represented in the audience, attendance was not universal, and an audience of a few thousand spectators probably represents an extreme upper limit range.

This was not the total size of the audience, however, because games had more than one day of *ludi scaenici*, and this means Roman plays were presented with a limited run. Leaving aside the issue of *instauratio* (which for example affected *Stichus* in 200; see Livy 31.50.3), we know that troupes would perform on more than one of the days available for performance. The *envoi* at the end of *Pseudolus* tells the audience, *verum si voltis adplaudere atque adprobare hunc gregem | et fabulam in crastinum vos vocabo* (*Pseudolus* 1334–5: 'Still, if you applaud and cheer this troupe and play, I'll invite you back tomorrow'). It is inconceivable that such an invitation would be offered unless the same troupe were performing the next day. We know *Pseudolus* was performed at the *ludi Megalenses*, which was the festival that placed the greatest restrictions on rehearsal time for the troupe. The natural inference, when we consider the enjoyment of the audience, the practical demands upon the theatrical troupe, and the

[227] Goldberg (1998) 15. Vitruvius 5.9 discusses the effects of adverse weather; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.385–6, mentions rain during the *ludi Megalenses*; Martial 4.2 envisages snow covering spectators.

[228] Welch (1994) 76.

[229] The Circus Maximus was of course larger, but there were no indications that it was used as a theatrical venue in the early second century.

[230] Beacham (1991) 59.

economic limits of the magistrates funding the *ludi scaenici*, is that each troupe would present a single play at a festival, and the same play would run for its length, which at times could be extended by *instauratio*. Terence provides the only known exception, when *Hecyra*, the previously unsuccessful play, was remounted with *Adelphoe* at the privately funded *ludi funebres* of L. Aemilius Paullus in 160.[231]

Audience psychology is difficult to fathom, and individuals at *ludi* probably behaved differently than they otherwise would. While we may be able to get some sense of the audience, in the end we only know that there were individuals who enjoyed Plautus' plays, then as now. Staging Roman comedy in modern performance contexts can reveal questions that otherwise would never occur. Often, these concern the play, and how it creates its theatrical effects. At times, though, the practice can also yield new understandings for how an audience might respond. As I discovered from my productions, there is an unexpected consequence when plays are presented in a run and admission is free and largely unregulated: the plays attract repeat attendees. Spectators come on multiple days, bringing different people with them as they do. Others come late to one performance, stay to the end, and then watch the beginning of the play on the next day, or on the day after that. When we consider the experience of Roman comedy, in all its dimensions, this seems to be a natural result, and has implications for the actors and for the playwright. For the actors, their job is clear: whatever the venue, their obligation is to attract and keep as substantial a crowd as they can. The troupe's economic relationship with the magistrates and its chance for future contracts depends on this success. Any means to secure repeat viewers, even those as obvious as *Pseudolus* 1334–5, work towards this end. For the playwright, the structure of the plays must make some allowances for these drifting spectators. This impacts upon characterisation, narrative development, and emotional engagement with the play, and constitutes another way in which the troupe depends on the active cooperation of the audience at all times.

The plays of Plautus have had many audiences over the years. Cicero watching Roscius act Ballio in *Pseudolus* in the first century BC experienced theatre differently from how spectators did in 191, and, differently from how we experience it today, whether reading it or seeing it in

[231] Goldberg (1998) 15–16 and 16 n. 53 understands the second performance of *Eunuchus* in 161 to be an encore. I suspect rather that this is additional evidence that in the early second century there were only two *ludi scaenici* at the *Megalenses*.

performance. We lack the necessary 'levels of cultural competence'[232] to appreciate all that transpired on the stage. We have the words (or many of them, allowing for issues of textual transmission), but we have lost all traces of vocal inflection, mask, gesture, body movement, posture, costume properties, stage design, the effects of natural light, music, the use of noise and silence, etc. Reading the play, we miss the experience of being in an audience, being pressed on the sides, hearing laughs, smelling the odours of food and people, and observing the stage from a fixed point in the *cavea* with perhaps a limited field of vision.[233] We have not walked through the festival crowd, arrived early in hopes of a good seat (close to the stage or near to our friends), waited in expectation for our favourite actor to appear, looked at the other spectators assembled, or selected this from among other festival entertainments. All of these factors also contributed to the original experience of Roman comedy, and were part of what it meant to be part of Plautus' audience.

[232] Bennett (1997) 68. [233] Bennett (1997) 65.