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**Travels through the Foreign Imaginary on the Plautine
Stage**

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by

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by

Deepthi R. Menon

To my grandfather, *M. Satyapal*, who read all my undergraduate papers. I wish you could have seen this one.

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Abstract

Travels through the Foreign Imaginary on the Plautine Stage

by

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This dissertation explores the ways in which Plautus's comedies, inherently translated works, negotiate foreign characters and foreignness within their hybrid theatrical and extra-theatrical spaces. This project is part of a larger discourse on the tension between Greek, Roman, and non-Greek foreign elements in Plautus's comedies. The three plays I analyze above display foreignness through particular theatrical elements: *Curculio's* stage situations, *Poenulus's* characters, and *Persa's* use of props and spatial vocabulary. In all of these elements, two things are brought into prominence: the negotiations of identity and the use of what I call "foreign imaginary," both of which show the ultimate breakdown of any dichotomy between the foreign and the familiar. I have coined the term "foreign imaginary" to refer to the foreign parts of the world which exist just out of sight of the audience, offstage. The foreign imaginary is almost always brought into a play when a character or object appears onstage. Moreover, it is usually an object which is considered distantly foreign (a coin with an elephant on it, as seen in the *Curculio*, or a tiara and a pair of fancy slippers, as in the *Persa*), and frequently resolves a major conflict within the play. However, we must not forget that at least some of the

“ordinary” Greek characters appeared from the same entrances onstage. It is therefore possible that the lines between “foreign,” “imaginary/foreign” “familiar,” “domestic,” or any other demarcations, are (or should be) blurred. This constant renegotiation of categories and boundaries is what leads me to a Bhabhaian reading of Plautine comedy.

This study comprises a close reading and analysis of three plays which demonstrate Plautus’s use of the foreign imaginary: the *Curculio*, the *Persa*, and the *Poenulus*. I show through the lens of theory that elements of Plautine comedy reflect a contemporaneous discourse between the familial and the foreign. While Plautine comedy predates European colonialism by at least two millennia, hybridity as defined by Homi Bhabha offers a useful lens for examining Roman comedy. Bhabha views hybridized culture as an ever-changing phenomenon comprised of moments of negotiation between cultures. We see in the chaotic period of Plautus’s career that Plautus is not writing from within a “Graeco-Roman” landscape fixed in time from which interested parties may pick out what is Greek and what is Roman. Instead, he deals with a ‘third space’ which is constantly in flux — a moment within which cultures communicate and are negotiated. Theater in Rome is a Greek import featuring adaptations of Greek plays ostensibly set in Greek cities peopled by “Greeks” who speak Latin and are familiar with Roman laws. The panoply of stock characters and conventions that Roman comedy has inherited from Greek comedy already has a value system that is neither exclusively Greek nor exclusively Roman. The uncertainty that surrounds Plautus’s theater makes taking the Bhabhaian approach feel particularly appropriate – the play is both Roman and foreign, its stage both present and evanescent, its context political and private by turns. My study of Plautus analyzes these singular elements to offer a new postcolonial reading of the presence of the foreign character in Roman comedy.

Contents

Introduction	1
Methodologies and Theories	1
Plautine scholarship – a look at identity	3
Plautus the pied piper: the hybridity of Plautine language	6
Cultural translation and Plautus	7
Circumstances of Plautine theater	13
Plautus’s literary ancestry: standing on the shoulders of hybrid giants	18
Livius Andronicus	19
Conclusion	23
Definitions	25
Greekness	25
Romanness	27
Foreign imaginary	30
Hybridity	31
Mimicry	32
Stereotypes	34
1 <i>Curculio</i>	37
1.1 Introduction	38
1.2 Plot	39
1.3 Identities in <i>Curculio</i>	42
1.4 A preview of <i>Curculio</i> ’s “foreign imaginary”	43
1.5 vv. 280-298	45
1.5.1 <i>Curculio</i> : 280-298	45
1.6 vv. 371-383: A bank manager standing a-loan	53
1.6.1 vv. 392-452: A failed attempt to ward off the weevil eye	54
1.7 vv. 462-486	58
1.8 Curtain call and all is well?	63
1.9 All the world’s a (hybrid) stage: how Greek is Roman comedy?	64
1.10 Conclusion	65

2	<i>Poenulus</i>	68
2.1	Introduction	69
2.2	Plot	70
2.3	Literary evidence of Carthaginian stereotypes	70
2.4	The foreignness of the foreign	72
2.4.1	<i>Poenulus</i> : 1-6	74
2.4.2	<i>Poenulus</i> : 17-35	77
2.4.3	<i>Poenulus</i> 46-58: Keep calm and Calydon	79
2.4.4	<i>Poenulus</i> 83-84; 106-113: Tunis company, four is a crowd	82
2.5	How Punic is Agorastocles?	87
2.6	Tricking Lycus: not the most aware wolf	90
2.7	<i>Advocati</i> : neither here nor there	96
2.8	Hanno: the Punickiest Punic	98
2.8.1	<i>Poenulus</i> 967-970	102
2.8.2	<i>Poenulus</i> 975-977	103
2.8.3	<i>Poenulus</i> 977-993	104
2.9	Conclusion	110
3	<i>Persa</i>	113
3.1	Plot	115
3.2	Previous scholarship of the <i>Persa</i>	117
3.3	Historical context of the <i>Persa</i>	119
3.4	<i>Terra incognita</i> : Plautus's moving vocabulary	122
3.4.1	<i>hic</i> and <i>peregre</i> , <i>eleutheria</i> and <i>basilice</i> : but where are we?	122
3.4.2	<i>hospes</i> : hospitality across borders	127
3.5	Greek-ish: Plautus's slippery Hellenism	128
3.5.1	<i>Persa</i> 1-6: A Herculean beginning	128
3.5.2	Parasitology: The arrival of Saturio	131
3.6	Act 4: A <i>virgo</i> and other Persians of interest	133
3.6.1	<i>Persa</i> 147-157	134
3.6.2	<i>Persa</i> 462-469	137
3.6.3	<i>Persa</i> 506-9; 520-5	140
3.7	Conclusion	142
	Conclusion	145
	Bibliography	151

Introduction

Methodologies and Theories

*huic nomen graece Onagost fabulae.
Demophilus scripsit, Maccius uortit barbare.
Asinariam uolt esse, si per uos licet.*

The name of this tale **in Greek** is *Onagos*. Demophilus wrote it; Maccius **turned it barbarian**. He wants it to be *Asinaria*, if it's all right by you.

*Philemo scripsit, Plautus vortit barbare:
Nomen Trinummo fecit: nunc hoc vos rogat;
Ut liceat possidere hanc nomen fabulam.*

Philemo wrote it; Plautus turned **it barbarian**: he made its name *Trinummus*: now he asks you this; namely, that you will allow this tale to have that name.

*graece haec vocatur Emporos Philemonis,
eadem latine Mercator Macci Titi.*

This is called, in Greek, the *Emporos* of Philemon. The same in Latin is the *Mercator* of Titus Maccius.

Plautus likes breaking the fourth wall, often to refer to his own irregularities as a playwright or actor with seeming mockery — this we know. However, in the *Asinaria*, *Trinummus*, and *Mercator* he draws attention to his works' Greek names and draws

attention not just to the fact that these are plays, but that these are *translated plays*.¹ A translated work is an artefact that shows the dialogue among cultures, and this is doubly so when it is a translated work of theater, a medium which is intrinsically dialogic.

I explore the ways in which Plautus's comedies, inherently translated works, negotiate foreign characters and *foreignness* within their hybrid theatrical and extra-theatrical spaces. These are, on their surface, Roman plays, but a deeper examination shows them to be at least partly Greek. They are *comoedia palliata* (comedy in a Greek cloak) — their physical space is located in the city of Rome, but they are nominally set in Greece. They adapt and appropriate the plots of Greek Middle and New Comedy. Some Plautine plays go beyond this dual setting, incorporating costumes from Persia, trips to Caria, or an entire cast of Carthaginians. Comedy thus becomes a medium through which the public can engage with foreignness.

The Greek world onstage shows the audience a world both familiar and self-consciously foreign at a time when Rome's military power is growing.² This growth meant that the need to establish a "Roman" identity was a crucial issue faced by Rome. I argue that these plays are part of this effort.

¹For discussion on Plautine prologues, see Sharrock (2009: 71-3), Dunsch (2014), Gunderson (2015: 73-74), and Brown (2016: 64-69).

²My examinations of Schutter (1952), Woytek (2001), and more recently López López (2007) lead me to conservatively put Plautus's florescence between 210 and 185 – a period which encompasses the Second Punic War and the severe losses to the city, but also a time within which Rome has control of most of Italy, including Sicily and Sardinia, as well as the inevitable expansions occasioned by Rome's war with Philip V of Macedon (200–196) and Antiochus III (191–188). For more on the Second Punic War, see Hoyos (2011) and Fronda (2010). For Roman activity in the Greek East, see Eckstein (2012). A discussion of Gruen (1992) and Leigh (2004), both of whom consider Plautus's interaction with these historical tensions, will come later.

Plautine scholarship – a look at identity

My dissertation is part of a larger discourse on the tension between Greek, Roman, and non-Greek foreign elements in Plautus's comedies, a tension which I argue implicates moments of Bhabhaian hybridity and mimicry. I show through the lens of theory that elements of Plautine comedy reflect a contemporaneous discourse between the familial and the foreign. This dialectic is also shown in practice in Amy Richlin's work, *Rome and the Mysterious Orient*. Richlin's 2005 book is a modern-day translation of Plautine plays whose connection to foreignness is most germane — the *Curculio*, the *Persa*, and the *Poenulus*. Her introduction asserts that the humor surrounding Plautine sense of the foreign must be filtered both through the characters onstage and the audience watching the play.³

The question about whether Plautus is Greek or Roman (or both, or neither) is one which has occupied the better part of the last century. Fraenkel's seminal *Plautinisches im Plautus* (whose popularity is evidenced by the two translations which are still in use) is a thorough effort to find the specifically "Plautine," Latin elements.⁴ (The book was a reaction to earlier scholars who had been more concerned with the Greek originals.) Fraenkel's work has allowed for many more studies about the "Romanness" of Plautus. These new studies particularly examine passages which have *prima facie* similarities to Greek comedy but which Fraenkel ultimately finds peculiarly "Plautine."⁵

More recent scholarship has continued to engage with the elements in Plautine comedy which are separate from their Greek models, based on late 20th century scholarship. Stark and Lefèvre both attributed many "non-Greek" aspects of Plautine

³Richlin (2005). My chapter on the *Persa* will also discuss Richlin (2017: 260-261), in which she discusses how some Plautine characters can be viewed through multiple layers.

⁴The original written in 1922, followed by an Italian translation (*Elementi Plautini in Plauto*) in 1960, and finally *Plautine Elements in Plautus* in (2007).

⁵Fraenkel (2007).

comedy to native Italian theater, a position which is known by the scholarly community as the “Freiburg school.”⁶ The Freiburg school goes beyond Fraenkel’s work, positing that native Italian improvisatory theater had an even greater influence on Plautus than Fraenkel suspected.⁷ From the Freiburg school, Petrides’s 2013 article summarizes Plautus as being “between Greek comedy and Atellan farce.”⁸ Others consider that the genealogies of Plautine theater are more blurred still. Hanson’s article “Plautus as a Source Book for Roman Religion,” comments that “[b]y the end of Plautus’ dramatic career, Roman religion, like Roman culture in general, was already a complex hybrid.”⁹ For Hanson, “everything in Plautus is to be considered Roman... as soon as it is written down in Latin and subsequently performed before a Roman audience; that is, it becomes part of the milieu of ideas and expressions in the Rome of that age.”¹⁰ The Freiburg school, though primarily concerned with Plautus’s position between “imitator of Greek theater” and “innovator in the Italian style,” does set the stage for a recent and lively interest in Plautus as *performance*.¹¹ Segal wrote that laughter engendered by these performances was particularly “Roman,” though he acknowledges that one might

⁶Lefèvre (1991) and Benz and Lefèvre (1998), e.g.

⁷See Fraenkel (2007: xi-xxii), N. J. Lowe (2007: 113-4), and Petrides (2013). The Freiburg school is in direct opposition to Zwierlein (1990), Zwierlein (1991a), Zwierlein (1991b), and Zwierlein (1992), who believed Plautus made very few alterations to his Greek originals, and that many discrepancies could be explained by later interpolators.

⁸Petrides (2013)

⁹Hanson (1959: 50). It should be noted that Hanson’s interest in Plautus was to discover insights into Roman religion, a move which is problematic now that we no longer consider comedy a source-book to Roman culture.

¹⁰*ibid.* However, see Dunsch (2013: 636), who admits that Roman theater is a cultural “no-man’s land,” being between written Greek comedy and improvised Italian theater. However, he points out the ritualistic aspects of religious scenes in comedy often seem to have strong resemblance to “real” religious practices. (cf. Jeppesen (2013: 17-8), who argues that Dunsch does not fully consider the parodic element of these religious scenes.) Burton (2012: 109) considers this same phenomenon the “interpenetration and intersection of Roman and Greek in the comedies, how the plays and characters become Roman and stay Greek, or stay Roman and become Greek, as it were.”

¹¹Scholars like Marshall (2006) claim that Plautus is not merely imitating the Atellan style of improvisation in his characters’ monologues, but that the actors themselves improvise onstage. Cf. Slater (2013: 168n10) who, though he considers players’ improvisation to be a possibility, considers the short run of Plautine plays to be evidence that such improvisation would be risky to try out on an unknown audience.

refer to Plautine plays as “Greco-osco-etrusco-latin.”¹² Likewise, Niall Slater referred to the cultural *mélange* that was Roman comedy as a place where “the Greek, South Italian, and Roman theatrical traditions collide with explosively creative results.”¹³ As regards the effect of this mixed and dialogic tradition on its public, Erich Gruen’s *Greek Culture and Roman Policy* asserted that Plautus “invited spectators to observe with a form of double vision,” mocking the tensions between Greeks and Romans while “remain[ing] above the fray.”¹⁴ Gruen’s view that Plautus lived in a “confused time of cultural permutation.”¹⁵ Matthew Leigh comes to similar conclusions in *Comedy and the Rise of Rome* and points to “the tendency of Plautus overtly to revel in the hybridity of the form and to play with the boundaries which divide Greece and Rome: allusions to Roman topography, institutions, and ritual in a Greek play; knowing allusions to Romans as barbarians and Latin as a barbarian tongue; an extravagantly Hellenized Latin vocabulary; characters deliberately acting Greek or even talking in Greek itself.”¹⁶ Though Leigh does not touch heavily upon non-Greek aspects of Roman comedy, his observations about Plautus’s jarring insertions of difference are applicable even outside a Greco-Roman framework.¹⁷

The lack of a Greek or a Roman “original” — as we do not know which versions of a particular Roman comedy were actually performed — means that we cannot look at the separate elements that make up this translated work. We must examine it as an event in which different elements are in a constant state of dialogue and negotiation with one another: theater in Rome is a Greek import featuring adaptations of Greek plays

¹²Segal (1987b: 7).

¹³Segal (1987b: 5).

¹⁴Gruen (1990: 155).

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶Leigh (2004: 5). Leigh (2004: 282-3) also offers the idea that Roman texts and their relationship to their Greek predecessors should be “studied value-free and...be seen in literary terms as a connection between intertexts.”

¹⁷Leigh (2004: 7).

ostensibly set in Greek cities peopled by “Greeks” who speak Latin and are familiar with Roman laws. Moreover, these and more overt instances of metatheatricity in Plautine comedy show the essential permeability of the stage – the stock characters of Greek plays are walking around in Rome and sometimes act like Romans. The panoply of stock characters and conventions that Roman comedy has inherited from Greek comedy already has a value system that is neither exclusively Greek nor exclusively Roman.¹⁸ To explore this tension, we need a framework that allows us to interrogate the conflict between the familiar and the foreign. Bhabha’s conceptual vocabulary of hybridity, which he used to explore such tensions in the modern world, allows us to see the significance of Roman comedy as a spectacle instead of purely as a text. Treating Plautine comedies as residing in a Bhabhaian “third space” helps show how these comedies defined Roman attitudes towards the outside world, an issue that was crucial at a time of Rome’s growing power in the Mediterranean.

Plautus the pied piper: the hybridity of Plautine language

With the exception of *Rome and the Mysterious Orient*, the above works touch upon, but do not focus on, translation itself — a topic I linger over as I think it has much to show us about Plautus. Some scholars explicitly discuss the “hybridity” of Plautine comedy, likely referring in both cases to the mixed ancestry that lends itself to a mixed setting and characters.¹⁹ However, looking at how this ancestry translates itself into Plautus’s language is an innovation which I hope to achieve in my project. Further, I discuss how Plautus’s plays occupy a Bhabhaian “third space” between identity and difference during a moment in history when neither is stable. To accomplish these

¹⁸When referring to the “Greece” of “Greek comedy,” I refer also to the Hellenistic kingdoms in Southern Italy and Asia Minor.

¹⁹Hanson (1959) and Leigh (2004).

goals, in the upcoming chapters I analyze the linguistic fabric of Plautine plays, finding words and phrases which diverge from the Latin of the period, and interrogate the linguistic variegation of Plautine literature.²⁰ Beginning from *Titus Maccus* Plautus's own name, which we know is a pastiche derived from names found in Atellan farce and Italian mime, we find words throughout his comedies that are entirely Greek (*eleutheria*), Greek-Latin hybrids (*thermipolio*), Punic (or pig-Punic, depending on one's opinion of Hanno's speech), and others.²¹ Gratwick (1993)'s moniker of "Plautopolis" for the variegated Plautine stage is particularly apt in its Greco-Italo-Roman flavor.²²

Cultural translation and Plautus

*Who can say if the thoughts you have in your mind as you read these words are the same thoughts I had in my mind as I typed them? We are different, you and I, and the qualia of our consciousnesses are as divergent as two stars at the ends of the universe. And yet, whatever has been lost in translation in the long journey of my thoughts through the maze of civilization to your mind, I think you do understand me, and you think you do understand me. Our minds managed to touch, if but briefly and imperfectly.*²³

While this dissertation's focus is primarily on interlingual translation and metatransla-

²⁰Clackson and Horrocks (2011: 90) consider the "tendency to retain traditional spellings and older grammatical forms in a period of rapid language change engendered by growing urbanization and much greater mobility" to be evidence that there was a 'Latin of the period,' at least in writing, though its relative uniformity concealed the existence and rapid evolution of many dialects throughout the Latin-speaking world. Adams (2003) identifies many words which first appear in writing in Plautus and provides a useful outline of the current scholarship with regard to code-switching in Plautus — another possible for these Plautine calques. Adams (2007) gives a specific account of many Latin words, some of which started *or ended* with Plautus as well as a few of Plautus's suspected "Umbrianisms."

²¹*Per.* 23, *Curc.* 292, *Poen.* 940–949. Regarding the Punic speech in the *Poenulus*, there are two major theories: 1) that it was nonsense and incomprehensible to the audience and 2) that it was Punic and understood by at least a few audience members. Gruen (2011a: 127) falls between the two camps and states that "Hanno... enters the stage speaking unintelligible Punic — or some comic form of it," though he does not specify where a "comic form" of a language falls on the spectrum of intelligibility. Röllig (1980), Gratwick (1971a) and Melo (2012a) are of opinion 2 — that there were at least a few audience members who did understand Punic and therefore would have derived a layer of amusement from Milphio's "translations" to which the other audience members would not have been privy.

²²Gratwick (1993: 15).

²³Liu (2016: viii)

tion — that is, translations that are self-referential — the cultural aspect of translation must also be considered.²⁴ To wit, I propose an examination of whether and how Greek *culture* is brought into a Roman purview through Plautine comedy. The leap from linguistic to cultural translation is one which has been articulated recently by scholars such as Buden and Nowotny and Risager who have argued that there is a language-culture nexus (or *linguaculture*, in the case of Risager) within which translations operate, and that the dichotomy between literary and cultural translation is a false one.²⁵ For instance, for Plautus to make plays attractive to a Roman audience at the *ludi*, the play cannot just be in Latin — it must also in some way appeal to a sense of Roman identity.²⁶ The audience, however, was unlikely to be empty of Greeks and Greek speakers — so the retention of Greek names, the sporadic acknowledgement of Greek writers who wrote earlier versions of the comedies, and the *pallium* the actors wore went some way to engaging with the plethora of languages and cultures of the audience, while still engaging with the concept of Romanness through their festival setting and staging.

Identifying this dynamic cultural translation is what brought me to examine Roman comedy from the angle of hybridity. This concept, at least with regard to cultural translation, has been largely developed by Homi Bhabha. What is most striking about

²⁴For discussions of metatranslation, see Hermans (2007: 41-51), who considers self-referentiality and metatranslation a latent form of every translation, one which “allow[s] us to appreciate not only the individual signature of a given version, but also the particular expectations to which it responds, irrespective of whether the response takes the form of defiance or compliance.” This well-articulated theory allows me to look at Plautine prologues, but also to tease out less overt references that show Plautus’s awareness of his work as translated. Plautine self-referentiality more specifically is mentioned in almost every scholarly work on him, and is an area I explore as well.

²⁵Buden et al. (2009), Risager (2014). Fontaine (2014a: 518) has also pointed out that Plautus’s transformation of language “invites us to inquire about translation (including cultural translation) rather than adaptation.”

²⁶Both Franko (2013a) and Dunsch (2013) discuss the “ludic” nature of Roman comedy. Franko (2013b) also mentions that some *serious* plays were used to highlight contemporary historical events, though he admits that Plautus’s lack of specific topicality means that links between specific plays and historical events is tenuous.

Bhabha's work on hybridity is that he does not view hybridity as merely a mixture of two or more cultures. Instead, he views hybridized culture as an ever-changing phenomenon comprising moments of negotiation between cultures. A Bhabhaian hybridity is present in the chaotic period of Plautus's career. Plautus is not writing from within a "Graeco-Roman" landscape fixed in time from which interested parties may pick out what is Greek and what is Roman. Instead, he deals with a 'third space' which is constantly in flux — a moment within which cultures communicate and are negotiated:

*"What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."*²⁷

Due to its status as a highly popular form of entertainment during a time of serious Roman expansion, Roman comedy is almost inevitably one of these "moments that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences."²⁸ The way in which the different voices of Greek, Roman, Carthaginian, and other characters are interwoven shows how the genre functions as a contact zone — what Gruen considered "our chief document for the cultural convergence of Hellas and Rome."²⁹

Homi Bhabha's ideas of the third space are very compelling when looking at comedies in which ideas coming from Greek theatre are in dialogue with those found in non-Greek, particularly Italian performances. However, this is one idea of many within Bhabha's theories which move beyond cultural essentialism. In using some of Bhabha's terms but not others, I do not wish to erase his role as a *postcolonial* theorist

²⁷Bhabha (1994: 1-2).

²⁸cf. Fontaine (2010: 149-200), who believes the audience for Plautine comedy had to have been bilingual, educated, and elite in order to understand the complicated jokes and puns which Plautus uses.

²⁹Gruen (1990: 157).

and scholar. Bhabha does not use “hybridity” to describe simply any interaction or dialogue between cultures, but to describe specifically the transcultural experience of migrant or colonized people and the perceptions of ‘otherness’ which, he believed, “may be the terrains of world literature.”³⁰ It is therefore imperative for me to discuss what role, if any, postcolonial studies have in discussions of ancient Rome.

Rome’s position with regard to colonization has been a topic of increasing interest in the last few years. Hall (1991)’s *Inventing the Barbarian* argued that the barbarian is a narrative of the anti-Greek and arose largely out of the struggle against Persia, thereby creating the identity of the Greek and the anti-Greek simultaneously, though Hall also acknowledges the existence of “barbaric Greeks” and “noble barbarians” which disrupt the same dichotomy.³¹ A decade later, Malkin (2001)’s *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* emphasizes identity as an invention that was constantly being reinvented both to people within the community and to those outside of it. The fragmentation and instability of identity highlighted in this book, as well as tensions between narratives of identity, are a very useful metric when looking at negotiations of the foreign and familiar in Roman comedy. When it comes to the Roman view, Burton (2012) has observed in Plautus early Roman efforts to “carve out a distinct cultural space for themselves within [the Hellenic] world” and to take early steps towards the colonization efforts of imperial Rome.³² Burton sees “cultural confidence” in Rome’s lampooning of non-Romans, particularly Greeks, but also points out the tensions inherent in using Greek genres (and often Greek-tinged language) to do so.³³ Although the previous scholars do not explicitly call themselves “postcolonial,” their explorations of identity have added valuable voices to postcolonial discourses surrounding the ancient world.

³⁰Bhabha (1994: 12).

³¹Hall (1991).

³²Burton (2012: 104).

³³Burton (2012: 111).

Dench (2009) has discussed the difficulties of “postcolonial” studies of Roman literature due to the Romanocentric focus of works in the past, largely unaddressed complexities of concepts such as “Roman” identity, and the rhetoric of post-colonial theory, pointing out that “so much of what passes for ‘Greek’ or ‘Roman’ literature of the Republican or early imperial periods is actually a literature of cultural meeting points. Ancient literature represents multiple perspectives on what it is and what consequences there are for local histories and identities to interact with Rome, to be ruled by Rome, or even to become Roman.”³⁴ Dench is discussing this in terms of cultural memory, but her overall narrative, which engages with history, material culture, and literature is one to which I hope to contribute. Though there is a definite scarcity of sources from this period, I believe we have the facts we need to sketch such a narrative: to show that identities in and around Rome are negotiable, and to show that Plautus’s plays give us a valuable perspective on interactions within and without Rome.³⁵

Though the evidence before the fourth century is scanty, a few facts are clear to modern scholars. Plautus’s imaginary “Plautopolis” is based on a Mediterranean which is unstable and comprises the dialogue of many nations. During the first and second Macedonian Wars (215-197), Rome and the Aetolian League formed an alliance against Philip of Macedon, ultimately leading to the death knell of latter’s expansionist ambitions.³⁶ During this time, Rome was also occupied in fighting the Second Punic War (218-201), which ended with the decisive victory at Zama and Hannibal’s defeat.³⁷ After the Second Punic War, Rome also fought wars with Gauls and gained control

³⁴Dench (2009: 27).

³⁵Dench (2009: 27) has also pointed out the issues of terminology when beginning from the starting point that identities are not fixed: “We could think too of the different stories that tend to be assumed when we choose to talk about either ‘Italic’ or ‘Italian’ peoples. My sense is that, while ‘Italian’ is dangerously teleological in that it carries associations of a proto-nationalism, the label ‘Italic’ has its own problems. I am not sure I can imagine ‘Italic’ peoples surviving Roman political incorporation.”

³⁶See Grainger (1999) and Worthington (2014) for further resources on the Macedonian Wars.

³⁷See Bagnall (2008), Fronda (2010), Hoyos (2011), and Rosenstein (2011) for historical perspectives on the Second Punic War.

of the northern part of the Italian peninsula in the late 190s. This was immediately followed by the Romans allying with their old enemy, the Macedonians, against the Seleucid empire in a conflict which ended in 190.³⁸ These conflicts meant that Rome was a constant medley of foreign influences, and Rome's new possessions, colonies, and spoils of war led to mass movement, mercantilism, and migration.³⁹ The census figures compiled and interpreted by Beloch (1886) and Brown (1971) from later authors such as Dionysius Halicarnassus or Livy, though considered to be either exaggerated or entirely fictitious by Drummond (2006), show a particular enduring narrative — that Rome began as small and weak before achieving power.⁴⁰ We also learn from that by the mid-third century, Rome had established *foedera* with various communities in the peninsula which granted aid to Rome in times of need, suggesting that there was an inevitable amount of interaction between Rome and local communities whose men were fighting together.⁴¹ The aftereffects of this war, Arnott has argued, particularly the resulting poverty, famine, and separation of families, were the inspiration for Plautus's *Stichus*.⁴² Moreover, a great deal of work has been done on the spread of religious cults and religious pluralism in Italy which shows a negotiation (or “marketplace” of ideas) between Rome and other Italian communities.⁴³ This goes against the older models of Roman colonization, which had concluded that Roman influence over native Italian communities was unidirectional.⁴⁴ Among others, Di Fazio's study of the cult

³⁸See Green (1993: 414-432) and Grainger (2002) for more information on the war against the Seleucid empire.

³⁹McElduff (2013: 64) discusses the floods of Greek statuary between the capture of Syracuse in 211 to the capture and sack of Corinth in 146. Nicholls (2018: 344): “Rome's Macedonian wars and the wars with Antiochus introduced Roman generals directly with the books, authors, and libraries of the Greek world.”

⁴⁰Drummond (2008).

⁴¹ibid. Antonaccio (2004: 72) actually discusses Greek colonization of Sicily in terms of Bhabhaian hybridity. Dommelen (1997) and Papadopoulos (1999) also used the term after Antonaccio to discuss Greco-Italian interaction.

⁴²Arnott (1972).

⁴³Roth (2012).

⁴⁴ibid. Wiseman (2008)'s chapter details the cult and games of Flora, an indigenous Italian goddess

of Feronia concludes that non-Romans were also part of the colonization efforts of the time, and that non-Roman gods, for instance, could find themselves in the Roman consciousness and find themselves spreading to other colonies which the Romans settled.⁴⁵ This suggests that there was already a sense in which the colonization effort involved a simultaneous delineation of identities as well as an interaction between these same groups which led to a very particular form of cultural syncretism. Rome during Plautus's period was a large part of a peninsula-wide phenomenon wherein identities were constantly being negotiated and recreated as different communities came together by means of religious, military, or other cultural bonds.

Circumstances of Plautine theater

Plautus appears to flaunt the Greek elements of his plays, naming as he does the Greek models of his plays at the very beginning of his plays. Not only does he start several of his prologues with the assertion (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) that he has "made barbarian" a Greek version of the comedy, but he also retains many Greek elements and transposes Greek attitudes towards foreigners onto the space of *comoedia palliata*. This practice has been the subject of many an article and book chapter. In brief: Plautus's oft-repeated phrase when discussing his relationship with his Greek originals is *vortit barbare*. The verb *vertere* or *vortere* here means "to translate."⁴⁶ This is particularly clear in Plautus as the phrase always precedes the claim of a Greek

appropriated by Rome in the mid-third century.

⁴⁵Fazio (2013) discusses Feronia's introduction into the city around the fourth or third century, and how the cult spreads throughout the peninsula along the same routes as Roman expansion. Though many Romans clearly continued to view Feronia as a foreign goddess, it was nevertheless part of the Roman colonization project.

⁴⁶Both Bettini (2012) and McElduff (2013) have given considerable space to finding words to do with translation, though Bettini is more unequivocal about preferring *vertere* to refer to the kind of translation I refer to above – where the translator appears to subsume or transform the work.

original text. The adverb *barbare* has attracted much attention among scholars of Plautus. Several scholars have suggested that that Plautus is (with varying degrees of irony) taking the Greek point of view of the Latin language.⁴⁷ However, the phrase *vortit barbare* is not followed by an elaboration as to how Plautus is ‘barbarizing’ his material, and modern readers can be of little help in filling in the gaps. Even Fraenkel’s painstaking work of 1922 was hampered by his lack of Greek originals with which to compare Plautus’s comedies.

The discovery of Menander’s *Dis Exapaton* has given more recent scholars an advantage in being able to compare works, leading scholars to note that Plautus’s translation of Menander made changes of the sort found in the Livius Andronicus’s *Odusia*, as well as adding entire elements of his own or contaminating his play with more than one Greek play.⁴⁸ Though Plautus leaves his characters and setting nominally Greek, he adds many Roman elements in his plays, allowing him to “revel in the hybridity of the form and to play with the boundaries that divide Greece and Rome.”⁴⁹ How does the self-deprecating tone of *barbare* fit in with this hybridity? Catherine Connors suggests that Plautus “preempts Greek scorn on his own terms.”⁵⁰ Siobhán McElduff juxtaposes Plautus’s performances with Rome’s expansions and appropriation of Greek material culture, arguing that “Plautus presents his work as translator as potentially equivalent to that of a general who brings glory and art back to Rome, and humorously elevates his achievements, even as this setting gives his use of “barbarian” a powerful sting, since the barbarians have clearly won.”⁵¹ Plautus is not bringing back physical objects,

⁴⁷*Trin.* 19 etc. See Gilula (1989: 104-5) and Connors (2004: 184) for these theories about Plautus’s ironic avowal of his Greek literary antecedents.

⁴⁸See Owens (1994) for a concise summation of scholarly opinions about the third argument in Plautus’s *Bacchides*.

⁴⁹Leigh (2004: 5). See also Fraenkel (2007) for an extensive commentary on what is particularly Roman in Plautus.

⁵⁰Connors (2004: 183).

⁵¹McElduff (2013: 69).

however — he is making a spectacle which, despite its mixed ancestry, is particularly Roman. Despite the presence of Roman plays at *ludi* alongside other triumphal trophies, the comparison of Plautine plays to statuary suggests a stasis which does not render accurately the role of these dynamic plays.⁵² More persuasive is Richlin's 2017 book *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic*, in which Richlin argues that she does not consider this an effort to Romanize — rather, she considers calling Italy *barbaria* “part of a defiant claim to hybrid identity.”⁵³ This remark, Richlin continues, goes together with the Plautine remark that bilingualism is intrinsically duplicitous — “this is an ironic joke, for the plays are inherently bilingual, hybrid.”⁵⁴ Richlin examines Plautus's theater as a hybrid space that is in dialogue with a fantastical and exotic space, as her earlier translations show. Examining the concept of hybridity through Bhabha's lens (and adding conceptions of mimicry and the third space) provides a useful and novel perspective to analyze these interactions between cultures. Using Bhabha's terms will help to pull forth self-conscious instances of mimicry and hybridity within Plautine comedy that shows Rome's ambivalence with regard to Greece and places even further afield. These moments show that Roman theater is performed in front of an audience which is both polyphonic in perspective and in constant renegotiation, reflecting the general instability of identity during the middle Republic.

There is nothing about Plautine comedy which is uncomplicated — even the circumstances of the staging are shrouded in uncertainty. Goldberg has concluded that the first permanent theater was only constructed in Rome over a century after Plautus's florescence.⁵⁵ He concurs with Duckworth that there were temporary wooden theaters

⁵²I place more importance on the *type* of the Greek artefact being brought back than McElduff (2013) does, coming to somewhat different conclusions about the significance of Roman comedy, an argument which I will further develop.

⁵³Richlin (2017: 17).

⁵⁴*ibid.* For the duplicity of bilingualism, see Plautus's remarks on the polyglot Phoenician Hanno in the *Poenulus* (further discussed in Chapter 2).

⁵⁵Goldberg (1998: 1).

which the audience watched from the steps of the temple of Magna Mater — a liminal space associated with a Phrygian cult.⁵⁶ Moreover, the audience was almost certainly diverse in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity.⁵⁷ Even the setting and context of the plays is unclear: the *ludi* of which they were a part may have been sponsored by public money or to have been commemorating more private occasions, such as *ludi funebres*, which were often paid for by the family of the deceased.⁵⁸ The uncertainty that surrounds Plautus's theater makes taking the Bhabhaian approach feel particularly appropriate — the play is both Roman and foreign, its stage both present and evanescent, its context political and private by turns. Plautus's plays are, as I conclude in my analysis, one such "space of negotiation" — a contact point between cultures.⁵⁹

Most of the studies we have are about the interaction between Greek and Roman cultures. My study both goes beyond this dichotomy and integrates another identity variable: Plautus's use of what I call the "foreign imaginary." These are the moments of Plautine comedy in which characters discuss, but do not see, foreign places — for instance, the lands of Arabia and Persia in the *Persa*, Elis in the *Captivi*, Carthage in the *Poenulus*, or Caria in the *Curculio*. The relationships between these places and Rome will play a significant role in my analysis of Plautine foreignness. These are, of course, places that can be *nominally* identified; however, these "imaginary" places given the names of Persia, Carthage, etc. do not appear to have much that anchor them in a physical reality nor are they ever displayed onstage. Characters claim to be from them or bring objects which are supposedly from there, but the evanescence of these

⁵⁶Goldberg (1998: 9) asserted that the cult was especially serious in order to assuage Roman sensibilities and anxieties about its exoticism.

⁵⁷On the diversity of Plautus's audience, see Richlin (2005), Manuwald (2011a: 98-103), Gunderson (2015: 74), and Moodie (2015: 15).

⁵⁸Goldberg (1998: 13-15) and Moore (1998: 104-6) have both discussed the ideological role of the festivals — Stewart (2012: 17) concurs that "both *ludi* and festivals created a shared experience of Roman-ness."

⁵⁹Bhabha (1996: 58).

places permits exoticism and trickery. A Persian tiara or a ring from Caria can be the lynchpin that maintains the delicate balance of the theatrical plot or the object that entirely undoes it.⁶⁰ And of course, the fact remains that these 'imaginary' places and items are part of the *ludi romani*, a festival which participated in a narrative of Roman superiority. This juxtaposes the "foreign imaginary" with what it means to be "Roman."

Examining the foreign imaginary is embedded in the relationship between Roman, Greek, and non-Greek cultures within Plautine plays. In fact, the other aspect to be considered is that Plautus was — at least to some extent — working from Greek models. This means that the Carthaginians in the *Poenulus*, for instance, have echoes both of Greek and Roman stereotypes of Carthaginians within the interwoven fabric of Plautus's comedies. This mediation among Greeks, Italians, Romans, and other "foreigners" (bearing in mind that Greeks occupy a space between the foreign and the familiar for Romans, as I will mention in my definition of "Greekness") is a strange concept which is virtually unique to Plautine comedy. An example of this which I will further develop in a later chapter is the stereotype of the "Punics" found in the *Poenulus*. There is some evidence that these stereotypes did not arise purely out of Roman conceptions. Rather, the evidence — as sparse as it is — suggests that some of the stereotypes surrounding Hanno's effeminacy were already present in Alexis's version which predates it by about a century. Another is the issue of the *Curculio*, in which Greek stereotypes about philosophers seem to be adopted and transformed into an insult directed at Greek slaves more generally.⁶¹ However, to discuss the issue

⁶⁰Richlin (2017: 285, 435-6, 473) discusses different examples of such foreign articles and the effects they may have, including effecting a kind of exotic sexuality, the "double effect" of having these place names be familiar to imported slaves but unusual to native Italians, or adding an extra foreign element to the money which is often an intrinsic part of comedy. A discussion of Sharrock (2008)'s discussion of props is also germane, but is better suited to the following chapter.

⁶¹Csapo (1989).

further will require looking at specific examples, which the patient reader will see me do in later chapters.

Plautus's literary ancestry: standing on the shoulders of hybrid giants

To better understand the manner in which Plautus approached both the concept of literary translation and cultural mediation necessary for the same, I look at one of his most important predecessors – Livius Andronicus. Livius's inclination to metatranslation — that is to say, translation which is aware of itself as a translation — and his willingness to change Homer's words makes him a conceivable literary and stylistic ancestor to Plautus and allows for one more data point in an examination of the field of Roman comedy. Looking at Livius Andronicus also allows me to compare existing works — something which is difficult to do in Plautus — and show why and how his works were so foundational as to set the tone for succeeding translations in Latin literature.

Before I continue to Livius, I want to discuss the role of Roman comedy in the earliest moments of Latin literature. One of the few things that most authors can agree on is the fact that comedy is undeniably a foreign import to the city.⁶² Livius Andronicus exemplifies this, as a Tarentine Greek. However, most of the information about ancient comedy and its role in Rome is owed to Livy, who of course lived several centuries after the writing of Plautine comedy. The most striking characteristic of Livy's account is its attempt to *exempt* Roman theater from its debt to Greek paradigms, instead postulating other foreign sources. For Livy, the theater is undoubtedly a *res*

⁶²Admittedly, so are Romans.

peregrina — a foreign thing.⁶³ However, despite a vibrant and likely unavoidable culture of Greek theater being present in Magna Grecia from at least the fourth century BC, Livy chooses to privilege Roman theater's Italian literary and theatrical techniques over its Greek ones.⁶⁴ Not only is Roman theater foreign in origin, but it can claim many different roots, including Fescennine verses, Oscan theater, and Etruscan dances. Scholars have pointed out Livy's bias against the theater, the resemblance between Livy's narrative and Aristotle's *Poetics* (which Moore attributes to Varro's influence), and the absence of the Greek element.⁶⁵ Livy is not only reticent about influence from Magna Grecia, but also avoids mentioning that some of the Etruscan elements had Greek origins themselves.⁶⁶

Livius Andronicus

Even Livy, however, could not avoid mentioning Livius Andronicus:

livius post aliquot annis, qui ab saturis ausus est primus argumento fabulam serere...

After some years, Livius first dared to move away from *saturae* and compose a play with a plot

Nowhere in this does Livy mention that Livius Andronicus was from Tarentum, a Greek city, nor that the *fabula* which he performed in 240 BCE was likely adapted, if not translated from Greek.⁶⁷ The *Ludi Romani* at which this play was performed were

⁶³Livy 7.4

⁶⁴Beacham (1992: 2): "Livy has a particular fondness for determining first causes in the interest of demonstrating how as he puts it, 'from small beginnings' great (and frequently unwholesome) things have evolved." N. J. Lowe (2007: 81-3) also argues for Livy's fondness for creating a linear pedigree. For evidence of *phylax* vases depicting comedic scenes found in Magna Grecia, see Taplin (1987), Taplin (1993), Hughes (1996), and Hughes (2003).

⁶⁵*Poet.* 1449a. see e.g. C. Lowe (2007) and Moore (2012).

⁶⁶Beacham (1992).

⁶⁷Beare (1940) and Beare (1964: 26-7) discuss the problematic aspects of dating Livius.

the first to host a full-fledged production.⁶⁸ While we do not have the text of this particular play, other sources provide fragments of Livius which suggest that his plays — entitled among others, *Aegisthus*, *Equos Troianus*, and *Tereus* — were either translated or adapted from Greek.⁶⁹ Livius's Andronicus's most famous work is of course the *Odusia*, a translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, which is considered one of the first examples of literature in Latin. This is not — and does not attempt to be — an entirely verbatim translation: Livius makes several changes to his text in order to better fit with Roman sensibilities. The very first line begins:

Livius: Virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum...

Tell me, *Camena*, of a clever man

Homer: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, (ὃς μάλα πολλά...)

Tell me, muse, of a man of twists and turns, who many...

While we do not know how the *Odusia* was received shortly after its composition, it is known by later authors as being a work by *Livius*, rather than an adaptation of an existing work.⁷⁰ This undoubtedly added to the feeling that the epic belonged to Rome and Latin speaking people. However, Livius himself chooses, as Plautus later will, to draw the reader's attention to the translated status of his work — normally not a facet of translators trying to assimilate foreign works — through the technique of metatranslation. Translating Homer's πολύτροπον as *versutum*, a word meaning both "turned about" and "translated," forces the reader to see and become aware of the work as a translated text and, by extension, the translator. Notably Plautus will use the word *vertere* when discussing his own translated works, as my initial quotes show.

⁶⁸This assumption is based on Cic. *Brutus*. For other sources see Beare (1964: 26-7) cf. Gruen (1992: 185), who considered that the games to which Livy referred might have been *ad hoc* games in reactions to the plague in that same year.

⁶⁹Conte (1999: 35), considers Livius's adaptation "more formalized and and elevated" than the original Greek meter. See also Livingston (2004).

⁷⁰Feeney (2016: 53). Burton (2012) calls the *Odusia* a "thoroughly original work"

Although Livius did seem to assimilate Greek literature into a Roman mode with his choice of vocabulary, he chose to use an archaizing style which once again seems designed to draw the audience's attention to the translator, and by extension to the Homeric original. Showing some specifics of Livius's translation will allow for more clarity when looking at the fabric of Plautus's text.⁷¹

For Livius, as for many translators, "translating means both preserving what can be assimilated and altering what proves to be untranslatable."⁷² Despite being from a Greek city himself, Livius appears to have eschewed a translation that would have seemed entirely 'foreign' to his audience, choosing instead to bring the Greek to the Romans in a manner which they would comfortably understand.⁷³ Accordingly, Livius's first line substitutes the Latin *camena* for the Greek *μοῦσα*, a move which juxtaposed a Roman deity with the Greek hero.⁷⁴ Livius also *reflected* and *created* cultural and audience sensibilities with his translations: *ibidemque vir summus adprimus Patroclus* was Livius's translation of Homer's ἔνθα δὲ Πάτροκλος, θεόφιν μῆστωρ ἀτάλαντος. According to Conte (1999: 41), Roman religious views of the time did not permit one to be "equal to the gods," so a compromise was reached. Techniques such as these created the conditions for the *Odessus*'s great popularity and subsequent inclusion in

⁷¹For more detailed scholarship of Livius, see Livingston (2013), who concludes her detailed study of the fragments of Livius Andronicus by noting that Livius did use archaizing language of the Od(d)u(s)sia (the single consonants in the title perhaps being themselves an archaizing retrofit), though she is also quick to point out instances in Livius's Latin which were less archaic in form than later Classical authors.

⁷²Conte (1999: 40-1).

⁷³Feeney (2016: 46-7) has pointed out that pre-Livius models of translation — interpreters and translations of official documents — attempted to produce an exact verbatim translation between Greek and Latin, which do not account for Livius's more creative divergences from the Homeric texts. Feeney has proposed that Livius's translations may have been the product of a bilingual classroom (where he taught Greek to students who only knew Latin) and his own formation in Tarentum (where he was likely asked to translate between Greek and Latin in a way that demonstrated both word-per-word and sense-per-sense understanding).

⁷⁴See Hinds (1998: 57-62), who juxtaposes Livius's translation to Ennius's choice of retaining *Musa*, a choice which Hinds claims Livius "might have seen ... as a retrograde step, a cruder alternative to his own strategy." See also Possanza (2004: 46-56).

school texts.⁷⁵ Whether this was due to his own personal sensibilities, those of his public, or both, Livius did appear to change his translation to better suit cultural mores. Likewise, Plautus adds elements that are clearly “Plautine” — either translations or new additions to the Greek text — as a nod to his own audience.

Livius’s blend of assimilation and disruption in his efforts at translation shows a certain awareness of his role as a translator which has led several earlier scholars to view his work as rude or unrefined, especially compared to Ennius.⁷⁶ The tradition surrounding Livius’s Tarentine background adds to the mosaic of different elements that mark the Roman perception of theater as a Roman construct which nevertheless was intimately linked with the world outside Rome. Scholars of the late twentieth century have attempted to explain how foreign elements blended without any apparent tension within the milieu of Roman drama. Von Albrecht claims that Livius’s works “simultaneously transmitted to the Romans ancient myth and the contemporary philosophy which had taken its place,” Latin was the dominant local language in Rome, meaning that Livius’s selection of works controlled the access to Greek literature for monolingual Latin speakers.⁷⁷ For those people, the only Greek literature which they could access was directly Romanized.⁷⁸

Livius’s technique of metatranslation illustrated by his treatment of πολύτροπον

⁷⁵Manuwald (2011a: 121).

⁷⁶Sanford (1923: 275): “We should undoubtedly greatly prefer to read Ennius than Livius, had we our choice, but if Livius had not written, would Ennius have written as he did?” Kruck (2014: 42) considers the phenomenon a bit of self-promotion on Ennius’s part: “Livius Andronicus uses the opening statement of his translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* to show how closely he can render Greek hexameter into Latin Saturnian; Ennius acts to displace Andronicus by depicting himself as the reincarnation of Homer...”

⁷⁷Albrecht and Schmeling (1997: 115) who have also pointed out that a large number of Livius’s works are Trojan myths which speak to the origin of Rome, and that Livius goes out of his way to ensure that the Greek elements of Homer’s *Odyssey* are transformed into Roman ones. Livius “mak[es] an effort to combine fidelity both to Homer and the Latin language,” suggesting that he did at least see a distinction between Roman and Greek.

⁷⁸How many people were truly monolingual is impossible to say — if one accepts from Fontaine (2010: 149-200) that elites would be expected to know and understand Greek humor, and it is reasonable to assume that slaves from abroad would speak their native language — whether Greek or a native Italic language.

anticipates Plautus's prologues, many of which also draw the audience's attention to the fact that a translator was at work to create the play. Livius's significance in studies of Plautus therefore is not just his contribution to theater, but his status as one of the first translators of the ancient world. The extant fragments of Livius's work offer many useful insights about the way in which Livius negotiated translation — and specifically Greek-to-Latin translation— in the 3rd century and to what extent the model was followed by later authors.

Conclusion

Throughout this project, I will use insights from Bhabha's theories of hybridity and mimicry to give a new account of Plautus's negotiations of identity. To do this, I will minutely examine Plautus's language, looking at archaisms and loanwords as Livingston did for Livius Andronicus. This will allow me to flesh out the relationship between how cultures interact as their linguistic corpora intermingle. This will also, I believe, demonstrate that taking a Bhabhaian approach to the cultural translation taking place in Plautus's works — treating the plays as living, dynamic artefacts — offers new insights to studies of Plautine theater. This approach is not without precedent, as Feeney in particular has acknowledged that cultures are a "mobile and varying target" whose labels of "Roman," "Greek," or "Egyptian" hardly do justice to the multiplicity found within. Using ideas of the 'third space' with Plautus specifically, I will engage with Feeney's observations about the destabilizing effect of having plays that are set "elsewhere" talk of "here" and "there." Using Bhabha will allow me to articulate the difference between the linguistic translation which Plautus claims to do and the cultural translation which is seen in his reinvention of the "other" when taking and transforming Greek plays. I will look at some of the ways that Plautus

articulates cultural difference and how these illustrate the tensions and negotiations surrounding identity in Republican Rome. In order to look at cultural translation, it is necessary to move beyond a sole focus on text. Accordingly, I will also consider the scholarly theories about the staging of the plays, as well as finding smaller “moments of negotiation” within Plautus’s plays themselves.

To ground this work, I will focus on three plays engagingly translated by Richlin — the *Curculio*, the *Persa*, and the *Poenulus*. These plays show their complex portrayals of Roman and foreign identity through different lenses. In the *Curculio*, the tensions are most visible in stage situations in which characters focus on spaces inside and outside of the theatrical action. The parasite, the *choragus*, and even the pimp display to the audience that the borders between the stage and its background are both negotiable and negotiated. These tensions highlight the instability of identity, particular foreign identity, both onstage and offstage. In the *Poenulus*, these same tensions are best highlighted by the characters themselves. All the characters in the play negotiate “foreignness” and “familiarity” within their identities in different ways, many of which center around the performatively foreign Hanno. In the *Persa*, we revisit the use of theatrical space as well as the props within that space. The *Persa* is a play in which props are used in an especially artificial way to play a trick on the *leno*. The *Persa*’s use of theatrical space and props come together to create a self-conscious self-reflective look at foreignness onstage.

Definitions

Greekness

When I refer to foreignness in Plautine comedy, I will be looking primarily at non-Greek foreignness. Greekness occupies a peculiar category particularly in early Roman literature, which is neither foreign nor Roman. Plautus's beginning words in his plays, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter, show that there is a clear distinction being made between what is Greek and what is Roman. However, Greekness was the language of the educated elite — sometimes. As Batstone observes:

Roman grammarians adopted Greek terms to describe their language and their rhetoric. Roman aristocrats learned Greek and they called those who did not speak Greek or Latin “barbarians” ... they mocked Greek intellectualism, contemned Greek manners, plundered Greek cities, labeled political enemies “Little Greeks” (*Graeculi*), and felt that it was a political disadvantage even to appear to speak Greek. While they complained about the paucity of their vocabulary, they were consistently eliminating what was inelegant, superfluous, and inefficient from it. In a field of responses as charged and contradictory as this, it is clear that none of the positions taken says anything comprehensive about what was happening to Roman identity.⁷⁹

We have few voices from the middle Republic besides Plautus's which shed light on Roman attitudes to Hellenism. Cato's antipathy to “Greekness” is well known, though

⁷⁹Batstone (2006: 546). Feeney (2016: 82) agrees that no other contact language came even close to Greek's role in the Latin translation project — that Greek was “the other language.”

also not uncomplicated. Gruen considers that Cato could respect Hellenism without respecting Greeks themselves.⁸⁰ Jenkyns' note that "The Romans believed that their expansion into the Greek south of Italy had profoundly transformed them, bringing culture or corruption or both" seems an apt summary of the ambivalence noted by almost all scholars discussing Roman attitudes toward Hellenic culture.⁸¹ The most concise example of Roman attitude toward Greek intellectualism may be the simple fact that Romans often acquired Greek slaves as *paedagogoi*.⁸² The *paedagogus* would teach the children of elite Romans who would then continue carrying out the ideals of "Romanness" with these Greek skills. Dutsch has suggested that the *paedagogoi*, nurses, and entertainers (who, Fraenkel contends, had been imported into Rome from Magna Graecia even before 240 B.C.E.) were the "artisans of the early phases of... 'Rome's cultural revolution.'" I argue that these artisans attempted to interweave Greek elements with Roman ones within this Bhabhaian third space.⁸³

Plautus's take on Greek stereotypes seems in many ways to have been borrowed from the Greek plays which he himself translated or absorbed from a city familiar with Greek theater. After all, the Greeks had their own stereotypical versions of Greekness which were presumably also transmitted to their own audience via Middle and New Comedy.⁸⁴ I believe that the chaotic nature of Roman expansions and their

⁸⁰Gruen (1992). Isaac (2013: 387) agrees with this assessment: "... even anti—Hellene Romans probably resisted the influence of their own, contemporary Greeks without rejecting the values and achievements of classical Greek literature and culture." Leigh (2004: 149–150) has pointed out that Cato borrows Greek tropes to belittle Hellenic influence on Rome, while Dutsch (2014: 15–21) argues that Cato's hostility to Greekness is more nuanced: he recommended a surface learning of Greek culture and his own writings show some influence of Greek *paideia* (see also Gehrke (1994)). However, he was explicitly anti-Greek philosophy, particularly as a development guide for Roman moral and social character.

⁸¹Jenkyns (2013: 128). Between Gruen and Jenkyns, other scholars have discussed the relationship between Romans and the Greek language. See Adams (2003: 10–11): "Greek, the language of high culture in Roman eyes, elicited in Romans a sense of cultural inferiority and in some of them a consequent linguistic aggression, particularly as Rome established political control in the Greek world."

⁸²Livius Andronicus and Ennius may have also been *paedagogoi* (Bonner (1977: 20–1)).

⁸³Dutsch (2017).

⁸⁴Greekness or subsections thereof — see again Dutsch (2008).

ambivalent attitude toward the Greeks lends itself to a phenomenon of Romanness, which is structured enough to be recognizable but flexible enough to be imbued with a Bhabhaian translation, allowing Plautus to be “neither one [thing] nor the other.”⁸⁵ Unfortunately, there is so little Greek comedy which has been clearly “translated” for a Roman audience, that we must instead look at what Romans did with the idea of Greekness rather than searching for a specific moment of Greek self-identity.⁸⁶

Gruen’s claim is that “ancient societies, while certainly acknowledging differences among peoples (indeed occasionally emphasizing them) could also visualize themselves as part of a broader cultural heritage, could discover or invent links with other societies, and could couch their own historical memories in terms of a borrowed or appropriated past.”⁸⁷ Plautus could hardly have chosen a more apt way to disseminate the negotiation of cultures than with a translated comedy that contained aspects of both Greek and native Italian styles. Roman comedy is full of these negotiations, not only of Romanness, but some recycled ones from Greek comedy which are reappropriated for a Roman audience, constituting a narrative of “Greekness” to which Plautus contributes and helps to share with the audience.

Romanness

It is perhaps an odd choice to talk about Romanness repeatedly in a universe where, as I assert, identities are negotiable. However, there are a few ways to define the concept. To begin, I do not define Romanness as necessarily having to do with citizenship — as we will see in Plautus’s plays, some of the characters onstage — none of whom are Roman — act in a manner that seems noticeably familiar and “Roman” to

⁸⁵Bhabha (1994: 127).

⁸⁶(For examples, see Damen (1992), Goldberg (2005), and Barbiero (2016a)).

⁸⁷Gruen (2011b: 3-4).

the audience.⁸⁸ It is therefore clear that Romanness has to do with behavior as much as (if not more than) generational ethnicity or citizenship status. Rome's expansions towards Carthage and Spain, as well as throughout the peninsula, means that it was in the interest of unity and cohesion to create a sense of "Romanness." This does not imply any statement about Plautus's own participation in such a project of national identity but does suggest that he was likely surrounded by and speaking to people who were affected by such a narrative about Roman identity.

Arno's dissertation is most useful in fleshing out my own conception of Roman-ness. Although Arno primarily focuses on Roman identities as Cicero engages with them, she reframes the concept of identity as *identities* and argues a very convincing view of Romanness as a "supra-state identity" which "provided a framework within which the institutions of community and state-level interactions operated."⁸⁹ When discussing Romanness, one may argue that in an audience which contains multiple experiences, how can Romanness be an idea which is identifiable to enough people to make the comedic propagation of it successful? I propose in response that Romanness is an identity alongside other identities. A diverse audience, perhaps unfamiliar with the *quadrupulatores* mentioned in the *Poenulus* could nevertheless understand the jokes at their expense.⁹⁰ This understanding would of course be helped by the presence of prefects and the spread of *suffragium* throughout the Italian peninsula, but the sense of Romanness could not come from laws alone, but from the spread a constructed Roman supra-identity, which Plautus engaged with in his comedies. When the idea appears in a Plautine comedy that Romanness means mercantile pursuits, severe parenting, or a

⁸⁸Erdkamp 2011: 109: "Ethnic identity was not an issue in Roman policies, which centered around the issue of military manpower. Neither ethnic identity nor citizenship were a great obstacle to mobility. Mobility was no problem, as long as it did not threaten Roman military manpower."

⁸⁹Arno (2012: 208).

⁹⁰For the presence of prefects in Rome, see Sacchi (2012) who discusses the interaction between Roman prefects and local magistrates in Capua.

disdain for Greeks, what we are looking at is a moment of dialogue between Plautus and the audience, where a joke is told and assimilated.

Looking at Romanness in this manner follows Somers's reformulation of identity as a narrative construct, allowing me to examine its effect on public narrative among Plautus's audience rather than attempt to piece together ontological narratives of hypothetical Carthaginian-Romans, Greek slaves, or Persian itinerant wanderers.⁹¹ As a comedian, Plautus also participates in the empirical 'research' about what Romanness means — as all joke tellers do when they test a joke on an audience. To craft a joke that proposes the idea of Romanness to the audience — whether positively (those barbarous Greeks, they're not like the Romans) or negatively (look at his money-grubbing ways, isn't he just so Roman?) involves assimilation, imitation, and subsequent replication of such a joke. A joke told during a national festival during which Romanness was constantly brought to face non-Romanness must, I believe, have been assimilated by the audience in order to make it an "inside joke."

This conception of Romanness ties into Bhabha's own work into hybrid identity as the result of moments of negotiation. Bhabha defines hybridity in the context of the marginalized and colonized experience, the concept and is a good way to examine complicated questions of conquest or marginality in a culture which is geographically expanding but artistically still grappling with the long shadow of Greek literature that comes before. Expanding and complicating earlier perceptions of Romanness allows for a reading of comedy which encompasses Richlin's theory that Roman comedy expresses the "hidden transcript," of slaves' voices which are pushed into a public space.⁹² It also allows for the theory that Plautus's comedies were written for a tiny

⁹¹Somers (1994), like Bhabha (1994), sought to avoid the fixedness of labels within the concept of identity, and at least partly for the same reason: a desire to free marginalized voices from the "totalizing fictions" that come from the more essentialist approaches to identity politics.

⁹²Richlin (2014).

audience of aristocrats, as Fontaine has repeatedly theorized. Although I stand in the former camp, this is because I believe that bilingualism was as much a popular skill as an aristocratic one. Plautus's engagement with identity shows that at least comedy was a good vehicle by which the concept of "Romanness," however ambivalent, could spread.

Foreign imaginary

I have coined this term to refer to the foreign parts of the world which exist just out of sight of the audience, offstage. The foreign imaginary is where Curculio's tortuous itinerary leads him through Sicyon, Caria, India, and various other exotic provenances; whence one of the brothers Menaechmus comes (and whither both brothers leave at the end of the play); and whence Amphitruo comes home to his wife with expensive presents. Plautus's foreign imaginary is particularly Saidian — the foreign imaginary is invisible, a sort of exotic "Out There..." where (often) the comic *servus* can "travel" to acquire gold or girls depending on the play.⁹³

There are many things which connect the different "foreign imaginaries" in Plautine comedy. They are a "crucial source of money, food, and slaves" — essentially a dress-up box within the play itself.⁹⁴ The foreign imaginary is almost always brought into a play in order for an object to shortly make an appearance onstage. Moreover, it is usually an object which is considered *distantly* foreign (a coin with an elephant on it, as seen in *Curculio*, or a tiara and a pair of fancy slippers, as in the *Persa*), and frequently resolves a major conflict within the play.

One of the most interesting moments of Plautus's plays are those in which these

⁹³Richlin (2005: 572).

⁹⁴*ibid.*

“foreign” objects appear. We will see this in the *Persa*, where the foreign imaginary that provides an exoticized Eastern costume not only advances the plot but transforms two characters onstage into “foreigners.” Although this only happens in the one play and therefore can scarcely be considered a trope, the denizens of ‘Persia’ and ‘Arabia’, are displayed for the audience in a way which plays a major role in the negotiations between what is familiar and what is foreign onstage. While the Romans might have had some familiarity with at least the Western Greek culture because of the proximity of Greek cities in Italy, Persia and Arabia were truly foreign. Rome’s general ignorance of Persia allows the schemers onstage a blank space — a representation without reality — onto which almost anything can be projected, a space of “silent shadows to be animated... [and]... brought into reality...”⁹⁵ However, we must not forget that at least some of the “ordinary” Greek characters appeared from the same entrances onstage. It is therefore possible that the lines between “foreign,” “imaginary/foreign” “familiar,” “domestic,” or any other demarcations, are (or should be) blurred. This constant renegotiation of categories and boundaries is what leads me to a Bhabhaian reading of Plautine comedy.

Hybridity

Bhabha’s postcolonial concept of hybridity is helpful in conceptualizing the blurred lines between what is Greek and what is Roman in a comedy. However, applying this concept to Plautus is not without its own challenges. Bhabha defines hybridity as a disruptive force which emerges in moments between colonizer and colonized. Bhabha

⁹⁵E. W. Said (1979: 209). A literary work that functions as similar is Lane’s 18th century narrative *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, mentioned in *Orientalism* (159), in which Lane creates an Egyptian narrative for the European people. However, Lane’s work is posing as a systematic description, while Plautus’s comedies make no such claim.

discusses the “interstitial” spaces where hybridity subverts colonizing forces. Accordingly, I look at the moments in Plautus which evidence ambivalence and “slippage.” I have mentioned in my introduction that Rome has military superiority over Greece during the time of Plautus. Whether the jokes target ethnic origin or class, this is a mockery of the minority and an othering of a specific group. The play then simultaneously destabilizes categories of “familiar” and “foreign” with its self-conscious artificiality, showing the audience two or more narratives of identity which are often in dialogue. Whatever Rome and Greece are to each other, they are not equal players. In fitting with Bhabha, they are providing competing narratives and engaging in a power struggle where it is not always clear from the direction of mockery who is controlling the narrative.

Mimicry

In order to discuss Bhabha’s mimicry, it is particularly necessary to take into account his status as a postcolonial scholar. Accordingly, one cannot discuss mimicry without engaging with Bhabha’s conceptions of the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha describes mimicry in this way:

The metonymic strategy produces the signifier of colonial mimicry as the affect of hybridity — at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance, from the disciplined to the desiring. As the discriminated objects, the metonym of presence becomes the support of an authoritarian voyeurism, all the better to exhibit the eye of power. Then, as discrimination turns into the assertion of the hybrid, the insignia of authority becomes a mask, a mockery.⁹⁶

The question then is: how does the situation in Republican Rome fit into this conception

⁹⁶Bhabha (1994: 172).

of “discriminated objects” and colonization? The initial instinct might be to consider Romans the colonizing force, considering that

Under the republic...warfare was part of the normal experience of all Italians, and was embedded in the fabric of their society. The Roman republic’s institutions were military in character and function; its religion, and its cultural and moral values, were suffused with a militaristic *ethos*. This is the warrior society that has been so well described and analyzed in recent studies.⁹⁷

Stek has documented that the Roman colonization project totaled thirty-three colonies in the century before the Second Punic War.⁹⁸ However, the elements of mimicry that I have found in Plautus have often worked in the opposite way to what Bhabha seems to expect. Rather than the conquered Greeks mimicking the Romans, it appears that the Romans are mimicking the Greeks with the style of theater, names, settings, and their own additions of “Greekness.” There are two explanations for this: the first is that we are seeing, somewhat uniquely, cases of reverse mimicry. The other explanation is that the power relations that one should examine are not militaristic ones. Despite Rome’s growing power, Greeks have the advantage in the realm within which Plautus was working — the realm of literature and theater. By all accounts, it is the Greeks who are the ‘colonizing’ force when it comes to literature and artistic culture. Roman comedy is, by its mimicry, adding an element of uncertainty to the narrative of Greek superiority. Roman interaction with Greek jokes seems to be one of *mimicry*, a performative gesture which in its ambiguity appears to be a “blurred copy” of Greek discourse. This ambivalence is productively explained by Bhabha’s larger narrative of hybridity and the creation of the third space. To modify Bhabha’s statement, to be Hellenized emphatically is not to be Greek.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Lomas (1995), Cornell (1995).

⁹⁸Stek (2017).

⁹⁹Bhabha (1984: 130): “Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse — the difference be-

Stereotypes

The term “stereotype” is useful to this discourse in both its standard and its specifically Bhabhaian meaning. In standard usage, a stereotype refers to “a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation ...[or] an attitude based on such a preconception. Also, a person who appears to conform closely to the idea of a type.”¹⁰⁰ A stereotype, then, can be positive or negative, and be aimed at racial, national, gendered, and many other categories. Some stereotypes are borne out of observation of representatives of the group, while others come from narratives — that is to say, not first-hand experience. Stereotypes are often used as a way to conceptualize the “other,” but do not necessarily reflect power dynamics — the colonized or disenfranchised are just as likely to stereotype their oppressors as vice versa.

Bhabha adapts the concept of the stereotype to his post-colonial views. For Bhabha, the stereotype “vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.”¹⁰¹ Bhabha considers the stereotype one more tool of colonial power in its very ambivalence:

“Ambivalence ... gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.”

This ambivalence is tied to Bhabha’s concept of *fixity*, which refers both to the rigidity of the stereotype and to the need for its constant repetition (“...disorder, degeneracy,

tween being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic — all these are metonymies of presence.”

¹⁰⁰ “stereotype, n. and adj.” (2019)

¹⁰¹ Bhabha (1997: 293)

and daemonic repetition.”)¹⁰² This constant vacillation between the assumption of a stereotype’s truthfulness and the need to strengthen it by repetition is yet another way in which stereotypes contribute to the Bhabhaian “articulation of difference.”

Plautus occupies a remarkable position within which he projects stereotypes — because he is a translator, he can borrow stereotypes from his Greek or Italian antecedents.¹⁰³ He can also echo Roman stereotypes. Lastly, the relatively new status of Roman comedy means that Plautus could even create new stereotypes. What the audience can most evidently see is that Plautine comedy is full of situational stereotypes — *adulescentes* behave one way, *servi* another, *parasiti* yet another — likely stereotypes borrowed from Greek comedy. However, certain stereotypes are subverted or partially fulfilled. I particularly wish to draw the reader’s attention to stereotypes of foreign characters on purportedly staged foreign lands — both the onstage Greece and the foreign imaginaries offstage. When the places or ethnicities depicted or mentioned onstage are both *named* and *known* by the audience (such as the theatrical Greek setting, or Carthage, a place which had prolonged contact with Rome due to recent conflict) Plautus’s stereotypes are — at least initially — both concrete and Bhabhaian: they appear to be part of a conversation, sometimes begun by the play’s Greek precedents, which then go on to break down.

When stereotypes interact with the foreign imaginary, the inchoate nature of the latter makes the idea of stereotypes difficult. When the Romans are faced with the idea of the “East” (as seen in both the *Curculio* and the *Persa*), which is often named but cannot be assumed to be known, stereotypes cannot be ‘in place,’ and as such cannot be repeated. In these circumstances, Plautus is both participating in vague but pervasive Eastern stereotypes and creating his own with his translations of and dialogue with

¹⁰²ibid.

¹⁰³See Hall (1991: 102-3) for the function these stereotypes serve in Greek tragedy.

these comedies.

Chapter 1

Curculio

1.1 Introduction

All of Plautus's plays are set in a made-up universe filled with mixed-up characters. In "Plautopolis" (as Gratwick calls the hybrid Plautine stage) Greeks speak Latin, the setting can be Greece, Rome, or somewhere even further afield, and the word "barbarian" is used about Latin when the play itself is being viewed in Rome.¹ This Plautine attention to the permeable boundaries of the stage is common to many types of theater. Plautine scenes are especially notable for their ability to dance between these boundaries and illuminate the interstices of culture present on- and off-stage as characters negotiate between different narratives of identity.

My interest is in stage situations which highlight difference within the strange hybridity of Roman comedy. Within the *Curculio*, I find themes that illustrate Plautine attitudes toward the process of identity formation happening in Republican Rome.

The absence of prologue in the *Curculio* removes the initial perception of the play as a translated work which is found in other Plautine plays, during which the audience begins by hearing a narrative that this a Greek play translated into Latin. Moreover, the eponymous parasite comes from Caria, offstage and unseen, through the city of Rome where the play is being set and onto the supposedly Greek stage where the events of the play are taking place. The parasite crosses theatrical and imaginary urban boundaries. *Curculio* is largely Greek and the non-Greek element is brief and off-stage. These make the *Curculio* an opportune starting point to discuss the negotiations of onstage identities and how they contribute to a larger understanding of Rome as a hybrid city. The *Curculio* is not one of Plautus's best-known plays, nor is it the one which has received the most positive acclaim.² However, in this chapter I intend

¹Gratwick (1993: 17).

²Lefèvre (1991) 71–2 lists many 19th century scholars who were disappointed in the *Curculio*. More recently, (Harsh 1944: 353) called the *Curculio* "one of Plautus's least interesting plays," citing as his reasoning its "trite plot" and whose dramatic action is "sadly lacking." Arnott (1995), on the other

to show that Plautus's *Curculio* uses its three separate settings — Caria, Epidaurus, and Rome — to illustrate the questions of identity that arise from the nascence of Roman self-definitions. This play uses the permeability of the stage in a way which illustrates moments of cultural interaction present at the time of Plautus's writing. This permeability is most visible in the particular stage situations I explore below, which primarily comprise Curculio and the *choragus* blurring the lines between stage and offstage action. Before turning to the specific cultural interactions found in the *Curculio*, I will first examine the scholarly interest in questions of identity within Plautus's plays and the *Curculio* specifically.

1.2 Plot

Some of *Curculio*'s frosty reception among 19th and 20th century scholars may arise from its plot, which is simple even by Plautine standards. In Epidaurus, the *adulescens* Phaedromus explains to his slave Palinurus (after a few *paraclausithyra*) that he has fallen in love with a girl named Planesium. Planesium, alas, is in the care of the pimp Cappadox. Phaedromus first plies Leaena, Planesium's custodian, with neat wine so that she will let him see Planesium. The lovers' touching reunion is cut short by the fact that Phaedromus has no money. Phaedromus then sends his parasite Curculio out to acquire money in order that he might purchase her. En route, Curculio meets a soldier named Therapontigonus, a soldier who also plans to purchase Planesium and has a deposit slip for the banker with him. Curculio manages to steal the soldier's document and (for added verisimilitude) his signet ring, with which he manages to trick both banker Lyco and Cappadox into handing over Planesium, whom he promptly

hand, saw in *Curculio*'s brevity Plautus's "theatrical skill" and a "carefully constructed acting script for its characters." (188-189) (Paratore 1957: 12) also considered that *Curculio*'s brief script contains a "ripostiglio di quasi tutti i τόποι più convenzionali della palliata."

presents to Phaedromus. Therapontigonus's impending lawsuit is averted when he discovers that Planesium has a ring identical to his, and that she is in fact his sister. All ends happily as Planesium and Phaedromus are betrothed and Curculio is promised a lavish meal by the happy couple. This series of events is somewhat abrupt and is quite possibly compressed from the Greek version.³ However, beginning from the parasite's monologue, one sees a near constant spotlight on identities. He controls and twists narratives of identity ("Greekness," "Romanness," "foreignness") and illustrates them as the ever-changing processes that they are. This interaction of Greek and Roman cultures means, in the words of Homi Bhabha, that "terms of cultural engagement ... are produced performatively."⁴ Somewhat perversely, I will begin by looking at the terms of engagement which are not performed in the *Curculio* — namely, those which are typically found in the prologue, in which Plautus usually frames the play as a translated work.⁵ The argument in favor of there being a prologue is primarily one of precedent — this would make the *Curculio* one of two plays without an extant prologue.⁶ More notably, Plautine plays which are set outside Athens nearly always have prologues.⁷ As for why there might not be a prologue after all, this can be explained by *Curculio*'s simplicity of plot and the possibility that Plautus wanted to maintain the suspense of the *anagnorisis*, which is unknown by anyone until the very end. Regardless of whether there was a prologue or not, all current texts of the *Curculio* lack prologues. Since the prologue often contains the Greek name of the play's progenitor, the lack of a prologue

³Fantham (1965) lists as evidence for compression the late exposition of Epidaurus (suggesting a prologue), the urgency of Curculio's errand (which suggests a time limit which is not explicitly mentioned), and the unexplainably friendly tone between Curculio and Therapontigonus during their first meeting.

⁴Bhabha (1984: 2).

⁵My introduction offers some examples of Plautus's prologues in which the *prologus* names the Greek predecessor to the comedy which is about to be performed.

⁶The *Persa*, which I examine in Chapter 3, is the other.

⁷Leo (1895).

means that is no known Greek source text for the *Curculio*.⁸

Curculio's lack of extant prologue also makes the beginning of the play somewhat abrupt – the reader is not given the characters, setting, or plot at the beginning of the play. As the play stands, it is not until line 341 that the audience is explicitly told that the action takes place in Epidaurus. Epidaurus does not appear to have been a place of any particular import to Romans at the time, aside from its shrine to Asclepius. It was, however, a place which Demetrios visited in the late fourth century, a detail which becomes more significant if the *Curculio* was translated from a topical Greek play, as Elderkin believes it was.⁹ Translated for a Roman audience, the link between the As previously mentioned, the audience hears about Caria – our “foreign imaginary” – before the location of the action onstage, which is suppressed for several more lines.¹⁰ The order of place names is underlined by their explicit significance to the play: Caria, a place still further from Rome than Epidaurus, plays the role of an “Out There... [a] crucial source of money, food, and slaves.”¹¹ *Curculio* comes from Caria, bearing the soldier's money and his ring with its exotic imagery, the two objects which ultimately solve all the problems of the play. In contrast, Epidaurus could well be the standard Greek backdrop to a *comoedia palliata*, furnishing clever slaves, ridiculous lovelorn *adulescentes*, drunken *lenae*, and other characters ready to offer hilarity to the audience in Rome. However, Greece is not presented as a mere uncomplicated ‘possession’ of

⁸Many of the scholarly theories regarding the *Curculio*'s model relate to events, not dates. Nevertheless, a few readers have expressed views on the latter theory is that the Greek play was written in 304/303, due to his assertion that the allusion in verses 394-6 is to Demetrios Poliorcetes's actual sacking of Sicyon. Elderkin (1934) believes that the *Curculio* is modeled on a play written by Phillippides, putting the Greek model somewhere in the 330s (Suda entry Φ 346). Grimal (1966: 131-141) believed that there were many elements satirical of Hellenistic monarchs in the “original,” but that they did not all cohere into a satire of one specific Hellenistic king.

⁹Elderkin (1934).

¹⁰Moore (1998: 127) suggests that this was in order to prevent the audience from associating the play with a particular Greek location, leaving the “Greekness” of the play deliberately vague. When contrasted with much more specific Roman allusions, this would lead the audience to view the play in a Roman light, despite the Greekness of the comedy's trappings.

¹¹Richlin (2005: 57).

Rome. Like a faulty hologram, the distant Epidaurus often blinks out and allows the actors and audience to see the real, mixed-up city of Rome whose residents can no longer take refuge in the comforting narrative that 'Greek' behaviors have remained in Greece where they belong.

1.3 Identities in *Curculio*

My concern in this dissertation is the negotiations of identity found in Plautine plays, particularly when these negotiations engage with specific markers of racial and ethnic identity onstage. In the *Curculio*, as in most other Plautine plays, the characters *onstage* are depicted as Greeks. However, this play also separates out the Greeks from the rest of its audience with the demonstrative pronoun *isti*, showing a metatheatrical awareness of its non-Greek setting.¹² This identification of Greeks as separated from the general audience happens during a play which is nominally meant to be set in the Greek city of Epidaurus, but is in fact set in Rome. The play is performed within a narrative of Romanness as a supra-identity, which is at least partly due to the Roman festival where one sees the play. Nevertheless, the play is simmering with the tension of hybridity of the characters onstage and the audience watching them. As I mentioned in my introduction, Roman comedy is part of a cultural discourse in identity which was burgeoning in the 3rd century with Livius Andronicus' reappropriation of a Greek epic, Ennius's , and now Plautus, with his reimagined Greek characters speaking a barbarous tongue while also acknowledging its barbarity. These labels of "Greek," "Roman," "Eastern," and any others are problematic at best. It is more useful to consider these adjectives with reference to Homi Bhabha's notion of nations as narrative constructions, which are shown in stark clarity in this play by the

¹²There are many definitions of metatheater. I use Slater (1985: 10)'s definition, in which he defined metatheatre as "theatrically self-conscious theatre, i.e. theatre that demonstrates awareness of its own theatrically."

constructors — Curculio and the *choragus*.¹³ These national labels function as useful supra-identities which Plautus indicates, reflects, and subverts within his plays by means of the characters, props, and settings which are associated with them. Rome's mimicry of Greece which is found in Plautus's comedies approaches the line towards mockery in a way that goes beyond the inherently imitative and mocking nature of the genre. The *Curculio* specifically draws enough attention to the theatrical space and its environs to show the extremely permeable and evanescent boundaries between the theatrical space and the cities it inhabits. By the very tenuity of its borders, the space in which the *Curculio* is staged is a Bhabhaian "third space," and Curculio, the *choragus*, and Lyco the pimp focus on space in a way that exposes the destabilization of "-ness" identities found in these plays.

1.4 A preview of *Curculio's* "foreign imaginary"

Curiously, the audience is in fact told of the play's offstage location – Caria – before it is even told that the play takes place in Epidaurus. However, with his entrance onstage from Caria, Curculio brings an "Out There" to his stage by means of glittering props and a colorful story. The constant tension found in the cultural translation of Greek into Roman comedy is briefly altered by a scene in which Curculio facilitates the return of some exotic-looking rings back from this mysterious land. Surprisingly, the rings are not any less hybrid and multifaceted than the character of the girl Planesium, who by the end of the play was viewed as more 'foreign,' having been identified as coming from the same Eastern imaginary as her brother the gilded soldier. Just as there is a male actor under the female persona, the "exotic" rings from the east are

¹³See Bhabha (1990: 1-9) as well as Gunew (1990: 99)'s evocative example of Australia: "the narrative of 'Australia' as it pertains to cultural and literary history is dominated by a cluster of organic images comprising, inevitably, new branches springing lustily from old family trees."

Roman stage props.¹⁴ Of course, all props are multilayered in the sense that they are not whatever they purport to be onstage — however, the ethnic “tags” attached to the props and the people add a new assertion of hybridity to the play. The rings, for instance, in fact lead to the betrothal of the young lady to the *adulescens* — an appropriately hybrid ending complete with foreign gold and Greek characters on a Roman stage.

Curculio’s opening monologue is one in which he, while playing a Greek character, taunts the audience for the number of Greeks among them. Following this, the parasite recounts his interactions with the soldier, which have many allusions to gilded Macedonian kings – a particularly exotic aspect of Greekness.¹⁵ The soldier’s itinerary takes him all over the exotic East, a scene which calls to mind Greek narratives of eastern “barbarians” in the seventh and sixth centuries.¹⁶ The *choragus* speaks in a style very similar to that of Curculio’s entrance. The *choragus*, rather than discussing how many Greeks there are in the audience, claims that even the Romans in the city are themselves Greek comic characters. The *choragus* is a character onstage as well as a provider of props, reinforcing the similarity between the “real” Romans and the “dressed-up” Greeks onstage. The two characters show the constant erosion of the fourth wall and the “slippage” in the Roman mimicry of Greeks. The moments which I discuss below show the contested boundaries between the narratives of “Greekness” and “Roman-

¹⁴Sharrock (2008: 6) describes this eloquently: “A theatrical ring not the ordinary ring such as audience members wear (although even ordinary rings nearly always have extra connotative work to do), but the theatrical signifier of plot device. So strong is its signifying power, that even a mention of a ring is inclined to make us expect from it a significant role in the plot, most commonly either in the trick or as a token in a recognition scene.”

¹⁵A similar phenomenon of Greek exoticism happens in the *Epidicus*. Goldberg (1978: 90) discussed Stratippocles’ campaign: “The sandwiching together of Epidaurus, Thebes, and Athens adds exotic color and a gleeful complication to events that ... accord well with a love of polysyllabic Greek names and gratuitous references to Greek dress.” Demetrios Poliorcetes in particular is considered to have had a particularly lavish and luxuriant lifestyle, leading O’Sullivan (2008) to consider him a *roi soleil avant la lettre*.

¹⁶Wallace-Hadrill (2008: 110).

ness," the foreign imaginary's very blatant "foreignness," and the subversion found in Rome's appropriation of Greek literature.

1.5 vv. 280-298

In this play, the first scene which densely packs in moments of ethnic tags is Curculio's initial entrance. Curculio the character is himself a *Graecus palliatus*, which complicates matters when he is the one packaging Greece in this hybrid way for the Roman audience.¹⁷ Instead of separating out the mysteries of Greece for the audience, Curculio blurs the dividing line between actor and audience, pointing out there is no real difference between the Romans and the Greeks that they are mocking. This marginalization of Greeks is particularly noticeable considering that it is the parasite coming from easterly Caria into Rome who decides to point out that the "Roman" audience is not in fact particularly Roman and is in fact a hybridized group, comprising Romans, Greeks, and others who are still more foreign. He then uses plunder from the Eastern region of Caria to create an exotic fantasy for his audience, namely the banker Lyco and the procurer Cappadox, advancing the play and ensuing the happiness of the adulescens. These two "blocking" characters act as Curculio's audience during his "play-within-a play."

1.5.1 *Curculio*: 280-298

Date uiam mihi, noti [atque] ignoti, dum ego hic officium meum 280
facio: fugite omnes, abite et de uia secedite,
ne quem in cursu capite aut cubito aut pectore offendam aut genu.
ita nunc subito, propere et celere obiectumst mihi negotium,
<nusquam> quisquam est tam opulentus, qui mi opsistat in uia,
nec strategus nec tyrannus quisquam, nec agoranomus, 285
nec demarchus nec comarchus, nec cum tanta gloria,

¹⁷lit. "a cloaked Greek."

quin cadat, quin capite sistat in uia de semita.
tum isti Graeci palliati, capite operto qui ambulant,
qui incedunt suffarcinati cum libris, cum sportulis,
constant, conferunt sermones inter se drapetae, 290
opstant, opsistunt, incedunt cum suis sententiis,
quos semper uideas bibentes esse in thermipolio,
ubi quid subripuere: operto capitulo calidum bibunt,
tristes atque ebrioli incedunt: eos ego si offendero,
ex unoquoque eorum exciam crepitum polentarium. 295
tum isti qui ludunt datatim serui scurrarum in uia,
et datores et factores omnis subdam sub solum.
proin se domi contineant, uitent infortunio.

CUR. Make way, known and unknown, while I go about my business here. Flee, all of you, go away and get off from the road, so that I don't in my hurry hurt someone with my head, my elbow, my chest, or my knee. So suddenly, quickly and hastily do I now have business to attend to. Nor is there anyone so splendid, neither a *strategus* nor a *tyrannus* nor an *agoranomus* nor a *demarchus* nor a *comarchus* that he might stand in my way and not fall down in all his great glory, from the footpath headfirst on the main road. Then these cloaked-up Greeks of yours, who walk around head covered, stuffed with books, with baskets – these fugitive slaves stand around together, gossip with one another, get underfoot, stand in the way, strut about airing their views, the sort of folk you can always see drinking in the tavern when they have pilfered something, drinking hot wine with their little heads covered, they leave sad and tipsy: if I bump into them, from each of them I'll elicit a barley-belch. Then those dandies' slaves, playing ball in the street and tossing it back and forth, and all the those who throw and those who catch, them will I put under the ground. Accordingly, they will avoid misfortune if they would stay home.

As these lines show, the parasite makes up for his tardy entrance by almost single-handedly controlling the reality presented to the audience at any given time. Curculio is the rock star of this play – the character that causes the play to break down from its usual structure. Before his entrance, the *adulescens* Phaedromus and the servus

Palinurus are behaving as they are expected to, one lovesick and the other teasing. The arrival of the Roman Weevil Knievel makes the *servus* redundant, changes the setting, and reminds the audience that they are watching a play.¹⁸ With an inflated idea of his own importance, the parasite dispatches the *servus currens* and takes on his far more prominent role.¹⁹ The grandiose Greek words which the parasite uses are also found in other Plautine plays with similar effect. *Tyrannus* and *comarchus* are unique to the *Curculio*, while the term *demarchus* is used again in *Poenulus*, albeit only as a proper noun.²⁰ The word *strategus* is also only used one other time in Plautus, in the *Stichus*. In that play, the term is used for the ‘master of the feast’ and is immediately followed by a query about which “province to take” — meaning in this case whether the diners will lay claim to water or wine.²¹ This term takes the audience from the luxury of a Greek symposium, which requires a symposiarch, to Roman provincial conquest in three lines. Likewise *agoranomus* is found twice, once in *Miles Gloriosus* and once in *Captivi*. In the *Miles*, the term is used to compare the gods to market-masters, who know the value of men and bestow blessings according to their worth.²²

The *Captivi* has another example of a very Greek term being used directly alongside the Roman equivalent:

HEG. *Eugepae, edictiones aedilicias hic quidem habet,
mirumque adeost ni hunc fecere sibi Aetóli agoranomum.*

HEG. Huzzah! This fellow has such “aedilic” edicts,
I am surprised that the Aetolians have not yet made him market-master

¹⁸I should note here that *Curculio*’s name means “weevil.”

¹⁹Papaioannou (2008: 114) considers *Palinurus*’s role to be initially that of a ‘protactic’ character whose role is to provide exposition for the audience, but he “goes on to participate in the plot as the parasite’s temporary replacement, an early “*Curculio*” in disguise.” Looking at these complementary roles from *Curculio*’s perspective leads me to see *Curculio* as a replacement rather than a continuation of *Palinurus*’s role.

²⁰See Ch. 2

²¹*Stich.* 702-705.

²²*Mil.* 528.

We know that the *agoranomoi* are the Greek equivalent of the Roman aediles. What is the purpose of juxtaposing the two terms in two lines, particularly when Hegio is, like Curculio, talking about being in the middle of a large public place? My contention is that Hegio too is drawing attention to the hybrid nature of his interlocutor — another parasite. It is also interesting that Hegio, an Aetolian, is discussing “the Aetolians” as though they are a group to which he does not belong. While Curculio is talking to the public watching the play, Hegio is talking to Ergasilus, the parasite — and by taking a Roman (or at least non-Greek) perspective, he draws attention to the hybrid nature of himself and the other characters. Ergasilus, for his part, has just spoken lines very similar to those of the *choragus*, talking onstage about ostensibly Greek characters but claiming that their smell is so powerful that it would drive even Romans in the forum into hiding.²³

The lines above express a multivalent attitude towards the theatrical and extra-theatrical space. Curculio initially walks through the public while using these ironic descriptive terms for them – *strategus*, *tyrannus*, *agoranomus*, *demarchus*, *comarchus*.²⁴ These terms seem as though he is maintaining that the play is set in Greece, but closer examination shows that these terms are bizarre when placed next to each other – Fraenkel and Leo have shown that this combination would be impossible in one city.²⁵ This is then a fantasy Greece, so foreign as to be almost as ‘imaginary’ as Caria. As Curculio’s next lines will show, Greece becomes less and less imaginary as it becomes more overlaid onto the Roman theatrical space. However, these over-Greeked Greek

²³*Capt.* 813-822, particularly 813-15: *Tum piscatores...quorum odos subbasilicanos omnes abigit in forum*. (emphasis mine). The *forum* is an unusually common word in Plautus, appearing more than thirty times in his works. However, since the word *agora* is never used at all (except in *agoranomus*), it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the play’s “Romanness” from his use of the word.

²⁴Moore (1998: 129).

²⁵Leo (1912: 186) and Fraenkel (1922: 123).

terms are currently almost as absurd as Curculio's errands with the soldier. Moreover, the fact that many of these terms refer to authority will call to mind the soldier's grandiose errands of setting up statues to himself in a triumphal fashion.

Immediately after this absurd list of Graecisms, Curculio turns onto the same audience with the phrase *isti Graeci palliati*, separating them from the Greeks onstage again in a moment of dizzying confusion. While the hyper-Hellenic effect produced in lines 280-287 suggests that the Greek setting cannot be taken for granted, the deictic *isti* makes it clear by the Greeks are separated from the audience addressed. While Moore has pointed out that not every Greek incongruity would have caught the attention of the audience, the adjective *palliati* would have likely produced a laugh, since Curculio was almost certainly wearing a *pallium* himself.²⁶ Somewhat more disconcerting for the audience, *isti Graeci palliati* has both a personal and a deprecatory touch – the Greeks, are, sneeringly, 'those Greeks of yours.' The references to the *caput opertum... cum suis sententiis* all suggest "an image... of slave-philosophers becoming fashionable to own and crowding the streets of Rome."²⁷ Thus Curculio is playing the role of a Greek *servus callidus* complaining about Greek philosophers who are reputed to behave precisely as he has been doing.²⁸ To further complicate matters, Curculio is also saying all of this with a Latin, if insectile, name.²⁹ However, Curculio is not echoing the Roman prejudices of Greeks. He is joining together the ideas of Greekness, Romanness, and the hybrid audience comprised of many different peoples as objects of mockery. The parasite also uses words which are a *mélange* of Greco-Roman origins,

²⁶ibid.

²⁷Dutsch (2014: 12).

²⁸Dutsch (2014: 11) has pointed out several other examples in which Plautus has made fun of philosophers, whose discourse "comes across as the *modus operandi* of dangerously clever slaves."

²⁹Fontaine (2010: 66-68) asserts that the parasite's name is Gorgylio, based on a pattern of the *-ylio* suffix in Middle Comedy and the argument that the joke in *Curc.* 586-7 functions equally well as a *mondegreen* or as a "pure" *paranomasia* – though he of course points out that Plautus's translation of Gorgylio into Curculio fits into standard transliteration patterns. Regardless of which name the audience heard, the argument that the parasite is creating a hybrid of many different identities is not invalidated.

such as *thermipolio*.³⁰ He even uses words which are entirely Greek but refer to officials who cannot possibly exist in the places where he identifies them — thereby drawing attention simultaneously to the Greekness and the impossibility of the same Greekness within and without the theatrical space. This tension, within which Greekness is both identified and denied by Curculio's words, produces hybridity. Here Curculio has shined a dazzling light onto the audience and illuminated their hybrid nature. While the existence of Roman comedy, at least on the surface, fuels the Roman illusion that it has possessed and appropriated Greece, Curculio's speech leaves in doubt who has possessed whom. In other words, Curculio shows that Greece is empty – *all the Greeks are here*.³¹

Despite not being able to compare the *Curculio* with a particular model of Greek comedy, one can still look at the differences articulated in some of the tropes which seem adapted from Greek Middle and New comedy. The remarks made by Curculio about Greeks seem drawn from Greek jokes about Greek philosophers.³² In the *Curculio*, the remarks have a different function. It is even possible that the jokes about Greeks in Curculio's monologue themselves come from a Greek original which was poking fun at mendicant philosophers. The parasite appropriates remarks about Greek philosophers and turns them into a general trope of Greekness. If Curculio's monologue can be believed, *isti Graeci palliati* seems to imply that there is a number of Greeks to be found in the audience, or at least on the streets on a day to day basis.³³ This mocking

³⁰Ellis (2018: 33-5) shows that while *thermi/opolia* was a common word in Pompeii, the only evidence for its usage dates to about two centuries after the performance of the *Curculio*.

³¹*Tempest* 213-4. Regarding the number of Greeks, it is important to note that these Greeks are Roman slaves: an expression of Roman control and, within the comic world, Greek ubiquity.

³²Csapo (1989: 150-151) claimed that these jokes would not have been out of place in a Greek comedy, while Dutsch (2014: 10-11) argues that the audience would still have understood these reappropriated remarks.

³³There is a mention in Livy that Publius Scipio (Africanus) would “walk up and down the gymnasium in his *pallium* and his *crepidae*.” (29.19.12) Although these attacks appear to be from Scipio's enemies, it should be noted that Livy does not go out of his way to deny them.

description of Greeks with covered heads, laden with books, would be at home both in Greek and Roman comedy. In Rome, Curculio's speech is a loud voice pointing out the foreignness of the Greeks who seemingly wander around the city on a regular basis. Though we may never know if mockery of Greek philosophers in Greek comedies was a sufficiently well-known trope for this to be an explicit appropriation, or one which would be evocative to the audience, Curculio is using this monologue to show Bhabhian "domains of difference" between Romans and Greeks. Thus, the parasite illustrates how cultural translation is negotiated through Plautus, within a Rome that is full of people who do not all identify (nor are identified) to the supra-identity of Romanness. Within the translation of the play, Curculio is also translating and mediating a Greek joke so it works in this hybrid context in which the Greeks are both the main characters and the outsiders to be mocked.

Not only Curculio's words, but also his physical entrance displays hybridity. Curculio arrives from an exotic place offstage to Greek Epidaurus and then changes the setting from Rome to Greece, from Greece to Rome. During his entrance onstage, Curculio looks at the theatrical Greece onstage as he swaggers towards the stage, and then brings the hybrid city of Rome through which he is walking onto that same stage. In pushing Romans out of his way while calling them Greeks, and then taking on the Roman point of view to talk about *isti Graeci*, he creates hybridity and confusion.³⁴ The parasite also shows the Roman mimicry of Greeks by blurring the lines between Greeks and Romans in a Latin-language play where the characters have Greek names.

The bleeding of Rome onto the "Greek" stage is also underscored by Curculio's physicality. His one-eyed character has no depth perception, physically or literarily, and therefore sees no difference between "There" (onstage) and "Here" (in the city of

³⁴I follow Moore (1998: 129) in believing that Curculio did in fact walk through the audience, perhaps mock-jostling various people out of the way as he did so. See also 1.9, in which I argue that Curculio and the *choragus* work together to direct the audience's attention outside of the theatrical action onstage.

Rome). However, let no one think that his disability makes him the lesser of two weevils. Curculio's association with hybridity from the moment of his entrance exemplifies his ability to manipulate theatrical space and the imagination of any audience he may have – onstage or off. The “foreign imaginary” space of Caria, which Curculio brings to the audience is one which in its very foreignness shows how un-foreign even the theatrical narratives and generalizations of Greekness and Romanness are to each other.

Curculio's *persona* as someone who travels between Caria and Epidaurus while pointing out at intervals that both of them are on the Roman stage shows Romans that Rome is in fact, so full of Greeks that Greeks feel perfectly at home there. More — his mirror image, the *choragus*, shows that Romans themselves have begun acting like Greeks, and not just any Greeks, but the walking caricatures shown on the comic stage.³⁵ It is unclear whether or not this narrative is meant to fit an agenda of “Roman-ness.” However, the pointing out of the foreign element during a Roman civic festival cannot but be a message about the hybridity of Roman identities. The Bhabhaian notion of nations as areas of contestation is especially clear here, where it takes a comic character to point out the how deeply intertwined Greece and Rome are. What is displayed onstage is “a Greece displaced to the Roman stage and all the more constructed, all the more hyperbolically Greek for that. It is therefore a Greece which invites constant reflection on what it is to be a Roman, just as, in the world outside the theatre, the ever-increasing influence of Greek culture on Rome makes the task of defining true, undefiled Romanity all the more urgent.”³⁶ The negotiation of this process breaks down any burgeoning narratives of national boundaries in the *Curculio* and shows that the efforts to articulate Greekness as difference are ultimately doomed to failure.

³⁵See 1.8.

³⁶Bhabha (1990) and Leigh (2004: 54).

1.6 vv. 371-383: A bank manager standing a-loan

LYCUS. *Beatus videor: subduxi ratiunculam,
quantum aeris mihi sit quantumque alieni siet:
dives sum, si non reddo eis quibus debeo;
si reddo illis quibus debeo, alieni ampliust.
uerum hercle uero quom belle recogito, 375
si magis me instabunt, ad praetorem sufferam.
[habent hunc morem plerique argentarii
ut alius alium poscant, reddant nemini,
pugnis rem soluant, si quis poscat clarius.]
qui homo mature quaesiuit pecuniam, 380
nisi eam mature parsit, mature esurit.
cupio aliquem <mi> emere puerum, qui usurarius
nunc mihi quaeratur. usus est pecunia.³⁷*

LYC. I seem to be fortunate: I have balanced my account — how much money is mine and how much is another's: I am rich, if I do not return the money to those to whom I owe it. If I return it to those to whom I owe it, the debt is greater. But indeed, by Hercules, then I think on it properly, if they press me for more, I will take myself to the praetor. [More bankers have this habit: namely, that they demand money from each other, but return it to no one, and they settle the affair with blows should anyone demand his money very plainly.] Any man obtains money quickly and quickly goes hungry if he does not quickly economize. I wish to buy a boy who could be obtained by me on loan — I need money.

Lycus is one of Curculio's blocking figures, but he is an interesting figure in his own right as well. The audience first sees him boasting that he generally gets the better of his clients and can indulge in a little *Schadenfreude* that this state of affairs is unlikely to continue once Curculio enters the scene. Indeed, once Curculio addresses him, Lycus's

³⁷I follow Leo (1895) in bracketing lines 377-79, as I cannot see any reason why bankers should be borrowing money from one another.

reference to the *forum* and his behavior which identifies him as a Roman *argentarius* suggests that he is expressing more Romanness, an identity which is contrasted with Curculio's created foreignness.³⁸

"The problem of debt and the need for credit pervade the *palliata*," writes Richlin.³⁹ Certainly there are enough passages involving debt, credit, interest, and loans to bear this out. The question of whether this is a particularly *Roman* practice is difficult. The specific laws of usury or debt that plagued the audience were certainly Roman, but both Old and New Athenian comedy also discussed finances in similar ways and many a plot arises from debt.⁴⁰ However, a banker whose enforcement of debt can easily turn a free man into a slave is surprisingly apt for a play in which identities can never be reliable and a sufficiently skilled character. However, as I show in the following section, it appears that Lyco is not that character.

1.6.1 vv. 392-452: A failed attempt to ward off the weevil eye

The conversation between the parasite and the banker gets even more strange after this. Lyco greets Curculio with the cheery "*Unocule, salve*." Lyco begins the dialogue by mocking Curculio's one eye and asking if he comes from the race of the Coclites.⁴¹ Although Lyco himself lives on *argentum alienum*, a man who does not fit

³⁸Moore (1998: 127-131) considered Lyco's monologue to be a reference to Roman laws and a flaunting of the same.

³⁹Richlin (2017: 188).

⁴⁰Aristophanes' *Clouds* is one of the obvious examples of Old Comedy where money was a significant issue, while Menander's *Sicyones* also involves a parent who attempts to free his son from his own debt incurred after a lawsuit.

⁴¹*Curc.* 391-5: **LYC.** *Vnocule, salve.* **CURC.** *Quaeso, deridesne me?* / **LYC.** *De Coclitum prosapia te esse arbitror / nam ei sunt unoculi.* **CURC.** *Catapulta hoc ictum est mihi / apud Sicyonem.* **LYC.** *Nam quid id refert mea / an aula quassa cum cinere effossus siet?* Richlin (2005: 102) considers that this may also be a sexual double entendre, as the Romans occasionally call the penis 'one-eyed.'

his expectations may as well come from a land of epic fantasy.⁴² Elderkin asserted that Coclites was probably *Kyklopes* in the original Greek.⁴³ However, Plautus's word *Coclites* is another Roman reference — Lyco is most likely asking Curculio if he comes from the race of Horatius Cocles, who famously lost an eye while defending the bridge against the Porsenna.⁴⁴ This time, it is Lyco who is mixing up Greek unrealities with Roman history. Although he uses more "Roman" language than Curculio, he seems to blend the same Greek-Roman elements to show the hybridity of his onstage "audience" and the audience outside the action, however sarcastically he may do so.

Curculio, meanwhile, denies Lyco's sneering question but affirms a different exotic provenance – he claims that his impairment is from a battle in Sicyon and explains the soldier's absence by the fact that he is out getting a golden statue fashioned in Caria after his successes in India. In a way, Lyco is correct – Curculio is from a fictional and exotic land. Lyco's rhetorical riposte is thus parried by Curculio's creative powers of hybridity but through a different means than he was expecting. Although he is twice called a *trapezita* by Curculio before his entrance, Lyco more closely resembles a Roman *argentarius* who engages in shameful moneylending *in foro ipso*, particularly when he boasts that he has found loopholes in the usury laws as fast as the lawmakers can come up with new ones, a possible reference to actual Roman laws passed in 193 BCE.⁴⁵

Though Caria, India, Sicyon, and the various places named by the parasite (here calling himself *Summanus*) are correctly viewed by Lyco as foreign *imaginaries*, the Greekness that the parasite references is very present in the space where the banker

⁴²Gaertner (2014: 624) asserts that a look at the distribution of Greek terms and their (sometimes rough) Roman equivalents leads one to believe that "*trapezita/tarpezita* only occurs in passages that concern key elements of the plot and go back to Plautus's Greek originals, whereas the Latin equivalent *argentarius* is used when Plautus expands his models."

⁴³Elderkin (1934).

⁴⁴See Polybius 6.55; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 5.23-35; Livy 2.10-13 for the legend of Horatius Cocles. Dionysius notes that Horatius acquired the name *cocles*, derived from the Greek κύκλωψ from his injury.

⁴⁵Slater (1985: 178) argued that this was a reference to the *Lex Sempronia*, and both Segal 1987b: 83-5 and Moore (1998: 54) considered Lyco a "Roman" character due to his grasping nature.

finds himself. Curculio's alias further shows the contrast between him and the banker. Summanus, though a god who is closely associated with Jupiter, is likely a non-Roman deity.⁴⁶ Although Summanus and Jupiter have quite a hybrid relationship – both controlling lightning, but at separate times of day – Lyco does not recognize the name Summanus, incorrectly considering it to be from the Latin *summanare* – to water, or more coarsely, to urinate.⁴⁷ Lyco's immediate dismissal of all matters which are ostensibly non-Roman renders him blind to the syncretic Jupiter Summanus shrine found in Rome. He appreciates the exoticism of the East that Curculio brings back because it is a source of profit but draws no connection between his experience with “other people's money” and the changing dynamics offstage as Curculio does.

The soldier embodies the ‘foreign imaginary’ I discuss above. Elderkin has argued that the *miles* Therapontigonos is modeled on Demetrios Poliorcetes due to his name suggesting “servant of Antigonos” and the seven-foot golden statue that he commissioned for himself.⁴⁸ The statue, Elderkin asserts, would call to mind both

⁴⁶This point is contested in almost every respect. Pliny considers Summanus an Etruscan god, Varro a Sabine one. There was a statue of Summanus on the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus alongside several statues of Etruscan craftsmanship, and a temple to Summanus was dedicated during the Pyrrhic war (Pliny xxviii.16, xxxv.157). Wissowa (1912) and Koch (1937) have argued that Summanus is a hypostasis of Jupiter that later became his own god, though Lipka (2009: 79-80) contests this due to, among other things, the temple being nowhere near a temple of Jupiter, nor having any calendrical connection to Jupiter in the date of its dedication. Lipka's preferred hypothesis is that Summanus was an independent god in decline, based largely on Varro's claim that Summanus was quite popular before the installation of the Capitoline triad. On the other hand, Melo (2011b: 275n23) considers Summanus “a title of Jupiter in his function as protector of houses from lightening.”

⁴⁷cf. Ussing and Thierfelder (1972), who believed Lyco *did* recognize the god's name, but cannot believe that such a lowly character would have such a name. Papaioannou (2008) considers that this joke is meant to point back to the earlier character Palinurus, whose name can also be interpreted as a joke about urination. Papaioannou also follows the theory that Summanus was a god of nocturnal lightning, while Jupiter controlled lightning during the day.

⁴⁸Elderkin (1934). Elderkin's conclusion that the play is largely a political satire of Demetrios's life, however, is more difficult to sustain. As Grimal (1966) and Webster (1970) point out, there is no real evidence that Therapontigonos is modeled on Demetrios Poliorcetes in particular, though there are many satirical elements which strongly suggest that Plautus is borrowing references to Alexander in an earlier Greek model. Once again, Plautus is appropriating a joke from the Greek version of the comedy and translating it into a mockery of the gilded Greeks, who are clearly monied and influential and yet still have to send their freedmen to Roman bankers to acquire money to buy things.

Alexander's larger-than-life statuary and the chryselephantine statues set up by Philip in the enclosure of Zeus of Olympia.⁴⁹ The clash between Lyco's reference to specifically Roman financial practices and laws and Curculio's use of Greek-inspired exoticism seems to show the two ways of pushing down the Greek influences — in one case by trying to highlight specific Roman ways of life and in the other by referencing such an exaggerated form of Greekness that it is closely tied to the "foreign imaginaries" of India, Arabia, and other countries of the 'mysterious Orient.' Both of these weaken the notion that Greekness is an integral part of the setting of the play and inseparable from the fabric of the city, while also displaying the partial (but only partial) hint of a Bhabhaian stereotype.⁵⁰ Greekness has already shown itself to be deeply embedded in Romanness: but here Lyco and Curculio in their conversation also identify Greekness with the foreign imaginary. While Greekness can be stereotyped (and comedy has both its Greek ancestry and the presence of Greeks in Rome upon which to draw for material), the foreign imaginary, as I argued earlier, cannot. This means that in this particular moment, any stereotype of Greekness unravels as it is faced with the foreign imaginary, a place which is impossible to pin down until the moment in which a character begins to describe it. Curculio is deliberately exoticizing his Greek soldier, while Lyco's stereotypes about the foreign imaginary latch on to Curculio's vague and exotic details and allow the ruse to take place.

⁴⁹Webster (1970: 198) considered that identifying Therapontigonus with Demetrios does not allow for any kind of satire within the plot, considering that many of the tropes noted by Elderkin are too common within the genre of comedy to be referring to anyone in particular. The particularly exotic elements in the soldier scenes — namely, the depictions of elephants on the coin and the golden statue that the soldier had commissioned — Webster considers to be "as likely to be [referring to] Alexander as Demetrios." Grimal (1966) recognizes that there are many points which appear to have Hellenistic attributes and most likely come from the originals but does not think that they provide a coherent whole which can be assigned to a particular person or event.

⁵⁰Drichel (2008: 588): "If the stereotype is 'an arrested, fixated form of representation', as Bhabha (1994: 75) suggests, then for the other not to reappear as a stereotype in postcolonial debates, different forms of representation need to be assumed. In other words, to be able to remain a focus in postcolonial debates without once again becoming reduced to a stereotype, 'the other' needs to appear as a partial assumption of a stereotype: both be and not be the stereotype."

The confrontation between Curculio and Lyco ends in Curculio's triumph as the banker falls for his scheme. Lyco fails to understand that he is in "Plautopolis" where Greek philosophers crowd the streets and Greek stock characters loiter in the Roman forum. He then cites Roman laws which were likely the cause of real problems among the citizenry and does not perform the "Roman self-consciousness about non-Greekness and the adaptation of Greekness."⁵¹ His own stereotypes of soldiers and the "East" cause him to believe any braggart foreigner who claims to be an associate of the soldier. Although Curculio has stolen and now has the soldier's seal ring for added verisimilitude, Lyco's cupidity for Curculio's exotic props clouds his judgment and allows him to ignore Curculio's flimsy story. Curculio's obvious *nugas* about his soldier's exploits should have been enough to fool all but the most dull-witted of bankers.⁵² Fortunately, Lyco's naïveté is only comparable to the *miles* Therapontigonus's inattention to his own possessions, and so Curculio can use his trinkets to acquire Planesium for his master. Sharrock argues persuasively that Curculio is an "extreme example of Plautine physicality" and that here the "ring and letter work together like magic."⁵³ However magical the objects, it is Curculio the magician that makes them work, leading to the eventual celebration of hybridity found in the conclusion.

1.7 vv. 462-486

The third character to negotiate the imaginary geography on and offstage is the *choragus*, who is the Teller to Curculio's Penn:

⁵¹Dufallo (2013: 25). Richlin (2017: 192-3) also discusses how Lyco's blithe disregard for other people's money touched on contemporary stereotypes of bankers and the negative view of lending money at interest.

⁵²*Curc.* 442-448: **CURC.** *Dicam. quia enim Persas, Paphlagonas/Sinopes, Arabes, Cares, Cretanos, Syros/Rhodiam atque Lyciam, Perediam et Perbibesiam/Centauiromachiam et Classiam, Vnomammiam/Libyamque oram omnem Conterebromniam/dimidiam partem nationum usque omnium/subegit solus intra viginti dies.*

⁵³Sharrock (2008: 8).

CHORAGUS *Edepol nugatorem lepidum lepide hunc nactust Phaedromus.
halapantam an sycophantam magis esse dicam nescio.
ornamenta quae locaui metuo ut possim recipere;
quamquam cum istoc mihi negoti nihil est: ipsi Phaedromo 465
credidi; tamen asseruabo. sed dum hic egreditur foras,
commonstrabo, quo in quemque hominem facile inueniatis loco,
ne nimio opere sumat operam si quem conuentum uelit,
uel uitiosum uel sine uitio, uel probum uel improbum.
qui periurum conuenire uolt hominem ito in comitium; 470
qui mendacem et gloriosum, apud Cloacinae sacrum,
ditis damnosos maritos sub basilica quaerito.
ibidem erunt scorta exoleta quique stipulari solent;
symbolarum collatores apud forum piscarium.
in foro infimo boni homines atque dites ambulant; 475
in medio propter canalem, ibi ostentatores meri;
confidentes garrulique et maleuoli supera lacum,
qui alteri de nihilo audacter dicunt contumeliam
et qui ipsi sat habent quod in se possit uere dicier.
sub ueteribus, ibi sunt qui dant quique accipiunt faenore. 480
pone aedem Castoris, ibi sunt subito quibus credas male.
in Tusco uico, ibi sunt homines qui ipsi sese uenditant,
in Uelabro uel pistorem uel lanium uel haruspicem
uel qui ipsi uorsant uel qui aliis ubi uorsentur praebeant.
[ditis damnosos maritos apud Leucadium Oppiam.] 485
sed interim fores crepuere: linguae moderandum est mihi.*

CHORAGUS By Pollux, Phaedromus has cleverly met with this witty braggart, though I know not whether I should say he is an informant or rather a slanderer. I fear that I will not be able to retrieve the costumes which I arranged. Though this is none of my business: I entrusted it to Phaedromus himself; nevertheless, I will keep an eye on him. But while this man comes outside, I will point out in which place you may easily find what sort of man, so that a man is not put to too much trouble if he wishes to meet a man either full of vice or lacking vice, either honest or dishonest. Let him who wishes to meet an oathbreaker go into the comitium; for a lying braggart to

the temple of Venus Cloacina; let him seek wealthy squandering husbands under the basilica. At the same place will be all the haggard prostitutes and those who wish to bargain for them, and the contributors to feasts will be at the fish-market. In the lowest part of the forum, good wealthy men walk around; in the middle, next to the canal, there are the mere boasters, and the malicious overconfident chatterers are past the Lacus Curtius, those who boldly insult each other for no reason and those who have enough that one might honestly say against them. Under the old shops, there are the men who lend and those who borrow with interest. Behind the temple of Castor are those whom you hastily trust at your peril. In the Tuscan quarter, there are the men who sell their very selves. In the Velabrum, either the baker or the butcher or the soothsayer, or those who turn or those who provide the opportunity for others to turn. Rich, injurious husbands at the house of Leucadia Oppia. But meanwhile the doors have burst open – I must guard my tongue.

After Curculio has inveigled the girl Planesium from the pimp, the *choragus* appears, mirroring Curculio's metatheatrical entrance and pointing out various monuments in the actual Roman forum near which the play is taking place. The *choragus* tells the audience that in these same monuments – the *comitium*, the temple of Venus Cloacina, the *basilica*, the *forum piscarium* — can be found various disreputable personages.⁵⁴ Many of the adjectives mentioned by the *choragus* in this passage are often used to describe stock characters – the comedic *leno* is often described as *periurus*, the *miles* as *gloriosus*, and so on.⁵⁵ The Roman forum is brought into prominence as the illusory Epidaurus falls away. However, all of these characters and scenes are once again being described to a Roman audience by a Greek character in a *pallium*. The reflection of Curculio's entrance is clear: Curculio is pointing out Greeks on the streets of Rome among a Roman audience, while the *choragus* is pointing to Roman people in Roman buildings and accusing them of being palliate characters — in other words, Greeks. Curculio's speech suggests that Greeks are all around the Romans, while the *choragus*

⁵⁴*Curc.* 466-486.

⁵⁵Moore (1991).

points out that the Romans are themselves rather Greek. These two sides of the same coin show how Roman comedy revels in its hybridity.

Interestingly, although Lyco is a traditionally “blocking” character to Curculio and the rest of the ‘team Phaedromus,’ he and the choragus appear to be working from the same set of cultural anxieties about debt, repayment, and commerce. Richlin (2017) has pointed out the specific lines which indicate economic instability: “[ornamenta] *metuo ut possim recipere;/quamquam cum istoc mihi negoti nihil est: ipsi Phaedromo/credidi...*” (emphasis mine).⁵⁶ While the banker is confident of being able to acquire money without ever giving any to anyone due to the Roman legal system, the *choragus* is playing a victim’s role, unable to get a return on the items which he has entrusted to others. The audience more than likely would have empathized with the latter, particularly if they are already primed to be resentful of the former. Lyco and the *choragus*, just like Lyco and Curculio, work in tandem with opposing ideas in order to demonstrate to the audience the ways in which, during a Roman festival, one finds oneself rejecting the characters that articulate Roman social realities in favor of identifying fellow “Romans” as part of a Greek comic troupe. In terms of hybridity, although the audience might live in the theatrical geography articulated by the *choragus*, they are absorbed into the fictional universe — their imposed identification as Greek characters within a Roman setting shows their part in the “third space” within and without the theater.⁵⁷ The *choragus*’s speech follows Lyco’s to defamiliarize the audience’s perception of their hybrid space “by affixing the unfamiliar to something established, in a form that is repetitious and vacillates between delight and fear.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶I am afraid I will not be able to *get back* the [costumes], though I *have* no *business* with that guy: I *entrusted* them to Phaedromus himself.”

⁵⁷ Bhabha (1994: 36).

⁵⁸ibid.

The events of the *Curculio* are all fairly tropic. Even the doubling of scenes above – where a character puts on one identity offstage and subsequently a/ effects similar events onstage — is part of a larger Plautine fascination with doubles.⁵⁹ Just as the Sosia ‘identity’ in the *Amphitruo* is divided among two players, Curculio is one actor who assumes two identities, his own and that of the *choragus*.⁶⁰ Plautine characters also frequently come onstage from “foreign imaginaries” — Rhodes, Sicily, or Thebes, for instance — without the point of departure being a significant part of the plot. However, Curculio’s foreign imaginary is used for a more dramatic purpose. Caria is used not only to explain a character’s absence, but to show that “Epidaurus” onstage is not entirely Greek and that “Rome” offstage is not Roman. Breaking the fourth wall is a common theatrical trope, but Plautus’s genius in these plays is his ability to use these tropes to show Rome to itself.⁶¹ The parasite’s awareness of the Greco-Roman hybridity is indicated by his ability to manipulate theatrical stage for the imagination of both his onstage interlocutor(s) and his audience. The *choragus*, whose job it is to manage costumes, plays a similar, mirrored role to Curculio.⁶² Both characters encourage the audience to look outside the stage – Curculio by coming down towards the stage through the audience, the *choragus* by pointing at the Roman forum and drawing the audience’s attention to it. The Roman forum in which the play is performed functions as the other side to the foreign imaginary. Both of these are not technically part of the stage, but are used as a way to shift the lines between fiction and reality by having the

⁵⁹Barbiero (2016b).

⁶⁰Barbiero (2016b) discusses the similarity between Curculio and the *choragus*.

⁶¹See also the *Truc.* 1-2, where Plautus asks for “*perparuam partem...loci/de uestris magnis atque amoenis moenibus...*”

⁶²Prescott (1920: 269-70): “. . . in brief, his function is like that of the chorus in Greek drama. His speech is wholly irrelevant but entertaining.” Prescott also considers that the *choragus* appears in preceding scenes as a silent role and therefore believes that Plautus did not invent the role of the *choragus* but adapted it from his original. Fraenkel (1922) proposes that the *choragus*’s speech was originally a parabasis in the Greek original.

elements onstage bleed into them.⁶³

1.8 Curtain call and all is well?

Curculio's last demonstration of his capability to possess foreign space is found at the end of the play. When the angry Therapontigonus realizes that Curculio has stolen his ring in order to obtain his girl by fraud, he rushes over from Caria into Epidaurus and onto the stage. The exoticism of the foreign imaginary here reaches its climax. The soldier's link to the particularly exotic Macedonian conquests has already been discussed, as has the ring. There is also a possible allusion to Hannibal's theft of a ring *in order to seem more Roman*.⁶⁴ Curculio, does not quite follow this example, instead using the ring to make the foreign imaginary less imaginary. This is, after all, the only prop which provides evidence for Curculio's wild story. This is immediately followed by a more dramatic reveal — the soldier himself is brother to one of the original cast! Instead of trying to blend into the established scene, the soldier adds by his presence an exotic element to the hybrid spaces which Curculio and the *choragus* have loudly pointed out in their speeches. Unlike the *Poenulus*, however, the foreign man does not foreignize his relatives to such an extent that they must be removed from the stage. Nor does the exotic soldier's mere presence allow the play's events to be resolved. Rather, it is Curculio's possession of the ring combined with Therapontigonus's entrance which awakes Planesium's curiosity and brings the two together for the revelation of their

⁶³McElduff (2013: 80) points out that these are educated Greeks whose books mean that they are not only infiltrating Rome with their bodies, but with written culture, "even as Plautus provides another form of culture onstage."

⁶⁴Leigh (2004: 34-5) recounts stories found in Livy and Appian in which Hannibal steals the ring of the dead soldier Marcellus and, combining that with his knowledge of Latin, uses it to talk his way into a number of Italian cities. Leigh remarks, "It is almost as if he has seen the *Curculio*."

identities. Thus, even when faced with a the source of the foreign identity that Curculio has been appropriating — the soldier and his ring — the parasite remains in control of it. When the two siblings finally reunite, Therapontigonus’s first action is to betroth consensually his sister to Phaedromus, which is what Curculio desired all along.

What Curculio’s scheme has in the end accomplished is an integration of the Eastern foreignness represented by the soldier and (by extension) his sister into the world of Phaedromus.⁶⁵ The twin rings, resplendent with the exotic imagery of the slaughtered elephant, lead to Planesium being brought into Phaedromus’s keeping like a prize of conquest. Thanks to Curculio, the girl is won and the soldier is pacified – within the bounds of the play, the East has been integrated onto the hybrid scene of the play, making it more ‘imaginary’ and less eerily similar to Rome as Curculio and the *choragus* initially made it seem. The blurring between Greece and Rome also means that Rome itself has connections to the remote East. Thus, the discourse of mimicry is superimposed onto the entire theatrical zone. The scenes where Curculio and the *choragus* minimize the “articulation of difference” between Greekness and Romanness, and more importantly, between Greek theatricality and Roman presence — produce a tension that is ultimately released at the play’s conclusion as the audience leaves Plautus’s created hybrid space.

1.9 All the world’s a (hybrid) stage: how Greek is Roman comedy?

There is already precedent for viewing Plautine comedy as a setting with interacting Greek and Roman elements, though Fraenkel’s 1922 work has led many subsequent scholars to believe that “...the Greek illusion was no illusion at all; the characters in

⁶⁵The sudden “foreignization” of Planesium recalls the sisters in the *Poenulus* and makes one long for a clearer idea of the sort of masks worn by characters that undergo such a transformation.

Plautine comedy were not Greeks but really Romans in disguise; the play was not really set in Athens or some other Greek locale but in Rome itself, or in some in-between fantasy space, with half-Greek, half-Roman characters. Beginning from these premises, then, the content of Plautus' plays soon became – whether as satire, cultural commentary, or racist caricature – a source of Roman social history."⁶⁶ This is a conclusion that seems to derive from similar conclusions about Athenian comedy, which also was full of foreign characters who even spoke in foreign languages or dialects.⁶⁷ As Old Comedy is generally seen as overtly political, previous scholars viewed common elements between Plautine comedy and Old Comedy, particularly those referencing current realities of ethnicity or language, as analogous in intended effect.⁶⁸ However, I believe that the *Curculio* shows characters who exercise their "double vision" on both the stage and the audience to show that narratives of Greekness or Romanness cannot be held down, due to the constant negotiation with "outside" elements. *Curculio* and the *choragus* both show in their monologues that the hybrid result is already extremely familiar to the audience, which is living within Bhabhaian "interstices of culture," where the "domains of difference" are "overlapped and displaced" in order to negotiate identities.

1.10 Conclusion

Curculio is a play in which we can clearly see how markers of spatial designation,

⁶⁶Fontaine (2014b).

⁶⁷For instance, Willi (2014: 181-2): "...the linguistic centrifugality we have diagnosed for Old Comedy also has to be seen in a 'political' light. By making fun of all that is deviant from the linguistic 'norms' set by the demos and embodied in the colloquial default register, comedy endorses these norms and reinforces civic cohesion among an audience which, despite its heterogeneity, discovers that it can laugh at one and the same target: those 'alien voices' the average Athenian was socially and culturally bound to encounter in his or her city."

⁶⁸The political nature of Old Comedy is unanimously commented upon. For an example of studies on political reverberations in Plautine Comedy, see my earlier reference to Leigh (2004: 34-5) who draws a parallel between *Curculio*'s theft of a ring and Hannibal's reportedly similar action as one which Plautus intended to resonate in the mind of the audience.

hybridity, and exoticism are shown, torn down, and restructured. Epidaurus is not a real place, but an empty shell: a “sort of default mode in which the location is just a marker of hybridity,” as Richlin aptly puts it.⁶⁹ The ‘Greek stage’ allows the Roman audience to view an image of Greekness which has been translated for their benefit. However, this insistence on Greekness is often undermined by Roman allusions or ironic designations of Romans as *barbari*, both of which remind audiences that they are in fact in Rome. *Curculio* is an ideal denizen of this translated Plautopolis — a master of changing Greece to Rome and back to Greece again, until the audience is forced to realize that Greece cannot be confined to a stage and is in fact commingled with the world in which they live. The *choragus* drives this point even further by pointing out that the Romans have the capability to behave as theatrically as the Greeks. Once the playful, metatheatrical characters have broken down boundaries of Greekness and Romanness, *Curculio* ends the play with an infusion of a foreign imaginary becoming visible. The soldier’s exotic presence added to the stage of already hybrid characters displays to the audience the shifting borders between what is known and what is foreign, and the new articulations of meaning that are produced when these different cultures interact onstage.

We must look in these “interstices of cultures” in order to gain further understanding of the “collective experiences of nationness,” or at least the efforts towards it, that are negotiated on and offstage.⁷⁰ Plautus’s shortest play is one of the best examples of this interweaving of the “collective experiences” of Greek and non-Greek foreignness within a Roman comedy that we possess. In the *Curculio*, we have roughly three settings – the offstage “foreign imaginary” of Caria, the onstage Epidaurus, and the Roman

⁶⁹Richlin (2005: 39).

⁷⁰Bhabha (1994: 2): “It is in the emergence of the interstices — the overlap and displacement of domains of difference — intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.”

setting in which the play is taking place.⁷¹ This category of the foreign imaginary is one which facilitates an analysis of the competing interactions between Greeks and Romans in this play.⁷² The repeated mention of Caria as a “foreign imaginary” whither and whence props and characters are brought onstage brings into starker relief the negotiations between Greek and Roman elements. When the eponymous parasite arrives from “Caria,” he saunters through the audience in the city of Rome while pointing out that this “Roman” audience is in fact full of Greeks. On the other side, the parasite’s physical presence in Rome — a character interacting with the Real People in the city — implicates the city in the theatrical action and weakens the distance that the audience might well feel when watching a play which is set “elsewhere” in Greece. This combination illustrates the complex and dialogic nature of the *Curculio*. It not only contains most of the tropes which characterize the genre, but also shows how these tropes, though typical of comedy, interweave a deeper discourse about the relationship between Romans and non-Romans. Caria is not so present in the audience’s imagination, allowing the playwright and actors to impute foreignness to this imaginary place in order to heighten the complicated dance of identity and difference between what is “Roman” and what is “Greek.” These differences show how the *Curculio* uses the ultra-foreign, two-dimensional Caria to show the Greek-Roman hybridity on the theatrical stage.

⁷¹There are of course fifteen more “foreign imaginary” places in the *Curculio* which are a supposed part of the soldier’s itinerary, but only Caria provides Curculio with anything as solid as a prop. For a detailed list of places where the soldier purportedly goes, see Richlin (2017: 352).

⁷²See for instance E. W. Said (1979: 63) version of the Oriental stage: “The Orient seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe.[...] In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world... of monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires.”

Chapter 2

Poenulus

2.1 Introduction

The *Poenulus*, like the *Curculio*, has Greece, Rome, and an unseen “Elsewhere” in dialogue with one another throughout the play. However, in the *Poenulus*, this engagement with foreignness is displayed through the characters’ self-definition and interactions with one another.¹ Moreover, the foreigners are Carthaginian – they represent a land with which Rome had been fighting a series of battles in the 3rd and 2nd centuries. Because the recognition scene between Hanno and Agorastocles only occurs at the end of the play, most of the *Poenulus* involves characters who are foreign to each other as well as to the setting and audience. In keeping with the theme of this dissertation, I show how this engagement with foreignness is tied to the outcome of the play. This becomes particularly complicated in the *Poenulus*, when almost everyone is in some way foreign — the young Agorastocles and the two girls are all aware of their Carthaginian identity but make little mention of it until the end of the play; Collybiscus is not an obvious foreigner but disguises himself as one deliberately; and Hanno is a Carthaginian whose foreignness engages with what appears to be a long list of recognizable stereotypes about Carthaginians.² These stereotypes, of course, arise from the long history between Rome and Carthage. I will begin this chapter by outlining a few of pieces of literary evidence illustrating that relationship before I analyze how these Plautine Carthaginians negotiate Carthaginian identity within this context of shared history and conflict.

¹See my section on the “foreign imaginary.”

²The diminutive in the title of the play has many scholarly interpretations. Franko (1996: 428) has pointed out that this is not the only diminutive in Plautus’s plays (*Mostellaria*, *Cistellaria*), adding that “in the case of *Poenulus* the audience would have absolutely no foreknowledge of whether the Punic in question is little, poor, lovable, rascally, or whatever else a diminutive can connote.” Melo (2012a: 11-12) sees a “note of contempt” in the diminutive but accepts that it may actually simply be affectionate or simply refer to Hanno’s stature.

2.2 Plot

Agorastocles is a young man from Carthage who was kidnapped as a child and adopted by a wealthy man in Calydon. He is in love with Adelphasium who, unbeknownst to him, is his cousin and was also kidnapped from Carthage. Adelphasium and her sister Anterastilis are in the care of Lycus the procurer, who, like most Plautine pimps, is the object of Agorastocles's hatred. Accordingly, Agorastocles and his slave make a plan to charge Lycus harboring a slave. The two plotters get Agorastocles's bailiff Collybiscus to disguise himself as a foreigner and ask Lycus to host him. Once the unsuspecting procurer has taken in Collybiscus, Agorastocles comes to his house with his witnesses and accuses Lycus of harboring his slave. In the middle of this intrigue, Hanno arrives. This extravagantly costumed Carthaginian is the uncle of Agorastocles and the father of Adelphasium and Anterastilis, and he has followed his daughters' trail to Calydon. Once Hanno's identity is revealed, Lycus is taken to task for his crime, and Lycus agrees to marry Adelphasium to Agorastocles.

2.3 Literary evidence of Carthaginian stereotypes

The stereotypes in the *Poenulus* do not all arise from the Punic Wars. The general consensus is that this play is one that is based on Alexis's *Καρχηδόνιος*, which is based on a universe very different from the one familiar to Plautus's Roman audience. Though there are only a few fragments of the *Καρχηδόνιος* remaining, Arnott has made two links between fragments of Alexis and verses of the *Poenulus*.³ The one which is most cogent to my reading is the two-word *βάκηλος εἶ*, which points to a stereotype that

³Arnott (1996).

Carthaginians were effeminate.⁴ Since these two words of Alexis comprise a large fraction of the extant *Καρχηδόνιος*, it seems risky to make any assumptions about the sexual stereotypes of Carthaginians before Plautus. However, since the Carthaginians have a well-documented history with Romans during Plautus's time, I will summarize the contemporary relationship, which adds another layer to the attitudes surrounding the Carthaginian characters.

In Greek literature, stereotypes about the Phoenicians go back all the way to Homer.⁵ The Romans are strikingly ambivalent towards the Carthaginians.⁶ Ennius's fragments only depict Hannibal as *dubius*, and although one might expect the relationship between Romans and Carthaginians to be hostile during Plautus's time, "in the age of the Punic wars, the Romans did not require a construct of Carthaginians as barbarous, wicked, and faithless to bolster their self-esteem or exhibit their superiority."⁷

Plautus provides some of the first evidence that negative stereotypes about Carthaginians had made their way to Rome. The phrase *Poenus plane est* as an explanation for Hanno's slyness sounds like an aphorism.⁸ There is evidence that this is used as an insult, particularly as there is a similarly contemptuous-sounding remark in the *Asinaria* about *Graeca fides*, as well as one about the clearly oxymoronic *fides muliebris* in

⁴ *βάκηλος* εἶ, is found in Kassell-Austin fragment 105. The other fragment is fr. 265(263K), which is closely linked to Poen. 522-3.

⁵In Homer, Phoenicians are described as merchants, but are not given a wholly positive or negative image (XIII.272, XIV.288-294). However, Aubet (1993: 127-128) has not seen this as ambivalence, stating rather that the Phoenicians are only depicted positively when they refrain from acting on their mercantile instincts. She continues, "The Homeric noble ideal assumes that goods are acquired through goods and piracy, hence the completely negative attitude seen in the Iliad and the Odyssey to trade and traders and, by extension, the Phoenicians."

⁶Aubet (1993: 127-8) does not see this as ambivalence, stating rather that the Phoenicians are only depicted positively when they refrain from acting on their mercantile instincts. She continues, "The Homeric noble ideal assumes that goods are acquired through goods and piracy, hence the completely negative attitude seen in the Iliad and the Odyssey to trade and traders and, by extension, the Phoenicians."

⁷Ennius, *Ann.* 474-5; Gruen (2011a: 139).

⁸Syed (2005: 366-367). The phrase *punica fides* certainly became a pejorative phrase later in Latin literature, but this appears in writing only after the fall of Carthage.

the *Miles Gloriosus*.⁹ Moreover, the fact remains that Hanno achieves his goal — his reunion with his daughters and is therefore a “winner” in the comedic game. One is forced to settle on the Ennian *dubius* as the adjective that exemplifies Hanno and the foreignness that he represents.

2.4 The foreignness of the foreign

Due to the plethora of foreign characters in this play, it seems wise to attempt to categorize the spectrum of foreignness before engaging with the slippages of identity which arise over the course of the play. In the briefest of terms, Agorastocles, Adelphasium, and Anterastilis are depicted as Carthaginian-Greek: all three were born in Carthage to Carthaginian parents, but arrived in Calydon at a young age.¹⁰ Collybiscus, Lycus, and Milphio are viewed as Greek, though the latter has a very strange name.¹¹ Hanno and Giddenis are Carthaginians who arrived in Greece as adults. However, these simplistic labels are not sufficient for my analysis of the play. With regard to the two lovers Agorastocles and Adelphasium, there is a “foreignizing” of the heretofore Greek-looking Carthaginians when their uncle arrives on the scene. Up till that moment, the young characters seem unaware of or largely indifferent to their “foreign”

⁹As. 199, commented on by Segal 1987b: 38, who adds “Beware of non-Romans, they are all ‘Greeks,’” ethnic differences notwithstanding, though adding on p. 243 that “...the stereotype which attributes all perfidies to foreigners is nowhere more factitious than in Plautus’s initial description of Hanno the Carthaginian.” For the ironic *fides graeca* and *fides muliebris*, see Dutsch (2000: 99).

¹⁰A note on names: Schmidt 1902: 354-5’s article displays the parallels between Agorastocles’ name and the Carthaginians’ reputation for businessmen, though Schmidt points out that ἀγοραστός means “buyer,” not “merchant..” ἀγοραστός, meaning “bought” or “paid for,” could also be a reference to Agorastocles’ kidnapping.

¹¹Schmidt (1902: 374-5) and Jocelyn (1971: 331) discuss the pathological overtones in the name Milphio, which might derive from μιλφός/μίλφωσις (the falling-off of eyelashes or an equivalent to the Latin *lippus*, or a term for baldness). However, none of these terms seem to be especially relevant to Milphio’s character, and may just be a Plautine innovation for more commonplace ones found in the Καρχηδόνιος.

origins. It is instead the young people's unambiguously foreign Carthaginian relative who emphasizes that they are not Greeks, but his own countrymen. During the six hundred or so verses that separate the prologue from Hanno's entrance, the audience sees that most of the characters onstage are of non-Roman, non-Greek foreign origin or disguised as foreigners, but are not noticeably treated as such by other members of the cast.¹² These characters are less obviously foreign than Hanno and thus provide an interesting contrast to him.

In my examinations of this play, I begin at the prologue, where the parameters of the play and the first descriptions of foreignness are laid out. I then look at the implications of Carthaginian foreignness, as the historical Carthage-Rome relationship differentiates the *Poenulus* from the other two plays. From there, I proceed through the play, paying particular attention to the scenes after Agorastocles's uncle Hanno appears onstage and the markers of identity mentioned above. I will end this case study by discussing the implications of the departure of the "successful" characters at the end of the play. I posit that it is the combination of their success and the Carthaginian-ness of their identity which renders them unsuitable for the stage. While the masterminds of the *Curculio* and the *Persa* were never part of the foreign world which they staged for their hapless victims, the young lovers are inescapably tied to their foreignness, a fact which Hanno exposes and emphasizes with his garishly foreign identity. They are not treated as the pimps and bankers of the Plautine world are, since they are the characters who traditionally are rewarded with "happy" endings (Milphio is the primary mastermind, but he works on behalf of the young lovers). However, they are inescapably tied to their Carthaginian origins. When the time of their staged foreignness is over, the tension

¹²Hanno almost certainly wore a mask which identified him as Punic, but it is less clear whether or not the young Carthaginians do. Richlin (2017: 376-7) has pointed out the visual gags that would occur if, for instance, Anterastilis were dressed in a black mask, but, as I will discuss later, the masks of the young lovers are not concretely evidenced by the dialogue surrounding their appearance.

between the Carthaginian characters' ethnicity and their roles within the hybrid comic world are resolved by their leaving the Plautine stage altogether.

2.4.1 *Poenulus*: 1-6

Achillem Aristarchi mihi commentari lubet:
inde mihi principium capiam, ex ea tragoedia.
« sileteque et tacete atque animum aduertite,
audire iubet uos imperator » ... histricus,
bonoque ut animo sedeate in subselliis, 5
et qui esurientes et qui saturi uenerint...

It pleases me to rehearse the Achilles of Aristarchus: thence will I take my beginning, from that tragedy. "Cease speaking and be silent and pay attention, listen up by order of your commanding..." actor, that you might sit with good will in the seats, both those who are hungry and those who come with a full stomach...

As is his wont, Plautus cites a Greek work which he professes to imitate — in this case, Aristarchus's *Achilles*. Lines 3-4 are likely a quote spoken by Agamemnon to his troops, trying to persuade Achilles to return and fight. However, what he quotes is Ennius's translation of the same tragedy. Ennius is known for having translated many works of Euripides and some of Aristarchus.¹³ However, the audience continued to know the play as Aristarchus's *Achilles*. Plautus is toying with his audience in two ways: both toying with his audience by suggesting that he will be imitating a tragedy (though he does not keep his word), and showing a Roman writer's translation of a Greek work. Although he calls this work *Aristarchi*, the Latin words which he speaks bring Ennius into prominence.¹⁴ In fact, even the name of the Greek author is not quite as 'Greek'

¹³Gloss. Lat. I, 568 L.

¹⁴Nervegna (2014: 185-6) asserts that the audience was used to Roman plays called by their Greek names, so Ennius is invisible even as his words are being spoken.

a voice as one might initially think: Greek plays, even translated ones, were often referred to by their Greek names to their Roman audiences.¹⁵ The Roman translator here is simultaneously anonymous and superimposed onto the Greek text.

Plautus's use of Ennius is an example of a Roman translator of a Greek work being privileged over the "original," though this is not necessarily a conscious Plautine choice so much as the standard practice of the time.¹⁶ Plautus then juxtaposes himself with Ennius by supplementing Ennius's *imperator* with his preferred term *histricus*. McElduff argues that "Plautus presents his work as translator as potentially equivalent to that of a general who brings glory and art back to Rome."¹⁷ However, Plautus is not bringing back *objects*. As stage manager, he is taking the role of *imperator* but also urges those unfortunate members of the audience who have not eaten beforehand to become *saturi. . . fabulis*.¹⁸ Not only is Plautus bringing back Greek work, but through the prologue he reappropriates it as a part of a Roman festival — only to complicate the idea of Roman power throughout the play.

The use and alteration of the *Achilles* begins with a brief burst of layered mimicry. The eleven words which are themselves "translated" from Greek (with all that translation implies) are nevertheless labeled as Greek — a mimicry of Greek literature which nevertheless elevates the Roman literature to which Plautus is adding. Plautus appropriates the "other," while the bathetic moment of adding *histricus* to the grandiose *imperator* has the effect of Bhabhaian mimicry — that of "exercis[ing] its authority through the figures of farce. . . irony, mimicry and repetition."¹⁹ Once again, this ap-

¹⁵Jocelyn (1969). Feeney (2016: 53) implies that Romans placed a high value on the translator, even calling the *Odusia* "Livius' book", However, in 267n48 he adds: "It is interesting that the practice of comedy is often different. . . Plautus and Terence refer to their own comedies or to tragedies by the name of the Greek author.

¹⁶Slater 1985: 136.

¹⁷McElduff (2013: 69).

¹⁸*Poen.* 8. The bathetic effect of going from an 'imperious' tone to discussing the mundanities of food and drink has already been seen in the *Curculio*.

¹⁹Bhabha (1984: 126).

pears to be a reversal of what Bhabha considers mimicry, as the Romans who are the conquering power in the Mediterranean are the ones who are mimicking the Greeks. However, this reversed mimicry is still a way to show Roman power: Romans are not imitating Greeks in an effort to become more like them, but are in fact showing their superiority in their implicit “claim to representation, to being able to stage the Greeks...”²⁰ This is an instance of mimicry that is closer to mockery or menace, a process in which the culturally ‘colonized’ subjects are behaving exactly as Edward Cust feared they would:

“by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence.”²¹

Despite the title and the prologue, Plautus’s audience only sees the ostentatiously foreign Carthaginian after two-thirds of the play is already over.²²

²⁰McElduff (2013: 78). Although I believe that Roman appropriation of Greek material culture and that of Greek literary are different (in ways which I have discussed in the introduction), there are still elements of superiority in the ways in which Romans interact with Greek theater.

²¹Bhabha (1984: 125).

²²This is in keeping with Slater (1985)’s well-supported law of inverse proportions: “...the more we hear about a plot in a Plautine prologue, the less we will see it acted in the course of a play.” (150) This particular prologue spends more time with the backstory of the characters than with the plot, and even when the plot is discussed the prologue focuses its attention on the last third of the play. The play nevertheless engages with social and ethnic tensions before Hanno’s arrival, just as the *Curculio* does.

2.4.2 *Poenulus*: 17-35

scortum exoletum²³ ne quis in proscaenio²⁴
sedeat, neu lictor uerbum aut uirgae muttiant,
neu dissignator praeter os obambulet
neu sessum ducat, dum histrio in scaena siet. 20
diu qui domi otiosi dormierunt, deceit
animo aequo nunc stent, uel dormire temperent.
serui ne obsideant, liberis ut sit locus,
uel aes pro capite dent; si id facere non queunt,
domum abeant, uitent ancipiti infortunio, 25
ne et hic uariantur uirgis et loris domi,
si minus curassint, quom eri reueniant domum.
nutrices pueros infantis minutulos
domi ut procurent neu quae spectatum afferant,
ne et ipsae sitiant et pueri pereant fame 30
neue esurientes hic quasi haedi obuagiant.
matronae tacitae spectent, tacitae rideant,
canora hic uoce sua tinnire temperent,
domum sermones fabulandi conferant,
ne et hic uiris sint et domi molestiae. 35

Let there be no worn-out prostitute seated in front of the orchestra, let neither a lictor nor his rods mutter anything, nor an usher walk in front of someone's face, nor show someone to his seat while an actor is onstage. Those who overslept at home, should now stand with good grace or refrain from sleeping. Let slaves

²³*Exoletum* comes from the Latin *exolesco* ("to to grow out of use, out of date, to become obsolete"). However, there is also a resonance of the verb *oleō* ("to smell"), which with the verb *muttio* creates a sensory gallimaufry of sight, scent, and sound.

²⁴There has been some debate about the meaning of *proascaenium*. Most recently, Moodie (2015: 94) defines *proascaenium* as "stage," but *scaena* more ambiguously, as meaning either "before the stage building" or "in the performance area." Marshall (2006: 33n75) claims that *scaena* should "properly" be defined as "the wooden, temporary backdrop" and *proascaenium* as "the area directly in front of it." Beacham (1992: 60) claims that neither term is exact and could be used interchangeably. If *proascaenium* does refer to the stage itself, rather than the front of the stage area or the orchestra (as Tanner (1969) asserts), we might see a Curculio-like blurring of boundaries between comedic characters and undesirable residents of the theatrical public.

not get in the way, in order that there may be space for free men or let them pay for their own seats. If they do not wish to do this, let them go home and avoid a twofold punishment, so they are not bruised with rods here and whips at home if they are remiss in their duties when their masters return home. Let nurses take care of their tiny newborn charges at home and not bring them to watch this, so the former are not thirsty and the latter do not die of hunger, nor wail hungrily here like kids. Let the ladies of the house watch in silence and laugh in silence, and refrain from being shrill with their far-reaching voices, and let them take home their commentaries, in order that they not bother their husbands here and at home.

Prior to Jocelyn (1969), several scholars believed that the above text was a literal translation of Alexis's *Karkhedonios*. However, Jocelyn and subsequent scholars have pointed out the mention of lictors and the very Roman *palma* show Plautine elements which could not have derived from Greek.²⁵ This lends credence to the idea that like the parasite's opening address in the *Curculio*, this prologue is a reflection (though a caricatural reflection, as all comedic comments are) of the audience watching the play. These lines also provide us with one of our few pieces of evidence that women and children were among the audience of the play.²⁶

However, the *prologus*'s bullying of the audience does a rapid about-face in lines 55-58, when he goes back to emphasizing the Romanity of his audience. In the following lines, he claims that his argument will be examined by the audience who will assume the role of *iuratores* or censors' assistants.²⁷ Instead of blurring the boundaries between theatrical Greece and urban Rome, the playwright blurs the social boundaries of the

²⁵Jocelyn (1969) believed that the prologue was the composition of at least three authors, based on elements such as the uncommon mention of the author's name, as well as the information of the Greek original (cf. Slater (2013), who seems to consider many of these objections unfounded and easily acceptable within the realm of performance.). Christenson (2008: 147n1) has pointed out that impersonal prologues (where the speaker is not identified) are a Roman innovation.

²⁶Of course, the opposite could well be true—there are no nurses or infants, but the butt of a joke could be not the presence of women and children, but a particularly reedy-voiced man, suggesting either the nagging of a woman or the wailing of a child. Consider Morgan Freeman in *Shawshank Redemption*: "Why do they call you Red?" "Maybe it's cause I'm Irish."

²⁷Moore (1998: 12-13).

audience.²⁸ The interstitial feeling of these lines will soon be eclipsed, however, by the arrival of the ultra-foreign Hanno onstage. The presence of the *poenissimus Poenulus* makes the audience, however hybrid, face off against him.

2.4.3 *Poenulus* 46-58: Keep calm and Calydon

Ad argumentum nunc uicissatim²⁹
uolo remigrare, ut aequè mecum
sit-is gnarures. eius nunc regiones, limites,
confinia determinabo: ei rei ego
finitor factus sum. sed
molestumst, nomen dare uobis uolo
comoediai; sin odios, dicam tamen,
siquidem licebit per illos quibus est in
manu. Carchedonius uocatur haec
comoedia, latine Plautus Patruus
Pultiphagonides.³⁰ nomen iam habetis.
nunc rationes ceteras accipite; nam
argumentum hoc hic censebitur:
locus argumentost suom sibi proscaenium, uos iuratores estis. quaeso,
operam date.

²⁸Marshall (2006: 78-80) discusses the theatrical segregation of seats against which Plautus appears to be trying to push back in these words.

²⁹Watson (1970: 113-4), Watson (1991: 337-9) considered this entire passage a parody of a praetorian edict, based on the reference to the lictors and the third person subjunctives found throughout.

³⁰This line is also quite debated. It is unclear whether Plautus is the porridge-eating uncle who translates the play into Latin, or whether Plautus translates the play as "Patruus Pultiphagonides." The latter, as Francken (1876) pointed out, is not especially substantiated, as there is no evidence that Carthaginians were ever described as porridge-eating. Copley (1970) suggested that the title may have been a multilingual pun "Plautus Patruus Pultiphagonides," which Franko (1996) translated "Uncle Son-of-Porridge-Eater," but both he and Melo (2012a) makes a strong case for it referring to Plautus rather than Hanno, due to all three nouns being in the nominative case and the fact that Plautus makes a similar joke about Roman dietary habits in *Most.* 828.

I now wish to return once again to the plot, so that you may be as wise to it as I am. I will mark out its spaces, borders, and boundaries: I have been made the surveyor of this play. But if it is no trouble, I wish to give you the name of the play; if you hate the idea, I will give it anyway – if in fact it is permitted by those with whom the permission rests. This play is called Karchedonius, which Plautus the Porridge-Eating Uncle [translated] into Latin. Now you have the name. Now hear the account of the rest; for this plot is assessed here: the place for this plot is its own stage, and you are the assessors. Please, pay attention.

Slater explains the phenomenon thus:

“Theatrical and political spheres here mirror and reinforce each other. The completeness of the power reversal on stage (the praetor reduced to an average citizen, the audience he ordered about elevated to iuratores) undergirds the notion of popular control over the magistrates of the Republic — even as practice historically moved ever further from that ideal.”³¹

Plautus’s interest in physical space is also clear in the first four lines of this excerpt. Even the adverb *vicissatim* may be part of his commentary on spatial boundaries: Naevius uses it once and Plautus twice. Although Plautus’s preference for *vicissatim* as opposed to the more common *vicissim* is at least partly due to metrical constraints, Crampon (2005) lays open the possibility that there is an allusion to *vicatim* — “through the streets/neighborhoods” — which the audience was intended to hear. Crampon has also suggested that “[u]ne valeur “technique” d’ordre général serait alors perceptible dans les adverbes en *-tim* que Plaute utilise pour suggérer un mouvement, unité par unité, qu’elle soit grande ou petite.”³² However, since both the common *vicissim* and the verb *remigrare* themselves suggest movement, the forced inclusion of the suffix *-tim* would do little that was not already expressed in the line. This is not Plautus’s first portmanteau or paronomasia with dubious phonetic justification, as Petrone has

³¹Slater (1985: 156).

³²Crampon (2005: 173).

shown with her analysis of *exossatum os* in Plautus's *Amphitryon*.³³ From this dynamic sentence, the *prologus* comes to a more static assertion: he will now mark off the *regiones, limites, and confinia* of the *argumentum*.³⁴ The bustle of the diverse spectators-turned-censusmen is suddenly encased in the space which Plautus is demarcating. This arrestation of movement is ultimately an illusion, but the present contrast is startling and captivating nevertheless.

The elevation of the extremely heterogeneous audience to the level of *iuratores* invites them to judge the play and unites them "as a set of knowers."³⁵ The prologue's bringing together of various Roman identities suggests an invitation to unity – an "us" against which to set the Carthaginian foreigner whom the prologue slanders. Of course, this being a Plautine play, the *Poenulus* continues to complicate this conception of identities as it continues. The racial hybridity and mimicry that are shown on Hanno's arrival are preceded by similar tensions happening with relation to the genre of the play and the social divides within Roman society and between the audience and actors.

Bhabhaian elements are already shown in the first sixty lines of the play. The idea of mimicry is seen in the bait-and-switch of the genre — I read the initial lines as mimicking Aristarchus's tragedy, creating a "blurred copy" of the play by translating it and then making it a comedy. The *prologus*, who may have been dressed in tragic fashion, says: *ego ibo, ornabor...ibo, alius nunc fieri volo*.³⁶ This is a moment in which the Roman mimicry of Greeks mentioned in the chapter on the *Curculio* appears again.

³³Petrone (2009: 91-99).

³⁴Coote (1869: 146) claims that Plautus uses these agrimensorial words to appeal to his plebeian audience: "none can doubt that the Roman plebs, ever agitating for territorial doles, would critically appreciate the due employment of these appetising words." Crampon (2006) also considers that with these lines, the *prologus* is marking himself as a surveyor, a promising sight for the landless audience.

³⁵Gunderson (2015: 74).

³⁶Manuwald (2011a: 305): "Plautus exploited the relationship between comedy and tragedy more than any other Republican dramatist." Also note that *exorno* is the verb used in Collybiscus's costume change (*Poen.* 426). Regarding the *prologus*, Mattingly (1960: 250n1) goes further than suggesting that the *prologus* was wearing tragic costume and thinks that the same *dominus gregis* from the *Achilles* performed the prologue here.

Plautus engages with his audience in such a way that they go from being different individuals to becoming a mass of *iuratores*. These initial theatrical *iuratores* may be, as I discuss later, an allusion to the *advocati*, who are another mass of characters without individual identification who appear onstage. The *nutrices* and *servi* from these first few lines appear onstage as characters not long after, as Milphio and Giddenis. Once again, the audience in Rome is being brought into prominence, only to flicker out again as the Calydonian stage comes to the fore, creating tensions which were already close to the surface, a decade after the Second Punic War.

The rest of the prologue is a description of the plot and the circumstances that bring it about – Agorastocles’ bereavement, kidnapping, and adoption, as well as the kidnapping of his cousins. However, this prologue also provides the audience with quite a series of insinuations against Hanno:

2.4.4 *Poenulus* 83-84; 106-113: Tunis company, four is a crowd

Sed illi patruo huius, qui uiuit senex,
Carthaginiensi duae fuere filiae...
ubi quamque in urbem est ingressus,
ilico omnes meretrices, ubi quisque habitant,
inuenit; dat aurum, ducit noctem, rogitat postibi
unde sit, quoiatis, captane an
surrupta sit, quo genere gnata, qui
parentes fuerint. 110
ita docte atque astu filias quaerit
suas. et is omnis linguas scit, sed
dissimulat sciens se scire:
Poenus plane est. quid uerbis opust?

But [Agorastocles'] uncle the Carthaginian, who is old but still living, had two daughters. . . when he enters any city, he finds out about all the prostitutes, where each one lives; he gives each one money, hires her for a night, then interrogates her afterward about where she is from, of what origin, whether she was a prisoner of war or kidnapped, of what family she is, and who her parents were. In this way he cleverly and slyly seeks his daughters. And he knows all languages, but pretends not to know what he knows: he is a total Punic. What more needs to be said?

While it is not stated that Hanno actually sleeps with these women, the specter of incest looms over the audience's first impression of him.³⁷ Hanno is also given a reputation for duplicity: the prologue informs the audience that [*Hanno*] *omnis linguas scit, sed dissimulat sciens se scire*.³⁸ Fontaine also suggests that the many instances of 'tongues' and Hanno's Phoenician identity associate Hanno with the shameful act of cunnilingus.³⁹ These aspersions are further underlined in lines 112-3, where Hanno is for the first time referred to as *Poenus* — an ethnic moniker rather than the national *Carthaginiensis*.⁴⁰ It seems that Plautus is attributing more negative stereotypes to Hanno the Carthaginian within the prologue than had ever been seen before in literature. On the other hand, Hanno is also described earlier on as *summo genere*, a phrase which has been used on five different occasions in Plautus. In at least two of these instances, the phrase is used in situations when the object of the phrase is pretending to be someone else — notably, Tyndarus pretending to be Philocrates in the *Captivi*, and *Persa's* Toxilus talking about the *virgo*, disguised as an Arab slave.⁴¹

³⁷Franko (1996: 430n7); cf. Starks (2000: 223), Maurice (2004: 278-9), Melo (2012a: 12-3). Franko and Starks in particular note how gestures and intonation could tilt the balance in either direction.

³⁸*Poen.* 112. Another example of *fides Punica*.

³⁹Fontaine (2010: 204-6).

⁴⁰Franko (1994: 155-6) points out that though the two terms are often used to refer to the same groups of people, Hanno is mocked in the *Poenulus* only with the ethnic term *Poenus* (155) while the civic term *Carthaginiensis* is not used insultingly. cf. Prag (2006: 7): "The natural desire for clarity leads to an attempt to maintain a clear distinction between ethnic *Poenus* and political *Carthaginiensis*...however...this is a distinction that imposes overly modern notions of ethnic and political categories upon the ancient usage."

⁴¹*Cap.* 170, *Per.* 670.

While it is not conclusive, it does suggest that the phrase is not necessarily spoken with the utmost sincerity. All in all, the remarks about Hanno above are not particularly flattering, and do seem to suggest that the audience is intended to be united against him.⁴²

Although Plautus does not use it at all, Ennius's adjective *dubius* seems to be the most fitting adjective for Hanno. He is a wavering character, who is by turns sympathetic and unsympathetic, humorous and serious. Hanno is also referred to as speaking with a forked tongue — the same phrase which Bhabha uses centuries later to refer to the discourse of colonialism.⁴³ Hanno is a character who illustrates attitudes towards race, identity, and ethnicity, often by engendering different and contradictory reactions towards himself. In reviewing the first few lines, the prologue appears to take a stand with its enhancement of negative stereotypes about Carthaginians. The previously mentioned relationships between Greek Calydon, Carthage, and Rome — along with another trio of the theatrical, the urban, and the mostly imaginary — make Hanno a particularly complicated character in the play. He is a foreigner trapped among layers of foreignness.

Hanno is doubly othered in the play, both in the theatrical Calydon where he arrives, and once again in the eyes of the Romans who make up his audience. Unlike the case of the *virgo* in *Persa*, no one in the cast considers Hanno anything but Carthaginian — though he is oddly dressed, there is no idea that Hanno has disguised himself. Hanno's late entrance means that the audience is faced with other examples of foreignness first. The other characters — the young lovers, the pimp, the soldier, the

⁴²cf. Syed (2005: 367-9), who insists that "If we were to look for denigrating portraits of Carthaginians as former enemies of Rome, we would not find them here," and that the *Poenulus* "contains none of the ethnic stereotyping found in the prologue," choosing to emphasize Hanno's moments of honesty over his desire to play pranks on his family. Syed also notes that the young Carthaginians are depicted in a way "no more or less sympathetic than what the conventions of the genre require."

⁴³Bhabha (1984: 126). Milphio points out Hanno's ability to speak with a "forked tongue" (*bisulci lingua*) in line 1034.

nurse, and the disguised bailiff place themselves in the audience's eye before Hanno, the Carthaginian *par excellence*, arrives. Richlin describes the pre-Hanno portion of the play as a "standard Plautine let's-trick-the-pimp plot, interesting in itself... but without much racial anything."⁴⁴ I argue that the play as a whole has many foreign "somethings" which merit attention. Because the audience knows at the beginning that they are Carthaginian, remnants of the stereotypes that the prologue attributes to Hanno also cling to them.

As I mentioned above, the supposedly bounded setting is also less so than the *prologus* gave the audience to understand. The play takes place in Calydon, but no free person in the play (with the exception of Agorastocles' late adoptive father and possibly his slave Milphio) appears to come from there.⁴⁵ Calydon, lacking any ties to the characters, becomes an especially anonymous setting. The lovers' foreignness to their setting by birth is already an unusual element, but the amount of migration described in the play is equally striking — Agorastocles is carried from Carthage to Calydon, the girls from Megara to Anactorium and then to Calydon with the Anactorian pimp Lycus. Their father has also left Carthage to go "a-roving round the Hellenic cities" in order to look for them.⁴⁶ When Antamoenides the soldier appears on the scene, he too has recently arrived from the imaginary Pentetronica and persists in reliving the experience by recounting his fantastical and unlikely exploits to the unfortunate Lycus before demanding the younger of the two Carthaginian sisters.⁴⁷ So much for the assimilated migrants and foreigners. The bailiff Collybiscus puts on the identity of a recently disembarked foreigner seeking a woman and a drink, which will juxtapose

⁴⁴Richlin (2005: 187).

⁴⁵Agorastocles' adoptive father is the other Plautine *Demarchus* which I alluded to in Ch. 3.

⁴⁶Henderson (1998: 9).

⁴⁷Most previous scholars assume that the name of the soldier's city is translated from a joke in Greek. Gronovius (1664) emended the text so that it read *ptenornithica*, 'winged-bird-land.' Ritschl (1879: 564) *ptenanthropica*, 'eagle-man-land.' Leo (1895: 581) preferred the Greco-Latin *ptenolatronica*, 'bird-thug-land.'

his faux foreignness with the unassimilated foreignness of Hanno. The constant motion and shifting identities of these characters as they permeate the “lawless wild West,” of Calydon show that everyone and everything in this play is “foreign” to somebody.⁴⁸

The initial categorization of these ethnic labels may seem odd when this chapter will focus on *dissolving* these distinctions, but the *narrative* of these ethnicities is an important factor in the *Poenulus*. The Calydonians I will leave aside for now. Antamoenides, though from an imaginary place, has much in common with Curculio’s Therapontigonus in that his previous locations of origin are unseen and mostly provide a foreign effect in keeping with the character of the *miles gloriosus*.⁴⁹ His name, which suggests defense, is one of the signs that he will be trying to hem in the complicated character of Hanno — setting out the boundaries of the Carthaginian stereotype which he expects the *senex* (and, to a lesser extent, Hanno’s relatives) to adhere to. Anterastilis, Agorastocles, and Adelphasium come from Carthage, though they are too young to have many memories of the same. Nevertheless, their identity is complex and shifting, as shown by the fact that they are mostly regarded as generic comic lovers until such time as their much more foreign uncle (and father) takes them away with him, at which point they are Carthaginians returning to Carthage. However, not all is as simple as initially characterized. I will first make a few broad generalizations about the three young Carthaginians. I will then analyze a few of the scenes in which instances of mimicry and hybridity are best displayed.

⁴⁸Fantham (2004: 237), though Richlin 2005: 187-8 has pointed out that Aetolia had become fortified and was sufficiently powerful that it was allied to Rome. Isayev (2017: 221) even sees echoes of Odysseus in Hanno (which Plautus may have translated from Alexis), particularly the voyage around the Mediterranean and the identification of Agorastocles from a monkey bite on his hand in Calydon, reminiscent of Odysseus’s boar hunt in the same place.

⁴⁹Richlin (2017: 454-5) discusses the avian metaphors which are shared in descriptions of the two *militēs*, but the difference between conquering and slaughtering which I mention is one which I will discuss in more detail.

2.5 How Punic is Agorastocles?

Although Agorastocles's character is not described by the prologue, the audience will glean several facts about him which are unusual. At line 166, the audience learns that he has easily enough money to buy his *amica* and that therefore the only purpose of the intrigue is to be revenged on the pimp for holding her in the first place.⁵⁰ He is also particularly tricky for an *adulescens*: Maurice has pointed out that not only does he alter his normally abusive behavior when he wants something from his slave, but he also has a reputation with Adelphasium for dishonesty.⁵¹ The *servus* tries to mend this impression with the *virgo* (presumably in an effort to receive better treatment), but is rebuffed and called *sycophanta par ero*.⁵² When Agorastocles plans the deception of Lycus, he is as tricky as his slave – in fact, “Milphio is less *callidus* than his early actions lead the audience to expect, whilst Agorastocles is more *malus*, and more able than other young masters in Roman comedy.”⁵³ Although it is Milphio who knows the law of the land well enough to realize how to make Lycus liable for theft, Agorastocles is more willing and able to devise the actual plots. The audience is treated to a small dose of *punica fides* in the form of a master who is noticeably dishonest, even to the object of his affections, and even wiler than his own slave. Although Agorastocles is mimicking a Greek so thoroughly that everyone he meets seems to treat him as Greek, we can see the slippage in between his Greek, Latin, and Punic identities — he is almost the same as a comic *adulescens*, but not quite.

How hybrid of a character is the Punic-faced, Greece-inhabiting, Latin-speaking Agorastocles? In the absence of masks, one must rely on the evidence of words — both his own and others' directed towards him. His very opening lines are both flattering

⁵⁰Segal 1987b: 62-3.

⁵¹Maurice (2004: 269-270).

⁵²*Poen.* 276.

⁵³Maurice (2004: 272).

and self-deprecating: he calls his own problems *dubias egenas inopiosas*, contrasting them with Milphio's way of fixing them — *sapienter, docte et cordate et cate*.⁵⁴ This is far from Plautus's first time using synonymous adjectives without connectives. *Dubius* and *egenus* also keep close company in the *Captivi*, when Tyndarus, the slave pretending to be his own master Philocrates, speaks to Philocrates, who is pretending to be Tyndarus, praising his "slave" for his loyalty:

*neque me umquam deseruisse te neque factis neque fide,
rebus in dubiis egenis...*⁵⁵

In the *Poenulus*, Agorastocles uses a similar turn of phrase to flatter his own slave. The strain of deception running through the lines in the *Captivi* is also present in the *Poenulus*. Milphio, at least, thinks so, pointing out that Agorastocles had him soundly whipped the day previous, but is now using (worthless) *blanditiae* on him.⁵⁶ Milphio's own machinations are described as being done *docte*, a word often used in Plautus to denote trickery and lying. Although Agorastocles is trying to give Milphio the usual role of *seruus callidus*, the master appears to be at least as *callidus* as his man.⁵⁷

These initial moments between Agorastocles and Milphio set in motion the theme of pretense which has led some readers to characterize Agorastocles as more Punic than first impressions appear.⁵⁸ Not only is he rather more deceitful than your average

⁵⁴*Poen.* 130-1.

⁵⁵*Poen.* 405-406: Nor have you ever deserted me either in your actions or in your loyalty in these uncertain and indigent circumstances ...

⁵⁶*Poen.* 135-9. Dutsch (2005: 214-217) discusses the essentially feminine or feminizing aspect of being *blandus*.

⁵⁷Henderson (1994: 51), Maurice (2004: 273-283) and Sharrock (2009: 161) all seem less than impressed by Milphio's cunning. However, I follow Moodie (2018) in considering Milphio's puns a way for him to achieve status — a continuation of the theme where he struggles to find his role against both Agorastocles and Hanno. I will also note here that Milphio refers to Agorastocles' persuasion in lines 135-139 as *blanditiae*, suggesting a flimsy promise.

⁵⁸Schironi (2013: 451), Frangoulidis (2014: 131), who also discuss the creative properties of *doctus*.

adulescens, but he is also familiar enough with Roman legal practices to know to obtain witnesses to trick the pimp. The gold he is trying to obtain, one must mention, is not gold needed to buy his girlfriend's freedom. Agorastocles already has enough and does not need to trick the pimp in order to obtain it. He also contradicts himself regarding religious piety: when Milphio asks him how he can love Adelphasium, whom he has not touched, Agorastocles replies that he also loves and fears the gods, whom he has not touched.⁵⁹ This seeming piety is belied by his later statement that he would rather be loved by Adelphasium than by the gods. Yet again, Agorastocles betrays behavior which we later see mirrored in his uncle, where piety is mixed with self-interest.⁶⁰

Agorastocles's early slyness blurs the boundaries between character tropes in this plays: in a standard comedy, the *servus callidus* does all the plotting, the hapless *adulescens* gets the girl and the *servus*, though often promised freedom, melts from view. However, in this case, it is Agorastocles who is far from hapless, Agorastocles who gets the girl, and Agorastocles who vanishes from the stage. The *adulescens* resembles a typical comic character of the type, but he also menaces the generally stable typecasting of Roman comedy by encroaching into the *servus*'s territory. The Plautine blurring of boundaries between roles has a similar effect on the boundaries between actor and audience. In the *Poenulus*, no one is who they seem. Like the *Curculio*, the audience and the actors are all mixed together in the prologue. Agorastocles's lines above show that this has a more destabilizing effect than ever when even the well-known character archetypes are unknown quantities. Agorastocles claims that it is *Amor* that makes him *oboedientem...servo*, a common enough discourse for comic lovers.⁶¹ His *servus*, however, compares him to a sphinx — part woman, part beast.⁶² The audience will see later

⁵⁹*Poen.* 281-2.

⁶⁰*Poen.* 277-290.

⁶¹*Poen.* 447-8.

⁶²*Poen.* 443-4.

how Milphio's repartee with Hanno can be interpreted in favor of either character — another element of ambiguity which shows how the 'other' can be a menacing force, but also allows enough doubt as to display the double vision at play.

2.6 Tricking Lycus: not the most aware wolf

Agorastocles's plan is this: he will disguise his bailiff Collybiscus as a rich foreigner who wants to sleep with Agorastocles's love, Adelphasium. Agorastocles will then go to the pimp, Lycus, asking if his bailiff is with him. When the pimp (in good faith) denies it and is found to be untruthful, he will be liable for double the amount of money that Agorastocles has entrusted to Collybiscus in the first. Milphio's plan to help his master is set in motion and Collybiscus is finally disguised as a foreigner, the conversation between him and the plotters contains a great deal of metatheatricity—when asked whether Collybiscus will be able to maintain his disguise, he responds: *quin edepol conductior sum quam tragoedi aut comici*.⁶³ Despite the conversational tone which is typical of comedy, this is a clear reminder to the audience that they are watching a play which has been written down.⁶⁴

Agorastocles's *vilicus* is a character who, like Milphio, plays with the setting. Collybiscus is disguised as a rich foreigner in order to trick the pimp. To add a further layer to the hybridity of this scene, the *advocati* make it clear that the gold that Collybiscus holds is *aurum comicum* meant to feed oxen in barbaria – that is to say, in Italy. The

⁶³*Poen.* 581: By Pollux, I am more learned than tragic and comic actors. See also similar words spoken by Sagaristio in the *Persa* 465-466.

⁶⁴Vogt-Spira (1995: 234): "Das ist für die Zuschauer eine unmissverständliche Erinnerung daran, dass es sich um ein literarisches Stück handelt. Der Scherztypus kehrt kurz darauf in etwas anders akzentuierter Form wieder, indem auf die Gedächtnisleistung beim Behalten einer Rolle angespielt wird."

coins which Collybiscus is holding up are lupin(i) beans, which are Italian food suited to both cattle spectators.⁶⁵ This possible barb at the audience also includes a dig at the pimp — one must use little wolves (*lupini*) — little Roman wolves, to be precise — to catch a big Greek wolf (Lycus). The coins themselves are pretending to be *verum Philippum*, coined by the luxurious Philip II.⁶⁶ Having theatergoers' snacks onstage as a prop and pretending it is Greek implicates the audience in the action onstage, and also implicates the comic plot in the lives of the spectators.⁶⁷ Like the parallel scenes involving Curculio and the choragus, this scene simultaneously makes the comic plot feel more part of the Roman cityscape by using the audience's food as props, and also makes the Romans feel more part of the Greek intrigue by calling their food *aurum Philippum*. Now the chorus of *advocati* is a cluster of tensions between Greek and Roman identities. They hold up Roman props and call the Romans barbarians — and yet they have bought their freedom like Romans.⁶⁸ There are clearly tensions here that are separate from the usual “let's-trick-the-pimp” plot.

Collybiscus's disguise is not limited to the lupines which he carries. Collybiscus's purported goal — *amare, potare, pergraecari* — undermines the Greek setting.⁶⁹

Pergraecari is clearly a word with connotations:

⁶⁵Lefèvre (2004: 31-2), quoting Gronovius (1664), and Moodie (2015: 92-140). Moodie also points out a similar joke in *fabulis* and *fabalis* in line 8.

⁶⁶Richlin (2016: 70): “For a slave, famous kings are a byword for luxury.” This could apply to both the slave actors or the slaves who may be sitting among the audience.

⁶⁷Gowers (1993: 99) focuses attention on the word *macerato*: “The image of fatness and pulp...connect this passage with Plautus's name (cf. *pultiphagonides*) and with the notion of the play as an *amplified, mixed-up version* of the Greek original.” (emphasis mine)

⁶⁸Gruen (1990: 155): “[Plautus's spectators] witnessed Roman actors in Greek garb deprecating Greeks — and they witnessed Greek characters, played by Romans, deprecating Romans.” Fantham (2004: 237-8) points out that the *advocati* would not have necessarily been citizens in a Greek community regardless.

⁶⁹*Poen.* 602. This line is also seen as *ubi ames, potes pergraecari*, as in Gruen (1990: 153n153), though the trio of infinitives seems more in keeping with Plautus' style. Gruen also mentions that the verb was frequently used in conjunction with words relating to eating, drinking, or wenching.

“Les contextes d’emploi de pergraecari et congraecare montrent que ces deux verbes ne font qu’hypertrophier la dimension grecque, c’est-à-dire voluptueuse des banquets auxquels ils se réfèrent...le verbe pergraecari suffit à lui seul pour signifier la débauche des jeunes gens dont nous avons vu qu’elle consistait à mener joyeuse vie de banquet en banquet, à manger, boire et payer des filles.”⁷⁰

He comes out, as Agorastocles says, *basilice exornatus*: a combination of a Greek word and a Latin one.⁷¹ Like the *lupini*, Collybiscus is costumed to look more Greek and more royal. This disguise evidently gets the attention of Lycus, who asks about the cloaked figure and his entourage. The *chlamys* which Collybiscus wears is not intrinsically an unusual garment, but identifies him as a soldier and a traveller.⁷² The *advocati* then attract the pimp’s attention. They claim that Collybiscus is a deserter who has money and wants a *locum liberum* to drink and make love. The *advocati* claim that Collybiscus was a *latro* with King Attalus of Sparta.⁷³ This last remark is particularly amusing because King Attalus was never ruler of Sparta.⁷⁴ Collybiscus then alludes to King Antiochus of Syria, another king known for luxury.⁷⁵ Collybiscus, during this scene, goes from the role of slave to that of the *miles gloriosus*.⁷⁶ Both of these exotic kings were near-contemporaries — Attalus died around the year 197, and Antiochus went to

⁷⁰Dupont (2005). For *pergraecari*, see also Goldberg (1976), Gruen (1990: 153), and Nichols (2017: 99n64).

⁷¹Melo (2012a: 77) imagines Collybiscus “wearing a cloak, broad-brimmed hat, and sword and carrying a wallet around his neck.” Richlin (2005: 161) compares *basilice* to contemporary Spanglish or Yinglish, offering the possible translation of “kingissimo.” cf. Melo (2011a: 340), who claims that *basilice* is an intensifier, and that this phrase means “‘you’re dressed up magnificently,’ not as a king, but as a Persian merchant.”

⁷²Isayev (2017: 214) points out that the traveling-cloak is sometimes accompanied by the Greek *zona*, the traveling belt. Of the twelve plays in which Plautine characters wear *chlamydes*, four of them also carry *machaerai*, which suggest Greek Italy rather than Athens, which had given up on arming its mercenaries (Knapp (1907: 296) Melo (2011c: 340)).

⁷³Poen. 664-5

⁷⁴Poen. 693-4: “*ego id quaero hospitium, ubiego curer mollius, quam regi Antiocho oculi curari solent.*” With regard to *oculi*, Richlin (2005: 263) has pointed out that Greeks used *oculus* to refer to a high-ranking official. More obscenely, Moodie (2015: 146) has pointed out that Martial has used *oculi* to refer to testicles.

⁷⁵Moodie (2015: 146).

⁷⁶Richlin (2016: 71) points out the golden statue that is common to both the *Poenulus* and *Curculio*.

war with Rome in 191, and died in 187. Lycus takes the gilded bait — the false coins and the phony kings lead him to offer Collybiscus his “deluxe pleasure package” — and here, the music stops to accompany the deception sequence.⁷⁷

Lycus, in the meantime, seems blissfully unaware of his ill fortune. Like *Curculio's* Lyco, he is having trouble with the gods — Venus is not taking his sacrifice and the *haruspices* keep presaging doom and gloom.⁷⁸ Unlike Lyco, though, Lycus is not seeing any immediate effects. In fact, he sees the opposite: far from suffering misfortunes, he has received a *mina* from the soldier Antamonides.⁷⁹ Though the implication is that Lycus performed his initial rituals in good faith, the words which the audience hear are pimpishly sacrilegious. Jeppesen suggests that a revival version of the *Poenulus* was performed at the dedication of the Venus Erycina temple in 181, explaining what looks like *contaminatio* in the first few hundred lines of the play.⁸⁰ Having a contradictory set of attitudes towards the festival of Venus may be particularly funny if the play was depicted in full view of the temple of Venus Erycina. Whether or not the version of the play is, as Jeppesen suggests, a combination the original and a revival version of the play, the lines about Venus “[represent] the complex cultural politics of adopting foreign religious practices at Rome.”⁸¹

Although Lycus is the comic antagonist and Collybiscus is on the “team” of the comic protagonists, they are not as different as one might expect. Though Lycus does not put faith in the gods, he is easily impressed by the promise that the disguised Collybiscus brings. Lycus’s mercenary open-mindedness is also very similar to that of *Curculio's* Lyco and *Persa's* Dordalus. Although his open greed makes him an ideal

⁷⁷Gunderson (2015: 127). Moore (1998: 251) discusses the presence and absence of music in Plautus’s plays.

⁷⁸Richlin (2017: 192) discusses the similarities in fiscal policy between Lycus and Lyco.

⁷⁹Also known as Antamynides or Antamoenides. Moodie (2015: 88-89) considers the latter spelling an overcorrection of *Antamunides*, a transliteration of the Greek name.

⁸⁰Jeppesen (2013: 241-315).

⁸¹Jeppesen (2013: 315).

victim for Milphio and Agorastocles' con, he thinks that he is the sneaky one. His repetition of the word *lepidus* emphasizes both the ostensible attractiveness of his wares (to Collybiscus) and his intention of tricking his mark (to the audience).⁸² He believes that the oddly-dressed Collybiscus will be *praeda* and *lucrum* for him, not suspecting a traveling soldier of being able to out-trick him.⁸³ Lycus is himself a traveller, having come to the present stage from Anactorium.⁸⁴ Lycus gives some indication of his link to foreignness in his conversation with Collybiscus. In fact, the conversation between the two parties becomes a battle for foreignness, as the *advocati* inform Lycus that Collybiscus was in Sparta ... *apud regem Attalum*, a geographical impossibility, and Lycus in turn offers his prospective client wine from the exotic islands of Leucas, Lesbos, Thasos, and Chios — foreign intoxicants to sweeten the credulous foreigner and show his knowledge of and control over the Greek world.⁸⁵

Lycus, though he is set against all the other characters, is as hybrid as any other. His name appears to be a holdover from Alexis, and Barrios-Lech has pointed out that several remarks in the play become puns when translated back to Greek, mainly dealing with the similarities between $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ and $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\chi\omicron\varsigma$, which can be translated into Latin as *insidia*.⁸⁶ There are also very similar jokes in Latin with *Lycus* and *locus*, place. These are remarks made by both the *advocati* and Lycus: another unlikely moment of connection between two characters who are in opposition. The Latin jokes suggest effeminacy: in fact, it appears that Lycus himself is part of the package deal which he is offering Collybiscus.⁸⁷ This kind of effeminacy is also what the soldier Antamonides

⁸²Gunderson (2015: 127) has a more extended discussion of Plautus's use of *lepidus*.

⁸³*Poen.* 683.

⁸⁴*Poen.* 91–5.

⁸⁵*Poen.* 663–4, 699.

⁸⁶*Poen.* 547–549, 788, 844.

⁸⁷Barrios-Lech (2018) has shown that the following lines in the *Poenulus* explore the wordplay of *locus/lycus*, often with the adjective *liber*: 175-7, 600-603, 657-8, 663-4, 695-8. For this reason, Barrios-Lech suggests that the pimp's name was pronounced with a short u: 'Lucus.'

later uses to refer to Hanno, as I will discuss later. This connection between Lycus and characters who ultimately ruin him suggests that although hybridity is a major part of a Plautine comedy, it is not entirely hybridity or the lack thereof which determines the success of a character. Lycus's destruction is the result of the inexorable pressure of laws that are both Greek and Roman. Ultimately, Lycus is condemned for his *furtum manifestum* — his "theft" of Collybiscus, another man's slave, in full view of citizens.⁸⁸ The calm assurance with which Agorastocles and Milphio discuss Lycus's penalties for theft initially might suggest that this was a reflection of contemporary or recent Roman policy. However, Scafuro points out that Lycus's doubled penalty is, in fact, the punishment for *furtum sine manifestum*.⁸⁹ Moreover, Scafuro continues, the crime-and-punishment lines do not seem to be entirely Roman.⁹⁰ Lines 789-790 look as though they are translated from a Greek penalty, which threatens arrest rather than a fine.⁹¹

The *advocati* are both witnesses and accomplices to this play-within-a-play. Ultimately Lycus, true to form, falls into the *advocati*'s snare of the foreign imaginary, while he himself uses the exotic names of foreign wines to try to catch Collybiscus. Despite his token struggle to behave otherwise, Lycus's hybrid nature – which is enhanced by his conversation with the *advocati* – cannot overcome his pimpish nature. Although his colorful language about hard liquor and soft women recalls Curculio's colorful language when talking to the soldier, Lycus is doomed to remain on the outside of the dramatic action. In the *Poenulus*, Lycus attempts to evoke his own foreign imaginary, but this only lasts until his role interferes with his pre-determined inability to triumph within the theatrical "Plautopolis" onstage.⁹²

⁸⁸See also *Asin.* 569. For a more comprehensive list of theft in general in Plautus, see Bork (2017: 2).

⁸⁹Scafuro (2004: 458-9).

⁹⁰*ibid.*

⁹¹*Poen.* 789–790: "*sed quid ego dubito fugere hinc in malam crucem / prius quam hinc optorto collo ad praetorem trahor?*"

⁹²Gaertner (2014).

2.7 *Advocati*: neither here nor there

While Lycus is engaging with the setting in which the play is being performed, the other characters are continuing their deception, complete with the metatheatricality which characterizes a Plautine play. Some characters are more metatheatrical than others. Once again, Agorastocles tries to escape his role as hapless *adulescens* by taking command of the play and telling the *advocati* what to do. Richlin points out that reversed order-giving is quite common in Plautine comedy — slaves give orders to their masters, wives to husbands, and so on.⁹³ However, this is also symptomatic of Agorastocles' general struggle for power, and could also reflect the tension of a Carthaginian character interfacing with the Greco-Roman *advocati*. The *advocati* react to Agorastocles's imperiousness by pointing out that they are all actors and that they rehearsed their lines together.⁹⁴ Agorastocles initially appears to agree, when he refers to them as being among his *amici*.⁹⁵ Burton has shown the tension intrinsic in comic friendship, particularly between characters of unequal social status, and this tension is apparent in this particular conversation, especially as he almost immediately calls them *plebeii* and *pauperes*.⁹⁶ The *advocati* are most likely understood as being Agorastocles's freedmen, adding to the power struggle happening between themselves and Agorastocles.⁹⁷ Freedmen occupy a position of tension in Roman society, as they do not have all the rights of Roman citizens, but can no longer be treated as slaves.⁹⁸

⁹³Richlin (2017: 389).

⁹⁴*Poen.* 550-554. The *advocati* are considered the closest thing to choruses which Plautus has, though they do not resemble Menandrian choruses at all (J. C. B. Lowe (1988), Manuwald (2011b: 156))

⁹⁵cf. Raccanelli (1998: 144-160) who asserted that friendship between slaves did not exist at all. Burton (2004: 215n20) does not agree, pointing out the friendship between Milphio and Syncerastus in the *Poenulus*.

⁹⁶Burton (2004: 235).

⁹⁷Rosivach (1983: 86)

⁹⁸Fitzgerald (2000: 88) and Mouritsen (2011: 165-6) both comment on the *advocati*'s assertive and

The characters (who are, lest we forget, likely played by slave actors) who are playing freedmen are the ones who are trying to break down the illusion of the play. Despite Agorastocles's attempt to separate himself from the *advocati*, the latter point out to him that they are all actors and all required to entertain the audience. This is another scene in which identities are not just blurred, but in constant motion: when the audience looks at Agorastocles's person onstage, do they see a Carthaginian interloper? A self-conscious actor? A standard *adulescens*? The answer to all these questions seems to be "yes."

The *advocati* are engaging in a non-racialized mimicry. Their freedmen status is reflected in their varying attitude towards Agorastocles. They engage with Agorastocles's sibilant contempt (*homines spissigradissimos*) defensively, telling him that although they may seem *plebeii et pauperes*, they are more than capable of punishing rich men like himself.⁹⁹ They are not bound either to his love or to his money. One should also note that they add to the metatheatricality of the play not just by drawing attention to their own characters, but by pointing out social circumstances. The line *praesertim in re populi placida atque interfectis hostibus* is almost certainly a reference to the Punic war being over.¹⁰⁰ Richlin (2018) has mentioned the destabilizing effect of mentioning a time of peace — something which Rome has rarely, if ever, had — in the same play as is mentioned the temple of Venus Erycina.¹⁰¹ The atemporality that these remarks create is especially meaningful as it surrounds the war: Rome at the time is between Punic Wars, but interbellum is not the same thing as peace.

performatively independent behavior as symptomatic of their freedman status.

⁹⁹Stein (1971) has discussed Plautus's compound word choices. Zimmermann (2016: 319-20) also discusses the trope of trochaic meters which Agorastocles uses to tell the *advocati* to hurry up.

¹⁰⁰*Poen.* 524.

¹⁰¹Richlin (2018: 49-72). Richlin points out the inconsistency between the moments mentioned, though her interpretation is that the play was produced multiple times, and so the lines were added or removed in keeping with the year.

2.8 Hanno: the Punickiest Punic

After these disruptions of theatrical and social convention, the audience finally gets what it is waiting for as Hanno makes his entrance onto the scene. As soon as he enters, he delivers a speech in a completely foreign language. This speech in Punic or pseudo-Punic has engendered more scholarship than the rest of the play put together.¹⁰² Most scholars consider that the speech is either real Punic or has enough Punic words that enough audience members would have found it especially amusing.¹⁰³ Others, Franko in particular, suggest that

“The authenticity of the Punic speech is not crucial because the sense of Hanno’s prayer can easily be conveyed in any language through gesture, tone of voice, and other non-semantic signifiers...note that the speech is long enough to entice an audience, not long enough to bore or confuse it.”¹⁰⁴

Gratwick, Szyner, and De Melo have discussed their interpretations of the Punic speech extremely exactly.¹⁰⁵ However, it is the *effect* of the Punic on a Plautine audience which I find more important than what he actually says. For this reason, I will be following Franko in his opinion that it is Hanno’s gestures and his display of his *tessera* that is more important than the precise words which he is saying, particularly since the text has undergone corruption over the years and centuries.¹⁰⁶ Lopez-Gregoris has identified several functions that Hanno’s Punic speech (and Milphio’s subsequent

¹⁰²The speech, to begin, is really three speeches. There are two speeches in Punic and one in Latin. The latter is almost universally viewed as an interpolation, as it would add too much tedium to repeat the same speech twice, even if the first version was incomprehensible to his audience. Krahmalkov (1988) considers text 940-949 to be the original Plautine speech, as 930-939 seems to be neo-Punic and later than Plautus.

¹⁰³Manuwald (2011a: 102n216).

¹⁰⁴Franko (1996: 431). See also Faller (2004).

¹⁰⁵Gratwick (1971b), Szyner (1967), and Melo (2012a: 209-220).

¹⁰⁶Friedrich and Röllig (1999), Krahmalkov (1988).

dialogue) serves:¹⁰⁷

1. *realism*, as Punic characters would be expected to speak Punic, of the comedic factor of mutual incomprehensibility (and possible chuckles from the Punic-speaking audience members) ¹⁰⁸
2. *comedy*, as the audience enjoys the mutual incomprehensibility between Hanno and Milphio
3. *ridicule*, as the audience becomes aware that Milphio is exaggerating his skills as a translator of Punic
4. *narrative*, as Hanno's language allows him and Agorastocles to recognize their familial bond

I would like to add a fifth function:

5. *mimicry*, as this speech shows Hanno's skill at imitating identities

He arrives onstage in a costume which invites ridicule from the (admittedly boundary-blurring) stock characters of the play. Hanno himself is not at this moment a stock character, though he will later appear to mimic several. In short, Hanno does not belong. His speech, with its easily comprehensible gestures, facial expressions, and props, is a mimicry of the Greco-Roman hybridity which is an intrinsic part of Plautine comedy. This mimicry, as with many Plautine mimicries, initially seems to suggest a desire to

¹⁰⁷López Gregoris (2012).

¹⁰⁸He could also be playing with the convention in which characters which claim to be Greek speak Latin.

assimilate into the comic stage. However, this scene shows how Bhabha describes the mimic man who “appropriates the Other as [he] visualizes power,” even while mimicry is “also the sign of the inappropriate.”¹⁰⁹ The audience initially perceives Hanno’s *inappropriateness* — which disrupts mimicry — when Hanno appears in his costume, only seeing his appropriation of the Greco-Roman theatrical landscape later. Hanno is a microcosm of the play as a whole — his character is a negotiation of identities and mimicries who is simultaneously written as a Latin-speaking actor appropriating a Carthaginian and a Carthaginian who is attempting to belong in the Greek-Roman staged landscape. However, in only a few lines Hanno will flaunt his foreignness, leaving behind his desire to “assimilate” into the comic stage. He then selectively uses his gift for mimicry to assert his superiority over these same comic characters.

One might expect no less from a foreigner than a prayer of thanksgiving in his own language after a safe voyage over the sea, or one entreating the gods to help him find his children. But it is important to remember — as the audience surely will — that Hanno *scit omnis linguas (sed dissimulat sciens se scire)*.¹¹⁰ I have already mentioned in a previous chapter the narrative that Hannibal could speak Latin well enough to fool a Roman.¹¹¹ If we take Hanno’s supposed sneakiness to another level, one could also suppose that he is aware of the stereotypes surrounding himself as a Carthaginian:

“to claim an identity as a Carthaginian, as the characters in the *Poenulus* do, then claims not only a despised identity, but an identity constructed to be despised.”¹¹²

Hanno’s multilingualism is a stereotype that could attach neutrally to his supposed

¹⁰⁹Bhabha (1984: 126).

¹¹⁰*Poen.* 113–4: ...knows all languages, but pretends not to know what he does know.

¹¹¹See 1.8.

¹¹²Richlin (2018: 54).

role as a merchant, or contemptuously to his stereotype as a sneaky Carthaginian. This multilingualism within Hanno's persona is both a *mimicry* and a human-shaped *microcosm* of the hybridity which the audience has seen onstage for the past nine hundred lines.

Punic stereotypes notwithstanding, Hanno's ambiguity in his actions does not necessarily imply deception. Various scholars have spoken of Hanno's *pietas* which manifests itself in his search for his children and reverence for the gods in his loud, Punic prayer.¹¹³ However, his reputed linguistic ability makes his prayer seem more performative than spontaneous. Gruen claims that "[Hanno's] pose serves only to undermine the guileful slave (the real *dissimulator*) whose pretense at offering a Latin translation makes him all the more ludicrous."¹¹⁴ Hanno is boldly asserting his otherness.

Hanno's self-identification as Punic has a contagious effect that begins immediately after his Punic monologue. Suddenly, Milphio turns to Agorastocles and calls him a *popularis* to his Carthaginian lady friend and her sister. Although the hints of Agorastocles's Punic identity have been mentioned throughout the play, this is one of the few times in which Milphio explicitly identifies him as Punic and as allied to the girls — and, in a minute, to his uncle. Here mimicry not only articulates difference and slippage in the mimicker, but also shows that it can have a contagious effect. We have seen Agorastocles more or less play the part of the comic *adulescens* up till now. This Punic speech from Hanno allows for the most overt moment of "slippage" that the audience has seen in terms of his identity.

Hanno then becomes aware of Milphio. The two men have very interesting reactions to one another:

¹¹³Duckworth (1942: 725) referred to Hanno as "pious and dignified." Gratwick (1971b: 32n5) also emphasized Hanno's piety.

¹¹⁴Gruen (2011b: 127).

2.8.1 *Poenulus* 967-970

HAN. pro di immortales, opsecro vostram fidem!
quam orationem hanc aures dulcem deuorant!
creta est profecto horunc hominum oratio.
ut mi apsterserunt omnem sorditudinem!¹¹⁵

HAN. *Immortal gods, I beg your protection!*
What sweet speech are my ears devouring?
These guys' speech is indeed chalk.
May they remove all dirt from me!

Hanno's first reaction to Milphio and Agorastocles is not a visual one, but an auditory one. He calls their speech "sweet," and compares it to chalk or fuller's earth, which will clean "dirt" from him. These lines also display Hanno's ability to read a situation. The word *creta*, which I have translated as "chalk," could also be understood as the participle of *cerno*, to understand. Put another way, line 969 could be read as: "*These guys' speech is indeed understood [by me].*"¹¹⁶ Hanno hears the speech of the comic characters and is at an advantage to them: they cannot understand him, but he can understand them. If we follow Maurice's interpretation and take *creta* as deriving from *cerno*, the lines seem sarcastic — particularly because Hanno is speaking Latin by now. Hanno's mimicry becomes, as Bhabha predicted, a type of mockery and menace.¹¹⁷ The dance of foreignness and othering continues, as Milphio now reacts to Hanno:

¹¹⁵Fontaine (2010: 48) considers this a pun on *surditia*, deafness.

¹¹⁶Maurice (2004: 280).

¹¹⁷Bhabha (1984: 129).

2.8.2 *Poenulus* 975-977

MIL. Sed quae illaec auis est, quae huc cum tunicis aduenit? 975¹¹⁸
numnam in balineis circumductust pallio?

AGOR. Facies quidem edepol Punicast.¹¹⁹ *Gugga* est homo.

Milphio : *But what bird is that, who comes here in his tunics?*

Was his pallium swiped at the baths?

Agorastocles: *By Pollux, his face is certainly Carthaginian. He's a gugga.*

While Hanno's perception of Milphio was with his words, Milphio chooses to focus on Hanno's appearance. During Hanno's lines, the *oratio* to which he refers is in the same language which Hanno is speaking. The Carthaginian *patruos*, ever the mimic man, is ostentatiously focusing on similarities, while Milphio's emphasis on Hanno's costume highlights the differences between Hanno and the other two characters. Milphio is looking for the slippage, for the most obvious places where he may fix the mimic Hanno with a "gaze of otherness."¹²⁰ *Gugga* is also a fascinating word. De Melo writes:

"Neither speaker assignment nor the meaning of *gugga* is clear. GG' is attested as the name of a profession in a Punic inscription...Gratwick prefers...to regard *gugga* as the name of a bird. In Greek the *gyges* is the bittern, but Gratwick prefers to see in the bird the purple heron, which would introduce a rather complex pun: Phoenicians traded in purple, and hence Hanno can be seen as a purple heron; the heron was also called the 'treacherous bird' by the Romans, and this association would introduce negative stereotyping of Carthaginians."¹²¹

¹¹⁸A tunic without a *pallium*, earrings, and purple garb all suggest Hanno's effeminacy, as Franko (1996: 432) has pointed out.

¹¹⁹I cannot help wondering why Milphio does not continue his identification of Agorastocles as Carthaginian by making a comment about the similarity of Hanno's and Agorastocles's faces (or masks).

¹²⁰Bhabha (1984: 129). See and for the ways in which mimicry and hybridity show "slippage" and difference.

¹²¹Melo (2012a: 122-3n53).

If, in a spirit of wild optimism, we follow Gratwick in believing that the audience might follow this complicated pun, we have yet another moment of hybrid language, though it is Carthaginian-Greek rather than Greco-Latin. If the Romans subconsciously absorbed the idea that Hanno was a “treacherous bird,” they would then find themselves on the end of a classic Plautine bait-and-switch: it is Milphio who is going to adhere to comic function and be treacherous.

2.8.3 *Poenulus* 977-993

MIL. seruos quidem edepol ueteres antiquosque habet.

AGOR. Qui scis? **MIL.** Uiden homines sarcinati consequi?¹²²

atque ut <ego> opino[r] digitos in manibus non habent. 980

AGOR. Quid iam? **MIL.** Quia incedunt cum anulatis auribus.

HAN. Adibo hosce atque appellabo Punice. si respondebunt, Punice pergam loqui; si non, tum ad horum mores linguam uertero.

MIL. Quid ais tu? ecquid commeministi Punice? 985

AGOR. Nil edepol. nam qui scire potui, dic mihi, qui illum sexennis perierim Carthagine?

HAN. Pro di immortales, plurimi ad illum modum periere pueri liberi Carthagine.

MIL. Quid ais tu? **AGOR.** Quid uis? **MIL.** Uin appellem hunc Punice? 990

AGOR. An scis? **MIL.** Nullus me est hodie Poenus Poenior.

Milphio: By Pollux, he certainly has elderly and ancient slaves.

Agorastocles: How do you know? Milphio: Don't you see those hunchbacked porters following?

And I think they must have no fingers on their hands.

¹²²Pezzini (2016) has pointed out that *sarcinator*, mender of old clothes, is a much more common term in Latin than *sarcinatus*, which appears to be a comic coinage. It is likely that Plautus was making a joke not only about these men's fashion, but also about their profession.

Agorastocles: *Why? Milphio: Because they are approaching with rings in their ears.*

Hanno: *I will approach them and greet them in Punic.*

If they respond, I will continue to speak Punic. If not, then I will switch language to accord with their customs.

Milphio: *What do you say? Do you remember any Punic?*

Agorastocles: *None, by Pollux. For how could I know it, tell me, I who disappeared from Carthage at the age of six?*

Hanno: *By the immortal gods, many free children disappear from Carthage in this manner.*

Milphio: *What do you say? Agorastocles: What do you want? Milphio: Do you want me to greet him in Punic?*

Agorastocles: *Do you know any? Milphio: No Punic fellow is more Punic than me today.*

Hanno initially comes onstage wearing Punic costume and speaking in Punic: both actions suggest that his character is deliberately othering himself by foregrounding the props and costumes which will most easily show “foreignness” to any other people or characters who are watching him. However, once he notices there are other people in his line of sight, he becomes more adaptable in his customs. He informs the audience that his words will depend on his interlocutors: if they do not speak Punic, he says, “*ad horum mores linguam uertero.*”¹²³ He is more than a mimic: he is an interpreter like Plautus himself. His first conversation is with Milphio, who immediately inserts himself into Hanno’s narrative by claiming he can speak Hanno’s language and then treating Hanno to a stream of Pig-Punic.¹²⁴ Of course, Milphio knows no more Punic than Agorastocles, choosing instead to “translate” Hanno’s speech with the closest-

¹²³See Introduction for a discussion of *vertere*.

¹²⁴See Fanon (1952)’s “*parler petit-nègre à un nègre*” While Milphio’s motives are impossible to prove, the idea of “imprisoning” the foreigner within the expectations of the pre-existing world is one which resonates strongly in the *Poenulus*, particularly when Hanno is immediately roped into the scheme to cheat the pimp out of his money.

sounding Latin words.¹²⁵ The duel between Hanno and Milphio is an example of layered mimicry, as the audience sees Milphio mimic Hanno — who, as we know, is a mimic himself. Everything Hanno can do, Milphio can do better — or so he thinks. What happens, then, to mimics-of-mimics? In this case, Milphio’s attempt to outdo Hanno’s foreignness which is ultimately unsuccessful, as Hanno gives up the game and admits that he can speak Latin.¹²⁶

Hanno’s assimilation to the stage leads to Agorastocles foreignizing himself, as he takes the side of this mysterious figure over that of his well-known slave.¹²⁷ Although the latter says that he speaks no Punic, since he was stolen away at six years old, the *adulescens* soon points out that he too was born in Carthage and he agrees to host Hanno after seeing the latter’s *tessera* of guest-friendship.¹²⁸ Thanks to Agorastocles’s hybrid identity, Hanno has therefore been brought into the circle of the comic characters.¹²⁹ What character Hanno will play in this Plautine drama is unclear, however. Hanno’s mimicry was primarily linguistic up till now. His assurance that Agorastocles will receive Hanno’s property upon his death makes Hanno a *pater* figure. Milphio has other plans: he asks if Hanno can become *subdolos*. Now Milphio wants Hanno to be *Poenior* (and, perhaps, *Milphior*). Through word and deed, Hanno is clearly quick-witted and not unfamiliar with deception. Milphio thus ropes him into the trick to hurt the pimp. However, Hanno is asked to act out a story which happens to be true – that his daughters have been kidnapped by a pimp. This too-true tale brings him to tears.

¹²⁵Melo (2012a: 209-220) translates all the Punic in this play extremely exactly. Franko (1996: 432n12) used Milphio’s correct interpretation of *avo* to conclude that Milphio did, in fact, know a bit of Punic.

¹²⁶*Poen.* 1029: HAN: *At ut scias, nunc dehinc latine iam loquar*. Richlin (2017: 322) has pointed out the oddity of Hanno’s having switched into Latin at this point, as well as the strange pathos of lines 989-990, if they are directed at the audience.

¹²⁷*Poen.* 1035-8. See also 1054-5:....*hau repudio hospitium nec Carthaginem*, a remark that feels strangely pointed.

¹²⁸*Poen.* 1047-9.

¹²⁹*Poen.* 1072-5: HAN : . . . *sed si ita est, ut tu sis Iahonis filius/signum esse oportet in manu laeva tibi/ludenti puero quod memordit simia*: but if it is so, that you are the son of Iahon, you must have a mark on your left hand, which came from a monkey having bitten you while you played.

Of course, Milphio does not believe Hanno, assuming that he is displaying his prowess as an actor: *malum crudumque et callidum et subdolum*.¹³⁰ Within the world of comedy, the humor lies in the juxtaposition of the fake and authentic in the world of the play, where what is authentic is suddenly a byword for fakeness.

Hanno's meeting with the girls' nurse Giddenis finally brings his whole family together.¹³¹ Once she confirms what he suspects — that Lycus's girls are in fact his daughters — he is able to take his place as the *paterfamilias*. He further identifies with this role by praying to Jupiter in gratitude, an unusual action for a Carthaginian who had no shortage of national gods of his own.¹³² The *Poenulus*'s staging is particularly interesting in this regard, as it was likely shown near the temples of Jupiter and Venus Erycina: Henderson suggests that the scene is meant to “‘evoke’ (lure away) the pair of Baal Hammon and Ashtart/Tanit from their city of Carthage, which boasted its own temple of ‘Erycinian’ Astarte...perhaps the (once?) orgiastic cult of Venus Erucina could be incorporated into the new cosmopolis without downing the gender- and power-lines of censorious old Rome?”¹³³ The transformation of Hanno from Punic *avis* to Roman *paterfamilias* seems almost complete, particularly when he betroths his elder daughter to Agorastocles. However, the Carthaginian family is still ‘almost-but-not-quite.’ The slippage here is not from the extravagantly dressed Hanno, but from Agorastocles, whose years as a Calydonian do not seem to have taught him piety. He makes a flippant remark about Jupiter, and then swears by painters instead of gods, reflecting his earlier

¹³⁰*Poen.* 1107-8: clever and cruel and crafty and cunning! Note also that *malus* is one of Plautus's favorite words for a clever slave.

¹³¹Since I have been talking about various characters' relationship to foreignness, it seems worthwhile to point out that Giddenis is the only character in the play with a Carthaginian name.

¹³²Giddenis claims in *Poen.* 1136-40 that it is Hanno's *pietas* which has taken him to his daughters. Gruen (2014: 607) enumerates the times when Hanno offers thanksgiving to gods in the abstract.

¹³³Henderson (1998: 8-9). Rainey (2004: 62) suggests that Adelphasium and Anterastilis's scene also is intended to evoke images of Carthaginian ritual: “Along with human sacrifice, Phoenician and Carthaginian ritualised prostitution of maidens to Astarte (Venus) was probably their most famed and despised religious practice in antiquity.” Blasdel (2014) considers this Aphrodisia scene to be representative Rome's victory over Carthage.

attitudes towards Roman religion.¹³⁴ This is a contrast to Hanno, whose prayers all seemed sincere. The differing attitudes toward religion within the same family suggests that something has to give. Plautus resolves the inconsistencies between uncle and nephew by removing the characters from the hybrid stage.

Hanno's supposed transformation, like the costuming in the *Persa*, has the disconcerting effect of showing that references to Roman religion can make a tricky Carthaginian seem almost like a Roman *paterfamilias*. But the play is not over yet – instead of immediately letting the young ladies of the Aphrodisia know who he is, he allows his own daughters believe that he is a client. *Punica fides* combined with the unpleasant hint of incest mentioned by Franko reappears in this scene.¹³⁵ This is also the audience's final demonstration that Hanno's Punic-ness is contagious. The two girls have not thus far been described as Carthaginian, but when Antamoenides sees his girlfriend embracing Hanno, he calls her *hanc amatricem Africam*. He then proceeds to hurl a barrage of insults at Hanno regarding his effeminacy, his circumcision, and the fact that he is stuffed with “common and Phoenician garlic” — perhaps a peculiarly apt remark about Hanno's hybrid nature.¹³⁶ He also throws away a remark on Agorastocles's effeminacy.¹³⁷ Even when faced with the soldier's wrath and insults about Hanno's sex and sexuality, Hanno does not immediately give away his identity.¹³⁸ Anterastilis's identification of Hanno as her father immediately mollifies the soldier and all signs appear to point to an imminent Plautine revel. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the play ends as it does, with Agorastocles and Hanno making plans to

¹³⁴*Poen.* 1271. Note the similarities of the painters to the names Apollo and Zeus.

¹³⁵Franko (1995).

¹³⁶*Poen.* 1303-1314.

¹³⁷*Poen.* 1317-8. Although this may just be the soldier insulting everyone in sight, I prefer to think that he sees the similar physiognomies of Agorastocles and Hanno('s masks).

¹³⁸Antamoenides' use of *mulier* to insult Hanno recalls the Alexis fragment mentioned above, where the Carthaginian is linked to effeminacy.

return to Carthage.¹³⁹

While Hanno's portrayal was not entirely sympathetic, he behaves through the play with at least as much sincerity and affability as everyone else, precluding it from being Amy Richlin's kind of "politically correct play."¹⁴⁰ There is much less hostility towards Carthaginians than one might expect from a playwright writing after a war — "though it was written very shortly after the peninsula of Italy had been steamrolled by Carthaginian troops, the main characters find out at the end of the play that they are Carthaginians, and they are delighted."¹⁴¹ Scullard concludes from the portrayal of Hanno that Punic traders had started visiting Rome again and that "a Roman audience, probably just after the Hannibalic War, could laugh, perhaps unmaliciously, at an ex-enemy."¹⁴²

The lack of historical information about the composition of the audience means that I will turn my attention towards conjectures one might draw from the script of the *Poenulus*. It is possible, even likely, that the audience was a very mixed group. The prologue suggests that freedmen and slave, women and children, aristocrats and immigrants, all attended the play together. The amount of Punic at the end of the play is particularly meaningful if one assumes that a part of the audience could understand it.¹⁴³ My own theory is that the flamboyant foreignness of Hanno is acting in a very different way from the 'foreign imaginary' created by Therapontigonus, Antamonides, and Collybiscus. While the soldiers' foreign imaginary separates the hybrid theater from the hybrid audience, Hanno's flappy-sleeved, earringed foreignness displays a Carthaginian stereotype. Just as mimicry can be used to assert power, Hanno uses the

¹³⁹The end of the *Menaechmi*, specifically lines 1149-1154, is the only other play in which the protagonists leave the stage-country at the end of the play.

¹⁴⁰Richlin (2005: 7): "[These plays] were politically correct in the sense of 'dumping on nations against whom Rome currently has troops deployed.'"

¹⁴¹ibid.

¹⁴²Scullard (1990: 510-1).

¹⁴³Richlin (2017: 378): "Look around you; we are here."

stereotype — a static image of what a Carthaginian *should* be — to make his heretofore Aetolian-seeming relatives more Carthaginian and less conformant to the theatrical stage.

2.9 Conclusion

In the *Poenulus*, we see characters who interact with foreignness in unique ways, and the ways in which interacting foreignnesses lead to tensions within the play. Hanno's particularly theatrical and eccentric foreignness is important to analyze as his character represents a Carthaginian viewed through the double lens of Greek and Roman comedy. He temporarily fits in with his young relatives in order to provide the catalyst to ruin the pimp completely, but instead of assimilating into Calydonian society, he foreignizes his family members, confirming their identities as Carthaginians.¹⁴⁴ Hanno's obvious foreignness then, highlights his relatives' more subtle foreignness and shows the audience how stereotypes can sometimes *occlude* identification of foreignness despite stereotypes function as both well-known and needing to be repeated. Put another way, Hanno's theatrical and decorative foreignness is so attention-grabbing that one may not notice the quieter foreignness of one's own neighbors (or a familiar comic *adulescens*) without the infusion of the foreign imaginary.

The mimicry of Greek tragedy in the first few lines of the play produces a third space within which the tension between Greek and Roman identities is clearly seen within the play. In the *Curculio*, the 'foreign imaginary' enacted by the soldier served to separate the audience from the Greco-Roman third space in which Curculio and the

¹⁴⁴E. W. Said (1993: xiii) is useful for the separation of "us" and "them" particularly when the separation is hostile.

choragus had enmeshed them. In the case of the *Poenulus*, however, the hybridity is articulated through the young lovers' Carthaginian identity and Greek residence. The performative foreignness (enacted in this case by Collybiscus and to a lesser extent by Lycus) is clearly not the main focus in a play entitled the *Poenulus*. Agorastocles behaves less like a *comic adulescens* because of *punica fides*, while Hanno performs his identity first as a theatrical Carthaginian, then mimics a Roman *paterfamilias*, but ultimately cannot escape his basic Carthaginian identity which has been established for him long before his appearance onstage.

The two characters who mimic foreignness without being foreigners themselves — Collybiscus and Milphio — disappear before the end of the play and the audience is left uncertain as to their fate, and their “blurred copies” of a foreign imaginary fade out.¹⁴⁵ Because of Hanno's appearance from the “foreign imaginary,” Agorastocles and his cousins have suddenly ceased to assimilate into Plautopolis, as their Carthaginian identities prevent them from performing foreign identities and then removing them at will. Like their Carthaginian relative, the young people can choose to be more or less Carthaginian, but cannot escape their identity entirely. Their hybridity moves them closer to the hybrid audience and further from the hybrid stage, leading them to ultimately leave the stage altogether. The performative hybridity of many Plautine plays is shown in the characters' glib offers to change a play as needed.¹⁴⁶ However, when Plautine characters such as Curculio address the audience, they are often drawing out a hybrid identity which is already present. So it is with Hanno. Although he uses his creative powers to perform various identities, the *Poenulus*'s handling of Hanno's

¹⁴⁵Milphio's last lines are in *Poen.* 1169-1171: **MIL.** *Opino hercle hodie, quod ego dixi per iocum/id eventurum esse et severum et serium/ut haec invenientur hodie esse huius filiae.* Collybiscus vanishes in line 805, though lines 803-4 (*dum lenonis familia/dormitat, extis sum satur factus probe*) suggest he did not leave the stage unrewarded.

¹⁴⁶Consider Mercury, purportedly turning the *Amphitruo* into a “*tragicomoedia*” with a flourish (*Amph.* 51-9), or the prologus in the *Menaechmi*, who hints that *poetae* create scenes to manipulate the audience (*Men.* 8-10).

Punic identity and its effect on his relatives suggests that our *Poenulus* — indeed, our *Poenuli* — hold up a mirror of foreignness to the audience, displaying to them what an articulation of hybridity looks like.

Chapter 3

Persa

In the *Curculio* and the *Poenulus*, we see a foreign element quite explicitly, as each play sees a character or characters claim to come from abroad in a way that is not contraindicated in the plot. In the *Persa*, however, the non-Greek foreignness is not just imaginary to the audience, but it is a deception known to all but one of the characters. For this reason, the moments of hybridity and the presence of the foreign imaginary are both more subtle and more blatant. As in the *Poenulus*, the climactic foreign scene takes place nearer the end than the beginning. However, Toxilus, Sagaristio, and the *virgo*, the masterminds of the deception, display an awareness of the third space in which they are present in preceding scenes as well. The staging of foreignness in this play is more explicit and theatrical than in the previous two plays. This artificiality is best manifested in the *Persa*'s engagement with space and objects. *Persa* is a self-conscious commentary on the tensions between identities in Rome and shows this with its staging and theatrical props.

This play, like the *Curculio*, includes a conflation of Greece and Rome through metatheatricality. The *Persa* also introduces into this hybrid space figures of faux-foreigners coming directly from the mysterious Orient as a model of foreignness. This is distinct from both the *Curculio* and the *Poenulus*, in which characters actually (within the rules of the play) appear to come from somewhere else. Plautus's use of language which suggests location or movement across borders, and words that are (or appear to be) Greek — is therefore particularly marked in the *Persa*. I will accordingly examine Plautus's use of *hic*, *peregre/peregri*, and several Greek allusions made throughout the play. These words, I argue, reveal the lack of stability in categories such as "foreign," as there is no discrete category of "familiar" from which the "foreign" may be distinct.

The contrast between the exhibition of foreignness in the *Curculio* and the *Persa* is particularly marked. The *Persa* is "over-determined with props": a *tiara*, *crepidula*, a

letter, unspecified *ornamenta*, and so on.¹ In the *Persa*, the motive for the objects is, like the *Curculio*, used as evidence of a foreign imaginary, but this time, these objects are used in a deception in which the audience is directly implicated. This difference — the explicit theatricality of the foreignness within the play — shows yet another way of looking at foreignness in Plautus. In my analysis of the *Curculio*, I focused primarily on the interaction of culture as shown in specific stage situations, particularly the monologues spoken by Curculio and the *choragus*. In the *Persa*, I will examine the way in which Plautus highlights tensions of identity with his use of “foreign” language and use of props in the play — objects that turn Greek citizens into Arabian prisoners of war, and Greek slaves into Persian traders. The explicitness with which the *Persa*’s props are introduced as signifiers, and the use of dialogue that carries multiple meanings within the foreign play-within-a-play of the *Persa* displays an awareness of the instability of “familiar” and “foreign” identities, which in this play appear to be in the eye of the beholder, or the mind of the translator.

3.1 Plot

To summarize the plot of this play: Toxilus, a slave, wishes to acquire money to free his girlfriend Lemniselenis from her pimp Dordalus. He asks his friend and fellow slave Sagaristio for the money, but Sagaristio does not have it. While Sagaristio goes to see if he can help his friend, Toxilus makes plans to trick Lemniselenis’s pimp Dordalus. He orders the parasite Saturio (by means of a threat to take away his free meals) to lend his daughter to Sagaristio in order that Sagaristio might disguise himself as a Persian and sell the girl as an Arabian captive. Sagaristio in the meantime has given Toxilus the necessary money and Toxilus has taken it to free Lemniselenis. Dordalus falls into

¹Sharrock (2008: 3).

Toxilus's trap and buys Saturio's daughter without any guarantees of her servile status, only to suffer doubly when Saturio comes along and claims his daughter as freeborn, forcing Dordalus to return the money he got for her. As expected, everyone triumphs at Dordalus's expense.

The *virgo's* reluctance to self-identify as a foreigner means that she occupies an ambivalent space, full of double meanings and contradictory identities. Making this play's disguise-centered plot function requires the ambivalent *virgo* to be surrounded by many exotic props. The props which I will be describing are: the letter which Toxilus gives to Sagaristio describing the Persian conquest of "Chrysopolis" and the fictional Persian and Arab, the tiara and slippers which the *virgo* wears when she is disguised, the *tunica*, *zona*, *chlamys*, and *causea* which Sagaristio will use to pretend to be a Persian trader. I will also offer a few remarks on the objects which the parasite may or may not be carrying: the *ampullam*, *strigilem*, *scaphium*, *soccas*, *pallium*, and *marsu(p)pium*. The *ampulla* is seen in the *Mercator* as part of a travel outfit, and is seen alongside a *strigil* in the *Stichus*, as part of a series of useless objects to be sold. The sibilant consonance of the terms is accompanied by a tension — the *scaphium* suggests a Greek symposium, while the *socci*, *pallium*, and *marsuppium* seem to be in precise opposition to the typical habiliments of the Cynics.² The *socci* are also a running metatheatrical joke, as actors wore them onstage.³ Although these items are not alluded to again, this blend of Greek and Roman terms in a hyper-theatrical setting adds to the unsettling feeling within the play that "clothes make the man (or girl, or foreign captive)."

²Pasetti (2010: 9-12) points out that this series of objects is particularly interesting, as the Cynics were known for going around barefoot and with a general paucity of possessions, possessing a *pera* rather than a *marsuppium*, a bag designed to hold money.

³Richlin (2017: 139n2) provides a list of these jokes.

3.2 Previous scholarship of the *Persa*

The most recent scholarship on the *Persa* has been Joseph M. Conlon's 2016 introduction and commentary. Before Conlon, there have only been five other commentaries, three of which are dated before the 20th century. Conlon argues that the initial commentaries' disparagement or lukewarm appreciation have influenced later commentaries and led to the general lack of study of the *Persa*.⁴ Camerarius's description of the play's *argumentum* is *exile*, *iocosum*, and *plausibile*, while Ritschl's 19th century commentary considers the play "nur für das größte Publikum berechnet," and, scarcely more positively, "einfach und gewandt."⁵ Coulter (1911) discussed the *Persa*'s "poor technique and crude character drawing," though she concedes that the failings of the plot may be related to its Middle Comedy ancestor. My opinion stands with Melo (2011c: 444-9), that "[the *Persa*] has some truly charming and witty exchanges which make its neglect hard to justify." Among these exchanges, we find moments in which different characters in the *Persa* express sentiments that display the theatrical setting of the *Persa* as a "third space," in which different articulations of identity are productively and dialogically displayed. As in the *Curculio*, there are jokes about Greek philosophers that could appeal both to Greeks and Romans in the audience. The subplot involving the Persian and Arab captives, which is the focus of my project, seems to illuminate the nature of the "foreign imaginary" and its effect on the hybrid "third space" which the reader may find in Plautus's comedies.

Perhaps surprisingly, many scholars have discussed the characters' ability to shift between categories, sometimes using the term "hybridity" to do so. Toxilus's ability to dance among comic archetypes has been remarked upon by Slater (1985: 31-5)

⁴Conlon (2016).

⁵Camerarius (1552).

and McCarthy (2009: 122-166).⁶ Richlin (2017: 260-5) goes into the most detail about the *virgo's* hybrid identity. The *virgo* is able to straddle the line between citizen and foreigner, Greek and Arab, in a way that shows that these same labels are deeply suspect. As regards shifting boundaries more generally, Fontaine (2011) goes into detail about how the *virgo's* lines manage to be “all things to all people,” being, among other things, simultaneously an Arab captive and a Greek citizen within the same self-identifying sentence.⁷

The *virgo's* ability to disguise herself, is, of course, due to the plethora of props in the play. Ketterer, in his useful articles, has been the most influential in articulating the function of props in Plautine comedy. Ketterer groups props as serving mechanical and signifying functions.⁸ A prop's mechanical function is, of course, the purpose that the prop serves because of its identity as its object or because of how it affects characters' interactions with each other— for instance, a cloak serves the function of a garment, or a bargaining tool between two characters. A prop's signifying function Ketterer divides into 'labelling' and 'symbolic.' The former is when the prop labels a character as either an individual or as part of a category (e.g. a stock character). The latter refers to the prop's symbolic meaning — for instance, a tiara signifies the *virgo's* change from a Greek free woman to an Arab prisoner of war. Marshall (2006: 68-72) discusses how props have multiple meanings, and how those meanings change during the play: “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

⁶Slater (1985) particularly mentions Toxilus's shift from lachrymose *adulescens* to cunning slave, triggered by Sagaristio's monologue, and then his shift into *adulescens*-like behavior again when he interacts with Paegnum. McCarthy (2009) notes the conflict intrinsic in Toxilus's role as the *amator*, a role which typically depends upon freedom.

⁷Fontaine (2011).

⁸Ketterer (2009a), Ketterer (2009b), and Ketterer (2009c).

some of what is important, for nothing appears onstage unless someone has decided to bring it onstage.”⁹ Marshall (2019) describes how the costume changes in the *Mercator* show the instability of the stage and a “willingness to distance [oneself] from [a] single stage reality.”¹⁰ Adding the element of foreign space to this prop-stimulated instability reflects a similar instability and negotiation of realities among the audience, without whose imagination the props have a far less interesting theatrical life. In the *Persa*, the *virgo* supplements the exotic props with which she festoons herself with her own technique of using double entendres when questioned about her fictional backstory. By using statements which are both true (i.e. which state that she is born in Athens to a local man) and appear to confirm the pimp’s beliefs about her (that she is a Persian captive of noble origin), the *virgo* invites the audience to consider that much of what is happening onstage is false and open to reimagination. Sharrock (2008)’s article, which largely discusses the props in the *Curculio* and which I reference in my chapter on the same play, expresses similar sentiments: “things on stage become theatrical, in farce doubly so: Plautus engages with the artificiality of theatre in a celebration of the physical, which brings humour off the page.”¹¹ Both the metatheatricality that Sharrock references and the “thingyness” that the plethora of props creates onstage are points which will show that in the *Persa*, sometimes the difference between a familiar face and a foreign one is merely a matter of wardrobe.

3.3 Historical context of the *Persa*

The *Persa*, like the *Curculio*, is a play with no extant prologue or known Greek antecedent. The former limits the amount of information that the audience receives

⁹Marshall (2006: 71).

¹⁰Marshall (2019: 93).

¹¹Sharrock (2008: 1).

before the plot begins, while the latter prevents very much speculation about the Greek relationship to Persia in comedy. With regards to a Greek model, a significant piece of evidence which allows the reader to date the Greek play is lines 498-538, in which Toxilus reads a letter ostensibly from his master about his struggles with the Persians and the plunder he has received from there.¹² Webster (1970) considers Dordalus's reliance on the letter to be significant: "Dordalus is not tricked because he is ignorant of current affairs but because the situation is sufficiently plausible for him to accept it as real."¹³ This suggests that the Greek play must have been written when Persia was still a kingdom, putting its latest date at 334, while several more textual references lead Webster to ultimately date the play between 341 and 338. However, Plautus's plots — even those involving a foreign imaginary — do not always require historical realism in order to be entertaining. It is entirely possible that, as Toxilus's master was nowhere near Persia, there is no need for backstory to that effect.

Usually the prologue "seeks to draw the audience into the world of the play."¹⁴ The lack of one, then, will allow the plot to surprise the audience. There are many elements of the *Persa* which are unique or unusual — for instance, the slave is the *amator* and it is a free woman who plays a captive. The Persian imaginary is especially unusual for the Romans, who had little interaction with Persia. The Greeks, however, had a cultural narrative surrounding Persia and Persians. Many of the Greek stereotypes about Persia — which deal with money, breeding, war, and adoption of others' customs — suggest anxiety about a Persian invasion, a threat which was very real for the Greeks.¹⁵ For the Romans, however, Persia was "a place where, among the loot from foreign conquests,

¹²See 3.6.3 for closer analysis of this scene.

¹³Webster (1970: 78).

¹⁴Slater (1985: 123).

¹⁵Faller (2001: 181-3) summarizes many stereotypes about the Persians, mostly collated from Aeschylus and Herodotus, as follows: Persians are rich, brave, bellicose, haughty, bibulous, slavish, and prone to having multiple wives and children. Also interesting is Herodotus's assertion that Persians quickly adopt foreign customs, as evidenced by the fact that their clothing is Median in origin.

a visitor might well pick up a nice-looking virgin for resale at home.”¹⁶ Persia’s lack of presence as “a genuinely felt and experienced force” within Rome makes it a place which has the potential to be all things to all people.¹⁷ Within the context of the play, it is the “imaginary” Persia which allows the whole scam to take place, in much the same way as Curculio’s invocation of Eastern foreignness causes Lyco to be dazzled and thereby fooled. But unlike the situation within the *Curculio*, in which the East is mentioned but scarcely shown, the denizens of ‘Persia’ and ‘Arabia’, are displayed for the audience at length.

For the Romans of this period, Persia and Arabia were truly exotic. Rome’s general ignorance of Persia allows the schemers onstage a blank space — a representation without reality — onto which almost anything can be projected, a space of “silent shadows to be animated. . . [and]. . . brought into reality. . .”.¹⁸ Using Persia as a “foreign imaginary” thereby allows Plautus to use any kind of foreign-looking prop to depict these new “foreigners.”

Before the Eastern foreigners arrive onstage, Plautus offers the audience an allegedly Greek setting where the audience can enjoy the risqué sight of leisurely slaves enjoying a rare holiday. This particular stage, although it is not explicitly called “Athens” until line 549, has sufficient parallels with other Plautine theatrical structures as to lead the audience to assume they are viewing a Greek scene. The slaves are evidently engaged in their own affairs, not their masters’, as Sagaristio explicitly distances himself from wanting to do his master’s will, and Toxilus is consumed with his own love-affair.

In contrast to most Plautine plays, when the audience sees the *servus* character for the first time when he is doing (or about to do) some service for his master, the *Persa* meets slaves engaged in their own affairs, and claiming that they are behaving

¹⁶Richlin (2006: 22).

¹⁷E. W. Said (1979: 208).

¹⁸E. W. Said (1979: 208).

“freely.”¹⁹ Further, the parasite acts as servant (or slave!) to the slave. Even more strange, there is a free woman taking part in the intrigue and having quite a significant speaking role. Although this breakdown of theatrical roles is not directly relevant to my argument, the instability of roles would likely unsettle the theater-loving public who were accustomed to stock characters behaving within certain parameters. These cracks in well-known comic archetypes may make the audience more aware of the artificiality of the theatrical scene. Plautine plays often address the audience in their prologues. However, the suspension of disbelief is usually restored by the first act. In the *Persa*, audience enters the play with the fourth wall already pre-broken by the characters breaking character: a slave refusing to behave slavishly — that is, resisting his usual role in a Roman comedy — is a conscious commentary on what the audience expects from those roles. This rupture of comic tropes brings a greater awareness of how comedy is structured. These initial interactions between the slaves at the beginning of the play, particularly Toxilus’s declaration of *militia amoris* and Sagaristio’s astounded *iam servi hic amant?* illustrate this phenomenon and are a prelude to the heightened metatheatricality that is to come.

3.4 *Terra incognita*: Plautus’s moving vocabulary

3.4.1 *hic* and *peregre*, *eleutheria* and *basilice*: but where are we?

Persa 24-31

TOX. Saucius factus sum in Veneris proelio: sagitta Cupido cor meum
transfixit./ SAG. Iam servi hic amant?

¹⁹Aside from the confounding of the standard dramatic roles which occurs when a slave behaves as an *adulescens amator*, Stewart (2014: 407-13) also speaks of the dissolution of the concept of “insiders” and “outsiders” that occurs when Toxilus and Sagaristio behave as *amici* – an “insider” (freeborn male) value – and then Toxilus disdains the same value of friendship towards the pimp who frees his girlfriend.

TOX. Quid ego faciam? disne advorser?/ quasi Titani cum eis belligerem quibus sat esse non queam?

SAG. Vide modo, ulmeae catapultae tuom ne transfigant latus.

TOX. Basilice agito eleutheria./ **SAG.** Quid iam? / **TOX.** Quia erus peregri est. /**SAG.** Ain tu,

pergri est? / **TOX.** Si tu tibi bene esse pote pati, veni: vives mecum, 30a basilico accipiere victu.

TOX. *I've been struck in a battle against Venus: Cupid has pierced my heart.* /

SAG. *Do slaves fall in love here?*

TOX. *What should I do? Should I set against the gods? Like the Titans, should I wage war against those whose equal I cannot be?*

SAG. *See here, just make sure elm catapults don't pierce your side.*

TOX. *I'm celebrating freedom in royal fashion.* / **SAG.** *How so?* **TOX.** *Because my master is abroad.* **SAG.** *You say he's abroad?*

TOX. *If you can bear to have a good time, come, hang out with me; you'll be received with royal food.*

The absence of freeborn *adulescentes* means that the slaves are acting on their own behalf within this play. According to Slater (1985), "The shock to the audience must have been marked. Could he be quoting his master? Could the actor in his haste...have grabbed the wrong mask? ...we realize that the slave, normally the witty critic of love, has himself fallen under its spell."²⁰ Sagaristio's response to his fellow-slave Toxilus's free behavior is a request that Toxilus take up his usual role of *servus callidus* by ordering his friends around in order to pursue his schemes. He also points out the oddity of Toxilus's behavior with the question I referenced above: *iam servi hic amant?* One can imagine Sagaristio turning to the audience for this line to give his question a double meaning – *hic* refers to Athens, but also to *Rome*, and the audience in the city. The deictic locative, while common in Plautus, is used with particular significance in this play. Sagaristio's *hic* evokes the third space onstage, which is sometimes Athens and sometimes Rome.

²⁰Slater (1985: 31).

Sagaristio's implicit comment about unorthodox slave behavior already makes the stage both Greek and Roman. This is highlighted by Toxilus's remark that *erus peregri est*, as it is unclear where the master is away *from*. This adds yet another element to hybrid space that is onstage. As the characters negotiate geographical identity of the stage, Toxilus introduces the unambiguous "other" with the adverb *pergri*.

Further, because Toxilus's master is *pergri* and not *hic*, the slaves can grant themselves an *Eleutheria*.²¹ Whether *Eleutheria* is a reference from the Greek model of the play or a Plautine note of Greekness, there is an explicit Greek element in the first few lines of the play.²² However, there is also an unspoken Roman element to this little scene: Eckard Lefèvre has pointed out that in two Plautine plays, the *Persa* and the *Stichus*, slaves appear to have license to behave freely for a very brief period of time, particularly when their masters are away. This suggests a Saturnalia, a festival during which slaves were granted a brief amount of freedom, Lefèvre concludes that "Nach gut dreißig Versen weiß jeder Zuschauer in Rom, daß kein griechisches, sondern ein römisches Spiel abzulaufen beginnt, das nur zum Schutzz im griechischen Milieu angesiedelt ist, ohne daß seine Wirkung in Rom beeinträchtigt wird."²³ However, Kruschwitz (2004) disagrees that there is an explicit Saturnalia reference: "But given that it was really part of the Saturnalia that the slaves at these days may have acted fully equally or even superior to their owners, this is not what can be seen in the *Persa*. There is no master eluded by his slave, no slave equal or superior to an honest free man (which should be the essence of the Saturnalia)."²⁴

The master's absence does not, to my view, present an insurmountable barrier to the

²¹Segal (1987b: 167) shows how this limited "freedom" is also found in *Stichus*. For more on *pergri*, see 3.6.1.

²²Leigh (2004: 28) and Leigh (2004: 28n23) takes the latter view, that this is a more generic Greek flavor.

²³Lefèvre (2001: 22). See also Chiarini (1979).

²⁴Kruschwitz (2004). See also Segal (1987b: 103) "...there is no evidence to indicate that during the celebration of the Roman Saturnalia slaves ever behaved as audaciously as they do in Plautine comedy."

idea that this scene is Saturnalian in tone. Toxilus does, after all, have the previously-unattainable ability to treat his friend to a lavish meal.²⁵ Moreover, he is working on behalf of himself, free from his master's usual demands — or ignoring them.²⁶ Although our ignorance of the Saturnalian celebration prevents any real analysis of whether Toxilus's words adhere to historical custom, the word *eleutheria* combined with Toxilus's short-term profligacy might well hint at the sort of Saturnalian *ethos* mentioned by Macrobius.²⁷ As in the opening lines of the *Poenulus*, the initial *hic*, following as it does from a rather Greek-sounding declaration of love, brings the setting into doubt.

The hyper-Hellenic and possibly impossible *basilice agito eleutheria* confirms that this setting is not quite Greek. There is also a *Persian* aspect to the word *eleutheria*. Richlin states:

The Greek/Latin hybrid adverb *basilice* is used repeatedly to denote actions by slaves that escape from the usual bounds: so Toxilus to Sagaristio, "I'm celebrating the Freedom Festival like a king" (*basilice agito eleutheria*, *Per.* 29). This is a joke, and one that goes by really fast: the most famous Eleutheria was the celebration at Plataea of the victory over the Persians, a celebration at which neither kings nor slaves were welcome; to this slave, *eleutheria* means a different kind of freedom, a personal freedom, and *basilice* is how he wants to be.²⁸

Like the monologues of Curculio and the *choragus*, this phrase seems to show that the dichotomy between Greek and Roman practices is a false one. In the *Curculio*, these characters show the audience that Greek characters live in Rome, or that Roman inhabitants often act like comic characters, Toxilus's use of *basilice* is a Greek word in a Roman costume: a mirror image to the *palliata* itself. *Basilicus* also "clearly carried the

²⁵*Per.* 30-1.

²⁶*Per.* 11-12

²⁷Macr. *Sat.* 1.7.26: ...*Saturnalibus tota servis licentia permittitur*: slaves are allowed total license during the Saturnalia.

²⁸Richlin (2017: 443).

aura of the great Alexander, *who had crowned himself βασιλεύς after the death of Darius of Persia*" (emphasis mine).²⁹ The layers of identity and conquest in this line are manifold, and will be further highlighted when the false Easterners arrive onstage. Although this series of scenes is the one in which the theme of breaking down identities is most overt, Plautus's use of language, particularly Greek-tinted language, is very deliberate. I will examine other uses of *hic* as they come up, but the above is the most vivid example of how Plautus uses this to show the ambivalence of where "here" is.

Persa 636-641

DOR. at ego patriam te rogo quae sit tua

VIR. quae mihi sit, nisi haec ubi nunc sum?

...

dico equidem: quando *hic* seruio, *haec* patria est mea.³⁰

DOR. *but I ask you from which country you are.*

VIR. *From where could I be, except where I am now?*

...

Indeed I say: since I serve here, this country is mine.

This is another moment in which *hic* is significant. Fontaine (2011) has explained very thoroughly how, due to her reluctance to involve herself in this plot, nearly all of the *virgo's* utterances have a double meaning, so that she is always telling the truth while convincing Dordalus of what he wants to believe. Like Sagaristio in the early lines of the play, the *virgo* uses the word *hic* as a non-sexual double entendre. Dordalus interprets this particular answer of the *virgo's* as "the past does not matter, only where I am now counts."³¹ At the same time, she has avoided claiming to be from any other

²⁹Segal (1987a: 132).

³⁰Emphasis mine.

³¹Fontaine (2011: 21).

place than Athens, where she was born.³² Since the *virgo* is wearing a “quadruple mask” — a male actor, wearing a mask of a poor Athenian girl who has to doubly disguise herself as rich and foreign — the audience is already in a state of ambivalence about who “she” is, particularly given the deliberate vagueness of her replies. As such, when she discusses serving “here,” it is difficult to know whether she means the Athens onstage, or if she is speaking as the actor who has been hired to play the role (a meaning which could become clear by the use of gestures), or if she is fully in her role as *Lucris* the Persian captive, or a combination of all three. The very ambiguity of the word *hic* opens herself up to translation and mistranslation, as her double meanings invite the audience to “translate” her words in multiple ways. The audience’s realization that Dordalus and the rest of the cast each understand her words differently makes the audience aware of ambiguities present in the “*hic*” where they themselves reside.

3.4.2 *hospes*: hospitality across borders

Persa 604

DOR. *hospes, uolo ego hanc percontari*

DOR. *Stranger, I want to question this girl.*

This remark is directed at Sagaristio, who is dressed as a Persian. Sagaristio is described as *hospes*, a word which is usually used to describe a stranger or friend who had a different homeland to oneself, or sometimes between compatriots who meet abroad.³³ Plautus usually uses the word when describing a host or guest.³⁴ This is one of the few times when Plautus uses this word as a seemingly friendly (or at least neutral) word to a stranger without the expectation of hospitality. Plautus’s usual usage, however,

³²ibid. Fontaine also points out that the *virgo*’s use of *quando* (which can mean “since,” “when,” or “if”) is a judicious choice.

³³Dickey (2007: 149-50).

³⁴*Epi* 662, *Mercator* 104 *Mil.* 746, *Most.* 479-82, etc.

seems to suggest that Dordalus is trying to bring Sagaristio into the community of characters in the *Persa* — where, of course, Sagaristio already belongs. Since the pimp is from Megara, this could also be an overture between “foreigners,” in which Dordalus is trying to connect with the *Persa* on a personal level. Interestingly, when the prank has been committed, Sagaristio is fairly consistently referred to as *Persa* — a term which is used with reasonable hostility and mockery in this play. In line 676, Toxilus mockingly says “*audin tu, Persa?*” (*Do you hear, Persian?*) to Sagaristio, when he was responsible for making him a *Persa* to begin with. Dordalus bitterly refers to the *Persa* and the country of *Persae* at various points at the very end of the play. When everyone except Dordalus has seen the “Persian” and is aware that he is, in fact, just another slave, is the time when Dordalus particularly insists on his “Persian” identity and curses: “*qui illum Persam atque omnis Persas atque etiam omnis personas/male di omnes perdant.*” (*May the gods send to utter perdition this Persian and all Persians and all [stage] characters.*) The constant repetition of “Persian” seems like a defensive distancing of the malefactor. This distancing is destroyed when Dordalus is ready to believe that *undisguised* Sagaristio is a Greek like himself. Sagaristio coming out and claiming that his brother was the Persian who tricked Dordalus strengthens the *Persa*’s self-conscious declaration that objects make the man: Dordalus is told that one man in a costume is a Persian, but the costume’s removal turns the same manto an Athenian (or Plautopolite).

3.5 Greek-ish: Plautus’s slippery Hellenism

3.5.1 *Persa* 1-6: A Herculean beginning

TOX. Qui amans egens ingressus est princeps in Amoris vias,³⁵

³⁵Arcaz Pozo (2012) translates ‘princeps’ militarily, due to the theme of *militia amoris*. If Toxilus’s first line suggests a soldier on campaign, this theme could also add to the motif of movement and shifting borders consistent in this play.

superávit aerumnis suis aerumnas Herculi.³⁶

nam cúm leone, cum éxetra, cum cérvó, cum apro Aetólicó,
cum avibús Stymphalicís, cum Antaeo déluctari mávelim,
quam cúm Amore: ita fio miser quaerendo argento mutuo,
nec quicquam nisi 'non est' sciunt mihi respondere quos rogo.

TOX. *Someone who's in love and broke and first set upon the paths of Love
surpasses the labors of Hercules in his own labors.*

*For I would rather struggle with the lion, the Hydra, the Aetolian boar,
with the Stymphalaeian birds, with Antaeus,
rather than with love: so miserable am I, looking for money to borrow —
but no one whom I ask knows how to say anything except "there isn't any."*

Plautus is no stranger to Greek words in his plays. As I mentioned in the introduction, the audience was likely to contain Greek speakers. More importantly, even aristocratic Romans were likely to have served alongside Greeks or in places where Greek was commonly spoken. Adams (2003) details the way in which Greek was simultaneously a high- and low-class language, as slaves spoke Greek as a first language while their highly educated masters spoke a rather different Greek, learned as a second language.

While the *Persa* does not have a prologue in which the Greek title of the play might be referenced, a reference to Hercules seems to be foregrounded. Fraenkel (2007: 5-16) has pointed out that a comic character comparing himself to a Greek hero is a common trope. In this case, the text contains the hybrid element of Hercules. Although Hercules is supposed to have been born in Thebes, he is a very common figure in Roman literature, particularly as mythological tradition depicts him as having driven the cattle of Geryon through Italy during his tenth labor. Slater (1985: 31n2) and Fraenkel (2007: 7) consider this motif entirely Plautine — or at least Italian, as Hercules was a common

³⁶Fontaine (2010: 220) sees not only the mythological associations associated with Hercules, but also a pun on *(h)eri culi*: 'of the master's asshole.' This theme is perhaps reinforced by *aerumnae*: 'hardships,' which "refers to the sufferings of pedication" at *Ps.* 770.

figure in South Italian farce.³⁷ Toxilus's representation of the boar as Aetolian is also a "jarring geographical reference ... and ... a sidestep into the wrong myth" as Hercules's boar is the *Erymanthian* boar, and it was in fact *Meleager* who slew the Aetolian (or Calydonian) boar.³⁸ The "wild west" nature of Calydon means that this play begins with a bit of foreign imaginary represented by Hercules and his exotic labors. Hercules is also a possible founder of the Saturnalia: Macrobius speaks of the legend in which Hercules's followers remained in Italy and celebrated the Saturnalia as a way to display their ritual observances to neighboring towns.³⁹ The next few lines, which reference to a possible Saturnalian revel, are accordingly predicted here.

The allusion to Hercules, though not uncommon in Plautus, has another valence: although this is not signalled in the play, there is a narrative tradition that Hercules, though the son of Zeus, briefly works as a slave under the Lydian queen Omphale. Toxilus is a slave behaving as a free man, comparing himself to Hercules, a freeman who is forced to become a slave. In several versions of this tale, Hercules (or Herakles) is also forced to dress in women's clothes (and presumably *Eastern* women's clothes) to further his humiliation — just as the *virgo* does later. Although Hercules's later life is not what Toxilus refers to, the layers of ethnic and prop-related subtext in this initial metaphor will retrospectively become more meaningful to a discerning audience. This Greek figure appropriated by Italian farce and later by Roman comedy seems to be a metonymic representation of Plautine comedy.

³⁷Nicoll (1963: 69), Slater (1985: 31n2), and Fraenkel (2007: 7) consider the mention of Hercules to be a Plautine invention, though Fraenkel (2007: 7) does not ascribe particular significance to the mistake of the boar, asserting that this is "a very understandable memory lapse." cf. Zagagi (1980: 55), who believes that there are Greek precedents for these sorts of mythological parallels.

³⁸Elderkin (1934).

³⁹Macr. *Sat.* 1.7.27.

3.5.2 Parasitology: The arrival of Saturio

The next aspect of the play which shows the blurring of lines between Greece and Rome is the arrival of the parasite. At first glance, Saturio's monologue "functions as a reassuring tonic note for the audience. Where Toxilus has profoundly disturbed our ideas of stock type, Saturio confirms them explicitly," particularly with his long opening monologue directed at the audience.⁴⁰ In his initial lines, he does what is expected of him: he says he is a parasite and then wanders around looking for food. However, within his speech are found many moments of hybridity and cultural negotiation, particularly between what is Greek and what is Roman. Ultimately, Saturio's "reassuring" character reveals another moment which breaks the third wall, bringing Roman concerns into the theatrical space.

Like Curculio, Saturio reminds the audience of the hybridity inherent in Roman comedy — though his identity as a parasite comes from that of a stock character in Greek comedy, he justifies his profession by citing his ancestors (Roman, if the name *Capito* is any indication).⁴¹ Moreover, Saturio's *cognomen* name appears to be a direct translation of ἀνήρ κροστρεύς ("mullet man") as *vir capito*.⁴² The name Saturio itself looks similar to the Greek parasite name Σατυρίων, but is not similar in pronunciation, causing scholars such as Fontaine (2010) to consider this a pun or parechesis.⁴³

Saturio's family name and his ancestry suggest Romanness, but there is a Greek joke hiding just below the surface. Saturio then explains that his alternative to being a parasite is to become an informant (*quadrupulari*) — a Roman term at odds with the Greek

⁴⁰Slater (1985: 34).

⁴¹Gunderson (2015: 104-5) mentions the juxtaposition of the very grandiose *pater, avos, abavos, atavor, tritavos...* in line 57, paralleling Roman texts, and compares the comic *Duri Capito* to the silly names of historical aristocratic Romans, such as *Brutus*.

⁴²Fontaine (2010: 171), Melo (2011c: 461n7), and Fontaine (2018: 38).

⁴³Fontaine (2010: 70-1).

setting, and one which he categorically rejects.⁴⁴ In other words, Saturio would rather inherit his Greek ancestors' profession than become part of Roman society, though he performatively names his ancestry and family name like a Roman.⁴⁵ He then makes his criticism of Roman society more explicit by demanding social reform — Saturio proposes that if a *quadrupulator* is claiming to do his job out of patriotism, he should give a portion of his proceedings to the public coffers, and an enactment of that law will substantially decrease the number of informants.⁴⁶ While Toxilus straddles the line between 'slave' and 'free,' Saturio's expresses his hybridity geographically with his speech, blurring Greece and Rome within his person. However, as soon as Saturio encounters Toxilus, the audience's world is once again turned upside-down as the parasite, a free man, becomes a client of the slave.⁴⁷ The hyper-theatricality of everyone playing multiple roles in the *Persa* seems to remind the audience that they are watching a play — a play in which Greek *parasiti* are reminiscent of Roman *senes* and have connections to Roman professions. Just as Moore showed that the hyper-Hellenization in the *Curculio* belies the Greek setting that the audience sees, Saturio's contradictory family and career sees Rome and Greece in contention, showing the audience that a

⁴⁴Both the Greek word *sycophanta* and the Roman *quadrupulator* are found in Plautus's plays. However, Plautus uses *sycophanta* to mean "tricks" and "deceptions" while he uses *quadrupulator* to refer to the act of informing. See Zijlstra (1967), who cites Leo and Fraenkel in mentioning that Roman *quadrupulatores* are not a perfect translation of the Greek *sycophantai*, but are a more direct reflection of Roman society. Fontaine (2010: 245) also sees a joke between *quadrupulari* and *quadrupedari*, 'to be on all fours,' a slang term for being a pathetic recipient.

⁴⁵Gunderson (2015: 105) adds that the call to ancestry is particularly Roman and not from a Greek play, as Greeks did not have words for a great-great-grandfather or beyond.

⁴⁶Flaucher (2002: 49-50): "Saturio grenzt seine Lebensweise streng von der der erwerbsmäßigen, übelbeleumdeten Denunzianten ab, die aus reinem Eigennutz durch das Erheben falscher Anklagen ohne Risiko den Besitz anderer Leute an sich reißen, und fordert, dass sie streng bestraft werden müssen." However, Flaucher continues: "Der Parasit folgt nun willig den Ausführungen des Toxilus, zeigt sich zur Ausführung bereit und übernimmt so die Rolle eines Sykophanten, eines gewerbsmäßigen Denunzianten, von dem er sich in seinem Auftrittsmonolog deutlich distanziert hatte. Er ist wahrlich kein Prinzipienreiter!"

⁴⁷The "upside-downness" is a view proposed by Guilbert (1962), who believed that the *Persa* was a parody of a typical *adulescens*-centered play. However, Slater 1985: 32n3 points out that if this is a parody, it falls rather flat, as there are several times when Sagaristio could have made fun of Toxilus's servile status or lovesickness, but chooses not to.

name, normally a short way to identify someone's nationality, can be a moving target. Once again, Greece and Rome are fused together within the permeable theatrical space.

3.6 Act 4: A *virgo* and other Persians of interest

Since his master is conveniently away in the east, Toxilus is able to wield both the power of a free man and the mystique of the Orient to fool the pimp. He does this by telling Sagaristio and the parasite's daughter to outfit themselves in exotic outfits, so that they appear to be born *longe ab Athenis*. He then asks the girl in particular to invent details regarding her parentage and place of kidnap. The girl's supposed Eastern origins provide another advantage to the schemers, as they mean that the pimp is more likely to take a risk and buy her without a guarantee, the greater distance between the girl and her city of origin diminishes the likelihood of her father returning to reclaim her. Sagaristio's forged letter links to foreign places. These places and the "Easterners'" costumes are this play's manifestation of the "foreign imaginary." I will examine the scenes which lead up to the presentation of the captives from "Arabia" and "Persia," and how the very artificiality of the props attached to these disguise scenes bring into prominence the idea that "foreign" is not as far away from "familiar" as one might expect, and that the two concepts are in constant dialogue and are reevaluated throughout the play.

When Toxilus informs Saturio that in order to maintain his comfortable lifestyle, he must 'lend' Toxilus his own daughter for the intrigue, the parasite briefly hesitates, fearful of what such a loan will entail. However, he is soon persuaded. It is of course Toxilus who is the stage manager of this play-within-a-play. Before the *virgo* has come out in her costume, he makes sure she and Sagaristio have their lines memorized and gives them their stage directions and cues:

3.6.1 *Persa* 147-157

TOX. Bene facis. propera, abi domum;
praemonstra docte, praecipe astu filiae,
quid fabuletur: ubi se natam praedicet,
qui sibi parentes fuerint, unde surrupta sit.
sed longe ab Athenis esse se gnatam autumet;
et ut adflectat, cum ea memoret.

SAT. Etiam tu taces?

ter tanto peior ipsa est quam illam tu esse vis.

TOX. Lepide hercle dicis. sed scin quid facias? cape
tunicam atque zonam, et chlamydem adferto et causeam,
quam ille habeat qui hanc lenoni huic vendat.

SAT. Eu, probe.

TOX. Quasi sit peregrinus...et gnatam tuam
ornatam adduce lepede in peregrinum modum

SAT. πόθεν ornamenta?

TOX. aps chorago sumito;

dare debet: praebenda aediles locaverunt.

TOX: *You're doing well. Hurry up, head home; cleverly give your daughter instructions and teach her cunningly what she should invent: where she should claim to have been born, who her parents were, whence she was kidnapped. but she should appear to have been born far from Athens; and she should cry when she remembers.*

SAT: *Will you be quiet? She is three times cleverer than you wish her to be.*

TOX: *By Hercules. you speak well. But do you know what you are to do? Take a tunic and a belt, and bring a cloak and a traveling hat which the man who sells her to the pimp should have —*

SAT: *Great, wonderful.*

TOX: *— as if he were a foreigner ... and lead your daughter here adorned in the style of a foreigner.*

SAT: *Adornments? D'où?*

TOX: *Take them from the stage manager; he needs to give them to you: the aediles put them there to be available.*

Like Hanno in the *Poenulus*, the *parasite* behaves *docte* and *astu* towards his daughter — although in this case, Saturio is instructing *her* in how to lie, rather than lying himself.⁴⁸ Although the *virgo* offers many philosophical objections, it is clearly not her ability to carry out the plan that worries her.⁴⁹ When Toxilus informs him of his scheme and wants to verify the *virgo's* acting talent, Saturio irritably responds that she is even more “clever” than Toxilus might expect.⁵⁰ The *virgo's* cover story should be elaborate, including both her parents and the place of her kidnapping. More importantly, she should claim to have been born far from Athens. “The slave thus translates the unnamed and freeborn *virgo*, whose social role was to be marriageable, into human chattel, with a story, a costume, and an expected emotional response.”⁵¹ However, the slave does not work alone. When Saturio asks whence the ornaments are supposed to appear, Toxilus points out that he should work with the *choragus*. Given that the whole *Persa* also has a *choragus*, asking a character within the play to use a stage manager to help with his scheme blurs together theatrical and extra-theatrical reality. There are three instances in which the *choragus* is directly named as the source of the *ornamenta* in a disguise plot: the *choragus* monologue in the *Curculio*, a moment in the *Truculentus* in which Megaronides is implicated in renting (*suo periculo!*) *ornamenta* from the *choragus*, and Toxilus’s scheme above. Though Gilula (1989) considers the *choragus* part of the theatrical setting, I agree with Marshall (2006: 27) that this is another way in which Plautus blurs the lines between theater and audience — and in the next few

⁴⁸In the *Poenulus* 111 and 1123, Hanno is described using those adjectives when he interacts with his daughters before his identity is revealed.

⁴⁹See Woytek (1982: 345) for an analysis of the *virgo's* philosophical discourse, which he concludes comes from the *Persa's* Greek model. Although this scene is not relevant to my current analysis, I will mention in passing that this theory displays an interesting example of Bhabhaian mimicry, as a Greek play’s words are translated into Latin as a resistance to Greek literature and philosophy’s cultural influence.

⁵⁰Anderson (1996: 77) considered the *virgo's* cleverness “a quality of all women in Plautus, slave or free.” However, this is Plautus’s only free maiden with a speaking role, and accordingly I believe her role requires individual consideration.

⁵¹Stewart (2012: 39).

lines, the *ornamenta* are named individually, the more to heighten their importance.

There is a formulaic tone to the details which the *virgo* is called to specify. Parentage and place of kidnap are also the details which Agorastocles uses to establish his own identity and relationship with Hanno in the *Poenulus*. It appears that parentage, place of birth, and location of kidnap are the standard hallmarks of identity from a free person or a previously-free slave. Likewise, a tunic, *zona*, and *chlamys* are often used to denote a foreigner, or at least a traveler.⁵² The Greek names for these pieces “reflects an interesting transference, as Roman attitudes toward Greek costume items (which characterize individuals as foreign, military, and perhaps eastern) function in the notionally Greek world as symbols for Persia, another foreign, eastern, military power.”⁵³ Once again, there is a double layer of hybridity, where “Greek names” are Greek on the surface, but suggest exoticism beneath. Since the “Greek” play has the characters speaking Latin by default, the Greek names are especially pointed.

Peregrinus, revisited: a lexical look at foreignness

The word *peregri/peregrinus* appears five times in this play, and all of these are significant. *Peregrinus* seems to be a relatively neutral word for a foreigner, meaning merely “from elsewhere.” This word is a contrast to words like *hostis* (which meant “enemy” by the time of Cato and likely had hostile associations even in Plautus).⁵⁴ Plautus also uses *alienus*, *ignotus*, and *hospes* to refer to foreigners.⁵⁵ *Peregri* is used twice at the beginning of the play to describe Toxilus’s master. Now, the *virgo* and Sagaristio are urged to dress as if they are *peregrini*. The world offstage is considered *peregre*

⁵²Richlin (2005: 100-2), Isayev (2017: 214-5). Isayev in particular notes that these items were often characteristic of soldiers.

⁵³Marshall (2006: 56-66).

⁵⁴Gargola (2017: 87) thinks that *hostis* became negative when *peregrinus* was brought into common usage. See also Isayev (2017: 216-8).

⁵⁵Isayev (2017: 217). I briefly mention Plautus’s use of the latter word in the *Persa* in 3.4.2.

when Toxilus’s master is away, but Toxilus shows that what is actually behind the stage is not the mysterious Orient, but an obvious plethora of props. The line “πόθεν ornamenta?” from *Saturio* exemplifies this — the Greek word πόθεν suggests the exoticism mentioned above, while *ornamenta* seems like a denial of the same exoticism. The Greek names for the elements of the prop-costume and the interrogative πόθεν speak to a code switching which primes the audience to think in multiple languages. This is a prelude to the *virgo’s* more extensive display of double-speak, in which the audience must, for the humor of the scene to come through, view each of her sentences as translated in multiple ways. If Greek words are, as I mentioned earlier, Persian-coded in a play in which everyone speaks Latin by default, then using the *Greek* words for the *virgo’s* costume also prepares the audience for the more subtle nod to translatory hybridity in the *virgo’s* dialogue, in which her sentences both invoke Persia and appear to stick to the truth at the same time.

The metatheatricality continues in the next scene, when the audience finally sees the costume:

3.6.2 *Persa* 462-469

TOXILUS : Sagaristio, heus, exi atque educe virginem
et istas tabellas, quas consignavi tibi,
quas tu attulisti mi ab ero meo usque e Persia.

SAGARISTIO: Numquid moror? **TOX**. Eugae, eugae! exornatu’s basilice;
tiara ornatum lepida condecorat schema.

tum hanc hospitam autem crepidula ut graphice decet!
sed satin estis meditati? **SAG**. Tragici et comici

numquam aequae sunt meditati. **TOX**. Lepide hercle adiuvas.
age, illuc abscede procul e conspectu et tace.

ubi cum lenone me videbis colloqui
id erit adeundi tempus. nunc agerite vos.

TOXILUS: *Oy, Sagaristio, come out and lead out the girl and that letter, which I entrusted to you, the one you brought to me from my master all the way from Persia.*

SAGARISTIO: *Surely I shouldn't delay further?*

TOX: *Hooray, well done! You're adorned like a king; the charming tiara sets off the ornate ensemble. And furthermore, how artistically do the sandals grace the foreign girl! But have you rehearsed enough?*

SAG: *Tragic and comic actors have never been so well rehearsed.*

TOX: *By Hercules, you are helping me delightfully. Go, hide over there, far from view and be quiet. When you see me talking to the leno, that will be the time to approach. Now go on, get going.*

The Greek words continue to be particularly notable in this metatheatrical scene. If one recalls from line 157, the girl was to be *ornata lepide in peregrinum modum*. The audience now sees that the two foreigners are “*exornat[i] basilice*” and that the exotic *tiara* accentuates the whole effect. The metatheatricity of the scene is apparent in Sagaristio’s assertion that he and the *virgo* are better rehearsed than any actors — to which Toxilus immediately responds by giving him his cue. This prelude to the foreign trick (which I consider to be fully underway only when the *leno* — the victim — appears) shows how contentious both the theatrical space and the actors’ *personae* truly are.

To begin, the exclamatory “*eugae!*” is a word which may contain the Greek *eu* within its congratulatory tone.⁵⁶

More concretely, *basilice*, like *Curculio’s thermipolio*, is another word with a dubious Greek flavor. Although it comes from the Greek *ó*, “king,” Plautus has used it to mean anything from “royally” to merely “magnificently.” Fraenkel (2007) considers the word *basilice* a Plautine invention and a pseudo-Greek equivalent of the Latin

⁵⁶Unceta Gómez (2016: 280-2) asserts that “... a congratulating force is ... inferred in certain uses of the interjection *eu!*, whose basic meaning conveys surprise and is generally used to express a certain degree of annoyance. For this reason, we might think that, in the examples in which this unit expresses congratulations, mainly in the works of Terence, an interference is taking place with the Greek adverb *εὖ* [‘well’].” Although this may well be true in the case of Terence, Plautus’ use of *eu*-compounds seems to be divided equally between praise and annoyance. (See, e.g. *Amph.* 802, 1018; *Aul.* 667; *Bacch.* 247, 724, 991, 1105; *Capt.* 274, 823, *Curc.* 98)

regie, designed to amplify the self-aggrandizement and bombastic exaggeration of the Plautine slave.⁵⁷ As to what the *virgo* and her companion are so magnificently dressed in, Plautus's vocabulary for these items of clothing occupies a space of hybridity. Alongside the items mentioned in the previous section, the *virgo* is evidently dressed in two more items: the *tiara* and the *crepidula*.⁵⁸ The *tiara*, which suggests exoticism and opulence, was part of Darius's costume in Aeschylus's *Persians*. In fact, just like the *virgo*, Darius's elegance is symbolized by his headwear and his footwear. Plautus further emphasizes the connection to Darius by juxtaposing the *virgo's* costume with the adverb *basilice*.⁵⁹ The *virgo* being dressed in a man's garment also others her in a gendered way. A woman wearing a man's garment is unusual, and plays into stereotypes about effeminate barbarian men and strong dominating barbarian women. Once again, the *virgo* is neither one thing nor another.⁶⁰

In these initial lines of the plot, Plautus's knack for "slippage" shows through in every line. As he does in the *Amphitruo*, the *Curculio*, and almost all his other plays, Plautus explicitly refers to this scene as being part of a play. The metatheatricity is particularly noticeable here, as Toxilus's speech almost seem to be cues from a director, rather than instructions from one actor to another. The metatheatricity is emphasized by the *virgo's* outfit: perturbingly, if all it takes is some theatrical costumes for a slave

⁵⁷Fraenkel (2007: 130-2). Melo (2012b) points out that *basilice* as an intensifier (meaning something like "really") is common in Plautus but not known in Greek.

⁵⁸Coon (1920: 54-60) asserted that *crepidula*, though part of Greek national dress, would be considered foreign to Romans. This word is only used once in Plautus's extant works. Livy (29.29.12) criticized Scipio Africanus for strolling around the *gymnasium* in his *pallium* and *crepida*.

⁵⁹S. Said (2007) discusses Darius's costume in the *Persians*, noting that the tiara is referred to as βασιλεις. Interestingly, Herodotus seems to consider the tiara the word for a Persian *military* headpiece. (Hdt. 7.61: "οἱ δὲ στρατευόμενοι οἷδε ἦσαν, Πέρσαι μὲν ᾧδε ἐσκευασμένοι· περὶ μὲν τῆσι κεφαλῆσι εἶχον τιάρας καλεσμένους πῖλους ἀπαγέας, περὶ δὲ τὸ σῶμα κινῶνας χειριδωτοὺς ποιχίλους, λεπίδος σιδηρῆς ὄψιν ἰχθυοειδέος, περὶ δὲ τὰ σκέλεα ἀναξυρίδας, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀσπίδων γέρρα· ὑπὸ δὲ φαρετρεῶνες ἐκρέμαντο· αἰχμάς δὲ βραχέας εἶχον, τόξα δὲ μεγάλα, ὀιστοὺς δὲ καλαμίνους, πρὸς δὲ ἐγχειρίδια παρὰ τὸν δεξιὸν μηρὸν παραωρεύμενα ἐκ τῆς ζώνης.")

⁶⁰For specifically gendered stereotypes about barbarians, see Hall (1991: 79-84), Briant (2002), and Penrose (2016: 1-22, 152-3).

to turn a citizen girl into a captive foreigner and make her words seem to repudiate her true birth and status, then the idea of “native” and “foreigner” is itself unstable. In successfully creating and displaying foreignness for Dordalus, Toxilus has shown the audience through the *virgo* that the very concept of foreignness is oddly evanescent – though it warps those whom it touches, it is difficult to pin down as an intrinsic identity. Toxilus and Sagaristio are behaving similarly to *Curculio* and the *choragus*: by pointing out their hours of rehearsal, they are showing that if a “neutral” comic character throwing on a few extra articles of clothing makes them unusual and foreign, then by extension, it is only a few feet of theatrical stage and a *pallium* separating audience from actor.

Sagaristio’s letter introducing the *virgo* adds the initial “Persian” backstory:

3.6.3 *Persa* 506-9; 520-5

DOR. Chrysopolim Persae cepere urbem in Arabia,
 plenam bonarum rerum atque antiquom oppidum:
 ea comportatur praeda, ut fiat auctio
 publicitus; ea res me domo expertem facit.

...

Iste qui tabellas adfert adduxit simul
 forma expetenda liberalem virginem,
 furtivam, abductam ex Arabia penitissima;
 eam te volo accurare ut istic veneat.
 ac suo periclo is emat qui eam mercabitur:
 mancipio neque promittet neque quisquam dabit.

DOR: The Persians have captured the city of Chrysopolis in Arabia, an ancient town full of good things: the loot is being amassed, so that there may be a public auction. This matter is what keeps me from home...the man who brings these tablets has brought with him a freeborn virgin of desirable beauty, captured from deepest Arabia; I want you to ensure that she is sold there; let he who buys her do so at his own risk: nor let anyone promise or give her with a guarantee.

Dordalus is reading a letter ostensibly written by Timarchides, master of Toxilus. In this letter, “Timarchides” claims that the Persians have captured the city of “Chrysopolis” and that the bringer of the letter has brought with him a kidnapped virgin from the same place. The place *Chrysopolis*, like *Curculio’s Pentetronica* or the *campis Curculionieis* of the *Miles Gloriosus*, appears to be a “foreign imaginary” — doubly so, as the place is offstage and invisible, as well as being nonexistent.⁶¹ In the *Curculio*, the mention of such places adds verisimilitude to the story being told onstage, while the obvious invention of the place name elicits laughter from the audience. The words *Persae*, *Chrysopolis*, *Arabia*, *bonae*, and *praeda* in conjunction within these lines suggest both exoticism and mercantilism associated with soldiers and traveling. These are also words which are carefully chosen to attract Dordalus, who is agelastic and obsessed with riches even by Plautine standards.⁶² Richlin (2017) comments that “[t]he East is not just code for ‘what Rome conquered,’ but a real place where unreal things could happen.”⁶³ This is very similar to the parasite’s speech in *Curculio*, in which his name-dropping of various Eastern cities works to persuade his interlocutor that the soldier is away on important (and profitable) business.

Although the pimp has not yet seen the *virgo* in her captive costume, the audience is already primed to see her as an unusual character she is. The girl in question is one of the *bonae* which Timarchides claims to have brought from Chrysopolis, or at least from *Arabia penutissima*. However, she comes with an element of risk: she cannot be purchased formally.⁶⁴ Moreover, her father has already described her to Toxilus as *peior* in line 153, a contrast with *bonae* in line 507. The *virgo*, rather than being *bona praeda* for Dordalus, will ultimately become his ruin — because she is *tanto peior* than what

⁶¹cf. Chiarini (1979: 221), who considers that *Chrysopolis* may be a veiled allusion to Ambracia, an extremely rich city and capital of Epirus under Pyrrhus in the third century.

⁶²Segal (1987b: 81-90).

⁶³Richlin (2017: 471-4).

⁶⁴See Lefèvre (2001) for why Plautus insists on *suo periclo*.

Dordalus expects her to be. This bit of *bona/mala* wordplay adds to the impression of the *virgo's* duplicity. It also gives the impression that adding the *ornamenta* to her turns her into a good (*bonum*) — that is, an object. In this tablet, she is both a *res bona* and a *liberalis virgo*. She is also simultaneously from “Athens” and from *Arabia penutissima*. A similar “slippage” happens a hundred lines previously, when Dordalus says “*sumne probus, sum lepidus civis, qui Atticam hodie civitatem maxumam maiorem feci atque auxi civi femina?*” (Am I not an upright man, a charming citizen, for having made the greatest state of Attica greater still by adding one female citizen to it?) about Toxilus’s recently-freed girlfriend: this is a statement that is impossible within the fictional theatrical setting of Athens, where citizenship was not a natural consequence of manumission.⁶⁵ The place where this is likeliest to happen, in fact, is Rome: yet another example of Rome bleeding into the theatrical stage.⁶⁶

3.7 Conclusion

In the *Persa*, we see the *virgo* as a character disguised as a foreigner who does not want to be perceived as foreign, being instrumentalized by characters who want her to be perceived as such. This creates a situation in which, unlike *Curculio* and the *Poenulus*, the character who is implicated in the foreign disguise says very little about it. Accordingly, I chose to focus on the objects that make characters foreign, as well as Plautus’s choice of vocabulary. I also brought focus to the increased metatheatricality which accompanies the characters’ interaction with these props, making it clear to the audience that the only difference between a foreigner and a “citizen” of the theatrical Plautopolis are the clothes they wear. I also found the notion of peregrination in the

⁶⁵*Per.* 474-5.

⁶⁶See Perry (2013: 201) regarding the “Romanness” of this line.

Persa to be especially interesting because the only characters that go or come from abroad are Toxilus's master and the pimp, who is from Megara, who take the role of 'blocking characters'. As I explored, the absence of Toxilus's master causes Toxilus to celebrate ("*basilice agito eleutheria*") a reference both to the slave's freedom without his master and to the festival celebrating Greek victory in the Persian Wars. The Megarian pimp, tries (as I mentioned in 1.6.1) to connect with the supposed Persian Sagaristio, but ultimately distances himself from the Persian at the end of the play while all the other characters draw closer to him. Ultimately, the character who comes from "abroad," but lacks the vision to see through the theatrical props, is excluded from the metatheatrical revelry, while the rest of the cast can wave their exotic costumes triumphantly.

The *virgo's* lack of explicit self-presentation as foreign means that, when examining the play for evidence of competing identities, I was led to examine the scenes leading to the *virgo's* deception. I accordingly looked at the elements of foreignness surrounding the *virgo's* deception — the careful use of *hic* and *peregre*, the Greek-flavored *eleutheria* and *basilice*, and the display of exotic-looking props with Greek names show that Plautus deliberately draws attention to the slippage between Roman, Greek, and the "foreign imaginary" which in this case comprises both Persia and Arabia. This is a third space with a vengeance, as Plautus shows how

"...the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew."⁶⁷

This is a play in which Greek words are used for the stage props which turn a Greek into an Easterner, and in which the same bepropped girl can be translated into a Greek freeborn girl or a Persian aristocrat depending on her listener. From its earliest moments, the *Persa* displays characters behaving unlike they should, blaming the

⁶⁷Bhabha (1994: 37).

ambivalent setting of *hic*, a word that is in constant flux with itself as the *Persa* questions the audience's understanding of a comedy's setting.

Conclusion

Rome in Plautus's time was a city of various cultures, attitudes, and ethnicities. Rome's historical background is one which involves foreign alliances, mercantilism, new colonies, and prisoners of war. Rome's sense of collective identity was one which was still in process. Festivals such as the *ludi romani* and the *ludi plebeii* were a loud voice within this national conversation, as they combined religious rituals, processions, and theater and were often organized and sponsored by magistrates, senators and the state itself. The *ludi* were, as far as we can tell, populated by an assortment of people — citizens, slaves, Romans, Greeks, Italians — and as such analysis of moments during the *ludi* are a valuable way to examine the tensions manifest in such a diverse and rapidly-changing space.

Roman comedy, a genre in its adolescence during the middle Republic, was a significant part of the *ludi*, and accordingly, of Roman recreational life. This genre arose from Greek middle and new comedies and was beginning to find itself translated for a Roman audience. Titus Maccius Plautus, a likely Italian immigrant to Rome, was a self-professed translator of Greek comedy. All translations are commentaries, and Plautus's translations are particularly striking. From a linguistic perspective, Plautus blends Greek words, Greco-Latin melanges, and sometimes different languages altogether into his creations. From a cultural perspective, Plautus seems to echo cultural stereotypes of Greeks, philosophers, Carthaginians, and even Romans themselves to his audience.

Given the diversity of the audience, the humor could seem othering to some and self-deprecating to others. This multiplicity of interpretation during a staged comedy is a reflection of and addition to a national dialogue about identity and foreignness. Plautus also inserts moments of metatheater — theater which breaks the fourth wall and points the audience to its existence as a play — to further bring the play to the audience, and collide the world of “Plautopolis” with the world outside the stage action.

Plautus’s examination of identities has been the subject of study for the past several years. Most scholars who engage with Plautus’s use of the foreign consider Plautine Rome to be a multicultural hub of foreign elements — particularly Greek and Italian ones. The two main approaches to “non-Roman” elements in Plautus’s comedies appear to be the “salad bowl” approach, which considers Plautine comedy to be a mixture containing discrete elements of Greek comedy and Italian farce, and the “colonial force” approach, in which Plautus’s use of Greek or Italian elements within his comedies is his way of asserting Roman supremacy over its smaller and weaker colonies. While both these approaches are extremely useful in identifying elements within Plautus that appear incongruous to his tropic settings, I argue in this work that viewing Plautus’s comedies as a reflection of his multicultural audience and setting makes the plays themselves appear too static. Plautus’s comedies are a performance, not merely a text — they are as dynamic as the audience that is watching them. The tensions which are present in Rome among the different peoples watching the play are reflected and in conversation with the tensions shown in Plautus’s works.

Alongside Plautus’s negotiations with Greek and Italian elements, he also adds vaguely exotic touches, usually from an offstage source. This is the element I refer to as the “foreign imaginary” — imaginary because the places are never specific enough to be pinned down, and because they are unseen by the audience. Categorizing these

unseen exotica as “foreign imaginaries” shows their effect on the play. These places are often the source for props or crucial plot elements that require an overseas voyage. Due to the overtheatricality and often metatheatricality that often appears when the foreign imaginary is involved, plays that use it highlight the falsity of the stage drama, showing the audience clearly that even the most foreign of theatrical settings is simply a matter of props from the *choragus* or a clever story by one of the characters. If the exotic does not really exist, these plays seem to suggest, the familiar and tropic world of the play, which also consistently breaks the fourth wall and implicates the audience in its action, might also be illusory. To put it another way: using the foreign imaginary to destabilize the concept of foreignness also destabilizes the familiar.

In this dissertation, I have examined the way in which Plautus displays tensions among identities within three particular comedies. The three plays which I have chosen — the *Curculio*, the *Persa*, and the *Poenulus* — are particularly good to work with since they foreground both Greek and non-Greek foreignness and weave Rome, Greece, and “other” (either the East or Carthage) in a *three-stranded* plait throughout the plot. The three plays I analyze above display foreignness through particular theatrical elements: *Curculio*’s stage situations, *Poenulus*’s characters, and *Persa*’s use of props and spatial vocabulary. In all of these elements, two things are brought into prominence: the negotiations of identity and the use of the “foreign imaginary” to show the ultimate breakdown of any dichotomy between the foreign and the familiar. In the *Curculio*, the foreign imaginary is primarily used in an instance of hearsay from the parasite, and is only brought onstage in the form of two rings in the very end of the play. In the *Poenulus*, the foreign imaginary is personified by Hanno, and his explicit infectious foreignness highlights the ways in which the young lovers diverge from what is expected in Plautine comedy. In the *Persa*, the foreign imaginary is a disguise plotted and perpetrated onstage, with the audience and most of the cast being well aware of it.

This self-conscious theatrical ruse leads to the *Persa* being a self-conscious commentary on the staging and characters, showing through the props that the border between familiar and foreign is both tenuous and artificial. The *Persa* also leans heavily on language which emphasizes the fluidity of the theatrical space and motion between spaces, emphasizing the artificiality of delineated borders.

In order to talk about these very different ways in which Plautine comedies negotiate identities, I have used Homi Bhabha's vocabulary of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. Bhabha viewed nations as spaces of contestation, a conception which perfectly suited to the Rome of Plautus's time and, Plautus's own plays. For Bhabha, the interaction between multiple cultures produces a new and dynamic meaning, and all these conceptions of culture appear in this "third space." As a postcolonial scholar, Bhabha considers the third space as the result of the colonizer and the colonized reacting. His conception of hybridity as a reaction against hegemonic forces, rendering them unstable, is particularly useful and compelling when considering the state of the Roman Republic during Plautus's writing years. Rome was, during this time, providing a space for a kind of "Roman" literature which was nevertheless in dialogue with the cultural force of Greek literature. Plautus in particular displays elements of Greek comedy in his translated plays, which are themselves performed during settings in which are nominally "Roman." The balance of power between what is "Greek" and what is "Roman" is particularly fraught in the period of history in which these comedies were staged, as Rome's military conquests are a mark of *Roman* power, even as it attempts to create a literature within the cultural influence of Greek cultural work. It is not entirely clear within Plautine comedy whether Rome, as the colonized subject, is mimicking Greece, the cultural colonizer, or if Rome is asserting power over Greeks in a kind of reversed mimicry. This very ambivalence makes Plautus a good candidate for a Bhabhaian analysis. The negotiations among these identities which Plautus

displays in his comedies lead me to consider Plautine theater a kind of Bhabhaian “third space” in which the categories of “Greek,” “Eastern,” and “Roman,” or, more generally, “familiar” and “foreign,” are rethought, renegotiated, and transgressed. Bhabha’s analysis of the third space as a zone of productivity is, I argue, shown clearly in Plautus, where his comedies stage his moments of collaboration and contestation. Plautus’s plays display a negotiation of identities which destabilize fixed identity while also breaking the boundaries of theatrical space. Combining Bhabha’s terminology with my own coining of the foreign imaginary shows a particularly unique form of ambivalence, where a display of the foreign imaginary often has a defamiliarizing effect on the hybrid comic stage.

An examination of Plautus’s plays as active performances, brimming with constantly negotiated identities, is a novel approach which is helped by using Bhabha’s postcolonial terminology. A minute analysis of Plautine language lends itself to seeing exactly where these moments of negotiation show up most clearly. The same close reading, which in this case focused on the self-consciousness of Plautus’s comedies when they foregrounded questions of identity, is an interpretive move which could easily move beyond Plautine comedy. Alternately, Bhabha’s identity as a postcolonial scholar could be further explored by examining other works of literature (or ideally, works of theater) where the roles of “colonizer” and “colonized” are more clear. Applying a Bhabhaian model to other works that are considered to be part of the “multicultural” aspect of Roman culture will open these works to new and dynamic analyses.

Of the three plays which I analyzed above, two have received bitter censure in earlier centuries for their flimsy plots or stale characterization. My commentary and subsequent analysis has shown the complexity of these plays. My chapters show a pattern of using the foreign imaginary to create an awareness of how all identities, exotic or familiar, are constructed. I also show that Plautus as a translator makes

deliberate metatheatrical choices that highlight the way in which comedy is aware of its efforts to create and reflect ideas of foreignness to his audience. My dissertation has gone some way to rehabilitating less-appreciated comedies and provided a new angle to Plautus's participation in the narrative of Roman identity. Plautus was a comedian, translator, and commentator on a dynamic and contentious society. By performing comedies that highlight issues of foreignness and the ultimate evanescence of identities during a time when Rome was struggling to form its own identity, Plautus allowed the audience a chance to laugh — and then think.

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