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DEVIL IN THE DETAILS:
THE YOUNG MAN OF PLAUTUS, *ASINARIA* 127–248
ONCE AGAIN



ABSTRACT: The inferior status of *Asinaria* has become virtually an article of faith in modern scholarship. In re-examining the identity of the youthful lover of lines 127ff., this study teases out elements of the play's thematic structure, as well as its approach to plot and characterization, in an attempt to demonstrate that much has been missed in earlier discussions, particularly as regards the portrayal of the young lovers Argyrippus and Philaenium. The analyst readings to which this work has traditionally been prey have promoted an understanding of *Asinaria*, and of Plautine farce more generally, that is shown to be untenable. In the process, such readings have precluded an appropriate engagement with one of the most intriguing challenges posed by this work: the staging of lines 127ff. if indeed, as the text suggests, these lines are to be attributed to Diabolus.

I: Louis Havet and the Unnamed Youth of *Asinaria* I.ii and I.iii¹

ASINARIA OPENS BY INTRODUCING a familiar scenario: a young man (Argyrippus) has fallen in love with a prostitute by the name of Philaenium but lacks the fee demanded by the girl's ruthless mother (Cleareta), who insists that her daughter consort only with paying customers. The general scheme is familiar enough, but, as with so many features of this play, it comes

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1. For the sake of economy of reference, I have retained the traditional division into acts and scenes. I do this in full awareness that such divisions risk imposing a structure on the play that is not necessarily related to Plautus' dramatic conception or the original audience's experience of the work in performance: see below, however, section VI. In the end, it is much easier to allude to "II.iv" than to "the scene at lines 407ff.," while a reference to "407ff." *tout court* is ambiguous and continuous references to "407–503" ponderous. I have rejected the more recent trend to number all of the scenes sequentially (I–XIV) for a similar reason: unlike the older division into acts and scenes, this newer system provides no conceptual "map" of the action and thus is much less useful in a general discussion. Few of us lecture on line 5,879 of Homer's *Iliad*; I would argue for the same indulgence in the case of Plautus.

with a twist. We learn of this situation from the young man's father Demaenetus, who has been approached about the affair by his son and, in the opening scene, accosts Argyrippus' loyal slave and ally, Libanus, not with rants or threats but with an offer of assistance and, more significantly, the key to solving Argyrippus' quandary. As it turns out, both Demaenetus and Argyrippus live under the stern command of Demaenetus' wife Artemona, who rules his household with an iron fist and controls the family purse-strings: with Demaenetus' compliance, Libanus is to find some way of bilking Demaenetus/Artemona of the required funds and thus assure Argyrippus' happiness. So far, so good. The curiously supportive Demaenetus departs for the forum, while Libanus heads off to lay his schemes: the stage is set.

The next scene commences with the entrance of a young man who bursts out of Cleareta's establishment, reproaching her, in an emotional song composed in cretic tetrameters,² for her ruthlessly mercantile attitude and utter lack of gratitude. Neither in this scene nor that which follows is any reference made to this young man's identity, nor to this point has there been any mention of a rival for Philaenium's affections: the natural assumption, given the information that Plautus has provided and the general practice of Roman comedy,³ is that this is Argyrippus, the youth about whom we have heard indirectly in I.i, now presented in the flesh — an assumption that is confirmed by the scene-headings for I.ii and I.iii.⁴

In 1905 Louis Havet challenged the paradosis, noting various ways in which the character and the social and financial standing of the young man presented in I.ii and I.iii contradict the impression of Argyrippus conveyed in I.i and III.iii; he also highlighted a number of inconsistencies and false trails in the play's account of Argyrippus' actions and his physical location. The individual presented in I.ii and I.iii, he argued, must be the play's second *adulescens*, Diabolus, who is presented as a challenger for Philaenium's affections at 633–36 as well as in IV.i and IV.ii.⁵ Havet offers less a critical

2. See Moore (2012) 194–96 on the use of cretics in this and related passages.

3. Webster (1970) 255, Hurka (2010) 49.

4. The introduction of accompanied verse at this point of the play is also relevant: Moore (2012) 245–46 notes the frequency with which the first use of the *tibia* attends the introduction of the young male lover, or a surrogate or ally of the lover. Cf. Marshall (2006) 205–06, Hurka (2010) 49, and see below, section XI.

5. Havet (1905) 94–97, 102–03. Havet was far from the first scholar to express dissatisfaction with assigning I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus. Earlier discussions tended to posit various forms of *contaminatio*, or, like Havet himself (below), to provide an appropriate context for the scenes by proposing strategic lacunae: see Hough (1937) 24–28, who cites (among others) Goetz/Loewe (1881) xxiii–xxiv, Leo (1895) ad 127, and (post-

reading of the play than a list of observations, focusing on the alleged confusions that arise from the assigning of I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus, all of which builds to a lavish biographical description of the three principals (Diabolus, Argyrippus, Philaenium). While several of his arguments are telling, his account is riddled with dated assumptions regarding plot and characterization. Nor does it help his case that he feels compelled to argue for an initial scene between Argyrippus and Leonida (lost when the text was damaged, or perhaps altered in transmission) that, in the full version of the play, would have guarded against any confusion regarding the basic contours of the plot and established the contrasting natures of the two male lovers (100–01).

As this brief summary suggests, Havet's case, as presented, is open to numerous objections, yet it has transformed the modern understanding of Plautus' play, to the point that, among the major editions and commentaries published since Lindsay's Oxford Classical Text (1904), only those of Goertz/Schoell, Nixon, and Hurka assign I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus.⁶ In 1992 J.C.B. Lowe published a highly influential study of the play that included a refutation of Havet's arguments, stressing, in particular, the confusion occasioned by the introduction of a second, unidentified *adulescens* at I.ii.⁷ Lowe's reading is frequently cited as conclusive in more recent work on Plautus,⁸ yet his study has failed to win over editors and commentators other than Hurka — a conundrum addressed most recently by Marshall, who supports and builds upon Lowe's case.⁹

The dispute has an obvious relevance to anyone interested in the study of *Asinaria*, but also raises interesting questions regarding the nature of Plautine comedy and the type of literary-critical lens(es) to be employed in deciding such issues. It is made particularly thorny by the fact that *Asinaria*, perhaps

Havet) Ahrens (1907) 13–23, 30–36. (Further references at Hough 24 n. 9, Marti [1959] 10–11, 28–30, 69.) Hough (37) argues that Plautus has melded the kernel of Demophilus' play (I.i, II.ii–iv, III.ii) with an unknown "Diabolus play" (I.ii–iii, III.i, IV, V), while concocting the remaining scenes himself as necessary patches.

6. Goetz/Schoell (1909) x (first edition: 1893) — cf. previous n. ad fin., Nixon (1916), Hurka (2010). Contra: Ernout (1932), Bertini (1968), Questa (1995), Danese (2004), Henderson (2006), de Melo (2011). (See Marshall [2016] 253 n. 2 for further references. I have not been able to consult Leonetti [2008–2009].) Danese (1999) 59–62 and 84–95 offers further support for Havet's proposal, anticipating several key elements of my own argument.
7. J.C.B. Lowe (1992) 159–63. Cf. id. (1999) 14–17.
8. E.g., Brown (1995) 681, Rosivach (1998) 175 n. 55, James (2006) 246–47 n. 33, Lefèvre (2014) 606.
9. Marshall (2016). Cf. id. (2006) 206 n. 15.

more than any other work by Plautus, would appear to be laden with inconcinnities of various sorts: sudden shifts in plot, the melding of various character types within a single figure, unexplained or incompletely motivated actions, odd-ball throwaway lines. This points to a particularly intriguing issue that must, of necessity, underlie any discussion of the controversy addressed in this paper: just how farcical *is* the work of Plautus, and the native Italian tradition of the Atellana by which it is inspired? Or, to put the matter more directly, at what point can farce be said to degenerate into incoherent sketch-comedy (whether as the result of *contaminatio* or careless [re]crafting on the part of Plautus) unworthy of our author and the theatrical traditions in which he works?

II: The Manuscript Tradition

As noted above, tradition assigns I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus, but the scene-headings found in the manuscripts bear little authority. They originate in texts aimed at a reading audience, likely produced at some time between the second and the fourth century AD, and — especially given their practice of attaching generic descriptors such as *adolescens*, *chlamidatus*, and the like to the characters' names — are easily given to corruption (since later readers can readily find other characters to whom a particular generic descriptor might equally apply):¹⁰ thus, for example (as Ahrens noted long ago), in *B* and *E*, through a wonderful symmetry, the scene-heading for IV.ii lists *Argiripus* in place of *Diabolus*.¹¹

More telling (if true): Della Corte reports that the list of *dramatis personae* which introduces the play places *Diabolus* third, after *Libanus* and *De-maenetus*, suggesting that, at the time this list was composed, *Diabolus* was regarded as the third character to speak.¹² I have not been able to discover

10. See Andrieu (1954), esp. 137, 166, 212–13, and 276; Bader (1970), esp. 57–68 and 150–54, and, on our scenes, 134; Questa (1984) 161–91; Danese (1999) 84–95; Deufert (2002) 217–24.

11. Ahrens (1907) 14. See, further, Danese (1999) 86–89, who notes that on this point *B* and *E* represent the *paradosis*; only *J* identifies the character correctly, the result of a critical reexamination of the text of Plautus in eleventh-century France. Bader (1970) 114 raises the possibility that the confusion in the assignment of roles in the headings at 127 and 810 might stem from the use of Greek notation to indicate that both of those characters were to be played by the same actor: little confidence can be placed in this suggestion, given the sporadic and confused nature of the sigla in the surviving texts of Plautus: below n. 13.

12. Della Corte (1951) 295.

just which manuscript(s) Della Corte is citing, but it is easy to imagine that a later copiest, finding a confrontation between a young lover and a *lena* early in the play, made the same assumption that is championed by modern-day defenders of the paradosis and inserted Argyrippus' name, with no one noticing the contrary indication provided by the cast-list. Through an odd chance, however, you have only to invert the position of the play's two *adulescentes* in that list to switch between the order of speakers assumed by the paradosis and that presented by Havet's revision: it is conceivable that such a switch was imposed by a reader who noticed the similar contracts in I.iii and IV.i, and thus listed Diabolus as the third character to speak, or that the listing is due to simple confusion in identifying which *adulescens* is which.¹³ The upshot is that, while there is possible support in the manuscript tradition for the ascription of I.ii and I.iii to Diabolus, the evidence provided by any surviving cast-lists, as well as that of the scene-headings, is something of a wash.

III: The Presentation of Argyrippus Elsewhere in *Asinaria* Acts I–III

What, then, are we to make of Havet's objections to assigning I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus? One generally expects to meet the young male lead early on in a New Comedy: if these scenes are assigned to Diabolus, then Argyrippus does not appear until III.iii, well more than half-way through the play, in the scene that presents the mock-tragic crisis-point in the lovers' relationship and its comic resolution.¹⁴ One might well expect a more direct exposition of the male lover's situation and feelings prior to this crisis, whereas (as Duckworth indicates) there is good precedent elsewhere in Plautus for the delayed introduction of a secondary character such as Diabolus.¹⁵ Were *Asinaria* a sentimental comedy of love thwarted, such as Terence's *Andria*, this type of *a priori* argument might hold some weight, but, apart from their participation

13. Any lists of *dramatis personae* in our texts of Plautus are late in origin. There is evidence for an earlier system of Greek sigla which identified characters according to the order of their first appearance on stage; this system was already being displaced at the time of our earliest surviving manuscripts (Jory [1963], Wahl [1974], esp. his conclusions at 63–73 and 147–52, Deufert [2002] 217–18 and n. 98). That a surviving cast-list might reflect knowledge of this earlier tradition, or of now lost didascalical notices such as we find attached to the texts of Aeschylus and Euripides, is most unlikely.

14. Some indication of the two lovers' affection for one another is offered by Philaenium in III.i.

15. Duckworth (1994) 180–81; cf. Hurka (2010) ad 634–35.

in two scenes (III.i and III.iii), Argyrippus and Philaenium are largely incidental to the comic melodrama that their affair has occasioned: Acts II–IV are for the most part given over to clowns, panderers, and buffoons (the comic slaves Libanus and Leonida; the mercantile Cleareta; the stultish Diabolus and his clever parasite),¹⁶ while Act V belongs to the hilariously randy Demaenetus and his eventual comeuppance. Plautus shows relatively little concern for the tender relationship between Philaenium and Argyrippus outside of Act III, and even there it is exploited as an occasion for humor (in the portrait of the ruthlessly pragmatic Cleareta in III.i: below pp. 314–15) and outright mockery (the tormenting of Philaenium and Argyrippus in III.iii).¹⁷ More to the point, as we will see, I.ii and I.iii themselves do not focus on the young lover's relationship to Philaenium so much as his at times angry, at times desperate confrontation with Philaenium's mother. Given that the central issue between the young man and Cleareta in these scenes concerns a commercial transaction, it is there that one should turn in evaluating their significance, and it is there that Havet's proposal finds its surest foundation.

The Argyrippus of whom we hear in the opening dialogue between Libanus and Demaenetus is a rather typical Plautine *adulescens*, which is to say, a non-entity. He has fallen in love with Philaenium, but has no funds at his disposal (54–56), nor is there any indication that he possesses the resources, or indeed the initiative, to acquire those funds on his own: as a result, he has turned to his father (74–75, 80–83) and to the comic slaves Libanus and Leonida (57–58) for assistance. The latter course constitutes the standard operating procedure of the young male lovers in these plays, but the former merits some comment as an indication of Argyrippus' desperation and his lack of other recourse — an early hint of the overall helplessness that will prove to be one of his defining traits.

The challenge that confronts Argyrippus does not lie in circumventing the authority of his father (as we have noted, Demaenetus is all too compliant) but rather that of his mother (60–98): in the topsy-turvy world of Demaenetus' household, it is Artemona who keeps a stern and watchful eye on her son (78–79) to ensure that he does not deviate from the straight and narrow,¹⁸ and it is she who controls the purse-strings. The image, then, is of a young man

16. Cf. Lefèvre (2014) 611–12: “Ingesamt sind 753 von 947 Versen ... von der Sklaven- und Hetärenwelt bestimmt.”

17. Cf. Woytek (1982) 69–70, Anderson (1993) 80, and see below p. 315–16.

18. This inversion plays an essential role in the comic finale, where (as Hurka [2010] notes ad 852–53 and 875) Artemona's indignation reflects a concern regarding the moral education of her son as much as anger at her husband's philandering: 851–53, 867, 875, 931–33.

who lives principally within the confines of his house under the watchful eye of his mother, with no resources beyond those that exist for him in the domestic realm: helpless, passive, and, to this point, invisible.

This is the same young man of whom Cleareta complains in the course of III.i — a youth who has been able to provide no material support for Cleareta's establishment but only passionate professions of his love, along with promises of largesse once his *mother* dies (522–31). We are presented with a boy, whose only recommendation lies in his professed devotion to Philaenium. The latter insists on loving him in turn (cf. 515), in spite of the fact that this is directly contrary to her own financial interests, and declares that she will even be willing to forgo food if only she can spend time with the young man who has won her heart (535). There is no talk here of a client who was formerly welcome, so long as his supply of “gifts” held out (a favorite Plautine trope):¹⁹ instead, we are presented with an utterly impractical attachment that exists outside of the financial realm, which leads Cleareta to offer her daughter the stock warning of what happens to the gullible young *meretrix* once she has passed her “best-before” date (537–38).²⁰ And once again we find a youth who is utterly passive, as becomes evident in the striking image that Philaenium employs in concluding her plea (539/40–42):

PHIL. But mother, even the shepherd who pastures other people's sheep has some lamb of his own with which he consoles his hopes. Let me only love Argyrippus, for my joy, the one I want.²¹

These lines highlight the unique nature of Plautus' Philaenium, who unites the simple candor and sincerity of the typical *pseudo-hetaira* with the hard-nosed realism of the established courtesan (see especially 511–12 and 517–20: below pp. 326–27): this is no helpless ingénue living under the authority of a demanding *leno/lena* and waiting passively to be saved by

19. Cf., e.g., *Truc.* 164–71, with Fantham (2000). Arguments from silence are always subjective, but it is perhaps worth noting that Philaenium nowhere bolsters her case by citing the obligation entailed by Argyrippus' past services, as we might expect if he were the young man of I.ii and I.iii: cf., e.g., *Most.* 204–32.

20. Cf. *Cist.* 78–81, *Most.* 186–247; *Ter. Hec.* 58–75. It is true that at 721 Argyrippus will express a wish that he might enjoy Philaenium's services (*huius operas*) for a year, employing language that is regularly used of the hiring of a professional courtesan (cf. *Bacch.* 45, *Truc.* 734). That is the scene, however, in which Argyrippus is reduced to begging his two slaves for the funds that have miraculously appeared and that will allow him to meet the specific terms set by Cleareta: cf. below p. 324.

21. All translations of Plautus are those of De Melo (2011–2013).

the usual matrix of recognition-legitimacy-marriage, but a practicing *meretrix*.²² And yet, amid her toils, she desires one young man whose company she might enjoy for her own sake. For our current purposes the most pertinent element of these lines lies in the portrait of Argyrippus as the passive and emasculated²³ sheep that in this instance is to be fostered, not in order to be “fleeced” (as at *Bacch.* 241–42, 1124–28, *Merc.* 524–26), but as a type of pet, with a view to bringing some comfort to the slave-shepherd who tends the master’s flock.²⁴ We find, then, that Argyrippus has not been aiming to possess Philaenium (even in the limited sense of a short-term exclusive contract) but merely to share her favors as one of various clients (albeit a non-paying one!), a situation that is common in the case of the practiced professional courtesans of New Comedy.²⁵ And even this project has depended principally on the effort and initiative of another: in this case, Philaenium.

When Argyrippus himself is first introduced on stage and named, in III. iii, the impression provided by I.i and III.i is confirmed. Here too we find an utterly helpless young man who is overwhelmed by the authority of a *materfamilias* (594, 632) and who, for all of his devotion to Philaenium (609–10), finds no recourse other than melodramatic suicidal gestures (606–07, 621, 629–30, 631–33) that are appropriately mocked by Libanus and Leonida (596, 616–24). In the end, Argyrippus wins the necessary funds, but through no initiative of his own and only after being thoroughly humiliated by the two comic slaves, who compel him to address them as his masters (652–53, 689–90) and even his gods (712–27), to clasp the knees of one (669–71) and carry the other around on his shoulders (697–710 — with overtones of sexual subordination at 703), and to look on as each embraces and kisses his mistress

22. Rosivach (1998) 63–66 highlights the sordid nature of Philaenium’s profession but, in following the *paradosis*, perpetuates the traditionally accepted image of her as an innocent young woman whose first and only liaison to date has been with the formerly solvent Argyrippus. This reading is directly refuted by the fundamental terms of the debate with Cleareta in III.i and the initial utterances of the young man of I.ii (127–29), whatever his identity, as well as by other allusions to Argyrippus’ situation and his relationship to Philaenium (52–56, 621–22, 631–37).

23. As, e.g., at *Bacch.* 1120ff., the grammatical gender of *ovis* is here employed to good effect.

24. Note the slippage in Philaenium’s metaphor. The typical shepherd might be allowed to raise certain animals as part of his *peculium*, with the goal of eventually profiting from their fleece or meat (*Merc.* loc. cit.; Watson [1971] 45 and n. 2). Philaenium transforms this into a sentimental image of the tender lamb that brings comfort to its owner, and presents herself as a curiously eroticized anticipation of Vergil’s Silvia (*Aen.* 7.475ff.: cf. Ovid, *Metam.* 10.109–25, with Bömer [1980] ad 109 on possible antecedents for this motif).

25. Again, cf. Fantham (2000).

(662–68, 686–96). Finally there is the *coup de grâce*, the ultimate humiliation: Argyrippus is awarded the money, but only on the condition that his father enjoy the first night with Philaenium (731–39), a stipulation that neither he nor, likely, the audience ever saw coming. To this too he readily agrees, thus applying the final touch to Plautus' portrait of a youth whose character is defined by two features: an utter (and utterly pathetic) devotion to Philaenium combined with a feckless helplessness and passivity.

One final point needs to be highlighted in this scene. An ironic poignancy arises from the fact that a key source of Argyrippus' distress is the knowledge that, while he himself seemingly has no prospects of acquiring the necessary twenty minae, his rival Diabolus has promised to produce the funds on that very day, with the stipulation that, from that point on, Philaenium service Diabolus alone (629–37). The fact that Argyrippus expresses these thoughts to Libanus while Leonida stands (likely behind Argyrippus' back) with the sack full of coins in plain view, further undercuts the force of the young man's melodramatic protestations. But for Argyrippus, who is as yet unaware that salvation is at hand, the terms of Diabolus' proposed contract represent the final blow to his and Philaenium's hopes. In III.i Philaenium had raised the prospect of cultivating other clients while retaining Argyrippus as a private source of comfort; the arrangement between Cleareta and Diabolus revealed in Argyrippus' lament would put an end to any such relationship.

IV: The Young Man of *Asinaria* I.ii and I.iii — Commerce and Control

Let us now turn to the young man of I.ii and I.iii. From his first entrance, this character's primary traits are a savage indignation and a desire for revenge, both of which are based upon the indignity of his being ousted from Cleareta's establishment in so ignominious a fashion despite his past gifts, and the insult of knowing that another lover is welcomed despite having given nothing (127–33a):

So this is what's happening? I'm being thrown out of the house? Is this the reward given to someone who's done you so many good turns? You're bad to the one who does you a good turn, you're good to the one who does you a bad turn.²⁶ But you'll suffer for it! I'll immediately go from here to the Board of Three and make sure your names are with them. I'll destroy you and your daughter utterly, you allurements, you ruins, you destructions of young men.

26. *promerenti optume hoccin preti redditur? / bene merenti mala es, male merenti bona es.*

Like Cleareta, this speaker regards the relationship between the youthful lover and the *meretrix* as essentially commercial in nature, although he cloaks this in aristocratic notions of reciprocity (*promerenti ... bene merenti ... male merenti*).²⁷ As such, it is a public matter, subject to legal recourse — something that can be taken to “the authorities.”²⁸ But it also entails matters of personal honor, given that he is being slighted in so unjust a fashion in favor of an unnamed other (or others, if we take line 129 in a generalizing rather than a particular sense).

The remainder of the young man’s solitary outburst focuses on the woman’s boundless greed and his outrage at having squandered all of his wealth in raising the fortunes of Cleareta’s household, only now to be given the boot — all of which drives his repeated threats of vengeance (137–40):

... but from now on I’ll do to you everything bad I can, and it’ll serve you right. I’ll bring you back to where you came from, the utmost poverty. Seriously, I’ll make sure you know who you are now and who you were before.²⁹

Three other features stand out in this opening salvo. First, the gifts of which the young man speaks, and the fortune that he expended in supplying them, would seem to have been considerable, as is implied at 141–44 where the speaker claims to have provided the funds that have put Cleareta in business:

Before I came to her, fell in love, and gave her my heart, you used to lead your life with coarse bread, in rags because of your poverty, and if you had that, you were very grateful to all the gods. Now that you’re better off, you don’t know me, you crook, me, through whose efforts this is the case.

Second, a clear source for the speaker’s wealth is suggested in his complaint at 134–35:

... compared to you, the sea is no sea: you are the wildest sea. At sea I found goods, here they went overboard.

27. Cf. 136–37 and see Zagagi (1980) 106ff. Note how the speaker’s complaint here complements Cleareta’s reproach to Philaenium at 526–27: where Cleareta condemns Philaenium’s mistreatment of “paying” customers in favor of the penniless Argyrippus, our young man denounces the women for favoring an unnamed freeloader (or freeloaders) over those who have paid in the past.

28. On the role of the *tresviri* (131) and the likely nature of the young man’s complaint, see Scafuro (1997) 454–57 (more generally, Gaughan [2010] 95–96); for the sociological background, Rosivach [1998] 6 and n. 23.

29. Cf. 145, 148.

Commentators have attempted to take this passage in a metaphorical sense,³⁰ and it does have the feel of a throwaway line (something we will run into more than once in this play: below pp. 340–44). But, while the reference is clearly included principally to set up the image of the women’s unfeeling and boundless greed, it is grounded in the notion of the speaker’s former prosperity being based in trade and thus provides another connection with the world of commerce. Objections that this fails to jibe with the speaker’s status as an *adulescens* (133a) risk imposing an anachronistic conception of youth: the *adulescentes* of these plays can, like the Diniarchus of *Truculentus*, be old enough to own property (*Truc.* 174), engage in contracts (*Truc.* 31),³¹ and undertake public business (*Truc.* 91–92), yet still be regarded as headstrong and irresponsible young men in need of supervision by their elders (*Truc.* 57–63).³² Throwaway line or not, the reference suggests an independent character along the lines of the louche Diniarchus rather than what we see of Argyrippus elsewhere in our play (below pp. 332).

Third, the speaker’s savage anger initially encompasses both Cleareta and her daughter (131–34). It is true that he eventually modifies this stance, acknowledging Philaenium’s subordinate position (136–48), but the unfeeling attitude evinced in his initial cretics, and in his repeated threats to drive Cleareta and her daughter back into a state of utter poverty, will be evident again in the following scene. Threatening utterances of this sort are not uncommon in New Comedy, but few display the viciousness evident in our passage.³³ A useful contrast can be found in *Truculentus*, where the frustrated Diniarchus engages in an indignant rant very like that presented by our speaker but with two key differences (758–69):

DIN. She’s gone in and locked me out. (*angrily*) Should I tolerate being treated this way? Now, you temptress, I’ll shame you by my shouting in the street: you’ve received money from a lot of men, against the law. I’ll make sure that your name will be with all the new magistrates in an instant, and then I’ll bring you to court to pay fourfold damages, you poisoner and

30. See, e.g., Hurka (2010) ad 191–92.

31. See, e.g., Cohen (2015) 100.

32. A Menandrian parallel can be found in *Sam.* 13–16. Note as well the number of times that sons are sent abroad to transact family business: *Men. Dis. Ex.*; *Plaut. Bacch., Merc.*; *Ter. Hec.* (Hurka [2010] ad *Asin.* 347–48 proposes adding the Mercator of *Asin.* to this list.)

33. E.g., Scafuro (1997) 430–37 offers a detailed catalogue of passages presenting threats of litigation; not all of these involve amorous *iuvenes*, however. On *Truc.* 758–69 (below), cf. ead. 456.

smuggler-in of supposititious children! Now I'll reveal all your misdeeds. Nothing prevents me, I've lost everything I had. I'm becoming shameless and I haven't the slightest bit of concern now which shoes I put on. (*after calming down*) But why am I shouting here? What if she had me sent in? I'd swear in solemn terms that I wouldn't go, even if she wanted it. (*pauses*) That's nonsense! If you beat cattle prods with your fists, your hands hurt more. There's no point in getting angry for nothing about a girl who doesn't care a straw about you.

For all of his anger, this speaker does not luxuriate in imagining the financial ruin and degradation of his former lover: the threats that he offers have a sense of innocence about them, born of their very ineffectualness. The lack of serious threat is further suggested by his keen self-awareness, which first comes to the fore at 764–65 (the young man's affirmation that he has lost all sense of shame, which is patently untrue) and leads to the utter collapse of his anger in the following lines, where he engages in a wryly confessional self-examination. This is the type of pronouncement that one might have expected of the Argyrippus of whom we hear in I.i and whom we meet in III.iii. The rant that we actually get is much more reminiscent of Ballio's intimidation of his "girls" at *Pseudolus* 173ff., whom he threatens to sell into common prostitution (178, 214–17, 229) and to torment on the wrack (200) or with the lash (229). Like the opening lyrics of our unnamed youth, Ballio's song is characterized throughout by an evident desire to domineer and degrade. Both passages offer humorous ditties at the opening of their respective plays to effect a lively introduction to the action proper: neither, in the end, is to be taken all that seriously. But each presents a character who is, at heart, unlikeable.³⁴

When the young man of our scene enters at 127, the audience has yet, of course, to hear Cleareta's complaints regarding Argyrippus in III.i or witness Argyrippus' own deportment in III.iii, but they have heard enough about Argyrippus' situation to be puzzled at how the young man before them — who has earned large sums only to squander them on an affair with a courtesan,

34. Also distinct from our passage is *Cist.* 519ff., sometimes cited in this context. The blustering of Alcesimarchus (introduced, after a good deal of comic spluttering at 512–17, by *enim uero ita me Iuppiter | itaque me Iuno itaque Ianus ita — quid dicam nescio*) is that of a helpless and frustrated youth caught between the demands of the *lena* Melae-nis, on the one hand, and those of his father on the other (as is made even more evident in Melae-nis' response at 528–33, where her ability to govern this emotional young man is made patent). As in the case of the Diniarchus of *Truc.*, there is none of the cruelty evinced by the youth of *Asin.* I.ii.

who operates very much in the public realm of commerce and litigation, and who, all in all, seems to be a rather nasty piece of work — might square with the youth of whom they have heard in I.i. They must also wonder how the penniless *Argyrippus* could be in a position to feel offended at the lack of gratitude towards his former largesse, and be still more confounded at his outraged reference to a rival lover (or lovers), not named before now, who seems to have won Philaenium's favors *gratis* (which, as III.i will demonstrate, is precisely *Argyrippus*' position). As we will discover, Havet's proposal is not without its difficulties, but the *paradosis* also presents its share of obscurity and confusion.

One might hope that I.iii would bring further clarity; what light it has to shed, however, is far from favorable to the traditional attribution. Here too the youth complains of Cleareta's lack of gratitude (163–64) as well as her boundless greed (167–68), and threatens revenge (159–61). And once again his relationship with Philaenium is presented in terms of a commercial transaction (171–73, 196–203).³⁵ But the scene also provides further insights into the nature of this young man and his relationship with Philaenium. First, we get an impression of the length of the attachment. At 226, after presenting a comic disquisition on the means that courtesans employ to ensnare their clients, Cleareta avails herself of a common metaphor — that of the student who has long been schooled — to criticize the naiveté of her interlocutor's complaints:

CLEAR. How could you forget that, you, who spent so much time at school!
 YOUTH That's your fault, sending your pupil away when he's halfway through the syllabus.³⁶

This allusion to the length of the relationship is of a piece with the references to the young man having been bled dry of his possessions: it suggests a habitual liaison of long duration.

We also find out something about the specific terms of the relationship. When the youth complains that he is now being dunned again, after having just provided still another set of "presents," Cleareta remarks on the insatiable nature of the youth's own demands (167–72):

YOUTH What limit is there to giving? You can never be satisfied. As soon as you've received something, you get ready to demand something else not much later.

35. Cf. below pp. 338–39.

36. Cf. esp. *Truc.* 22–23, 735–38, and see Hurka (2010) ad *Asin.* 226–27.

CLEAR. What limit is there to taking her (*ductando*) and making love? Can you never be satisfied? Just now you've sent her back, yet immediately you ask me to send her back to you.

YOUTH I gave you what you arranged with me.

CLEAR. And I sent you the girl. A fair return has been given for a fair price, service for money.

As Gray notes in his commentary ad 164, *ductare* is a *verbum lenonium* that echoes the language of legitimate marriage (*domum ducere*) in denoting some sort of limited-term relationship with a member of the demimonde.³⁷ In the case of our passage, however, the use of the verb constitutes anything but a dead metaphor, since Cleareta twice alludes to the *literal* sending of the girl to and from the young man's home as an essential element of this arrangement (170–71; cf. 190, 195, 197). Just how this might be possible in the case of Argyrippus is far from clear. It is true that later in the play Artemona will suddenly discover that Demaenetus has in fact been robbing her for some time in order to fund his amorous activities (884–89 — another of this work's surprise revelations):³⁸ it is, however, one thing to imagine a husband purloining his wife's finery without being detected, quite another for a son to secretly carry on a long-term affair with a courtesan (with the attendant drinking parties and other refinements) in his mother's home — especially when we have just been told of the particular care with which this rather intimidating mother oversees her son's behavior (78–79).³⁹

37. Cf. Hurka (2010) ad 164 and see Rosivach (1998) 51–75 on the various arrangements offered by the *lena*e of New Comedy.

38. Libanus alludes to Demaenetus robbing his wife at 95, but the context makes it difficult to determine whether this is a joke (along the lines of the other *adynata* raised by Libanus) or a reality.

39. Note Artemona's shock (851–53, 875) upon her learning of her son having dealings with prostitutes. At 635 Argyrippus expresses his distress at the intent of Diabolus' proposed contract, *ut hanc ne quoquam mitteret nisi ad se* ("so that [Cleareta] wouldn't send her anywhere except to him"), in terms that could be taken to challenge the interpretation proposed above: if pressed, his words imply that, under other circumstances, the girl would be sent to Argyrippus instead. In this instance, one must understand a certain looseness of speech; this cannot be argued in the case of 170 and the other passages cited above, with their express reference to the girl being sent out and sent back. Contrast the initial terms of the young man's proposed contract (236: *nec quemquam interea alium ammittat prorsus quam me ad se virum* ["and cannot let any man other than me come near her in the meantime"]; cf. 756), which directly anticipate the relationship between Philaenium and Argyrippus as presented elsewhere in the play.

As in I.ii, there is virtually no talk of the speaker's passionate desire for Philaenium.⁴⁰ Rather, what he longs for is the time when he was coddled by both Philaenium *and* Cleareta, and was treated like a king within their household (204–14):

YOUTH Now that you've robbed me you are using a different kind of rhetoric on me; I say, now you give me a kind of rhetoric far different from when I was providing for you, you criminal, different from the time when you were enticing me to you with flattery and kind words. Then even your house was smiling at me when I came to you. You used to say to me that out of all people you and she loved me and me only; whenever I gave you something, both of you were at my lips all the time, like chicks of a dove, all your interests were in line with mine, you were clinging on to me all the time. You did whatever I ordered and whatever I wished, you deliberately avoided whatever I didn't wish and forbade, and you didn't dare try this earlier. Now you don't give a damn about what I like and what I dislike, you crooks.

What this speaker loved, it turns out, was the sense of authority and control that his "gifts" formerly purchased — hence the curious image of the young doves (209–10), which is traditional and humorous, in its mixing of the metaphorical with the literal, when applied to Philaenium but ludicrous and somewhat revolting in the case of the elderly *lena* whom the audience sees standing on stage.

Finally, once all of his outraged protestations have failed, the young man capitulates and asks Cleareta her price. But he has clearly learned from Cleareta's instruction (226): he now demands a strict arrangement that will assure him a full year's access to Philaenium, with no other lovers allowed (229–36):

YOUTH Wait, wait, listen. Tell me, what do you think would be a fair price for me to give you for her so that she won't be with anyone else this year?

CLEAR. For you? Twenty minas. And on these terms (*ea lege*): if anyone else brings it to me earlier, it's good-bye to you.

YOUTH But before you go away, there's still something I want to say.

CLEAR. Say what you like.

YOUTH I'm not yet completely ruined, there's still something left that allows me to be ruined even more. I have the means to give you what you demand; but I'll give it on my own terms (*in leges meas*). Just so that you know: she has to give me her services (*mihi ... serviat*) for this entire year and cannot let any man other than me come near her in the meantime.

40. Havet (1905) 96.

Gone are the earlier outraged threats of vengeance, but the speaker takes care to see to it that he will now receive the proper “service for money” (172) on his own terms, with no possibility of a rival undermining the specific conditions that he stipulates, for which he will have paid full dollar. No longer do we find him invoking aristocratic notions of reciprocity (128–29): the language of commerce has triumphed, ousting the slippery talk of “gifts” and “gratitude.”⁴¹ And with this, and the mention of a specific fee, the young man is once again able to assert his control: when Cleareta makes a point of presenting her terms (*ea lege*, 231), the youth very deliberately brings his own to the table (*sed in leges meas*, 234), making it clear that the women’s past shenanigans, and his own days of being humiliated, are now to cease.⁴² He is still very much on the hook, as is evident from the desperate *mane mane* of 229 and his parting address to the audience (243–48), but his days of being “played” are, he hopes, now over.

Cleareta, in turn, is quite happy to accommodate the newly solvent youth and, in an attempt to assure him of her good faith, goes so far as to suggest a formal contract that will address his anxieties about being humiliated yet again (237–42):

CLEAR. If you want me to do so, I’ll even castrate the male slaves at home. In short, do bring along a contract that states how you want us to be; as you wish, as you please, impose your terms on us. Just bring along the money with you, I’ll easily put up with the rest. The doors of a madam’s house are very similar to harbors: if you bring something, the house stands open, if you don’t have anything to give, it remains closed.

True to form, Cleareta is utterly indifferent as to the young man’s demands and is willing to meet any and all stipulations — so long as he pays accordingly. But it is important to notice that this contract is offered specifically to address the young man’s outraged indignation over what he regards as the injustices that have been committed against him in the past: once the proposed deal is signed, he will indeed have something that he can take to “the authorities” (131–32).⁴³

41. Cf. Zagagi (1980) 118–20.

42. Note as well the striking *serviat* of 235, which, in this context, indicates not *servitium amoris* but the lot of a bond-slave. Philaenium too is here put in her place.

43. At 231 Cleareta declares that, should another lover appear with the required sum beforehand, her agreement regarding an exclusive contract with our young man will be void. She says nothing about engaging in a similar contract with this hypothetical rival, however. The threat posed here is that which routinely confronts the young lovers of these plays — losing out to a wealthy rival who has the cash in hand: cf. below n. 114.

It is true that, in his later entreaties to Leonida and Libanus, Argyrippus also will associate the desired twenty minae with the chance to enjoy Philaenium's services for an entire year (721).⁴⁴ Even there, however, his main concern is to satisfy Cleareta's demands (724–25) rather than the exclusivity of the arrangement. It is the young man of I.ii and I.iii, and the Diabolus whom we encounter by name later in the play, for whom the latter is of central importance.⁴⁵

Finally there is still the matter of the twenty minae. Whereas the Argyrippus of whom we hear in I.i is a penniless youth kept under strict watch by his mother and reduced to turning for help to his equally impecunious father and family slaves, this individual can hope to find friends in the forum who will loan him the funds at no interest (*mutuae pecuniae*). And, if need be, our young man will simply borrow the money the old-fashioned way, at interest (243–48).

The scene concludes, as did the interview with Cleareta, firmly embedded in the world of commerce. The young man in these scenes speaks, in passing, of his love for Philaenium (141) but focuses on what he is *owed* and, in the end, supposes that he has found a legal and economic means of coercing the two women to abide by their end of the contract, once he acquires the necessary cash.

V: Economic Compulsion — The Diabolus of *Asinaria* IV

The above analysis of I.ii and I.iii demonstrates just how difficult it is to reconcile the presentation of the youthful speaker in those scenes with what we learn of Argyrippus in I.i and, still more, in Act III, both in terms of his character and his general situation. The tradition not only presents us with a schizophrenic image of the play's male love interest and an incoherent account of his relationship with Philaenium, but builds to a climax at the conclusion of Act I (Argyrippus' desperate quest for cash) that in the end proves to be utterly irrelevant and is simply dropped without further mention.

What, then, of Havet's proposal? The Diabolus whom we meet in Act IV is also a coarse, unfeeling, and obsessively controlling figure and, more to the point, is introduced while in the act of working out the very contract that Cleareta had proposed at 237ff. He certainly has the funds to pay Cleareta's fee, and even enjoys the services of a parasite,⁴⁶ but this does not disqualify

44. Cf. Demaenetus' remark at 847–48. On 721, cf. above n. 20.

45. *Asin.* 230, 235, 635, 753–54. Cf. 128–29 and 746ff. *passim*.

46. Ahrens (1907) 21.

him for the role of the young man in I.ii and I.iii: as we have seen, the Diniarchus of *Truculentus* provides a suitable model for the wealthy *adulescens* of means who is temporarily out of pocket prior to delving still further into his patrimony; equally apt, in this context, is the Phaedromus of *Curculio*, who, upon finding himself in need of cash to purchase his beloved, is able to send his parasite Curculio in search of the required funds.⁴⁷

What is most striking, however, is the similar concern with control. Diabolus does not insist that Cleareta's household slaves be castrated (237) but, in the often ludicrous terms set out by his parasite and the still more ludicrous amendments that he himself proposes, goes so far as he can to "castrate" Philaenium by forbidding all of the tricks traditionally employed by faithless courtesans in deceiving their clients.⁴⁸ It is possible to imagine that Diabolus too has been enticed with the offer of an exclusive contract, in addition to Argyrippus (after all, both young men have been presented with the same fee of 20 minae: 89, 633, 752), but there are major objections on this point. As we have seen, the desire for an exclusive contract to cement their relationship is never expressed by either Philaenium or Argyrippus in Act III (where it is clear that the latter is content merely to share in Philaenium's attentions), whereas it is integral to the negotiations between Cleareta and the young man of I.iii, where it both soothes that individual's sense of grievance and provides assurance that he will not only once again be lord of Cleareta's establishment (207–13) but have Philaenium attending to his every desire (235: *serviat*). And a contract specifically with Diabolus (otherwise not mentioned at any earlier point in the play) serves as a major threat to the happiness of Argyrippus and Philaenium in III.iii (633–36: above pp. 316).

Havet's proposal allows the contract to help define the character of Argyrippus' rival and cement his association with the sterile world of finance, commerce, and economic (versus erotic) compulsion. It allows the threat of such a contract to hover over the schemes of Libanus and Leonida, thereby providing a source of dramatic tension.⁴⁹ And it helps to bind the play together: on the plot level, by offering a connection between acts I and IV

47. *Curc.* 67–69. Note as well, e.g., Cato's concern that the absentee landowner not allow his overseer (*vilicus*) to maintain a parasite (*de Agri.* 5.4) and the parallel at *Pers.* 29–31 (Damon [1997] 48–49).

48. James (2006) 228–32. Note, in particular, the insistence that Philaenium not know any tongue other than Attic Greek (793, which, apart from the metatheatrical joke, suggests that she "unlearn" any other languages she might have picked up) and that she lose her sight if she should cast a glance at any other man (769–70).

49. Danese (1999) 62. Cf. Hough (1937) 20–22.

(below pp. 333–34), and on the thematic level by providing an ironic conclusion to the contrast between sentimental and emotional attachment, on the hand, and contractual obligation, on the other, that runs like a thread throughout much of acts I and III as the play explores Philaenium’s contrasting relationships with each of these young men.

To appreciate the latter, we need to consider another minor crux in the play — the challenge of the parasite’s parting speech at 911–19:

PAR. Demaenetus is dead. It’s time for me to disappear from here. This battle is growing beautifully. I’ll go to Diabolus and say that his orders have been executed as he wished. I’ll advise that we should recline to dinner in the meantime while these people here are fighting. Then finally I’ll bring him here to the madam tomorrow so that he can give her the twenty minas in order to get permission to get his share of the girl. I hope Argyrippus can be persuaded to go shares and let him enjoy her every other night: if I don’t achieve it, I’ve lost my patron; the man is all aflame because of his love.

This passage — which interrupts the climactic confrontation between Artemona and Demaenetus and leaves the principal characters “frozen” for some nine lines — is problematic in a number of ways, not least in its seemingly gratuitous concern to include Diabolus and his parasite as participants in Philaenium and Argyrippus’ happy ending.⁵⁰ The plan that the parasite moots here can be paralleled elsewhere in comedy and in the (generally tendentious) biographies of actual *hetairai*,⁵¹ but has struck most critics as degraded and demeaning — one of several under-motivated and unexplained betrayals of the loving relationship between Argyrippus and Philaenium portrayed in Act III that earlier scholars have detected here in the final act.

There is no denying that the parasite’s scheme presents yet another surprising turn in this most slippery of plays. But critical objections to the passage are based in large part on a misunderstanding of the nature of Philaenium’s relationship to Argyrippus. As we have seen, the Philaenium of Act III is not a naïve *pseudo-hetaira* but a practicing *meretrix* — one who can recite the nature of her profession like a young student in a bordello’s boarding-school (*mater, is quaestus mihi est: / lingua poscit, corpus quaerit, animus orat, res monet, 511–12*)⁵² and who is all too aware of the degree to which the

50. Reichel (2000) 381, Lefèvre (2014) 604–05.

51. Ter. *Eum.* 1060–94 (cf. *Truc.* 958–64). For a real-life (?) instance, commentators cite the Neaira of ps.-Demosth. 59.26 and 29; Fantham (2015) 94.

52. (“That’s my job, mother. My tongue asks, my body earns, my mind prompts, the circumstances urge.”) The clever, sing-song tone of 512 is enhanced by the structuring

prosperity of Cleareta's establishment relies upon her sordid activities. The latter is evident in her plea to her mother in III.i, which is much more sharp-edged than is sometimes noticed. At 517–20, in response to Cleareta's attempt to put her in her place, she acquiesces to her mother's authority, but inserts a barb of her own, in the form of a pointed reminder of just how much Cleareta relies on her compliance to keep their household afloat:

PHIL. I grant you both my share of speaking and yours; you'll give the signal (*tute habeas portisculum*) for speaking and being silent. But if I put down the oar, resting alone in the cabin, the progress of your whole household comes to a halt.

The image suggested in the second half of this passage — viz. of Philaenium working to the relentless beat of the *portisculus* (the hammer with which the boatswain pounded out the rhythm of the oarsmen's strokes) — provides a vividly earthy suggestion of the degraded nature of those labors by which she sustains Cleareta's household and lends further pathos to the following plea that she be allowed to keep her “lamb” Argyrippus (539/40–42: above pp. 314–15). But the text leaves no doubt as to the reality of Philaenium's circumstances, or Argyrippus' place therein. As we have seen, the young couple's desire, from the beginning, has not been to form an exclusive attachment (which, given Argyrippus' financial circumstances, would lead to Philaenium and Cleareta's ruin) but to allow Argyrippus to share in her attentions: in that regard, the plan proposed by Diabolus' parasite in V.ii constitutes little more than a return to the original *status quo ante*.

The proposal serves another function, however, which is to further integrate the fate of Diabolus into the thematic structure of the play. Despite the curious nature of Philaenium and Argyrippus' romantic attachment, and serious uncertainties about the long-term prospects of their relationship,⁵³ the play concludes with the joyous victory of the devoted young lovers. The only way in which Diabolus can participate in that victory is by casting aside his insistence on an exclusive contract and hoping that Argyrippus will somehow then grant him access to Philaenium. The high-handed and indignant figure of Act I, who was so concerned with being given what he was owed and with asserting his control over Cleareta's household, is now reduced to begging to be allowed to have some part in the celebrations — after he has paid, of course.

within the line (*versus quadratus*: Gerick [1996]), with coincidence of ictus and accent.
53. Rosivach (1998) 66.

This adds a nicely ironic fillip to the end of the play, and deftly draws together the themes that have informed Philaenium's contrasting relationships with Diabolus and Argyrippus: economic compulsion versus heartfelt (if somewhat preposterous) affection. In contrast, the *paradosis* once again presents us with a sequence of events that is off-kilter and dissatisfying: an Argyrippus who, in I.ii, is indignant at Philaenium's attentions to a rival and, in I.iii, demands and is eventually awarded exclusive access — only to then (in the parasite's imagination, at least) happily agree to share her with Diabolus. Casting Diabolus in I.ii and I.iii yields a work that is wonderfully subversive and original (especially in its treatment of the young lovers) and that is informed by a set of unifying themes; the casting of Argyrippus yields only a muddle.⁵⁴

VI: The Structure of the *Asinaria*

It is perhaps worthwhile, at this point, to take a brief look at the overall structure of *Asinaria*.⁵⁵ It is fashionable these days to reject the act and scene divisions in our texts, which have no ancient authority (above, n. 1). In the case of *Asinaria*, however, these divisions highlight the artistry with which Plautus has laid out his plot:

- Act I: introductory [prologue; general introduction to the principal characters and essential background (isolated scene between Libanus and Demaenetus that concludes with an empty stage); introduction to Argyrippus' rival and to Cleareta (the two threats to Argyrippus' happiness)]
- Act II: Libanus and Leonida [bilking of the merchant's agent]
- Act III: Philaenium and Argyrippus [opens with a touching picture of their relationship and the threat posed by Cleareta's demands; concludes with the happy (?) resolution of that threat (the acquisition of the funds that will allow Argyrippus both to satisfy Cleareta's demands and beat out Diabolus)]
- Act IV: Diabolus [return of Diabolus (who is unaware of what has transpired since Act I); his second humiliation]
- Act V: Demaenetus' triumphal failure

54. Woytek (1982) 69–71 anticipates elements of the above reading, but misses the contrast in the presentation of the two male lovers and the poetic justice inherent in Diabolus' final defeat.

55. While my own analysis takes a very different tack, Vogt-Spira's reflections on the structural and thematic economy of *Asinaria* repay study on many points (1991: 34–66).

Assigning I.ii and I.iii to Diabolus results in a structure that is elegant and logical, however we choose to label the various divisions. After an initial introduction to the principals, each of acts II, III, IV, and V opens with an initial challenge involving a specific character (or pair of characters) of central importance to the play, and concludes with the resolution of that challenge (happy or otherwise): each displays a Plautine peripaty of sorts. The above summary also highlights the different emotional and comic registers that the play marshals, as well as the variety of incident, all deployed with a keen sense of pacing. But above all it points to a coherent unity of conception, as the figure of Diabolus, who hovers over acts II and III as a looming threat, returns in Act IV to face his ultimate humiliation in a pair of scenes that cunningly effect the integration of the play's first action (the challenge facing Argyrippus and Philaenium) with the new plot-twist introduced by Demaenetus' unexpected intervention.⁵⁶

VII: Staging *Asinaria* — Tracking Argyrippus

Then there is the question of Argyrippus' movements in the course of the play.⁵⁷ According to the *paradosis*, Argyrippus departs from Cleareta's establishment at 248, heading for the forum where, as we have seen, he suddenly has hopes of acquiring the necessary funds from friends (233–34, 243–48) — a contingency never raised in the opening scene. One finds no reference here to any expectation of help from Libanus or Leonida (57–58),

56. Cf. Vogt-Spira (1991) 59–60. The question of act-divisions also raises interesting practical issues. If one assumes that Plautus employs a relatively small troupe of masked actors who adopt multiple roles and do not share individual roles, a minimum of five actors is required to stage *Asinaria*. On any distribution, an interlude of some sort must be assumed at the conclusion of Act III to accommodate a change of costume. (If the actor playing Leonida also assumes the role of Diabolus, the transition could be effected very rapidly but at the cost of a certain awkwardness.) Roles can be divided so as to avoid interludes at the conclusion of acts II and IV, but that assumes that the avoidance of such interludes is the guiding principle in assigning those roles; if other considerations are brought into play (continuity of type, distribution of lines among actors, highlighting the talent of star performers), the interlude at the conclusion of III becomes more substantial while further interludes are also likely required at the conclusion of II and IV. It is, then, very possible that *Asinaria* was designed to incorporate interludes at three of the four places suggested by the traditional five-act division. If nothing else, it is worth noting how often the junctures indicated in our text by act-breaks are also the sites that pose the greatest challenges for the deployment of roles.

57. J.C.B. Lowe (1992) 163–65 and below, section IX.

nor is it altogether clear how this separate venture is to play out in conjunction with the more conventional comic scheme for which the ground has been laid at some length at 46–126.⁵⁸

In Act II, however, Libanus has returned to the stage and — in response to a query from Leonida — informs us that Argyrippus is “in here” while his father is off in the forum (329). The collocation *hic ... intus* is beloved by Plautus; in this unadorned form, with no further modifiers and no context to suggest another location, it is most readily taken as an allusion to Argyrippus’ house (an impression that will be reinforced in III.i).⁵⁹ Dislocations of this sort are not unparalleled in Plautus, but that the young lover should suddenly be found at home in this fashion, so soon after his earlier departure and with no word regarding the success of his proposed scheme, is curious, to say the least, since the success of that scheme would render Libanus and Leonida’s participation in the play irrelevant, along with the whole of acts II and III. Having apparently opened the play in I.ii and I.iii by casting the young lover as the protagonist in his own drama, Plautus inexplicably, and quite awkwardly, relegates him to the background.

Act III opens with a scene between Philaenium and Cleareta, where it is clear that Argyrippus is not currently in Cleareta’s home.⁶⁰ This is established by the general tenor of the scene, which presents Philaenium’s sorrow at being separated from her lover (515), as well as by Cleareta’s threats that, unless Argyrippus is attended by the required twenty minae when next he visits, he will be sent packing (532–33). At 591, however, Argyrippus enters from Cleareta’s establishment attended by Philaenium as the two tearfully play out what they believe is to be their final farewell, occasioned by the fact that Cleareta has (once again?) sent Argyrippus packing (594). Again, there is no reference to the outcome of the scheme mooted at 243–48, which, it turns out, has played no role other than to motivate an exit (248) that has then had to be “cancelled” in an altogether ham-fisted and confusing manner, leading to an oddly redundant replay of Argyrippus’ expulsion.

58. Cf. Hough (1937) 24–25.

59. On a practical level, there is no way for Libanus to know for certain just where Argyrippus might be (Hough [1937] 26, J.C.B. Lowe [1992] 164). Given that, according to the *paradosis*, the scene prior to Libanus’ return to the stage depicted Argyrippus being ejected from Cleareta’s establishment and told not to return without the cash in hand, it would be altogether confusing to find him inside that establishment once again so soon, with no explanation, even with the intervening act-break/empty stage.

60. J.C.B. Lowe (1992) 164, who presents a similar case but with a view to documenting confusions in the text.

One might simply throw up one's hands altogether on the question of Argyrippus' movements and highlight the confusion regarding the young man's location, as well as his actions, as one element of the anomia that is a constituent feature of Plautine farce. On assigning I.ii and I.iii to Diabolus, however, most of the above difficulties disappear. On that reading, Argyrippus remains invisible and utterly passive until his entrance in III.iii: there is no longer any need to reconcile the louche figure of I.ii and I.iii with the young man who enters to bid a pathetic farewell to Philaenium at 591, nor to account for how the conniving individual who bargained so cunningly with Cleareta in I.iii suddenly has been transformed once again into the typically helpless *adulescens* to whom the audience was introduced in I.i. Gone as well are the concerns regarding the seemingly aborted plan mooted at 233–48. The circumstances of Diabolus' return at 746, while lacking comment, make it evident that this scheme has been effective, and the audience has been reminded at 634 that Diabolus has claimed that he would be bringing the funds on this very day — the same promise offered by the young man of I.iii at 233–36. The above scenario makes much better dramatic sense than to have an unnamed character appear for the first time at 746, talking about a contract — but not the contract of which the audience has heard — with an unidentified companion.⁶¹ Argyrippus' presence in Cleareta's establishment at the opening of III.iii still finds no explicit explanation in the text but is now clearly motivated. The confrontation between Philaenium and Cleareta in III.i has sounded the death-knell for the young lovers' relationship: it is straightforward enough to understand that Philaenium has summoned Argyrippus for a final farewell, and to appreciate the latter's despair at this news (594) and word of Diabolus' proposed contract (633–36) — especially given his feckless character and the fact that (unlike Diabolus) he has no apparent prospects for acquiring the required funds.⁶² Not only does this scenario lack the contradictions and confusions that attend the paradosis, but it provides a suitably drôle occasion for the introduction of the play's pseudo-tragic protagonist.

61. Diabolus is identified by name once Parasitus begins to read out the text of the contract (751): those in the audience who recalled 633–36 would then understand who this was, but would still have to speculate about the contract itself, which in their minds had been promised to Argyrippus.

62. One might object that, even on Havet's reading, the presentation of Argyrippus' situation in I.i suggests that he requires the twenty minae on that very day (98, 103). As Vogt-Spira (1991) 39–42 notes, however, the twenty minae are presented in I.i as an extra-dramatic "given" which ill suits the logic by which the plot of the play itself advances, whatever one's decision regarding the identity of the young man of I.ii and I.iii. See, further, below pp. 352–53.

VIII: Havet's Diabolus and the Comic Dynamic of *Asinaria*

Havet's proposal addresses a number of difficulties in the plot of *Asinaria* as presented by the paradosis and allows us to begin to tease out thematic elements that have not always been appreciated. But it is not without its own difficulties. One concerns the presentation of the character of Diabolus. We seem, in brief, to be presented with two Diaboluses — the louche and impetuous rake of Act I, and the buffoonish *alazon* of Act IV.

As has been suggested above, the young lover of I.ii and I.iii maps quite nicely onto the figure of Diniarchus in *Truculentus*: an independent and formerly wealthy young man practiced in the ways of the demimonde, who has run through his patrimony and now finds himself barred from his former haunts, except to the degree that he can discover still further means to drive himself to ruin (*Truc.* 174).⁶³ Diniarchus for the most part is closer to what one might call a connoisseur of courtesans — he is generally able to regard his plight in a somewhat more abstract and philosophical light than is our indignant youth⁶⁴ — but the two are cut from very much the same cloth, as becomes particularly evident when the courtesan's maid Astaphium provides Diniarchus with the same type of "schooling" as that offered by Cleareta in I.iii (*Truc.* 162–84). In the end, the amorous desires of each render him helpless before the wiles of the courtesan's agent, despite the young men's awareness of these women's ways and, in the case of our youth, his angry indignation. For all of their folly, however, they are far from buffoons: each sets about effecting his own ruin with a calculating cunning that shows him to be profligate but not moronic.

The Diabolus of Act IV, by contrast, is very much the comic dupe, earnestly concocting a ridiculous document with the aid of his clever parasite (who is happy to feed his patron's folly if it means that he will be fed in turn) only then to be mocked and humiliated by the triumphant Demaenetus (who, it turns out, was helping his son with a view to sharing in Philaenium's charms — yet another unexpected twist).⁶⁵ Rather than a dissolute rake

63. This comparison is also noted by Leo (1895) ad 127 and (1912) 149; Webster (1970) 138, 235; Woytek (1982) 67.

64. Cf. above pp. 318–19.

65. 810–16 show that Diabolus has been treated in a high-handed fashion by the triumphant Demaenetus, in particular, who seems to have bragged about the clever way in which he acquired the funds required to purchase Philaenium's favors: 814–15. The sudden focus on Demaenetus — rather than Argyrippus — as Diabolus' rival lays the

such as Diniarchus, this Diabolus recalls the buffoonish Pyrgopolynices of the opening scene of Plautus' *Miles*, who is also a rival of the play's youthful protagonist and is gulled by a manipulative parasite in a scene involving a set of writing tablets and a form of dictation. The connection is so close that Petrides catalogues Diabolus as a *miles* type, in the tradition of the ancient Greek *alazon* attended by his clever parasite (Greek: *kolax*).⁶⁶ This must surely be incorrect: Diabolus is characterized as an *adulescens* at 634 (cf. 133a) and, while one might think of such figures as Menander's Polemon (*Perikeiromene*) and Thrasonides (*Misoumenos*), neither in Menander nor (especially) in Plautus is the *miles* figure invoked in so unmarked a fashion and to so little purpose. Although Diabolus incorporates elements of the pompous self-ignorance that is typical of the comic *miles*, the relationship between him and Parasitus is much closer to that of the foolish master to his clever slave.⁶⁷ In this, Parasitus fits seamlessly into the typology established by Ribbeck, according to which (following Damon):

... by the time of Menander the *παράσιτος* was particularly associated with civilian patrons, the *κόλαξ* with the boastful soldier. ... the soldier is flattered and requites his flatterer with a variety of rewards, while the private host is coaxed by a variety of tactics into providing specific edible perquisites. The constant in the one case is the tactic, in the other the reward. These functional distinctions are useful; that is, it is useful to recognize that there are two basic techniques that a dependent might use to attract benefits from a patron, namely, flattery and service.⁶⁸

The buffoonish Diabolus might recall the pompous soldier-*cum*-rival, but the tactics of Parasitus place the pair firmly in the "civilian" realm, as does the allusion to Diabolus at 633–36.

As so often in this play, we find a blending of traditional comic types: Diabolus the louche young amorist *cum* buffoonish *alazon* finds parallels in Philaenium the naïve ingénue *cum* practiced *meretrix*, Demaenetus the

necessary groundwork for the comic finale but is well motivated: Diabolus has not simply lost out in the race to produce the required twenty minae, but has been mocked and humiliated by a (new) boorish and ludicrous rival to boot: Danese (1999) 77–78.

66. Petrides (2014a) 217–19 and (on the *kolax*) 220–26.

67. Damon (1997) 32–33; Flaucher (2002) 4 and 98–100. Cf. the Moschion of Men. *Perik.* 267–352.

68. Damon (1997) 13, citing Ribbeck (1883) 21. Ribbeck's typology is somewhat oversimplified but serves my purposes in pointing out how Plautus once again conflates traditional types: cf. Antonsen-Resch (2004) 203–06.

sympathetic liberal father *cum* randy *senex amator*, and (to a lesser degree) Argyrippus the hapless *adulescens cum* irresponsible *amator* (in his sudden transformation in V.ii, upon Artemona's entrance).⁶⁹ These transformations are not haphazard, however, or unrelated: although hinted at in various ways earlier in the play, the second, more farcical element in my description of each of the above characters emerges in full force only after the introduction of Demaenetus' scheme to win a night with Philaenium (731–40) — that is, after the shift away from the romantic melodrama with its scheming slaves, to the randy Demaenetus' glorious pseudo-triumph and still more glorious defeat.⁷⁰ Commentators have attempted to explain these shifts in terms of faulty, or at the very least inorganic, composition on the part of an author who has melded together characters and/or plot elements from different sources with a view to generating high-comic farce. But the systematic nature of these transformations, and the clever use of the returning Diabolus to help effect the transition from one plot to the other, suggest a coherent, if far from Menandrian, scheme. Like a classical composer changing keys, our author employs Act IV to effect a shift from a traditional romantic theme, with its forlorn lovers, scheming slaves, grasping procuresses, and various dupes and straightmen, to a more over-the-top and rather more subversive type of farce that offers his audience a suitably rollicking conclusion. The shift in the presentation of Diabolus is part and parcel of this transformation: a new action is introduced, and, as did the first action, it opens — after a brief introduction (731–40) — with the rebuffing of Diabolus, now cast as the buffoonish and controlling *amator* who is humiliated by the play's triumphant Saturnalian principals.

69. Note the repeated fashion in which Argyrippus attempts to worm his way back into his mother's good graces, generally at his father's expense: 911, 931, 938.

70. As we have seen, elements of Philaenium's more hard-bitten side are hinted at in her conversation with Cleareta in III.i, but only in V.ii does she play the impudent, practiced *meretrix* to the hilt (920–21, 930, 939–41 and, perhaps 894 [Philaenium's first contribution to the conversation in this scene], if this is delivered in a fashion that indicates that Philaenium has caught sight of the eavesdropping Artemona at this point). In the same way, the Diabolus of I.iii displays elements of the obsessive concern for control evident in IV.i, but with the little of the over-the-top buffoonery evident in the latter scene. In the case of Demaenetus the hints are more oblique: the knowledgeable theater-goer must have wondered, however, at what might be portended by the attitudes he evinces at 47–83 and would have noted that, as the husband of a *uxor dotata*, this seemingly enlightened *senex* also represented a potentially much less noble type of stock character (Vogt-Spira [1991] 60–62, Danese [1999] 52–53, 56–58, 74–76). For Argyrippus, cf. 270 and 597 (both throwaway lines, admittedly, but each raising the possibility of a less reputable version of this character: below pp. 340–42).

IX: Lowe's Challenge to Havet's Proposal — The Farcical Plautus

I have deliberately avoided, to this point, engaging too directly with the specific points raised by others who have addressed my topic, in favor of attempting an independent reading of the play and its themes on its own terms. It is time, however, to consider the case that has been made against Havet's proposal. As we have seen, J.C.B. Lowe's presentations (1992, 1999) have been the most influential. Like Havet, Lowe presents less a reading than a series of observations: his method is schematic at heart, an approach that rather biases his discussion in favor of his professed objective — to present evidence of Plautus' creative but inorganic recrafting and expansion of his source material in a farcical vein. His principal objection to Havet's proposal (1992: 160) is the confusion occasioned by the sudden appearance, at the opening of I.ii, of an unidentified lover who is not in fact the Argyrippus of whom we have heard previously. This, in the end, is Lowe's strongest point,⁷¹ but it is supported by a couple of minor objections, both of which have been addressed above:

- “The lover of I.ii–iii has no money now, even if it is suggested that he did have in the past. Yet later in the play Diabolus appears to have no lack of funds; he is able and willing to enter into a contract that very day” (1992: 160). — As we have seen, Diabolus leaves the stage at 248 swearing that he will get the money by hook or by crook; at 633–36 we hear that he has promised to produce the funds (his very promise at 233–36); at 746 he appears with the funds in hand. That no explanation is provided for just how he obtained these funds is paralleled in the play by the lack of explanation for Leonida's initiative in undertaking to bilk the merchant's agent (II.ii: below n. 83), the lack of explanation for Argyrippus' entrance from Cleareta's establishment at the opening of III.iii with the knowledge of Diabolus' contract, and the immediate return of Diabolus and Parasitus to stage at the opening of IV.ii: the author of our play repeatedly forgoes providing such mundane transitional elements.⁷²
- “... the lover of I.ii–iii is highly emotional; yet, unlike Argyrippus, Diabolus in IV.i–ii shows little sign of being emotionally involved with Philaenium” (ibid.) — No word here about the obsession with control that features

71. Danese (1999) 59–60 n. 26.

72. In a slightly different context, Woytek (1982) 68 cites Süß (1910) 455, where *Asinaria* is described as “arm nicht an Handlung an sich, wohl aber an Lust, sie *in extenso* dramatisch auszubreiten.”

prominently in all of these scenes, or the fact that there is really quite little talk of the speaker's erotic passion in I.ii and I.iii beyond line 141 (above pp. 322). As we have seen (above, section V), the Diabolus who enters at the opening of Act IV has lost all reason for the indignant emotions displayed in I.ii and I.iii: he has obtained the required funds and is in the process of putting together what he regards as an air-tight contract.

For the rest, Lowe's case is almost entirely negative, denying, through a curious *petitio principii*, the significance of various contradictions and infelicities that result from the paradosis, on the grounds that, as Lowe's conclusion tells us, Plautus' drama is likely closer in spirit "... to the improvised popular farces which existed in Italy before the introduction of the *palliata*. Plautus shows himself more concerned with the dramatic effectiveness of the individual scene than with the overall structure of the play," and displays "a tendency to depict certain characters in brighter colours and to substitute comically exaggerated stereotypes, such as the greedy *meretrix*, for realistic characterization." Above all, "...Plautus has made structural changes and substantive additions to his Greek models which are clearly in some sense 'dramatic'" if not organic or coherent (1992: 174). Thus, where earlier scholars often posited a form of *contaminatio*, compounded by lost or omitted scenes, and/or offered detailed lines of reasoning whereby the audience could supply connections omitted by the author, Lowe cuts to the chase: we still find Plautine intervention, but of a more practical sort dictated by the traditions of the Roman stage and the expectations of his audience. Farce has displaced *contaminatio* as the principal factor underlying the play's contradictions and inconcinnities.

Most scholars would likely agree with much of Lowe's general assessment of Plautus' work, but his position becomes problematic when it is employed, in effect, to pre-empt readings that do search for a certain coherence of plot, characterization, presentation, and theme. Thus Lowe argues that:

- the confusion of having Argyrippus depart for the forum at 248 only to then be said to be *intus* at 329 and subsequently to enter from Cleareta's establishment at 591 can be explained as the result of a Plautine revision of III.iii ([1992] 160, 163–65). Thus the critic is able to dismiss the dropping of the scheme voiced at 243–48, the nature of Argyrippus' intricate off-stage peregrinations (from forum to home in 329, and from home to Cleareta's house prior to his re-appearance at 591 — which Lowe does not describe accurately), and the oddity of what then must be Argyrippus'

second expulsion at 591. Such infelicities and confusion are justified on what are largely *a priori* grounds: Plautus must have reworked his original here, and we know that he was not concerned with those sorts of matters. It is striking, however, that the majority of Lowe's discussion of this point is presented in the course of arguing for Plautus' extensive revision of III.iii: having dismissed Havet's thesis in the earlier part of his paper, Lowe is then free to develop an elaborate account of the inept nature of Plautus' modifications without ever being called upon to apply Occam's razor, and is able to present a playwright who, in attempting to effect a "patch," mysteriously (and, at 329, gratuitously) makes matters still worse.

- the inconsistency in the portrayal of Argyrippus' financial and social position in I.ii and I.iii (in contrast to I.i and III.i) "can be explained ... by supposing minor Plautine additions and modifications such as were a normal part of the process of *vortere*. So far as the development of the plot is concerned, the essential point is that the lover has no money now, when Cleareta has lost patience and issued an ultimatum (cf. 534); on this these scenes are in full accord with Argyrippus' situation" ([1992] 160). Again, consistency of characterization and presentation at even such a fundamental level is not Plautine. The fact that I.ii is quite possibly a Plautine confection ([1992] 161) is cited as adding further force to this point.
- in response to Havet's objection that the angry and threatening lover of I.ii and I.iii scarcely matches up with the devoted and lachrymose Argyrippus of III.iii, Lowe remarks: "That is not a sufficient reason ... to deny that Plautus could have put [the diatribe of I.ii and I.iii] in the mouth of Argyrippus. The lover of I.ii–iii is depicted as emotional, no less than Argyrippus is later; in both cases strong emotion is expressed in exaggerated language. We should not expect a greater consistency of characterization from Plautus than that; he was concerned above all to make his audience laugh and for this purpose stereotypes were more useful than subtly drawn characters" ([1992] 162). The fact that the one emotion is angry indignation, grounded in a specific set of circumstances that Lowe has already admitted do not apply to Argyrippus, while the other is a hapless devotion, does not matter: concerns of this sort belong to Menander ([1992] 174) and the other Greek dramatists ([1992] 160) rather than Plautus.
- "Taking 135a *in mari repperi* to imply that the speaker had engaged in profitable commerce, which Argyrippus could not have done, [Havet] presses too hard the logical implications of a piece of Plautine rhetoric. ...

The idea of the sea as a source of wealth in 135a provides a convenient antithesis [to the voracious greed of the *lena*]; it should not be accorded a significance extending beyond its immediate context” ([1992] 162). No attention here to the mercantile themes so prominent in I.ii and I.iii and in the play’s last two acts.

- “That Diabolus later brings a draft *syngraphus* in 746ff. is no reason to suppose Cleareta’s words in 238 *syngraphum facito adferas* addressed to him rather than to Argyrippus. Cleareta was evidently willing to enter into a contract with anyone, provided he could produce 20 *minae*” ([1992] 162). Again, the specific context in which such a contract was offered is not considered; the very real likelihood of confusion at the opening of IV.i is deemed acceptable, given Cleareta’s earlier reference to the possibility of a rival at 231 and the allusion to Diabolus at 633–36 ([1992] 167).

To account for the various anomalies entailed in his thesis, Lowe follows Gestri in presenting the figure of Cleareta as the key to Plautus’ recrafting of I.ii and I.iii.⁷³ Gestri detects two sides to Plautus’ Cleareta: the typically shameless and rapacious *lena* represented by lines such as 153–55 and 173–75, and a seemingly more reasonable business-woman who is simply looking out for her own interests in attempting to keep her establishment afloat — as, e.g., at 186, 198–203. This latter Cleareta is found to derive from Demophilus’ original, where Gestri detects a sophisticated procuress who reduces her interlocutor to a state of *aporia* via the pornoboskic equivalent of a Socratic elenchus.⁷⁴ The former, it is argued, has been imposed upon the scene by Plautus himself, for whom the *lena* provided by his model was much too refined. The resulting confusion, as well as the inconsistencies in the portrayal of Argyrippus’ situation, is, according to Lowe, to be attributed to the imperfect suturing together of these two incongruent models:

La mia ipotesi dunque per spiegare questa incongruenza è che in queste due scene Plauto abbia rimaneggiato il suo modello per creare un confronto stereotipato fra mezzana ingorda e giovane amante squattrinato. ... Se la mezzana dell’ *Onagos* era meno sfacciata, più tranquilla, ecco il motivo per Plauto di trasformarla in una tipica mezzana ingorda, per soddisfare il gusto grossolano del pubblico romano. Insomma, la mia ipotesi è plausibile in sé e spiega bene sia l’incongruenza con altre scene rispetto alla situazione finanziaria di Argirippo, sia la duplicità nel carattere di Cleareta.⁷⁵

73. Gestri (1940).

74. Gestri (1940) 181–83.

75. J.C.B. Lowe (1999) 16–17; cf. id. (1992) 161.

This argument is problematic in two regards. As so often with such hypotheses, it abandons the play at hand in favor of a non-existent work of the critic's manufacture — a work that Plautus is then found to revise without regard for the ensuing consequences. Once again, farce meets the Greek comedy of manners, with thoroughly unhappy results. In this instance, however, the project is further undermined by the lack of a substantial foundation, given the weakness of Gestri's original thesis. In the world of Plautine comedy, any application of the Reality Principle is viewed negatively, and financial reality is one of the most cruel (and common) principles of all. Cleareta might seem, in the eyes of the modern reader, to present the case for her policy in a reasonable (if cynical) fashion, but at heart her position is indistinguishable from that presented by the Ballio of *Pseudolus*, who declares quite candidly, upon hearing that the youth Calidorus is desperately in love but out of pocket, "I'd have pity on you if I could feed my household on pity" (274), and who delights in contrasting the sentimental romantic views indulged in by his girls' lovers, with the concrete merchandise that constitutes the price of those lovers' admittance (179–229) — an application of the principle put much more succinctly by the Erotium of *Menaechmi*: "For a lover loveliness (*amoenitas*) leads to loss, for us, to profit" (356). In such passages, the typical Roman saw, not the pragmatic measures taken by an individual struggling to maintain a small business, nor the cruel oppression of one who traffics in human flesh, but the unfeeling, mercantile, and reductive attitude of the procurer/procuress who puts money above love: the notion of a dissonance between such a position and that presented at *Asinaria* 153–55 would not have occurred to Plautus' audience.⁷⁶ In the end, the presentation of Cleareta in I.iii merely offers a variation on a common trope: the *leno/lena's* hard-hearted obsession with cash. The alleged inconsistency in her characterization scarcely provides sufficient grounds on which to justify the sorts of disruptions required by Lowe's thesis.

As influential as it has been, Lowe's argument cannot be said to offer a significant advance on the observations of Goetz and Loewe, Leo, or Ahrens, who readily identified the essential issues.⁷⁷ Defenders of the paradox have yet to offer a convincing explanation of why Plautus would effect the alleged alterations, and, still more significantly, how we are to trust that he would be content with the results.

76. Gestri's attempts (1940) 184–85 to posit a dissonance between *Asin.* 153–55 and 156–58, and (1940) 185–89 to tease out two separate strands in the metaphor at 177–85 are indicative of the artificial nature of the enterprise.

77. Above, n. 5.

X: Contradictions, Inconsistencies, and the Nature of Plautine Farce

The above summary smacks more of eristic than I would prefer, but the intention is to drive home an important issue, one that is beyond the scope of this paper but that must be touched on nonetheless: just what do we mean when we refer to Plautine “farce”? What type of coherence might we look for — of plot, character, theme? Does Plautine comedy admit of traditional forms of literary analysis and, if so, to what degree? — or are we to be limited to questions of technique, such as are deemed relevant to a quasi-improvisational form of drama designed solely to elicit laughs from the raucous and, it would seem, altogether uncritical mobs that thronged the Roman *ludi*?⁷⁸

If we limit ourselves to the evidence of *Asinaria*, two types of inconsistencies become immediately evident. One consists of throwaway lines that are introduced for comic effect and, while they contradict some element of the play’s established plot or characterization, are readily understood as punchlines designed to elicit a laugh. These are very much in the same mode as the numerous metatheatrical jokes to be found in Plautus: they are accepted as part of the tacit agreement between playwright and audience that, despite the sentimental tale of romantic love that frequently provides the armature for the plot, these are in fact comic farces performed in a quasi-improvisational mode.

Thus, for example, when Argyrippus, at the height of his impassioned farewell to Philaenium in III.iii, responds to her desperate plea that he not leave by replying, “I’ll stay at night if you want me to” (597), we can appreciate Plautus’ yielding to the opportunity for an easy laugh.⁷⁹ The line is utterly unsuitable to the faux tragic mood of the scene, and to the character of the young man as we have come to know it, but finds a close parallel at *Pseudolus* 121–22, where the formerly despair-ridden Calidorus jokingly remarks that piety compels him to suggest the bilking of Mom as well as Dad. (As Calidorus himself proclaims at 238, *non iucundumst nisi amans facit stulte* — “There’s no fun in it unless a lover behaves stupidly.”)⁸⁰

78. I am well aware that, in limiting myself to matters relevant to the evaluation of *Asin.* I.ii and I.iii, I am situating myself on the margins of a much larger debate: see the useful review in Petrides (2014b) 424–33. I do not myself accept that farce is necessarily inimical to more subtle nuances of structure, theme, or characterization — as is well illustrated, in the case of *Asinaria*, by studies such as Konstan (1983) 47–56 and Slater (2000) 45–56.

79. Cf. 624–25.

80. It is possible that many such lines were delivered directly to the audience, thus further marking them for what they were: extra-dramatic gags.

Asinaria 270 belongs to a similar class. When Leonida enters in II.ii, out of breath and desperate to share his good news with Argyrippus and Libanus (viz., that he has found an opportunity to win Philaenium), he notes that it is only right that he do so, given the adventures that the three have shared in the past (267–71):

Where should I now look for Libanus or for our young master so that I can make them more joyful than Joy is herself? With my coming I'm bringing them the greatest booty and triumph. Since they drink together with me and hang out with prostitutes together with me (*pariter scortari solent*), I'll share the booty I've got hold of together with them.

The allusion in 270 to habitually drinking and hanging out with prostitutes together cannot be taken to concern affairs of the sort facilitated by Cleareta. Slaves did not generally carouse with their masters at the expensive formal *convivia* that such affairs entailed,⁸¹ nor is there any indication that the impecunious Argyrippus has engaged in any affairs prior to that with Philaenium. The words *scortari solent*, as here introduced, operate in a realm utterly foreign to that of Argyrippus' relationship with Philaenium. As Hurka notes,⁸² the metaphor that informs these lines is that of a seasoned soldier who has spent many a day drinking and carousing with other members of his company, and who now brings, as his freshly acquired "booty," news of how he and his companions might plunder the funds necessary to satisfy Cleareta (a slightly jumbled metaphor but effective nonetheless).⁸³ In such a context, the

81. The banquet celebrated at *Pseud.* 1255ff. is exceptional: it presents a triumphant Saturnalian inversion that is of a piece with Pseudolus' drunken presence on stage and the following humiliation of his master Simo. (And even there, Pseudolus' presence at the banquet is made to seem less remarkable by casting him as the traditional *scurra*/parasite.) Contrast Argyrippus' response to the slaves' erotic gestures at *Asin.* 624–25, 669, and 697, and note the slaves' responses in the last two passages. *Mostellaria* offers another variation on this motif. At lines 11–54 the rustic slave Grumio portrays a household in such a state of disarray that the slave Tranio is permitted to join his master Philolaches in his carouses and in purchasing prostitutes: the activities of Philolaches and Tranio are deliberately conflated in Grumio's indictment, an indictment that Tranio gleefully accepts in his mocking dismissal of Grumio's boorish earnestness. When we witness Philolaches in mid-carouse, however, Tranio is accorded no role (308ff.).

82. Hurka (2010) ad 269 and 270–71.

83. Leonida cannot have been aware of Demaenetus' acquiescence in such a scheme and has to be informed of this at 362–66. But the audience knows that he had been enlisted by Argyrippus and Libanus (58 and 101) and can readily assume that he has under-

use of the vulgar *scortari*, in reference to his and his fellow legionaries' pastsprees, implies, not the type of establishment associated with the typical New Comic *leno* or *lena*, but rather the seedy world of common brothels, eateries, inns, and cribs — all much frequented by the poor, slaves, freedmen, foreigners, and, significantly, soldiers — that, as DeFelice notes, is far removed from the fictionalized demimondes found in Plautus and Ovid.⁸⁴ The line is crude and, if taken at face value, a bit shocking, as much for the social milieu that it suggests as for the activities.⁸⁵ Hurka regards the passage as a fantasy inspired by Leonida's excessive enthusiasm, which leads him to cast Argyrippus, Libanus, and himself as carousing soldiers (“zu einer phantastischen Ausspinnung einer soldatischen Zech- und Hurgemeinschaft”) but there is some uncertainty here about just where the metaphor ends and the reality begins. The passage furnishes a suitably striking and humorous means of introducing Leonida, and of initiating the rude and lively tone that will inform this scene as a whole. Many in the audience might have taken it literally, but, in the end, this really does not matter. The tone and context offer the appropriate markers to allow the audience to accept it for what it is: a passing comic gag that has no import for an understanding of the play's larger concerns.⁸⁶

Still more problematic contradictions are also acceptable on occasion. One passage that has featured prominently in the interpretation of I.ii and I.iii is that at 229–30, where the youthful lover asks Cleareta to name her price:

IUV. Wait, wait, listen. Tell me, what do you think would be a fair price for me to give you for her so that she won't be with anyone else this year?
CLEAR. For you? Twenty minas.

Commentators early on noted the inconsistency here, if our youthful speaker is in fact Argyrippus, given that it is clear from I.i that Argyrippus is already aware of Cleareta's fee (89). This sort of superficial inconsistency is com-

taken to bilk the merchant's agent on his own initiative — something that seems quite in character for the individual presented in II.ii and II.iv.

84. DeFelice (2001) 88–92, McGinn (2004) 19–20. For slaves frequenting brothels, see Flemming (1999) 45, McGinn (2004) 72 with n. 415, Levin-Richardson (2011) 60–61, Åshede (2016) 938; cf. *Poen.* 270 (*servolorum sordidulorum scorta diobolaria*), 830–34, *Colum. Rust.* 1.8.2, *Hor. Serm.* 2.7.46–52.

85. While the principal informing metaphor is that of the victorious soldier, the triumphant tone and implicit allusion to past victories are also mildly redolent of the erotic graffiti associated with that same milieu: Levin-Richardson (2011).

86. As noted above, such a line would likely be delivered directly to the audience, attended by a suitably ribald gesture.

mon enough in Plautus, however, and frequently can be shown to be the result of Plautine innovation:⁸⁷ it generates no confusion regarding fundamental elements of plot or characterization, and can be defended as providing an appropriate emphasis (as well as clarity) regarding a key element of the plot. Havel's proposal removes that particular inconsistency, but the content of the lines, in and of itself, does little to prove the merits of his suggestion.⁸⁸

In each of the above examples, contradictions, inconsistencies, and infelicities can be shown to perform a specific function in context and do not hinder communication between playwright and audience; they are self-contained, and contribute in some fashion to the play — adding a joke, providing clarity or emphasis, helping to establish the tone. Above all, they are transient and nugatory, and are often marked as such in some fashion — by context, delivery, or in their very nature.

What then of lines 134–35, considered above (p. 317–18)? Here too (as at 267–71) we find a comic metaphor employed to set the tone for a new character's arrival and provoke interest through an injection of liveliness and variety. In this instance, however, the unnamed character introduces himself by complaining that he is being shown the door despite his own past gifts (127–29) and then proclaims, in effect, "I made my fortune at sea, only to have it tossed overboard here!" In light of the introduction provided in I.i, the knowing theater-goer would have no doubts about the general scenario involved here. But in this instance, the information presented (regarding the former wealth of the speaker) is fundamental to his situation and crucial to the dynamics of the scene. As noted earlier, the origin of his wealth is in one sense cited merely to set up the bitter joke that follows, but, given that it is one of the first items that we learn about the speaker and introduces a fundamental constituent of the scene, it scarcely seems justifiable to dismiss it as "a piece of Plautine rhetoric" (J.C.B. Lowe [1992] 162) — it is neither transient nor nugatory. In this instance, to insist that the viewer must cancel out this initial bit of very specific and quite relevant information is to brand Plautus as a careless craftsman who fails to pay sufficient attention to

87. Note the very similar contradiction between *Pseud.* 51–52 and 324–49. (Other examples are noted in Hurka [2010] 48; more generally: Langen [1886] 89–232, Marti 1959.)

88. For more on the problematic nature of 229–30, see below pp. 352–53. Assigning I.iii to Diabolus does provide Cleareta's response with a humorous twist, however: for an audience that has heard of the price of twenty minae already being offered to Argyrippus (89), Cleareta's reply here ("For you?") further demonstrates the slippery nature of her negotiations with her clients, and provides additional grounds, on an extra-dramatic level, for Diabolus' insistence on an air-tight contract. Cf. the similar joke at 191–94.

his audience's experience as they attempt to make sense of his play. If these lines were in fact composed to be delivered by Argyrippus, then Plautus is reduced to stitching together a loosely related collection of generic sketches on the theme of "liberal *pater* and *adulescens-amator*," "*adulescens-amator* vs. *lena*," "*adulescens-amator* and *puella*," etc.⁸⁹

Such readings are of course subjective: not everyone will agree on the interpretation of each passage. But it is bad method to consider passages as mere counters, to be assigned significance or not according to one's assumptions about the work in question, without a close examination, in particular, of the audience's experience in watching the play and each passage's relationship to the broader thematic texture.

The second type of inconsistency, on prominent display in *Asinaria*, concerns larger shifts in the presentation of individual characters. As we have seen, the Philaenium, Demaenetus, Argyrippus, and (I argue) Diabolus of the last two acts are presented in a markedly different fashion than they were earlier in the play, even though hints of this later presentation can be detected here and there earlier on. Whether this phenomenon is to be attributed to a curious feature of Demophilus' composition, some form of *contaminatio*, or Plautus' use of different models in the course of crafting (or recrafting) his material, is not my concern here. It is more important to note that these transformations are calculated and coherent, with each contributing in its own way to enhance the play's ludic conclusion: the randy Demaenetus lays the foundation for the presentation of the tart Philaenium and the coyly disrespectful Argyrippus, while the Saturnalian freedom of their *convivium* finds a foil in Diabolus' stolid efforts to put a stop to any such misbehavior through his ponderous contract.⁹⁰ As with the throwaway lines considered above, the ultimate justification for this feature lies in its effectiveness: the results are hilarious.

The same cannot be said for Lowe's reading of I.ii and I.iii, where the contradictions and infelicities are neither coherent nor a source of humor, and where all too often the focus of the discussion lies, not on the shaping of the play's plot, themes, and characters, but rather the imperfect mechanics by which the comedy has been recrafted.

89. Early critics were quite forthright about adopting such a view of the play. Cf. Kunst (1919) 155: "... man hat gewissermaßen eine Zahl voneinander unabhängiger *εἰδύλλια* vor sich, jedes um seiner selbst willen ohne Vor- und Rückbeziehung vorgeführt" (cited by Vogt-Spira (1991) 14 n. 11). It is in such readings that the analyst project, in its various manifestations, is born, and where its principal justification continues to lie.

90. On centrality of Demaenetus' role, cf. Danese (1999) 74–76, 83–84.

XI: Communicating with the Audience — The Challenge of *Asinaria* I.ii

We have yet to address the strongest argument against Havet's suggestion, however: the potential confusion occasioned by the entrance of an unnamed *adulescens* at 127 who is not in fact Argyrippus, but whose situation so closely resembles that of the young man who in I.i has been introduced as the play's protagonist.

This difficulty is directly addressed by Hurka, who nonetheless also appreciates the fundamental incongruity between these two characters. Following a brief overview of the challenges presented by I.ii and I.iii, Hurka concludes that these scenes must belong to the original scheme according to which the plot of *Asinaria* was constructed, and must have been assigned to Diabolus as part of that scheme.⁹¹ As Hurka proceeds to demonstrate, Diabolus provides the lynchpin for the cunning plot-twist which sees Argyrippus' helper (his father Demaenetus) later transformed into his chief rival, only then to be brought to ruin by Argyrippus' former rival, now turned helper, in the form of the indignant Diabolus of IV.ii. In the end, however, Hurka argues that it is Plautus himself who is responsible for reassigning I.ii and I.iii to Argyrippus, citing the lack of concern with logical coherence — as evidenced by *Capt.* II.ii, *Cas.* II.ii, *Pseud.* I.i, *Trin.* II.ii, and, in particular, *Stich.* I.ii — as a constituent feature of Plautus' œuvre.⁹²

As so often in discussions of this work, Hurka's remarks fail to present a convincing explanation of just why Plautus might have effected this change, nor does he do full justice to the number of contradictions presented in these scenes, or their nature. But he does offer a compelling argument in favor of the *paradosis*: how in the world was the audience to know who this young man was, when no concrete reference to a rival, or to Diabolus by name, is to be found prior to 633–36?

This case is presented most recently, and with much greater force, by Marshall, who poses what is to date the most convincing challenge to Havet's proposal. From the beginning, Marshall emphasizes the importance of privileging how meaning is created in performance:

91. Hurka (2010) 47.

92. Hurka (2010) 48–49.

... the problem is not one of textual conservatism or being led astray by (post-Plautine) scene headings. What survives as a question of line attribution originates in practical terms as a question of mask, costume, and actor deployment, and of the interpretability of the theatrical *mise-en-scène* by an audience in Rome.⁹³

By “performance,” however, what Marshall means is performance within a carefully worked-out set of conventions that govern both the composition and the production of these works and help to guide the audience’s responses. Thus the first element of performance to which he turns⁹⁴ is the use of music (255–56). Building on his own work and that of Moore (above n. 4), he notes the frequency with which the introduction of accompanied verse attends the introduction of the play’s male love-interest: the audience has, in effect, been conditioned to expect that the young man who enters from Cleareta’s establishment at 127 in the midst of a song is in fact Argyrippus. In the case of *Asinaria*, this element is potentially still more significant since (as Marshall notes) the musical accompaniment, which commences here with the start of the plot proper, will continue uninterrupted until the entrance of Diabolus in IV.i, and will recommence only once the latter departs (V.i).⁹⁵ Diabolus is thus isolated in this play, as a character with whom the music literally stops. By contrast, as Marshall notes, each time the music commences (on the reading of the apodosis), it attends an entrance by Argyrippus.⁹⁶

The principal focus of Marshall’s argument, however — as with those of Lowe and Hurka — is the confusion generated by the unmarked introduction of a second youth at 127:

93. Marshall (2016) 253–54.

94. A number of Marshall’s arguments reiterate points that have been raised earlier in this debate or that are more literary in nature. Thus, e.g., the allusions to Argyrippus’ name at lines 74 and 364 might perhaps mislead a later *rubricator* (Andrieu, above n. 10) but scarcely constitute a significant form of bracketing for an audience watching the play in performance (Marshall [2016] 257), while the allegation that complaints regarding inconsistency in the presentation of Argyrippus reveal “an assumption that characterization in Plautus is somehow predictable or simplistic” (id. 255) echoes Lowe in its lack of engagement with specifics. The absence of any particular reference to Diabolus in the scene between Cleareta and Philaenium in III.i (id. 258) is readily explained by the focus on Philaenium’s passionate devotion to the impoverished Argyrippus: for the purposes of that scene, Philaenium’s other clients are mere ciphers (or, rather, sheep: 539–40), identified only by the cash that they have in hand.

95. Cf. Moore (1998) 250–51, (2012) 183.

96. Marshall (2006) 205–06, citing Moore (1998) 250–51 and 253.

... if the first *adulescens* is Diabolus, then Plautus deliberately creates confusion among his audience. Having spoken about Argyrippus (16–126) and introduced a young man (127–248), the audience has no resource to understand that it has not been Argyrippus for some time. The confusion persists throughout the exchange between Libanus, Leonida, and Merchant (249–503), and the exchange between Cleareta and Philaenium (504–44). Argyrippus has been mentioned by name in both scenes (364, 522), and the natural assumption for every audience member is that the character being named is the infatuated young man that they have seen. Further, if we have not seen Argyrippus before the mother-daughter exchange, the stakes of that scene are greatly reduced: Philaenium is pining for an abstraction that may not even appear as a character in the play.⁹⁷

A potentially disingenuous note is sounded by the use of “deliberately” here, which is derived from Henderson, for whom such gambits are characteristic: there are other interpretative options to consider, nor does Henderson himself regard mere confusion as Plautus’ goal.⁹⁸ But the essential point remains: for any in the audience who do not catch the clues to this young man’s identity, a series of false assumptions must ensue that will only be set right upon Argyrippus’ entrance in III.iii, with a good deal of attendant confusion and frustration:

Havet’s theory therefore requires Plautus to mislead part of his audience at least from 127 until 586 (460 lines; almost exactly half the play), with the likelihood of some residual confusion until line 635 ... For modern readers, who know the play’s outcome and have access to a cast list, this is possible, but still a challenge to follow. In its original performance context, the play becomes simply uninterpretable.⁹⁹

Further highlighting this anomaly (as Marshall argues) is the lack of compelling parallels elsewhere and the fact that Plautus is usually quite diligent in avoiding such points of confusion — thereby marking himself as a man of the stage who is aware of the need to attend to the requirements of a viewing audience.¹⁰⁰

97. Marshall (2016) 258.

98. Henderson (2006) 137–38 with 224 n. 5. (It is true, however, that Henderson’s Plautus seems to be motivated by little more than an impish and self-advertising cleverness, performed before an appreciative audience that is in on the game: comparison with the opening of Terence’s *Adelphoe* [id. 223 n. 3] argues against, rather than for, Henderson’s reading.) Cf. below p. 350 regarding *Trin.* 223ff.

99. Marshall (2016) 259.

100. *ibid.*, citing *Miles* 72–74 and *Capt.* 1–68, to which one can add, e.g., *Amph.* 142–47.

There is no definitive argument against Marshall's case, but there does remain more to be said. Regarding the play's use of accompanied verse, one can argue that the fact that accompaniment is employed continuously renders the use of the *tibia* less significant as a marker in this play than elsewhere in Plautus. The lack of accompaniment in IV.i is readily explained by another convention: the routine use of iambic senarii in scenes where documents are read out.¹⁰¹ What is truly striking is the lack of accompaniment in IV.ii, the scene where Diabolus and his parasite return to the stage immediately after exiting at the conclusion of IV.i. As Moore notes,¹⁰² the fact that both of these scenes are composed for spoken delivery makes the sudden re-entry of Diabolus and Parasitus all the more jarring: a shift from accompanied to unaccompanied meters, or vice-versa, often serves to ease such transitions (as at *Cist.* 630 and *Trin.* 601). The key here would seem to lie in the parallels between I.ii and IV.ii, each of which (on Havet's reading) presents the entrance of a Diabolus who is outraged at his shabby treatment within Cleareta's establishment and uttering threats.¹⁰³ The young man of I.ii still has expectations of gaining his point: the bouncy lyrics of 127ff. lend a humorous quality to his reproaches against Cleareta that, for all of their bitterness, provides a suitably lively opening to the play's action (above, pp. 319). Nothing of the sort is evident in the case of Diabolus' parallel entrance at IV.ii. Having obtained the funds which he so desperately required, and having assiduously drafted the proposed contract, he nonetheless finds himself driven from Cleareta's house once again, under still more humiliating circumstances: for him, the music has definitely stopped.

Nor is it an absolute rule that the first accompanied verse in Plautus attend the young male protagonist. *Trinummus* 223ff. also presents an unnamed youth who enters immediately following an introductory scene. This young man also sings, presenting a lengthy *canticum* that addresses the theme of love. And, as in *Asinaria*, it eventually transpires that this is not in fact the youthful *amator* of whom the audience has earlier been told (the young rake Lesbonicus) but an as yet unheard of young man by the name of Lysiteles, who will not actually be named until line 604 and who is Lesbonicus' polar opposite: a decent, responsible young lad who listens to his father and avoids the enticements of love-affairs altogether. Lesbonicus, on

101. Beare (1964) 225, Moore (1998) 250, Scafuro (2003–2004) 10.

102. Moore (1998) 250–51 and (2012) 17–19

103. Cf., e.g., 810–11 (*emori / me malim quam haec non eius uxori indicem*) and 131–32 (*vostraque ibi nomina / faxo erunt*); 817 (*iam quidem hercle ad illam hinc ibo*) and 130–31 (*iam ex hoc loco / ibo ego ad trisviros*).

the other hand, will not be introduced in person until line 402, one third of the way through the play. As Hunter noted long ago, this situation provides a close parallel for that of Diabolus in *Asinaria* I.ii and I.iii.¹⁰⁴

Only through a generous stretching of the terms can Lysiteles be called an ally or surrogate of the protagonist Lesbonicus (to employ Moore's designation: above n. 4): while he offers a form of assistance, this is a by-product of his ultimate goal (marriage with Lesbonicus' sister);¹⁰⁵ at no point does he present himself as a supporter of Lesbonicus' own ruinous behavior — he is no Callidamates (*Mostellaria*). In structural terms, Lysiteles introduces a quite separate, if crucial, strand of the plot in much the same way as does Diabolus, albeit in a friendlier guise. As in *Asinaria*, this as yet unidentified young man's song addresses themes relevant to the situation of the youthful protagonist described in the previous scene, but from a standpoint that is diametrically at odds with what we know of that individual: in this case, reflections on the opposition between *amor* (described in terms of the traditional *meretrix/lena*: 237ff.) and industry (*res, frux*), with a firm conviction in favor of the latter. In the initial sections of this song, the audience, assuming that this is Lesbonicus, might well think of a repentant lover such as the Philolaches of *Mostellaria* 84ff. Once the youth turns to the bitter side of *amor* (256ff.), doubts about his identity might begin to set in, but many viewers would still likely assume this to be the song of a remorseful Lesbonicus whose actions have been driven by motives or concerns that have yet to be revealed — thus providing a direct parallel with the elderly Callicles (whose similar situation has been laid out for us in the earlier scene). When, at the opening of the next scene, this youth then is accosted by an older man and addresses him as “father” (277), the viewer must recognize that this cannot be Lesbonicus, but doubts and confusion would remain, particularly since it takes so long for any particulars to be provided regarding the precise identity of these two figures. The young man's pious speech at 301–04 offers further evidence, but it is not until 324ff. that we are provided with absolute

104. Hunter (1980) 220–22, citing Fraenkel (2007) 425 (*Addendum* ad 273). For *Trin.*, Hunter posits the insertion of a Plautine *canticum* prior to what was originally a stand-alone dialogue between father and son; for *Asin.*, he suspects that Plautus has replaced a narrative prologue in the Greek original with the dramatic dialogue between Libanus and Demaenetus.

105. Sharrock (2014) 186. (As Tim Moore notes, *per litt.*, Lysiteles, while not the protagonist, is the true lover in *Trin.*, rather than the profligate Lesbonicus. In this regard, the use of the *tibia* to attend his entrance provides a proper sense of his character, unlike the entrance of the more transgressive Diabolus.)

clarity — that this is in fact a noble young friend of Lesbonicus who, as a favor, desires to wed the latter's dowerless sister.

The length of time for which the audience seems to be left in confusion is much shorter here than in the case of *Asinaria* (just over 100 lines), but the number of parallels between the two opening *cantica* is striking. And, whatever the duration, the lack of clarity evident in the opening scenes of *Trinummus* would seem to put the lie to the notion of Plautus as the diligent master of the stage who assiduously avoids generating needless confusion in his audience. Nor is there any sense here of a positive desire to create such confusion: the scenic progression, as presented on the page, is simply muddled.¹⁰⁶

This raises the question of extra-textual indicators, the obvious candidate being the use of mask, costume, and, perhaps, props. The frequent introduction of paired contrasts in New Comedy has long been noted: in Plautus, Olympio – Chalinus, Cleostrata – Myrrhina (*Casina*), Charinus – Eutyclus (*Mercator*), Philolaches – Callidamates, Grumio – Tranio (*Mostellaria*), Palaestra – Ampelisca, Trachalio – Gripus (*Rudens*), and so forth.¹⁰⁷ That the contrast in these pairs was often reflected in the actors' masks and costume seems a certainty: whatever one makes of the evidence of Pollux and our other late sources, or of the Roman adaptation of what was originally a Greek tradition, it would seem arbitrary to accept the adoption of a tradition of masked performance for Plautus only then to deny that he might employ the signs provided by such a system in communicating with his audience.¹⁰⁸ That this

106. Sharrock (2014) 180–81 highlights the misleading elements in Lysiteles' song and argues that these were in fact intended to suggest that this young man was Lesbonicus. In the spirit of Sharrock's reading, one might imagine a cunning bit of Terentian misdirection here, but, in this instance, it is far from clear just what is gained from the misapprehension: a case still needs to be made for how this gambit might contribute, e.g., to the presentation of Lesbonicus or to the play's broader themes. Cf. above pp. 347 on Henderson's reading of *Asin.* I.ii and I.iii.

107. Duckworth (1994) 179, 184–90, 269. Such contrasts, and the accompanying typologies, are of particular interest to an earlier generation of scholars: e.g., Webster (1949) 111, who argues that these pairings reflect a fundamental element of the Greek tradition. Cf. Wiles (1991) 71–74 on the general system of binary opposition that informs the typology of the Greek mask. The situation for Plautus is more uncertain: see, in general, Wiles (1991) 129–44, Marshall (2006) 126–40, Petrides (2014b) 433–40, and cf. below.

108. Cf. Marshall (2006) 138 on Plautus' use of stock characters. Wiles' position on this point (1991) is difficult to fathom. As N.J. Lowe (1993) 196 notes: "W. applies an elegant ... Levi-Straussian analysis to Pollux's mask-list and the problematically-related Lipari models to argue a system of physiognomic signs and a model of the individual attractively consonant with Aristotelian ideas; this system, he argues, is then obliterated by a Roman mask-system that accentuates the boundaries between social types and discourages

system of signs generally is utilized as an adjunct, to support verbal cues within the text, does not necessarily preclude it being employed independently upon occasion — particularly in the case of the matched pairs of contrasting stereotypical characters in which the genre abounds, and to which the audience would have been attuned. The pairs Lysiteles – Lesbianicus, Argyrippus – Diabolus would seem to offer evidence of precisely such a practice.¹⁰⁹

In arguing against Havet's proposal, Marshall cites the evidence of modern productions of *Asinaria*, which generally cast Argyrippus in I.ii and I.iii.¹¹⁰ More striking, Danese cites a 1998 production that, in its initial performance, attempted to resolve any ambiguity by presenting a more mature Diabolus as the lover of I.ii and I.iii.¹¹¹ This solution confused the modern audience altogether: in the end, the producers were compelled to insert lines into the actor's monody that overtly identified him as Argyrippus' rival. As experimental test-cases, such productions can tell us little. Modern audiences are not versed in the various systems that inform the ancient tradition (masking, costuming, conventions of plotting, character-type, scene-construction, and so forth) and are witnessing productions that can draw upon a variety of performance traditions: they have no system of signs to read. But the production cited by Danese does suggest further potential lines of investigation. The principal challenge that confronted Danese's troupe was the absence of a reliable means to signal our character's louche aristocratic background in a performance that emulated ancient conventions of production: when it comes to the world of ancient Rome, modern audiences lack the equivalent of the top-hat, tuxedo, monocle, cigar, and fluted champagne

differentiation within them. Though not implausible, this Roman model rests too heavily on the narrow methodology of Questa's analysis [1982] of Plautine prologues, and underestimates the contrastive doubling of types in e.g. *Rudens*, *Stichus*, *Bacchides*."

109. For other paired youths in Plautus, cf. the Charinus and Eutyclus of *Merc.*, and the Philolaches and Callidamates of *Most*, both of which however involve sympathetic supporters of the protagonist. *Asinaria* offers a similar example of this use of the mask, in the introduction of Parasitus at 746. As Damon notes (1997) 37 n. 1, the character Parasitus is never expressly identified in the play, either by name or in his role as a parasite. Nor is his entrance attended by any overtly "parasitical" themes: these do not appear until 150 lines later and in a separate scene (V.ii), when he alludes to his hopes for a meal at Diabolus' expense (914) and refers to Diabolus as his *rex* (919). Prior to that point, he would have been identifiable solely through his role (as both the helpful underling who assists and humorously exploits his patron, and as legal expert) and, likely, his mask and costume.

110. Marshall (2016) 260 n. 22.

111. Danese (2014) 154–56 (following a suggestion of Havet [1905] 102; cf. Danese [1999] 60 n. 27). Contrast above p. 317–18.

glass. Whether an equivalent system of signs was available to Plautus — not only in the nature of the mask, but in the form of other markers that might have provided specific and unambiguous indications of both character and socioeconomic standing — is unclear. Nor can we be certain what other indicators might have been present in the original production. Modern farce would have Diabolus employ, e.g., the accent and physical mannerisms of the decadent British toff; the degree to which such conventions formed a part of Roman theatrical tradition is unknown.¹¹² That such issues arise so rarely in discussions of Roman comedy points to the anomaly of our scene and that at *Trinummus* 223ff. As Beare notes (in what remains a useful overview of the subject), although ancient commentators such as Donatus and Pollux highlight visual elements of performance:

... in the plays we get the impression that the appeal was not to the eye but to the ear and the imagination of the public. When a new character appears, we are told in plain language who he is. It is only in special circumstances that stress is laid on his costume.¹¹³

But it is along such lines that an answer would seem to lie, if we are to account for the presentation of Diabolus and Lysiteles in our texts as we have them.

One further consideration supports Havel's proposal. As we have seen (above n. 62), the allusion in I.i to Argyrippus' urgent need for twenty minae (89) is offered as an essential background element but is premature and out of place no matter whom we decide to cast in the role of the young man of I.ii and I.iii. The situation confronting both the Argyrippus of I.i and the young lover of I.ii is the lack of funds more generally: the young man of I.ii and I.iii is not presented with a demand for twenty minae until near the conclusion of I.iii (230); if that young man is Diabolus, then Argyrippus only learns of the specific nature of Cleareta's fee, and of the danger presented by this particular rival, just prior to his entrance at the beginning of III.iii. I have argued above (p. 331) that the latter scenario is an essential feature of the play's design: at its core, *Asinaria* presents the plight of an impecunious young man whose frustrated love for a prostitute faces a seemingly overwhelming crisis

112. One might expect such traits to be reflected to some degree in the diction and speech patterns of the character. This is not patent in *Asin.* 127ff. The lines do demonstrate an aristocratic hauteur passim, however, upon which an actor could readily build.

113. Beare (1964) 187. A partial exception, noted by Beare (189), is to be found in plays of mistaken identity involving identical pairs, where specific features of costume, as well as physical objects, play an overt role in establishing a character's identity (*Amph.*, *Men.*).

in the third act, with the news of his rival's proposed contract. Whatever view one takes of Havet's proposal, the allusion at 89 to the specific need for twenty minae (as opposed to a more general reference to a lack of *argentum*, *nummi*, *dona*, *data*, or the like — as at 56, 75, and 83) is superfluous. Still more superfluous — in fact, utterly out of place — is the additional requirement that the funds be acquired on that very day (98, 103; cf. 364). This further detail, for which no specific context is offered, perfectly anticipates Argyrippus' situation as presented at 633–36, upon his learning that Diabolus has promised to pay the fee “today” (*hodie*), but has no place in the opening scene. While the full significance of this curious detail cannot be fully appreciated by an audience watching I.i in performance, the implied sense of urgency does hint at the presence of a rival, thus laying the ground, in however oblique a fashion, for the appearance of that rival at the opening of I.ii.¹¹⁴

Marshall is correct: Plautus employs a dangerous gambit in introducing Diabolus in I.ii unannounced, with only the nature of his mask and costume, as well as the tone and content of his song, to identify him as the louche rival lover rather than Demaenetus' son. But such a gambit is not without parallel, and finds at least a certain grounding within the systems of conventions and stereotypes in which his audience is versed.

XII: Conclusion — Making Sense of *Asinaria*

We are confronted, then, with a number of possibilities, all of them in some sense problematic, imperfect, or (in some cases) difficult to establish:

- 1) retain the paradosis, along with the associated implications regarding Plautus' practice in adapting his Greek originals
- 2) follow Havet in assigning I.ii and I.iii to Diabolus in the conviction that Plautus occasionally relies upon a system of stereotyped masks and costumes, along with his audience's familiarity with his use of paired opposites, to signify the generic role of a newly introduced character for whom no verbal identifier is provided in the text

114. Cf. the similar deadlines in *Bacch.* (42–46, 218–33, 589–91), *Pers.* (34–37a), and *Pseud.* (51–86, 103–05, 111–18, 279–84, 372–79). The young man of I.iii is also working under the clock, as it were, given that Cleareta has declared that, should another lover offer her that sum, her agreement with him regarding an exclusive contract will be void (231), but it is only the Argyrippus of III.iii who is presented with the specific deadline of that very day, and only in Act III.

- 2a) posit the omission, loss, or modification of a set of lines — or another scene or scenes — that might have supplied a suitable context for 2) in some iteration of the play¹¹⁵
- 3) affirm that Plautus here merely follows his Greek model, which in that case represents a post-Menandrian pastiche that Plautus, for whatever reason, is content to imitate¹¹⁶
- 4) consider the possibility that *Asinaria* is a late second-century work by an inferior playwright who emulates Plautus while in effect riffing on various established conventional plot-devices and character types¹¹⁷

In opting for 2) above, I am driven above all by the desire to make sense of the play as it currently stands, on its own terms, as a work by Plautus, and as one that made dramatic sense to its original audience. Those who defend the *paradosis* have a strong negative case to offer against Havet's suggestion, but tend to dismiss, or altogether ignore, the specific themes and images presented in the play, favoring instead broader elements of plot or situation in presenting what is essentially a reductive view of Plautus' work. In addition to undermining their position, this approach tends to diminish or obliterate interesting features of Plautus' artistry, and to reconfirm the notion of the play as a secondary or even a tertiary piece of mere "farce."

Asinaria is a comedy that deserves to be read more widely than it is. That the above study will quell the objections to Havet's proposal, I very much doubt, but I do hope that it will help to elicit renewed interest in what the play has to offer.¹¹⁸

115. Cf. above p. 309–10 on Havet's proposal and n. 104 on Hunter's utterly sensible hypothesis; Burckhardt (1931) 422–23 posits the loss of expository matter in the prologue (following line 8). Cf. above p. 351 on the production cited by Danese.

116. Webster (1970) 99 and 253, Woytek (1982) 65–75 (esp. 74), K.–A. s.v. "Demophilus." Cf., e.g., Gratwick (2001) 47, who characterizes the play's Greek original as "a reductive spoof on various Menandrian themes."

117. Havet/Freté (1925) v–xxxvi and liii–lxii, Reichel (2000). Cf. Vogt-Spira (1991) 14 and Lefèvre (2014) 606–607 and 614–17, who point to these same features but accept Plautus as the author.

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