

Singing for Your Supper

The satirist Horace did not like Plautus, and based his critique on money (*Epistles* 2.1.168–76):¹

Creditur, ex medio quia res accessit, habere
 sudoris minimum, sed habet comoedia tanto 170
 plus oneris, quanto veniae minus. Adspice Plautus
 quo pacto partes tutetur amantis ephebi,
 ut patris attenti, lenonis ut insidiosi,
 quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis,
 quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita socco. 175
 Gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere, post hoc
 securus cadat an recto stet fabula talo.

Comedy, because it summons its subject matter from what's at hand,
 is believed to take minimal sweat, but, [compared with tragedy], 170
 it's as much more work as it is less easily liked. Look at Plautus,
 how he tends to the characters of the young man in love,
 of the frugal father, of the tricky pimp,
 what a Dossennus he is among his voracious *parasiti*,
 how he runs across the stage with his *soccus* untied. 175
 See, he's stretch to put coin in his cash-box, after that
 he doesn't care if his play falls down or stands up straight.

As Juvenal remarked a century later, Horace had a full belly, thanks to his full moneybox (7.62); the satirist can afford to look down on Plautus, and sets him onstage, in the guise of a stock character from Atellan farce, among the *parasiti*, running like a slave, wearing the shoes of a comic actor,

¹ “The satirist Horace”: I make no claim about the historical Horace. This passage, with *Ars Poetica* 270–4, has been very widely discussed; for overviews, see Ferriss-Hill 2015: 197–8; Manuwald 2011: 172; and esp. Lowe 1989, Stärk 1995. The comparison between comedy and tragedy and the comedian's claim that comedy is harder go back at least to Antiphanes' comedy *Poiësis* (fr. 189, Ath. 6.222c–223a): Horace here knocks comic shtick by appropriating comic shtick. For adumbrations in Aristophanes, see Ferriss-Hill 2015: 72–8; on the Antiphanes fragment, Slater 2014: 108–9.

all for money.² In fact the plays themselves make it a point of pride: actors are professionals, onstage to make their living; highly skilled, but low in the social scale. They wear *socci* as a badge of honor. As seen in chapter 2, actors, like *parasiti*, sing for their supper, to an audience that knows what labor costs. As seen in chapter 1, they did so in a wartime economy. This chapter ties the song to the supper: poverty, debt, and hunger, and the fears of a *populus* in times of war, found expression in oral forms that actors in the *palliata* took to the bank.

Despite commonalities, then, between actors and some audience members, a constant theme in the plays, especially in prologues, works to separate the players from the audience: actors are “us,” the audience is “you.” As seen in chapter 1, this distance is a structural element of all theater and endows the actor with authority and glamor. In Roman theater generally, already by the time vernacular tragedy and the *palliata* become visible to us, this distance allowed those on the stage to speak of political issues in coded terms that audiences could pick up on, despite the danger; in later periods, we know they did.³ In the *palliata*, this distance, augmented by the use of masks, allowed the players to speak of themselves and the circumstances entailed by their social position, and to set themselves apart from the official endeavors of the Roman state, or any state. As Timothy Moore has demonstrated (1998), the actors, by both pleading with and commanding the audience, fluctuate between a marked lower position and a marked usurpation of power. This is the quintessence of the comedian’s art.

Moreover, the plays are permeated by familiar popular forms that put the audience into the familiar position of onlookers at a shouting match. What is at stake, often: honor, credit, money, civil status. Just as the presence of prostitutes on the city stage overlaps with the everyday presence of prostitutes in the city streets and market spaces, so the insult matches and scenes of dunning in the plays superimpose the audience, essentially sitting in the street, over the same space where they might see the same kind

² Comedy shoes: wearing *socci* – soft-soled shoes – is a running joke in the *palliata*. They leave tracks onstage (*Cist.* 697–8); Epidicus’ owner swears to supply him, as he frees him, with clothing (including the comedian’s *pallium*) and *socci* (*Epid.* 725); a rich man is said to have had soles fastened onto his *socci* with gold (*Bac.* 332); Stasimus, about to run away with his young owner to join the army, says he must have “stiffeners” (i.e. ankle supports) fastened into his *socci* (*Trin.* 720; see chapter 8); Saturio says that a *parasitus* has to be like a Cynic philosopher, whose accessories include *socci* and a *pallium* (*Per.* 12.4). Clown shoes, metatheatrical shoes: omnipresent *socci*, freedmen’s *socci*, rich men’s *socci*, soldiers’ *socci*, Cynic *socci*. A joke similar to Atellana titles like *Maccus Miles* (attested in the later literary Atellana), or the title of the probably Plautine *Parasitus Medicus*.

³ See, for later periods, Bartsch 1994; on political interpretations of drama by audiences in the Republic, Kruschwitz 2013.

of scenes enacted by amateurs on any given day. As best we can tell from later sources, these scenes occupied a well-demarcated space in the social hierarchy: low.⁴ Cheers, dunning (*flagitatio*), and cries for help (*quiritatio*) are uniformly associated with crowds in the street, while *occentatio* (a sort of charivari) is performed by a crowd unruly if not always low-class. Yet these practices followed a set format, with rules of its own, and the actors are amazingly good at it – professionals – courting the audience’s admiration. These verse forms as preserved in the record of the *palliata* are, in the terms used by Giulio Colesanti (2014) and Riccardo Palmisciano (2014), “emerged texts,” as opposed to the “submerged texts” that enjoyed scarce transmission. The actors and their comedy, then, mark themselves as low by means of formal elements as well as by explicit metatheatrical speeches to the audience, but also claim to be worth watching. Both as actors and as professional jokers, they repeatedly insist that this is how they feed themselves. Prostitute to *parasitus*: “You’re talking trash!” *Parasitus*: “I always do – trash is what I live on” (*nugas garris. #soleo, nam propter eas vivo facilius, Cur. 604*).

The prologue speaker of *Captivi*, an actor, in explaining the plight of Tyndarus, pauses for some editorial comment (50–2):

ita nunc ignorans suo sibi servit patri; 50
 homunculi quanti sunt, quom recogito!
 haec res agetur nobis, vobis fabula.

So, now, in ignorance, he is a slave belonging to his own father; 50
 how much are little guys worth, when I come to think about it!
 This action will be real for us, a play for you.

Lindsay translates line 52, “fact on the boards, fiction for the benches” (1921: 74). *Res* here surely has a double meaning: “the matter of our play,” “the internal reality of the play,” and “reality for us actors,” with the consciousness of the presence of slaves and freedmen behind (some) masks. Moore puts it strongly, spelling out the prologue speaker’s meaning: “‘To you free spectators,’ he says, ‘this is only a fiction, but we (the slave actors and the previously-mentioned slave spectators) know the reality of slavery’” (1998: 196). Lines 50–1 are the more emphatic in that they repeat an idea expressed earlier in the prologue, as the speaker points to one of the two men standing in chains on the stage: “He now, back home here, is a slave belonging to his father, nor does his father know; / it’s a fact that the gods use us human beings like balls” (*hic nunc domi servit suo patri, nec scit*

⁴ For the low register, see Fantham 2005: 223, allocating *flagitatio* to “the humble.”

pater; / enim vero di nos quasi pilas homines habent, 21–2; the reference is to a game of catch).⁵ Indeed, the speaker, as he begins to speak, points first to the two men (line 1), then to those in the audience who are standing (line 2), and then to the house that forms the backdrop (4), and poses the question of “how this guy comes to be a slave belonging to his own father” (*is quo pacto serviat suo sibi patri*, 5) as the subject of the prologue (*apud vos proloquar*, 6).⁶ The ambiguity of *homunculi quanti sunt* (51) is hard to convey in English: *homunculi* are persons for whom the speaker feels compassion, seeing them as small, weak, or obscure; *quanti sunt* means “are worth how much,” “what is the price of,” and here cues an exclamation. If line 51 continues the thought in line 50, it opens up an issue rarely discussed openly in Latin: not the play’s far-fetched situation whereby a father unknowingly purchases his own lost son, but the everyday situation in which owners impregnated their own slave-women, the resulting *vernae* then not being acknowledged as sons and daughters. Plautus’ audience would have been conscious of this as we are not, and from many angles. Likewise, the movements of the speaker’s masked face, his gestures, would enable him to include some audience members in *homunculi quanti sunt* and *nobis*, others in *vobis*. Explicitly, however, this play is about war captives who are sold as slaves, a description that applies roughly to at least some of the comic writers we hear about: Livius Andronicus, Caecilius Statius, Terence. This is the players’ story; this is what war means to them. And, as they took their show on the road, they moved through a war-torn landscape, belonging nowhere now themselves – an experience also shared by some in their various audiences.⁷

The plays are set in the street. Accordingly, they are full of street noise. Italian oral forms belong to the time and place the actors moved through; the content of the form derives meaning from its historical location. The choice by actors and playwright to adopt these forms into the *palliata*

⁵ Cf. *Truc.* 706, Naevius *Tarentilla* 75–79R with discussion in Wright 1974: 35–6, and *Cur.* 296–7, in a double entendre. Notably, all these passages are metaphorical.

⁶ The question of what is meant by *illi quia astant*, “because those men are standing here” (2), has been the topic of much discussion; see Moore (1994/5: 114, 118–19; 1998: 11, 195) for the argument that it means audience members without seats, accepted by de Melo (2011a: 511). Moore identifies these persons with “slaves and other poor spectators,” in connection with income distinctions in the subsequent lines, and that must be the case in the *Captivi* prologue. There is no real reason, however, to think that general seating was usually differentiated by civil status rather than first-come-first-serve; see Marshall 2006: 78 on the dynamics of seating in the *cavea*, and further below, in the section on debt.

⁷ All three came from war zones; if not taken directly in a siege (Terence was certainly born between the wars), they were part of the collateral damage. On *Captivi* and audience members with kin amongst the Roman soldiers taken at Cannae, see Leigh 2004: 86–96.

marks the plays as not-Greek; also, like the popular stories studied by Rebecca Langlands, the forms are a kind of “shared language.” In turning now to verbal dueling, *flagitatio*, *occentatio*, *quiritatio*, and what I here call “cheerleading,” I hope to show how the relationship between form and history takes shape, and what the forms have to do with the lives of actors and audience.

Cheerleading

Among the fourteen extant prologues, six incorporate a sort of cheerleading, in which the prologue speaker praises the prowess of the audience and the state in war, and/or wishes them success in their current military endeavor. In all these wishes, the speaker uses the second person plural: this is *your* war. Of course all the prologues, which address the crowd directly, naturally use the second plural throughout, but there is still something about the way these wishes are framed that separates them from the actors, and makes the whole endeavor of war – or the audience’s wars – something from which the cast is separated.

There is some reason to think that that would in fact have been the case for Rome itself. (As will be seen, the cheerleading speeches are quite generic, and could have been played as well in Praeneste or any other town the troupe visited; both Praeneste and Tibur had their own cults to Victoria.⁸) As noted in chapter 1, most of the actors in the *palliata* were not Roman citizens at all, so that the civil disabilities that later attended actors, keeping them out of the military, would have been irrelevant for them: too low, too outside, to be eligible for the Roman army in the first place. So were the poorest citizens, the *proletarii*, who held only an unenvied eligibility to row in the fleet. This is not to say that slaves, freedmen, and outsiders had no experience in the Roman armed forces, for all these categories had such experience, at times, throughout the 200s and to Polybius’ day, in various capacities; moreover, the army itself was divided into ranks according to census classes determined by property, so that property differentiated the military experience of male citizens and their families – especially so in the city (see chapter 2).⁹ Onstage jokes using military language addressed this wide range of experience. But onstage victory cheers addressed the whole

⁸ Weinstock 1957: at Praeneste, 215 n. 19; at Tibur, a cult for Hercules Victor, 217. On Victoria at Rome, see also Clark 2007: 56–8. On touring, see chapter 7.

⁹ Welwei concludes his discussion of *calones* (free and slave workers on the infantry supply train) with the observation that at least some of them had combat experience (1988: 77).

audience, many of whom could only be civilians, for whom defeat meant the sack of the city, ruin, and a strong chance of death or enslavement. As seen in chapter 1, audiences at the *ludi Romani* wore the laurel crowns of victors from 293 BCE onwards, and Cato made a chilling joke about this practice: “That the *populus* might rather go hold a thanksgiving ceremony wearing wreaths, for a battle well fought by their own effort, than be sold wearing the wreath if the battle were badly fought” (*ut populus sua opera potius ob rem bene gestam coronatus supplicatum eat, quam re male gesta coronatus veneat*). The mass appeal of the goddess Victoria is suggested by an onstage joke in which the slave Truculentus jeers at Astaphium, a prostitute’s slave-woman, betting her that her “Victorias” are made of wood (*Truc.* 275) – cheap ornaments made to look like gold, indicating that rich women wore Victoria, too. Rich women had more to lose; slave-women had already lost. It cannot be too often emphasized that Gellius put Plautus’ *floruit* during the Second Punic War, when Hannibal was at the gates.¹⁰

The actors are removed from the war effort, yet they, with the audience, are engaged in something that has to do with it: the *ludi* themselves. The lengthy *Amphitruo* prologue brings in the audience’s success, at home and “abroad” (*peregrī*), in several places (1–14, 39–49, 73–80); as seen in chapter 2, the god Mercurius, the prologue speaker, takes credit for their success in trade, and gives credit to Jupiter for their success both generally and, specifically, in war. He then makes an elaborate series of metatheatrical arguments that locate Mercurius and Jupiter as actors inside the god costumes and suggest how familiar a sight were the gods of war on the war-time stage in the 200s BCE.¹¹ We will look at this prologue in detail before turning to the more formulaic cheerleading speeches in other prologues.

¹⁰ Laurel wreaths for the audience: Livy 10.47.3; see Oakley 2005: 461–2 (probably only in years when there was a victory, but, in the 200s, that was most years) and Weinstock 1957: 216–17. Cato’s joke is at Festus 400L, Gell. 6.4.5; cf. 6.4.3, explaining the expression *sub corona venire*, which refers to the sale of war captives (see Welwei 2000: 12–14 on this passage). The surprising attribution of this joke to Cato’s lost *De re militari* (fr. 2) derives from explicit attributions in Festus and Gellius. See Astin 1978: 184–5, 204–5 on *De re militari*, and Richlin 2017a for further discussion. Victorias: usually taken to be earrings; Enk quips, “Truculentus contendit Victorias ex auribus Astaphii pendentes non aureas esse” (1953: 2.75), but there are no *aures* here. Perhaps *fibulae*? The next line is *ne attingas me* (276), so he has moved his hands towards them; brooches would cue a classic grope. Dutsch 2015: 21–2 comments on 276 but takes the Victorias to be bracelets. On “direct military appeals” in the prologues, see Gunderson 2015: 108–17; on the plays in the context of the lament for the fallen city, see Jeppesen 2016.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of the *Amphitruo* prologue, see Moore 1998: 110–15; he shows how Mercurius builds rapport with the audience and notes that “Mercury speaks more lines of monologue than any other Plautine character” (115). See Beard 2003: 41–3 for the notion that *Amphitruo* is basically a “parody of triumphal mimesis,” in that, at the *ludi Romani*, the presiding magistrate dressed as a

After Mercurius' remarks on how Jupiter fears a beating "no less than any of you" (27), he says he comes in peace, bringing peace (32), makes some general remarks on justice, and then, as prologue speakers do, asks the audience to pay attention – still in character as an actor in a god costume (38–45):

nunc iam huc animum omnes quae loquar advortite.
 debetis velle quae velimus: meruimus
 et ego et pater de vobis et re publica; 40
 nam quid ego memorem (ut alios in tragoediis
 vidi, Neptunum, Virtutem, Victoriam,
 Martem, Bellonam commemorare quae bona
 vobis fecissent) quis benefactis meu' pater,
 deorum regnator, architectust omnibus? 45

Right now, all of you turn your attention here, to what I'm saying.
 You ought to want what we want: we've earned it,
 both I and my father, from you and from the state; 40
 for why should I remind you (the way I've seen others,
 in tragedies, remind you – Neptune, Manliness, Victory,
 Mars, Bellona – of what good things
 they'd done for you) – [why should I remind you] of what good deeds
 my father, ruler of the gods, is the architect for all? 45

On the surface, the joke is that the god Mercurius is standing there on the stage asking the audience to be grateful to him and Jupiter, and doing so (appropriately for this god) in the language of the market: *meruimus*, "we've earned it." But, as seen in chapter 2, earned rewards are often laid claim to in the plays by those who hope to improve their lot, and what Mercurius asks for here is for the audience to pay attention to the play; the benefit is to the actors, not to the gods, unless spectatorship is worship. In a way, that is just what the *ludi* were, but Mercurius is also reminding the audience of the good that actors (as well as gods) do for "you and the state" – a move familiar from Aristophanes, except that this petition is on behalf of an outsider social group rather than a competitive playwright (contrast what Terence does in his prologues). The list of gods on the tragic stage who remind the audience how they have served "you" is a list of gods of war, a topic appropriate to tragedy rather than comedy, as the *Captivi* prologue speaker notes (58–62); war is present in the *palliata* everywhere, but obliquely, expressed in the form of jokes and the cast of characters. Yet

triumphator – who was dressed as Jupiter; a costume not attested, however, before the empire, and only ambiguously there, cf. Beard 2007: 281–4.

Neptune and the rest are also actors in god costumes.¹² When Mercurius claims to have seen these gods onstage himself (*vidi*, 42), the joke involves triple speech: as the god Mercurius, as the actor who plays him, and, in both guises, as a slave (he comments self-consciously on his costume's "servile appearance," 116–17). So he joins the group of theater-going slave speakers: Chrysalus (*Bac.* 213–15), Gripus (*Rud.* 1249–53).

Mercurius moves smoothly from this point to a string of jokes – famous, see chapter 6 – about tragedy and comedy. From there he goes on to convey Jupiter's requests to the audience on the subject of angling for theatrical prizes, which he treats as if it were *ambitio*, "crooked campaigning," using grand legal diction: the presence of claque among the audience is to be policed by *conquistores*, here "investigators," who are to go around the *cavea*, to all the spectators on the *subsellia*, and take the toga away from any claque members (*favitores*) they find, to be held as security (64–71).¹³ This unique mention of the toga in Plautus constitutes a strong identification of noisily applauding members of the audience, or hecklers, with voters (male Roman citizens), erasing, for the moment, the others present; the toga, of course, made its wearer conspicuous. The joke works the same way as those that tease the audience by identifying those who clap with those who would like to have a *scortum* (above, chapter 2); in a similar move, without using the word "toga," Euclio in *Aulularia* says to the audience, "Why are you laughing? I know you all, I know there are a lot of thieves here, / who hide themselves in their chalky outfits and sit there as if they were prudent" (*quid est? quid ridetis? novi omnis, scio fures esse hic compluris, / qui vestitu et creta occultant sese atque sedent quasi sint frugi*, *Aul.* 718–19; cf. Moore 1998: 19, 45–7). The investigators are likewise to make sure that the aediles do not "give [the prize] to anyone" *perfidiose* (72); as will be seen, *fides* in the plays is a central preoccupation: "good faith," "trustworthiness," "fiscal integrity." Here the aediles' trustworthiness is also under scrutiny.

Then Mercurius returns to his double address, in the role of god/actor, to the audience as victorious in war (73–80):

sirempse legem iussit esse Iuppiter,
quasi magistratum sibi alterive ambiverit.

¹² See Holliday 2002: 186–8 for a late-fourth-century *cista* possibly showing a theatrical staging of a triumph, featuring a *triumphator*, multiple *paternae*, and "the triumphal chariot of Jupiter," with remarks on its relation to theater history.

¹³ *Conquistores* at a later period are military recruitment officers, enforcing the draft; for the call-up process in the city and on-the-spot penalties in a story from 275 BCE, see Brunt 1971a: 628–9 n. 5, with sources. In that context, the verb *respondere* has the technical sense "answer when called"; see below on its theatrical sense.

virtute dixit vos victores vivere, 75
 non ambitione neque perfidia: qui minus
 eadem histrioni sit lex quae summo viro?
 virtute ambire oportet, non favioribus.
 sat habet faviorum semper qui recte facit,
 si illis fides est quibus est ea res in manu. 80

Jupiter has ordered the same law to hold [for the aediles],
 as if one of them engaged in crooked campaigning for office, for
 himself or another.

He said, you are victorious because of your manliness, 75
 not by crooked campaigning nor by breaking faith: how less
 should there be the same law for an actor as for a man at the top?
 It's right to campaign by manliness, not by clagues/partisans.
 A man who does right always has enough fans/partisans,
 if those who are in charge of all this have *fides*.

Mercurius goes on (81–5) to stipulate that actors, too, should be inspected to make sure they do not have supporters planted in the audience – if they do, they are to be beaten in costume, stripped, and beaten again (*eius ornamenta et corium uti conciderent*, 85), a marked differentiation from the audience member who is to lose his toga (and whose war it is – who is part of the *vos victores*). The whole thing, with its legalistic language, must be a send-up of ever-current efforts to control electoral corruption; *virtute ambire* (78) is an oxymoron picking up *virtute ... victores vivere* (75).¹⁴ Here what is at stake is some kind of prize for actors and playwrights (*palmas*, 69), satirically compared with elected office. Again, the contrast between players and what the Advocati in *Poenulus* called “a rich man from the topmost position” (*dives de summo loco*, 516) is explicitly marked by Mercurius’ double-edged rhetorical question: *qui minus / eadem histrioni sit lex quae summo viro?* (76–7). *Histrion* and *summus vir* are polar opposites here, just as the *virtus* of Sagaristio and Leonida sends up this kind of *virtus*. The argument is clownish, the sentiment serious, insisting on *fides* just as Sosia’s song, as seen in chapter 2, insists on what is *aequom*. The structure of the section strongly suggests that the troupe had at least one plant in the audience who was wearing a toga and had it ripped off his struggling body by other troupe members acting as *conquistores*, here clown policemen.

¹⁴ See Gruen 1996a: 148 n. 126, part of a general treatment of political issues in the *palliata* as recyclable rather than specific; and chapter 1 for a case of *ambitus* in 328 BCE.

Funny, like the jokes about the *tresviri* and the lictors and the *carcer*, a building also located in the Forum.

This section of the prologue concludes, before moving into the by now long-awaited outline of the plot, with a last reminder of the actors inside the god costumes (86–95):

mirari nolim vos quapropter Iuppiter
 nunc histriones curet; ne miremini:
 ipse hanc acturust Iuppiter comoediam.
 quid? admiratin estis? quasi vero novom
 nunc proferatur Iovem facere histrioniam; 90
 etiam, histriones anno quom in proscaenio hic
 Iovem invocarunt, venit, auxilio is fuit.
 praeterea certo prodit in tragoedia.
 hanc fabulam, inquam, hic Iuppiter hodie ipse aget
 et ego una cum illo. nunc <vos> animum advortite 95

I wouldn't want you to wonder why Jupiter
 now cares about actors; don't you be surprised:
 Jupiter himself is going to act in this comedy.
 What? You're surprised? As if indeed it was a new thing
 to put Jupiter onstage to play an actor's part; 90
 why, when the actors on this stage last year here
 invoked Jupiter, he came, and helped them out.
 Anyway he certainly appears in tragedy.
 This play, I say, Jupiter himself will act in here, today,
 and I along with him. Now you all, pay attention 95

The fact that Jupiter and Mercurius will be acting in the play is stated twice in this section (88, 94–5), and will be repeated again in the prologue's last lines (151–2). Mercurius again here jokes on a triple level: it should not be a surprise to see Jupiter onstage, because Jupiter often appears in tragic scenes when the characters invoke his aid; likewise (this?) actor playing Jupiter helped out the other actors in a performance the audience is called on to remember, when he was needed onstage; literally, the god Jupiter manifested himself onstage when the actors needed him. There is a hint, in *auxilio*, of the *quiritatio* formula that invoked help from the *populus* or from the gods (see below). Furthermore, a sense cued by Mercurius' earlier lines about war gods onstage, the tragedies themselves display the world of victorious soldiers, aided by Jupiter. This joke relates to the *Poenulus* prologue, where the *imperator histricus* announces in his opening lines that he is here to rehearse the *Achilles* of Aristarchus, a play Ennius transposed to the Roman stage, evidently not long before *Poenulus* was staged. It was

tragedy's job to play kings and gods, comedy's job to play the slave, as Mercurius says himself (60–3; see chapter 6).¹⁵

The *Amphitruo* prologue, then, embeds victory wishes in a complex argument; other prologues are more direct. The *Captivi* prologue speaker, as seen above, also says war has no place on the comic stage – ironic, in a play that deals entirely with the aftermath of war – and takes himself offstage by differentiating himself from the warrior audience: “goodbye, most just judges / at home, and best of warriors in warfare” (*valete, iudices iustissimi domi, duellique duellatores optumi*, 67–8).¹⁶ Again here, as in the *ambitio* jokes in *Amphitruo*, the prize-voting audience owns the war. The actual audience is not entirely composed of *duellatores* any more than is the all-male cast of *Captivi*, which includes a *parasitus* who is starving in wartime; the prologue speaker indulges in flattery (we are used to this in the barker's ubiquitous “Ladies and gentlemen,” once also flattery, and the great bebop comedian Lord Buckley did the same with “M’Lords, M’Ladies” – not so bellicose, equally fictive).¹⁷ Likewise, the *Casina* prologue speaker, fresh from his jokes about what “Casina” might do after the show, incongruously wraps up with two lines of flattering cheerleading: “Goodbye, do well, and conquer by true manliness, as you’ve done so far” (*valete, bene rem gerite, [et] vincite / virtute vera, quod fecistis antidhac*, 87–8).

The delayed *Cistellaria* prologue is spoken by the self-proclaimed god Auxilium, “Help,” whose serious name, as seen in chapter 2, is undercut not only by late arrival (line 149) but also by its resemblance to prostitute and *puer* names. Auxilium rattles off a story of rape and travel between Lemnos and Sicyon, with the occasional “take my wife” joke thrown in, and ends with an elaborate set of wishes for the audience to beat Carthage (197–202):

... bene valete et vincite
virtute vera, quod fecistis antidhac;
servate vestros socios, veteres et novos,
augete auxilia vestris iustis legibus, 200

¹⁵ Compare, in respect to stage effects, the probable reference to an *Alcumena Euripidi* on the Roman stage at the opening of *Rudens* (Fraenkel 2007: 50–1), where the rude slave Sceparnio, in his entrance speech, says his household's roof has been blown off, not by the wind, but by this play (*Rud.* 86), setting up a reference to the thunderous ending of *Amphitruo* as well as to a visit to the tragic theater. If so, he thereby becomes yet another slave with experience as an audience member.

¹⁶ On the formulaic speeches that follow, see Leigh 2004: 38–9, with discussion of the definition of *virtus vera* in Ennius' *Phoenix* (*TrRF* 109). In that passage, the verbal similarity of this Ennian tragedy to Plautine cheers is close (*virum vera virtute vivere*); note also the speaker's alignment of *virtus* and courage with *libertas* as opposed to servitude.

¹⁷ On Lord Buckley, see Trager 2002.

perdite perduellis, parite laudem et lauream,
ut vobis victi Poeni poenas sufferant.

... Goodbye and be well, and conquer
with true manliness, as you have done so far;
preserve your allies, both old and new,
augment your auxiliaries by your just laws, 200
destroy your enemies, give rise to fame and glory,
so that the *Poeni*, conquered, should pay the price to you.

Along with the wish for victory, Auxilium self-referentially begs consideration for *auxilia*, and looks to the law. Does he mean the *auxilia* offered by the tribunes of the plebs? Could *legibus* be dative – do the laws themselves need help? Elsewhere the *populus* is strongly associated with the rule of law.¹⁸ Probably, in this martial context, he means the non-Romans (*socii*), who provided the non-citizen troops (*auxilia*, 200) that fought alongside the Roman army. Both senses were available to the audience. The *Rudens* prologue ends with a one-line cheer: “Goodbye [= be strong], so that your enemies lose faith in themselves” (*valete, ut hostes vestri diffidant sibi*, 82). Considering that Arcturus’s whole complaint in the first part of this prologue has to do with his job of supervising the *fides* of mortals, this is an appropriately framed wish, resembling Auxilium’s appeal on behalf of *auxilia*. The *Asinaria* prologue speaker, after a short string of jokes about Plautus and the play, similarly exits on a two-line simple *quid pro quo*: “pay attention to me, benevolently, / so that Mars will help you equally now as he has done at other times” (*dote benigne operam mihi / ut vos, ut alias, pariter nunc Mars adiuvet*, 14–15).

These appeals to the audience have several points in common, beyond the obvious echoes in the wording. Continued success is offered in return for paying attention to the play, and is said to depend on a set of virtues. These virtues involve fairness and justice, a constant concern throughout Plautus’ plays, always a concern of the less powerful, and often a concern of actors speaking as actors in the prologues. And war is always spoken of as your (pl.) concern, not ours: “the *Poeni*, conquered, should pay the price to you” (*vobis victi Poeni poenas sufferant*, *Cist.* 202), but “We will give you an old-time comedy of his” (*nos ... anticuam eius edimus comoediam*, *Cas.* 11–13): this revival prologue attests to the temporal as well as locational re-usability of cheerleading. The “you” addressed here are the

¹⁸ See *As.* 600, *Bac.* 438, *Cur.* 509, *Poen.* 725, *Ps.* 126, *St.* 353, 490, 492, *Trin.* 482, 1146, and esp. *Trin.* 1028–58. For legislation onstage as ineffectual, see Gruen 1996a: 141–2.

populus, including the slaves and free women who, though not agents in the war, needed victory.

The obvious echoes in the wording, however, perhaps constitute more than the regular tendency of the *palliata* to quote itself and re-use jokes. Mercurius tells the audience that Jupiter says *virtute ... vos victores vivere* (“you are victorious because of your manliness,” *Am.* 75); the *Casina* prologue speaker exits on *vincite / virtute vera, quod fecistis antithac* (*Cas.* 87–8); Auxilium in *Cistellaria* winds up for the lead-out with the exhortation, *vincite / virtute vera, quod fecistis antithac* (*Cist.* 197–8). Could this be a slogan? A crowd chant to the departing legions? If so, *parite laudem et lauream* (*Cist.* 201) sounds like part of another. Taken as a whole, with the stress on the last syllable of *vincite* at the end of the iambic line, *vincite ... antithac* imitates the trochaic septenarius, the beat common in known Roman street chants, here embedded in two lines of senarii.¹⁹ Virtus and Victoria themselves appeared onstage (*Am.* 42): did they elicit cheers for the soldiers?²⁰ Did the audience pick the cheer up as the prologue speakers addressed them? This would make sense for audiences who were wearing the laurel crown of victors on their heads. Meanwhile, the repeated references to past success, and the purpose clauses, sound like prayers: *ut vos, ut alias, pariter nunc Mars adiuvet* (*Asinaria*); *ut vobis victi Poeni poenas sufferant* (*Cistellaria*, a terrible pun, with obvious currency until 201 BCE); *ut hostes vestri diffidant sibi* (*Rudens*). The widespread use of orchestrated or spontaneous chants in the street, sometimes in the theater after permanent theaters were built, has been well established for later periods.²¹

If he was echoing a popular chant, Mercurius would (ironically) have been taking on the role of a *fautor* himself. “Cheerleading” both does and does not translate what he is doing. Like cheerleaders, the prologue actors

¹⁹ Cf. below for Gilbert Highet’s theory on the repeated taunt *libertino patre natus* in Horace’s *Satires*: in Horace, part of a line of hexameter; but also readable as part of a trochaic septenarius. Gerick, in his book on *versus quadratus* (a special form of this meter), does not consider *Cas.* 87–8 or *Cist.* 197–8, and notes in his section on soldiers’ songs that the earliest ones attested in this meter come from Julius Caesar’s Gallic triumph (1996: 35); as will be seen below, however, he treats *versus quadratus* as a characteristically folk/popular meter. Moore 1998: 15–16 treats *Captivi* 67–8 to illustrate the actors’ strategy of combining flattery with manipulation of the audience; compare Leigh 2004: 79–80, setting this address to the audience in the context of war.

²⁰ On the increasing importance of the cult of Victoria in the 200s BCE, see Weinstock 1957; the chronology he traces keeps step with the development of the *palliata*. See also the brief discussion in Dench 1995: 73–4, and Richlin 2017a. Weinstock cites the god-list in *Amphitruo* (217 n. 30) in a discussion of conjoined groups of war gods.

²¹ Aldrete 1999: 101–64, focusing on the relation between the urban plebs and the emperor, but acknowledging the long history of the custom; note esp. “the existence of a body of well-known acclamation formulas and the rhythmic nature of many of the acclamation chants themselves” (103).

lead a crowd of spectators to yell for a contest which the actors themselves are ineligible to join. Like rabble-rousers, they are of the crowd and incite the crowd. This was a position integral to several better-attested Roman street practices. If public or mass speech formulae are indeed present in the cheerleading speeches, they tally with a far larger group of popular speech formulae present throughout the plays, in the more entertaining form of insults; here, too, the actors would be performing as experts in drawing a crowd.

Verbal Dueling

In 36 or 35 BCE, Horace published, in his first book of *Satires*, a poem about a road trip that may have taken place in 38 or 37, in which he and Vergil traveled from Rome to Brundisium in the entourage of Maecenas. Although festooned with vivid historical and geographical details, the poem, according to the commentator Porphyrio in the 200s CE, was based on an earlier satirical poem, the *Iter Siculum* by Lucilius (c. 180–102 BCE), thus at the earliest about a generation after the death of Plautus. Lucilius in turn may have looked to the *palliata* for a scene in his poem, where Horace, despite his professed dislike of Plautus, may have followed him. Lucilius, a Campanian, came from an equestrian family; Horace, an Apulian, made both his home town and his class placement a central part of his poetic persona, repeatedly calling himself *libertino patre natus*. In this respect, his satirical oeuvre constitutes a gigantic expansion of the speeches of the touchy freed Advocati in *Poenulus* – with typically second-generation assimilation, for the *dives de summo loco* is now the speaker's admired friend and patron, although the speaker manifests a painful self-consciousness about his origins, and shows off a concomitant envious consciousness of Lucilius' higher status.²² The class position of both Lucilius and Horace, then, should be kept in mind when considering a central vignette in Horace's poem.

At this point in the road trip still in Campania, entering Samnite country, Horace and his friends stop for the night at a villa belonging to one of the travelers, L. Cocceius Nerva, ancestor of the future emperor, and

²² On the date of *Satires* 1, see Gowers 2012: 3–4; on the historicity of the trip to Brundisium, Gowers 2012: 182–3; on Horace's status as a freedman's son, Williams 1995, Gowers 2012: 4 (“the poverty and ex-slave status of his father are now regarded sceptically”); on *Satires* 1.5, Gowers 1994, Cucchiarelli 2002, Wallochny 1992: 91–5. Lejay 1911: 136 and Cucchiarelli 2001: 35 n. 69 argue that there were contests like the singing match at S. 1.5.15–17 in Lucilius' *Iter Siculum*. Fraenkel pointed out the similarity between the animal insult at 1.5.56 and a line of insult in the *Iter Siculum* (2007: 42).

are entertained at dinner by a pair of comedians whose language evokes Plautus in certain ways (S. 1.5.50–70):

hinc nos Coccei recipit plenissima villa,	50
quae super est Caudi cauponas. nunc mihi paucis Sarmenti scurrae pugnam Messique Cicirri, Musa, velim memores et quo patre natus uterque contulerit lites. Messi clarum genus Osci;	
Sarmenti domina exstat: ab his maioribus orti	55
ad pugnam venire. prior Sarmentus “equi te esse feri similem dico.” ridemus, et ipse Messius “accipio” caput et movet. “o tua cornu ni foret exsecto frons” inquit “quid faceres, cum sic mutilus minitaris?” at illi foeda cicatrix	60
saetosam laevi frontem turpaverat oris. Campanum in morbum, in faciem permulta iocatus, pastorem saltaret uti Cyclopa rogabat: nil illi larva aut tragicis opus esse cothurnis.	
multa Cicirrus ad haec: donasset iamne catenam	65
ex voto Laribus, quaerebat; scriba quod esset, nilo deterius dominae ius esse; rogabat denique cur umquam fugisset, cui satis una farris libra foret, gracili sic tamque pusillo.	
prorsus iucunde cenam producimus illam.	70
From here, the lavish villa of Cocceius received us,	50
which stands above the cheap inns of Caudium. Now, o Muse, I wish you'd sing me the brawl of the <i>scurra</i> Sarmentus and Messius Cicirrus, and of what father born each joined the dispute. Glorious the stock of Messius, an Oscan, while Sarmentus' lady legal owner lives: sprung from these ancestors	55
they came to the brawl. First Sarmentus: “Like a wild horse, that’s what I say you are.” We laugh, and himself, Messius: “I take that” – and moves his head. “Oh, your forehead – if the horn hadn’t been cut off,” he says, “what would you do, when you threaten us so, even mutilated?” But the other had a disgusting scar	60
disfiguring the bristly forehead on the left side of his face. Having made a lot of jokes about the “Campanian disease” and his face, he kept asking him to dance the Cyclops shepherd: he'd have no need of a mask or tragic boots.	
Cicirrus said a lot back to this: had he already given his chain	65
to the Lares, as he had vowed; if he was a <i>scriba</i> , his legal owner still had the right to him, nonetheless; finally he kept asking why he had ever run away, when one pound of <i>far</i> was enough for him, so skinny and weak as he was. Right merrily we enjoy that dinner to the last.	70

The main difference between verse satire and the *palliata* as literary forms is well illustrated here: the satirist writes for readers or declaims for listeners, a one-man show; the satire speaker stands outside the action, describing it from the point of view of a particular spectator; most of the lines of insult are in indirect discourse, preserving no formal elements from the fictive original. When Horace did a reading for friends, he was performing a scene of performance. At the same time, his text specifies the scene's setting (dinner, Cocceius's villa), along with audience reactions (*ridemus*, 57, *prorsus iucunde ... producimus*, 70), and indicates action as well as words (*caput et movet*, 58). The performance transcripts of the *palliata*, in contrast, while they give the performers' lines, offer us only clues about a setting that was immediate to the audience and also a public space – open; just as the performance left each audience member free to laugh as he or she saw something funny.

Verse satire is not so open; the speaker in Horace's satire differentiates himself from the performers he reperforms by a series of sneering comic moves that amplify the performers' insults of each other. He locates himself in a "lavish" (*plenissima*) villa, belonging to the aristocratic Cocceius, that is set "above the cheap inns" (*super ... cauponas*, 51); then he belittles the performance and the performers by casting the event in mock-epic language (53). It is a *pugna* (fistfight, 52, 56) or *lites* (lawsuit, 54), no epic battle; Sarmentus is a *scurra*, Messius Cicirrus has a funny name, like a rooster crowing (52); their parentage is low (Oscan ethnicity is a joke, an outsider ethnicity, so *clarum genus* is a sneer, 54; Sarmentus has a female owner in place of a parent, 55); neither of them has *maiores* in the Roman sense, so that the attribution of *maiores* to them (55) is a dig. As is his wont, the speaker has it both ways, with the question *quo patre natus* (53) recalling the numerous times this question is asked about Horace himself in the *Satires* and *Epistles*.²³ Contrast Mercurius' question to Sosia (*Am.* 346), *quoius sis* – "Whose are you?" – and Sosia's dignified assertion that he is *Davo prognatum patre*, "born of my father Davus," a classic comedic slave name (365; see chapter 4). In the *palliata*, a player gets to answer the question; Horace, caught between Lucilius and Maecenas, gives a top-down view. Sarmentus was a real person, an actual freed slave associated with

²³ *Quo patre natus*, Hor. *S.* 1.6.29, cf. 1.6.7, 58–60, 64, *Ep.* 1.20.19–28; cf. Gowers 2012: 222. See above on cheerleading; note esp. Gilbert Highet's idea, pointed out by Gowers, that *libertino patre natus* (*S.* 1.6.6, 45, 46; *Ep.* 1.20.20) might have been the start of a street taunt in trochaic septenarii (a passing thought, Highet 1973: 268 n. 1: "an accentual form of the *versus quadratus* used in popular taunts").

Maecenas, well attested; if, as Emily Gowers argues, he is a surrogate for the satirist Horace, he is an object one.²⁴

Certainly the speaker's own body in *S.* 1.5 is grotesque itself, so that the grotesqueries of the insult match do not entirely set the performers apart from him. But grotesque the insults are, based on animal comparison, facial disfiguration, disease, the monstrous onstage, and slavery – chains, the Lares, being a runaway, being owned, thinness associated with controlled feeding (*una / farris libra*, 68–9). “Short commons,” as Gowers notes, citing the ration for chained debtors in the XII Tables (2012: 203; cf. chapter 2). Adding a layer of invective, the speaker verifies some of these insults, labeling Messius as Oscan, giving Sarmentus a *domina*, describing Messius' scar as disgusting (*foeda*), his forehead as *saetosam*, “bristly,” like a boar. Compare *saetosi caput hoc apri*, “this head of a bristly boar,” in Vergil's seventh *Eclogue* (29) – a poetry-book closely akin to Horace *Satires* 1, and a poem that produces its own (Theocritean) song contest in alternating verses (*alternis ... versibus*, 18), just as Sarmentus and Cicirrus here take turns (56–64, 65–9).

These literary duels, layered with intertexts like puff pastry, aim at a reading audience that can pause to savor the aftertastes. Yet Horace's poems also bear simple witness to insult matches as a part of the culture he lived in and to the staging of insult matches as a popular form of entertainment, sometimes associated with eating dinner, often associated with laborers, nor is he the only witness. On the passenger barge on the way to Brundisium, the *pueri* and the sailors insult each other (*S.* 1.5.11–13), chiasmically: *tum pueri nautis, pueris convicia nautae / ingerere* (“then the boys upon the sailors, upon the boys insults the sailors / heap,” 11–12). A sailor and a traveler (*viator*) take turns praising their girlfriends, *certatim* (17). In *S.* 1.7, duels within a duel: a proscribed man named Rex and a “half-breed” (*hybrida*) named Persius, arguing their case before Brutus in Asia in 43 BCE, are sneeringly contrasted with pairs of epic warriors (10–18) or gladiators (19–20); again, everybody laughs at them (*ridetur ab omni / conventu*, 22–3), and animals are invoked, if only figuratively, as Persius compares Rex to “that Dog, the star hated by farmers” (25–6). Rex, identified as from Praeneste (28), retorts with “Italian vinegar” (*Italo ... aceto*, 32), like “a hard / grape-harvester undefeated, to whom often the traveler / would have yielded, as he reviled him as a ‘cuckoo’ in a loud voice” (*durus /*

²⁴ Gowers 2012: 200; cf. Richlin 2015a: 361 for further contemporary abuse of him. Like Plautus' *parasiti*, and like the Greek comedians attested at Hellenistic courts (Richlin 2016), Sarmentus was a clown for the powerful. See further below.

vindemiator et invictus, cui saepe viator / cessisset, magna compellans voce cuculum, 1.7.29–31).²⁵

Almost two hundred years later, the young Marcus Aurelius, after a long day at the vintage, dined with his mother and his adoptive father the emperor in the wine-press room, and “We all enjoyed listening to the yokels insulting each other” (*rusticos cavillantes audivimus libenter*, *M. Caes.* 4.6.2). Or so he writes to his beloved teacher Fronto, in a letter full of the consciousness that he is acting like a person in (what is to him) a book: he gargles like someone in an Atellan farce by Novius, and he picks grapes with a quotation that is taken to be from Novius, perhaps from his play *Vindemiatores*, “Grape-harvesters” (4.6.1). He probably was well aware, then, that *cavillationes* are among Gelasimus’ goods for sale (*St.* 228), and were associated onstage with shtick (*Aul.* 638) and jesting (*Mil.* 642, *Truc.* 684–5). Two hundred years later still, Ausonius, in a highly self-conscious portrait of the river Moselle, shows the vineyard-workers “competing with crude yells” (*certantes stolidis clamoribus*), while the traveler on the riverbank and the bargeman on the river “sing insults to the belated farm-workers” (*probra canunt seris cultoribus*), raising the echoes (*Mosella* 165–7). The agricultural writer Columella, a contemporary of the younger Seneca, opines in his section on the best slaves for vineyard work that they must have a “quick mind” (*velocior animus*) and a “strong intelligence” (*acuminis strenui*), but that it is just the dishonest ones (*improborum*) who are likely to be so endowed – “which is why vineyards are usually cultivated by men in chains” (*ideoque vineta plurimum per alligatos excoluntur*, *Rust.* 1.9.4). To what extent this idea is present to Horace, Marcus, or Ausonius cannot be known, but the status of the *vindemiator* for them must be low, probably servile, and the same goes for the bargemen and the farm-workers, while the *viator* is no grandee.

The *palliata* is full of insult matches like these and the one reported in *S.* 1.5, but much more elaborate, carefully structured – and produced onstage before a mixed audience, not at dinner to entertain the *summi viri*. Rather than think of literary parallels, then, the spectators could be caught up in the swing of it, as they might be on the street, only without danger. In doing so, they were participating in a folk form that exists in cultures around the world, known to anthropologists and folklorists as “verbal dueling.” The slave Libanus, a champion practitioner, calls it

²⁵ I must agree with commentators who find the explanation offered by the elder Pliny forced (*HN* 18.249; cf. Morris 1909: 115 *ad loc.*); *cuculus* is a common term of abuse in Plautus, cf. *As.* 923, 934 (associated with a trochaic refrain), *Per.* 282, *Ps.* 96, *Trin.* 245–6.

“word-skirmishing” (*verbiveliatio*, *As.* 307), an image from light-armed troop combat, with its stinging jabs; Pompeius Festus sums up the main structural element as “the throwing back and forth of insults” (*ultra citroque prob<r>orum obiectatio*, 507L). (Libanus’ term might also have evoked for his audience the class placement of the *velites* in the lowest census bracket.) Two specialized Roman forms, *flagitatio* and *occentatio*, were analyzed long ago by Usener (1901) and will be discussed further below. The elements of the form common to many cultures are as follows: men, usually in pairs, take turns insulting each other; there is a conventional verbal format, and the opponents score points by good use of the format; conversely, it is possible to lose by being unable to reply in kind; this takes place before an audience in a public place, with locally recognized temporary boundaries; and in conventional circumstances (at dinner, after dinner, while drinking, at a bar or other party venue). The most widespread form today is the rap battle. The content is often obscene and, as in most forms of humor, often involves play with recognized social norms.²⁶ Thus Horace stages his written duel as after-dinner entertainment featuring local semi-pro talent, like the one mentioned by Marcus at which actual “yokels” performed, while the poetic vignettes of grape-harvesters are set in a particular outdoor workplace; the duels in Plautus, like almost all the action in the *palliata*, take place in the street outside the house doors. That this location was associated with verbal dueling in real life is suggested by passing remarks within the plays.

It should be emphasized, in light of some commonly made arguments about the *palliata* as *Kunstsprache* rather than “colloquial” speech, that verbal dueling, like many other folk forms, is often metrical and subject to elaborate formal conventions, while still being considered by native speakers to be low in register – even contemptible, as in “truly frivolous talk” among the Chamula (see Gossen 1976). Low forms are not *ipso facto* artless. As scholars have noted, the shtick that recurs in Roman comedy is highly formulaic, in characteristic ways quite different from what appears

²⁶ For verbal dueling around the world, see Pagliai 2009, and Pagliai 2010 on traditional verbal dueling in central Italy, with comprehensive bibliography; for rap battles, see formal and historical analyses in A. Bradley 2009, Neff 2009, and Wald 2012; for formal and historical analyses of protest music, see A. Moore 2013 and Peretti 2013; on ancient invective and rap, Rosen and Marks 1999; on Roman verbal dueling, Richlin 1992b[1983]: 74–5. Among classic studies, Gossen 1976, on verbal dueling in Mexico, makes a good comparative example for Rome on both formal and social grounds. Among numerous analyses of verbal dueling in Plautus by the Freiburg school, see Lefèvre 2001 on the opening duel in *Epidicus*; Wallochny 1992: 142–80, 189–93 focuses on *verbiveliatio* as a type of argument scene and analyzes its “tactics.” For Greek versions, see below on *skolia*; accounts of comedians at Greek symposia do not include this kind of team act (see Richlin 2016).

in related jokes in Greek comedy. Since Parry and Lord, any Homerist would be startled to hear that orality is inconsistent with sophisticated formal structure.²⁷

A duel in *Persa* between the slave Toxilus and the pimp Dordalus incorporates two telling cues that underscore the level of skill needed to perform these duels onstage (405–27). Dordalus greets Toxilus as he emerges from his house, and at once Toxilus launches his attack:

... DO. oh,	405
Toxile, quid agitur? TO. oh, lutum lenonium, commixtum caeno sterculinum publicum, inpure, inhoneste, iniure, inlex, labes popli, pecuniae accipiter avide atque invide, procax, rapax, trahax – trecentis versibus	410
tuas impuritas traloqui nemo potest – accipin argentum? accipe sis argentum, impudens, tene sis argentum, etiam tu argentum tenes? possum te facere ut argentum accipias, lutum? non mihi censebas copiam argenti fore,	415
qui nisi iurato mihi nil ausu's credere? DO. sine respirare me, ut tibi respondeam. vir summe populi, stabulum servitricium, scortorum liberator, suduculum flagri, compedium tritor, pistrinorum civitas,	420
perenniserve, lurcho, edax, furax, fugax, cedo sis mi argentum, da mihi argentum, impudens, possum [a] te exigere argentum? argentum, inquam, cedo, quin tu mi argentum reddis? nihilne te pudet? leno te argentum poscit, solida servitus,	425
pro liberanda amica, ut omnes audiant. TO. tace, opsecro hercle. ne tua vox valide valet!	
[DO.] ... Oh,	405
Toxilus, what's up? TO. Oh, you pimping dirtbag, you public shithouse, with extra dung on top, you unclean, immoral, illegal, unjust, people's grease stain, you greedy, beady-eyed, evil-eyed money vulture, you mouthy, grabby, pushy – nobody could	410
run through your unclean garbage in three hundred lines –	

²⁷ On formulae in shtick, see Richlin 2017b: 179–92, Vogt-Spira 2001; on “truly frivolous talk,” Gossen 1976. For an (uncharacteristic) example of a misleading opposition between “orality” and “stylised forms of language” affected by meter and song, see Halla-aho and Kruschwitz 2010: 128. They are dealing with early Roman tragedy, and it is fascinating to speculate on overlaps in personnel, training, and method between tragedy and comedy in this period.

Will you take your cash? Please take your cash, shameless!
 Please have your cash, your cash, are you even going to have it?
 Can I make you take your cash, dirtbag?
 You didn't think I could get my hands on that much cash, 415
 so you wouldn't risk giving me credit unless I swore to it?
 DO. Hey, let me breathe, so I can do the response to you.
 The people's man at the top! You slave-girls' motel,
 you savior of whores, you're making the whips sweat,
 you're wearing out the shackles, you flour-mill city, 420
 you permanent slave, you slurper, you food-grubbing, thieving runaway!
 Hand me my cash, please, give me my cash, shameless!
 Can I squeeze the cash out of you? The cash, hand it to me, I'm saying,
 won't you give me back my cash? Have you no shame?
 The pimp is asking you for cash, you solid slavery, 425
 to set your girlfriend free – everybody listen up!
 TO. Shut up, please – my God, your voice is mighty mighty!

The echoing “oh”s that initiate the duel suggest the drawing of breath, and that is just what Dordalus says he needs to do in order to launch into his reply to Toxilus, in a metatheatrical pause (417) that courts the audience's anticipatory laughter. When he is done, Toxilus remarks on the strength of the pimp's voice (427), and we might guess that the actor playing Dordalus performed his speech on a single breath (I cannot myself get beyond line 424).²⁸ In response to Toxilus' admiring exclamation, the pimp says, “Salt costs me as much as it costs you”; his tongue must defend him or never taste salt (428–30). Like the slaves in chapter 2, the tongue has to earn its keep; or, as an actor, the man under the pimp mask has to display this skill to eat.

The two actors not only put on a bravura display of breath control; not only do they employ a full set of the insults commonly aimed at slaves and pimps; first and foremost, they take turns showing off, as the first speaker sets up an intricate pattern, and the second speaker matches and outdoes it (*tibi respondeam*) – a style familiar in modern tap-dancing and in improvised vocal and musical forms. (Indeed, the final scenes of both *Persa* and *Stichus* feature brief competitive dance-offs.²⁹) So Olympio says to Chalinus at the end of their verbal duel, topping off a barrage of threats,

²⁸ For a possible parallel in Greek, dated to the mid-300s – “nearly sixty lines of anapaestic dimeters without break and so possibly spoken in one breath by a virtuoso slave/cook” – see Scaforo 2014: 201.

²⁹ Habinek 2005: 117 thinks the slaves of *scurrae* who *ludunt datatim* at *Cur.* 296 are doing a “competitive dance” and Curculio is outdoing them as he runs past; followed by Moore 2012: 124. The use of *datatim* there, with parallel uses of *dato* to mean “oblige sexually,” seems to me to rule out that option, but it certainly comes up elsewhere. See chapter 4 on *Stichus*; for an overview of competitive dance in the *palliata*, Moore 2012: 126–7, and 195–6 on “reciprocal choreography” and “banter.”

“Now, so you don’t ask that you should respond to me, / I’m going inside; I’m bored with your conversation” (*nunc ne tu te mihi respondere postules, / abeo intro. taedet tui sermonis*, *Cas.* 141–2) – a laugh line, because Chalinus has said nothing but “What will you do to me?” and “What will you do?” for the last twenty-odd lines (*quid tu mihi facies?* 117, *quid facies?* 132): straight lines. But Toxilus and Dordalus give a full performance. The verb *respondeo*, then, has a technical sense in a verbal duel like this; it also works as a cue in runs of shtick, as straight man and funny man feed each other lines, and *responde mihi* appears already in one of the few fragments of Livius Andronicus’ comedies. As in “double acts” in modern Anglophone popular theater, two comedians work together, developing a fast-paced rhythm grounded in recycled material.³⁰

In the *Persa* duel, each of the duelers does four lines of insults, followed by five lines of patterned, thrusting questions; as will be seen below, these follow a format peculiar to the dunning performance called *flagitatio* and widely attested elsewhere. Toxilus’ four lines start with a half-line (406), then three full lines, then another half-line (410), followed by a metatheatrical comment that takes up a half-line plus a line (410–11), saying how many lines he would need to cover all the pimp’s *impuritas*, his uncleanness; dirt has been a main component in Toxilus’ insults against the pimp. Dordalus begins with his metatheatrical breath-taking line (417), which he follows with four continuous lines of insults. Both speakers make much use of alliteration – a feature of contemporary poetic diction here put to forceful use. Each also has a group of three adjectives ending in *-ax* (410, 421), Toxilus at the start of his line, Dordalus at line end, each time capping the run of insults before the speaker moves on, Toxilus to metatheatrical, Dordalus to his *flagitatio*. Each insults the other in relation to the people: Toxilus’ disgusted *sterculinum publicum* (407) and *labes populi* (408) are opposed to the pimp’s sneering *vir summe populi* (418). The figure of the “man at the top” – as we have seen, a problem figure in the *palliata* – here, as elsewhere, has the respect of pimps, which gives this insult a boomerang quality like the “exploding cigars” in chapter 6, for Toxilus makes no claim to be a *vir summus*. Toxilus’ insults recall the cook-to-cook insult *prostibulum populi* in *Aulularia* (chapter 2), and, in keeping with his theme, associate Dordalus with dirt. Dordalus here and in all his insults

³⁰ On verbal dueling as an enjoyable game, where the players seem more like partners than opponents, see Wallochny 1992: 182. Just so; see Arnott’s review (1996b: 67), quoted in chapter 1 above. Wallochny uses the proverbial *par pari respondere* (cf. *Per.* 223, Paegnium to Sophoclidisca) to stand for a category of duel; see esp. 1992: 65–72, 166–71. On *responde* as a cue and its appearance in Livius, see Richlin 2017b: 185–6.

attacks Toxilus for his civil status, focusing, as in slaves' verbal duels, on Toxilus's history of punishment (*suduculum flagri*, 419; *compedium tritor, pistrinorum civitas*, 420), the unlikelihood of his manumission (*perenniserve*, 421; *solida servitus*, 425), his hunger (*lurcho, edax*, 421), and the likelihood that he will try to escape (*fugax*, 421). Toxilus pulls off almost a whole line of insults beginning with the negating *in-*, emphasizing all the righteous things Dordalus is not (408), along with an animal metaphor incorporating a play on *avidelinvide* (409). On the other hand, he falls back on a repeat of *lutum* (406, 414) and forms of *impur-* (408, 411). Dordalus repeats an idea in *perenniserve* (421) and *solida servitus* (425), and again in *impudens* (422, borrowed from Toxilus, and in the same position – line end, first line of *flagitatio*, cf. 412) and *pudet* (424); but his four lines of insults dance and weave, the first line picking up Toxilus' *sterculinum publicum* with *stabulum servitricium* (418), the next two lines alternating pairs of nouns in the vocative and genitive in an elaborate chiasmus: ABBA, ABAB. He ends with five vocatives in one line. The chiasmus of his insults meshes with the chiasitic patterns in both characters' *flagitatio*, and, if this contest were being judged, Dordalus would win on points.

Insult matches like these fill the plays in order to fill the seats: made to order. The *grex* at the end of *Bacchides* claims to have made the plot from firsthand knowledge (*neque ... haec faceremus, ni ... vidissemus*, 1209), and the actors commonly describe the play as something they are doing or making (the basic meaning of *ago*). As seen in chapter 1, the plays show signs of improvisation by the players. Improvise what? Beatrix Wallochny sums up: Plautine characters have *Streitlust* – they love to argue (1992: 189). Evidently this was fun to watch. And fun to hear: Dordalus' mighty lungs, the content of these duels, and the marked term *clamor* (below) suggest delivery at full volume, useful to overcome what must have been considerable ambient noise in an open-air theater. Form follows function; location and demand shape form. (Think of the instructions to Nicholas Nickleby on the elements to include in his translation of a French play, all determined by the props, skills, and egos of Mr. Crummles's troupe.³¹) A major structural element in the plays is evidently there to facilitate the players' display of verbal dueling skills like the ones on show for the characters Toxilus and Dordalus.

Moreover, the plays are full of scenes that involve two slaves, or a slave and an adversary. As seen in chapter 2, many of the prologue speakers

³¹ Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, chapters 22–4; see McElduff 2013: 61–2 for an entertaining application of this episode to the rise of Roman comedy.

are slaves, actors, or workers. What is the effect, what is the motive for this procession of humble figures? The prologues are all in *senarii*, spoken; perhaps, then, more intimate with the audience than sung lines accompanied by music (see Moore 1998: 31). Though some prologues are funny, a prologue constitutes a sort of talking program (for productions unlikely to have had written ones), performs a service for the audience and the play, and serves as a transition between pre-play and play, like a verbal curtain (for productions that never mention curtains). The prologue sets the tone; the tone is low.

In a smooth transition, then, once the prologue is over, and in cases when there is no prologue, the opening scenes of the plays very commonly involve slave or other low characters engaged in low joking. Of the nineteen plays that have extant opening scenes, only *Trinummus* and *Truculentus* open with free male characters, and even the boring old men in *Trinummus* do a run of old-wife jokes (51–66). Five plays feature opening dialogues between two slaves: *Amphitruo* 153–462 – with Mercurius’ prologue, over a third of the play; *Casina* 89–143; *Epidicus* 1–103; *Mostellaria* 1–83; *Persa* 1–52. *Rudens* opens with a brief monologue by the slave laborer Sceparnio (83–8). Six more opening scenes feature dialogues between owner and slave, all lively and more or less antagonistic (*Asinaria* 16–126, *Aulularia* 40–119, *Curculio* 1–95, *Mercator* III–224, *Poenulus* 129–209, *Pseudolus* 1–132), as well as (probably) the lost opening scene of *Bacchides*, while Sceparnio’s monologue in *Rudens* continues into a scene in which Sceparnio insults not only his owner but an arriving visitor (89–147).³² Two plays open with monologues by *parasiti* (*Captivi* 69–109, *Menaechmi* 77–109), one with a dialogue between a *parasitus* and his soldier patron (*Miles* 1–78). The two that open with female characters together (three prostitutes, *Cistellaria* 1–119, followed by a monologue by the *lena*, 120–48; two young wives, *Stichus* 1–57) are, then, anomalous, possibly a novelty, unexpected. It seems safe to guess that low joking was what the audience preferred to see, because the opening scene needs to grab the audience’s attention.

Accordingly, several spectacular and memorable examples of duels occur in opening scenes: Mercurius and Sosia in *Amphitruo*, Olympio and Chalinus in *Casina*, and Tranio and Grumio (who disappears thereafter) in *Mostellaria* (cf. also the scene between Palaestrio and Sceledrus at *Mil.* 272–344, which at times follows dueling format, e.g. 315–18). Verbal duels take place almost exclusively between slave characters, not all of them male,

³² On the *Bacchides* opening see de Melo 2011a: 364–9.

although the maleness of the actors complicates gender in scenes involving female characters.³³ There is a lot of this in the plays – more than 229 of 947 lines in *Asinaria* include dueling between the slaves Leonida and Libanus (267–380, 407–90, 545–78, and *passim*); *Persa* includes duels between Sophoclidisca and Paegnium (200–50) and, as seen in chapter 2, Sagaristio and Paegnium (272–301), as well as the one between Toxilus and the pimp (405–26); and there are minor duels between Phaniscus and Pinacium in *Mostellaria* (885–98) and Astaphium and Truculentus in *Truculentus* (256–314, 669–98). There are some brief duels involving free characters, like the flurry of insults between the neighbor *senes* Alcesimus and Lysidamus (*Cas.* 591–612) and the tirade of the soldier towards the end of *Poenulus*, with replies from Agorastocles and the visiting Carthaginian, Hanno (1296–1320). All instances of formal *flagitatio* onstage involve mixed slave/free groups, while sections of the duel between Toxilus and Dordalus follow this specialized format, as will be seen further below. Agonistic elements like the tug of war in *Rudens* or the lot-casting scene in *Casina*, which itself incorporates some verbal dueling and a proxy fistfight between the slaves of husband and wife, should remind us that paired combat is the most famous Roman spectator sport, the combatants in both tending to be servile or free poor. As is the case today, specularized physical combat for pay was not an upper-class occupation; as seen in chapter 2, Tranio gives a shout-out to men who get hurt for three *nummi*, perhaps performers (*Mos.* 357–8), and Gelasimus, taxed with a willingness to go *summam in cruce* for a meal, says, “I’ll fight it out with anyone much more easily than with Starvation” (*St.* 627) – a probable reference to paid combat.³⁴

A word about meter. Although the duel between Toxilus and Dordalus is set in *senarii*, and duels can be found in a range of meters including poly-metric songs, a great many of the examples in this chapter are in trochaic *septenarii* (tr7), traces of which are seen above in cheers and which are attested later for the soldiers’ songs at triumphs, familiar from Suetonius.

³³ On slaves and parasites as the main participants in duels, see Wallochny 1992: 62, with bibliography; 83.

³⁴ De Melo translates *quicumvis* as “with anything,” but the sense of *depugno* leans heavily towards single combat. For the gender of *quicum*, cf. Cic. *Off.* 3.77, *dignum esse ... quicum in tenebris micat*, which he calls “a proverb worn with antiquity” among “rustics.” The gladiatorial pair as model for duelists appears explicitly at Horace *S.* 1.5.56 *pugnam*, 1.7.19 *par pugnat*, and has an obvious parallel in Aristophanic images of fighting cocks. The points of similarity between *Clouds*, *Knights*, and Plautine verbal dueling have long been noticed; see Fraenkel 1927: 366–7, 1961: 50 n. 16, with further bibliography. He took the relationship to be cousinly rather than ancestral, as does Wallochny, who believes Plautus had no knowledge of Old Comedy. But what did the *actors* know? Where had they been? See Richlin 2016, 2017b.

Those songs taunted the triumphant general the soldiers had followed; as a marching beat, they invite comparison with jodies, the call-and-response “cadence calls” used in the US military. Jodies, in turn, go back to African-American work songs, and the best known of them, “Sound Off,” is also called the Duckworth Chant, after an African-American soldier, Pvt. Willie Duckworth, in the Second World War.³⁵ The tune of “Sound Off,” however, resembles the tune of familiar children’s taunts, also in trochaic septenarii, like “John and Mary sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G,” or (from my own childhood in the mean streets of New Jersey in the 1950s), “Car, car, C-A-R, stick your head in a jelly jar,” “You can’t catch a nanny goat” (from playing tag), or just the basic “Nah, nah, na-nah, nah” – or, for that matter, “Ring Around the Rosie,” or sports taunts like “We want a pitcher, not a glass of water.” The oral circulation of such taunts is a major area of study in the subfield of children’s folklore, most famously by Iona and Peter Opie; whether there is something cross-culturally and transhistorically irritating about trochaic septenarii is a matter for sociolinguists.

Timothy Moore argues that trochaic septenarii are so common in Roman comedy that they should be viewed as “unmarked” – “the default meter of Roman comedy” – the very stuff, then, of which the *palliata* is made. They are among the stichic meters that were, like polymetric songs, accompanied by the *tibia*; Moore suggests that these lines may have been delivered between speech and song, with rhythm as the most important element. (Although accompanied stichic meters are often compared with operatic recitative, perhaps an analogy with rap would be closer, as in “My Shot” in *Hamilton* – agonistic, polyvocal, full of resolution, more rhythmic than melodic, popular, and, like much rap, set in trochaic septenarii.) Certainly taunts onstage in the *palliata* are often set in this meter, and it seems at least possible that the cadence would trigger a deep recognition in the audience, also that the “tune” often associated with taunting by Roman commentators (below) was recognizably present onstage. As will be seen, the jingling segmentation characteristic of the *versus quadratus* – a variety of trochaic septenarius associated with nonliterary forms – also structures both taunts and *flagitatio*. Nonliterary examples range from children’s rhymes to soldiers’ songs to crowd chants at the theater, several of which, like this one, single out the Sarmentus we met in Horace, *Satires* 1.5:

³⁵ For historical background and bibliography, see Burke 1989: 424–5. Burke focused on the extremely violent content of cadence calls she collected at the US Naval Academy and other service academies; scholarship on the history of the form remains scarce. Interestingly, Burke documented many Vietnam-based calls and songs, circulated among trainees in the late 1980s by contact with “prior-enlisted” men: an example of the persistence past currency that characterizes popular forms.

digna dignis | sic Sarmentus | habeat crassas | compedes
 people get what they deserve | so Sarmentus | should have thick | fetters

As these are reported, they were directed at Sarmentus “by the people,” *a populo*, attesting to the possibilities for spontaneous composition and rapid circulation in public spaces: not just actors in the audience but comedians.³⁶ Again, this capacity for jingling among members of the audience, if it was present in the 200s as it was in the 30s, suggests opportunities for interaction between insult-sliding actors and echoing audience. Several of the forms to be considered here – *flagitatio*, *occentatio*, and *quiritatio* – depend on group participation; as with the cheerleading discussed above, the audience might well have gotten into the act.

Lost to us are conventional taunting gestures, of which Roman sources name very few other than the extended middle finger that has enjoyed such a long history. They are robustly attested in Italian culture from the 1700s onward, so perhaps they were also present onstage in the *palliata*. For their effectiveness, I need only turn to the taunting scene in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, where John Cleese as the French soldier, having exhausted a fund of parodic yet irresistibly funny insults, beats a sort of tattoo on his own head: a climactic point.³⁷

Formal characteristics of verbal dueling in Plautus include:

- line-for-line exchanges, as at *As.* 274–7 (tr7). Here, of the two combatants, Leonida has entered without seeing Libanus, who has already struck up a relationship with the audience in a monologue (249–66), so that Leonida’s lines are straight, Libanus’ are jokes:

LE. aetatem velim servire, Libanum ut conveniam modo.

LI. mea quidem hercle liber opera numquam fiet ocuis.

275

LE. etiam de tergo ducentas plagas praegnatis dabo.

LI. largitur peculium, omnem in tergo thensaurum gerit.

³⁶ On children’s playground chants and street culture, see Opie and Opie 1969. Fraenkel 1927 argues that trochaic septenarii came into Latin from Greek, although long before the 200s BCE, through popular circulation; for independent indigenous evolution, see Gericke 1996: 12–26, esp. the closing remarks on popular stress-accented verse. On the chants in Suetonius, with many examples of Roman taunts, chants, and games, see Gericke 1996: 27–58; the taunts of Sarmentus are discussed in Courtney 1993: 473–4, along with numerous examples of *versus populares* and *triumphales* (470–85). On the unmarked nature of trochaic septenarii onstage, see Moore 2012: 172–4, and 93–103 for the relation between rhythm and song. For association between this meter and insults onstage, see the full survey of *versus quadratus* in Plautus, Gericke 1996: 84–185. For “actors in the audience,” see Bartsch 1994.

³⁷ On taunting gestures in Rome, see Conington 1872: 18–19, *ad* Persius 1.58–60; Corbeil 2004: 6, 38; Richlin 1992b[1983]: 90, 132. On such gestures in Italy in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, in connection with the Society of Dilettanti, see Carabelli 1996: 66, 95–106; understanding of the portrait of the Dilettanti is now considerably advanced by Coltman 2009: 159–90, esp. at 175–6.

LE. I'd be willing to slave all my life, if I could just meet up with Libanus.
 LI. With my help, surely by God you'll never be free sooner. 275
 LE. I'll even give two hundred fat whip-strikes off my back.
 LI. He's giving away his *peculium*, he carries his whole fortune on his back.

Here the audience is pulled one way by Leonida, the other by Libanus, who has the advantage of being able to riff on Leonida's lines while Leonida remains oblivious.³⁸

- name-calling, as at *As.* 297–8 (still tr7; here the combatants meet):³⁹

LE. gymnasium flagri, salveto. LI. quid agis, custos carceris?
 LE. o catenarum colone. LI. o virgarum lascivia.

LE. Workout gym for the whip, greetings. LI. What's up, guardian of the jail?

LE. You chain farmer. LI. You rod romp.

In line 297, the second player matches the syntax of the first, again with chiasmus: vocative-genitive-verb, verb-vocative-genitive; then again in 298, *o* genitive-vocative, *o* genitive-vocative. As seen above, much of the duel between Toxilus and the pimp in *Persa* consists of name-calling, sometimes, as here, in vocative-genitive pairs, sometimes just a barrage of two-syllable adjectives (*edax*, *furax*, *fugax*), although, again, symmetrically placed. This is seen also in the *flagitatio* of the pimp Ballio below; compare a fragment of Naevius, unfortunately without context: *pessimorum pessime, audax, ganeo lustru aleo* ("Worst of the worst, bold, glutton, barfly, gambler," *Com. inc.* 118).

- capping insults within lines, as at *Per.* 287–90 (continuing on from the exchange discussed in chapter 2):

SAG. potin ut molestus ne sies? PA. quod dicis facere non quis.

SAG. abi in malam rem. PA. at tu domum: nam ibi tibi parata praestost.

SAG. vadatur hic me. PA. utinam vades desint, in carcere ut sis.

SAG. quid hoc? PA. quid est? ... 290

SA: Could you possibly not be annoying. PA. You're talking about what *you* can't do.

SA: You go to hell. PA. No, you go home – hell's there already and waiting for you.

³⁸ On this line-for-line structure see Wallochny 1992: 69–71, 166–71 on Plautus, and 13–21 on amoibaic competition in Old Comedy.

³⁹ On this passage, see Wallochny 1992: 61–2, on the commonness of insult exchange in scenes of greeting.

SA. This baby'll bail me out. PA. I wish there was no bail, so you'd be in jail.

SA. What's this? PA. Yeah, what? ...

290

The speed of the exchange here is augmented by elisions at the change of speaker (288, 289), forcing the audience to shift along, willy-nilly. The pace also tests the players' (or the characters') ingenuity; when at a loss, they fall back on echoic insults, as Paegnium essentially says "No, *you* are" to Sagaristio (287); Sagaristio himself then falls back on a formula (288). Paegnium scores a point by picking up *vadatur* with *vades* and making the "go" in "go to hell" literal, then turning it into a cut at what awaits Sagaristio at home; Sagaristio responds with a figurative threat to punch Paegnium (289). Paegnium again scores by developing Sagaristio's metaphor (and fist) into a threat of the *carcer*; then both of them take a rest with place-holding lines (290).⁴⁰ Compare Sophoclidisca and Paegnium, briefly at a loss: PA. *heia!* SO. *beia!* (*Per.* 212).

- interruptions, where one character starts a line and the other cuts in and gives his words an insulting twist, as at *Cas.* 389–90 (tr7):

OL. taceo. deos quaeso – CH. ut quidem tu hodie canem et furcam feras.

OL. mihi ut sortito eveniat – CH. ut quidem hercle pedibus pendear.

OL. I am silent. I pray to the gods – CH. That indeed you might bear the dog and yoke today.⁴¹

OL. That it may fall to my lot – CH. That indeed, by God, you might be strung up by your feet.

The same technique shows up as Sagaristio and Paegnium continue their duel (*Per.* 292–3). Sagaristio begins an oath: "May all the gods and

⁴⁰ On this scene, see Wallochney 1992: 71–2. The meter is iambic septenarii (ia7), on which see Moore 2012: 184–9; this exchange forms part of a run of ia7, incorporating most of the duel between Sagaristio and Paegnium (280–99) plus a teasing scene involving Toxilus, Sophoclidisca, and Sagaristio, that lies partly outside Moore's grouping of ia7 runs involving the romance plot. Arguably, the association between Sagaristio and this meter in *Persa* (also) relates to his role as sarcastic sidekick; cf. Moore's remarks on the Roman association between this meter and comedy (2012: 184).

⁴¹ *Canis* here is evidently yet another sort of slave punishment; compare *Cur.* 691–2, *cum catello ut accubus, / ferreo ego dico* ("that you should lie next to a puppy – the iron puppy, I mean") – a play on *catella*, "small chain." Other uses of "dog" in Plautus suggest that the instrument itself is the object of contempt, suggesting further that all the instruments of torture and punishment are demeaned by association with those punished, rather than elevated by association with those who decree the punishment, just as those who physically inflict the punishment are themselves demeaned, as seen in chapter 2. See esp. Allen 1896: 45–6 on *canis*, *catulus*, *catellus* and Greek *skylax*; also Headlam 2001[1922]: 156 on animal names for instruments of torture in Greek, and Hunter 1994: 177–81 on instruments of torture in Greek and the relation of the instruments to degradation (on which in general, see duBois 1991, 2003: 103–13).

goddesses destroy me –” (*di deaque me omnes perdant*); Paegnium cuts him off before he gets to “if”: “I’m your friend, I want all your prayers to come true” (*amicus sum, eveniant volo tibi quae optas*). The oath in shtick, then, is a setup for this kind of joke. As performed in verbal dueling, this is a variation on the “technique of the pregnant pause” (*bedeutungsvolle Pause*, Lefèvre 2001: 116), also often used in oaths, as in Paegnium’s “God bless ... me” (*Per.* 205): suitable for a single speaker or a double act.

- back-and-forth insults, four to a line (*Am.* 344, tr7):

ME. ain vero? SO. aio enim vero. ME. verbero. SO. mentire nunc.
ME. So you say? SO. So I do say. ME. Flogbait. SO. Now you’re lying.

The pace here is even faster, again with elision at the change of speakers, this time in combination with a pun – another quick-shifting move that demands quick response from the audience to get the joke. Picking up Sosia’s *vero*, Mercurius morphs it into the insulting term *verbero*, and Sosia re-interprets it as the verb *verbero*, “I’m flogging you,” which is not true at the moment, although Mercurius does beat Sosia at some points during this duel, hence Sosia’s stress on “now.” See next.

- fistfights, or threats of blows, as at *Amphitruo* 395 (tr7); throughout the long exchange between Mercurius and Sosia, there are repeated verbal cues for Mercurius to hit Sosia, like this:

SO. pacem feci, foedus feci. vera dico. ME. vapula.
SO. I made peace, I swore a truce. I’m telling the truth. ME. You take a beating!

This single line manifests repetition, parallel structure, alliteration, and a clean segmentation into four units, the fourth being emphasized by a blow.

The duel between Grumio and Tranio in *Mostellaria*, in its opening lines, combines many of these elements and sets up a more elaborate framework of call-and-response, including marked use of imperatives and questions (1–10):

GR. Exi e culina sis foras, mastigia,
qui mi inter patinas exhibes argutias.
egredere, erilis permities, ex aedibus.
ego pol te ruri, si vivam, ulciscar probe.
<exi,> exi, inquam, nidoricupi, nam quid lates?
TR. quid tibi, malum, hic ante aedis clamitatioſt?
an ruri censes te esse? apscede ab aedibus.

5

abi rus, abi dierecte, apscede ab ianua.
em, hoccine volebas? GR. perii! qur me verberas? 9–10

GR. Get out of the kitchen and outdoors, please, you whipping post, since you're showing me how smart you are among the lasagne pans. Step outside, the ruin of your owner, out of the house. Gee, when I get you in the country, if I live long enough, I'll fix you right. Get out, get out, I'm saying, you oven-smell-lover, and what are you hiding for?

TR. What's all this yelling from you, damn it, here outside the house? 6
Do you think you're in the country? Get away from the house.
Get back to the country, get strung up, get away from the doorway.
Pow! Is that what you wanted? GR. I'm dead! Why are you hitting me? 9–10

Here the elements of verbal dueling are refashioned to fit the spoken lines of *senarii* (ia6), as in the duel between Toxilus and Dordalus. Notice particularly the repetition of *exi* (1, 5), along with forms of *ex* and *e-*, and the balanced ABC, ACB structures of lines 1 and 3: imperative – adverbial phrase – name-calling; imperative – name-calling – adverbial phrase.⁴² Compare the repetition of *abi* and *apscede* in 7–10 and the triple imperative in 8; and compare the opening duel between Olympio and Chalinus, another rural/urban pair, in *Casina*: “Get back to the country, get back to your military zone to be hanged” (*abi rus, abi dierectus tuam in provinciam*, 103). The setting before the house door is significant; as will be seen, the house door is the main location for *occentatio*, and one location for *flagitatio*. The same goes for the word *clamitatio* (6): *clamor* is yelling with a purpose, yelling intended to shame the addressee (compare Dordalus, *ut omnes audiant*, *Per.* 426; Chrysalus paying off the soldier, *ne clamorem hic facias neu convicium*, *Bac.* 874). Grumio wants to get Tranio out of the house; it works, with *quid lates* cuing a magnificent eruption out the door. Grumio will lose the duel. “Why are you hitting me?” asks Grumio (9–10); *quia vivis*, “Because you're alive,” retorts Tranio, and Grumio answers *patiar*, “I'll let that go” (11), like Messius Cicirrus saying *accipio* in Horace's satire: a missed point. The use of *patior* here, with its use in double entendres elsewhere (*Capt.* 867, see chapter 4), reveals the implicit sexual stakes in these duels: the winner is top, the loser is bottom, which would become a marked characteristic of later Roman humor.

⁴² Lindsay has *nidoricupi nam* at 5 for MSS *nidor culine*; de Melo takes Pylades' *nidor e culina*, punctuating *exi, inquam, nidor, e culina*, which would produce another variant on lines 1 and 3: imperative – parenthesis – name-calling – adverbial phrase.

The content in verbal duels, as already illustrated, takes a familiar shape: slaves accuse other slaves of having been frequently punished, or threaten that punishment lies ahead; slaves argue about who is more likely to gain manumission; slaves accuse each other of having been used for sex; a “good slave” like Grumio accuses another of harming the owner. Slaves are not supposed to insult free people, although onstage they frequently do (chapters 4, 6). The Mercator in *Asinaria* is stunned when Leonida and Libanus insult him: “You, a slave, insult a free person?” (*tun libero homini / male servos loquere?*, *As.* 477–8). Menaechmus I, trying to placate his wife, guesses that she is angry because their slaves have broken this rule, and promises to punish them: “The slave-women or the male slaves haven’t talked back to you, / have they? Tell me. They won’t get away with it” (*num ancillae aut servei tibi / responsant? eloquere. inpune non erit, Men.* 620–1). The power to insult, on the other hand, is freely available between slaves: “You crime, are you still insulting me?” says Sagaristio to Paegnium; “Since you’re a slave, it should at least be okay for a slave to insult you,” Paegnium replies (SAG. *etiam, scelus, male loquere?* PA. *tandem uti liceat, / quom servos sis, servom tibi male dicere, Per.* 290–1).

Insult matches between free characters are less common. The back-and-forth between the neighbors Alcesimus and Lysidamus plays mostly on a series of questions, especially a barrage introduced by *quin* (*Cas.* 604–9, ia6), which elsewhere commonly introduces insulting or sarcastic questions (see chapter 8). The teasing exchange between Agorastocles and the Advocati in *Poenulus* (721–40, ia6) perhaps mocks forensic cross-examination; the tense introductory scene between Agorastocles and this anomalous chorus ends in a brief exchange of body-part curses (570–1, tr7):

[AG.] *quin etiam deciderint femina vobis in talos velim.*

ADV. *at edepol nos tibi in lumbos linguam atque oculos in solum.*

AG. In fact, I wish your thighs would fall right on your ankles.

ADV. But, gee, us to you: your tongue on your crotch, and your eyes on the ground.

The soldier Antamoenides in *Poenulus*, astounded to see the Carthaginian Hanno with his arm around the prostitute the soldier plans to buy, launches into a series of single insults that use Hanno’s foreign dress to liken him to a working man in a long tunic – an inn’s boy or a porter (*puer cauponius*, 1298; *baiiolum*, 1301, tr7) – or an effeminate man: “womanish,” “African hussy,” “woman” (*mulierosum, amatricem Africam, mulier*, 1303–5,

switching into *senarii* at 1304).⁴³ Then, in a brief barrage, the soldier compares Hanno to a list of squashy, smelly, foreign things (1309–14):

ANTA. *ligula*, in' malam *crucem*?
 tune hic amator audes esse, hallex viri, 1310
 aut contrectare quod mares homines amant?
 deglupta maena, sarrapis sementium,
 manstruca, halagora, sampsa, tum autem plenior
 ali ulpicique quam Romani remiges.

ANTA. You shoelace, will you get crucified?
 You dare to set up as a lover here, you fish-sauce man, 1310
 or put your filthy paws on what male persons love?
 You skinned sardine, you seedy Levantine,
 you smelly sheepskin, you fishmarket, you smashed olive,
 you're more stuffed with garlic and Punic garlic than Roman rowers.⁴⁴

The items on his list are exotic, in a cheap way, but also produce a magnificent outpouring of brick-like syllables: the glop of *deglupta*, the hiss of *sarrapis sementium*, the eruptive *manstruca*, *halagora*, *sampsa*. The triple epithet recalls the cadence of the duel between Toxilus and Dordalus.⁴⁵ The list evokes, like the *puer cauponius* and the *baiiolus*, the detritus of the marketplace, what Virginia Woolf called “bargaining and cheapening”; the *malam crucem* and the *remiges* evoke the direst precincts of slavery and poverty. The soldier is not a sympathetic character, while Hanno has been

⁴³ On *baiiolus* (or *baiulus*) and unskilled labor, see chapter 2. The soldier goes on to say that Hanno smells like a rower in the fleet; similarly, one of the speakers in Cicero's *De oratore* cites a scrap of Caecilius Statius that seems to pair *remigem* ... *aut baiulum* (*De orat.* 2.40; but see Caecilius 274 R, where Ribbeck takes only the oarsman to belong to Caecilius). For *mulierosus* “womanish,” not “womanizing,” compare, among many common formations in *-osus* in the Plautine corpus, *hircosus* (“goaty,” *Mer.* 575), *radiosus* (“radiant,” *St.* 365) – both, like *mulierosus*, hapax – and the repeated forms *latebrosus* “shadowy,” *rabiosus* “crazy,” *ventriosus* “paunchy.” The soldier goes on to call Agorastocles a *cinaedus* who should have a *tympanum* (1317–18) like the eunuch priests of Cybele, continuing to impugn his opponents' masculinity in opposition to his own (cf. *Bac.* 845). The idea of womanizers as effeminate, however, does appear in another insult by a soldier, calling his rival a *moechum malacum, cincinnatum, / ... tympanotribam* (“soft adulterer, with curled hair, ... a drum-banger,” *Truc.* 609–11).

⁴⁴ For translation and brief notes on the text, see Richlin 2005: 270; Starks 2000: 177–81, who emphasizes the low-class associations of the items on the list, and argues that all have an insulting sexual sense. *Hallex* at 1310 is a guess for the MSS semi-legible *fallax*. On the vegetables in line 1314, see de Melo 2012: 159, who translates *ulpici* as “Phoenician garlic,” citing Columella, *Rust.* 11.3.20 (who in fact says that some people call *ulpicum* “Punic garlic”); perhaps more pertinently, Cato (*De agr.* 71) recommends it for use in cattle medicine. On the “Roman rower,” see above on slaves and poor men in the Roman fleet; after the sack of New Carthage in 210, there were plenty of Punic slaves rowing; on the ethnic implications of their double diet, see chapter 7.

⁴⁵ The triple epithet is peculiar to the early *palliata* (cf. above on Naevius, *Com. inc.* 118) and is found neither in early tragedy nor in Ennius *Satires*.

established as good; the soldier's top-down insults backfire. After this tirade, following up on his feminization of Hanno, the soldier accuses the young owner Agorastocles of being a *cinaedus* rather than a *vir* (1317–18), which leads to physical threats from Agorastocles (1319–20). Both the soldier and Agorastocles threaten punishments usually reserved for slaves (*excruciantum ... carnufici dabo*, 1302; *fustis*, 1320), a move characteristic of many exchanges of insults, even between free characters. As with the instruments of torture and punishment, invective itself, as a tool, belongs at the bottom.

Flagitatio, Occentatio, Quiritatio

The Roman folk form *flagitatio* appears throughout the plays, not only acted out but also referred to as a feared form of communal policing through shame.⁴⁶ That it was a kind of street theater is evident, and implied by Diniarchus' bitter threat against the prostitute Phronesium outside her house, which begins, "I'll put on a show by shouting in the street" (*ludos faciam clamore in via*, *Truc.* 759–63); compare Tranio's *ante aedis clamitatio* (above). The street-scene setting of most Roman comedy places the spectators exactly where they would normally be for optimum real-life rubbernecking – a fact brought out at the end of *Mercator*, after a scene of *flagitatio*, as one of the shouters says, "Let's go inside, this place isn't serviceable for your deeds / (while we're discussing them), that passersby should be their arbiters" (*eamus intro, non utibilest hic locus, factis tuis, / dum memoramus, arbitri ut sint qui praetereant per vias*, 1005–6). [All look at audience.] The pimp Ballio in *Pseudolus* connects the dots between real-life *flagitatio* and stage comedy (1081–3, 1a6), referring to an extended *flagitatio* scene earlier in the play as

nugas theatri, verba quae in comoediis
solent lenoni dici, quae pueri sciunt:
malum et scelestum et peiurum aibat esse me.

theater nonsense, the words that by custom
are said to the pimp in comedies, even children know them:
he said I was "bad" and "criminal" and "an oath-breaker."

⁴⁶ On *flagitatio*, shaming punishments, and Roman honor, see Barton 2001: 18–21, who refers to the censor as "a sort of chief shamer." For *flagitatio* in the context of self-help punishment in early law, see Kelly 1966: 22–3. Wallochny 1992 deals with *flagitatio* only briefly (95 n. 162) and credits the roots of verbal dueling in the *palliata* to Fescennine verses, mime, and Atellane farce (88–97, 189–93). Since almost nothing remains of any of these forms from the mid-Republic, and the word *Fescenninus* does not appear in the extant *palliata*, I will not make use of them here.

His lines not only make a metatheatrical joke but suggest, again, the presence of children among the *palliata* audience, or at least the childhood socialization of people living in the cities where the *palliata* played – socialization into both the language of the *palliata* and the language forms the *palliata* re-enacted.⁴⁷ As with the late Republican audience's taunts of Sarmenus (above), the exchange of insults potentially incorporated the audience, not just as bystanders but as participants. The process itself, moreover, had specific associations.

Flagitatio was a way of dunning a debtor or a dispossessor; a century and a half after Plautus, the equestrian poet Catullus uses this form, whereby an owner demands his property back, to make one of the invectives among his lyric poems (c. 42). First he summons friends to help him – here, meta-poetically, the friends are the verses themselves (1–2):

Adeste, hendecasyllabi, quot estis
omnes undique, quotquot estis omnes.

Come here, hendecasyllables, as many as you are
all of you, everywhere, as many as you are, all of you.

Then he says what he has lost (his notebook), and calls the woman who has taken it a “foul adulteress” (*moecha turpis*, 3). Then he asks his friends to act with him in dunning her: *reflagitemus* (6). Then, after some more nasty descriptions of the woman, comparing her with a dog, he gives his friends the direct command, and they all chant together (10–12):

circumsistite eam, et reflagitate, 10
“moecha putida, redde codicillos,
redde, putida moecha, codicillos!”

Stand on each side of her, and shout for them back: 10
“Adulteress putrid, give me back my notebook;
give back, putrid adulteress, my notebook!”

More name-calling: now she is “dirt, whorehouse” (*lutum, lupanar*, 13); then, “in a louder voice” (*altiore voce*, 18), the chant is repeated (19–20).

The hendecasyllabic meter was sometimes used for Greek *skolia*, convivial verses that featured back-and-forth verse-capping, and was a favorite of Catullus in his polymetric collection; moreover, theft is a general theme in Catullus' poetry book (cf. esp. c. 12 on the napkin thief, where the alternatives are return of the object (*remitte*, 12.11), or “three hundred

⁴⁷ That these lines attest to the presence of children at the plays is viewed with skepticism by Peter Brown (2013); Ballio's words can be taken to mean simply that the insults were childish.

hendecasyllables” (10; cf. *Per.* 410–11)).⁴⁸ But in this one poem, Catullus uses elements already familiar from verbal duels in Plautus, both in content (the comparison to a dog; the words *putidus* and *lutum*) and in form: the chanted refrain here takes the chiasmic form seen above in verbal duels, which is characteristic of *flagitatio*: “a stylistic device of popular eloquence,” as Fraenkel says (1961: 48). In Plautine *flagitatio*, verbs like *redde*, “return,” often appear, and the performance is said to take place either in the forum (*Epid.* 118–19, *Ps.* 1145) or in the street outside the debtor’s front door: “like a *flagitator* he’s always standing in front of my house,” *quasi flagitator astat usque ad ostium* (a lame joke about the sun, *Mos.* 768); cook to Euclio, “If you don’t order my pots to be returned right this second, / I’m going to tear you apart by squawking here in front of your house” (*te <iam> iam, nisi reddi / mihi vasa iubes, pipulo hic differam ante aedis, Aul.* 445–6).⁴⁹ When *flagitatio* takes place onstage, it is, then, in the right place: outside the front door. If the creditor has supporters, they surround the debtor (like Catullus and his hendecasyllables), with the verb *circumsisto* or forms of the adverb *altrinsecus*, and occasionally *clamor* or *flagitium*, *appello* or *compello*, used as a cue. In Plautus’ plays, slave characters sometimes serve as the little hendecasyllables do in Catullus’ poem.

So Libanus and Leonida surround their young owner, in a clinch with his beloved: “Let’s stand on either side of them, and, one of us from this side, from the other side, the other, let’s call them out” (*circumsistamus, alter hinc, hinc alter appellemus, As.* 618, ia7), a double chiasmus – here you can see how the sentence structure echoes the physical act of surrounding. The neighbor *senex* and the young man’s friend in *Mercator* surround the young man’s lecherous father, who has bought the young man’s *amica*: “I’ll stand next to him from here, on the other side. / Let’s both keep loading

⁴⁸ On hendecasyllabic meter in *skolia*, see Ellis 1889: xli; on *skolia* and verse-capping, Griffith 1990: 192–3. The association between *skolia* and the aristocratic symposium has been challenged by Gregory Jones, who associates them with “the voice of the demos” (2014: 257). Certainly *skolia* are picked up in Old Comedy in non-elite contexts. On verbal dueling in Catullus 42, see Fraenkel 1961, following Usener 1901: 20–1 and arguing that Catullus used the form in the spirit of Plautus and popular custom rather than that of Callimachus and antiquarian preciousness. Chiasmic structure appears in invective in Catullus 16.2; 58.1, 2; 61.124–8 (Fescennines), as well as in *Catalepton* 12.1–3 (Fescennines; note *putidum caput*, 12.1). Triple epithets like those in Naevius, *Com. inc.* 118 and *Persa* appear at Catull. 29.2, 10 (*impudicus et vorax et aleo*); this poem has a second refrain (29.5, 9, *cinaede Romule, haec videbis et feres?*).

⁴⁹ On *pipulo* here and in other testimonia as the racket made by *flagitatio*, see Usener 1901: 23. Usener compares *obvagulatam iro* in the XII Tables (2.3; Festus 262L), where the place of a subpoena is served by shouting outside the house door; *vagulatio* is defined as *quaestio cum convicio*, Festus 514L. Warmington, fond of a quaint translation, renders *obvagulatam* as “waul” (1938: 437). Compare *Poen.* 31, where the hungry babies *obvagiant* “like kids.” Usener notes the theme of animal noise comparison, and compares the term “Katzenmusik” as applied to the charivari (1901: 27).

him with the words he deserves” (*ego adsistam hinc alterinsecus. / quibus est dictis dignus usque oneremus ambo*, *Mer.* 977–8, tr7). Then the two of them take turns with the refrain “Are you still talking, you ghost?” (*etiam loquere, larva?* *Mer.* 981, 983); like the wife’s refrain at the end of *Asinaria* – “get up, lover, and go home” (*surge, amator, i domum*, 921, 923, 924, 925), also in tr7 – this one seems suitable for being picked up by the audience. Finally the friend says, “Give her back to him” (*redde illi*), and the father says, twice, “He can have her for himself” (*sibi habeat; sibi habeat licet*, 989) – relinquishing ownership.⁵⁰ When the slave Pseudolus and his young owner Calidorus move to attack Ballio, Calidorus orders Pseudolus, “Stand next to him on the other side and load him with insults” (*Ps.* 357, tr7, *adsiste altrim secus atque onera hunc maledictis*). The probably Plautine *Cornicula* seems to have had a scene in which characters surrounded a soldier to insult him, as Varro quotes from it: *quid cessamus ludos facere? circus noster ecce adest* (“Why hesitate to hold our games? Look, our Circus is here,” tr7, fr. 62); the soldier is the *circus*, Varro explains, because, when he enters, “those mocking him surround him” (*circumeunt ludentes*, *L.* 5.153). Again, here, *flagitatio* is a form of theater. Entertainingly, as the *senex* Periphanes in *Epidicus* realizes that the *fidicina* he has been trying to palm off on the soldier is freed and not saleable, and refuses to hand back to her the *fides* he has been holding, she threatens to dun him for it: “You’re not returning my *fides*? / ... I’ll leave. / But with a louder outcry you *will* return it later” (*fides non reddis? ... / ... abiero. / flagitio cum maiore post reddes tamen*, ia6, *Epid.* 514–16). Presumably she plans to come back with helpers.

The spectacular attack on Ballio takes the simple form of a rapid fire of epithets in the vocative case, spoken alternately by Calidorus and Pseudolus, each insult being smugly accepted by the pimp. The scene is prompted by the discovery that Ballio has sold something Calidorus wants – his *amica* (*Ps.* 347) – much as Charinus in *Mercator* wants his *amica* back, and Toxilus wants his *amica* to be freed. Money, however, is the basic problem; Ballio cues the barrage by pointing out that he, the wicked pimp, has money, while the self-righteous, well-born Calidorus has none (*ego scelestus nunc argentum promere potestis sum domo; / tu qui pius*,

⁵⁰ For the insulting response *etiam loquere*, see the insult duel between Sagaristio and Paegnium above (*Per.* 290), and below, chapter 6. This scene in *Mercator* is the only instance of *flagitatio* discussed by Scafiuro (1997: 185–6), who is mainly interested in what this scene has to do with the lost Greek original: “The *flagitatio* has replaced the mechanism of reconciliation that probably belonged to the Greek original. ... Here we have another instance of the parody of Attic social practice and theatrical convention.” Citing Usener, she sees *flagitatio* as related in general to “the public shaming of a wrong-doer,” and does not tie it in with the problem of debt (see below), which was not part of the purview of her study.

istoc es genere gnatus, nummum non habes, 355–6). Calidorus and Pseudolus take up their positions and set upon Ballio (359–68, tr7):

CALI. ingere mala multa. PS. iam ego te differam dictis meis.
 impudice. BA. itast. CALI. sceleste. BA. dicis vera. PS. verbero. 360
 BA. quippini? CALI. bustirape. BA. certo. PS. furcifer. BA. factum optume.
 CALI. sociofraude. BA. sunt mea istaec. PS. parricida. BA. perge tu.
 CALI. sacrilege. BA. fateor. PS. peiiure. BA. vetera vaticinamini.
 CALI. legerupa. BA. valide. PS. permities adulescentum. BA. acerrume.
 CALI. fur. BA. babae! PS. fugitive. BA. bombax! CALI. fraus populi.
 BA. planissume. 365
 PS. fraudulente. CALI. inpure. PS. leno. CALI. caenum. BA. cantores
 probos!
 CALI. verberavisti patrem atque matrem. BA. atque occidi quoque
 potius quam cibum praehiberem: num peccavi quippiam?
 CALI. Heap a lot of bad things on him. PS. Now I'll tear you apart with
 my words.
 Shameless slut.⁵¹ BA. Yup. CALI. Criminal. BA. You're right. PS. Flogbait.
 BA. Why not? CALI. Tomb-robber. BA. Sure. PS. Yoke-wearer. BA.
 Well done!
 CALI. Embezzler. BA. Done that, too. PS. Killed your parents. BA.
 Keep going.
 CALI. Temple-robber. BA. I confess. PS. Oath-breaker. BA. Old news.
 CALI. Law-breaker. BA. Very much so. PS. Young men's ruin. BA. So glad
 to do it!
 CALI. Thief. BA. Oh yeah. PS. Runaway. BA. Yowza. CALI. Cheater of the
 people. BA. So obviously. 365
 PS. Cheater. CALI. Unclean. PS. Pimp. CALI. Filth. BA. Honest
 eulogy, guys!
 CALI. You flogged your father and mother. BA. And killed them, too,
 rather than give them food: did I do something wrong?

The pounding beat of trochaic septenarii fosters the litany of single-word insults while the long line makes room for changes of speaker; compare the long scene between Mercurius and Sosia at the beginning of *Amphitruo* (263–462, tr7, demarcated by change of meter), or between Libanus and Leonida at *Asinaria* 267–380 (tr7), or between Paegnium and Sophoclidisca at *Persa* 200–50 (tr7). The terms of abuse are familiar from the verbal duels seen above, and add a calendar of the worst crimes in Roman culture: tomb-robbing, temple-robbing, breaking an oath, fraud, killing parents. In addition, Ballio is called by names usually reserved for

⁵¹ See Usener 1901: 25 n. 48: “*Impudicus* steht geradezu für *pathicus*” (with some later parallels). This duel inspired Usener's essay, as Fraenkel noted; Usener discusses it in full at 1901: 25–7.

slaves (*verbero, furcifer, fugitive*), and accused of doing what pimps do for a living – ruin young men (364); indeed, “pimp” itself is used here, self-reflexively, as an insult (366) – the ultimate insult, for Pseudolus. Ballio’s winning technique takes the novel form of acceding to each insult, usually the mark of a lost point in a duel, as seen above with *accipiam* and *patiar*. That Ballio feels no shame is part of his onstage identity as a pimp, as he says himself (1081–3, above); as Toxilus says to Sagaristio when Dordalus charges him extra for a moneybag: “He’s a pimp, he’s not doing anything surprising” (*quando lenost, nihil mirum facit, Per.* 688).

That being shouted at in public was normally shameful is implied by jokes. When young Stratippocles in *Epidicus* asks his friend Chaeribulus for a loan, Chaeribulus first says, “God, if I had it, I’d <promise you>” (*si hercle haberem <pollicerer>*, 116); pressed further, he replies, “But I myself, by God, am torn apart by shouting, I am dunned” (*quin edepol egomet clamore differor, diffлагitor*, 118; for *differor*, compare *Aul.* 446, *Ps.* 359, above). Stratippocles’ reply shows how bad this is: “I’d rather my friends like you were burned up in the oven than flamed in the forum” (*malim istiusmodi mi amicos forno occensos quam foro*, 119.⁵² He has the bakehouse on his mind; two lines later, he threatens the eavesdropping Epidicus with the *pistor*). Chaeribulus is like a slave here in that a slave has no money, but also in that he is shouted at; Epidicus, at the end of the play, complains, “I’m being shouted at like a slave” (*inclamitor quasi servos*, 711; a joke, since he is still a slave). For a free person, this is degrading, and not only metaphorically so, for an audience familiar with debt bondage (below). The prologue speaker in *Menaechmi* says he can remember Menaechmus’ grandfather’s name the more easily “because I saw him dunned by shouting” (*quia illum clamore vidi flagitarier, Men.* 46) – a laugh line. When the soldier’s slave Harpax first sees the *senex* Simo and the pimp Ballio, he asks Simo if he is the pimp, pointing at him; Simo gets angry, threatens him with a beating, and clears things up: “He’s the pimp [points at Ballio], but *this guy* [points at self] is an honest man” (*hic leno est, at hic est vir probus, Ps.* 1144). Ballio picks him up on this: “But you, Mr. Good Man, are often dunned by shouting in the forum, / when there’s never a nickel, except what this pimp assists you with” (*sed tu, bone vir, flagitare saepe clamore in foro, / quom libella nusquamst, nisi quid leno hic subvenit tibi, Ps.* 1145–6) – the same point he scores off Simo’s son Calidorus in the *flagitatio* scene.

⁵² *Occensos* is Usener’s emendation for the MSS *mensos* (1901: 12 n. 20), engineering a play on *occensus* “burned up” (only in Ennius, *Ann.* 14.9 [v. 387 Skutsch], attested by Festus 218L) and *occentatio*, the process of chanting at someone, on which see below.

Charinus in *Mercator* complains that his own father “sets up a shout all over the city” to announce that no one should trust him if he asked for a loan (51–2; *conclamitare tota urbe*). As seen in chapter 2, the *Advocati* in *Poenulus* say proudly, “We don’t dun anybody and nobody duns us” (*neque nos quemquam flagitamus neque nos quisquam flagitat*, 539).

The basic problem is credit, and a public reputation for trustworthiness. In an extended scene in *Mostellaria*, the moneylender Misargyrides (“Son of Cash-hater”) sets out to dun Philolaches for the interest on the money he has loaned him (all in *senarii*). He makes it clear that he wants the interest first, and then the principal (592, 598–600), and Tranio, to his face, calls this free man “beast” (*belua*, 569, 607–8, 619); both in Misargyrides’ presence and after he exits, Tranio expresses loathing for moneylenders as a class: “a man who’s a *danista*, the class that’s most dishonest” (*danista qui sit, genu’ quod improbisimum est*, 626); “By God, no class of persons is more disgusting today / nor less legitimate than the moneylending class” (*nullum edepol hodie genus est hominum taetrius / nec minu’ bono cum iure quam danisticum*, 657–8). Misargyrides is identified throughout the scene as a *danista*, and this Greek occupation-type enters the forum along with the cash-flow problems endemic in the Hellenistic world, as seen in chapter 1.

Onstage, Misargyrides is standing in front of Philolaches’ house, and he begins to shout for his money: “I know you have a good voice, don’t shout so much,” says Tranio (*scio te bona esse voce, ne clama nimis*, 576); “By God, but I’m really going to shout,” replies the moneylender (*ego hercle vero clamo*, 577); “Whoa, vigorous! / You’re enjoying good fortune now that you’re shouting,” says Tranio, cutting him off in mid-yell (*eugae strenue! / beatus vero es nunc quom clamas*, 587–8); the moneylender threatens to shout for Philolaches by name (*iam hercle ego illunc nominabo*, 587), and to stay in front of the house until midday (582). Tranio brings up and dismisses the idea that Philolaches might go into exile on account of the debt (596–7); that the dunning is a cause of shame is explicitly stated by Tranio’s owner: “Why is this man calling out (*compellat*) my son Philolaches so / and why is he making an insulting outcry (*convicium*) in your presence?” (616–17). Misargyrides, although without any helpers, is warming up for a full-fledged *flagitatio*, and tells Tranio that, if he will only pay up, this will put an end to all his *responsiones* (591) – a reminder of *respondeo* in the insult match between Toxilus and Dordalus. Sure enough, when no money is forthcoming, the moneylender begins to chant (*Mos.* 603–5):

cedo faenus, redde faenus, faenus reddite.
 daturin estis faenus actutum mihi?
 datur faenus mi? ...

Give me the interest, return the interest, the interest – you guys, return it.
Aren't you going to give me the interest right now?
Will the interest be given to me? ...

“Interest there, interest here!” says Tranio, reduced to mimicry (*faenus illic, faenus hic!*, 605).

The moneylender's chant picks up on the earlier exchange between him (“Will the interest then be returned to me,” *reddetur igitur faenus?*) and Tranio (“It will return: now go away,” *reddet: nunc abi, Mos.* 580), which is continued by Tranio's line, “No, go home, by God, I'm telling the truth, just go away” (*immo abi domum, verum hercle dico, abi modo*, 583). The injunction to go away repeats the duel between Tranio and Grumio and the duel between Olympio and Chalinus; as for the format, it can now be seen that, in the duel between Toxilus and Dordalus, each of their speeches ends with a classically chiasmic *flagitatio* refrain. Each uses the *flagitatio* format to cap his stream of insults; returning to the duel in *Persa*, we can now see how Toxilus ironically reverses the usual demand by dunning the pimp to *take* the money to free his *amica* (*Per.* 412–14):

accipin argentum? accipe sis argentum, inpu-dens,
tene sis argentum, etiam tu argentum tenes?
possum te facere ut argentum accipias, lutum?

Will you take your cash? Please take your cash, shameless!
Please have your cash, your cash, are you even going to have it?
Can I make you take your cash, dirtbag?

Dordalus returns to convention (422–4, *cedo sis mi argentum, da mihi argentum, impudens*), and underscores the point by saying he is shouting for his cash “so all may hear” (426).

Money is the basic problem, but female slaves are also a commodity. The practice of *occentatio* in Plautus consists of a mob first clamoring for a woman outside the doors of a house and then setting fire to the doors; the woman's owners are shamed by the process. The scene somewhat resembles the *charivari* as attested in modern Europe, in that it enforces community values, although *occentatio* more blatantly expresses the crowd's straight-forward desire for the woman.⁵³ The *senex* in *Mercator* paints a picture of what is likely to happen if his son presents his mother with *Pasicompsa* as an attendant (405–11, tr7):

⁵³ On the *charivari*, see Davis 1971 (on sixteenth-century France), esp. 52–3; Barker 2013 (on seventeenth-century Italy); Thompson 1992 on the English equivalent, “rough music,” esp. on the

... illa forma matrem familias 405
 flagitium sit sei sequatur; quando incedat per vias,
 contemplant, conspiciant omnes, nutent, nictent, sibilent,
 vellicent, vocent, molesti sint; occentent ostium:
 impleantur elegeorum meae fores carbonibus.
 atque, ut nunc sunt maledicentes homines, uxori meae 410
 mihique obiectent lenocinium facere. ...

... A shape like that, if she were accompanying 405
 a married lady, it'd be a public scandal; when she'd be walking down the
 street,
 they'd all stare, they'd look at her, they'd nod, they'd wink, they'd whistle,
 they'd pinch her, call her, they'd annoy her; they'd set up a chant outside
 the door:
 my front door would be filled up with coals of poesy.
 Also, the way people are given to insult these days, they'd be accusing 410
 my wife and me of setting up in the pimp business.

The *flagitium* he fears here is related to the *flagitium* the *fidicina* threatens to use to get her *fides* back: something simultaneously disgraceful and loud. According to Cicero, the XII Tables included strictures against anyone “who had performed *occentatio* or made up a song whereby he caused disrepute or *flagitium* to another” (*si quis occentavisset sive carmen condidisset, quo infamiam faceret flagitiumve alteri*, *De rep.* 4.2 = XII Tables 8.1), and Festus says, retailing the opinion of Verrius Flaccus in the late Republic (190L),

Occentassint antiqui dicebant quod nunc convicium fecerint dicimus, quod id clare et cum quodam canore fit, ut procul exaudiri possit. Quod turpe habetur, quia non sine causa fieri putatur. Inde cantilenam dici †querellam, non cantus† iucunditatem, puto.⁵⁴

The ancients used to say *occentassint* [“they sang against”] to describe what we now would call *convicium fecerint* [“they made an insulting outcry”], because this is done loudly and with a certain melodic quality, so that it can be heard from far off. It is considered shameful, because it is thought to be

use of rhyming, memorization of format and elements, the relation of folk to “dignified” forms, and the “total publicity of disgrace” (8); also Davis 1975: 139, on “truth-telling.” Usener ended his study of “folk justice” with a note on the persistence of these forms into medieval Italy, as attested by the city ordinances of Bergamo. See below on the parallel with some Greek customs, and Forsdyke 2012: 144–70, for comparison between Greek and early modern customs.

⁵⁴ I print Lindsay’s text with the dubious parts obelized; the noteworthy word in the last sentence is *cantilenam*, with its suggestion of singsong and repetition. *Querellam* is a conjecture for MSS *quia illam*, already in Paulus; as *cantus* is for *candus*.

done not without cause. Hence I think the [grievance?] is so called [because it takes the form of?] a refrain, [not for the] pleasingness [of the song?].

The elements of loudness and the refrain format, in these definitions, link together *occentatio* and *flagitatio* with the abstract terms *flagitium* and *convicium*, seen above in *Bacchides* and *Mostellaria*.⁵⁵ Again here in *Mercator*, capping the mostly non-verbal street harassment, there is some kind of chant in front of the house door, and the house is treated as a brothel, the family as brothel-keepers like Ballio. A married lady should have an ugly maid, the old man argues, one because of whom “no *flagitium* would come to our front door” (*neque ... quicquam eveniet nostris foribus flagiti*, 417).

The *carbones* at the climax of the attack on the house are sticks of charcoal to write with, scrawling the *elegea* (a unique use of this term in Plautus) onto the door like a slave tattoo, a visual version of the chanting in *occentent* (cf. Catull. 37.10). Yet their fiery origin is strongly suggested by the description of *occentatio* that Toxilus uses while persuading Dordalus to buy the Virgo (all in tr7). He paints a picture of how rich she will make him, and how many of the “best men” (*optimis viris*) will come to him for a party (*Per.* 564–8); Dordalus, slow on the uptake, says he will keep them outside; Toxilus then cannot resist a swerve aside into threatening the pimp: “But then they’ll chant in front of your door at night, they’ll burn down your front door” (*at enim illi noctu occentabunt ostium, exurent fores*, 569): an elite mob. The extreme act of arson is connected in Greek performance texts with the climax of komastic revelry (implicitly upper-class), and *parasitōi* in Middle Comedy boast of their ability to help their patrons attack a house: climbing ladders, fighting, prying doors open, rushing in. The pimp in Herodas *Mim.* 2 complains about such behavior, again with a class inflection (33–9, cf. 52). In the *palliata*, parties are not so violent.⁵⁶ But fire and the charivari underlie Usener’s suggested emendation of *occensos* seen above, in a context that combines an oven

⁵⁵ For discussion, see Lintott 1999: 8–9; Usener 1901: 3–5, with reference to this passage in *Mercator* and to the passage below in *Persa*. On the fear of public disgrace over failed *fides* expressed in *flagitium volgo dispalescere* at *Bac.* 1046, see Owens 1994: 397.

⁵⁶ In Middle Comedy: Aristophon, *Iatros* fr. 5 = Ath. 6.238b–c; Antiphanes *Progonoi* fr. 193, = Ath. 6.238c–d. For a wide array of sources, see Headlam 2001[1922]: 82–4, on Herodas *Mim.* 2.36–7: “one of the most picturesque features of Greek and Roman life, the practice of young men in the evening after their wine ... sallying forth alone or in bands” (82). In the *palliata*, violence at the house door only at *Bac.* 1118–20 (no fire, just a threat of axes, instantly quashed) and Terence, *Eun.* 771–91 (a comic military assault, with a very faint suggestion of fire in the invocation of King Pyrrhus, 783 – “Burns”).

with *flagitatio*. A connection with burning, although not based in etymology, hangs around both terms: *flagito* with *flagro*, *occento* with *incendo*. The infatuated young man at the pimp's door in *Curculio* is at the right address when he cues himself, "Suppose I go up to the front door and set up a chant?" (*quid si adeam ad fores atque occentem*, 145); the polite and silly serenade that follows, then, is something of a surprise.

The practices of *flagitatio* and *occentatio* have points in common with *quiritatio*, the public cry for help whereby a person in trouble could appeal to all others in earshot to defend him against hostile force. By the time of Varro, it had this name, with its basis in citizenship: *quiritare dicitur is qui Quiritium fidem clamans implorat* ("That man is said to 'quiritate' who shouts to invoke the *fides* of the *Quirites* [Roman citizens]," *L.* 6.68). This is certainly the sense it bears in sources from the later Republic; in the *palliata*, however, the practice is not so restrictive, although the conjoined terms *fidem*, *clamo*, and *imploro* have a well-established technical sense onstage. Possible interactive staging is suggested by several direct appeals to the audience for help (*auxilium*) in cases of theft, all of which invite the audience to point and shout out directions: the slave-woman Halisca calls on "my dear people, my dear spectators" (*mei homines, mei spectatores*, *Cist.* 678); the soldier in *Curculio* offers a reward (590); the miser Euclio beseeches the audience, "I beg you, ... / I plead, I call you to witness" (*opsecro ego vos ... / oro, optestor*, *Aul.* 715–16). Fear of violence, however, rates full *quiritatio*, perhaps inviting a barrage of *fabuli* from the audience. The *parasitus* Curculio, who has been treated as a slave by the soldier, first starts a fistfight and then calls on the citizens for help: *o cives, cives!* (*Cur.* 626). Menaechmus I, attacked by the slaves of the *senex*, appeals to the citizens of Epidamnus for help: "I beg your loyal help, / Epidamnians, rescue me, citizens!" (*opsecro vostram fidem, / Epidamnienses, subvenite, cives!* *Men.* 999–1000). In a way, he performs a counter-*flagitatio*, as he asks of the crowd attacking him, "Why are you surrounding me?" (*quid me circumstistitis?* 998). In the event, it is the loyal slave Messenio who comes to the rescue. As seen in chapter 2, Sosia slips in a bit of *quiritatio* when he calls out to the audience (or to the gods), *obsecro vostram fidem* (*Am.* 455); the formal cry was *pro fidem, Quirites!* Indeed Sosia has made use of the formula earlier, as Mercurius beats him: *pro fidem, Thebani cives!* (376), at which Mercurius jeers, "Are you still shouting, you executioner?" (*etiam clamas, carnufex?*) – an ironic insult to choose, in the circumstances. Sosia, of course, is no citizen, but he is certainly being forcibly abused, and needs rescuing; he is not the only slave in the *palliata* to make such an appeal,

either. The slave Trachalio in *Rudens* appeals to the citizens of Cyrene to come to the aid of the two slave prostitutes who have taken refuge in the shrine of Venus, in an elaborate *quiritatio* (615–26, erupting into tr7 in an entrance cued by *quid hic ... clamoris oritur*, 613–14):

TR. Pro Cyrenenses populares! vostram ego imploro fidem, 615
 agricolae, accolae propinqui qui estis his regionibus,
 ferite opem inopiae atque exemplum pessimum pessum date.
 vindicate, ne inpiorum potior sit pollutentia
 quam innocentum, qui se scelere fieri nolunt nobilis.
 statuite exemplum inpudenti, date pudori praemium, 620
 facite hic lege potius liceat quam vi victo vivere.
 currite huc in Veneris fanum, vostram iterum imploro fidem,
 qui prope hic adestis quique auditis clamorem meum,
 ferite suppetias qui Veneri Veneriaeque antistitae
 more antiquo in custodelam suam commiserunt caput; 625
 praetorqueite iniuriae priu' collum quam ad vos pervenat.

TR. Help! Fellow-countrymen of Cyrene! I invoke your *fides*, 615
 farmers, neighbors, who are nearby in these parts,
 bring help to the helpless and do your worst to the worst kind.
 Deliver them, lest the power of the impious be more powerful
 than of the innocent, who do not want themselves to be made notorious
 by crime.
 Make an example for the shameless, give a prize to chastity, 620
 make this a place where it's permitted to the vanquished to live by law
 rather than by force.
 Run to the shrine of Venus here, I invoke your *fides* again,
 you who are nearby here, and you who hear my outcry,
 Bring help to those who have entrusted their *caput* to Venus
 and to the guardianship of Venus' priestess, in the age-old custom; 625
 wring the neck of *iniuria* before it comes to you.

Indeed he makes quite a ruckus (*clamorem* 623 picking up 614), and Daemones, as he interrupts and Trachalio flings himself at his knees, expresses annoyance, ordering him, “Explain to me why you are starting a riot” (*quid sit mi expedi / quod tumultues*, 628–9). This cues a loop of shtick, punctuated by the repeated cue *ut mi istuc dicas negoti quid sit quod tumultues* (638); *tumultus* was civil unrest necessitating an emergency call to arms: the owner's view, just as Daemones' *clamoris* differs from Trachalio's *clamorem*.⁵⁷ All Trachalio's language, however, resonates with themes seen

⁵⁷ Wallochny 1992: 68–9 comments on the loop of shtick but not on the *quiritatio*. On *tumultus* and the call to arms it justified, see Lintott 1999: 91, 153–4; Brunt 1971a: 629–30 on tumultuary levies, for example the one held on the occasion of the slave uprising in 198 BCE. In the plays, *tumultus*

above: he appeals to his *populares*, fellow members of the *populus*; he asks for help for the helpless (lit. “those without resources”), expressed in terms of *opes* and *inopia* (contrast the *opulento homini* of Sosti’s song), while the wicked are to be punished as a correct *exemplum*; power should not threaten the innocent; the two girls are credited with *caput*, as if they were free (see chapter 2); notoriety for victimhood is feared; merit should be rewarded; and *vi victo vivere* is here rejected for the rule of law and custom – the reverse of the cheerleading *virtute victores vivere*. Law and *mos* belong to the *populus* (cf. *Cur.* 509–11, below; *Trin.* 1028–58, which also reclaims *mos*); *iniuria*, damage to honor, threatens all, low as well as high (see chapter 2). In a typically Plautine personification, Trachalio calls on the people to “wring the neck” of *iniuria*, implying a powerful gesture; he employs the powerful verb *vindicare*, which, as will be seen in chapter 8, is the word for what a person does who reclaims a person wrongfully enslaved; and indeed Trachalio is calling for help for two slave-women clinging to an altar and beset by a pimp (cf. 643–5). Here *clamor* serves as a defense, and *fides* stands guard; in *quiritatio*, *fides* is more than faith, trust, or a good credit rating, and appeals to a network of persons, of legal subjects.⁵⁸ It is important that slave characters onstage can appeal to the *populus*; these speeches blur the line between slaves and the free poor.

Yet *fides* poses a major problem for a slave. A slave’s promise, or oath, has nothing to back it, for a slave officially has no honor to lose, a slave has no *fides*. In return, a slave cannot expect *fides* from an owner; as seen in chapter 1, Paegnium makes a significant complaint about this. His owner Toxilus, exasperated, says to him, *peculiabo* – “I’ll peculate you” (*Per.* 192). This is a probable sexual threat framed as a promise of money, and Paegnium’s joking response takes off from the promise and returns the threat, with a wink to the audience (see chapter 6 on face-out lines): “God, I know how owners’ *fides* is always accused of sluttishness / but they can’t ever be forced to bend – to judgment on that *fides*” (*scio fide hercle erili ut soleat inpudicitia opprobriari / nec subigi queantur umquam ut pro ea fide habeant iudicem*, *Per.* 193–4, tr7; see chapter 1 on *erilis*). The wording

tumultuo are associated with loud noise at the house door (*Bac.* 1120, *Mil.* 172, *Poen.* 207, *Trin.* 1176) and the beating of hated characters (*Mil.* 1393, *Rud.* 661); the political sense is explicit in a joke at *Poen.* 524–5 (*non decet tumultuari*; see chapter 7). In all cases, these words describe disorderly conduct.

⁵⁸ See Fantham 2005 on the relation between *quiritatio* and popular freedom in Livy; Lintott 1999: 11–14 on *quiritatio*, esp. Trachalio’s speech, 7 on stoning as “a form of angry demonstration.” Fraenkel cites the Plautine instances of *quiritatio* in arguing that *fides* was invoked by the weak seeking help from the strong, the appeal to the gods in expressions like *obsecro vostram fidem* being modeled on human relations (1916: 193, 195).

impudicitia opprobriari is startling, and suggests a common (*soleat*) off-stage resentment. An owner's meaningless promises form a running gag in *Mostellaria* (174–5, 184–5, 252–3) and in *Poenulus* (133–7, 428–44). The chief promise arousing anxiety in slaves onstage is the promise to manumit (chapter 8), which is why Chrysalus (an expert on the legal process of promising) predicts that his owner will endow him with freedom, “to the extent that I’ll never get it” (*ego adeo numquam accipiam*, *Bac.* 828–9).⁵⁹ This anxiety, in turn, is directly related to the poor man’s anxiety over debt.

Debt and Shame, *Fides* and Credit

The prologue speaker of *Casina* defines the *ludi* as a time and place where the audience can forget their worries and their debts, and the bankers have been eluded (23–8):

eicite ex animo curam atque alienum aes*,
 ne quis formidet flagitatorem suum:
 ludi sunt, ludus datus est argentariis; 25
 tranquillum est, Alcedonia sunt circum forum:
 ratione utuntur, ludis poscunt neminem,
 secundum ludos reddunt autem nemini.

Throw your worries out of your mind, along with your debt,
 and don't let anyone be afraid of the man who duns him:
 it's time for the games, and we've played a game on the bankers;
 it's peaceful – in the forum it's like the Alcedonia. 25
 They're calculating; during the games they don't hound anyone,
 but after the games they won't pay a thing back to anyone.

These lines address the audience in general, and assume that bankers are the common enemy, dishonest dealers who deserve to be tricked, and that debt is a common problem. Certainly it was a problem for some people. The prologue speaker in *Captivi* jokes that he must pay the audience the “balance” of his story because he does not want to be in debt (*accipite reliquam: alieno uti nil moror*, 16). As seen above, he has focused from the start of his speech on vertical differences in the audience, saying that the two chained men are standing (onstage) “because those guys are standing

⁵⁹ For Chrysalus' legal expertise in the context of *fides*, see Owens 1994: 392. Chrysalus' line is commonly taken to mean that he would refuse to be manumitted; surely *accipio* here has its technical sense in the context of money and legal promises (like its counterpart *reddo*), and means “receive” and not “accept” (despite de Melo 2011a: 453 and many school texts and translations available online). See chapter 1 for the idea that there are “slaves content in their servitude” in comedy. For *accipio* as a technical term, see examples below.

there” (*illi quia astant*, 2), as he points to audience members without seats. Then he singles one out at the back (*illic ultimus*) who says he didn’t “get it” and calls him to the front (*accedito*): “if you don’t have a place to sit, there’s a place you can take a walk, / since you’re forcing an actor to be a beggar” (*si non ubi sedeas locus est, est ubi ambules, / quando histrionem cogis mendicariet*, 12–13) – surely a plant, as in the *Amphitruo* prologue discussed above. The speaker specifically addresses the “balance” of his explanation to “you who can be assessed for your wealth” (*vos qui potestis ope vestra censeri*, 15), as if the seated audience were his potential creditors, or as if the rest of the audience could not hear: another joke, and not a friendly joke. An entire segment of the city population, the *proletarii*, were defined – as opposed to *assidui* – precisely by their lack of wealth to assess.⁶⁰ A related joke is made by Auxilium in *Cistellaria*, speaking his (late) prologue: “Now I want to pay off the balance remaining, / so that my name will be taken off the ledgers, and I won’t be in debt” (*nunc quod relicuom restat volo persolvere / ut expungatur nomen, ne quid debeam*, 188–9). Toxilus in *Persa* caps his reverse *flagitatio* with financial language: “You didn’t think I could get my hands on that much cash, / so you wouldn’t risk giving me credit unless I swore to it?” (*non mihi censebas copiam argenti fore / qui nisi iurato mihi nil ausus credere?* 415–16). These lines are full of significant terminology: *censebas*, “assess” (like a censor); *copiam argenti*, “plenty of ready cash”; *iurato*, “sworn on oath” (with legal implications – not something a slave could usually do); *credere*, “give credit.” His words here, and a major theme in *Persa* as a whole, address a situation that plagued most ancient cities and became particularly pressing during the wars of the 200s BCE: poor people were mired in debt.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For discussion of this passage, see Moore 1994/5: 118–19; Moore 1998: 195; above, n. 6; and Dressler 2016: 37–41, on the economic relations in play. An unspoken joke on *assidui*, “those with enough wealth to be assessed by the census”/ “those sitting down,” may be in play; although *assiduus* in its class sense does not certainly appear in the corpus (? *Trin.* 202), it appears in the XII Tables (1.4 = Gell. 16.10.5). Gellius’ antiquarian interlocutor opines that “property and family money were held to be like a hostage and security to the state, and there was in it a certain *fides*, a guarantee of patriotism” (*amorisque in patriam fides quaedam*, 16.10.11).

⁶¹ On debt in the 300s–200s BCE, see Andreatu 1999: 64–70 (on slaves and their *peculium*); Andreatu 2002: 115, 123–5; Millett 1991: 74–9, on poverty and debt in Athens; Richlin 2014b: 207–10; Walbank 1981: 167–75; and below on *nexum*. On credit problems for the “new poor” in classical Athens as denizens of the *emporium* (including prostitutes), see Vélissaropoulos-Karakostas 2002: 132–3, with Vlassopoulos 2007, and compare Leigh 2004: 118–23 on the significance of the port in the *palliata*. On the procedure for bankruptcy, during which the bankrupt was sold *sub hasta*, see Mayor *ad* Juvenal 3.33 (*et praeberere caput domina venale sub hasta*), with many legal references. Procedure for bankruptcy in Plautus involves the *parasitus* Gelasimus who auctions his belongings (see below), as well as the pimps in *Curculio* and *Poenulus* who are threatened with bonds and litigation (*Cur.* 718–23, *Poen.* 1338–66, 1408–9). Livy, at least, connected debt problems in the Republic with mandatory

Legally, moreover, slaves could not own property at all; everything they acquired was for their owner (this is Gripus' problem with the suitcase, as later with his finder's fee, in *Rudens*). This is what makes it such a radical claim when the *Advocati* in *Poenulus* say they paid their own money for their *caput*. Slaves onstage, as also later attested in law, were allowed to accumulate money in a *peculium*, which they were expected to apply towards purchasing their freedom from their owner; hence that particularly Roman virtue, *frugi*, means, for a slave, simultaneously "thrifty" and "good" (cf. *Capt.* 956–7).⁶² So Syncerastus describes slave customers in his owner's brothel as losing their *peculium* "for their owners" (*Poen.* 843); the owner is expecting to get this money in the end, to make up for the money he spent on the slave's purchase price, if any, and on his keep over the years. (He would get it one way or another, for the money was his if the slave died before manumission; three hundred years later, the younger Pliny indulgently let his slaves make wills, as long as they kept the money in the household: no loss to him [*Ep.* 8.16].) Lack of a *peculium*, in the plays, is thus counted as a moral failing on a slave's part: so Lysidamus says that Chalinus has none, as opposed to the *frugi* Olympio (*Cas.* 254–8), and Stalagmus bitterly accepts chains as the correct pay for a slave without one (*Capt.* 1028). The cost of desired goods had to come out of the *peculium*; Stichus' owner means it when he says Stichus' *amica* must be paid for "out of your pocket" (*de tuo*, *St.* 426), and, as seen in chapter 2, Stichus and Sangarinus, when Stephanium tells them she will lie with both of them, know what that means to their savings towards freedom (751). The owner here incentivizes abstinence. Evidently Stephanium's "love" for the rivals will be adding to her own *peculium*; Sangarinus is her *conservos* (433), but she is making money on the side (cf. Paegnum, *Per.* 192, 285). While *in patria potestate*, sons also had *peculia*, of which slaves might form a part, as Tyndarus was given to Philocrates (*Capt.* 988); slaves (called *vicarii*) might also be part of a slave's *peculium*, as Sophoclidisca belongs to Lemniselenis (*Per.* 201, 248) and Paegnum belongs to Toxilus (247) – just as slaves might form part of a woman's dowry, like the unseen *atriensis* in *Asinaria* (85). Indeed, Leonida, pretending to be that *atriensis*, is credited with a *vicarius* by his henchman, as part of the effort to make him appear fiscally sound (*As.* 433–4).

army service; see Brunt 1971a: 642; Fantham 2005; *contra*, Rosenstein 2004: 54–5. For an extended analogy between the *palliata* and Depression-era film comedy, see Gunderson 2015: 243–50.

⁶² On the custom of the *peculium* in the mid-Republic, see Watson 1971: 45, citing *As.* 539–41 as "very significant" (the prostitute Philaenium to her mother: "even the shepherd who tends another man's ewes, Mother, has one for his own [*peculiarem*], to comfort his hope with").

Therefore, for a slave, cash was the best good thing of all, convertible into food, love, and freedom, the key to getting goods for oneself; this is perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the ending of *Pseudolus* – that Simo feels forced to give the slave twenty minas, rather than torture him “as in other comedies,” and he hands over the money onstage (1238–45, 1313–17). Big money very rarely comes into slaves’ possession in the plays; a plot point, as the golden Chrysalus himself observes (*Bac.* 676). Gripus’ hopes of hanging on to the money in the suitcase, or even to his finder’s fee, are repeatedly denied by his owner, in the end with cold finality: “By God, there’s nothing here for you, don’t get your hopes up” (*nihil hercle hic tibi est, ne tu speres, Rud.* 1414). From the start, Gripus knows he will have to make a deal with his owner for his freedom before he lets on about his find (928–9). Likewise, the Slave of Lyconides hopes vainly to convince his owner to let him use the pot of gold to buy his freedom (*Aul.* 816–17, cf. 823). In the normal course of events, rarely do slaves even obtain temporary control of large sums (shaving a bit off small sums is a joke, as at *Truc.* 562). Sagaristio’s owner entrusts the cattle money to him (*Per.* 260–1), but Leonida and Libanus, despite elaborate efforts (*As.* 407–503), cannot get the Mercator to entrust the donkey money to Leonida, who is pretending to be the *atriensis* Saurea. Leonida makes a show of asking about money owed to the household (432–45); they both claim the owner trusts Leonida (456–62); Leonida calls the money “My twenty minas” (*viginti minas meas*, 468); they boast of Leonida’s reputation for fiscal probity at Athens and in high-value trade (492–3, 499–501). Standing on his dignity, Leonida/Saurea finally accuses the Mercator of *iniuria*, a public assault on his honor, and says, “Although I wear a working man’s clothes, / I am prudent (*frugi*) nonetheless, and my *peculium* is immeasurable” (*quamquam ego sum sordidatus, / frugi tamen sum, nec potest peculium enumerari*, 497–8; see chapter 2). None of it works; to get the money, they need their owner to vouch for Leonida (579–84). When they finally have the *crumina* full of money in their possession, they dangle it before their young owner to make him crawl for it (see chapter 4).

Even *Pseudolus*, pretending to be Ballio’s slave Syrus, cannot get the soldier’s slave Harpax to give him the money owed the pimp. He claims to be, not the *atriensis*, but the one who gives orders to the *atriensis* (609); he says he handles the pimp’s accounts, receiving and paying out money (*accepto, dato*, 626–7); he claims that six hundred times as much is habitually entrusted to him (*soleant credier*, 632). “You had to come stick a fork in my credit!” he laments (*inventus ... meam qui furcilles fidem*, 631). “I’ll never trust you,” says Harpax (*numquam credam*, 629); “I wouldn’t trust

you” (*ut ne credam tibi*, 633); “I’ll never trust a dollar to anyone but Ballio himself” (*nummum credam nemini*, 644). (He, at least, has been trusted with money, and is last seen on the way to pick up much more; he thinks, however, that he can trust the pimp, a self-professed perjurer, and has trusted Pseudolus with something more valuable than money, providing an object lesson in the superiority of brains to obedience.) Chrysalus, the embodiment of cash flow (*copiam*, *Bac.* 639a), only handles money directly once, among all his schemes (1066). The *vilicus* Collybiscus in *Poenulus* is given the “three hundred golden Philips” only in order to trick the pimp, and happily lets the *Advocati* inspect his bankroll (*Poen.* 597); they let the audience know it is only stage money, “comic” money (598–9). All he gets from the deal is an unexpected meal (802–4). Money is scarce.

The problem of debt and the need for credit pervade the *palliata*. Previous discussions of *fides* have treated it as, by definition, a virtue of the powerful (the *summi viri*, the Roman state) in relation to the weak (dependents, conquered states): asymmetrical.⁶³ But within the world of the *palliata*, *fides* is commonly treated as something everybody needs: a reciprocal value, inherently even (*aequom*) rather than uneven. For people at the bottom, survival is at stake, before politics. Their world is hazardous. The Choragus in *Curculio*, before he begins his tour of the Forum, worries about having trusted the rented costumes to Phaedromus (464, 466 *credidī*); the Forum as he sees it is full of untrustworthy characters – perjurers (470), liars (471), false accusers (478–9), moneylenders (*qui dant quique accipiunt faenore*, 480), and just “those you should not trust” (*quibu’ credas male*, 481). Soon after this scene, *Curculio*, disguised as the freedman “Thunder God,” exclaims that associating with pimps causes people to lose their credit rating (502–4, 1a7):

nec vobiscum quisquam in foro frugi consistere audet;
qui constitit, culpant eum, conspicitur, vituperatur,
eum rem fidemque perdere, tam etsi nil fecit, aiunt.

Nor does anyone prudent dare to stand with you in the forum;
anyone who’s done so, they blame him, he’s stared at, he’s insulted,
they say he’s lost his assets and his credit, even if he’s done nothing.

⁶³ On the pervasiveness of the issue: “credit is everywhere in the plays of Plautus and Terence” (Callataÿ 2015: 36), though he takes this to reflect Menander’s Athens; the lucid account in Kay 2014: 1–7, 107–25 is grounded in the Roman historical context. The issue is central in only six extant plays (*Asinaria*, *Curculio*, *Epidicus*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Trinummus*, presumably also in the lost *Addictus* and *Faeneratrix*), but numerous casual remarks on banking show up elsewhere. On *fides*, see Owens 1994: 387 for a review going back to Fraenkel 1916 and Heinze 1929; on the religious roots of *fides*, Burton 2011: 40–1, with further bibliography.

The honest man here is *frugi* – a virtue elsewhere consistently associated with good slaves who save up their *peculium* to pay for their manumission – and two things are at stake: *res* and *fides*. The Virgo in *Persa*, pleading with her father not to sell her to the pimp, even falsely, points out to him that poor people need a good reputation: “for, if *infamiae* move in with poverty, / poverty gets heavier, and your *fides* gets weaker” (*nam ad paupertatem si admigrant infamiae, / gravior paupertas fit, fides sublestior*, *Per.* 347–8). The vulnerability of monetary, personal *fides* is a constant sore point in the plays; its loss is effected, Curculio says, through public shaming, just as the too-pretty slave-woman is harassed in the street.

Likewise, in a face-to-face society, bankruptcy was performed in public, so that a man who had lost everything was subjected to the scrutiny of rubberneckers. Gelasimus, setting out his goods to the audience for auction, complains of his disgrace (*St.* 198–204, 207–8):

sed curiosi sunt hic complures mali,
 alienas res qui curant studio maxumo,
 quibus ipsis nullast res quam procurent sua: 200
 i quando quem auctionem facturum sciunt,
 adeunt, perquirunt quid siet caussae ilico:
 alienum aes cogat an pararit praedium,
 uxorin sit reddenda dos divortio.

...

dicam auctionis caussam, ut damno gaudeant;
 nam curiosus nemo est quin sit malivolus.

But there are a lot of bad busybodies here,
 who look after other people’s assets with the greatest zeal,
 though they have no assets of their own to look after. 200
 These guys, when they know someone is going to hold an auction,
 they come, they ask what might be the reason, right there:
 whether debt forces him, or he’s bought a farm,
 or if the dowry has to be given back to his wife in a divorce.

...

I’ll tell the cause of my auction, so they can take pleasure in my loss;
 for there’s no busybody who isn’t also an ill-wisher.

The *curiosus* was a figure of particular dislike in later Roman culture, often tied, as here, with the evil eye; the social critique in Gelasimus’ speech has Greek ancestors as well, in the traditional dislike of *polypragmosunê*. It is clear that the experience of having your goods auctioned had a punitive aspect in itself, of public shaming.⁶⁴ What Gelasimus is doing onstage once

⁶⁴ On the *curiosus* and the evil eye, see Barton 1993: 85–98, 189, on *polypragmosunê*, *curiosi*, and magic;

again overlays the performance of a common street scene onto the common street, with editorial comment. That debt was *aes alienum* – literally, “somebody else’s bronze” – shows how grounded this problem was in the location of money. The auction turns the house inside out; Gelasimus says, “I have to sell out of the house whatever I have” (*foras necessumst quidquid habeo vendere*, 219). Despite the presence of *curiosi* “here,” he starts to hawk his possessions to the audience: “I’m selling funny stories. Go on, set the price. ... [to one audience member] Hey, did you nod?” (*logos ridiculos vendo. age licemini. / ... ehem, adnuistin?* 221, 224).

Where would a slave keep his *peculium*? In a cash-box, as Horace says of Plautus’ money? Bankers in the *palliata* hold money on deposit, but not for slaves. Another idiom associated with money, then, perhaps has a more literal significance than might at first appear: *domi* means “in my pocket,” but *domi* is where the cash is. Sagaristio, asked for money, says, “If I had it at home (*domi*), I’d promise it now” (*Per.* 45). In the same play, the *parasitus* Saturio says that a *parasitus* who has any money at home (*si quid domist*, 122) just wants to spend it on a meal. In a variant on the common joke in which a character says he can pay for something “out of his back” (that is, by being flogged), Chrysalus boasts that he has plenty of “back at home” (*mihi tergum domi est*, *Bac.* 365) – here also a joke on his owner’s threat of “rods in the country” (*virgae ruri*). Milphio envies Syncerastus because he has food and women at home (*domi*, *Poen.* 867). The Advocati are proud that they have food to eat at home (*domi*, *Poen.* 537). Leonida/Saurea boasts that he made a debtor bring a banker to the house (*domum*) to pay up – although, in keeping with Leonida’s grandiose airs, the banker will make a written transfer (*scribit nummos*, *As.* 440). Tellingly, Ballio is also proud that he has plenty of money in the house (*domo*, *Ps.* 355). The house then is not only identified with the self (“at my house”), even with the body, but with availability; this is ready money, money a person actually has, and does not have to go to the forum to get – to borrow; or to withdraw from a credit account, as wealthy persons are able to do onstage.⁶⁵ The Slave of Lyconides takes the pot of gold home to secure it (*condam domum*, *Aul.* 712), and later confesses that the gold is “in a moneybox at my house” (*in arca apud me*, 823). The house is “my house” even for slave characters.

Leigh 2013: 79–84, and 30–2, 45–52, 60–7 on the *polypragmôn* in comedy and related genres. On auctions as a form of public shaming, see Ste. Croix 1981: 166; Callataj 2015: 42–3.

⁶⁵ On where money was kept, and the relatively large amounts kept at home, see Callataj 2015: 32–6; on the scene in *Asinaria* and ledger transactions, see Kay 2014: 121.

Bankers, in contrast, belong in the forum. Indeed, in the extant *palliata*, they never live behind the door in the scenery, but enter from the forum; less domestic, even, than pimps, although, as seen above, Diniarchus puts the tables of money-men (*argentariae*) right next to the pimps (*Truc.* 66–7), and draws an analogy between prostitutes and the ledgers recording “interest-bearing money” – “deposits, not loans” (70–2, *aera ... usuraria; accepta dico, expensa ne qui censeat*).⁶⁶ The moneylender in *Mostellaria* enters with a comic speech about how poor business is these days (a laugh line – the audience is not expected to sympathize), and pictures himself toiling away, “from morning til night, I spend all day in the forum” (*a mani ad noctem usque in foro dego diem*, 534), trying to lend money at interest. Leonida, playing the *atriensis*, makes a similar complaint (*As.* 428–9). The banker in *Curculio*, with his wolfish name, makes no bones about his crookedness (371–83):

LY. Beatus videor: subduxi ratiunculam,
 quantum aeris mihi sit quantumque alieni siet:
 dives sum, si non reddo eis quibu' debeo;
 si reddo illis quibu' debeo, plus †alieni† est.
 verum hercle vero quom belle recogito, 375
 si magi' me instabunt, ad praetorem sufferam.
 habent hunc morem plerique argentarii
 ut alius alium poscant, reddant nemini,
 pugnis rem solvant, si quis poscat clarius.
 qui homo mature quaesivit pecuniam, 380
 nisi eam mature parsit, mature essurit.
 cupio aliquem <mi> emere puerum qui usurarius
 nunc mihi quaeratur. usus est pecunia.

LY. I appear to enjoy good fortune; I've cooked up a little calculation,
 re: how much of my money is mine and how much is other people's.
 I'm a rich man, if I don't pay the people back I owe money to.
 If I do pay them back what I owe them, there's more I can borrow.
 But, by God, how nice it feels to bear in mind 375
 that if they start to press me, I can just go to court.
 You'll find that plenty of money-men have this custom –
 they hound this one and that one for money, but pay nobody back,

⁶⁶ On *argentarii* as small-scale operators, see Andreau 1999: 30–49. See Kay 2014: 116–24 for Plautine banking in its economic context, with attention to several passages discussed here, including an elucidation of *Truc.* 66–73; on the Forum location, see Moore 1998: 130–6. Kay (113 n. 30) accepts the arrival in Rome of *argentarii* as bankers by the late 300s despite the ambiguity of Livy 9.40.16, on which, see Richlin 2017a: 220–2.

and they settle accounts with their fists, should anyone hound them too loudly.

Any person who's made his money quick, 380
 unless he gets stingy quick, gets hungry quick.
 I want to buy myself some boy who could be marketed
 for rental from me. There's money in rentals.

Evidently Lyco is on his way to the pimp's house to do some shopping; the surprise ending to his speech confirms Diniarchus' observation on the kinship between bankers and pimps, with their cozy forum location. Lyco is identified in *Curculio* as a *trapezita*, a "table-man" – a Greek occupational title that evokes the way moneylenders set up in the forum. He says outright that he plans to return none of the money he holds, matching the observation made by Pseudolus that bankers "look to get their own back, but pay back a deposit to no one born" (*suom repetunt, alienum reddunt nato nemini*, *Ps.* 297; the same wording found at *Cas.* 27, above). Lyco's self-professed fiscal policy is acted out, offstage, by the pimp Lycus in *Poenulus*, although he loses confidence that going to court will solve his problems. (Note the shared name.) Lyco confirms the relationship between lack of money and hunger (*essurit*, *Cur.* 381), and suggests how a rich man could overcome *flagitatio*: by meeting loud outcries (*poscat clarius*, 379) with force. *Curculio* completes his rant against pimps with a rant against men like Lyco (*Cur.* 506–II, ia7):

CU. eodem hercle vos pono et paro: parissumi estis hibus:
 hi saltem in occultis locis prostant, vos in foro ipso;
 vos faenori, hi male suadendo et lustris lacerant homines.
 rogitationes plurimas propter vos populus scivit,
 quas vos rogatas rumpitis: aliquam reperitis rimam; 510
 quasi aquam ferventem frigidam esse, ita vos putatis leges.

By God, I lump you right in with them, you're just the same as they are;
 at least they set up shop in shady places – you're right in the forum;
 they mangle people by luring them into their lairs – you do it with interest.
 The *populus* has passed plenty of bills on account of you,
 which you dodge as soon as they're passed; you always find
 some loophole; 510
 as if boiling water were freezing, that's what you think the laws are.

If *Curculio*, unlike Diniarchus, locates bankers and pimps in different parts of the city, Lyco is standing next to him in front of the pimp's house as he says these lines, and indeed touches off the attack on bankers by appreciating the attack on pimps. This speech is one of those places in the plays that refer (semi-)explicitly to contemporary issues and conditions,

siding with the *populus*; that lending money at interest was also viewed negatively offstage in this period is most obviously attested at the outset of Cato's *De agricultura*, where Cato compares *faeneratores* unfavorably with thieves, claiming that "our ancestors" set a double penalty for thieves but a quadruple penalty for moneylenders (*De agr.* pr.1–4).⁶⁷ The title of *Faeneratrix*, with its resonant fragment (chapter 1), suggests the impact of *faenus* as a buzzword. Dinia in *Vidularia*, making a private loan to a poor man, says flatly, "It's not fitting to wear out a needy person with interest payments" (*defaenerare hominem egentem hau decet*, 89) – probably with a wink to the audience (see chapter 6). Money-men are the enemy; even Cappadox the pimp calls them untrustworthy (*Cur.* 679–85, tr7):

CA. Argentariis male credi qui aiunt, nugas praedicant:
 nam et bene et male credi dico; id adeo ego hodie expertu' sum. 680
 non male creditur qui numquam reddunt, sed prosum perit.
 velut decem minas dum solvit, omnis mensas transiit.
 postquam nil fit, clamore hominem posco: ille in ius me vocat;
 pessume metui ne mihi hodie apud praetorem solveret.
 verum amici compulerunt: reddit argentum domo. 685

CA. People who tell you you can't trust bankers – they're just talking trash.
 I say it's both good and bad to trust them; that's how it went today
 for me. 680
 Money's not badly trusted to people who never pay it back – it just
 disappears.
 Like when this guy is paying my ten *minas*, he went to every banker's table.
 After nothing happens, I hound the guy with shouting: he summons me
 to court;
 I was scared in the worst way that he'd settle with me today in front of
 the judge.
 But my friends made him do it: he's paying back the cash from his home
 savings. 685

Even the pimp can hound his debtor in public; even when the money-man tries his favorite move of dragging things into court, the pimp's *amici* can force the issue, and the money-man has to pay with real money, *domo*.

For a slave, the problem was much worse, acting, as slaves must, without real *fides*. This is the joke when the old man in *Epidicus* refuses to give back the *fides* (lyre) to the freedwoman *fidicina*, and she threatens to dun him for it – to make him give her back her *fides* – for she is entitled to it, in

⁶⁷ On the date of *De agricultura*, see chapter 1. In any case, Cato's attitude here is representative of his lifetime; see Astin's detailed discussion of moneylending in the early 100s, 1978: 319–23. On Cato's own involvement in shipping loans in this context, see Leigh 2004: 148–52.

both senses. Hence, as seen in chapter 2, *confidenter* is used as a reproach to slaves who act free (see further in chapter 6). Toxilus and Sagaristio have little prospect of getting a loan (*Per.* 5–6, 43–5); Sagaristio, when Toxilus asks him for money, replies just as Chaeribulus (possibly) does in *Epidicus*: “if I had it at home, I’d promise it to you right now” (*si id domi esset mihi, iam pollicerer*, *Per.* 45); but, unlike Chaeribulus, who is free, he does not say he is being dunned.⁶⁸ Instead, he says it is a ridiculous amount of money to ask him for, more than he would get if he sold himself (40) – not that he owns himself; pressed to look for a loan somewhere, he replies, “I’ll look for one myself – if anyone would give me credit” (*si quis credat*, 44). Slaves thus can dun, but are not dunned themselves, because you have to have credit to get into debt. The pimp Dordalus has made Toxilus swear an oath that he will pay in cash for Lemniselenis (400–3), and, at the end of the play, concludes that Toxilus has swindled him because he would not give Toxilus credit, would not trust a slave (*quia ei fidem non habui argenti, eo mihi eas machinas molitust*, 785): revenge. Indeed, Toxilus makes a point of this mistrust in their duel (416), and again afterwards, as he and Dordalus exchange ideas on credit and banking (431–6). He leads by expressing his anger (*tibi suscensui*, 431) as a low credit rating (*tibi sus-censui*):

TO. iam omitte iratus esse. id tibi suscensui
 qui te negabas credere argentum mihi.
 DO. mirum quin tibi ego crederem, ut idem mihi
 faceres quod partim faciunt argentarii:
 ubi quid credideris, citius extemplo a foro
 fugiunt quam ex porta ludis quom emissust lepus.

435

TO. Now stop being angry. I low-rated you
 because you said you wouldn’t trust me for the money.
 DO. Strange if I wouldn’t trust you – so you’d do the same
 to me that the money-men mostly do:
 when you trust them with any, they run away from the forum faster
 than a rabbit out of the starting gates at the games.

He sounds like Cappadox; another pimp insulting bankers. Toxilus then hands Dordalus the money; although Toxilus says it is “honest, counted out” (*probi, numerati*, 438), the pimp wonders aloud how he can get it checked to be sure it is not counterfeit (440). Toxilus wants Lemniselenis (441): “Maybe you’re afraid to trust her into my hand?” (*fortasse metuis*

⁶⁸ *Pollicerer* is Mueller’s addition to the text at *Epidicus* 116, on the analogy of *Per.* 45 (also *Bac.* 635, Pistoclusus to Mnesilochus); the two situations are certainly parallel, except that the two speakers in *Epidicus* are free and the two in *Persa* are slaves. See chapter 4 on slave friendships.

in manum concredere?). The pimp remains focused on the tendency of bankers to disappear (442–3). But when he returns from the forum, in a good mood, he exults about how many people he has trusted today (*ut ego multis credidi*, 476), and he repeats forms of the verb *credo* nine more times in the next thirteen lines (477, 478, 482 twice, 484 twice, 485–6, 487, 490). Toxilus, pretending to be grateful, calls down blessings upon him and promises never to wish harm to the pimp from now on (a big lie); the pimp replies, magnanimously, “Go on, don’t swear an oath, I trust you enough” (*abi, ne iura, sati’ credo*, 490). He will soon find out his mistake. Chrysalus in *Bacchides* leverages his own untrustworthiness to make his owner hand over the money: *nolo ego mi credi*, he protests (*Bac.* 1062, cf. 1064–5). It is part of the grandiosity of Leonida’s claims as *atriensis* that he complains that a merchant was slow to pay back “what I gave him on credit, before” (*priu’ quae credidi*, *As.* 439). Like Toxilus, he wants to be thought credit-worthy.

Again, the audience would have been fully conscious that, for a free person, the enforcement of a debt could end in a form of slavery or house arrest, after a trip to the praetor’s court, as seen in the threats against the pimp Cappadox at the end of *Curculio* (689–93, 718, 721–3) and against the pimp Lycus at the end of *Poenulus* (1341–2, 1361–5, 1409).⁶⁹ Debt led to the last secession of the plebs, in 287. When the pimp says he will become Agorastocles’ *addictus* (*Poen.* 1361) and hold an auction tomorrow (1364), Agorastocles threatens him explicitly with imprisonment in his house: “so you’ll be with me meanwhile in wooden custody” (*ut sis apud me lignea in custodia*, 1365).⁷⁰ Any free person can turn into a slave. At the same time,

⁶⁹ Although the contract for *nexum* was abolished by the Lex Poetelia in 326 or 313 BCE, private imprisonment for debt and debt servitude persisted afterwards; see Brunt 1971b: 56–7; Ste. Croix 1981: 165–9; Watson 1971: 163, 1975: III–24, esp. at 115. See Livy 23.14.3, where those who were “in chains, having been adjudged for a cash amount” were set free to fight in the army in 216, with Ste. Croix 1981: 572 n. 65. Oakley 1998: 688, on Livy 8.28, emphasizes the vastness of the legal scholarship spawned by this problem. Varro, in discussing the term at length, defines the nature of the servitude involved: “a free man who bonded his work into slavery in place of the money he owed, until it was paid off, is called a *nexus*” (*liber qui suas operas in servitutem pro pecunia quam debebat <nectebat>, dum solveret, nexus vocatur*, *L.* 7.105). This chapter of *De lingua latina*, in which Varro mentions the ending of *nexum* in the dictatorship of C. Poetelius (313 – Livy 8.28 gives the earlier date), begins as a gloss on the word *nexum* in a play titled *Colax*; as seen in chapter 1 and indeed as remarked by Terence (*Eun.* 25), Plautus and Naevius each wrote one, though the fragment is conventionally attributed to Plautus (Varro does not explicitly identify the author). Plautus also wrote an *Addictus*, and the *addictus* shows up in Plautus at *Bac.* 1205, *Capt.* 181, *Poen.* 521, 720, 833; with a court judgment, at *Poen.* 186, 564, 1341, *Rud.* 891. Watson 1975 differentiates *nexi* from *addicti*. See chapter 4 on the story of Publilius. On “the prominence of debt as a cause of political change under the Roman Republic,” see Kay 2014: 114–15.

⁷⁰ On the form of confinement, see Allen 1896: 48–51.

this fantasy of torturing the pimp in your own back yard belongs less to any senators in the audience – what Philip Kay calls “Rome’s aristocratic plutocracy” – than to those who actually might have been in trouble for debt at this level.⁷¹

Actors and Audience in the Wartime Economy

In an early scene in *Asinaria*, the *lena* Cleareta gives a young man a lesson in what John Henderson calls “marketplace economics in the sexwork industry”⁷² (*As.* 198–201, tr7):

diem, aquam, solem, lunam, noctem, haec argento non emo:
 cetera quae volumus uti Graeca mercamur fide.
 quom a pistore panem petimus, vinum ex oenopolio, 200
 si aes habent, dant mercem: eadem nos disciplina utimur.

Daylight, water, sun, moon, night – these things I don’t buy for cash:
 the other things we want to use, we trade by the rules of Greek *fides*.
 When we want to get bread from the baker, or wine from the
 wineseller’s shop, 200
 if they get the coin, they give the goods: well, we here go by the same
 rulebook.

The *lena* sees this as fair exchange: “equal recompense given for equal, work in exchange for money” (*par pari datum hostimentumst, opera pro pecunia, As.* 172). Her economics describe, as well, the format of verbal dueling, where contestants return like for like (*par pari respondent*); her economics also describe, on a larger scale, the bargain between actors and audience, where performance earns applause, and applause earns military success, in the quid-pro-quo terms of cheerleading. That “cash on the barrel” evidently went by the oxymoronic *Graeca fides* makes perfect sense for the *Graeci palliati* onstage and in the street. They all had to eat; they all had credit problems.

The actors cheering on the audience and putting on magnificent displays of invective were singing for their supper. Usener and Fraenkel looked

⁷¹ Kay 2014: 17; see full discussion at 15–18 of evidence for high levels of wealth in Rome’s upper classes during the Second Punic War.

⁷² Henderson 2006: 107, and see his discussion at 139–41. On this scene, see esp. Dutsch forthcoming; she argues that the speeches of the *lena* “suggest that an imaginary cultural structure is determining her position,” achieving a “quasi-Brechtian effect of distancing from a dominant ideology,” and that her arguments to her daughter invert the Roman moral system “under conditions of penury,” being “class-specific rather than universal.” See further Dressler 2016: 27 on representation as simultaneously economic and rhetorical in Plautine thought.

at their chanted forms as interesting survivals of *Volk* rituals, part of the “self-help” nature of Roman law; Andrew Lintott looked back on these scenes from the perspective of the late Republic, where there are eyewitness accounts of orchestrated shouting, with well-attested political goals (see Richlin 1992b[1983]: 86–7). We do not have contemporary witnesses to tell us how a performance of *Persa* at a given date and venue was interpreted by the audience. But we have some idea of the offstage world. In the 200s BCE and the early 100s, the *palliata* addressed an audience for whom debt was not quaint, shame was a real threat, and slavery was directly tied with the fortunes of war as well as with debt; indeed, the *palliata* itself took form in a Mediterranean world racked by war and debt. The circulation of jokes and actors to central Italy came about, at least in part, through war and debt. The importance of the idea of credit in *Pseudolus* (datable to 191) has been tied with an effort to regulate banking in 193–192, and that certainly would have been an association present to spectators of the 191 performance, but the onstage search for credit would have had a political edge throughout the 200s. A joke about loans appears in the *Triphallus* of Naevius, who was born in the 260s and probably died before the end of the Second Punic War. Plautus’ plays in general are full of moneylenders, while Terence’s, all produced after Pydna, have none. The plays’ concern, seen in chapter 2, with beating, sexual abuse, and hunger is related to the question of money and credit in a century when the first mass enslavements hit the market, the *populus* had some voice, and central Italy was in flux. The *populus*, says Curculio, has passed laws to control the flow of credit, and this is in keeping with the development of legislative power by the tribal assembly after 287, in a crisis itself triggered by debt; even if the wealthy Cato also disapproves of moneylenders, the attacks on them in the plays most directly address people with money problems.⁷³ If Plautus was “astretch to put coin in his cash-box,” as Horace chided, so were a lot of people onstage and in the audience.

The actors operated in a fiscal climate in which pimps and moneylenders were a threat to people with limited cash, people already traumatized by war. Comic actors are there to cheer people up, hence the

⁷³ On *Pseudolus* and the crisis of 193–192, see Feeney 2010: 295, who traces the idea back to Kiessling in 1868; also Feeney 2010: 296 on Jean Andreau’s observation on Plautus and Terence; and cf. Kay 2014: 114–15, 119, who notes the similar arguments made to date *Curculio* to this crisis. On the year 287 and the tribal assembly, see Brunt 1971b: 57–8. Naevius’ loan joke: *Com.* 96–8 R₃; see Wright 1974: 48. As Kay’s overview shows, the widespread attitude towards banking across the extant plays suggests an ongoing issue; see esp. his remarks (2014: 114) on the number of known bills aimed at regulating interest during this period (twenty-seven).

cheerleading: *your* city will not be sacked. The prologue speaker of *Casina* opens with a formal greeting: “Hail, best of spectators, / you who hold *Fides* in the highest esteem, as *Fides* holds you” (*Salvere iubeo spectatores optumos, / Fidem qui facitis maxumi, et vos Fides*, 1–2); soon he will bring up their debt problems. The whole last third of *Aulularia* centers on the Temple of *Fides*, and it is here that the Slave of Lyconides finds the pot of gold he hopes he can use to buy his freedom.⁷⁴ The star Arcturus begins the *Rudens* prologue by explaining how he and other stars walk the earth by day, spying out who acts with *pietas* and *fides*, who gets a boost from *opulentia*, and who reneges on loans and acts falsely in court: Jupiter will punish wrongdoers, he promises (1–30).⁷⁵ Slaves, for whom access to cash meant so much, had no credit; *fides* and *credo* are highly charged terms for them in the plays. Meanwhile, sex trafficking, as these plays and their Greek cousins show, was a major part of the slave trade; hence pimps do business with bankers, and hence the central role of pimps onstage. The pimp says to the weeping Planesium, as he sells her to the man she thinks is the soldier’s agent, “Just be a good prudent girl” (*fac sis bonae frugi sis, Cur.* 521). Save up your tips. The process of *occentatio* and the street scene described by the old man in *Mercator* show what the public life of a young prostitute or *ancilla* was like. At the same time, the process of *quiritatio* onstage allows the powerless to try to get redress; the audience participates, as slave and free together are appealed to as the *populus*.

Behind *flagitatio* lies a threat of enslavement between free people; verbal dueling between slaves onstage uses some of the forms of *flagitatio* in a performance by people who had already lost everything but their skill, for an audience at risk. In onstage duels, as in their occasional appeals to “fellow citizens,” slave characters act free, they push towards freedom, often at the expense of a rival; they compete to be upwardly mobile, to be treated with respect. This is the driving force behind the desires to which we will now turn.

⁷⁴ On the deified *Fides* and the temple of *Fides* onstage, see Clark 2007: 58–62, 73–5, 82–5, 101–5.

⁷⁵ On this odd passage, see Fraenkel 1942, following an extensive treatment by Friedrich Marx (1959[1928]: 52–62); Marx credits the whole concept of stars as spies to Diphilus, while of course the idea of celestial record-keeping goes back to Hesiod, lending this passage a strong flavor of the folktale. Neither Fraenkel nor Marx comments on the Roman topicality of the language here, particularly of *pietas*, *fides*, and *opulentia* (which I here take as nominative, with de Melo. Although the range of *opulentia* and *opulentus* in connection with prayers for money makes Marx’s translation “daß er jeden mit Reichthum segne” attractive, these words are more often used of rich people as opposed to the poor).