IV FROM GREECE TO ROME

The origins of Roman comedy are, in one sense, clear-cut: at the *Ludi Romani* or Roman Games of September 240, a Romanized Tarentine Greek known as Lucius Livius Andronicus, who at some point also translated the *Odyssey* into Latin, produced the first Latin translations of Greek plays on a Roman stage. This firm date, for which we have Cicero's friend Atticus to thank, marks the beginning of the establishment of a practice of translating classic Greek plays that would continue in both comedy and tragedy for at least a further century.

This is not, however, the way the Romans told the story. A first-century source used by Livy (vii.2) and Valerius Maximus (ii.4.4) spins an extraordinarily elaborate tale of home-grown dramatic evolution.[78] Here is Livy's fuller version, which Valerius closely mirrors:

[vii.2.1] There was plague in both this year and the next, the consulship of C. Sulpicius Peticus and C. Licinius Stolo (365/364). Nothing worth recording happened then except that [2] a *lectisternium* was held to try and placate the gods: the third time since the city's foundation. [3] When neither human resources nor divine help were able to mitigate the plague, the people gave way to superstition and are said, amongst their other attempts to mollify the gods, to have introduced theatrical games (*ludi scaenici*), previously unknown to a militaristic nation whose sole public entertainment had hitherto been gladiatorial. [4] As often in such cases, the games started small, and from an outside source. Players were brought in from Etruria and danced to the measures of a piper, with no singing or acting-out of songs, performing relatively dignified movements in the Etruscan style. [5] Subsequently the young men of Rome began to copy them, while at the same time exchanging jokes in improvised verse and fitting their movements to the words. [6] In this way the practice was established and developed by frequent practice. These local performers were called *histriones*, the Etruscan word for an actor being *ister*; [7] and they abandoned the exchange of impromptu badinage like the Fescennine verses, and instead began to perform musically scored medleys (*saturae*), with singing composed for pipe accompaniment and movement in time. [8] Some years later Livius, who was the first to venture away from the *satura* and compose a play with a plot, was acting in his own plays as normal for the time, [9] and is said to have lost his voice from repeated encores. With permission, he stood a boy in front of the musician to do the singing while Livius acted out the song, the more energetically now because he was not restricted by having to sing. [10] So began the practice of actors' using singers while their own voices were limited to the dialogue parts. [11] Through this kind of play, performance moved away from disconnected jokes, and theatre turned gradually into an art; and the young men abandoned the performance of plays to the professional

[78] The famous passage at Horace, *Epistles* ii.1.139–63 seems to derive from the same ultimate source (most likely Varro).

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actors, and began once more to exchange extemporised jokes in verse, from which came the so-called 'closing sketches' (*exodia*), which were connected especially to the Atellan playlets. [12] This kind of performance, taken from the Oscans, remained the preserve of the Roman youth and was not allowed to be tainted by professional actors – [13] whence the practice of allowing Atellan performers to retain their tribal registration and military service on a par with non-actors.

Whatever we make of the details, two things about this account stand out. First, it looks very much like an attempt to construct the kind of unilinear retrospective pedigree that Aristotle's *Poetics* proposed for comedy, with an inferred prehistory based on the hypothesis of origins from popular sub-literary improvised performance, which could be observed still to survive in the reader's own day; an earlier theatrical phase which prioritized comic ridicule over narrative coherence; and a later literary phase marked by the transition to 'plays with plots'. More strikingly still, it entirely suppresses the Greek element; even Livius Andronicus' introduction of 'plays with plots' makes no mention of the fact that those plays were actually translated from Greek, and the overall aim seems to be to claim Roman drama as an autochthonous invention.

(i) Etruscan dancers are introduced in 365/364 for religious reasons (4). This may have been recorded in the *Annales Maximi* or other official archives, but may also have simply been attached to that year because a persistent plague happened to be recorded for it. Livy may be right about the Etruscan origin of the Latin word for 'actor', and several other Latin theatre terms were thought, not implausibly, to have come through Etruscan from Greek (such as the Latin *persona*, 'mask', from Greek *prosopon*). Certainly, song and dance are familiar elements in Etruscan art.

(ii) Young Romans imitate them, adding improvised repartee and action (5). This looks more suspicious, and is probably a projection back from the widely attested rural improvisations known as Fescennine verses.

(iii) *Satura* (6–7): fusion of elements in 2. The word *satura*, originally a culinary term meaning a dish with many different ingredients, will later become the basis for the literary term 'satire' – itself a generic label with a long and convoluted history. There is, however, no independent evidence for Livy's lost musical *satura*, and the vagueness of the language and chronology only add to the impression of a later scholarly fiction.

(iv) Livian developments: plot, mimed *cantica* (8, 9–10). This looks like a highly tendentious description of Livius' introduction of

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translated Greek tragedy and comedy from 240 onwards. Livy's source (perhaps the great Republican scholar Varro, who is, however, usually better than this) is certainly mistaken to trace the miming of sung parts back to Livius' own day; the texts of Plautus routinely give their star actors parts that are largely sung, and would look very different if all they were required to do was to mime to professional singers.

(v) Professional and amateur traditions diverge (11–13). Here Livy's source ties itself in knots trying to come up with a unified just-so story for the relationship between Greek and non-Greek genres, given that the entire narrative is hell-bent on denying any Greek input at all. The term *exodium* seems to suggest that Atellan comedy was used, at least in the late Republic, as a short closing item in a dramatic programme dominated by more substantial kinds of performance – a function, however, suspiciously analogous to that of satyr-play in the Athenian tragic competitions at the City Dionysia, so the claim may be founded on inference rather than evidence.

(vi) *Atellanae* introduced as *exodia* (also 11–13). The interesting detail here is, as so often, the one that the antiquarian narrative has been concocted to explain: that Atellan performers were exempted from the general Roman rule that prohibited citizens from performing on stage. Once again, this makes sense in terms of the separate Greek and Italian origins of the different performance traditions, but Livy's source has had to suppress the very existence of the former, and so has to explain the difference instead in terms of a long-running dialogue between amateur and professional traditions within Rome itself.

What is clear from all this is that, even in the age of Cicero, the early history of Roman drama was the subject of deep chronological confusion and cultural contestation; that the traditions of literary tragedy and comedy were understood to have grown up in a complex multicultural environment of Etruscan, Greek, Oscan, and Latin performance traditions; and that considerable cultural energy was invested in attempting to assert the Italic over the Greek elements in the archaeology of those traditions.

Greek drama in the west before Livius Andronicus

The history of Sicilian and southern Italian comic drama has something of the quality of early hominin archaeology: a vast and complex family tree that must somehow be reconstructed from a few cupfuls of

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random bone fragments from widely separate geological eras. (i) We have already met the sophisticated verse dramas, many or all of them mythological, composed in Syracuse in the first half of the fifth century by Epicharmus, Phormis, and Dinolochus. (ii) In 441, Athens played a central role in the foundation of the Italian city of Thurii; the historian Herodotus was involved in the foundation, and Athens now had a close cultural offshoot on the Italian mainland. (iii) By the end of the century, Sophron and Xenarchus were scripting the prose sketches from myth and life known as 'mime'. (iv) A famous anecdote in Plutarch has Athenian prisoners of war, captured by the Syracusans in 413, redeem themselves by satisfying their new masters' enthusiasm for the latest works of Euripides, whose plays were hugely popular. (v) Xenophon's *Symposium*, whose dramatic date is around this time, has a Sicilian cabaret troupe perform a succession of acrobatic and musical entertainments culminating in a two-handed erotic ballet of Dionysus and Ariadne, and (vi) from the end of the fifth century down to the time of Menander, west Greek vases show scenes from Athenian comedy on local stages, which used to be thought a precursor of (vii) the mysterious Tarentine genre of *phlyax* drama attested from Rhinthon and others in the time of Menander. Meanwhile (viii) western Greek dramatists were increasingly involved in the Athenian dramatic competitions, from the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse in the 360s to Menander's rival Philemon (a Syracusan by birth, according to the *Suda*), who took Athenian citizenship and became one of the most successful (and longest-lived) of all Greek comic poets. His later years coincided with two third-century developments: (ix) the first appearance of the *Technitai* ('Artists') of Dionysus, the Hellenistic guilds of musical and theatrical performers who became the professional infrastructure of the theatre industry in the newly internationalized world of the expanded Greek Mediterranean, with a branch in Greek Italy and Sicily; and (x) a new poetic interest in the west Greek 'mime' tradition, which was given ambitious literary dress in the poetry of Theocritus, a Sicilian by birth, and the more shadowy Herodas.

c. 490–460 BC?	Epicharmus and Phormis active in Syracuse; Dinolochus a generation later
468 (or earlier?)	Aeschylus in Syracuse under Hieron
458–456	Aeschylus in Sicily again; dies in Gela
441	foundation of Thurii
later 5th century	Sophron active in Syracuse

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422	dramatic date of Xenophon's *Symposium*
413	Athenian prisoners in Syracuse
411	Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*
c. 400	earliest Italian tragic vases and comic vases
early 4th century	Xenarchus (son of Sophron) active in Syracuse
370s	*Thesmophoriazusae* vase
368	Dionysius of Syracuse wins first prize at Athenian Lenaea
327	Philemon's first victory
c. 300	Rhinthon active in Tarentum or Syracuse
c. 300?	Theocritus born in Syracuse
c. 280	Artists of Dionysus first attested
c. 275–260?	Theocritus' *Idylls*
c. 250?	Herodas' *Mimiambi*

The pieces of this immense and perplexing jigsaw refuse to join up, but clearly there was a rich and complex tradition of comic performance in the Greek west from the fifth to the third centuries, which interacted with Athenian drama in both directions, and must in turn have influenced the early forms of Etruscan, Oscan, and Latin performance in central Italy to which the comedy of Plautus and his lost rivals is, to an unquantifiable extent, indebted. The history of Athenian tragedy and comedy, at least in the period of the surviving plays, is for all its uncertainties at least disentangled from the largely untellable story of other kinds of dramatic mimesis in other parts of the Greek world, whatever its early history might owe to outside influences. But what survives of Roman literary drama – not just the translated New Comedy of Plautus and Terence but Seneca's tragedies and the fragments of his Republican predecessors – are embedded in a much larger and more diffuse generic history of which comedy and tragedy seem not to have been even the most important parts.

Broadly speaking, the story of Roman drama is of two intertwined traditions that have quite different kinds of developmental story. On the one hand stands the tradition of literary adaptations of Athenian tragedy and comedy; on the other, the more elusive history of the various performance genres that seem to have established themselves as independent traditions in the Roman world, whatever their roots in popular west Greek and Italic performance. Thus, the Latin mime, which was certainly institutionalized at the festival of the Floralia in the second century and probably much earlier, seems to have developed at an early date into a distinct tradition from the Greek genre or genres loosely known by this name. The imperial genre of pantomime,

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a form of virtuoso solo mimetic dance to a sung libretto, emerges to view with the Augustan pioneers Pylades and Bathyllus, but seems to have very ancient roots in a native Roman tradition of danced drama attested under the enigmatic name *ludus talarius*. Of particular fascination is the long-lived 'Atellan' comedy rooted in the Oscan language and culture, which featured a recurrent cast of named characters such as Maccus, Pappus, and Bucco in situations reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte* or possibly of Warner Brothers cartoons, with titles such as *Maccus's Bar* or *Maccus in the Army*. Large claims are often made, especially by the 'Freiburg school' of Plautine studies, for the influence of these (at this date) improvised comedies on the distinctively Plautine elements in his adaptation of Greek comedy. In truth, we know very little indeed about what these plays were actually like, and even the attested titles come not from Plautus' time but from a literary phase a century later, when both the Atellana and the Latin mime went through a scripted form.

The tradition from which Plautus, Terence, and Roman tragedians from Ennius to Seneca emerged was quite distinct: these plays, even those of the theatrically minded Plautus, emerge out of the early history of Latin *poetry*. And, whereas the histories of the native dramatic genres go through an unscripted and largely anonymous popular phase that gives way relatively late to a more ambitious literary stage of their history with named writers and circulating scripts, the story of the poetic genres follows a quite different course: from a literature of *translation* to a series of increasingly bold experiments in the composition of original Latin works in emulation of Greek forms, and finally to the free appropriation of those forms as systems of essentially literary conventions. In the case of scripted drama, this manifests as an early phase of translated Greek plays by versatile multi-specialist poets in the Hellenistic mould; a later, but overlapping, phase of specialist translations by poets such as Plautus, Caecilius, Terence, and the tragedian Pacuvius, who work in one genre exclusively; original plays using Greek conventions, first as sporadic experiments but latterly as established genre traditions; and finally the disengagement of new tragedy and comedy from actual performance to become a vehicle for original poetic compositions on the Greek formal model but never intended to be staged.[79]

[79] This is not to assume any kind of stand on the question of Senecan tragedy's relationship to the stage. There is clearly stagecraft in Seneca, in the sense of significant elements, such as Hippolytus' sword, that need to be read visually rather than verbally – but recent thinking may be right to invite us to take more account of the dominance of early imperial pantomime in making sense of the performative oddities.

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Roman drama: the main genres

Genre		Date	Principal authors
(a) native forms			
fabula Atellana	Atellan farce	?4th century BC to end of 1st century AD	L. Pomponius Novius (early 1st century)
mimus	mime	?later 4th century BC to Imperial times and beyond	Decimus Laberius (106–43 BC) Publilius Syrus (fl. 43 BC)
pantomimus	pantomime	Imperial (22 BC or earlier until at least 4th century AD)	Pylades, Bathyllus
(b) Greek-derived forms			
fabula palliata	comedy in Greek settings, translated from Greek originals	240 to c. 100 BC?	L. Livius Andronicus (?290–?205 BC) Gn. Naevius (died c. 200 BC) Q. Ennius (239–169 BC) T. (?) Maccius (?) Plautus (died c. 184 BC) Caecilius Statius (died 168 BC) P. Terentius Afer (?184–159 BC or after)
fabula togata or *tabernaria*	comedy in Roman settings	160 BC or earlier to early 1st century BC.	Titinius (date unknown) L. Afranius (active after 160 BC) C. Quinctius Atta (died 77 BC)
fabula crepidata	tragedy on Greek mythological plots, translated from Greek originals	240 BC to 1st century AD	Livius Andronicus Naevius Ennius M. Pacuvius (220–131 BC) L. Accius (170–after 90 BC) Varius Rufus (*Thyestes* 29 BC) P. Ovidius Naso (43 BC–17 AD) L. Annaeus Seneca (4 BC–65 AD)
fabula praetexta or *praetextata*	tragedy on Roman historical plots	sporadically from late 3rd century BC; the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* is the last known example	Naevius Ennius Pacuvius Accius L. Cornelius Balbus (in 43 BC) anon., *Octavia* (c. 70 AD?)

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Barbarous versions

Demophilus scripsit, claims the *Asinaria* prologue, *Maccus vertit barbare*: 'Demophilus authored it; Maccus turned it barbarian.' This wry formulation of the relationship between Greek play and Latin adaptation encapsulates the issue at the heart of Roman comic criticism: that the plays are highly creative adaptations of Greek plays, but the Greek plays adapted are lost. To understand the dialogue between Greek and Roman elements that is one of the principal engines of meaning in the plays, we need to appreciate something of what this process of barbarization actually involved.

As we have seen, Latin poetry was born from translation. Livius Andronicus was not just the first Latin literary dramatist but the first Latin poet, responsible for a remarkable translation of the *Odyssey* into the native Saturnian metre, through which the young Horace was still famously being dragged by his *grammaticus*, Orbilius. Cicero, generally something of a fan of the early Latin poets, gave his verdict on looking into Livius' Homer as *opus aliquod Daedali* ('a bit of a cave-painting'); but the surviving lines give a valuable glimpse of early Latin translational practice, since (unlike the few fragments of Livius' dramatic translation) nearly all can be matched to the Greek lines they translate. Livius' translation, though not verbatim, is largely versatim. One Saturnian corresponds to one line of Homer and, though there is much alteration at the verbal level, it remains a much closer level of correspondence than we find in dramatic translation. This could mean either that translators loosened up over the generation that separated Livius from Plautus, or that translation for stage performance was always freer to practice what Terence would call *neglegentia* ('casualness'), because it was never going to be compared side by side with its source. Nevertheless, there is already significant cultural translation in the *Odusia* fragments, such as the Italian *Camena* or *Moneta* substituted at different points for the Greek Muse; and Livius also shows a particular fondness for patronymic periphrases (son of Laertes, daughter of Saturn, daughter of Atlas, son of Latona) in place of a simple name in the Greek. There is heightened use of apostrophe in place of third-person naming; and there are signs of the redignification of potentially sub-heroic lines, such as Odysseus' knees being loosed with terror (5.297) and Patroclus' being compared to the gods (3.110).

But, until 1968, the most extensive direct evidence for Roman translational practice in *comedy* was Aulus Gellius' comparison of a

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passage of Caecilius with its Menandrean source. Gellius is probably the most interesting ancient writer on the subject of translation, certainly after Terence's prologues, and, though his views reflect the debates of a much later period, he nevertheless thinks carefully about text and register in ways that make him a useful witness to Republican practice. But Gellius' verdict was damning: Caecilius stood convicted of losing everything that was subtle, humane, and naturalistic about Menander, and replacing it with misogynistic belly-laughs and heavy-handed tragic bombast (*tragicus tumor*). Modern readers of Roman comedy might be more appreciative of things that Gellius was unlikely to value, such as the military imagery, the inversions of master/slave patterns, and the muscular way in which Roman theatrical moralizing recasts the thought in terms of the heavily keyworded Latin ideological vocabulary of *res publica* and *fortuna*.

Then, in 1968, Handley unveiled the Greek text of part of Menander's *Dis Exapaton*, already strongly suspected to be the original of Plautus' *Bacchides*.[80] The surviving Greek scene is the moment where the young man known in the Latin as Mnesilochus, whose slave Chrysalus has tricked Mnesilochus' father out of the money to pay his mistress Bacchis, has just found out that Bacchis is the mistress of his best friend Pistoclerus – not realizing that Bacchis has a twin sister of the same name, and that Pistoclerus' Bacchis is a different Bacchis from Mnesilochus' Bacchis. In the surviving passage, Mnesilochus announces his intention to confess all to his father, hand the money back, and break off with Bacchis; he then meets his father, enters the house with him, and carries out his intention, only to meet Pistoclerus on the way out and discover his ghastly mistake. Chrysalus will now have to find a way to dupe the money a second time out of a father now fully alert to his tricks. But Plautus' version of this scene was far more than just a translation. Among the mischief of which Plautus stood long suspected but now clearly convicted:

(i) The Latin is packed with wordplay, rhetorical and verbal fireworks, riddles and repartee, and punchline gags of a kind alien to the naturalistic conversational Greek of Menander's dialogue.

(ii) Characters are renamed: ordinary and colourless Greek names are replaced with longer, more grandiloquent alternatives (Pistoclerus, Mnesilochus).

[80] The most helpful discussions are Handley 1968; Bain 1979; Gentili 1979: 52–61; Primmer 1984; Damen 1992, 1995; W. S. Anderson 1993: 4–28; Halporn 1993; Jacques 2004.

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(iii) Plautus has set most of Menander's spoken dialogue to music, in pipe-accompanied trochaic septenarii rather than the spoken iambic senarii that would correspond to the spoken iambic trimeters used through the whole passage in the Menander. But, at line 500, there is a switch from recitative into spoken senarii, only for the scene to switch back again at 526.

(iv) Plautus cuts a choral break and makes the action continuous, with the result that the whole business of finding Mnesilochus' father, explaining the trick, handing over the money, and making apologies takes up the four lines of covering dialogue spoken by Pistoclerus at 526–9.

(v) The relation between onstage and offstage action has been significantly recast: Plautus has banished the father to an entirely offstage role, and reworked the onstage dialogue between father and son as the end of a monologue by Mnesilochus announcing what he will say to his father offstage (520 ff.).

(vi) In a massive expansion, Plautus spins a whole forty-line comic routine (534 ff.) out of the dramatic misunderstanding that Menander clears up in half a dozen lines at *Dis Exapaton* 102–8.

All this spectacularly confirmed Fraenkel's careful conclusions about where to look for internal evidence of Plautus' own creativity at work. There is, in fact, a surprising amount in common between Plautine barbarization and the kinds of thing visible in the surviving fragments of his contemporary Ennius' adaptations of extant Greek tragedies, notably Euripides' *Medea*. Both show a fascination with the sound of Latin, working up the naturalistic style of the original into a highly unnaturalistic farrago of jangling verbal effects. In both we find a fondness for alliteration, assonance, rhyme, puns, etymological jingles, and rhetorical structures of expression such as anaphora, antithesis, clausal symmetry, tricolon, and climax. These are not in themselves comic effects, though in Plautus they are often *used* for comic effect; rather they are an essential part of the rhetoric of Republican dramatic verse, as is the tendency to moralize on the highly charged keywords of the Roman ideological vocabulary such as *patria*, *honos*, *virtus*.

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Music and metre in Roman comedy

One of the most drastic transformations was in the musical form of the plays. First, while Roman tragedy kept the chorus, Roman comedy eliminated all trace of its presence. The reason may be no more complex than that the golden age of tragedy was the fifth century, but that of comedy the fourth, so that tragedy was frequently adapted from fifth-century texts that included choral lyric in the scripts, while comedy was adapted exclusively from fourth-century texts with only a bare *CHOROU*, if that, to mark where choral interludes would have stood. Since the chorus seems only to have been referred to in dialogue on its first appearance, it is possible that Plautus or his predecessors may have been largely unaware that there had ever been choruses at such points.

Whatever the reason, the lost musical element was made up by setting large sections of the play to music, in two quite distinct styles of delivery. We know almost nothing about how they sounded, and the terms 'recitative' and 'song' are at best approximations; but they are instantly distinguishable metrically, and they have a structural and dramatic role at least as important as the musical sequences in Aristophanic comedy. There are thus three modes of performance in Plautus and Terence:

		metre
speech	Plain spoken verse delivered without musical accompaniment.	Iambic 'senarii' or six-beat lines.
recitative	Verse intoned with accompaniment on the *tibiae* or reed-pipes.	Uniform runs of longer lines, such as iambic or trochaic septenarii or octonarii – lines of seven or eight beats.
song	Fully melodic lyric songs in the manner of operatic arias and duets; the Latin term *canticum*, which ancient writers applied to both recitative and song, is nowadays reserved for this mode (strictly *canticum mixtis modis*, 'song in mixed metres'). These, too, are accompanied by the *tibiae*.	Mixed, with no repeating structures, but may include stichic runs of identical lines (and may embed snatches of spoken and recitative metres).

The first two of these are familiar from Menander, although recitative is used much more widely than it is in Menander, where it occurs

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only sparingly and climactically for scenes of heightened emotion, such as the end of *Dyskolos* or the fourth act of *Samia*. Plautine lyric song has no parallel in Menandrean comedy, and seems to descend not from Greek choral lyric – with which it has little in common – but from another source entirely: perhaps from native Italian tradition, from Hellenistic Greek solo performance, or (as Fraenkel influentially argued) from the actors' monodies that were becoming a controversial fashion in later Euripidean tragedy, and were evidently adapted into Roman tragic drama. *Cantica* are astrophic: they do not fall into repeated structural units and, though the metres used can as usual be seen distantly to descend from Greek lyric metres, their combination and sequencing is quite different from anything in Greek dramatic lyric.

The three modes of delivery can be thought of as different emotional gears through which the play shifts in its modulations between higher and lower dramatic temperatures. Thus speech will tend to be used where the content of the dialogue is informative rather than emotional – it is always used for prologues, for example – whereas song will be favoured when the emotional impact of a static situation is being explored aria-style. It is common to jump a gear while shifting up (from speech directly to song, without passing through recitative), but a change down will nearly always pass through recitative. Plays normally open with a spoken prologue and then modulate directly or indirectly up to song, though a few (*Cistellaria*, *Epidicus*, *Persa*, *Stichus*) jump straight into song at the start; and they normally end in recitative, occasionally in song, never in speech. These musical divisions shape the overall dramatic contours of the play, both in the movements between more and less dramatic intensity and in the phrasing of the action, created by the divisions between them. Modulations in and out of speech tend to mark stronger dramatic shifts in tone and structure than modulations between recitative and song.[81]

Festivals, theatres, and the palliata tradition

The Roman theatrical experience of comedy was a very different one from its classical Athenian counterpart. In Athens, the performance of

[81] Marshall 2006: 203–44, with a full tabulation of the modulations within each play at 280–4.

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drama was restricted to two festivals of Dionysus, probably both accommodated in the same permanent theatre, and with a programme centred on the competitive production of tragedy and comedy before an audience that may have been the single largest gathering of citizens in civilian life.[82] But, in Rome, performances of literary tragedy and comedy had to find a place in the numerous existing festivals, which were celebrated at different sites around the city with no permanent theatre in the city until 55 – by which time all the famous poets of Republican comedy and tragedy were long dead. Beginning with the *Ludi Romani* of 240, several of these festivals became *ludi scaenici* ('festivals with plays'); Plautus' *Stichus* was produced at the Plebeian Games of 200, and the new festival of the Great Mother, the Megalensia, introduced plays six years later and would become Terence's regular festival for the first five years of his career. We also know that Terence produced two plays at the funeral games for L. Aemilius Paullus in 160; it is unclear how far such productions at *ludi funebres* were common practice, although Livy mentions four days of dramatic performances at the funeral games for Flamininus in 174. The temporary stages erected for these performances had to fit the particular constraints of the festival space, which at the Megalensia would have meant an audience of a few thousand at most;[83] and the plays had to compete for their audience's interest against a variety of long-established popular entertainments, such as combat sports and acrobatic displays, that in the case of Terence's *Hecyra* seem to have held rather more appeal. We know very little about the stages themselves beyond what can be inferred from the texts; Pompeian wall-painting and Vitruvius' architectural handbook offer rich evidence for first-century designs, but it is optimistic to imagine that they tell us anything about Plautus' stages. Masks, costumes, personnel, seating were all organized on quite different principles to their Greek counterparts; there was none of the standardization of production resources that in Menander's theatre restricted the range and names of masks or the number of speaking actors.

Even the history of the genre is very imperfectly represented. Plautus and Terence were just two of the many poets working in their tradition of the *fabula palliata* or 'Roman theatre in Greek dress'.

[82] Estimates of the capacity of the Theatre of Dionysus are in the process of being revised significantly downwards (see Csapo 2007), but even the most pessimistic figure of five thousand or so would be a match for meetings of the *ekklesia*.

[83] Goldberg 1998.

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Gellius quotes thirteen lines of jangling iambics from a work *On Poets* by the shadowy Volcacius Sedigitus ('Six-Fingered'), apparently a poet of the early first century, giving a personal ranking of the top ten authors of *palliatae*.[84]

> We have seen many doubtful debaters of this point:
> To which poet of comedy comes the palm?
> This uncertainty I shall undo for you with my own view,
> And if anyone dissents, he has no sense.
> I give the prize to the comic **Caecilius Statius**;
> In second place **Plautus** easily beats the rest;
> Next **Naevius** in third place, for his energy.
> If there is to be a fourth place, it is for **Licinius**;
> I rate **Atilius** next after Licinius;
> In sixth place **Terence** follows after these,
> **Turpilius** seventh, and **Trabea** takes eighth.
> I happily hand the ninth place to **Luscius**,
> Adding **Ennius** tenth for antiquarian value.

This is a large list for its kind – otherwise, only the Attic orators managed a canon of as many as ten – and still pointedly omits some famous names altogether. Notably absent are Livius Andronicus, whose plays Cicero would later dismiss as only worth reading once, and the Aquilius canvassed (perhaps by Accius) as a possible author of the *Girl from Boeotia* cited by Gellius, which Varro thought good enough to attribute to Plautus. Licinius Imbrex, Atilius, and Trabea are shadowy figures of uncertain date and output, though we have brief fragments from all three and the first two may be identical with poets known elsewhere for their work in other genres. Luscius and Turpilius are more substantial figures: the first Terence's older rival and sparring-partner in the prologues,[85] the second the last major poet of *palliatae*, active in the decades following Terence's death. Q. Ennius, a major figure across other genres of Latin poetry, was far more active and successful in tragedy than in comedy, and scrapes on to the list for historical interest. But in fact the earliest poet in the list is Gn. Naevius, who fought in the first Punic war (on which he composed the first original epic poem in Latin) and died around 200. Although he also wrote tragedy and pioneered the *fabula praetexta* or serious historical drama on Roman themes, his greatest success was as

[84] Gellius xv.24; see Courtney 1993: 87–96 and H. N. Parker 1996: 589–90.

[85] Donatus on *Eunuchus* 9–10 tells us a bit about Luscius' translations of Menander's *Phasma* and *Thesaurus*; for an attempt to flesh these out into a portrait of the poet, see Garton 1972.

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a comedian, and the fragments seem to confirm him as the principal pioneer of the full-blooded *palliata* style of Plautus and Caecilius. Volcacius' preference for Caecilius over Plautus seems to have been the general view in antiquity; the major playwright of the generation between Plautus and Terence, he is stylistically closer to Plautus but appears to have shared Terence's, and seemingly also Turpilius', special enthusiasm for Menander.[86]

Bibliographic note

Beare 1964, while outdated on Greek New Comedy and indifferent to archaeological evidence, remains unrivalled in English as a synthesis of the literary source material, particularly on lost genres, while, for the extant comedies, Duckworth 1952 still covers more ground than any other single volume in English. Boyle 2005, though centred on tragedy, offers an extremely helpful cultural history of literary drama at Rome, with invaluable discussions of the careers of Livius, Naevius, and Ennius.

Marshall 2006 is now the fundamental text on matters of Roman comic staging and stagecraft; its focus is principally on Plautus rather than Terence. There has also been illuminating work from theatre-studies professionals: the Roman parts of Wiles 1991 present bold and important suggestions about the fundamental differences between Greek and Roman New Comedy on stage, while Beacham 1991 builds on some landmark practical experiments at reconstructionist productions, though with a more positivistic treatment of Pompeian theatrical wall-painting than that argued in his more recent and nuanced follow-up studies. Bieber 1961 assembles a rich dossier of evidence with abundant illustration, but its text needs using critically. The standard work on Roman theatre architecture is now Sear 2006, though its subject is the surviving remains and so begins with the imperial phase of the story.

On music, a series of articles by Moore (1998a, with followups in several of the ScriptOralia collections on individual Plautine plays) paves the way for his forthcoming full-length treatment. Understanding of the metres of Roman comedy (on which Questa 2007 is now the master synthesis) has been revitalized in recent years by the

[86] On all these figures, Wright 1974 offers detailed profiles and close reading of the fragments. New imaging techniques are slowly recovering the second half of Caecilius' *Money-Lender* from a Herculaneum papyrus: see Kleve 1996, 2001.

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firm discrediting of podic, isochronous, and ictus-based models and a closer appreciation of the dynamics of the Roman versions of the Greek metra; the master exponents in English are Willcock (in his editions of Plautus' *Casina* [with MacCary, 1976] and *Pseudolus* [1987]) and Gratwick (in his editions of Plautus' *Menaechmi* [1993] and Terence's *Brothers* [1999]; see also [1982: 84–93]), and there are good accounts also in Christenson's *Amphitruo* (2000) and an excellent concise summary in Henderson's *Asinaria* (2006). Handley's alphabetic notation (originally used to describe the metres of Menandrean comedy in his *Dyskolos* edition [1965: 56–62]) has proved especially useful here and is becoming the standard shorthand, while Gratwick's system of marking the start of the *longum* with underdots is gradually gaining ground in editions; it is adopted in Henderson, as well as in Barsby's edition (1999) of Terence's *Eunuchus*.

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