CHAPTER I

Art and artifice

> Below art, we find artifice, and it is this zone of artifice, midway
> between nature and art, that we are now about to enter.
>
> (Bergson 1913: 66)

Bergson's tempting twilight zone where artifice rules is the domain of
comedy.

Comedy is an art form which delights in its artificiality, glories in its
artifice, and actualises its art – all with apparently effortless ease and stud-
ied avoidance of obvious studiousness. This study concerns the particular
form of comedy which flourished as a performance genre in the late third
and early–mid second centuries BC, the plays being first produced as part
of festivals celebrating one of the gods, or on other religious, social, and
political occasions, such as the dedication of a temple or funeral games
for a great man like Lucius Aemilius Paullus.[1] The audience was on hol-
iday and expecting a play to match,[2] but it was also, at least in part, a
sophisticated theatre-going crowd with experience of different types of
dramatic performance and of other forms of art. The plays of Plautus and

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[1] Gruen (1992: ch. 5); Csapo and Slater (1995: 207–10); Leigh (2004b: 2–3); Marshall (2006: 16–20);
Henderson (1999: 49).

[2] As a representative, see Beacham (1991: 21–2): 'while [the games were] quintessentially religious, to
attend them was also to be on holiday, with the expectation of being entertained . . . Unlike the
great theatrical festivals of the Greeks, at Rome the scenic games were only notionally competitive,
with the emphasis not on a contest for artistic excellence (much less on free ethical debate), but
on impressing and pleasing a crowd out for a good time.' Later (29), Beacham says that Roman
comedians had to take care 'not to make excessive demands on the sophistication of their audience',
although his position is softened (33) in response to the outright hostility of Norwood (1923). Wright
(1974: 190–2) gives a nuanced assessment of the theatrical sophistication of the audience of Roman
comedy. See also e.g. Beare (1964: 167): 'the increasing vulgarity of the Roman audience must have
tended to degrade the status of those who performed to amuse that audience'. Polybius (30.22) tells
us that in 167 BC the eminent Greek musicians assembled on the stage found that the readiest way to
please the crowd was to indulge in a mimic battle. (Polybius, of course, could have his own rhetorical
reasons for such a comment.) As Erasmo (2004: 29) says, it was the same audience for republican
tragedy.

Terence flourished also as a textual genre which manifested itself in a much wider range of reading practices, including the scholarship of Varro, the rhetoric of Cicero, the epitomisation of the grammarians and moralisers, the exemplification of the schoolroom, and the imitation of the Western comic tradition.[3] If throughout this book I appear to privilege the performative audience, it is because the reading of scripted drama involves the imaginative construction of a performance context, even when the reader also makes use of the different interpretative resources available to him or her.[4]

ART AND DECEIT

Terence used his prologues to pursue literary debates which apparently (albeit misleadingly) had only tangential connection with the play at hand. This analysis of Roman comedy begins in the same spirit, with a reflection on art.

Crucial to ancient theories of art is the imitation of nature. So extreme is this code of naturalistic mimesis that its highest accolade is the capacity to deceive the viewer, as is demonstrated by anecdotes such as the famous contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius. Zeuxis painted grapes which attracted birds eager for food, but Parrhasius tricked even his fellow artist by painting a curtain over his work.[5] The difference between Zeuxis and the birds is that he appreciates the curtain as a consummate work of art precisely when and because he realises that it is *not* real.[6] The work of naturalist art, then, is a pretence of deceit. The phrase 'pretence of deceit' is designed to evoke two different but related phenomena, on which depend the edifices of fiction. On the one hand, I suggest, the fictional construction of a pseudo-reality,

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[3] In much of this textual flourishing in antiquity, it was Terence rather than Plautus who was most floriferous. See Reeve (1983: 412–13) on the early manuscript history. The story of how the plays of Plautus and Terence became literature is well told by Goldberg (2005b). The very notion of 'literature' has been deconstructed recently, for earlier Roman culture, by Habinek (2005). I remain convinced of its usefulness as a category.

[4] At a late stage in the revision of this work, I read Meisel (2007), one of very few works of scholarship on theatre which makes explicit its author's address to those who are reading plays, with an imaginative eye on the play in performance. He too often seems to privilege the live audience, no doubt for the same reason.

[5] The story is told by Pliny *Nat.* 35.65. See Isager (1991: 138) for this and for the aesthetic valuation of realism in Greek and Roman art theorists; Kris and Kurz (1979: ch. 3); Carey (2003: 109–10); Zanker (2003: 7).

[6] Elsner (1995: 17–18), apropos this story, says: 'At the heart of this anecdote, the genius of illusionism is ultimately defined by its ability to deceive.' He notes, additionally, that naturalism is not the only point at issue. Naturalism is 'inherently deceptive', and so opposed to the truth for which there was also an artistic drive in ancient theory.

whether in realist mode or fantastical, is predicated at some level on the deception of the viewer: or to put it differently, whatever kind of fiction is at issue, some part of our process of appreciation has to involve seeing the fictive creation as in some sense 'real'.[7] At the same time, however, art requires that the deceit be a pose, and be recognised, otherwise there is no art. Even at its most mimetic and representational, art only comes into being (as art) when there is a perceptible gap between the signifier and the signified. Otherwise the reader is too naïve even to qualify as a reader.[8] In another anecdote, Apelles used the reaction of real horses to his painted versions as proof of their realistic superiority (Plin. *Nat.* 35.95), but it is the discerning observers, not the horses, who appreciate the work as art. A naïve reader is like a bird pecking at painted grapes, a victim who is so much taken in by the fiction that s/he really believes it to be real, and does not recognise it as art. If someone looks at an Unswept Floor mosaic and sees an unswept floor, he is not a viewer of art, but someone who needs to tidy up.[9] Even at its most fantastic and provocatively anti-natural, art must use the pegs of our experience on which to hang its crazy ideas. It is this necessarily deceptive but also interactive relationship between reality and art which caused such anxiety for thinkers in the tradition of Plato, for whom Reality is a concept reified almost to divinity. Art must be treated with the utmost caution, precisely because it is parasitic on reality.[10]

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[7] Useful in this regard, although his purpose is different, is Feeney (1991: ch. 1); also Newsom (1988) on interactions of belief and the suspension of belief in fiction; Hardie (2002: 180), '[o]urs is a knowing credulity, as we watch ourselves being duped by the art'.

[8] See Zanker (2003: 85) for a Hellenistic naïve reader, and Gill (1993: 48) for Plato on such naïve readers. For more on the pretence of deceit, and the need for the reader to be 'ignorant and wise simultaneously' (244), see Feeney (1993).

[9] The problem of absolute realism, if I might so call it, is perhaps what leads the scholars cited by Isager (1991: 137) to deprecate Pliny's artistic sense as too concerned with realism above all things. Halliwell (2002: 143–4) discusses the Platonic idea of perfect imitation as simply the same as the *imitandum* (Plato *R.* 3.395d–e). Many people's understanding of art would struggle to encompass such complete identification. Golden's Aristotelian reading of mimesis is helpful in distinguishing the specific cognitive aspect of the appreciation of art: '[t]he key to understanding Aristotle's aesthetic is to be found in this unambiguous emphasis on the fundamental intellectual pleasure and purpose of artistic representation – the quintessentially human delight in learning and inference, which is evoked by the mimetic structure of works of art' (Golden 1992: 64). The pleasure comes not from the thing represented but from the process of representation. Although made in a different context, Hunter's comment in Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004: 425) is important: 'both "drama" and "real life" are theatrical; failing to recognise that and assuming that they are theatrical *in the same way* are both mistakes which lead to truly comic results'.

[10] Halliwell (2001: 88) briefly discusses the largely positive connection in Aristotle between mimesis and fiction. Halliwell (2002: esp. 138) denies the validity of the commonly held interpretation of Plato's objection to mimesis as being 'copy of a copy'. Golden (1992: ch. 3) gives a clear account of the positive and negative aspects of Platonic mimesis: 'Plato held in delicate balance a philosophical contempt for *mimesis* – due to its essential alienation from ultimate reality – and a sober realisation

Of all fictional forms, it is drama which feels this deceit most keenly, because the fictive relationship is the more immediate as the dividing line between fiction and reality is the narrower, above all in the act of performance. In its pure, performative, form, to which all textual experiences of drama aspire, drama consists in embodied people, living, breathing, moving in front of us, but people who 'are' not what they 'seem', or perhaps, rather, whose 'being' is problematised by the relationship between their physical selves and their textual selves.[11] This is especially true in the ancient outdoor temporary theatre, constructed each time for the purpose in the Rome of Plautus and Terence, with actors and audience all involved in the same social and religious ritual.[12] Drama deceives us because it is so very like truth, and yet it depends for its force on our seeing through its tricks. To this deceit, which lies at the heart of drama, comedy has something extra to add. In comedy, a trick (a manipulation of identity, a lie like truth) is inherent. Deceit thus functions as a programmatic signifier of the play-making process itself: deceit is not just the manner and mode of art, but its substance as well, and hence the 'intrigue' which is the structuring device of very many comic plots is a metaphor for the play. Illusion and disguise are its essence, both as a play and within the play.

For all theatre is predicated on disguise.[13] An actor pretends to be someone other than himself. It may be that for ancient plays the personal identity of the actor (who will usually take several different roles within the performance) was less important than in the modern celebrity-obsessed culture, and that there was less opportunity for the kind of confusion between actor

that the skilled use of *mimesis* is an indispensable means for whatever approach we are able to make to that ultimate reality' (41). In ch. 4, and throughout, Golden develops a strongly cognitive and intellectual understanding of Aristotelian mimesis. For our purposes, what matters is the widespread acknowledgement of and anxiety about the relationship between art and nature. For Plato's almost overwhelming role in this debate, see Halliwell (2002: esp. 37–8). For the suggestion that a modern distinction between fictional and factual discourse does not correspond to anything in Plato's thought, see Gill (1993).

[11] Aristotle famously used a distinction of medium as one of his ways of classifying works of literature, in which drama performs its representation by doing things (*Po.* 1448a–b1). Orr (1996), in a paper concerned with narrative as an act of mimetic repetition, stresses the especially direct status of drama in mimesis. On the peculiar narratological manner of drama, see Serpieri *et al.* (1981), and Laird (1999) for direct speech as a particularly mimetic form of narrative. See Duncan (2006: 9) on ancient and modern anxieties surrounding the inherent 'lying' of acting.

[12] Goldberg (1998) is an important recent account of the performative context of Roman comedy. See also Moore (1991) on the *choragus* speech in Pl. *Cur.*, where the boundaries between the world of the play and the world of Rome are mangled. For a more detailed account of the *choragus*' and Plautus' Rome, see Sommella (2005).

[13] Nelson (1990). Note in particular his comment (138): 'it is a commonplace of criticism that comedy thrives on disguisings, deceptions and mistakings: that is to say, on the provisional nature of our perceptions and interpretations of reality'. Particularly important for disguise in Roman comedy is Muecke (1986), and for the programmatic significance of lies, Petrone (1983: esp. 6).

and character which is so creative and yet so problematic in the modern
performing genres. Celebrity actors were by no means unknown, even in
the early years of Roman literature, as we can see from the comment about
Epidicus and the actor Pellio in Pl. *Bac.* 214–15.[14] At the least, ancient the-
orists were acutely aware of the difference to the mimetic process which
is produced by live performance, and were concerned enough about the
psychological effects of acting a part to feel the need to hedge it around in
various ways.[15] The very word *persona* is witness to the sense of an acted
part as an identity, from its primary meaning as 'mask' through a 'dramatic
role' to an 'individual personality'.[16] When the actor takes up his *persona*
(mask and identity), he is also taking up the challenge of all literature,
which is to explore the meaning of the self, or the meanings of selves, and
is doing so in a very explicit way, both through the fact of acting and in
the content of plays. The search for selves is paradoxically intensified in a
medium which makes strong demands on the denial of one self and the
acquisition of another.[17]

The ideal Aristotelian tragedy contains some mistake or misapprehen-
sion, the undoing of which brings or narrowly averts disaster; in some of
the most influential classical tragedies, moreover, the matter is symbolised
and intensified by horrific distortions of and misunderstandings about the
nature, the very possibility, of seeing things clearly.[18] Sometimes the deep

[14] Brown (2002: 232); Barsby (1986: 116); Garton (1972: 170–88) on known republican actors; Marshall
(2006: ch. 2, esp. 87–90). The *Bac.* lines are deleted as a later interpolation by Zwierlein (1992:
204–12), following Mattingly (1960: 251): see below, n. 66. Celebrity actors in the later republic
are attested by the relationship between Cicero and Roscius. The stigma attaching to acting in the
Roman world is not an obstacle to celebrity status. See Csapo and Slater (1995: 275–7).

[15] The Virgo in Pl. *Per.* clearly feels that acting the part of a prostitute in some worrying sense
turns her into one. McCarthy (2000: 143) comments that the Virgo does not see any gap between
appearance and reality (and so is functioning in a very different universe from that of comedy). For
Plato's theoretical concerns about the psychological effect of acting, and of its near-relative reciting,
see Halliwell (2002: esp. 52–3); Golden (1992: 41–3): 'Plato argues that the imitative process will
encourage and accustom the imitator to *become like* that which he imitates' (43, his emphasis).

[16] *OLD* s.v. *persona* 1, 2, 4.

[17] Gill (1996) characterises the Greek conception of, as he puts it, '(what we call) "personality"' as
being 'objectivist-participant' more than the modern 'subjective-individualist'. Possibly the weaker
sense of boundaries around the self in Greek thought might contribute to the complexities involved
in picking up a role as theatrical performer. Webb (2005: 7–11) discusses the anxieties expressed by
late antique commentators on theatrical mimesis and the dangers it poses both to audience and
to actor. On the wider history of ambivalence about the theatre from this perspective, see Goody
(1997), who situates the anti-theatrical tradition alongside iconoclasm and other forms of anxiety
about representation.

[18] Sophocles' *Oedipus tyrannus* and Euripides' *Bacchae* are the most intense exemplars. The role of
sight in deception will be considered in ch. 3. Fantham (2001) argues that although Plautus and
Ennius did not know Aristotle's *Poetics*, Pacuvius (contemporary with Terence) may have done,
either directly or through the lectures of Crates of Mallos in 168–167 and other Greek critics in

human question about personal identity is reified into specifics and is made tragic through the playing out of the possibilities for errors and mistakes to which human life is prone. All theatre, then, especially all Roman (and Greek) scripted drama, both in form and in content is concerned with identity, but identity perverted and manipulated. What in tragedy was *hamartia* – at least a part of which is a mistake based on an error about identity[19] – in comedy is renegotiated and replayed, but not fundamentally denied, by comic capers around the unstable identities of its characters (and ourselves). In this analysis, *hamartia* is the dark twin of the comedy of errors and ultimately of the intrigue as programmatic device, where pro-comic characters get away with deceit.[20]

Where tragedy played out the horrors of failures in the proper establishment and acknowledgement of identities, comedy manipulates. The humours of mistaken identity, disguise, intrigues, deceit, play-acting and recognitions all offer different but intimately connected ways of exploring the complexities, the possibilities, the limits, the difficulties of personal identity, and the control of knowledge about it, and so act programmatically for the action of the play itself.[21] Comedy jokes at us for wanting to hold onto ourselves, for thinking that our identity is stable, but also it offers us the opportunity to play through the comic possibilities of the instability

155 BC. Most of his plays have recognition bound up in averting disaster (cf. Euripides' *Iphigenia Taurica*), sometimes with a combination of recognition and intrigue. This plot-type is one highly favoured by Aristotle. In response to an interlocutor who suggested that Pacuvius was just making use of a successful plot-type, rather than being influenced directly by Aristotle, Fantham points out that Ennius did not use this plot-type, as far as we can tell. But if Plautus did? This binding-up of identity, intrigue and recognition seems to be Aristotelian as well as tragic, whether or not Plautus was directly conscious of it.

[19] Else (1957: 378–9) argues for *hamartia* as a 'mistake about identity'. See Golden (1992: 80) for the view that *hamartia* is best understood as 'intellectual error'. (This is in keeping with his strongly intellectualist reading of Aristotle.)

[20] The personified Agnoia (Misapprehension) in Menander's *Perikeiromene* could be called a direct descendant of tragic *hamartia*. Duckworth (1994: 140) makes clear the 'importance of being mistaken', as he creatively calls it, also linking comic misunderstandings and tricks with Aristotelian *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*. Linking comic deceit to tragic *hamartia* is a stage further, and not one that Aristotle makes, but it seems a small step worth taking. Janko (1984), a defence of the Aristotelian nature of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, reads comic errors as closer to 'flaws' than mistakes of knowledge. Else (1957: 379) also comes close to making the links which I am suggesting here: 'Recognition is a change ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν; might not *hamartia* be the ἄγνοια from which the change begins?' Petrone (1983: esp. 101) takes the tragic connection in a different way, deriving comic deception in part from the tricks of tragedy, such as Clytemnestra's deceptive reception of Agamemnon.

[21] Purdie (1993) reminds us that any attempt to say 'what comedy is' is liable to enact its own downfall, but that it is useful and perhaps inevitable nonetheless. As she points out, 'even at its simplest, joking is always overdetermined' (13, see also 36); Purdie uses the term 'joking' for all 'occasions of funniness' (12).

which we have a sneaking feeling might be inevitable (and hence, perhaps, not really too threatening).

PROGRAMMATIC PROLOGUE

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the beginning of a work of literature must be in need of an end, and that the edges of literary works are places where their artifice is particularly in evidence.[22] Beginnings and endings in comedy are sites of particular comic intensity, from the prologue's warm-up act posing as exposition, to the closing celebration of drink, sex and social integration, and the final call for applause, which both completes the stage-business and integrates the audience by allowing it to play its crucial judgemental role – and to dissolve itself along with the dramatic illusion. The end must finish what the beginning set out to do: sometimes it does so in ways we expect, sometimes – being comedy – it may overturn our expectations.[23]

At these liminal moments at the edges of the play, when the audience's power is at its greatest and the playwright's control is most vulnerable, the play must do two things: it must kick us into action (firstly listening, lastly applauding) by trumpeting its arrival and departure as pivotal moments in our perception of the world around us (i.e., moments which frame the play-world and the dramatic performance), and at the same time it must create an image that is greater than itself, one that stretches out into a wider fictional illusion, a social and ritual context, and a dramatic and literary tradition. Every beginning is a Big Bang, every end is *Finis*, Time, Apocalypse Now, but even the Big Bang tempts us to ask what went before, how it relates to everything else, whether it is *really* The Beginning, while The End always implies its own afterglow. Not wishing to overplay comic inversion, I begin with Beginnings (chapter 2) and end with Endings (chapter 5).

[22] Rabinowitz (1998: 58) opens his discussion of 'privileged positions' in the process of reading in a similar manner.

[23] For theoretical and critical discussion of beginnings, see Nuttall (1992) on narrative literature, and Said (1975) on both literature and wider culture. On beginnings and endings in Roman comedy, the most explicitly literary reading is that of Slater (1992a). The brief but rich discussion of beginnings and endings in Slater (2000: 122–7) touches on several of the same points that underpin the Plautine parts of my chs. 2 and 5. See also Duckworth (1994: 61–5) on Terence and Lanuvinus, (211–18) on Plautine prologues and exposition; Leo (1912); Abel (1955); Raffaelli (1984b); Anderson (1993: 137); Gowers (2004). The literature on literary ending is wide, among which Kermode (1967) is crucial. For comedy, important also are Frye's comments (1957: 163–71) on the generic significance of reintegration and re-establishment of the social order at the endings of comedies. Charney's comment (1987: 92) is worth repeating: '[i]n fact, the ending is likely to be the most artificial element in the entire action . . .'

No-one will be surprised to hear that Roman comedies involve plays-within-plays and deceitful plots hatched usually by clever slaves in order to achieve their goals.[24] Plautus, like Baldrick in the Blackadder series, has a Cunning Plan. In many Plautine plays, there is an intrigue which directs and constitutes the action: get money from the old man, pass off a prostitute as a matron, divert a letter which releases a girl from the pimp, persuade someone that his house is haunted, or that his eyes or ears deceive him, to give only a few examples.[25] Contrary to what is sometimes thought by the majority of Classicists who are not avid readers of Roman comedy, Terence also, albeit differently, plays with intrigue as an image for the process of playwriting.[26] Chapter 3 considers the games of plotting in both authors. That the deceits which constitute the plays come right in the end is an affirmation not only of the comic spirit but also more widely of the aesthetics of literary fiction.

Chapter 4 brings together a range of types and devices of repetition, seeking to present them as having something in common with each other in the generic self-positioning of comedy. This chapter attempts to capture a range of repeating devices used by Plautus and Terence, verbal, structural, thematic, metaphorical and intertextual. It seeks, moreover, to offer a holistic interpretation of them, by suggesting that they all partake in different ways in the same underlying phenomenon – the comedy of repetition. The holistic argument proceeds by accumulation, but is not essential to the reading of the chapter's parts.

And to finish: chapter 5. Here I return to the idea that edges are generically both intense and vulnerable. Its manner of ending, in particular, is integral to a play's identity as comedy: as Aristotle says (*Poetics* 1453a), it would be a travesty of tragedy for Orestes and Aegisthus to walk off arm in arm, and no-one to kill anyone at all. That would be for comedy. It is indeed what happens at the end of Plautus' *Rudens*, where the celebratory reconciliation and reintegration of society is so complete that even the

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[24] See Benz, Stärk and Vogt-Spira (1995); Slater (2000); Moore (1998a); Muecke (1986); Petrone (1983); Blänsdorf (1982).

[25] Despite Bettini's (1982) argument for an underlying structure in Plautine (though not Menandrian or Terentian) plots in the manner of the anthropologists' 'six basic structures', comic plots show both huge variety and playful predictability.

[26] A commonly expressed classical non-specialist view of the Roman comic playwrights is that their plays are very similar, but that Terence is wet compared with Plautus. These two views would, of course, show some inconsistency. Wright (1974) makes a strong case for Terence's style as being very different from that of Plautus and all the other writers of *palliatae*. Even Wright's Terence can make explicit allusion to the standard style of the *palliata*, for all that he may not be chained to it.

pimp is invited in to dinner.[27] The prologue, spoken by the star Arcturus, threw that play into confusion at the beginning, nearly turning comic mess into tragic disorder with his tragic/epic shipwreck, but the play sorts itself out into civic order,[28] and moreover into dreams-come-true comic fantasy. Despite Arcturus' posturing about comeuppance for sinners, the deserving and the undeserving all get to celebrate in the end. The pimp goes in to dinner with the man whose daughter he was trying to sell into prostitution. To stop and think about how comfortable Daemones might be back in Athens, whether the pimp will continue his trade in women's bodies, whether the slave Gripus, who thought the chest was his salvation (not someone else's), will ever own anything, is to fall into the realist trap – the comic response is just a party, just the here-and-now. Or so it would have us believe. One of the clever tricks comedy pulls on us is to make us believe in the party – not literally, but emotionally and metatheatrically. Comedy also offers us the seeds of endlessness, however, and here too we see the artifice of the playwright.

WORDS AND MORE WORDS

There may be something artificial in making a special category for the comic in words, since most of the varieties of the comic that we have examined so far were produced through the medium of language.   (Bergson 1913: 103)

The enormous sea of words represents possibilities of expression that can never be used. Words are gestural and have a life of their own available for comic exploitation. Once words and actions are separated from communicable meaning, they are freed of their utilitarian taint.   (Charney 1987: 7)

Artificiality, however, is of the essence of comic art. Not all comedy is verbal, and indeed it is a *topos* of critical responses to Roman comedy to insist that the original performance would have been a lot more spectacular, more impressive, more visually funny, than the dry text left to us.[29] The

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[27] Slater (1992a) feels some anxiety about the way in which the *Poen.* pimp is not so invited, such is the powerful expectation of comic integration. Perhaps it is *Rud.* which is remarkable in this regard, not *Poen.*: cf. *Cur.*, where the pimp is treated equally badly and excluded, by implication, from the dinner-invitation to the soldier-rival, now prospective brother-in-law. On the other hand, in *Per.* the pimp is also invited in.

[28] Konstan (1983: 73–95).

[29] Beacham (1991) is a sustained effort to offer more than a textual reading of Roman comedy. Beare (1964: 178), in a useful discussion of stage conventions, comments: '[t]he fact that an actor mentions some object is present may sometimes be evidence that that object was actually shown on the stage; at other times we know that the object was not and could not be shown to the eye, and therefore

words are the subject of this study, however, and are the primary vehicle through which the reader posits the performance.[30] Slater's discussion of Plautus' *Pseudolus*[31] is concerned with the power of Pseudolus' speech, and his ability to make things happen and run the plot by means of his clever words; my interest here is in vocabulary, in the clever words of Plautus (and Terence) by which *they* make things happen and run the plot. It will be argued in this book, particularly in chapter 3, that trickery is not only a crucial element in the workings of a play, but also programmatic for the nature of comedy. The rich specific vocabulary which Roman comedy employs for intrigue[32] consists of words for a trick, a trickster and a big mess.

 As well as the great host of uses of *dolus* ('trick') and its variants, there are words stressing the artful cleverness of tricksters (variants on *astutus* and *doctus*, *callidus*, *versutus/vorsutus*, also *sycophantia* and cognates); the fictionality and makerliness of the trickster's skill (*fabr-* words, *machin-* words); its moral badness (*malum*, *facinus*) and dishonesty (*mendacium*, *fallacia*); playfulness (*lud-* words, which are of particular significance since performance is at *ludi*)[33] and artistry (*ars* and its variants). None of this is surprising per se, although the employment of this register of words can work interestingly in some contexts. For example, Tyndarus in *Captiui* (who both is and is not a slave) uses and has used of him the language of comic-slave trickery to describe his exchange of identity with Philocrates. When he rightly fears that his cover is about to be blown by the arrival of Philocrates' obtuse friend Aristophontes, Tyndarus sounds like any other comic slave:

had to be suggested to the imagination by words and gestures'. Fortier (2002: 12) puts starkly the point that the text is only part of the story: 'to discuss drama is to discuss a part of theatre'. See also Slater (2000: 3); Goldberg (2004: 385).

[30] My interest in the words of comedy, although driven primarily by the desire to elucidate the text for a reader, finds some resonance in the case put forward by Purdie (1993) for reading all 'joking' (in her inclusive sense), whether verbal, visual or otherwise, as 'discourse', as a manifestation and instantiation of communication. Meisel (2007) also stresses the role of words, even though much of his interest is in modern dramatic forms of much more variable media than ancient theatre. See his comments at 44–5, including that 'a competent reader of plays will experience a *sensation* of visuality' (his emphasis). At the extreme verbal end of the reading of funniness is Chiaro (1992) on the language of jokes in popular media.

[31] Slater (2000: ch. 7). The present section title is intended as an honorific allusion to that chapter title, 'Words Words Words'.

[32] Brotherton (1978); Petrone (1983: esp. 94–8); Anderson (1993: 109–18, 131). Related is the important study of comic imagery by Fantham (1972).

[33] For the connection between the action of the trickster in the play and that of the celebrants of the *ludi*, see Chiarini (1983: 215), who connects the phrase *ludos facere aliquem*, i.e. trick someone, with the festival *ludi*. Petrone (1983: 202–9) also connects *ludi scaenici* with games of deception.