Lost in barbarian translation: The anchoring function of the Greek models in Plautine comedy

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INTRODUCTION

On September 4th 1882, Thomas Alva Edison installed electric lighting in a private building in downtown New York for the first time. Incandescent light was discovered as early as 1802 by the English baronet Humphry Davy, who in 1815 also invented a primitive form of light bulb. In 1878 Edison designed a durable and advantageous type of incandescent light bulb, but it took him four years before he managed to bring such an advantageous innovation to the office of the American financier J. P. Morgan. Exactly eighty years—from 1802 to 1882—passed between the discovery of electric lighting and the activation of the first light bulb in a private place. Given the unquestionable usefulness and convenience of electric lighting, one might think that the long delay in its dissemination was due to implementation of the technical improvements which were needed in order to make the new technology convenient for widespread use. This explanation, however, is far from being accurate. Instead, Edison's diaries attest that the major obstacle he had to face was not a technical but a human one.

First of all, there was fear: the danger of short circuits and electrocution was evident enough to obscure the advantages of adopting electric lighting instead of gas lighting, which in fact was no less dangerous at the time. Nevertheless, the very established institution of gas lighting produced the strongest resistance to the diffusion of Edison's combined system of electric lighting and centralised generation of electric power. A whole web of pipelines and streetlights already integrated into the cityscape prevented the installation of an alternative system of lighting and energy distribution, which would have produced a visual change in the familiar urban surroundings. Most of all, companies that supplied different districts of New York with gas felt threatened by Edison's competition, and therefore waged a price war against his new lighting system. The feeling that electric lighting would have never replaced established gas lighting was so widespread that "a British parliamentary committee of inquiry had concluded in 1878 […] that the commercial production of incandescent light was utterly impossible."[1] Eventually, as we all know, things took a different turn.

Edison succeeded at overcoming his opponents' resistance because, as he records himself, he had managed to cloak his innovation in the mantle of the established institution of gas lighting. For example, he produced electricity centrally and distributed it to each building individually, just as happened already in th case of gas distribution. He also exploited existing gas pipes and chandeliers in houses and roads by replacing gas with electricity. Even the

[1] Hargadon-Douglas 2001, 486. See the whole article for the story of the diffusion of Edison's innovative lighting system and the strategy he adopted in order to make it acceptable.

means of billing electric lighting imitated that of gas providers. It must be noted that none of these devices were intrinsic features of Edison's technology, since his electric lighting did not require such a design in order to work. Edison transferred these accessory elements from the old to the new technology merely to make his innovation look more familiar to his potential recipients. Edison was aware that many were suspicious and mistrustful of the new technology because novelty itself prevented them from grasping the use and advantage of electric lighting. In conclusion, Edison realised that, in order to promote his innovation and facilitate its acceptance, he first had to anchor it in current technological understanding, thus bridging the gap between the old and the new lighting systems.

Much earlier, at the beginning of the first century of the Roman empire, the rhetorician Seneca the Elder proved himself already aware of the problematic reception of the new by certain groups of recipients, and of the need to attach something old to the new in order to encourage public recognition. Of course, unlike Edison, Seneca's concern with innovation did not focus on technology but on literature, and on Vergilian epic in particular. Seneca participated in the classicising agenda of the Julio-Claudian literary culture, which contributed to the canonisation of Vergil as a 'classic,' that's is a model of stylistic equilibrium. However, according to Aulus Gellius—who quotes a passage from a lost Senecan treatise—the rhetorician thought that Vergil's epic diction was flawed by the occasional presence of archaic stylistic features which were inherited from Ennius, Vergil's epic predecessor. Nevertheless, Seneca 'forgave' Vergil because he knew that the poet was compelled to insert those Ennian features in his *Aeneid* in order to meet the presumed expectations of the audience, which was familiar with Ennius' diction and therefore expected epic poetry to speak Ennius' language:[2]

> *Vergilius quoque noster non ex alia causa duros quosdam versus et enormes et aliquid supra mensuram trahentis interposuit quam ut Ennianus populus adgnosceret in novo carmine aliquid antiquitatis*. (Seneca *apud* Gell. 12.2.10)
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> Our Vergil too inserted some rough, irregular, and hypermetric lines, and the only reason for that was that in this way Ennius' audience could recognise some taste of antiquity in the new poem.

By addressing Vergil with the affective pronoun *noster*, Seneca conveys the idea that he admired Vergil to such an extent that he could have never believed that Vergil deployed Ennius' archaic features for literary purposes. According to Seneca, these insertions rather worked as anchors that grounded the *Aeneid* in the existing epic paradigm which was represented by Ennius' *Annals*. The Roman audience (*populus*) of epic poetry was *Ennianus*, and therefore the only way for Vergil to make his new, thus 'strange,' epic poem be accepted and eventually surpass its Ennian precedent was to attach to it something Ennian, in the form of the old and the familiar.

[2] Brief comment on this passage is offered in Ker-Pieper 2014, 13-14.

1. Anchoring an innovation

However different, Edison's and Vergil's strategies of promotion of electric lighting and of the *Aeneid* respectively are two manifestations of the same phenomenon, namely the anchoring of an innovation in something established. It is a common observation in psychology that, when an individual has to tackle something new, his first instinctive reaction is one of suspicion and, eventually, frequently on that basis, of rejection.[3] This occurs because a new thing is initially perceived as an unfamiliar,[4] if not as a potentially dangerous object. Therefore, it seems to be 'safer' and, in some way, more economical to keep things unchanged, even if the innovation has the potential for improvement. Put simply, human beings generally perceive the new as being worse than the old, and thus they initially resist or even despise innovation. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian psychiatrist and criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) noticed and studied this particular aspect of human behavior, which he termed 'misoneism' ('the hate of the new').[5] Horace's proverbial expression *laudatores temporis acti* (*ars* 173), which refers to the incurable nostalgia which older generations feel for 'the good old days,' is one of the oldest verbal depictions of people's misoneist attitude. In the last few years, short sentences modelled after the template "X is the new Y" have become an extremely popular 'snowclone'[6] that convey the idea that a new object can be easily understood and made familiar by comparing its role and function to those of a comparable

[3] "One reason why there is so much interest in the diffusion of innovations is because getting a new idea adopted, even when it has obvious advantages, is often very difficult" (Rogers 1983[3], 1). D'Angour 2011, 150-156 deals with shock as a possible reaction to the new.

[4] See the consequences of uncertainty in Rogers 1983[3], 6.

[5] Cesare Lombroso was the founder of criminal anthropology, and he pioneered a positivist approach that attempted to classify criminals according to certain recurrent somatic traits. In an article titled *Innovation and Inertia in the World of Psychology* published in 1890 (Lombroso already outlined his theory of misoneism in a book called *Il Delitto Politico e le Rivoluzioni*, co-authored with Rodolfo Laschi and also published in 1890), he wrote: "[T]he most certain proof of the extension and of the predominance in the moral world of the law of inertia is the hatred of novelty, so little noticed, which we call Misoneism, and which arises from the effort and the repugnance we experience when we have to substitute a new sensation for an old one" (Lombroso 1890, 344-345). Lombroso's view is affected by the positivistic and quasi-/pre-racist view that dominated late-nineteenth century science, so its physiological premises are highly questionable, and nowadays they are deemed as lacking scientific basis ("and this is so common among animals that it can be regarded as a physiological character. […W]hen the innovation is too radical, it is not merely the savage and the child who repel it with dread; the great majority of men, for whom misoneism is a law of nature, are sensible of a feeling of repugnance, as the result of the pain produced by the necessity in which they are placed of causing their brains to be traversed by too rapid transitions, a task not within their power, inertia and the repetitions of movements (individual or atavistic) before performed, being natural to ordinary men, as to all animals," Lombroso 1890, 345). Even so, Lombroso was one of the first scholars to theorise psychologically about people's resistance to the new.

[6] The word 'snowclone' was invented in 2004 by Glen Whitman, an economist with a passion for linguistics. The term applies to a wide array of short phrasal templates, such as "If Eskimos have N words for snow, X surely have M words for Y," a very popular cliché in the English speaking world, from which the term derives. The function of snowclones is to identify or describe a particular variant of a stereotypical situation by adapting the phrasing of a short descriptive and allusive sentence so as to convey a specific message in a fast and straightforward way. Whitman's article (with the explanation of the "X is the new Y" cliché) can be found on the blog *Agoraphilia* via the following link: http://agoraphilia.blogspot.com/2004_01_11_agoraphilia_archive.html#107412842921919301 (accessed on 13th December 2018). See Sluiter 2018, 289-290 on the anchoring function of the snowclone 'X is the new Y.'

familiar object. The increasing use of such snowclones betrays the persistent need to promote an innovation, as well as the fear felt by the users of such templates that their target group will judge the promoted new thing as a worse version of the object which it aims to replace.

A wide array of disciplines ranging from psychology to diffusion studies, anthropology to cognitive linguistics, have analysed human resistance to the new, producing multiple explanatory models of how innovations are promoted and accepted. All these fields agree on one tenet, namely that 'the new' is not an objective feature, but rather the product of human perception. Therefore novelty is not an intrinsic quality, but the result of a judgement. Not only that, the rejection of the new is a completely human phenomenon, and as such it can be prevented. The examples of Edison's promotion of electric lighting and Seneca's handling of Vergilian epic mentioned above already showed how. Diffusion studies describe this strategy of facilitation in terms of 'robust design.' "An innovation's design is robust when its arrangement of concrete details are immediately effective in locating the novel product or process within the familiar world, by invoking valued schemas and scripts, yet preserve the flexibility necessary for future evolution. […] To strike this balance, prospective innovators must carefully choose designs that couch some features in the familiar, present others as new, and keep still others hidden from view."[7] Therefore, 'design' is a device that makes an innovation familiar mainly by shaping it in such a way as to incorporate into it some already familiar features (though the hiding of novel aspects can also play a crucial role). This is exactly what Edison and Vergil did, the former by attaching to his electric lighting some features of the previous technology, and the latter by inserting 'Ennianisms' in the *Aeneid*, the 'new' epic poem.

Anthropology calls these familiar features that aim at giving a feeling of familiarity 'skeuomorphs.' As Hargadon and Douglas write, "[s]keuomorphs are those elements of a design that serve no objectively functional purpose but are essential to the public's understanding of the relationships between innovations and the objects they displace."[8] An example of a skeuomorph which we all know is the image of a phone appearing on the icon of a smartphone: calling someone with a smartphone does not require picking up a receiver, and yet the image of the receiver is crucial in making immediately clear the function of that particular icon on the smartphone.

Psychology has also focussed at great length on the cognitive dynamics of the process of familiarisation with the new. The work of Tversky and Kahneman,[9] for example, has shown that when the human mind is required to make an estimate of the amount of some entity about which it has no prior knowledge—so the information contained in the question is somewhat new—the mind makes that estimate by relying on whatever datum is provided in conjunction with the question, regardless of its actual usefulness (and even in spite of its apparent uselessness). An example could be the question "Was Gandhi more than 114 years

[7] Hargadon-Douglas 2001, 479-480.
[8] Hargadon-Douglas 2001, 491.
[9] The results of their research were first published in *Science* in 1974 ("Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases'). Now the article can be found in Kahneman 2011, 419-432.

old when he died?" in which the number of Gandhi's age at his death is obviously exaggerated. Research has shown that the provided datum is taken as a starting point regardless, and that the estimate is made by adjusting the given number. Therefore, most of the interviewed subjects would make a much higher estimate than if they were asked, for example, whether Gandhi was more or less than 50 when he died (Gandhi actually died at 79). Kahneman and Tversky call this phenomenon of rapid familiarisation with the provided datum 'anchoring,' and call 'anchor' the datum which is perceived to be useful and which is thus taken as a starting point in coping with an unknown—thus new—problem.[10]

At a second stage of their research, it has become clearer that anchoring can be either unconscious or deliberate.[11] This distinction (and above all the possibility of an intended anchoring) is crucial, because it implies that the priming effect of anchors can be exploited intentionally, especially in order to counteract the puzzlement which recipients experience when they are introduced to an innovation for the first time. This is an aspect that has not been noticed before, or that has not been sufficiently stressed.[12] Specific anchors can be devised and attached to an innovation in order to facilitate the recipients' acceptance of its novel aspects. Familiar anchors can hide the strangeness of the innovation to which they are attached, and can arouse a feeling of familiarity with an object that has in fact never existed before. Both Edison and Vergil—at least according to Seneca the Elder—were aware of their recipients' resistance to the new, and therefore they developed suitable strategies in order to overcome this resistance by anchoring their innovations in their existing familiar backgrounds.

Last but not least, these two examples show that innovation and the need to make it acceptable is a great concern not only of technology but also of a field such as the study of (ancient) literature. As stated above, 'hard' sciences have nowadays become vastly more aware of the role of the human factor in promoting an innovation.[13] Therefore, the study of innovation and of anchoring cannot be the exclusive prerogative of technology or psychology.[14] Conversely, the humanities must also claim their right to contribute to the

[10] A detailed focus on 'anchors' can be found in Kahneman 2011, 119-128.
[11] Cf. Kahneman 2011, 122.
[12] Sluiter 2017 is the programmatic paper of the *Anchoring Innovation* research agenda carried out by a team of classicists affiliated with OIKOS, the *National Research School in Classical Studies in the Netherlands* (Sluiter 2018 is a shorter version in Dutch). The project is concerned in particular with investigating how innovations were made successful by means of anchoring in the ancient world. See also the website of the project: https://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/ (accessed on 5th January 2019).
[13] See Sluiter 2017, 20-21. See also Hargadon-Douglas 2001, 476 ("One cultural determinant of an innovation's value is how well the public, as both individuals and organizations, comprehends what the new idea is and how to respond to it"), and Rogers 1983[3], 4 ("an important factor affecting the adoption rate of any innovation is its compatibility with the values, beliefs, and past experiences of the social system").
[14] Even a 'scientific' handbook of diffusion studies such as Rogers 1983[3] stresses the fact that innovation is not an objective entity but a perceived quality, and therefore as such is a human construct. See in particular his definition of 'innovation': "an *innovation* is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. It matters little, so far as human behavior is concerned, whether or not an idea is "objectively" new as measured by the lapse of time since its first use or discovery. The perceived newness of the idea for the individual determines his or her reaction to it. If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation," ibid. 11).

understanding of the dynamics between the old and the new. The subject of Classics in particular offers a wide range of case studies where the anchoring of innovations is clearly at work.[15]

2. The topic of this book

The publication in 2016 of Denis Feeney's book *Beyond Greek: The Beginnings of Latin Literature* has reignited the debate on the question of the birth of Latin literature, which was unquestionably a radically innovative event. The author starts from the premise that we tend to take for granted that "there is a literature in Latin."[16] Feeney claims that in fact "there should really not have been one," and that the birth of Latin literature was "one of the strangest and most unlikely events in the Mediterranean history,"[17] for no other civilization of the ancient Mediterranean basin had engaged before in such an enterprise. In the light of these premises and of the theme I am interested in, namely the anchoring of an innovation, this event proves to be particularly interesting because it provides us with a good example of a radical innovation—Feeney stresses the unprecedented nature of such a "translation project" in the ancient world—that nevertheless managed to be extremely successful. This is all the more striking given the unchallenged position that Greece held as a cultural and literary authority in antiquity until that time.

The present book discusses how Roman literature challenged and managed to overcome the authority of Greek literature, which was the most developed and systematised existing literary system in the Mediterranean, by creating a new literature in the Latin language that became immediately successful and popular. In particular, this book tries to identify the anchoring strategies (and, ultimately, the anchors) which were adopted by early Latin authors, above all the mid-third century BC comic playwright Plautus, in order to make this literary innovation so successful.

My investigation will focus on Plautus' comedies because they constitute the earliest extant corpus of Latin literature and thus provide the most ancient and complete material for the study of how it was possible to go 'beyond Greek.' As is well known, most of the corpus of early Roman literature has been lost, and only scant fragments survive whose interpretation is very problematic due to the great amount of conjectures they require in order to be made readable (in the first chapter I will analyse some fragmentary material nevertheless). However, this is not the only reason for the suitability of the Plautine corpus. Plautus is an extremely self-reflexive author, and through the filter of his various meta-theatrical reflections it is possible to infer some aspects of his poetics that concern his understanding and use of previous Greek literary works. The most remarkable declaration in this regard is the definition of his comedies as 'barbarian translations' from some Greek models, a statement that conveys

[15] See Sluiter 2017, 21-28.
[16] Feeney 2016, 4.
[17] Ibid.

the idea that Plautus' poetic activity is (seemingly) limited to being a work of adaptation of certain Greek originals. In other words, Plautus presents his own work as regular and familiar Greek literature with just a different linguistic façade. At the same time, however, he also declares on other occasions the absolute novelty of these plays, hence undermining any monolithic definition of his *palliatae* as translations into a 'barbarian' language. These declarations have not received systematic attention by Plautine scholarship until now, thus the present research also aims at filling this gap.

With regard to the dynamics of reception of a *palliata* by the Roman audience, Papaioannou rightly claims that "a new comedy is simply *more acceptable* if it engages in dialogue with a set of forces (the 'context') that the audience finds familiar."[18] This short claim condenses four points that are crucial to the present study of the anchoring strategies in early Roman literature, namely: novelty, familiarity, dialogue, and acceptance. As I will argue in the following chapters, in some of his prologues Plautus seems to be concerned with a group of spectators who might reject his plays because of their 'barbarian'—i.e. Italic, non-Greek—nature. Apparently, performing official drama in the Latin language was perceived by some as an unacceptable innovation in the long-standing tradition of Greek comic poetry. This tradition informed theatrical performances, education, and literary criticism in the Italian peninsula too, and as such it denoted the common ground ('the context')[19] that the group of spectators that Plautus envisioned must have shared. Moreover, this common ground could lead some spectators to judge Plautine *palliatae* as too innovative in comparison to Greek comedy, above all the so-called *Nea*, which is best represented by the poet Menander.

In fact, the majority of Plautus' audience most likely enjoyed his *palliatae* without expressing any harsh criticism. However, the above-mentioned group of 'learned' and philhellenic spectators [20] must have represented a serious concern for the playwright, whose

[18] Papaioannou 2014, 2.

[19] On Clark's notion of common ground and its potential as an anchoring device, see Allan-Van Gils 2016.

[20] It has been long believed that Plautus' audience consisted mostly of ignorant and rough spectators (e.g. Della Corte 1967², 13-14), a prejudice that was obviously based on the alleged superiority of the Romans' better counterpart, namely the Greek audience, and on an excessive trust put in Plautus' own depiction of a crass audience from the prologue to the *Poenulus* (ll. 17-35). A reassessment of this stereotypical view began with Wilson 1998, who postulated a more "heterogeneous" kind of audience. Starting from Moore 1998, 9 ("many in the audience must have been true theatrical connoisseurs) and Goldberg 1998 (esp. pp. 13-16), the idea of a sophisticated audience for Plautine spectacles has now become established in current scholarship. Goldberg estimated the amount of an average Plautine audience to be less than 1 600 spectators, which is a quite small crowd. He did so by drawing on archaeological evidence from the excavations at the temple of *Magna Mater* on the Palatine—in front of which the *Pseudolus* was performed in 191 BC—and the testimony of Livy 34.44.4-5, which records how a certain amount of seats was reserved for the senators from 194 BC. This information implies that a Plautine audience was probably not only small, but also elitist. Fontaine 2009, 183-187 refines Goldberg's conclusions and data, adding that, compared to the total amount of the Roman population (about 350 000 people), the Plautine audience "was small." He goes on: "And if it was small, it was exclusive; if it was exclusive, it was predominantly elite" (ibid. 185). Fontaine further pointed out that in Plautus' time there were 300 senators, who represent, out of 1600 spectators, a good percentage of the audience. According to Fontaine this elitist section of Plautus' small (i.e. exclusive) audience knew Greek and Greek theatre (through their aristocratic and philhellenic education), which thereby "served as the focal point and constituency to whom Plautus would cater and whom he would strive to please" (ibid. 185). Most recently, Wiseman 2015, 50-55 and

acknowledgement as an official *poeta* depended on his fulfilment of the established literary conventions, which were obviously Greek and taken by some spectators as a point of reference given that they had largely been raised within a Greek-focused system of education. Plautus' *palliatae*, as well as most of the earliest Latin literature, was a new phenomenon with respect to this established literary system. Therefore, it was necessary for Plautus to establish a dialogue with the conventional system, and to show that there was continuity between his work and the Greek models. As we will see, in a number of plays (not only in the prologues, but throughout the whole drama), this task was accomplished by developing a meta-theatrical discourse on the presence of a Greek model, which works as a sort of reassurance that the new theatrical form was, from a literary perspective, 'orthodox.' Such a 'quality brand' must have been enough to convince a philhellenic audience that Plautine drama fulfilled the (Greek) standards, thus enabling them to be acknowledged as authoritative and official literature.

The thesis of this book is that Plautus' mention of, or reference to, certain Greek models in his plays does not really aim to provide objective and strictly reliable information about what he actually did during his activity as translator (if he can be called a translator at all). Rather, I argue that these claims show that Plautus pursues a precise target, namely the target of convincing some recipients—the most demanding ones—that his *palliatae* are not so different from the existing Greek comedies. In order to do this, at the same time Plautus shapes the established Greek conventions that his plays claim to follow such that he gives the impression that his comedies can be thought of as being indebted to certain Greek models, even when a Greek model is not mentioned at all or when a play features a considerable number of non-Greek elements. In other words, the mentioned or implied presence of Greek models works as an 'anchor' that establishes a connection with the authoritative and normative Greek literary system. Given such a purpose, Plautus might have exaggerated or sometimes even invented the actual impact of the mentioned or implied Greek models on his work.[21]

I base this thesis on two premises. First of all, as I will show below, there are some discrepancies between what Plautus says and what he seems to have done, between what he says and what other poets say he has done, and even between other authors who discuss his use of the Greek models, not to mention other oddities such as the Greek model of the *Asinaria*. In the prologue to this play, Plautus claims that an otherwise unknown Demophilus is the author of the Greek model he chose to translate in his *Asinaria*. However, as I will show in Chapter 2, this seemingly informative statement turns out to be a witty and ironic claim

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59-61 has also confirmed the limited number of Plautus' (and Terence's) selected audience, which was housed in the closed and restricted space of the *cavea*.

[21] The idea that Plautus might have exaggerated (and thus even invented) the direct dependency of his plays on certain Greek originals in order to meet the audience's expectations was suggested as early as 1900 by Pernard: "Plaute connaît le gout de son public. Il sait que sa pièce ne sera bien accueillie qu'autant qu'elle viendra de ce pays de Grèce, qui semble avoir le monopole des arts et de la littérature. Il se conforme à la mode régnante et met sur sa marchandise l'étiquette obligée. […] Si nous ne craignions de paraître avancer un paradoxe, nous dirions que l'assurance avec laquelle il affirme que sa pièce est greque, nous portre à croire, au contraire, qu'elle ne l'est point" (Pernard 1900, 31).

that mocks the expectations of those spectators who approve of a Latin play only as long as it is based on a Greek model. Plautus seems to mock such a philhellenic attitude by attributing a speaking and punning name to the author of his model, namely Demophilus, which means literally 'The Audience Lover' (the flattery of the philhellenic audience for Greek authors is thus mirrored and turned on its head in the punning name of the Greek dramatist). The intended silence about the most famous model of the *Nea*, namely Menander (even when Menandrean elements are clearly present in Plautus' plays), is also another remarkable oddity.

The second premise on which I base my thesis is the discourse on originality and personal achievement that recurs in much of Plautine drama. Although this discourse is as relevant as (if not more relevant than) the discourse on the presence of Greek models, it nevertheless still lacks a thorough and systematic analysis. This is a striking niche in Plautine scholarship, because Plautus proves to be highly aware of his own originality and novelty, and he stresses this aspect quite emphatically across the corpus. At first glance, this aspect seems to contradict the theory of anchoring. As I said above, in order to anchor an innovation it is necessary to hide novelty itself by cloaking it in some old and familiar dress (as Edison and Vergil did), instead of boasting about accomplishing something new, as Plautus does.

As I will show in due course, this paradox betrays the multi-faceted horizon of expectations and conventions that Plautus had to meet, and it will prove to be impossible to find a single solution to this paradox. The philhellenes could accept Plautus' claims to novelty as a form of innovation within the tradition, given the self-claimed Greekness of the *palliatae*. Very similar claims can be found in the Greek comic tradition itself (in Old and Middle Comedy, on which see Chapter 4), thus these very statements can work as 'anchors.' From a merely Roman perspective, Plautus' claims to innovation could be interpreted as the cultural side of the Roman hegemonic agenda (see the end of Chapter 2), which aimed at taking over the Greeks not only as military, but also as cultural, leaders ('we are the new Greeks'). Although the possible explanations for this paradox are multiple, the reference to the Greek precedent and its exploitation as an 'anchor' seems to be a constant device.

3. Outline of the chapters

The present work consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the early Roman literary system and examines how the presence of Greek models was intentionally displayed in some of the earliest Latin writings. However, given the scant evidence that can be inferred from the fragmentary state of the material examined in this chapter, Chapters 2-6 proceed to look at some of Plautus' comedies, which represent the oldest corpus of complete texts of Latin literature. Chapter 2 focusses on Plautus' *Asinaria*, which is probably the oldest extant Plautine play. Scholars currently define many early Latin texts (drama in particular) as translations from Greek originals. Although this definition is not incorrect *per se*, this chapter shows that it can nevertheless be misleading. First of all, *vertere*, the most recurrent Latin

word for 'translation'[22] (which recurs in the early texts themselves), implies an understanding of translation as metamorphosis, which thereby it allows for some degree of originality in the translating author. Secondly, these works themselves claim to be translations and stress this very aspect, which is a phenomenon that proves to be at odds with our current understanding of translation, according to which the 'translatedness' of a literary work is typically an implicit characteristic that does not need any further highlighting within the body of the text itself. This aspect discloses the self-reflexive nature of early Roman literature, and shows the presence of a meta-literary narrative that aims at assuring the audience of the presence of a Greek model—apparently a byword for literary perfection—in the self-claimed 'translation.' Given the persuasive target of such discourse, the provided meta-literary information might be manipulated, thus serving a rhetorical rather than a really informative purpose. These aspects are explored much more in detail in the last part of the chapter, which focuses on Plautus' self-representation in the *Asinaria* as a poet in need of 'Greek anchors'. Finally, Plautus' poetic self-portrait and meta-theatrical discourse will be used to understand the possible message conveyed by the prologue-speaker when he claims that Maccus is dependent on Demophilus.

Chapter 3 develops the analysis of Plautus' meta-theatrical self-representation as an innovative and original play by focussing on the *Bacchides*. It is crucial to analyse this play because it is the only Plautine *palliata* for which a part of the Greek model has survived (Menander's *The Double Deceiver*), arousing a great deal of enthusiasm among scholars. When this Greek fragmentary play was discovered in 1968, a large number of scholars concentrated their efforts on assessing the degree of faithfulness (and, less often, the degree of originality) of the *Bacchides* with regard to its model. However, this traditional comparative approach neglected the fact that throughout the play Plautus wants his audience to believe that his 'translation' is to some extent original. Plautus makes the cunning slave Chrysalus, the protagonist of the play, remark explicitly that his name is different from that of his Greek counterpart in the model—Syros, which was a very common Greek name for a slave. In addition, Chrysalus overtly performs more deceits than his predecessor, thus outdoing him. What is more, the deliberate silence about the use of a Menandrean model for the *Bacchides* is made the more deafening by the explicit praise in the comedy of a previous Plautine play, the *Epidicus*, whose plot is very similar to that of the *Bacchides*, and which seems to be presented as a model (for the *Bacchides* itself?). This implies, first of all, that a study of what Plautus might have actually accomplished in terms of his own poetic craft does not help understand the (discrepant) meta-theatrical messages conveyed to the audience by his mouthpieces during the performance, and, secondly, that the decision to mention or not to mention a (Greek) model connotes a rhetorical, rather than an information-bearing, device. In the theatre the audience, including the group of philhellenes, could not perform a close comparative reading of Greek and Latin texts. Therefore spectators were presumably more inclined to take the poet's claims at face value. Given the similarity of the plots and the explicit

[22] Cf. Traina 1989, 97-99. The whole article is a very detailed analysis of the meaning and implication of the practice of *vertere* in ancient Rome.

reference to the *Epidicus*, it was probably not very difficult to believe that the *Bacchides* was more Plautine than Menandrean. And yet, both Latin plays (*Epidicus* and *Bacchides*) are very Menandrean indeed. Hence, Plautus' originality is anchored in the Greek tradition by means of a negative anchor ('this play does not follow Menander but Menandrean Plautus').

Chapter 4 focusses on the *Pseudolus*. This play contains the strongest declaration of originality in the whole of Plautine theatre. In the middle of the play, the eponymous cunning slave claims that it is the playwright's duty to bring on stage "something new in a new way" (l. 569). Should the poet (who is being impersonated by Pseudolus himself) fail this task, someone more capable than him must take his place. Although less radically than in the *Bacchides*, the theme of innovation permeates the whole play, as the chapter points out. Even though no section of the comedy explicitly mentions the presence of a Greek model, the ides is implicitly conveyed that the play's originality as embodied by Pseudolus' extraordinary creativity is anchored in an established Greek convention, similarly to what happens in the *Bacchides*. This emerges clearly in Pseudolus' repeated allusion to the feature of the double deceit that is usually performed by cunning slaves—which seems to have been a conventional feature of Greek (and in particular Menandrean) comedy. More importantly, Pseudolus parades in front of the audience his improvement of this feature by means of a numerical increase of the deceits (from two to three). The fact that the *Pseudolus* is in fact not based on *The Double Deceiver* (though a very close similarity exists with another Menandrean play, the *Aspis*, as it will be shown), shows once more how the mention of—or, in this case, the allusion to—certain Greek models works as an anchor for Plautus' innovation. Finally, a comparison between Plautus' and Aristophanes' poetics of innovation is drawn.

Chapter 5 discusses the anchoring of the *Amphitruo*, which is a self-claimed innovative "tragicomedy." Innovation is emphatically stressed in the prologue of the play by the god Mercury, who urges the audience's astonishment about the presence of tragic features in a comedy, which seemingly represents an unprecedented innovation. The aim of the chapter is to show that this is rather a pretext by which Plautus can display his knowledge of the generic definitions and conventions as established by the Greek literary system, in order to foreshadow the possibility of also applying them to his *palliata*. It will be shown that Plautus' understanding of literary innovation is strictly related to the concept of metamorphosis, which is perhaps the main theme in the play, where gods turn into humans, and tragedy turns first into tragicomedy, and then into comedy. Both transformations prove to be different manifestations of the same process of *vertere*, namely different examples of 'translation.' Consistently with such an understanding of *vertere*, at the end of the prologue Mercury can say that the plot of the *Amphitruo* is new because it is an old (Greek) story performed anew (in Latin). Nevertheless, the innovation, as Mercury himself will demonstrate, is performed in compliance with the conventions of Greek literary criticism.

Chapter 6, which is the final chapter, analyses the concept of innovation understood as the absence or reduction of the Greek model (here, the mentioned *Kleroumenoi*, a play by Diphilus), according to the definition given in the *Casina* itself, which is very likely Plautus'

last comedy. This chapter shows that the Greek model is mentioned just in order to tell the spectators that, at the beginning, there was indeed a model, but at some point in its composition Plautus decided to cut it. Therefore, the episode(s) allegedly cut by Plautus seem to have been replaced by, or to have allowed for, the expansion of the episode of public humiliation devised by a group of women against a lecherous *senex amator*. The preparation of his mockery is characterised as the staging of such an innovative and excellent spectacle—*ludus*—that not even in Greek theatrical performances seems ever to have previously occurred. The reason for this is that the *ludus* organised by the poetesses proves to be very much indebted to the Italic theatrical background, that of the *fabula Atellana* in particular. Towards the end of the play, the moment when the *senex* is shown to be very close to the Atellan character of the *pappus* coincides with his being deprived of the *pallium*, the typically Greek cloak that the actors of the *palliata* wore on stage. The chapter—and this whole book along with it—comes to the conclusion that, just as the cloak makes the actors of *palliatae* look more Greek, the mention of the (cut) model too works as a *pallium* that disguises the Atellan story as a Greek one.

Overall, Chapters 2-6 outline Plautus' metatheatrical self-representation as an innovative and original poet, and point out the different aspects of his poetics of innovation by analysing in detail five comedies from his oeuvre. In each case, Plautus charges a 'poetic' alter ego (mostly, the creative *servus callidus*) with the task of announcing the originality of each comedy on-stage. This analysis shows not only that, according to Plautus' poetics, literary originality is a multifaceted entity, but also that, despite the claim to more or less radical innovation, Plautus still—or perhaps, all the more—needs to show the presence of the Greek 'models' in his work.

4. Method and scope

The analysis provided in this work as a whole will survey the mechanisms of anchoring through a meta-theatrical close reading of Plautus' plays. This means that I will make no attempt to retrace what Plautus might have actually done with his Greek models, unlike the established comparative approach. As I anticipated above, the mention of Greek models in Plautine theatre seems rather to carry out an independent discursive and persuasive function, regardless of what the poet might have done with his actual models (if he actually had any at all). With this in mind, I propose that this discourse is to be read as a device that aims at anchoring the new Latin works in the established Greek literary tradition by showing—or perhaps by rhetorically building—a relationship between the two literary systems, the new and the old respectively.

The word and concept of 'meta-theatre' that has been used in the previous pages is a generic one. Meta-theatre is actually a label that applies to a number of dramatic phenomena,[23] among

[23] Hornby 1986, 32 identifies five different form of meta-theatre (although he does not really use the word 'meta-theatre;' this he seems to replace with the word 'meta-drama,' to which I give a slightly different, more specific,

which the most relevant for our case studies are the device of the play-within-the-play (which does recur in Plautine theatre,[24] especially when the *servus callidus* engages other characters in his machinations by making them play a part in the masquerade he devised[25]), and the device of literary (self-)awareness.[26] Here, I am particularly interested in the latter form of meta-theatre, which appears very clearly in Plautus' self-representation as an innovative poet. Plautus depicts his own self-portrayal by making certain characters (the cunning slave in particular) act as his poetic mouthpiece. He therefore charges them with the task of presenting his poetry as being highly innovative and at the same time anchored in the Greek tradition. Although the device of the play-within-the-play allows for self-reflexivity, the aspects I will focus on are not necessarily framed as constituting a play-within-the-play, but can take the shape of a meta-literary, or meta-poetic, discourse which is directly addressed to the audience during a break of the dramatic illusion. There is a recurrent tendency in Plautine scholarship to label all instances of literary self-reflexivity as 'meta-theatre,'[27] but this is quite an approximate way of studying such a complex phenomenon. In what follows, I will consistently try to use meta-theatrical definitions according to their proper meaning, and in particular I will use the terms 'meta-dramatic'[28] or 'meta-poetic' with reference to those meta-literary declarations that explicitly concern Plautus' poetry, poetics, and his views on literature.

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meaning, see footnote 28 below): 1. the play within the play; 2. the ceremony within the play; 3. role playing within the role; 4. literary and real-life reference; 5. self-reference.

[24] *Pace* Hornby 1986, 35: the "use of the play within the play is not found in Western drama before the Renaissance. Classical Greek and Roman drama do not employ the device, although they do employ all the other metadramatic devices, some of them in abundance." Hornby's definition of "play within the play" is rather limited, and applies only to those cases in which it is explicit that a theatrical spectacle is taking place within the play (e.g. when the actors attend a theatrical performance in which other fellow actors perform).

[25] A list is provided by Muecke 1986, 217 n. 3.

[26] With particular reference to Plautine theatre, Frangoulidis 1997, 1-4 limits Plautus' *Gattungsbewußtsein* (partially corresponding to Hornby's "self reference") to the meta-theatrical device of the play-within-the-play (Hornby's category 1). See also Muecke 1986, 225-229, p. 217 in particular, where Muecke points out her understanding of meta-theatre as "theatrical self-consciousness").

[27] Most recently, this has been done by Christenson 2019, 136-137, who applies "the terms 'metatheatre' and 'metatheatrical' […] in a limited sense (and scope) to explicate an important aspect of early Roman comedy: Plautus' and Terence's playful reflections on the genre of New Comedy, especially its plots, characters, and conventions."

[28] Therefore, my definition of 'meta-dramatic' slightly differs from that given by Hornby, who seems to consider it as just a byword for 'meta-theatre,' as his use of the word throughout his book seems to suggest. Cf. Hornby 1986, 31-32: "[M]etadrama can be defined as drama about drama, it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself. In one sense, […] *all* drama is metadramatic, since its subject is always, willy-nilly, the drama/culture complex. […] Metadrama is thus not a narrow phenomenon, limited to a few great playwrights or to a few periods in theatre history, but is always occurring. Nevertheless, the *manner* in which a given play is metadramatic, and the degree to which the metadramatic is *consciously employed*, can vary widely. Great playwrights tend to be more consciously metadramatic than ordinary ones, and their plays to employ metadramatic devices more obviously, because the great playwright conceives his mission to be one of altering the norms and standards by which his audience views the world, and is thus more likely to attack those norms frontally." By 'meta-drama' I mean exactly what Hornby says about self-aware "great playwrights" (I do not endorse his distinction between 'great' and 'ordinary' dramatists, which is too subjective a categorisation), and I would adjust his definition of the playwright's mission as consisting in "altering the norms and standards by which his audience views" the *drama*, rather than the *world*. This applies particularly well to Plautus' meta-

Meta-theatrical readings have become a consolidated approach in Plautine scholarship. The first, still tentative, attempt was that of Marino Barchiesi, who in 1969 published a pioneering paper titled "Plauto e il «Metateatro» antico,"[29] in which he drew a comparison between modern and contemporary European meta-theatre and Plautus' comedy. In this essay the topic of poetological self-reflexivity is already taken into account (especially in relation to Pseudolus' definition of the role of the poet), but in Barchiesi's hands it is not considered as a specific manifestation of meta-theatre.[30] (as it will be shown, when Pseudolus makes this declaration, he breaks the dramatic illusion addressing the audience directly, therefore there is no such a thing as a play-within-the-play: Pseudolus just gives an explicit comment on a poetological aspect rather than conveying his idea of theatre by showing himself how a play should be performed). In 1985, Niall Slater[31] provided the first extensive analysis of Plautus' meta-theatre, in which he applied the theoretical premises that were developed some twenty years earlier by Lionel Abel.[32] As in the case of Barchiesi, although poetological self-reflexivity is consistently dealt with throughout the whole book, it is considered as identical to the phenomenon of the theatre-within-the-theatre device. The present work aims to follow in the footsteps of these works, but it will attempt to make a more accurate distinction between the different meta-literary phenomena which are in operation.

As I noted in the outline above, five Plautine comedies are taken into account in detail. The analysis starts with Plautus' (likely) oldest extant play, the *Asinaria* (in Chapter 1), and ends with his (also likely) latest—and probably his very last—extant comedy, namely the *Casina* (in Chapter 5). These works have been chosen because of their extensive and emphatic meta-poetic discourse on literary innovation. Three of these plays (*Bacchides*, *Pseudolus*, and *Casina*) are generally attributed to the mature phase of Plautus' literary activity, and according to Lefèvre[33] these are the plays in which Plautus' originality appears most clearly. If Lefèvre is correct, it is no coincidence that in these comedies Plautus makes the strongest claims to literary novelty, whose accomplishment, as Pseudolus argues, is indeed the poet's duty. Therefore, in these plays literary innovation is not only the subject of meta-literary discussion, but is also an actual dramatic feature of Plautine theatre. This makes these four dramas particularly suitable case studies for studying the mechanisms of anchoring.

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drama, which mostly entails a—playful—game of redefinition of the dramatic conventions, as the following chapters will show.

[29] First published in *Il Verri* (1969), and now reprinted in *I Moderni alla Ricerca di Enea* (1981). In this book Barchiesi's essay will be referred to as Barchiesi (1981).

[30] I will show that, when Pseudolus makes this declaration, he breaks the dramatic illusion by addressing the audience directly, therefore there is no such a thing as a play-within-the-play: Pseudolus just gives an explicit comment on a poetological aspect rather than conveying his idea of theatre by showing himself how a play should be performed.

[31] Niall Slater, *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind*, Princeton 1985 (first edition, the book has been republished in 2000).

[32] Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, New York 1963.

[33] Lefèvre 1980.

5. The present work in the ocean of Plautine scholarship

I mentioned in the previous paragraph a peculiar trend in Plautine scholarship, namely the meta-theatrical approach. The field of *Plautusforschung*, however, is far from being limited to a small number of other approaches. In fact, its extent is oceanic. The bibliography of Plautine scholarship is seemingly endless, and mastering it requires a special expertise. Plautine philology can really be defined as a sub-branch of Latin philology, and contrary to what one might believe at first sight, among Latinists there is a 'Plautine tribe' that is very productive in terms of scholarly publications.

Very recent and up-to-date bibliographies and histories of *Plautusforschung* already already in abundance, and therefore it would be redundant to repeat here what has been already done elsewhere to a very useful degree.[34] It will suffice instead to mention just two other main approaches besides the already mentioned meta-theatrical approach, namely an Hellenocentric kind of analysis that stresses the dominant role of Greek models in Plautus' playwriting, and a Bakhtinian view,[35] which has vindicated Plautus from the charge of merely copying his Greek models by framing his activity within the native theatrical background.[36] As it can be already imagined, a brief outline of these two approaches will help clarify to what extent my understanding of the role of the Greek 'models' as anchors differs from current understandings.

The Hellenocentric approach was formalised by Frierich Leo's book *Plautinische Forschungen* first published in 1895.[37] The aim of this approach was outlined by Leo himself as reconstructing the compositional technique of otherwise lost Greek playwrights, such as Menander, Diphilus, and Philemon (the three canonical poets of the *Nea*), from the extant comedies of Plautus and Terence,[38] which were regarded as faithful copies of (now lost) Greek originals. Leo and his colleagues lived and worked before the prosperous season of discoveries

[34] The most recent Plautine bibliography is that compiled by Mantzilas 2014, 649-796. See id. 650-652 for a list of previous bibliographies on Plautus. The most up-to-date overview of the approaches and of the *status quaestionis* in Plautine scholarship is that of Petrides 2014. Richlin 2017, 1-67 offers in addition an excellent and a very extensive panorama of the many approaches and theories that have been applied to Plautus' text over past decades, with particular regard to the figure of the slave.

[35] The book by Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*, first published in 1968, was the first extensive attempt to read Plautine comedy along the lines of the Italic cultural and theatrical background as a coherent whole, stressing the importance of the theme of the "Saturnalian inversion" (i.e. the inversion of social roles taking place both on stage and during the festival, the master-slave relationship above all), rather than pointing out single Greek and the Roman features.

[36] Fontaine 2014, 529-530 has called this scholarly dichotomy in Plautine scholarship "the war of the paradigms." Although it was published more than sixty years ago, the critical and aesthetic assessment made by Barchiesi 1957 of the results gained by the different approaches of the *Plautusforschung* is worthy of attention. In particular, Barchiesi showed that the 'German school' from Ladewig to Jachmann, which practiced the so-called *höhere Kritik*, was not always obsessed with *Quellenforschung*, that is with investigating Plautus' models and their reconstruction from the extant Latin 'translations' (see ibid. 177-183). In this light, the quest for Plautus' originality is much less recent than is generally thought (indeed Barchiesi opens his essay by talking about "the law of the 'constant anachronism'" that affects the *Plautusforschung*, ibid. 163).

[37] A second edition followed in 1912, which is the one from which is usually quoted.

[38] "Aus Plautus und Terenz die Technik der attischen Dichter entnehmen" (Leo 1908, 46). I took the Leonian quote from Petrides 2014, 426.

which in the first half of the twentieth century uncovered several papyri containing a good deal of Greek New Comedy, especially by Menander. Therefore, for these scholars, the only way to know something about the *Nea* was to rely on Roman *palliatae*. However, this approach ended up overstretching itself: the new papyrological finds did not really return 'Plautine' or 'Terentian plays,' and even when a part of the 'model' of the *Bacchides* was found, it became clear that Plautus could invent from scratch Hellenising sections that did not exist in the Greek model.[39] Moreover, this approach was affected by circular reasoning, since it aimed at reconstructing from Latin plays the original structures of their Greek models, which were compared back to the *palliatae* in order to find differences, or alleged barbarisms in the form of the Roman playwrights' interventions.[40]

A student of Leo, Eduard Fraenkel, contributed to an important reassessment of the Hellenocentric approach. In 1922, Fraenkel published his canonical book *Plautinisches im Plautus*,[41] in which he acknowledged the presence of a considerable amount of original elements in Plautine comedy that could not be attributed to the Greek models (whose role in Plautus' playwriting was for Fraenkel still very important, although no longer overwhelming). Fraenkel called these original elements 'the Plautine' (*Plautinisches*). The publication of Fraenkel's book laid the foundations of the so-called 'analytical approach,' whose aim was to discern Plautine from Attic elements, as the title of another fundamental book published by Günther Jachmann in 1931 goes: *Plautinisches und Attisches*. In the past century, the analytical approach has become dominant in subsequent Plautine scholarship.

A major asset of the analytical approach has been the reappraisal of the influence of the Italic theatrical background on Plautine theatre, especially that of the improvisatory *fabula Atellana*, a connection that is displayed starting from Plautus' *nomen* Maccus, which the poet

[39] Lines 540-558 of the *Bacchides* do not have any correspondence in the comparable section of Menander's *Dis Exapaton*. Although they are most likely Plautus' invention, these lines sound very gnomic, and consequently very Greek. Before the discovery of the papyrus of Menander's *Dis Exapaton*, Leo regarded lines 540-551 of the *Bacchides* as Menandrean. However, the recovery of Plautus' 'model' proved him wrong (see Fontaine 2014, 526), and thus he was something of a victim of a philhellenic prejudice. Fontaine (ibid.) tries to rescue him partially by arguing that Plautus might have taken that section from another Menandrean passage (from the same or another play), which is thus a *contaminatio*. Fontaine also seems to fall into the same trap (of what he later on calls the "Hellenistic paradigm") as Leo, in claiming the need to postulate the presence of a Greek model also for this section (and a Menandrean one!). Plautus can 'sound' very Greek even without taking that Greekness directly from a Greek model, and this could have been the case for *Bacch*. 540-558. See further Plautus' "deconstruction of Menander" in Anderson 1993, 3-29. More will be said on the *Bacchides* and the reassessment of the actual role of Menander's *Dis* in evaluating Plautus' poetic workmanship in Chapter 3.

[40] One of the last most remarkable (and somewhat most recent) products of this approach is Otto Zwierlein's philological work on Plautus' comedies (*Zur Kritik und Exegese des Plautus I*: *Poenulus* und *Curculio*; *II*: *Miles gloriosus*; *III*: *Pseudolus*; *IV*: *Bacchides*, 1990-1992). Zwierlein expunged all the passages that did not sound Greek as interpolations by Roman *retractatores*. The extent of the excised material is very high, and this consequently aroused scholars' general disapproval of Zwierlein's work (see for example Gratwick 1993, 40: "let him think again and again why it was that his illustrious predecessor Fr. Leo liberally recorded his and others' suspicions in the app. crit., but was circumspect (yet not circumspect enough) in inflicting the Humiliation of the Square Brackets in the text in places other than those where objective MS. evidence is available. Editing 'Plautus' is a complicated business; and so far at any rate, Z. is adding to the distortions that Plautus has undergone in the transmission, not healing them. *Di melius duint*").

[41] In this book the Italian edition published in 1960 with Fraenkel's own *addenda* and revisions will be referred to.

derived from the name of one of the stock-characters of the *Atellana*, the *maccus* ('the silly guy'). In some cases, the importance ascribed to the role of the Atellan background in Plautus' theatre was such that the presence of Greek models at all has been denied. The defence of this scholarly position became the peculiar hallmark of the so-called 'Freiburg School,' a group of (German) academics led by the Freiburg-based scholar Eckard Lefèvre. Freiburg scholars perceive themselves as Fraenkel's successors, and thus their approach can be defined as 'neoanalytical.'[42] In two cases in particular (in the *Asinaria* and the *Menaechmi*),[43] members of the Freiburg School have ruled out the presence at all of Greek models, a claim that is particularly striking in the case of the *Asinaria*, where the presence of a Greek model is explicitly mentioned by the prologue-speaker, as we will see in Chapter 2.

With regard to these and other claims, Freiburg scholars have been met with harsh criticism, especially by their British and American colleagues.[44] Nevertheless, their provocative approach has contributed to a general reappraisal of the importance ascribed to the Greek models by Plautine scholarship: "as Plautine studies grew ever more sophisticated, the importance of the Greek original as an interpretive factor petered out."[45] One member of the Freiburg School, Vogt-Spira, who concluded that the *Asinaria* has no Greek model, has emended the radical claims of his circle by proposing a triadic model to describe the simultaneous relationship[46] between Plautus' *palliatae*, the indigenous Italic dramatic traditions,[47] and the Greek models. However, the role of the allusions to Greek models in Plautine comedy—be they explicit, as in the prologues, or implicit, as in the meta-theatrical declarations of the *servus callidus*—still needs to receive proper investigation, especially when they seem to be inconsistent with what Plautus might have actually done.

Contrary to the most extreme claims of some neoanalytical scholars, this book does not aim to deny the presence of Greek models in Plautus' plays. Rather, in what follows it will be assumed, with Danese, that it is neither convenient nor fruitful to try to infer and identify a specific Greek model from a certain Plautine play,[48] as it has been done so far. Two circumstances prompt this approach.

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[42] Petrides 2014, 431.
[43] See Vogt-Spira 1991 and Stärk 1989 respectively.
[44] Petrides 2014, 431. See also n. 81 on p. 70 for specific references.
[45] Petrides 2014, 427.
[46] Vogt-Spira 1998. This model is confirmed by Panayotakis 2019, 34.
[47] Most recently, Panayotakis 2019 has confirmed the influence of Italic dramatic forms (*Atellanae* and mime, above all) on Plautus' *palliatae*. However, he is much more cautious than are the Freiburg scholars about establishing the exact (large) extent to which these forms contributed to Plautus' process of composition.
[48] "Ogni commedia di Plauto e Terenzio, anche quelle la cui *facies* drammaturgica è più faticosa per problemi di tradizione, risponde ad un evidente progetto teatrale autonomo, destinato, nelle intenzioni dell'autore, a stupire e a divertire il pubblico attraverso una linea di sviluppo dell'intreccio coerente e ben congegnata. Il fatto di utilizzare situazioni sceniche tratte da diversi modelli greci implicava perciò un lavoro di adattamento e trasformazione delle medesime, in ossequio alla nuova idea di intreccio concepita dall'autore romano, senza lasciarsi condizionare da scrupoli per un attento rispetto del testo originale" (Danese 2014, 42). Danese has argued for a revision of the definition and concept of (Greek) 'model' for Roman *palliatae* both in this and in a previous article (Danese 2002). Danese belongs to the 'Urbino school' (see Danese 2014, 40 n. 6), founded and led by Cesare Questa († 2016), which is devoted in particular to the study of Plautine metre and of the textual

Firstly, the fact that the dramatic repertoire of *palliata* is based on a rather small number of recurrent plots[49] suggests that Roman playwrights could have composed their own plays, whilst bearing in mind different and mutually interchangeable Greek 'models' at the same time. Ancient as well as modern scholars, as we will see in Chapter 2, will 'accuse' Roman playwrights of 'contaminating' the Greek originals, and of conflating two or even three Greek models into one Roman comedy. However, Roman poets may have occasionally been more interested in recurring dramatic types than in specific Greek plays.[50] As we will see, soon after Plautus' death, ancient scholars already disagreed on the exact Greek models of some Plautine (and Terentian) plays, which suggests the possibility that more Greek models might be identified for a single *palliata* due to the recurrence of standard dramaturgic patterns that affect the comedies of the *Nea*.

Secondly, the ancient circulation and transmission of the text of the *palliatae* was exposed to changes and adaptations for following revivals by different troupes[51] to such an extent that the identification of a specific Greek model became, if it ever really was, no longer clear. Therefore, it follows that identifying or reconstructing Plautus' hypothetical Greek models is not a viable task.

As Danese claims, "è necessario allora riconsiderare a fondo l'idea di modello per la *palliata*, ma anche per tutto il teatro latino arcaico in generale."[52] Such a wished-for reconsideration of the idea of 'models' for Roman comedy and its function will take place in this book within the workings of the anchoring of an innovation outlined above. Therefore, all explicitly mentioned or implied Greek models, which do not necessarily give an accurate account for what the playwright could have done, will be analysed in their function as 'anchors' for Plautus' innovative plays, as they present themselves multiple times offering an overview of the poet's multi-faceted poetics of innovation. This implies that in the present book the term 'model' will not refer to the Greek text(s) that Plautus could have actually employed in his

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transmission of Plautus' text in the period of Humanism and Renaissance. Crucial is its engagement in the ongoing project of replacing the (still) standard *OCT* Plautine text with a new *Editio Plautina Sarsinatis* (see above). The 'Urbino school' is also famous for having organised a series of annual lectures on single Plautine plays called *Lecturae Plautine Sarsinates*, starting with *Amphitruo* (the proceedings of which were published in 1998), and ending with *Truculentus* and the fragments of *Vidularia* (the proceedings followed in 2017). A new series of conferences and proceedings on single Plautine themes has now started, under the title of *Ludi Plautini Sarsinates*. The first conference focussed on the character of the braggart soldier (proceedings have been published in 2018), while the second analysed the figure of the parasite (proceedings are forthcoming). These events are hosted in Plautus' hometown, Sarsina, and take place within the frame of the *Plautus Festival*.

[49] Bettini 1991, 11-76 has classified the different stock plots which are recurrent in the Roman *palliata*.

[50] Danese 2014, 43-47.

[51] Danese 2014, 47-49. Marshall 2006, 261-279 ventures to claim that the scripts of Plautine plays were not fixed, since some literate actors of a certain troupe could change, adapt, and interpolate the original (i.e. Plautine) text according to the needs of their fellow actors.

[52] Danese 2014, 46.

compositions (and there is evidence that in some cases he did use Greek models), but to the 'model' as the subject of his specific meta-literary discourse.[53]

[53] Cf. the most recent approach of Telò 2019, 48 on Plautus' (and Terence's) poetics of adaptation: "I will not pursue the model hunting and traditional comparative criticism that have occupied classical philology for so long. Except for the fortunate case of Plautus' *Bacchides* and Menander's *The Double Deceiver* (*Dis Exapaton*), the possibility of setting the Roman plays alongside their Greek originals is hindered by the dearth of textual evidence. Instead I will chart some of the ways in which the plots of Plautus and Terence comment upon the modes of literary transposition that shape their identities."

Note to the reader

Although Plautinists affiliated with the 'Urbino School' have embarked upon the ongoing ambitious project of providing Latinists with a new standard text of Plautus' plays, the *Editio Plautina Sarsinatis*,[1] the text of the Plautine passages quoted in this dissertation is taken from Lindsay's *OCT* edition (1904-1905), still the standard edition in Anglophone scholarship.[2] All the (few) modifications to Lindsay's text are indicated in the footnotes (and referenced in the final bibliography).

The abbreviations of the titles of works by Latin and Greek authors follow the conventions of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and of the Liddell-Scott dictionary respectively.

All the translations of Latin and Greek passages are my own.

[1] Until now, the editions of *Asinaria* (Danese 2004), *Bacchides* (Questa 2008), *Captivi* (Torino 2013), *Casina* (Questa 2001), *Cistellaria* (Stockert 2009), *Curculio* (Lanciotti 2008), *Pseudolus* (Questa 2017), and *Vidularia* (Monda 2004) have been published. In addition, Cesare Questa has published also an edition of all Plautine *cantica* (Questa 1995).

[2] See Fontaine 2005.