THE PLOT OF THE CAPTIVI OF PLAUTUS

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In this paper¹ my intention is to offer first a brief survey of the main lines of research on Roman comedy during the past half-century, and then to consider more particularly some problems that have been raised in connection with the plot of Plautus' Captivi.

It is well known that nineteenth century scholarship showed a marked preference for what it considered to be the original, the primary, and therefore the more 'natural' and 'true' creations of literature. This led to interminable and often quite fantastic 'Quellenforschung', attempting to trace every literary motif and realisation to its ultimate source or sources. An excessively analytical approach not only concerned itself with the Homeric Problem but also dissected the works of Virgil until they became hardly recognisable mosaics of borrowings from Homer, Apollonius, Hesiod, Theocritus, Ennius, and many more.

Since the beginning of this century source hunting became the predominant line of research on Roman comedy too, particularly in the Germanic world. For almost 50 years scholars have been tracking down meticulously all kinds of real and—more often—supposed inconsistencies and improbabilities in the plots of Roman comedies,² and, especially with these as their clues, they have been trying to determine which elements in the plays were adapted more or less faithfully from the particular Greek model of New Comedy, and which elements were additions due to the Roman poet or adapter, be it more or less original creations of his own or borrowings of parts from other Greek models through the process of contaminatio,³ to which Terence twice refers in his prologues (And. 9–21, Heaut. 16–21), once naming Plautus among his auctores in this practice. This search for the unknown behind the actual, concrete play that we have, often amounting almost to ignoring what we have for the sake of the unknown—for of the the original Greek New Comedy very little has been preserved, and of the plays supposed to have been the models of the Roman comedies, almost

¹ The substance of this paper was presented in Afrikaans to a conference of the South African Classical Association, held at Bloemfontein in January 1959.
² Already P. Langen in his Plautinische Studien Berlin, 1886 compiled a list of Plautine repetitions and prolixity, as well as inconsistencies in plot and characterisation, but with the view to eliminating inferior post-Plautine accretions to and corruptions of the text. See also n. 18 below.
nothing—this effort then, by working from Roman comedy, to gain some knowledge about its lost Greek models, and, concomitantly, about the original Roman element added in the adaptation, finds its expression in the following three basic works: Friedrich Leo’s *Plautinische Forschungen* (second edition, Berlin 1912), Eduard Fraenkel’s *Plautinisches im Plautus* (Berlin 1922), and Gunther Jachmann’s *Plautinisches und Attisches* (Berlin 1931), while the limit in an exaggerated application of this method is surely displayed by W. E. J. Kuiper’s *Grieksche Origineelen en Latijnsche Navolgingen* (Kon. Ned. Akademie, Amsterdam 1936). These ‘big shots’ were accompanied by a large convoy of smaller vessels, sailing mostly under a German flag, and of which a very useful, though now somewhat antiquated, survey is given by P. J. Enk in his *Handboek der Latijnse Letterkunde*, deel II, 1 en 2 (Zutphen 1937).

This spate of analytical Quellenforschung has undoubtedly enriched our knowledge of Roman comedy: by drawing attention to all kinds of apparent inconsistencies in the plots and in the structure of the plays, and in spite of much exaggeration and many wrong conclusions in doing so, this diagnosis nevertheless in the end opened the way to better evaluations and explanations of such findings and consequently to a better insight into and understanding of the nature of Roman comedy; secondly it emphasised, though mostly not in very flattering terms, the originality and creative talent which Roman comedians revealed in spite of their predominant attachment to the Greek ‘masters’. Nevertheless, most of these analyses of ‘sources’ must now be rejected because they depart from certain unjustified and wrongful basic assumptions. Though the fact must be accepted that Plautus often dealt quite freely with his models and doubtlessly also created plots by ‘contamination’ from more than one Greek model, we cannot by mere internal criticism and without any external evidence come to any certainty as to when, where and how this took place. Already in 1920 the French scholar Michaut warned against the wrong assumptions behind much current research on Roman comedy. None less than Wilamowitz already in 1911 questioned Leo’s use of ‘inconsistencies’ to prove departure from the Greek models. And Jachmann’s book evoked two extensive criticisms of principle,

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4 He also wrote special studies on the *Stichus, Pseudolus* and *Amphitruo*, published respectively in N.G.G. 1902, 375ff.; 1903. 347ff.; 1911, 254ff.


7 *SB. Akad. Berlin* 21, 1911, 485ff., referring to similar ‘inconsistencies’ that could be traced in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* where there can be no question of a *contaminatio* of sources!
in a review by A. Körte⁸ and in particular in a 40-page review in Gnomon by Andreas Thierfelder.⁹

The first unjustified basic assumption is that all the Greek originals of New Comedy were dramatically perfect and flawless, and that all defects—inequalities, repetitions, inadequate motivations or explanation—in the plot and the structure of the Latin plays are due to the Roman adapter.¹⁰ But there is no a priori reason for this assumption and even the preserved remnants of New Comedy show us that these models were not always so flawless. There is, moreover, no reason why the Greek comic poets themselves could not have borrowed or 'contaminated' from plays of their predecessors, their contemporaries or themselves, particularly in view of the general sameness in plot that characterised New Comedy.¹¹ On the other hand, there is as little reason for assuming clumsiness and lack of technical skill as the peculiar mark of Roman comic poets: the mere fact that the Roman adapter is often credited (or debited!) with quite intricate and far-reaching changes in the whole structure and set-up of the Greek original seems in itself a refutation of his supposed lack of dramatic skill and enterprise.¹² Add to this the fact that many passages with an obviously strongly Roman colour, and therefore probably Roman originality, excel in power of expression, lively wit, vivacious farcicality and dramatic momentum in a way which certainly does not suggest the hand of a clumsy, unskilful and boorish bungler and botcher.

In the second place, the criteria for determining flaws and inconsistencies are quite arbitrary and subjective and differ from one scholar to the next. Lejay¹³ rightly remarked that if the 'logic' of Leo in the criticism of Roman comedy differs entirely from that of Ritschl and of Ribbeck, it is most likely to differ also from that of Plautus! Moreover, he adds, these speculations

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¹⁰ One is astonished to read in an article published in 1954 the following still stated as a basic assumption: 'After a long development both the (Greek) tragedy and the (Greek) comedy attained a degree of perfection where certain postulates of dramatic technique could not possibly be overlooked. Therefore, wherever we come across any transgression of the (sic) rules of dramatic technique we may infer that Plautus changed the plot of the original.' (B. Krysniel-Józefowicz, Eos 47, 1954, 139.)
¹¹ Michaut op. cit., p. 257–8. A healthy reaction is to be found in W. H. Friedrich, Euripides und Diphilos, München 1953, with his approach of Diphilos-criticism rather than Plautus-criticism (see esp. pp. 171–3, 182–3). He stresses that differences in character and ability should be assumed among the New Comedy poets such as Menander, Philemon, Diphilos. 'Die Aussichten der Plautus-Analyse sind ja nach Vorbild ganz verschieden' (p. 183).
'procèdent uniquement de la logique, le guide le plus trompeur quand il s'agit de la littérature'. Roman comedy is being criticised according to norms and standards that are really quite inapplicable. Instead of first determining the nature, technique and design of this type of comedy by means of a careful comparison and analysis of what we do know and possess of it, and then measuring the plays according to their own standards,¹⁴ scholars have, without any justification, subjected Roman comedy to what one might call modern standards and requirements of perfect consistency and structural soundness, and according to this norm it was then decided what is intrusive and what genuine, i.e. Greek. Proper attention was not given to the influence of such factors as 'the staging of plays with a limited cast, the conventions of ancient comedy, the playwright's desire for clarity and humour', considering in particular that his rather unsophisticated audience was assembled in a ribald holiday spirit of amusement and delight, and did not consist of scholars searching the plays for flaws 'to be discovered by a logical and unimaginative investigation of details'.¹⁵

Some flaws must be attributed merely to Plautus' hasty and rather careless writing ('il lui suffit que les choses s'arrangent en gros', as Michaut remarked), without being necessarily due to an unskilful contamination of sources. After all, Terence did not say, or imply, that Plautus always or usually 'contaminated'; in their context these passages at most suggest that Plautus sometimes did so, and Terence would have found it in his own interest to say so expressly if this had indeed been a common practice at all,¹⁶ such as the results of the modern source hunters would have it. Already Langen¹⁷ pointed out that a certain repetitiveness and some defects in composition and exposition have to be accepted as characteristic of Plautus' plays, though he admitted that there is a certain limit beyond which irregularities call for additional explanation. There should in principle still be left room for the possibility which Langen mainly had in mind, though modern critics seldom follow it now, namely that flaws can be due also to the textual transmission: interpolation, retractatio, omission, especially occasioned by actors and directors at later performances of the plays.¹⁸

¹⁴ Stressed by Thierfelder in his reaction already mentioned, Gnomon 11, 1935, 142.
¹⁵ Duckworth op. cit., p. 206, 207. Already Naudet in the preface to his French translation of Plautus' Captivi (Théâtre de Pluerte, t. II, Paris 1845, nouvelle éd.) while admitting certain flaws in the play, sensibly added: 'Mais les Romains applaudissaient à un jeu de scène qui les amusait, sans exiger qu'on leur rendit compte des motifs et des circonstances qui l'avaient produit'. Thierfelder op. cit., p. 123, remarks on the inconsistency on the part of critics crediting an audience with an alert shrewdness enabling them to pounce upon the smallest inconsistency, but unable to supply for themselves the most obvious explanations when these are not expressly offered by the playwright!
¹⁶ Michaut op. cit., p. 255.
¹⁷ op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 90, 223.
Both these objections of principle and the often contradictory results reached by different scholars, have in recent years rightly deterred scholarship from this rather sterile line of research. In 1937 the American scholar P. W. Harsh remarked: 'doubtless it would be advisable to relegate to the background consideration of contamination and Roman originality in future studies of Plautus and Terence', and in 1956 Professor Thierfelder of Mainz advised the congress of the Deutsche Altphilologenverband to consider this avenue of research as closed.

Without devoting much attention to the almost equally unrewarding research on the chronology of Plautus' plays (an investigation which has found a rather definitive conclusion in the Groningen dissertation of Schutter, but which has failed to make any noteworthy contribution to our understanding of the plays as such), I should like to refer briefly to two other fields of study on which much rewarding labour can still be bestowed, namely those of the dramatic techniques and of the language of Latin comedy. It is well known that the language of Latin literature, and in particular of Latin poetry, was rather different from everyday, colloquial Latin. But we are inclined to forget that in the language of Roman comedy—or rather especially in that of Plautus, for Terence's language was again more elegant and polished—we have something approaching very closely to the everyday language of cultured Romans, and, more than this, the everyday language of a very specific situation, with all its verbosity, vigorous liveliness, spicy wit, and sonorous effects. If we want to approach to a 'living Latin', a true 'direct method', we must for a while forget Caesar's correct and logical idiom and Cicero's rolling periods; we must draw from the idiom and diction of Plautus. Thierfelder, in his paper mentioned above, called upon the Latin masters of his country to draw more amply upon this rich storehouse of everyday conversational material. Much good research has already been done in this field, but there are still ample opportunities for further work. Think of such 'tasty' subjects for essays or dissertations as: the A.B.C. of swearing, reviling and being angry; how to express astonishment, surprise, fright; joy and dissatisfaction, disappointment and disillusionment; the A.B.C. of greeting and good wishes; oaths, cursing, threatening; and much more. Add to this studies on the figures of speech; the typical idioms and phrases belonging to certain specific situations and on which the Americans

19 A.J.Ph. 58, 1937, 282-293.
20 Gymn. 63, 1956, 326-345; see also note 9 above.
22 See e.g. F. H. Reimers, Der Plautinische Schimpfwörterkatolog, diss. Kiel 1957; P. J. Miniconi, Les termes d'injure dans le théâtre comique, R.E.L. 36, 1958, 159-175—both published since the surveys of Duckworth and of Taladoire.
have done much work: colloquial exaggeration, *sermo amatorius*, vocabulary of intrigue; finally the countless techniques of witty and humorous expression which form the main subject in part IV of Barthélémy Taladoire's *Essai sur le Comique de Plaute* (a Paris *thèse* of 1948, which was published in Monaco in 1956).

It is above all in further studying and analysing its dramatic techniques and structural peculiarities that one can still contribute much towards a better insight into the nature of Roman comedy. Already in the early '20s the Americans began to fight shy of the excessively analytic approach of German scholarship and of the nineteenth century's moralistic criticism of Roman comedy. Upon the lead of H. W. Prescott there followed scholars such as Post, Flickinger, Harsh, Hough, Wilner, Duckworth, and their pupils, studying the types of character, kinds of scenes, use of monologues, entrances and exits, structural problems, and all kinds of techniques (notably foreshadowing and suspense) used by the Roman dramatists. They accepted each comedy as it is given to us, as a literary composition, and without trying by conjecture and theory to trace the history of its origin and creation, they preferred to trace the common features and nature of the concrete, preserved comedies. Instead of simply dubbing a certain feature of a specific comedy as an irregularity, they made cross section studies of such a feature throughout Roman comedy to determine what is in this respect really typical, characteristic or normal and regular in Roman comedy in general. We are fortunate in now having available an extensive critical summary and survey of the results of this school of research in George Duckworth's *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton, 1952).22

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I now propose to proceed to a consideration of a specific play, the *Captivi* of Plautus, and in particular of the problems and irregularities that several scholars have pointed out in the plot, and the conclusions they have drawn from these irregularities as to the origin and originality of certain parts of the play. It might seem strange to devote time to investigating an application of a method of research that I have just discredited. But the fact is that a scholar from the predominantly anti-analytical American school, Professor J. N. Hough of Colorado University, in an article on 'The Structure of the *Captivi*’ in 1942 found that there are certain 'inconsistencies affecting the heart of the intrigue' and leading to the conclusion that

22 During the proof stage of this article I noted quite a different approach, in the French critic Charles Mauron's *Psychocritique du genre comique*, Paris 1964, who considers comic themes repeated by Menander, Plautus and Molière as evidence of certain permanent subconscious human reactions ('obsession inconsciente') and not only of conscious imitation. Reviewed in *Le Monde* (selection hebdomadaire) 21–27 May 1964.

certain parts of the play—notably the scenes in which the parasite Ergasilus appears—were not found in Plautus' Greek model but were added (or at least greatly expanded) by Plautus himself from a different source.24 This article seems to deserve special consideration also in view of the apparent approval with which Duckworth (p. 208) refers to it in his otherwise very critical estimate of the results of contaminatio research. The occasion will also be used to refer to the more recent article by the Polish scholar B. Krynkiel-Józefowicz, ‘A Reconstruction of the Original of the Captivi’, in which she seeks traces of the plot of the original in ‘the motives recurring frequently without any good reason for their being repeated [i.e. apparently, repeated from the original], ... (and) often in contrast with the action’.25 She sensibly limits Plautus’ supposed intervention in the Ergasilus role merely to a considerable extension, for the sake of amusement, of a subordinate role already present in the original; she further supposes that Plautus omitted the following elements from his model: the role of Hegio’s brother, an unsuccessful attempt to escape by the prisoners who had been bought up by the latter, and an earlier appearance and more prominent and better motivated role of Stalagmus. It would seem justified, therefore, to consider more closely which elements in the play have been diagnosed as irregular or unmotivated, and whether the conclusions drawn are acceptable.26

24 As already proposed on different grounds by Th. Ladewig, Über den Kanon des Volciatus Sedigitus, Neustrelitz 1842, 28–31; E. Herzog, Die Rolle des Parasiten i.d. Captivi des Plautus, Neue Jahrarb. 46, 113, 1876, 363–5; T. Kakridis, Barbara Plautina, Athen 1904, 18–23; cf. also C. Pascal Rev. di Fil. 29, 1901, 1–15 for a criticism of Herzog. Hough op. cit., p. 31 n. 14, points out that the mere prominence of Roman puns and allusions in a scene or scenes cannot in itself be considered as decisive evidence for their separation from the original Greek play. K. Abel, Die Plautusprologe, Diss. Frankfurt 1955, 53–4, considers Ergasilus’ dismay at Hegio’s facere quaestum carcerarium (98–9, 129ff.) as representative of the Greek rather than Roman social attitudes.


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A study of the plot of the *Captivi* permits the division of the action into four 'movements' (the structural elements which Taladoire\(^\text{27}\) rightly proposes instead of the traditional but apocryphal 'acts'): (1) Execution of the identity trick and acceptance of Hegio's exchange proposal (acts 1 and 2). (2) Appearance of Aristophontes and exposure of the identity trick (act 3). (3) The parasite Ergasilus at last gets his chance for a feast by being the first to bring Hegio the good news of his son's return (act 4). (4) The anagnorisis or recognition of Tyndarus as the lost son (act 5).

From a survey of the plot it soon appears that the piece suffers from certain defects as drama. (N.B. I am not now referring to factual inconsistencies and irregularities in the plot.) Its tempo is slow and sluggish, in particular because of the need in the beginning to explain repeatedly to the simple and restless audience the fact and the details of the identity trick.\(^\text{28}\) The plot also develops in a rather straightforward and rectilinear way, and the expectations and plans of the intriguers are frustrated only once by an unexpected peripety, when Aristophontes exposes their identity deceit—but there are not the surprises and suspense created in other plays by all kinds of unexpected developments and complications. There is an excess of monologue and dialogue and the only two lively scenes of action are that in which Aristophontes exposes the real identity of the crafty Tyndarus who pretends that Aristophontes is a dangerous madman, and the one in which the parasite Ergasilus brings Hegio the good news of Philopolemus' return home. In fact, with this climax in the fourth act Ergasilus' role comes to an abrupt end without any echo in the final scene; also in the preceding part of the play one all the time feels that Ergasilus is a rather extraneous character almost entirely unintegrated and even unconnected with the development of the actual plot (what Prescott calls an 'inorganic character')\(^\text{29}\), especially when one considers the large share he has in the stage action.\(^\text{30}\) It is clear that the poet uses Ergasilus mainly to provide diversion in the form of exuberant fun and frolic, and to remind the audience that after all they are watching a comedy, which becomes necessary in view of the unusually serious and almost tragic tone marking the play throughout, but in particular in the scene where Philocrates takes leave of Tyndarus and in the one where


\(^{28}\) Observe the amount of repetition between the prologue and scenes I.i and I.ii (91–104, 110–111, 129–132, 167–172) where the same factual background is described by Ergasilus and Hegio, and in scenes II.i and III where Hegio repeats much the same conversation with Philocrates and Tyndarus (263–292, 293–337, and again 361–384), and these two cover between themselves much the same ground in 219–250 and 401–448. Ernout (p. 88) speaks of 'monologues et dialogues qui piétinent sur place', and Taladoire (p. 102): 'l'action continue de trainer', (p. 104) 'l'action est lente, alourdie de ce luxe d'explications'.


\(^{30}\) His part consists of five monologues (one is a supposed monologue) and three dialogues with Hegio, scenes comprising 274 lines in all. Cf. Michaut p. 249.
Tyndarus pleads with Hegio after the exposure of his deceit. Both Ernout (p. 88) and Taladoire (p. 104) ascribed the unsatisfactoriness of the Captivi mainly to ‘le caractère hybride du sujet’. Plautus himself both in the prologue (II. 55–58) and in the epilogue (II. 1029–1034) emphatically draws his audience’s attention to the unique qualities of the plot and to the elevated moral spirit of the play: *ad pudicos mores facta haec fabulast*. It contains no improper verses unfit for repetition; no bad characters such as a *perius leno*, a *meretrix mala* or a *miles gloriosus*; no amatory intrigues accompanied by financial fraud, false substitution of an infant or buying the freedom of a harlot—what is more, in the play not a single female character appears on the stage, and no woman is even referred to in the dialogue. In short, it is one of the rare plays *ubi boni meliores fiant*. Even those regular character types of New Comedy which do appear in the Captivi, have undergone a kind of metamorphosis. The basic change that made this possible, is the substitution of the chivalrous and self-sacrificing devotion of a servant to his master as the motive force of the action instead of the traditional theme of an irregular and often dishonourable love affair of a young man and its concomitant intriguing. The traditional *comicus stultus senex*—the overbearing but deceived and outwitted father—is replaced by the kind-hearted and witty old gentleman Hegio, who throughout retains our sympathy; the hackneyed *amans ephebus*—a spendthrift and intriguing young lover—is replaced by the truly noble characters of Philocrates and Philopolemus; and finally the character-type of the crafty slave assisting his young master in his intriguing, undergoes a veritable apotheosis in the role of Tyndarus, the real hero of the piece, with his noble self-sacrifice for the sake of his master. Already Wilamowitz traced the Captivi back to a Greek original from the later, post-Menandrean phase of New Comedy ‘die sich von dem Kornischen abwendet und vornehmlich auf Rührung hinauswille’; or as W. G. Waddell in the *O.C.D.* characterises this phase: ‘New Comedy is predominantly serious in tone, with elements of pathos and grave reflection’. This hybrid, tragi-comedy

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31 I cannot agree with Taladoire (p. 103) that Tyndarus’ change in this scene from a farcical to an almost heroic figure is unconvincing.
32 This claim is not quite justified in view of II. 866–8 and 966 which Lessing (p. 174) in vain tried to excuse as not necessarily intended in *malam partem*.
33 Lejay pp. 133–4 judges rather harshly of Hegio: ‘J’ai peur que ce ne soit un imbécile’. See also below note 50.
34 Lessing p. 191 judges the vindictiveness of II. 1019–20 inapposite to Tyndarus’ noble character. But the wicked, blunt and sullen (951), and unrepentingly wilful (956–7, 961) Stalagmus must get his deserved punishment.—Be it also mentioned in passing that Tyndarus remembering in the end *nunc edepol demum... quasi per nebulam* (1023–4) that his father was called Hegio, is most unconvincing (Lessing p. 156–7, 190).
character of the *Captivi*, then, must be held responsible for several of the above-mentioned dramatic defects of the play as a comedy. These points of criticism have concerned the kernel and essential nature of the *Captivi*, and so we must be warned beforehand that it is unlikely that only the Latin adapter Plautus is to be held responsible for improbabilities and inconsistencies of detail!

Plautus' plays, and the whole of New Comedy as such, were a theatre of conventional characters and conventional situations. It is remarkable that when the poet by way of exception departs from this fixed pattern he seems to fail somewhat in the dramatic structure of the play seen as a whole. This reminds us that the rather strict subjection of ancient authors to the traditional conventions and formal requirements of each literary genre was not without its salutary disciplining and safeguarding advantages. It was only at the risk of going off the tracks that they could allow themselves more personal freedom.

Let us now consider those factual points in the plot which have been censured as improbabilities or inconsistencies. First of all there are those affecting the ruse of the identity exchange between Philocrates and Tyndarus. In this regard Ernout mentions three objections, the first being 'the truly strange conditions under which Tyndarus and Philocrates were able, without being either seen or suspected, to proceed to an exchange of identity'. But we only have to assume—and there is nothing preventing this—that their ruse had been arranged and effected already before Hegio bought them from the war booty, and since he had apparently acquired them as a single 'lot' chained together (iuncti, 113), he must from the outset have taken Tyndarus to be the young master. This also anticipates Ernout's second objection, against 'the uselessness of this substitution'—useless because given Hegio's exchange plan and his kindly character, Philocrates could have regained his freedom by a frank and direct proposal to Hegio.

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38 See Taladoire p. 158-9, with reference to the *Captivi* and the *Amphitruo*, and comparison with French comedies. The conventional aspect was also of course for the benefit of the audience.
36 See esp. Enk pp. 231-3.
30 See also the prologue II. 30-34 with the natural transition from *equitem Aleum* to *hosce . . . ambo*.  
40 F. Pléssis, *La poésie Latine*, Paris 1909, p. 59, poses the question why Hegio, who knew in whose possession his captive son in Elis was (335), did not attempt direct negotiations instead of the round-about way of buying up Elean captives for exchange. Obviously an Elean would be in a better position to achieve Philopolemus' release in Elis, especially if under pressure of the need thus to secure the release of his own son (or relative) in Hegio's possession ('reconciliare ut facilius (filium) posset domum', the prologue says in 33 of Hegio's activities). In any case, we must not rationalise away the whole basis of the plot! Cf. also Duckworth p. 152, n. 32.
without risking what Naudet called ‘un si périlleux échafaudage d’impos- 
tures, sans aucune intention de dol ni di fraude, sans une raison de danger 
réel et pressant, seulement pour le plaisir de tromper’. Only, it is not until 
I. 261 that the two captives learn, from Hegio, that his son is a captive too. 
But the motive for their substitution trick, which has been brought into 
effect long before this point, must have been one that existed from the very 
beginning of their captivity and this was most probably the fear that an 
excessive ransom would be demanded in Aetolia for Philocrates’ freedom.41 
Should this be the case, Philocrates himself, pretending to be the slave, 
could then ask permission to return to Elis for negotiating the payment of 
the ransom for his ‘master’ with the result that the more costly of the two 
captives would be free straightaway—even if the required ransom be refused. 
And the remaining captive, being in reality only a slave, would naturally 
carry a much lower price and so could more easily be ransomed by his 
escaped master, so that the whole transaction would be relatively cheap. 
For, throughout, the intention of the two captives is clearly not that the 
slave should be sacrificed for his master’s freedom, but that the latter, upon 
regaining his liberty, should also liberate his slave from captivity.42 Also, 
the initiative for sending the false Tyndarus to Elis for negotiating the 
exchange clearly comes from the captives, not from Hegio, who at first had 
thought of sending somebody else as negotiator.43 Moreover, it is apparent 
that the cost of the ransom had from the beginning occupied the thoughts 
of the two captives. This is obviously the intention of Tyndarus’ pun in 
229–230:

nam tu nunc vides pro tuo caro capite 
carum offerre <me> meum caput uilitati.

The same object is behind the warnings which both Philocrates and 
Tyndarus, independently, give Hegio about the miserliness of Philocrates’

41 Cf. K. Abel, Die Plautusprologe, p. 50. Krysiniel p. 166 supposes that the necessity 
for the captives’ disguise and for Philocrates rather than Tyndarus undertaking the 
journey to Elis (‘the more so as he has to be back possibly soon’) is to be found in ‘some 
circumstances which were dropped by Plautus, (and which) were perhaps connected with 
Philocrates’ father’.

42 Note esp. I. 231 (spoken by Tyndarus before their confrontation with Hegio), but 
also Tyndarus stressing in I. 397 (‘nostrium . . . amborum vicem’) that Hegio’s offer is to 
liberate both of them in exchange for his son (cf. 331–2), and Tyndarus emphatically 
impressing upon his ‘slave’ not to leave him in the lurch after his return home (406–9, 
434–445, 448).

It must be admitted that, should the deceit be unmasked and it be realised that the 
remaining captive is only the slave, there was from the beginning a strong likelihood of the 
new owner out of anger and irritation refusing to liberate this slave, whether the one 
escaped to Elis were to send his ransom or not. And this is what Hegio actually does after 
Aristophontes has revealed Tyndarus’ true identity: the poor slave is sent to do hard 
labour in the stone quarries though as yet it is uncertain whether the escaped master 
is going to carry out his undertaking or not.

43 See the passage 339–351; cf. also 382–3.
father. Particularly relevant in this regard is also the possibility alluded to of being reduced to beggary by finding a ransom (323). Though it nowhere appears that the course of action suggested had been planned by the captives in this very way, it nevertheless makes it clear that there is nothing *prima facie* improbable in the whole identity ruse. The playwright too might not actually have thought out its implications as suggested above, but merely accepted it intuitively as a plausible basis for his play. Obviously, when this well-conceived plan was rendered in a sense superfluous by Hegio’s attitude, it was no longer possible and safe for the two captives to give it up, reveal their deceit, and prefer to act in a straightforward way. In any case, Hegio might for all his kindliness in the meantime still find occasion to change his mind or the negotiations in Elis might not go so smoothly after all. As Duckworth (p. 152) observes, the exchange of roles would have succeeded in providing for Philocrates’ freedom, had not Philopolemus been found.

A technical difficulty is raised by two verses (37 and 39) in which the prologue says of the captives: ‘itaque inter se conmutant vestem et nomina’, and: ‘huius ille, hic illius hodie fert imaginem’. This would imply that the exchange of identity was accompanied on the stage by an exchange of costumes and of masks (if, with Duckworth, we here interpret *imaginem* as ‘mask’ and so assume that comic actors wore masks already in Plautus’ time). But the *lorarius* in I. 197 considers both captives, present before his eyes, as former Elean freemen; in I. 676 Hegio gives as grounds for his false belief only ‘ita vosmet aiebatis itaque nomina inter vos permutastis’; and Aristophontes in his confrontation with Tyndarus (541ff.) does not seem to find anything unusual in the slave’s clothing. So we must assume either that the prologue is inaccurate (perhaps, as often, interpolated in the revival era of the second century B.C.) and that in fact no exchange of masks and clothes did take place, or—what seems more acceptable—that the exchange was of no effect because the characters did not wear distinctive costumes, or because their original clothes had since been changed for

44 See 286—292 and 319—323. Those who object to the indelicate description by Philocrates of his own father’s miserliness (Lejay p. 133) forget that he is here acting the part of the (traditionally impertinent) slave and that the dramatic situation demands precautions against excessive bargaining by Hegio. Therefore, too, I. 288, giving the true name of Philocrates’ father, seems to me an effective aside making it clear to the audience that Hegio is intentionally being misled on the former’s miserliness, and it should not be taken as a negligent inconsistency with ll. 633—5 (Langen p. 118, Marti p. 21 n. 17).

45 Legrand pp. 401—2.


47 See Duckworth pp. 80—81; Beare pp. 149—150. K. Abel, *Die Plautusprologe*, does not touch this problem.

48 Beare pp. 179—180.
prisoners' garb. In both events we must then admit that the remark of the prologue is pointless. 49

Ernout's third objection to the identity ruse is 'the credulity of Hegio followed too late by his care to verify the identity of his prisoners—only after Philocrates' departure'. But Hegio is presented throughout as a kind-hearted, credulous old gentleman who, himself a bereaved father (and from the prologue we know it is the second son he has lost), is deeply moved by the fate of his two captives and is moreover hasty to get back his own son from Elis as soon as possible, 50 and in this frame of mind he could hardly be blamed for being entirely taken in by the excellent and clever acting of the two deceivers in the second act. And, after all, he does take the trouble of first cross-questioning the two captives separately on Philocrates' background, a subject about which, as we shall see, he was already well informed. The criticism of Hegio's foolishness in verifying the identity of his captives only after Philocrates' departure, 51 is based on a curious misunderstanding of the final lines of the second act (458–9), where Hegio before leaving the stage to send off to Elis the false Tyndarus, says to the lorarii:

. . . <iam> ego adparebo domi.
ad fratrem modo captivos alios inviso meos;
eadem percontabor ecquis hunc adulescentem noverit.

However, his intention with this inquiry is not to have his captive's identity verified—on this score he has not the least doubt, as later on appears from his reluctance to believe Aristophontes 52—but it is a further manifestation of his essential kindness, a friendly gesture to let the supposed Philocrates, remaining behind alone, still enjoy the company of some acquaintance or friend. From his description of his visit to his brother's (511–515), it is clear that he brought along Aristophontes at the latter's request because he claimed to be a sodalis of Philocrates and 'hic extemplo orat obsecratque eum sibi ut liceat videre'.

49 See esp. L. Havet, Les Prisonniers p. 19 and 46, who proposes to amend vestem in l. 37 to sortem.
50 His kindheartedness: 112–5 (he has them put in lesser, separate chains), 354–6 (he frees both their shackles), 324–8 (his ideas on wealth and gain, cf. 99). His haste: 398 and 400; 423. His ready acceptance of 'Philocrates' proposal and good faith: 341–3, 351. His noble trust (358): 'quod bonis bene fit beneficium, gratia ea grevidast bonis'. Moved by captives' farewell: 418–420. Note also his readiness to joke with Ergasilus and even with the lorarii in scene I.i; his pride and sense of dignity in ll. 500–4, 785; his understandably violent reaction against Tyndarus in spite of the latter's noble defence in 711–4 and 717–720. Lejay p. 133-4 characterises Hegio as 'ridicule discretement' and even goes to the extreme of stating: 'On a dit que c'était un brave homme. J'ai peur que ce ne soit un imbécile!'
51 See e.g. also Langen p. 119 (correctly answered by Schoell pp. xix–xx already in 1887), Legrand p. 401, and even recently Krysiniel p. 166.
52 See 545–6, 559, 565–6, 573, etc.
Upon closer examination, therefore, none of the objections to so-called inconsistencies or improbabilities affecting the identity ruse really seem to hold water. Moreover, an analysis of the two scenes which are constructed mainly on the identity ruse, i.e. the scene between Tyndarus, Philocrates and Hegio (scenes II.ii and iii) and the scene in which Tyndarus is unmasked by Aristophontes (III.iv), shows that a questioning of the logical value of the deception is not really relevant to its dramatic value. Plautus is not so much concerned with its contribution to the logical development and unravelling of the plot as with its enriching and enlivening the action. In the first of the two scenes mentioned it leads to a masterly characterisation of the two captives on two levels: as they are in reality and in their assumed roles. This produces amusing contrasts between the assumed tone of dignified seriousness of Tyndarus in the role of the master and his saucy, witty asides in his true character as the slave, and so too in the way in which the master Philocrates interprets the part of a verbose, exaggerating, forward and pertinent slave. Besides, the identity deceit creates a further source of amusement in the intentional ambiguity of several of the captives' remarks to Hegio, who sententiously prides himself in his cleverness and insight while in fact he is being led by the nose. In the third place there is the dramatic irony in many of Tyndarus' remarks on himself in his assumed role as the freeborn Philocrates, which unwittingly also apply to himself as the lost freeborn son of Hegio, an applicability which the audience can enjoy thanks to the explanations given by the prologue. Finally, it is indeed through the identity deceit that the play acquires its unusually high moral tone in portraying the moving loyalty and devotion of the slave to his master. As a matter of fact the so-called useless and superfluous exchange of identity is the direct result, the real embodiment and manifestation of this loyalty and devotion, a clear case of the decisive influence of character upon the course of the action. Add to this the liveliness and rollicking fun of the unmasking scene with Tyndarus' anxious and ingenious efforts, when cornered, to suggest that Aristophontes is a dangerous madman, and against this the amusing indignation of the dismayed Aristophontes who just will not realise what Tyndarus wants to make clear to him by his hints and gestures. In view of all this it seems unimaginative and bookish criticism to speak of 'the uselessness' of the identity ruse.

We now proceed to consider 'the inconsistencies affecting the heart of the intrigue' which Hough detects in the first scene between Hegio and the

\[\text{53 Cf. the formulation of M. F. Smith, The Technique of Solution in Roman Comedy, diss. Chicago 1940, pp. 18–19: the trickery 'although it is the main complicating force and rich in humour, pathos and dramatic irony, probably contributes nothing to (later: 'is quite unnecessary to') the solution of the plot'.}\]

\[\text{54 Duckworth p. 146.}\]
parasite Ergasilus, and which lead him to the conclusion that this scene (and most of the Ergasilus role) are an unintegrated addition from some other source than the Greek model of the *Captivi*. In ll. 169–171 Hegio tells Ergasilus that among the Elean captives he has been buying up, he has found a young man *prognatum genere summo et summis divitiis* for whom he hopes to exchange back his own son. (Already in the prologue ll. 30–33 we are told that Hegio has learned the previous day *de summo loco* *summoque genere captum esse equitem Aleum*, whom he has spared no money in buying together with his slave attendant.) This Hough considers as a contradiction with scene II.ii where Hegio spends some time and effort to elicit this very information from each of the two captives separately as if he knows nothing about them at all. Are the words of ll. 169–171 to be taken as an inconsistency due to careless interpolation on the part of Plautus himself? (In any case, why not due to carelessness already on the part of the poet of the Greek model?) But why does Hegio specially select these two prisoners for having them brought on to the stage to be cross-examined (251–2) if he does not already have some reason to believe that their position is a special one? And the words with which he concludes the whole scene—*at etiam dubitavi hosce homines emerem an non emerem diu* (455)—surely are open for the interpretation that he only decided to buy them for some good and special reason, though this line as well as the words introducing his monologue in 498ff. also seem to reveal a pleasant feeling of surprise at the results of his purchase, but this is quite natural in view of the readiness with which his captives accept his proposal, and need not be a surprise about the high exchange value which, as it turns out, Philocrates possesses. But more important still is the businesslike manner in which Hegio questions his two captives and the fact that he receives their ‘revelations’ without the least trace of surprise (277–286, 294–328); it is only about the miserliness of Philocrates’ father that he ventures an additional question (289). It is clear that the second interview, with the false ‘Philocrates’, is only to have the first one confirmed (296–7, 317), and in any case Hegio remains quite passive while ‘Philocrates’ explains his situation. Also Hegio’s introductory remark to the false slave, *quid tu? servosne esse an liber manulis, memora mihi* (270), suggests a reward which could hardly be earned by mere truthful replies to the questions that are to follow; here too Hegio seems to be already well enough informed to consider an exchange deal as likely and to be envisaging services connected with it. So the cross-questioning of the two captives, who have after all been bought only the previous day (111, 499), need not be taken as inconsistent with Hegio’s foreknowledge of Philocrates’ status; it might quite naturally be his first opportunity of checking
by direct interrogation the information he was given by the quaestors who sold them from the booty.  

A second inconsistency Hough finds in the fact that though both Hegio and Stalagmus refer to Philopolemus as Hegio’s ‘unicus filius’ in ll. 147 and 150, yet in reporting to Hegio the return of his son from his Elean captivity accompanied by the runaway slave Stalagmus, Ergasilus is well enough informed to add ‘qui tibi subrupuit quadrimum puerum filiolum tuum’ (875-6). But if Ergasilus could not have obtained this information during the meeting with the return party at the harbour before hastening off to bring the news to Hegio, he (like Hegio himself) might surely very well have known all about the lost son even when referring to Philopolemus as unicus, for as Hough (p. 27) himself admits, ‘the emphasis on the only son may not be wholly inconsistent with a senex whose second son was stolen many years ago’.  

A third inconsistency Hough detects (pp. 27-31) in the entrances and exits of Hegio and the motivations thereof: these he considers ‘the kernel of any criticism of the play’, in particular those preceding and following the Ergasilus scene. The problem is that Hegio, after his first appearance and before Ergasilus starts his dialogue with him, in lines 126–8 expresses the intention of not returning home before first having inspected his other captives whom he had bought up and left at his brother’s house, to see whether they have not caused some disturbance during the previous night. Yet this intention is continually being postponed for more than 300 lines. The motivations for these changes of mind Hough calls ‘poor’ and even ‘utterly stupid’. The chief difficulty he finds in the ‘absurdity’ of ll. 192–4 where, after his conversation with Ergasilus at the end of which he invited this formidable eater to a humble meal at his place (176–7, 184–5ff.) if he cannot find anything better elsewhere, Hegio first goes into his house again to balance his books and see how much money he has left in the bank; after that, he says, he will carry out his intention of visiting his brother. For this change of plan, Hough objects, there is ‘not the ghost of an excuse’,

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55 K. Abel op. cit., p. 51 considers that l. 30 of the prologue (quoniam heri inaudiuit, makes it clear that Hegio has thus far had only hearsay information. Schoell p. xix, n.) remarks: ‘ea enim omnino valet inquisitionis ratio, velut iudex solet publice quaerere ex res, quae satis ipse scit quaque illi am antea confessi sunt.’ Marti p. 21, n. 16, rejects psychological explanations of this case of ‘contradiction between knowing and not knowing of certain facts’.  
54 See also Marti p. 15, and cf. Terence And. 540 (unicam gnatam tuam) with 99ff.  
57 See also Perna p. 456 n. 3.  
53 126–8: ego ibo ad fratrem ad alios captivos meos; visam ne noce habe quipiam turbaverint. inde me continuo recipiam rursum domum.  
60 192–4: ibo intro atque intus subducam ratiunculam, quantulum argenti mi apud trapezitam siet. ad fratrem, quo ire dixeram, mox iuero.
nothing which took place between these two points had any effect on Hegio's plans; nothing could be lamer than the bank balance excuse'.
But surely the connection of lines 192–4 with the preceding scene suggests clearly enough that Hegio's sudden concern about his bank balance has been caused by a comic fear, raised by his conversation with Ergasilus, that his pecuniary means might not measure up to the costs involved in entertaining such a gourmand as Ergasilus. His bank balance must already have slunk considerably as a result of extensively buying up captive Eleans from the war booty, but in the specific dramatic situation this fact could at the most be a contributory cause for Hegio's financial concern.

Hegio's next appearance on the stage, apparently after having looked into his financial position, is said to be to question the two captives whom he has had brought out of doors for this purpose. After this, he says, he will first return indoors again (251–2). So no further mention is made of a visit to his brother's, and it seems as if we have to regard the questioning of the captives as an initially unforeseen interlude in respect of the intended visit to his brother. But why then was it dramatically necessary to mention at all at that early stage his intention of visiting his brother? This could well be interpreted as an effort of the playwright to characterise by means of repeated changes of plan the rather upset and busy-body old gentleman; the changes are also caused technically by the awkward necessity of providing every time some excuse, however superficial, for his appearance when he is needed on the stage, which conventionally represents the street in front of his own house.

But the outcome of Hegio's interview with his two captives necessitates a further change in his plans: in lines 457–9, before leaving to send off Philocrates on his way to Elis with the necessary journey money and a pass, he expresses his intention of then also first passing by his brother's.  

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61 Also Krysineol p. 164, at the bottom.
62 See e.g. 27, 32, 100, 126; and Ussing ad 192.
63 251–2: iam ego revortar intro si ex his quae volo exquisivero. Ubi sunt isti quos ante aedis iussi huc produci foras?
64 Hough p. 28 is right in pointing out (against Harsh, Studies in Dramatic Preparation in Roman Comedy, diss. Chicago 1935, p. 32) that at 126–7 there could not yet be any question of 'foreshadowing' the arrival of Aristophontes and his unmasking of the identity trick. But at 458–9 the mention of a visit to his brother's does have a very definite foreshadowing effect.
65 Duckworth p. 120. This problem seems to deserve a special study. M. Johnston, Exits and Entrances in Roman Comedy, New York 1933, deals only with the technical staging.
66 457–9: ... iam ego adpareho domi. ad fratrem modo captivos alios inuiso meos; eadem percontabor equis hunc adulescentem nouerit.
67 Hough (p. 28) remarks that 'if any announced purpose is to be postponed it should have been his return indoors (251), not the visit to his brother's (458)', but we might well consider l. 457 as taking up again the intention of l. 251.
apparently—though this is not explicitly stated—for his original purpose of seeing whether his captives have behaved themselves the previous night, and at the same time (eādem)\(^{68}\) to enquire whether there is somebody who knows Philocrates, apparently—as we have already argued—a friendly gesture to procure some company for the captive 'young master' remaining behind. In any case, the course of events have, quite naturally, again caused Hegio not to carry out his declared purpose, namely of first going indoors directly after the cross-questioning!

So it seems after all that Hegio's changes of plan are motivated reasonably enough, first by developments in the intervening course of events, secondly as characterisation of the upset and excited old gentleman, and thirdly as technical means of getting Hegio back on to the stage. Hough, however, concludes (pp. 34ff.) that the Greek original contained two visits by Hegio to his brother's, the first as announced in 126, to determine how the captives behaved during the previous night; the subsequent Ergasilius scene was not part of the original (and with that all Hough's supposed inconsistencies disappear from the original); at 252 Hegio returns home from his first visit, while 251 must be a later insertion made by Plautus when the Ergasilius scene was added and the visit did not go through as intended; then followed the scene between Hegio and his two captives resulting in a second visit to his brother's, this time to find a friend to keep the supposed Philocrates company.\(^{69}\) But we are satisfied that the diagnoses upon which this theory is founded have been shown to be unconvincing.

The second main aspect in which Hough detects 'inconsistencies affecting the heart of the intrigue', concerns the anagnorisis of Tyndarus as Hegio's lost son, and the role of the runaway slave Stalagmus in this regard. Certain incongruities lead Hough to assume (pp. 35–6) first that the fourth act, in which Ergasilius brings Hegio the news of Philopolemus' return, is an addition by Plautus to the plot of his model, and secondly that room was found for this addition by omitting an original fourth act in which the

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\(^{68}\) Hough (p. 29) misses the force of eādem when remarking that 'the visit planned at 126 for one reason (is) carried out at 458 for an entirely different one'. Marti (pp. 36–7) points out how the turbare is the sole motive in 127, while a subsidiary motive creeps in with eādem in 459, and in 509 turbare seems to be entirely forgotten. 'So drängt sich nach den Sz. II 2 & 3 eine neue Motivierung vor, die das alte Hilfsmotiv ... ablöst.'

\(^{69}\) Hough (p. 35) follows Kakridis in further concluding from Hegio's later account of his second visit (507–9, or 508–510 in some editions: 

inde (i.e. from the praetor) ilico praevortor domum, postquam id actum est; 

ego protinus ad fratrem inde abii, mei ubi sunt alii captivi. 

rogo Philocratem ex Alide ecquis omnium nouerit) 'that it was only a second thought after he had started to return home from the praetor's', and that Hegio's intention already expressed in 458–9 was an unsatisfactorily integrated addition made by Plautus himself, forgetting that the second visit was to be a second thought, and wanting to anticipate the coming unmasking of the identity ruse and thus to create expectation and suspense.
meeting between Hegio and the party returning from Elis actually took place on the stage and that there several questions, at present unanswered, concerning the presence of Stalagmus, were explained.

A closer analysis will indeed raise several questions and objections concerning the appearance of Stalagmus. But already Lessing’s critic (p. 146) objected that the very fact that Tyndarus proves to be Hegio’s lost son is of a rather episodic nature since it contributes nothing to the central plot or its dénouement. Admittedly we have here a second or subsidiary plot. But apart from the brilliant dramatic irony created in the second act by Tyndarus’ position, Lessing pointed out (p. 185) that the audience would be left unsatisfied if such a noble character, for all his self-sacrifice, were to remain a slave70 while everybody else, except Stalagmus deservedly, has some special reason for rejoicing. One could almost say that Tyndarus’ nobility of conduct demanded some explanation, and in itself already suggested that it belonged to an ingenuus.71 Now, in respect of this final recognition of Tyndarus as the son of Hegio, the role of Stalagmus is not that of a subsidiary character in respect of whom some carelessness might be easily excused, but it is the essential key role—‘this necessary resolving character’, as Hough calls it. And the appearance of this key figure has long been criticised as unexpected, unexplained and unmotivated—‘ganz unvermuthet ... als wenn er vom Himmel gefallen wäre’, as Lessing’s critic already said (p. 155).72 But at the end of the scene in which the identity ruse has been unmasked and when Hegio is left despairing, depressed and deceived, the theme of the identity trick being brought to its conclusion and ‘worked out’ as it were,73 an important anticipation or ‘foreshadowing’ of the next development or ‘movement’ in the play is given74 when Hegio in his self-

70 Hegio’s promise in 332 to the supposed master was simply et te et hunc amittam hinc—i.e. to give back gratis to Philocrates his freedom and his slave, not necessarily to emancipate the latter too. The question of emancipating Tyndarus is raised only after the return of Philocrates from Elis, cf. 940 and 948. But the anagnorisis in the next scene renders superfluous a sequel to this proposal.

71 Lejay p. 133: ‘Le trait de vertu donc ... ne choque pas le fieret de caste du citoyen libre. L’auteur a pensé que la vertu doit être bien née.’

72 Also Hough p. 32, Ernout (‘retour vraiment miraculeux de Stal.’), Smith, Technique of Solution p. 64 with n. 2; Duckworth p. 159 (‘introduced far more crudely than is the regular practice of the ancient dramatists’); Krysiniel p. 167 and 168; Marti p. 26.

73 Note, by the way, that the dramatic function of the identity trick being fulfilled, the playwright does not bother logically to tie up the loose ends: Hegio must have confronted Philocrates off-stage with the unmasking of his deceit and forgiven him for it (cf. 927), for at 932 he addresses him quite naturally by his true name as Phileocrates. But according to 944–6 the position of Tyndarus was strangely enough not touched upon at that off-stage meeting!

74 Lessing p. 186; Harsh, Studies in Dramatic Preparation p. 21 n. 5 (cf. Hough p. 32, n. 15). H. W. Prescott CL.Ph. 15, 1920, 277, in his study of Inorganic Characters, judges that ‘no objection of course, can be raised’ to Stalagmus’ temporary appearance, ‘for though he appears only here, and merely to solve the complications, we have known of his existence from the start, and the dramatist has led us to expect him’. 56
pity, in order to stress the full extent of his misery, for the first time in the
day (apart from what we are told in the prologue) most naturally mentions
that he had also lost another son who had been kidnapped as a four-year-old infant by a runaway slave and had never since been recovered or found
(759–762).

Yet there are certainly circumstances about Stalagmus which one would
have liked to have had explained. How did Philopolemus manage to
get hold of Stalagmus in Elis, and how did he recognise him as the kid-
napper from his early childhood? The explanation of this Hegio might
well have got from his son Philopolemus during their meeting at the
harbour, but one feels that the audience too would like to have been
informed. And why does Ergasilus give no explanation of this when
reporting to Hegio the return of his son with the kidnapper Stalagmus
this unexpected news (881)? This problem has led L. Havet to the supposi-
tion that a passage must have been lost, probably before ll. 887–9, in which
Ergasilus informed Hegio in greater detail about the return party (in
particular about the ‘new-comers’ Philopolemus and Stalagmus) in order
to convince him of the truthfulness of the good tidings. But dramatically
this lack of logical completeness is not so strange after all: at the moment
of Ergasilus’ message the full attention and main interest of himself as well
as of Hegio are concentrated upon the return of the captive son Philopole-
mus, the fulfilment of everything Hegio has been doing and thinking thus
far, and quite naturally at this stage they show little interest in the return
of a slave who had deserted 20 years ago. Moreover, at this point, in the
fourth act, Stalagmus’ own dramatic function is still quite secondary, for
his presence only acquires importance for the final act which is concerned
with the recognition of Tyndarus as the second lost son, a theme which at
this stage is not yet prominent. But still, it does remain a pity that the poet

75 It was clearly not Philocrates who captured Stalagmus (though he helped Philo-
polemus to bring him to Aetolia, cf. 1014): from 985 it appears that he did not even know
him, and from 989 that Stalagmus had no further connexions with Theodoromedes’
house after selling to him the kidnapped child. So the objections of Hough p. 32 and
Marti p. 26 cannot be taken seriously; cf. Lessing pp. 189 and 156. That Stalagmus was
brought along as a captive appears from ll. 888, 926 and 1014.

76 Cf. Philopolemus’ reference in 929: ‘satis tam audivi tuas aerumnas, ad portum mihi
quas memorasti’.

77 ‘La lacune des Captifs’ in Mélanges Chatelain, Paris 1910, pp. 26–32. On Hegio’s
initial incredulity and subsequent acceptance of the report he remarks: ‘La scène a
longuement piétiné sur place; soudain on la voit aboutir sans motif. Donc il y manque
quelque chose.’ J. de Decker, Handelingen v. h. Tweede Vlaamse Philologen-congres,
Gent 1913, pp. 190–7 prefers to assume a lacuna after ll. 1016 as the origin of the Nonius
quotations on which Havet bases his theory. He considers (p. 195) that from the informa-
tion in the prologue the audience could easily enough imagine that and how Philopolemus
got hold of Stalagmus.
did not better reconcile the logical and the dramatic requirements in respect of explaining the appearance of Stalagmus.

A further improbability is that Philocrates is informed only in the final act, scene V.iii, of what Stalagmus has to tell about the kidnapped child, that he had sold him to none else than Philocrates' father who gave him to Philocrates himself as a res peculiaris and renamed him Tyndarus. This is a key passage bringing about the recognition and can hardly be thought away. Yet it is only possible if we assume the highly improbable state of affairs that Philopolemus neither in Elis nor on the journey ever interrogated Stalagmus about the fortune of his kidnapped little brother, or that, if he did interrogate him, he then never revealed a word about it to his companion and liberator, Philocrates, who by his words in l. 1014 associates himself with the bringing back of Stalagmus ("nam hunc ex Alide huc reduximus"). Logically this is of course very unacceptable, but dramatically it is unavoidable, else the recognition would have taken place too early and the dénouement in the play would have fallen flat. This is clearly an improbability inherent in the very nature of the 'secondary' plot and can hardly be ascribed to careless adaptation by Plautus. It is also noteworthy that when at ll. 938ff. Philocrates asks Hegio to return his slave to him, he strangely seems to avoid mentioning him by name, apparently because Stalagmus is also in their company while the recognition must not take place before the following scene where Stalagmus reveals that the kidnapped child Paegnium had his name changed to Tyndarus by the master to whom he was sold as a slave.

We must candidly admit that the concluding episode shows several improbabilities necessitated by the dramatic development, but there is no reason for ascribing them to Plautus rather than to his Greek model. At all events, about the four incongruities upon which Hough (pp. 33–4) founds his theory of a different original conclusion, he has to admit himself that they 'are indeed minor and in themselves do not hurt the general dramatic effect'. These are, first, that Ergasilus is forced unnecessarily to go to the harbour if he is really looking for a meal. But already at 496 Ergasilus, after having failed in the forum (478) to find an alternative meal to the humble fare offered by Hegio (176, 184–190), has decided first to continue his search at the harbour before accepting to resign himself to

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78 In view of what preceded, illic of the mss. in 1014 (illic indicium fecit) cannot be interpreted as indicating that Stalagmus had made his revelation already in Elis. Lindsay reads illi; (adv. with previous line) and then hic indicium fecit to avoid having in one line illic and hunc referring to the same person.
79 But Hegio in 950 does mention Tyndarus' name when calling into the house upon his slaves to fetch him from the quarry; however, these words might be supposed to be outside earshot of those on the stage, or Stalagmus may simply prefer to remain rigidly impassive and indifferent to all that is going on, a true 'statua verberea' as Hegio calls him (951).
the old man's *cena aspera*. With the second point, that Ergasilus at 875–6 knows all about Hegio's lost son while at 170 'he knows nothing of the other son', we have already dealt above. To the third point, that no announcement as such of the returning party is really necessary at all, the reply is of course that Ergasilus uses this announcement for his own purposes, to get a sumptuous meal out of Hegio when he is overwhelmed with joy. And in this way the announcement really opens the way to the dramatic consummation of all the preceding activities of the parasite. The fourth objection we have already considered as valid, namely that Ergasilus omits to supply the essential motive for Stalagmus' presence.

If we now turn to the further elaborations added by Krysiniel to the theorising about the plot of the original of the *Captivi*, we shall find her clues still more insubstantial and unconvincing than those of Hough; and besides, her results imply that Plautus introduced such an elaborate structural change into the original plot that this in itself seems to invalidate the assumption of amateurish carelessness on the part of the Latin poet, from which this whole argument in principle departs. Krysiniel (p. 164) supposes that 'the interrelation between the characters ... (was) probably carefully planned and gradually actualised in the original', and that Hegio’s partner in this was not Ergasilus but Hegio's brother, 'the person capable of influencing Hegio ... (and who) took a heartfelt interest in (his) afflictions and was probably a support to him'. To this conclusion Krysiniel is led by certain motives 'recurring ... without any good reason for their being repeated (from the original)' and 'often in contrast with the action (of Plautus' version)' (p. 160), i.e. 'a circumstance, important in the original, exists as a reminiscence, a vestige' (p. 164). These motives are the following: the 'strange' fact that Hegio should purchase the prisoners as if trade were his profession, that he should then leave them at his brother's in spite of being aware of the possibility that they may cause troubles, the absence of motivation for the appearance on the stage of the two captives at that specific occasion in act II; the absence of a good reason, at this stage, for having them put in lighter chains (110–113), while Hegio's warning that they should be carefully watched lest they escape (115ff.; the escape theme is resumed in 203ff. by the *lorarii*) seems to conflict with this and is in any case not taken very seriously in the sequel (as e.g. by allowing the secret conversation between the captives in scene II.i); Hegio's change of purpose

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80 See note 10. I trust that I have succeeded in correctly culling the essentials from a sometimes strange phraseology and argumentation.

81 p. 162.

82 pp. 162 and 164.

83 pp. 160 and 165.

84 pp. 163–4. Langen p. 116 also remarks on the ready permission granted by the *lorarii* at l. 213 after their suspicion in l. 207.
about visiting his brother, already discussed, Hegio's talk with the captives inquiring about circumstances already well known to him also seems to be 'based on motives drawn from the original . . . (but) at variance with, the action . . . in Plautus' play'. From all this Krysiniel imagines (pp. 165 and 168) that in the original Hegio's brother was a tradesman purchasing captives during the war; these captives tried to escape from prison; their plan falling through, they 'got to' Hegio's house (or 'went into Hegio's hands') where they carried out their identity exchange, and an opportunity presented itself for Hegio to recover his captive son. The flimsiness of this structure is so obvious that it is perhaps superfluous to point it out. What makes Hegio's brother a more acceptable buyer of captives than Hegio himself? Why and how did the captives 'get to' Hegio's house when their escape failed? Does the identity exchange really present fewer difficulties if taking place after the failure to escape? Is the round-about way of this failure to escape really necessary—and dramatically convincing at all—to the end of presenting Hegio with an opportunity of recovering his lost son? As for the two captives' appearance on the stage, that is surely motivated well enough by Hegio himself in 251–2; having them put in lighter chains completely fits Hegio's kindhearted nature (he also allows them greater freedom of movement, 114), and carefulness about their possible escape is perfectly natural in the situation and can in no fairness be considered 'inadequately connected with the action'. There only remains Hegio's leaving his probably troublesome captives with his brother: surely we may allow a comic playwright the privilege of leaving this very subordinate bit of off-stage background information unexplained and unmotivated!

Krysiniel also finds that the scene in which Tyndarus' real identity is revealed 'needs some character who would have a greater influence on the development of the action' than Aristophontes who has no subsequent role to play, while also the preparations for this scene show up flaws in that the fetching of Aristophontes 'shows lack of purpose' and Tyndarus at l. 516 'rushes out of the house without any guardsman, contrarily to Hegio's words in 456–7'. These 'difficulties' Krysiniel solves by assuming that Stalagmus (whose 'belated appearance in Plautus . . . is against all the rules of drama') was introduced already at this stage in the original, causing the unmasking of Tyndarus and perhaps, incidentally, by some remarks unintentionally awakening in Hegio the hope of recovering his kidnapped son now that he is disillusioned about recovering the son who had been made
captive. Here again the theory seems weakly founded. Though we have had to admit that there are difficulties about the appearance of Stalagmus, on the other hand the appearance of a character such as Aristophontes in one scene only is by no means unprecedented, while Tyndarus' great alarm and consternation (well portrayed in 516ff., 534ff.) are surely a sufficient motivation for his rushing out (proripuisse foras se, 533) without waiting for his guard or obtaining permission! With the fetching of Aristophontes we have already dealt above. One need hardly say how inferior the comic possibilities would be of a recognition scene in which the unmasker had last known the deceivers as an infant of four years and as a little boy respectively (981-2) and had since not bothered to have anything to do with them (989), compared with a recognition of the slave by the naïvely unwitting friend of his master, himself a prisoner too. And this remains so in spite of Ernout's objection against 'l'aveuglement d'Aristophontès et son obstination à ne pas comprendre les allusions, pourtant transparentes, de Tyndare'—a kind of criticism which might well eliminate all possibilities of comedy.

Even those scholars who trace Plautine intervention by means of 'inconsistencies', have to admit that his model for the Captivi was itself not without some serious improbabilities. This appears especially from the amazingly short period of time that the development of the plot allows for Philocrates' journey to Elis and back. Though this point was criticised as early as 1580 by Muretus, no scholars have thus far thought it necessary (or possible?)

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92 On this question cf. H. W. Prescott Cl.Ph. 15, 1920, 260ff. (esp. p. 271); Duckworth p. 178-180; Marti p. 77-84. E.g. in scene IV.iv of the Captivi the puer having described the ravage caused by Ergasilus, rushes off to inform Hegio (919), but this is the last we hear of him (or of Ergasilus, for that matter!). See Lessing p. 145; Langen p. 123; Marti p. 81. One may also regard as 'improbable or illogical' the amusing fact that the puer rushes off in search of his master while the latter enters the stage from the opposite direction.—There is also need of a time lapse between Ergasilus' entrance indoors (908) and the slave's dismayed report (909). Brix and Ussing suppose an interlude with flute playing; H. W. Prescott very sensibly suggests an interlude during which the noise of Ergasilus' ravages can be heard inside ('Three Puer-scenes', Harv. Stud. 21, 1910, 31; cf. also Cl.Ph. 15, 1920, 263); Lessing, Langen, Hallidie suppose the new act to begin at 1. 909; A. Frété assumes at 908 'un bref interval mais pas un entr'acte' (comparable to that after 515) while there is 'très certainement scène vide' at 921 (La structure dramatique des comédies de Plaute, Paris 1930, p. 29–30). See also Duckworth p. 98–101 on 'Act-Divisions and Continuity'; Beare pp. 199ff.

93 See pp. 50 and 55.

94 One must keep in mind that Aristophontes was enraged at Tyndarus' effort to suggest that he is a madman (551ff). See also Smith, Technique of Solution p. 86 (n. 2 of p. 85) on the role of Aristophontes.

95 Lectionum Variarum lib. XIV, c. 16 (p. 380 of the Antwerp 1586 edition). Already Menage, Discours sur l'Heaut. de Térènce, Utrecht 1690, tried to defend the time factor in the Captivi against the criticisms of Scaliger and Muretus. Lessing's critic (p. 151) considered the speed of Philocrates' journey 'am allerunglaublichen und am allernunwarscheinlichsten'. Cf. Naudet préf.; Langen p. 120; Legrand p. 420-1; Ernout.
to ascribe it to Plautine interpolation. The action of the play takes place within the course of a single day, as appears e.g. from Hegio’s reference in l. 783 to having been deceived *hodie*, at the moment when Ergasilus is on the point of reporting the return of the party from Elis, and also from Ergasilus’ references in ll. 497 and 831 to clearly the same meal as that offered him by Hegio in l. 188. The journey, moreover, occupies only a *part* of the day represented by the action of the play; it only commences at the moment referred to in l. 507 and is already completed at the moment referred to in l. 873-4. In these few hours Philocrates has to sail from Aetolia to Elis,⁶ where he has to have Philopolemus ransomed, whereupon the latter secures Stalagmus (and apparently also has him put in fetters, cf. 888), and then follows the return journey. Even with a favourable wind (in both directions?) this would be a formidable proposition, as the poet himself seems to have realised, judging from the specific reference *in publica celoxe* introduced into Ergasilus’ report (874). Otherwise there is no sign that the poet was conscious of or tried to explain away this time problem. Hegio’s *iam diu . . . venit?* (882) might suggest surprise at the swift return (Havet⁷ puts this beyond doubt by emending to *tam cito . . . venit?*) but it also seems to suggest that an even earlier return would have been conceivable;⁸⁹ and Tyndarus shows no sign of surprise in learning that his master has returned so soon (1005), though admittedly Hegio’s salutation *o salve exoptate gnate mi* immediately overwhelms him with an even greater surprise reducing the former to insignificance. Now it is of course quite a general practice as regards the passing of time for off-stage action to leave much to the imagination of the spectators and to the illusion which is at the basis of all drama.⁹⁹ Duckworth (pp. 127–132) in dealing with Off-Stage Action and the Lapse of Dramatic Time, refers to such extreme cases of compression of time as *Cas.* 758/9 and *Cist.* 629f./631/774, but he admits that the *Captivi* is ‘perhaps the most striking example of the lapse of dramatic time’.¹⁰⁰ But what is

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⁶ Langen (p. 118) objects that Hegio sends off the supposed Tyndarus contrarily to his initial intention (*misero hinc ubi erunt indutiae*, 342), but this is because Tyndarus not only persuaded him to send the false ‘Tyndarus’ (344ff.), but also suggested it should happen *hodie* (348), i.e. without waiting for *indutiae*. Havet’s idea (*Les Prisonners* p. 17) that the action of the play takes place during an armistice needs his emendation *indutiis his* in 168, and leads him to ascribe 342 and 60 (foris . . . fient proelia) to inadvertent adapters!

A striking example of criticism demanding logical completeness which would be dramatically quite irrelevant or unnecessary is Havet’s supposition (op. cit., p. 19) that at l. 507 *ille abit domum* is an abbreviation of the Greek original in which Hegio should also have referred to the question of providing a *viaticum* (449) and a *publica celox* (874).


⁸ The situation excludes an ironical intention.

⁹⁹ See also M. Brasse, *Quaestus in fabulis Plaut. et loci et temporis unitatibus species veritatis neglegatur*, Gryphimontii 1914, p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ See note 92 above for short time lapses to be ascertained in the *Captivi* before ll. 516 and 909.
more, in the Captivi the unusually cavalier treatment of time also takes place at the cost of an essential element in the plot, the seriousness of Tyndarus' devotion.\footnote{Havet op. cit., pp. 18–19.} For the self-sacrifice of this loyal servant could not have amounted to a stay of more than a few hours in Hegio's stone quarry, especially if we consider that his true identity was revealed only some time after Philocrates' departure, and that after this he still had to be put in chains by a smith and travel to the quarry which is some distance from the town (733–6)! All this greatly reduces the significance of Tyndarus' description of his own toil and suffering (998–1004), and also of Philocrates' pity (945–6) and Hegio's remorse (993–6). But, as Schoell remarked,\footnote{p. xvi, n. 63} a critic relying on all these details \textit{eis nititur rationibus, quas inimus, ubi singula singillatim comprehendimus, non totam fabulam oculis animisque subicimus}: the playwright trusted that a comedy audience would be carried along sufficiently by the action, not to ponder such details too minutely!

In conclusion, then, it seems clear that most of the so-called inconsistencies and improbabilities upon which scholars have based their theories about Plautine additions and adaptations and about the original content of his Greek model, can be explained from the nature of Roman comedy or from the plot of the Captivi itself. Nevertheless, we must admit that the tracking of inconsistencies did, by way of reaction and explanation, lead to a profoundlyer understanding of and a greater sensitivity for many details of character, situation and structure in our play.
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