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OUTLINE

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Introduction

1 Stage space is haunted by the productions which have previously occupied it. The collective process of imagining a play into being occurs in a space which, certainly during the Roman Republic, has been hijacked for that purpose; every element of each performance is entirely new, yet other characters, other settings, other plots hover behind the actions on stage.[1] An actor known for comic parts, for instance, is always Pseudolus even as he is performing Palaestrio.[2] Given the consistent simplicity of the stage in the Republic and early empire, set in front of a *scaenae frons* or painted backdrop depicting three multi-purpose stage buildings, every play really did happen in the same place.[3] In this article, I argue both that a stock spatial configuration enabled haunting to exist within Roman comedy, and that Seneca used paracomedy in the *Troades* to summon the ghost of Plautus for his own dramatic purposes; by using links between drama, space, words and performance, stagecraft itself becomes an intertheatrical practice.

2 While performances of comedy in the first century AD may have been rare, the scripts of Plautus and Terence had become part of the landscape of Roman literature which would have shaped Seneca's writing.[4] Grant has outlined how Plautus and Seneca shared a common dramatic tradition, focusing on particular structures of

dialogue, the use of monologue, and continuity and motivation within the plot.[5] More recently, Lund argues for Senecan engagement with the *seruus callidus*, including through the figures of Andromache and Ulysses in the *Troades*;[6] Bexley offers a specific consideration of Atreus as the *seruus callidus* of the *Thyestes*, and outlines the significance of finding methodologies to consider the two-way generic dialogue between tragedy and comedy.[7] The methodology I propose here uses the idea of the haunted stage to help understand a further dimension of that relationship.

3 This use of the *seruus callidus* for tragic ends points towards paracomedy as a lens for understanding the interactions between Seneca and Plautus. Paracomedy offers a framework for considering how generic markers of comedy can be appropriated by tragedy for specific purposes.[8] It considers intertheatrical elements that go beyond the text, which can include "lines, speeches, costumes, gestures, situations, interactions" – and configurations of stage space.[9] A paracomic interpretation of stage space thus offers a model for how the genre of tragedy can be in dialogue with comedy without "disrupting its seriousness and making its gravity appear bombastic".[10] Approaching the use of stage space as a conscious choice made by the playwright, in the same way that he might deliberately choose particular words and phrases, offers a way into understanding Seneca's relationship to his comic predecessors, and what those predecessors thought they were doing.[11]

4 To inform that understanding, I turn to Carlson's investigation of haunted repetition in theatre. He says that any theatrical experience "is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection".[12] Haunting, as opposed to intertextuality, "presents the identical thing [the audience] have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context".[13] This sense of re-encounter, without necessarily being able to put one's finger on what is evoking the memory, is particularly appropriate for considering how the configuration of stage space might be used to deliberately conjure such ghosts. My consideration of haunting will focus on the use of all-female space, and the dramatic conventions associated with it.

5 Gendered theatrical space is generated as characters enter and exit, causing sudden shifts of behavioural expectations and constraints.[14] The use of stage space occupied solely by women appears to be an unexplored phenomenon in Roman drama.[15] While the fragments of other comedians are too thin to make confident assertions about stage configuration elsewhere, such moments are infrequent and rare within Plautus and Terence; "women's relationships are decentered in comedy" and thus rarely dominate the action.[16] However, there is sufficient Plautine evidence for me to argue for the existence of a stock scene, much like a stock character, which played into and with certain audience expectations. The existence of such a stock scene then permits the possibility that Seneca may have used it, just as he used the *seruus callidus*.

6 Twenty-one more-or-less complete extant plays are attributed to Plautus. Excluding monologues, conversations between two or more women without male involvement occur in six of them: between Palaestra, Ampelisca and Ptolemocratia in *Rudens* (185-289); twice in *Casina*, once between Myrrhine and Cleostrata (165-216) and once between the two women and an enslaved girl (855-74); between Panegyris and Pamphila in *Stichus* (1-57); between Selenium, Gymnasium and her mother the procuress in *Cistellaria* (1-148); between Philaenium and her mother Cleareta in *Asinaria* (504-44); and between Bacchis and her sister in *Bacchides* (102-8).[17] Five more plays have conversations between women in which the speakers are either unaware of other characters eavesdropping or, in the case of *Miles Gloriosus*, are deliberately playing to the gallery.[18] These scenes can be grouped into two broad categories: *meretrices* in conversation without their clients present, and *matronae* discussing a household crisis.

7 These examples of all-women spaces in comedy are very much the exception rather than the rule, particularly given the plot's usual focus on the concerns of men. The impact of gender on drama has been established by studies of female speech in comedy, noting the varied ways that women speak to men and to each other depending who else is on stage.[19] Those speech patterns also tell us "what such women cared about, what was important to them";[20] I would add that by paying attention to which type of women are grouped in a partic-

ular scene, we can extrapolate the priorities of different groups of women from the themes which repeat themselves in conversation.

8 In this article, I concentrate on the scenes which involve *meretrices*, women who might be *meretrices*, and *lenae*, and propose that the surviving evidence suggests the existence of a stock scene involving sex labourers discussing the trials and tribulations of their professional lives. There are gestures towards similar scenes in Terence; Philotis and Syra, a *meretrix* and *lena*-type, speak alone in *Hecyra* (58-75), and the *ancillae* of the *meretrix* Thais speak alone in *Eunuchus* (718-28).[21] Plautus also appears to subvert this stock scene himself in *Rudens*, where he has two apparent *meretrices* who will turn out to be freeborn on stage with a priestess, his only religious official, instead of a *lena*;[22] the modification of the stock scene is in line with a play which subverts comic spatial expectations by visiting a Libyan beach rather than staying in town. In order to explore the expectations of the stock scene further, I focus on two short scenes where Plautus creates all-female space between sex labourers, in front of buildings owned by those sex labourers. Drawing on Carson's model of haunting as the familiar reencountered in an unfamiliar setting, I then read those scenes against a spatially similar scene in Seneca to argue that the comic stock scene is the ghost that creates a moment of spatial paracomedy.[23]

Plautine Women: The *Cistellaria* and *Asinaria*

9 My first example, from the *Cistellaria*, helps establish the existence of a stock scene and Plautus' use of it. Its opening scene features the *meretrix* Gymnasium; her mother, an unnamed *lena*; and Selenium, a young woman in a dilemma over whether she will become a *meretrix* or be able to marry her lover. Naturally, Selenium is revealed to be the daughter of two citizens, conceived when her father raped her mother before they were married, so the young lovers can ultimately be united, but this is all yet to unfold.[24] Since the *Cistellaria* is itself an adaptation of Menander's *Synaristosae*, an earlier play haunts this particular stage, perhaps with some unease – not only has Plautus removed a scene featuring Selenium's adopted mother, he also cuts

to the aftermath of the dining scene for which the Menandrian original was famous.[25] One wonders whether the reason this bold opening and the delayed prologues work is precisely because Menander's *Synaristosae* scene had acquired iconic status, which brought with it fixed expectations about what would transpire in a space occupied in this particular way.[26]

10 In reshaping his audience's experience of how an adaptation of the *Synaristosae* would/should play out, Plautus manipulates their expectations of genre. As Hexter notes, when dealing with a text that deliberately evokes another, "discerning where what is there ends and what is not there begins, or perhaps better, which echoes, ghosts, or absences are significant and which are merely trivial, is a perennial vexation to interpreters."[27] In the case of the *Cistellaria*, the link between lost Greek source and surviving Latin adaptation offers a more explicit invitation for such discernment.[28] However, I argue that as well as engaging with the *Synaristosae*, Plautus' choices in adaptation reflect the existence of a stock scene featuring *meretrices* familiar to his audience, and that the move to that stock scene facilitates his choice to cut the original as he does.

11 Plautus draws on a number of familiar Roman stock characters, including the tipsy *lena*, as part of his reframing of the plot within the broader conventions of the Roman *palliata*. However, this scene does more than simply meet dramatic expectations. In the *Cistellaria* as a whole, Plautus gives us "comic portrayals of mothers and daughters excluded from bourgeois security".[29] Already, this differs from the comic pattern of a "prostitute-headed household where the women's network is limited to a single household" by depicting two such households socialising together, similar to the example of citizen women neighbours found in the *Casina*.[30] The introductory scene thus presents us with a community of women working together despite the hostility they face from conventional society, as the *lena* suggests (23-32):

> decet pol, mea Selenium,
> hunc esse ordinem beneuolentis inter se
> beneque amicitia utier,
> ubi istas uideas summo genere gnatas, summatis matronas,
> ut amicitiam colunt atque ut eam iunctam bene habent inter se.

> si idem istuc nos faciamus, si [idem] imitemur, ita tamen uix uiuimus cum inuidia summa. suarum opum nos uolunt esse indigentis.
> nostra copia nil uolunt nos potesse
> suique omnium rerum nos indigere,
> ut sibi simus supplices.

> My Selenium, it is absolutely right for our professional body to practice mutual aid and comradeliness well among ourselves, when you see how those women born of the noblest stock, the highest matrons, cultivate friendship and successfully have that solidarity among themselves. If we do the same thing, if we copy them – even then, we'll only just get by, with maximum outrage. They want us to need their charity. They want our own resources to be no use to us, and for us to need everything from them, so that we're bowing down humbly to them.

12 Since Gymnasium, the *lena* and Selenium all possess free status, they have a degree of agency over their actions. In order to support themselves economically, they have chosen to participate in sexual labour with multiple clients; Selenium, with only one lover at the point the play begins, grapples with the reality of that profession in real time as the plot unfolds. As the *lena* grumbles against the *matronae* who adopt an air of moral superiority and wish to turn her and those like her into dependents rather than autonomous agents, the theatrical space itself offers proof of the *meretrices*' economic power.[31] One of the three houses depicted on the *scenae frons* belongs to Melaenis, Selenium's "mother".[32] She has gained sufficient economic security to own and maintain property, without being dependent on male support.[33] The ability to participate in a newly developing economy based on the purchase and sale of property, rather than working in crops and livestock, was becoming increasingly important to Plautus' audience; indeed, in the *Mostellaria* the question of property acquisition becomes central to the plot.[34] Regardless of how Melaenis acquired the house, the fact that she now possesses it signals her financial resources.[35]

13 The precise source of her economic security is made explicit when the *lena* notes that both she and Melaenis used to be *meretrices* (39). She also lays out what is at stake in Gymnasium continuing in the same profession (45-52):

> L: nam si haec non nubat, lugubri fame familia pereat.
> G: necesse est quo tu me modo uoles esse ita esse, mater.
> L: ecastor hau me paenitet, si ut dicis ita futura es.
> nam si quidem ita eris ut uolo, numquam hac aetate fies
> semperque istam quam nunc habes aetatulam optinebis,
> multisque damno et mi lucro sine meo saepe eris sumptu.
> G: di faxint!
> L: sine opera tua di horunc nil facere possunt.

> L: For if this girl doesn't marry, the household will perish of sorrowful hunger.
> G: Needs must for me to be the way you want me to be, mother.
> L: Blimey, nothing bothers me if you'll be like you say you will. For if you'll actually be like I want, you'll never be this age, and you'll always stay as young as you are now, and you'll be a loss to many men many times – and a boon to me, without me shelling out.
> G: From your lips to the gods' ears!
> L: Without your efforts, the gods can do none of it.

14 The comfort Gymnasium and her mother now enjoy relies on her continuing to function as an active economic agent in the field where she currently works. While the comedy of this exchange depends on the stereotypical money-grubbing characteristics of the *lena* stock type, Gymnasium is willing to take direction from her mother as head of household and work to support her dependents. [36] After all, sexual labour is a rational decision for her to make. [37]

15 However, once Gymnasium's situation has been established, an exchange between Gymnasium and Selenium reveals Selenium's love-sickness and emotional pain (59-61):

> misera excrucior, mea Gymnasium: male mihi est, male maceror;
> doleo ab animo, doleo ab oculis, doleo ab aegritudine.
> quid dicam, nisi stultitia mea me in maerorem rapi?

> My Gymnasium, I'm miserable, I'm being tortured: I'm doing badly, I'm badly worn down; I'm sore at heart, I'm sore in my eyes, I'm sore from grief. What should I say, except that my own foolishness grips me in sorrow?

16 Selenium moves the conversation away from the economic considerations between customer and sole trader which preoccupy the *meretrices*. She must consider her options, as her lover Alcesimarchus is being forced to marry a relative from Lemnos, thus breaking his promise to marry her and leaving her homeless. The *lena* advises Selenium that she should feign love to look after her own affairs (95-7), continuing the discussion in economic terms, but there's no sense that Selenium's emotional turmoil and Gymnasium's sympathy for her plight are anything other than sincere.[38] The scene closes with a brief exchange between Gymnasium and her mother (117-9):

> G: numquid me uis, mater, intro quin eam? ecastor mihi
> uisa amare.
> L: istoc ergo auris grauiter optundo tuas,
> ne quem ames. abi intro.

> G: Do you want me, mother, so that I shouldn't go in? Blimey, to me she looked like she's in love.
> L: That right there is why I always bang on at you not to love a gent. Get inside.

17 This final moment confirms the genuineness of Selenium's emotion, but also the danger that it poses to working women – Gymnasium cannot risk a situation where she's emotionally unable to function economically and support her mother.

18 In this moment of women, and only women, together, the characters discuss not only the practicalities of their lives and trade, but also their inner emotional experiences. Selenium's ambiguous status, straddling the worlds of *meretrix* and citizen, allows her to be both virtuous and sexually active, particularly since the plot will absolve pre-marital sex through a happy marriage to Alchesimarchus. Audience members alert to the ghostly presence of the *Synaristosae* will know that Selenium's citizen status will eventually be revealed; those with sufficient generic competence, or familiarity with how these comic plots usually turn out, may also anticipate this outcome.[39] However, for those new to the play or not yet competent with the genre, there is no reason to assume Selenium is anything other than a *meretrix* in waiting until Hope delivers her delayed prologue (150-

203). While the world of sexual labour that these women inhabit is a fantasy, without any of the dangers faced by the actual sex labourers of the late Republic, Plautus nonetheless presents their professional lives seriously, without the pejorative language or negative reactions expressed by male characters.[40]

19 My second example, from the *Asinaria*, shows a different approach to the stock scene which still uses all-female space and particular gendered themes of conversation. Cleareta and Philaenium, another mother-daughter pair, are arguing in front of Cleareta's house. The disagreement begins with Cleareta making an appeal to filial piety, which Philaenium cheerfully punctures (504-7):

> C: nequeone ego ted interdictis facere mansuetem meis?
> an ita tu es animata ut qui expers matris imperio sies?
> P: ubi piem Pietatem, si istoc more moratam tibi
> postulem placere, mater, mihi quo pacto praecipis?

> C: Am I unable to make you civilized with my commands? Or are you so minded as to be free of your mother's authority?
> P: How might I propitiate Piety, mother, if I expect to please you by being civilized in that manner which you dictate to me?

20 Philaenium, separated from her beloved, continues to bewail her plight; in response, Cleareta explodes about the stinginess of Philaenium's lover, and how they can't afford to have him hanging around if he isn't paying his way. With matters more-or-less resolved, they return inside after Philaenium promises to do what she is told even if she can't do so wholeheartedly (535-44):

> P: patiar, si cibo carere me iubes, mater mea.
> C: non uoto ted amare qui dant quoia amentur gratia.
> P: quid si hic animus occupatust, mater, quid faciam? mone.
> C: em,
> meum caput contemples, si quidem ex re consultas tua.
> P: etiam opilio qui pascit, mater, alienas ouis,
> aliquam habet peculiarem qui spem soletur suam.
> sine me amare unum Argyrippum animi causa, quem uolo.
> C: intro abi, nam te quidem edepol nihil est impudentius.
> P: audientem dicto, mater, produxisti filiam.

> P: I'll endure it if you order me to go without food, my mother.
> C: I do not forbid you to love those who give something for which they are loved.
> P: What if my feelings are engaged, mother, what should I do? Guide me.
> C: Here you go – look at my head if you're really asking for advice on your business.
> P: Mother, even the herdsman who grazes other people's sheep has some property which comforts his own hope. Let me love Argyrippus alone, the one who I want, for the sake of my feelings.
> C: Go inside – good grief! Honestly, nothing's more shameless than you.
> P: Mother, you have brought up a daughter who listens to your word.

21 The humour of this brief sequence lies in the inversion of expected social norms.[41] Rather than being accused of shamelessness for inappropriate sexual conduct, the daughter of this particular house is criticised for wanting to have only the one lover! The economic requirements of working as a *meretrix* thus collide with conventional moral values to comic effect.

22 There are clear parallels with the *Cistellaria* scene, as well as some telling contrasts. The mother-daughter pair are once more presented as an economically independent unit, relying solely on Philaenium's professional clients for their income; as a result, Cleareta prioritises the financial security of the household over her daughter's emotions. Philaenium combines elements of Gymnasium and Selenium; she is explicitly obedient to Cleareta's instructions as a mother and a manager, but she also experiences the emotional conflict of balancing romance with business. The use of Cleareta's house as one of the stage buildings again physically embodies the women's autonomy as a concrete part of the play's imagined world. The building which Philaenium's labour must maintain is located before the audience's eyes, alongside the house in which her beloved lives, giving the conflict she feels between mother and lover a visual dimension.

23 Plautus seems, then, to make use of a stock scene that features two or three women engaged in sexual labour or adjacent to it, discussing the profession, free from the perceptions of their clients or others who might have negative views of their activities. Even though the

older women may once have been enslaved, these women all possess free status in their dramatic context.[42] The underlying stock scene is identifiable not just by the content of the dialogue, but by the creation of all-female space and the presence of an older and a younger woman.[43] Without comparative material, it is hard to tell how much Plautus is manipulating the expectations associated with this scene, but it is possible that he adopts a more sympathetic view of his characters' situations. The women appear as fully-rounded characters, aware of the choices they can make and with financial stability that grants them agency over their actions.[44] They also grapple with the obligations and support networks created by kinship and community. The fact these scenes include younger women talking openly about their feelings and romantic lives adds a further dimension to their characters – they are given emotional hinterlands, a sign for the audience that there is more to them than what is presented on stage. There are even suggestions of this depth in the older women, such as when the *lena* in the *Cistellaria* darkly hints at the dangers of falling in love (95-7). The sex labourer stock scene, characterised by all-female space, thus allows Plautus to round out his characters within a romanticised but nonetheless precarious economic context.

Senecan Women: The *Troades*

24 Now I have argued that Plautus' use of all-female theatrical space draws on a stock scene featuring sex labourers, I turn to how Seneca uses this element in the *Troades*.[45] The plot is set immediately after the destruction of Troy and depicts the experiences of the women of the royal house as they wait to discover their fates. The play is structured around five distinct scenes; choral odes provide breaks between the action as well as reframing the theatrical space. Scene four takes place in entirely all-female space until the final choral ode. The scene opens with Hecuba, Andromache and Polyxena on stage, on a battlefield near Sigeum.[46] Helen enters from the Greek camp to fetch Polyxena, supposedly so that she can be married to Pyrrhus. However, as Helen reveals in an aside to the audience, Polyxena has actually been selected to be a human sacrifice at Achilles' tomb (861-9):

> quicumque hymen funestus, inlaetabilis
> lamenta caedes sanguinem gemitus habet,
> est auspice Helena dignus. euersis quoque
> nocere cogor Phrygibus: ego Pyrrhi toros
> narrare falsos iubeor, ego cultus dare
> habitusque Graios. arte capietur mea
> meaque fraude concidet Paridis soror.
> fallatur; ipsi leuius hoc equidem reor:
> optanda mors est sine metu mortis mori.

> Whatever deathly, joyless marriage has laments, slaughter, blood and groans is deserving of Helen as its portent. I am forced to do harm in the same way after the Phrygians have been overthrown: I am ordered to spin a tale of the fake marriage bed of Pyrrhus, to provide Greek elegance and toilet. Paris' sister will be captured by my art and will fall to my deception. Let her be taken in – I actually think that is easier for her: to die without the fear of death is a death to be wished for.

25 Despite the fact that she brings death rather than marriage, Helen sees her deception as a gift; it will allow Polyxena to die without fear, a fate better than that which many of the people of Troy have suffered. After her aside, she approaches the Trojan women with her prepared announcement. However, Andromache is sensitive to the optics of sending Helen, of all people, to praise a marriage, and unleashes a barrage of abuse at the ill-omened messenger (888-95):

> hoc derat unum Phrygibus euersis malum,
> gaudere – flagrant strata passim Pergama:
> o coniugale tempus! an quisquam audeat
> negare? quisquam dubius ad thalamos eat,
> quos Helena suadet? pestis exitium lues
> utriusque populi, cernis hos tumulos ducum
> et nuda totis ossa quae passim iacent
> inhumata campis? haec hymen sparsit tuus.

> This was the one evil missing for the ruined Phrygians, to rejoice – the wreckage of Pergamum burns all over the place: what a marital moment! Would anyone dare deny it? Who could possibly go to the wedding ceremony which Helen advocates doubting what to think?

> You plague, you disaster, you scourge of both our peoples, do you see these burial mounds of leaders and the bare bones which lie unburied everywhere on the whole plain? Your marriage scattered them.

26 A young woman's marriage unlocked her social potential and marked the beginning of a new phrase in her life course. To have marriage proposed in the upside-down world created through Troy's destruction by the cause of that destruction cannot be anything except perverse, and Andromache knows it.

27 Despite her initial intentions, Helen cannot keep up her façade, and reveals the true reason for her errand (938-44):

> utinam iuberet me quoque interpres deum
> abrumpere ense lucis inuisae moras
> vel Achillis ante busta furibunda manu
> occidere Pyrrhi, fata comitantem tua,
> Polyxene miseranda, quam tradi sibi
> cineremque Achilles ante mactari suum,
> campo maritus ut sit Elysio, iubet.

> If only the interpreter of the gods ordered me to cut short the lingering of the hated light with a sword as well, or to die in front of the tomb of Achilles by the frenzied hand of Pyrrhus, a companion in your fate, pitiable Polyxena – you whom Achilles orders to be handed over to be him and slaughtered before his ashes, so that he might be a husband on the Elysian plain.

28 The motif of death replacing marriage was common on tombstones for young women who had died too early;[47] here death for Polyxena becomes both the end of her life and a twisted gateway to marrying a ghost. Now that the cat is out of the bag, Helen shares more news from the Greek camp, namely that the other royal women have been allotted to the Greek leaders. She informs Andromache and Hecuba of their new masters, thus cementing the fates of these once-royal women who have been occupying a prisoner camp in limbo as their futures are decided by other people.[48] The section closes with Hecuba's lamentation of her fate before she is interrupted by Pyrrhus' arrival on stage to take Polyxena to her death (981-98).

29 Like the *Cistellaria*, the *Troades* is a play haunted by the ghosts of predecessors, including Euripidean plays dealing with the lives of the Trojan women after the fall of Troy.[49] While the title *Troades* offers an invitation to read the play directly against Euripides' *Trojan Women*, there are significant differences between the two plays, not least that in Euripides' version, Polyxena never appears on stage and her death is reported in a messenger speech delivered by Andromache.[50] Similarly, the kind of all-female space created in Seneca's scene between Helen, Hecuba, Andromache and Polyxena never materialises in Euripides.

30 Another of the many ghosts behind the *scaenae frons* is Euripides' *Hecuba*. Its plot is bookended with the murder of Hecuba's son Polydorus and the revenge she takes on his murderer, but the initial action focuses on the Greeks' decision to murder Polyxena, Hecuba's revelation of this news to her daughter, and Odysseus' arrival to escort Polyxena to her death. The conversation where Hecuba tells Polyxena of her fate takes place in all-female space, broken by Odysseus' entrance (177-215); similarly, Hecuba's discovery of Polydorus' death occurs in an all-female space shared by the enslaved woman who brings his body back from the beach (657-725). These intimate all-female spaces are interrupted by the Greek men responsible for the atrocities the women are experiencing; the fragile moments they are able to make their own are always precarious, and risk the unpredictable and uncontrollable appearance of the men who are in control of both the space and their futures.

31 There is also a period in the *Troades* where Hecuba and the chorus are on stage in dialogue, which arguably creates all-female space, since the chorus is composed of captive Trojan women. However, the dynamic here differs from other scenes where more than one named character is on stage, not least because of the contested purpose and function of the *Troades* chorus. Fantham goes so far as to identify them as a major reason for arguing the plays were not staged.[51] Within the play, while they alternate their song with Hecuba for the first ode (67-163) and briefly interact with Talthybius (166-7), their main role is to perform choral odes which demarcate phases of dramatic action. Fitch argues that the chorus "is neither 'present' nor 'absent' between odes, but rather in abeyance in dramatic terms: after singing an ode, the chorus ceases to have any dramatic exist-

ence until the next ode";[52] he sees the use of the chorus leader as a convenient hold-over from the Greek tragic tradition. By contrast, Marshall sees them as critical for the spatial creation of the play's world, tracking a path from the destroyed city of Troy to the seashore, foreshadowing their journey to Greece.[53] Regardless of whether we see Hecuba as interlocutor or chorus-leader in the first scene, and how we conceive of their presence for the rest of the play, the chorus primarily amplifies broad dramatic themes and does not engage with the specific events of the plot.

32 As an author, Seneca is much closer to the way the Roman comic tradition conceptualises space and its relationship to gender than he is to Euripides.[54] I propose that Seneca deliberately evoked the sex labourer stock scene and its concerns, as exemplified in the *Cistellaria* and the *Asinaria*, through his use of all-female space. I return to Carlson's idea of haunting – the familiarity of the comic stock scene encountered in the incongruous setting of tragedy acts to deliberately unsettle the audience in what is an already unsettling moment. The *Troades* itself is aware of the special nature of scene four, since it treats the approach of Pyrrhus and the entrance of men into all-female space as a violation (999-1003):

> sed incitato Pyrrhus accurrit gradu
> uultuque toruo. Pyrrhe, quid cessas? Age
> reclude ferro pectus et Achillis tui
> coniunge soceros. perge, mactator senum,
> et hic decet te sanguis – abreptam trahit.

> But Pyrrhus rushes here with a rapid step and a pitiless expression. Pyrrhus, why do you pause? Come, lay open my chest and join together the in-laws of your Achilles. Get on with it, butcher of the elderly, this blood suits you too – he grabs her and drags her away.

33 The transitional choral ode begins immediately after Hecuba finishes speaking (1009) and no lines are given to Pyrrhus; it is unclear whether he grabs Polyxena in the sight of the audience or outside it, although Hecuba's furious address does imply he has an on-stage presence. However, to have an impact, Pyrrhus does not need to speak; he simply needs to be visible. His entrance into the all-female space marks the shattering of the temporary balance the captive

women established to process their sudden and drastic change of status, as well as the rough and temporary solidarity they brokered with Helen. The violence of Polyxena's seizure signals what awaits them as they prepare to be passed on to their newly allotted enslavers. [55]

Conclusion: A Literary Haunting

34 So what does reading scene four of the *Troades* under the ghostly influence of the sex labourer comic stock scene, as exemplified in the *Cistellaria* and the *Asinaria*, reveal? One purpose of paracomedy is to produce "a sense of discomfort or disquieting confusion"; [56] as such, the haunting presence of the stock scene, both the same and different, plays on the audience's generic competence to create the uneasy sensation that something about this scene is fundamentally wrong. The three speaking characters echo the trio at the start of the *Cistellaria* in their respective ages and relationships – in both plays, theatrical space is shaped by an encounter between a mother-daughter pair and another woman the same age as the daughter. However, rather than summoning the jovial atmosphere among *meretrices*, Seneca creates a mirror image of that all-female space, occupied by elite women who have lost their free status and must face the realities of their enslavement. Andromache asks Helen whose *famula* she will be (975), and Hecuba says she will follow her new *dominus* (993). They pointedly avoid the word *ancilla* or any word linked to *seruus* to describe their new status; *famula* allows for some ambiguity, as it can mean attendant, particularly in religious contexts. Unlike the Plautine *meretrices*, all-female space does not represent economic empowerment or provide a forum for discussing professional concerns; for the Trojan women, it is a space to begin acknowledging the trauma of the opposite experience, the removal of the privileges associated with their free status. Any doubt is removed in the play's final couplet, where a messenger herds the women towards the Greek ships and addresses them as *captivae* (1178).

35 For these women, enslavement means more than adjusting to the change in their material conditions and status. The noble women of the Trojan court may have escaped some of the immediate outrages that women suffered when a besieged city was captured by

an enemy.[57] Hecuba in particular may have survived only because of her royal status: her age meant she had no reproductive value as an enslaved woman, as well as possessing the maturity of character to resist her new enslavers.[58] However, sexual violence was a central mechanism of control in ancient warfare in the aftermath of battle;[59] Ajax's rape of Cassandra, despite her attempt to claim sanctuary in Athena's temple, highlights that status was no protection for women, even in mythical warfare. The royal women are not just adjusting to the risk of sexual violence at the moment of capture, as a mechanism of enforced compliance with their captors; as Seneca and his Roman audience knew, enslavement meant they would experience a permanent loss of bodily autonomy. Physical and sexual abuse of enslaved people was entirely acceptable within a Roman legal framework, and enslaved people had no recourse against it.[60] The journey of the chorus of captive women across the linear geography of the theatrical space represents the slow start of their journey to Greece;[61] this scene marks another phase of progression towards the full implementation of enslaved status when they get there.

36 The ghostly echo of Plautine scenes featuring *meretrices* thus becomes a way to add pathos to the situation of the newly enslaved royal women, by hinting at the sexual exploitation that they face both in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Troy and in their future lives.[62] Instead of the social and economic independence, however precarious, that underpins the *meretrices*' conversations, the women in the *Troades* have no control over their actions and futures; even Helen has been forced to summon Polyxena under false pretences rather than doing so of her own free will. Rather than agonising over whether they will be able to be with their preferred lovers, the Trojan women must wait to discover the identities of their allotted enslavers.

37 A further bitter haunting comes from the inversion of the traditional 'happy ending' trope of the Plautine plays, when a couple who appear to have been hopelessly divided overcome all the odds to be happily united. The contrast is deliberately stark. Where Selenium marries her lover in the *Cistellaria* after the revelation of her citizen status, and Philaenium is able to continue her monogamous relationship after escaping the *senex amator* in the *Asinaria*, Polyxena instead is allocated a fatal marriage to a dead man; his posthumous sexual

desire for her haunts the whole of scene four. Her fate becomes a warped yet preferable alternative to the slavery faced by the others, a perverse happy ending for the youngest woman on the stage. Andromache's initial description of Polyxena's reaction to the news makes it explicit that she sees her death as desirable (945-8):

> uide ut animus ingens laetus audierit necem.
> cultus decoros regiae uestis petit
> et admoueri crinibus patitur manum.
> mortem putabat illud, hoc thalamos putat.

> See how her great spirit hears of her death with happiness. She seeks the fine elegance of royal clothes and submits to a hand arranging her hair. She was thinking of *that* as death – *this* she considers marriage.

38 While Andromache's speech is undoubtedly underpinned by irony, her next words suggest she is not only speaking rhetorically. As she encourages Hecuba to rise after falling to the ground, she comments on the fragility of her mother-in-law's link to life, and says that it would take only a little to make Hecuba happy (*felicem*, 953). Yet as she sees Hecuba revive, Andromache wryly comments that death is the first to flee from the miserable (*prima mors miseros fugit*, 954). Her words imply that Hecuba, too, would be happier dead than alive; death is the superior option for all the Trojan women. Where comic romantic protagonists look forward to a life together, here the ceremony of human sacrifice becomes conflated with the marriage ritual, grotesquely mimicking the point of transition between life stages. Andromache cannot even speak the alternative option that Polyxena might expect, instead using *illud* to gesture towards enslavement. Hecuba also speaks of Polyxena's death as preferable to the possibilities facing Cassandra and Andromache (967-8):

> laetare, gaude, nata. quam uellet tuos
> Cassandra thalamos, uellet Andromache tuos!

> Rejoice, be glad, my daughter. How would Cassandra, how would Andromache wish for *your* marriage!

39 Polyxena's false marriage becomes the resolution that the other female characters desire, situated in the emotional landscape of their grief and trauma. In the all-female space of the *Troades*, they can speak the unspeakable, gain some agency over what is happening to Polyxena by embracing it as her best option even as they avoid the realities of their own enslavement. The openly spoken violence of her ritualised murder is a better outcome than the unspoken, institutional violence which awaits them.

40 Seneca's deliberate use of all-female theatrical space in this charged and powerful scene creates a paracomic engagement through the haunting sense of having seen this sort of thing before. An audience recognised the comic stock scene where *meretrices* occupied all-female theatrical space to discuss their romantic lives and the practical challenges they faced, without the contributions or perspectives of any male characters. By transposing that familiar use of all-female space to the camp where the Trojan women are held and creating a deliberate yet subtle dislocation of his audience's expectations, Seneca intensifies the women's tragedy. The evocation of the stock scene causes the ghosts of comic *meretrices*, possessing a low social status but in control of their own bodies, to generate a deliberately uncomfortable parallel with these fallen women of the Trojan court, and the colossal shift in their lives. These women, after all, have themselves been enslavers. They are aware of the realities of enslavement, of the range of slave management strategies once available to them and now available to their enslavers, of the cruelties imposed on enslaved bodies.[63] They know what is coming next.

41 Spatial citation, summoning the ghosts of previous occupants of that space, becomes a way to address the unspeakable reality of what enslaved women experience. The engagement of bodies and space, and the ways in which bodies articulate ideas through their occupation of space, becomes a way to explore and understand concepts without the need for speech. While we may not be able to recover gestures or other physical aspects of performance, we can consider the configuration of bodies on a stage. This return to valuing the physical as an experience lies at the heart of phenomenology as a methodology, a different way of expressing meaning and coming to truth.[64] Bodies, although silent, express gendered difference; women's bodies "make visible what was supposed to remain invisible

according to a masculine logic".[65] The creation of all-female theatrical space by female bodies in the sex labourer stock scene allows their characters to develop a life which exists beyond the plot; in the *Troades*, it complements the women's spoken fears and concerns about their radically disrupted futures. This exploration of the spatial interactions in Plautus and Seneca has gone some way to demonstrating that while all-female theatrical space may have only occurred rarely on the Roman stage, it has its own conventions which were deliberately deployed to significant dramatic effect. The haunting of the *Troades* by its comic predecessors thus allows all kinds of spectres to emerge.

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NOTES

1 Marshall 2006: 31-56 explores how the nature of the space available for performance might have affected dramatic practice. Goldberg 2018 concentrates more specifically on the Forum Romanum as a performance space for Plautus and Terence. This article is dedicated to the memory of Sharon James, who was extraordinarily supportive as I prepared the first version of this manuscript. Tomasso Gazzarri and T.H.M. Gellar-Goad started me thinking. I am grateful to the audience of the Classical Association panel who heard an exploratory paper in 2018; to *Eugesta*'s readers for making this a much better article; and to Virginia Campbell, Kate Cook, Sarah Bond, Gregory Hays and Andrew Riggsby for suggestions they have probably forgotten they made. I did not use AI to produce any part of this article, and (to the best of my knowledge) I cite no work which used AI.

2 In discussing the phenomenon of theatrical typecasting, Carlson notes "when an actor appears again and again as a rugged fighter or comic buffoon, in a character whose actions and gestures are so similar role to role that the audience recognizes them as they would the conventions of a familiar genre. But, even when an actor strives to vary his roles, he is, especially as his reputation grows, entrapped by the memories of his public, so that each new appearance requires a renegotiation with those memories" (2001: 9).

3 Marshall 2006: 49-50; Groton 2020. Marshall notes that the most common arrangement is for Plautus to use two doors of the *scenae frons* to represent two citizen houses, or one house of a citizen and one house of a *meretrix*; only two plays only use one door, while thirteen use three doors (2006: 52).

4 Goldberg 2009: 136; Manuwald 2019: 266-8.

5 Grant 1999. Bexley 2023: 477-87 develops Grant's rather vague ideas about metatheatricality through a careful consideration of the eavesdropping trope in the *Thyestes* and the Plautine corpus.

6 Lund 2023.

7 Bexley 2023.

8 Jendza 2020 offers a thorough exploration of the theoretical framework for paracomedy in Greek theatre.

9 Jendza 2020: 265.

10 Bexley 2023: 461.

11 Meltzer 1988: 314-15 references in passing the presence of a Plautine 'model scene' in the banquet of the *Thyestes* but does not pursue the idea further.

12 Carlson 2001: 2. See also Bell 2023 on the importance of absence in stage space.

13 Carlson 2001: 7.

14 Space was gendered in the ancient world, as in the modern, in ways which are complicated, inconsistent and constantly up for renegotiation. Two critical works on the gendering of space in ancient Rome are Milnor 2005 and Russell 2016a, dealing with the early empire and the Republic respectively. A space does not have to be single-sex to become gendered (Russell 2016b: 165-6).

15 Fantham 2004: 232 notes that all-female space is "a rarity in comedy"; as far as I am aware, there has not been a systemic exploration of all-female space. My interest is in theatrical gender rather than the gender of the actors. Roman audiences were aware of the disjunct between embodied and staged gender, as is evident from Plautus' use of scenes where he depicts women in a state of undress, to great comic effect, or otherwise plays with the fact that the women are being played by men (Gold 1998; Dutsch 2015; Richlin 2017: 281-303; Richlin 2024). In my examples, there is no indication that Plautus invited the audience to unsuspend their disbelief as part of the joke.

16 Feltovich 2020: 249 on Plautus.

17 Slater 2004: 268 notes that the opening of Menander's *Synaristosai* creates a voyeuristic scene by allowing an audience to look inside the house of *hetairai*; the lack of an ἐκκύκλημα, a wheeled platform representing interior space, in Roman theatre means these Plautine scenes do not create a similar effect.

18 *Mostellaria* 157-292 (Philematium bathes with Scapha in attendance, while Philolaches spies on them); *Poenulus* 210-330 (Adephasium and Anterastilis converse as Milphio and Agorastocles are eavesdropping); *Mercator* 700-12 (Dorippa and Syra are overheard by Lysimachus); *Amphitryon* 1053-71 (Bromia is unaware Amphitruo is listening to her monologue);

Miles Gloriosus 1216-66 (Milphidippa and Acroteleutium deliberately pretend not to see Pyrgopolinices and Palaestrio).

19 See, for instance, Adams 1984, Dutsch 2008 and James 2015. Gold 2020: 169-70 specifically analyses how the women in *Casina* speak and indeed sing in gendered ways because of all-female space, but does not consider the wider implications of the women being alone on stage together.

20 James 2015: 119.

21 There is also a short scene in *Adelphoi* where a *matrona* and a nurse come into the street to talk about the *matrona*'s daughter giving birth in the house (288-98), and an eavesdropping scene in *Andria*, again about women discussing a birth in progress (459-90).

22 There is some ambiguity around the final status of Ampelisca in the text, but Palaestra's free-born status is a central motivator of the plot.

23 Both my examples here rely on set-ups where a *meretrix* is living with her *lena* mother. Connors 2020 observes the different dynamics at play when Plautus uses a house where the *meretrix* lives independently without a *leno* or *lena* figure. I follow Witzke 2015 in using sex labourer rather than sex worker.

24 This background is provided in the delayed double prologue delivered by the *lena* (120-50) and Help (151-202). Lape 2004: 13-17 provides the social context which informed Menander's concern with ensuring that the comic marriage plot resulted in citizens forming a relationship to reproduce the Athenian state; see Feltovich 2021 for some of the plot mechanics by which lost daughters are recovered. Note also James 2020, which points out that marriage is not the focal point for Plautine plots that it is usually assumed to be.

25 Fantham 2004: 221-2 summarises the history of the play's reconstruction. Auhagen 2004, Lefèvre 2004 and Slater 2004 all explore different aspects of the relationship between the *Synaristosae* and Plautus' adaptation.

26 Part of the evidence for reconstructing the plot of the *Synaristosae* was a mosaic discovered at Mytilene depicting this opening scene, indicating that it was sufficiently famous to be the basis of household art (Fantham 2004: 221).

27 Hexter 1993: 336.

28 Nervegna 2020 offers an overview of Plautus' relationship to his Greek predecessors.

29 Fantham 2004: 22.

30 Feltovich 2020: 252-3; she identifies the plays that follow this pattern as *Asinaria*, *Curculio*, *Mostellaria* and *Persa*. Feltovich is right to note that the limitations of social networks should be understood as partly resulting from the demands of any given plot rather than reflecting historical reality. I gesture here to the possibility of another stock scene, featuring two *matronae* in conversation, which Plautus blends with the *meretrices* stock scene in the *Cistellaria*, but the evidence for this second scene appears more tentative.

31 I thank Molly Gerlach-Arthurs for pointing this dynamic out to me. Fantham 2004: 233 notes that "the *lena*'s assumptions about the arrogance of bourgeois wives (25-37) are reversed by the actual behaviour of Phanostrata", at least in this specific instance. Feltovich observes that while the *lena*'s speech sets up an expectation of conflict between sex labourers and *matronae*, the plot itself offers a harmonious resolution when Melanis returns Gymansium to Phanostrata, her birth mother (2020: 256). It is not clear whether the *ordo* that the *lena* claims she and Selenium belong to and that the *matronae* patronise contains women of a lower social status in general or *meretrices* specifically. My translation of the passage has drawn on the language of the trade union movement to read *ordo* as referring to a professional organisation, presumably in this case of *meretrices*.

32 The question of whether Melaenis' house was represented by a stage door has been the subject of some dispute, which Lowe 2000: 93 summarises; the arguments of Lowe, Slater 2004, Rosivach 1986: 435-8 and Woytek 1971 have comfortably established that this was the case.

33 Gilula 2004: 240 suggests that Melaenis and the *lena* may have purchased their freedom with savings or contributions made by lovers. Zagagi 1980: 118-30 explores the depiction of financial transactions between *meretrix* and client in Plautus.

34 Slater 2016 explores the significance of the buying and selling of property in the *Mostellaria*, arguing for an increasing rise in the importance of the property market following Rome's victory in the Second Punic War. As McGinn 2006: 162-3 notes, the Romans did not have a concept of a so-called 'red light zone', so the location of a *meretrix*'s house in a suburban area was unlikely to cause comment.

35 By contrast, it is explicitly noted that while Alcesimarchus' father has a villa in the countryside (225), Alcesimarchus himself is renting the house which appears on stage (*hasce aedis conductas habet meus gnatus*, 319). The adjective *conductus* and associated verb *conduco* are more usually used by Plautus to describe the hiring of people (cf. the sycophant in *Trinummus*, 815, 853; the cook in *Pseudolus*, 797; the cook and flute girls in *Aulularia*, 280; the flute girl in *Epidicus*, 313, 372, 500).

36 Gilula 2004: 240 notes that these type of one-parent families are "the only families in which a woman has an authority comparable to that of a *paterfamilias*".

37 While the question of the precise financial requirements of the *lena*'s fictional household is beyond the scope of this paper, Gymnasium would have needed to support her mother, herself, and possibly a few enslaved people. Gymnasium has a wider range of labour options available in the city than in the countryside (cf. Groen-Vallinga 2013: 295-6); the range of attested jobs remains narrow compared to those held by men (McGinn 2004: 63-5). The line between household labour and remunerated labour could easily blur, as in the case of working wool (cf. Groen-Vallinga 2013: 298); however, as the *lena*'s household has no men to generate income, Gymnasium must enter the external labour market. There is strong evidence that people joined the family business early (cf. Groen-Vallinga 2013: 305-7, including wool-working and jewellery manufacture), which establishes a path for Gymnasium to follow her mother. Had she wished to move into a different career without marrying into it, options for a freeborn daughter of a freed *meretrix* appear to have been limited. Joshel's survey of occupational inscriptions found women in manufacture, sales, administration, professional service, skilled service and domestic service, with the majority in manufacture and domestic service (1992: 69). Enslaved or freed women are primarily recorded in domestic service (Groen-Vallinga 2013: 304-5; cf. Joshel 1992: 46-61), which would have entailed a considerable restriction of independence, as would wet-nursing or midwifery. Freedwomen are recorded as running small businesses, which may have been continuations of the professions they held while enslaved, or acquired upon marriage. To maintain the household's independence with her own labour, without merging with another household, and making the most of their limited means, sexual labour does seem a rational choice. Cf. Gilula 2004, and *pace* Witzke, who would classify Gymnasium as one of Plautus' "free young women obligated to their mothers who are hiring them out,"

and whose level of autonomy in her working activity is thus less clear-cut (2015: 9).

38 Zagagi 2000 highlights how Plautus has widened the emotional breadth of his Menandrian heroine throughout the *Cistellaria* as a whole. Feltovich 2021: 82 notes that Selenium's expressed desire to be faithful to a single lover foreshadows the discovery of her free-born status.

39 For generic competence in comedy, see Mazzara 2022.

40 Cf. McGinn: "the conclusion seems valid that prostitution does not profit most prostitutes, and that many women entering prostitution experience a decline in their economic status and standard of living" (2004: 54). The fragmentation of the *Cistellaria* itself means evidence for these negative views must be found elsewhere in the Plautine corpus. Examples include *Menaechmi* 260-264, 338-45 and 373-8; *Asinaria* 127-242; and *Bacchides* 35-90 and 739-49. Connors notes a pattern of comparing the houses of independent *meretrices* to the underworld which "is a way of depersonalizing the lives and experiences of women who charged men for sex" (2020: 160). Fantham 2015: 91 notes a similar tendency to take hostile descriptions of women by their good-for-nothing husbands at face value.

41 This inversion is accentuated by Cleareta's use of *edepol*, an interjection which in Plautus is more frequently used by men than women, and "has an important role as a male oath in Plautus" more generally (Adams 1984: 51).

42 The *lena* of the *Cistellaria* explicitly comments that because she and Melaenis are *libertinae*, they were both *meretrices* (*quia nos libertinae sumus, et ego et tua mater, ambae meretrices fuimus*, 38-9); it is not clear whether they became *meretrices* before or after obtaining free status.

43 The scene in *Bacchides* may innovate by featuring sisters rather than a mother and daughter.

44 Fantham 2015 explores ways in which women in Republican comedy more generally are given control.

45 I take the position that Seneca wrote his works for performance. I am persuaded by Fitch 2000 that this performance may have taken many different forms at different stages, including *recitatio*, and also by Marshall 2000: 30-3 that Seneca wrote for a three-sided theatre space. I am less convinced by Fantham 2000's arguments that Seneca wrote purely for recitation and reading, or by the case made in Harrison 2000a that he wrote for the *odeum* or small theatre, as tempted as I may be by the vision of a flooded orchestra.

46 As Marshall 2000: 27-8 notes, the location of this scene must be identified from two separate brief references and is not explicitly stated.

47 Rehm 1994 explores the conflation between weddings and funerals in Greek tragedy more generally. Lattimore 1962: 192-4 gathers examples of epitaphs and poems from the *Greek Anthology* either lamenting the death of a girl before marriage or referring to death as a marriage ritual.

48 Shelton 2000: 107 notes the potential use of this episode as a Stoic *exemplum* of the unpredictability of fortune.

49 Given the fragmentary evidence we have for Roman Republican tragedy, it is impossible to reconstruct the extent to which it may have been a further influence. Manuwald 2015 collects the evidence for women in this period and genre, making clear the impossibility of establishing whether two or more women are ever alone together on stage from what survives. Fantham 2000: 20 argues for the importance of epic poetry as an influence on the *Troades*; Fantham 1982: 50-75 traces Seneca's engagement with earlier versions of the Trojan war in a wide range of genres, including more detailed analysis of the *Troades*' relationship to the Greek tragedies mentioned briefly here.

50 In the P manuscript, the play is titled *Troas* rather than *Troades* (Fantham 1982: 117).

51 Fantham 2000: 14.

52 Fitch 2000: 8.

53 Marshall 2000.

54 There is insufficient evidence in the fragments of the Republican Roman tragedians to consider whether there may have been a similar use of space within that genre to which Seneca was responding.

55 Marshall 2000: 41-5 argues that Polyxena, alongside Calchas and Astyanax, acts as a figure who anchors the fluid space of the play into a particular location for a brief moment before the chorus moves further on, towards the beach where the Greek ships await them.

56 Jendza 2020: 24.

57 Women were also subject to sexual violence during the course of the war, as the very beginning of the *Iliad* and the experiences of Chryseis and Briseis attest; Gaca 2015: 286-288 summarises the evidence from Homer and the Greek tragedians. Joshel 2010: 81-95 outlines the fate of people

captured during warfare, which was a major source of enslaved people for Rome. Vishnia 2002 explores the special role of *lixae* in managing the administration of people enslaved during war by the Roman army.

58 Cf. Gaca 2015: 280-1.

59 Gaca 2015: 283-4 summarises the various acts of violence that would have been inflicted on captive women, and the deliberate decisions to vary what occupying forces did to women who were and who were not wanted alive. I would here counter Shelton's statement that the murders of Astyanax and Polyxena were "were the final acts of violence at Troy", which seems to elide many other kinds of violence which may take place in a post-conflict zone (2000: 87).

60 The legal position on the sexual vulnerability of enslaved women was clear. Laws concerning accusations of adultery and *stuprum* only applied to women of free status, not enslaved women; harm done to enslaved people was covered under the Lex Aquilia, for the recovery of loss to property (*Dig.* 48.5.6.pr). Excessive sexual activity with enslaved women only damaged a free man's character and did not open him to legal penalty (*Cod. Iust.* 9.9.25); as Joshel puts it, "law patrolled men's sexual treatment of other owners' slaves but put few limits on an owner's relations with his own slaves" (2010: 151). Feltovich sums up the general position in Greece and Rome more sharply: "enslaved women are available to be violated so that citizen women are not" (2021: 82). Joshel 2010: 121-3 offers a summary of the physical violence that enslavers regularly practiced on the enslaved people in their households.

61 Marshall 2000: 40-1.

62 I hesitate to argue that the sex labourer stock scene always features women of free status, but if that were to be the case, then the invocation of that stock scene here would add further irony given that the royal women are about to join the class of enslaved sex labourers. Feltovich 2021 considers how Greek and Roman New Comedy use enslaved women to save the day by reuniting separated daughters and families; the women of the *Troades* have not transitioned into the position of the stock helpful enslaved women that Feltovich considers.

63 The assumption that women were not actively involved in the violence of oppressing enslaved people rests on anachronistic stereotypes of femininity; this does not hold for the Roman world, as the implicit violence of Ovid's threats to reveal his sexual relationship with the enslaved Cypassis to

her mistress in *Amores* 2.8 alone makes clear. Jones-Rogers 2019 offers a helpful comparative study of women enslavers in the antebellum US.

64 Cf. Kozel 2007: 11.

65 Kozel 2007: 64.

ABSTRACT

English

This article argues both that Plautus made use of a comic stock scene featuring all-female space to deepen the characterisation of his *meretrices* figures, and that Seneca used paracomedy to deploy these conventions and heighten the tragedy in the *Troades*. Using the concept of the haunted stage laid out by Marvin Carlson, I argue that stagecraft becomes an important intertheatrical practice that offers a new way into thinking about the relationship between Seneca and his comic predecessors. Examples from the *Cistellaria* and *Asinaria* illustrate how a stock scene featuring single-gendered theatrical space created a specific set of behavioural conventions and expectations that Plautus exploits in the same way as he does comic stock characters. Interpreting scene four of Seneca's *Troades* through a paracomic lens reveals how it is haunted by this spatial template in a way which sharpens the hovering spectre of enslavement awaiting the royal women in Greece.

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Keywords

Plautus, Seneca, Roman drama, Roman comedy, Roman tragedy, gender, space, paracomedy

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