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Untaming the Shrew: Marriage, Morality and Plautine Comedy

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Untaming the Shrew: Marriage, Morality and Plautine Comedy

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In this dissertation, I theorize Plautine humor as a relatively naturalistic, and essentially Roman, phenomenon. As such, I follow recent scholarship that emphasizes the topical features of Roman comedy, and thus resists reading the plays as based entirely on inversion of social roles or on Saturnalian escapism. In light of this more naturalistic reading, I describe the Plautine stage in terms of the ideological imaginary, that is, as a space in which the audience could see its own possible identities in the characters onstage. I employ the character of the wife (*matrona*) to mediate between a literary and historical reading of the plays. I problematize the traditional assumption that the *matrona* is meant to be an object of laughter, and demonstrate how her comic agency and moral position go hand-in-hand. This reconsideration of the figure of the *matrona* and her relationship to the audience compels us to reconsider the very nature of Roman comedy. I thus re-analyze Plautine marriage as a satiric medium for the expression of Roman values, many of which demonstrate continuity with later Republican ideals. I conclude by speculating that the primary focus of marital humor is its relationship to *concordia*, spousal harmony. All of Plautus' comic marriages engage with this ideal, and demonstrate the gap between ideal and practice. In fact, the conflicts arising onstage foreshadow themes that will later appear in historical marriages, such as that of Cicero and Terentia.

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Introduction

While this project started as an examination of the character of the *matrona*, it has become a study of marriage in Plautus and its relationship to Roman society. My initial aim was to examine the *matrona* as a comic figure. As I delved more deeply into the plays and their characters, however, I began to realize that the complaints of the *matronae* did not seem very far-fetched and, in fact, corresponded to some historical conditions of the time. This led me to consider the question of Plautine marriage more generally, and to ask how the marriages portrayed in Plautus' plays might have been situated in contemporary society.

Hence, this dissertation is either feminist history or cultural history or both. It is not, of course, traditional history, in that it does not use writers calling themselves historians as its primary source, nor is it based solely on other "historical" texts such as inscriptions, laws, or decrees. It participates in the movement of cultural poetics, to use Stephen Greenblatt's term, in that it does not aim to explain things in terms of causality, or to order them chronologically. Rather, it aims to tell us something about the culture that produced the plays, and to create a synchronic snapshot of cultural information. It is feminist history in that it has women as its topic, and it aims to understand their place in Republican Roman marriage as refracted through Plautine plays.

Nobody would claim that the plays give an undistorted view of reality. However, we should not assume that they are completely unrealistic. On the contrary, these plays *are* in some sense realistic, or at least naturalistic. Past interpretations have tended to concentrate on carnivalesque inversion, a notion that implies the plays not only distort

everyday reality, but overturn it entirely. I will discuss the problems of the model in detail below, but it is particularly important to question inversion as the best analytical tool for Plautine husband-wife relationships. If women in charge are an inversion of the normal power structure, how can we take the claims of their "henpecked" husbands seriously, as scholars have done when they make certain assumptions about the audience's reaction to the characters?

The Myth of the "Shrew"

When analyzing Plautine *matronae*, scholars have tended to distinguish between "good" and "bad" wives. I do not find this division useful, but it is so firmly entrenched in Plautine studies that it must be addressed. The Plautine *matrona* is described by scholars as a typical stock character, and invariably in negative terms ("shrewish" being the most common).¹ She is considered the object of audience laughter, usually as a satiric parody of real, contemporary *uxores dotatae*.² Two *matronae* are set out as exceptions: the *Amphitruo*'s Alcumena and the two *matronae* in the *Stichus*.³ Only Segal and Williams explicitly link these women's outstanding character with the Roman notion of a wife being *morigera* and *obsequens*,⁴ and they take these terms to mean that an ideal wife should be entirely obedient to her husband's wishes. But other critics implicitly

¹ Slater: wives are typically "scolding" (61); agelast (62); "figure[s] of repression" (129). Segal 1971: wives are "henpecking" and "bitchy" (23); "a parade of untamed shrews" (25); "usually need no specific call to war" (28). Duckworth: "not pleasant" (282); "disagreeable" (283); "unattractive" and "shrewish" (255, 318). Moore 1998a: "shrew(ish)" 166, 168, 170; agelasts who do not bond with audience (159). Stärk 71: "unattraktiv". Wives more generally assumed to be typically unlikeable: Bond 210; Christenson 2001: 244-5; Grimal 85-6, 89; Segal 1969: 79; Schuhmann 1976, 1977, 1978; Della Corte.

² Schuhmann 1977, 1978; Grimal; Gruen: 144; Treggiari: 329-331; Llinás 89.

³ Segal 1971: 22; Duckworth 256, 282; Moore 1998a: 159; Bond 210; Grimal 85-6.

utilize the same standard when judging all wives: *uxores dotatae* are "shrewish" precisely because they tell their husbands what to do. Scholars are, in effect, defining the wives relationally: the "bad" wives are set off as such because of the virtue of the "good" wives.

There are problems with this categorization. In the first place, "good" *matronae* are not utterly obedient. Even Alcumena resists her husband: she does not submit meekly to his accusations of adultery, but instead threatens to divorce him. The *Stichus* sisters, who are admirable because of their devotion to their husbands, must defy their father. More generally, defying authority does not necessarily make characters unsympathetic--witness the clever slave--and women's roles are no different than men's in this regard. Further, the quality of being *morigera* might be one wifely virtue, but we should not use it as the sole criterion by which to define an ideal wife, nor should we assume that it means slavish and unquestioning obedience.⁵ Finally, the idea of a woman being *morigera* is not as unequivocally positive as these critics imply. An Afranius fragment states that *morigeratio* is one of the poisons (*venena*) that women use to get what they want from men.⁶ In the *Menaechmi*, as we shall see, the prostitute Erotium does just that, and Menaechmus praises her for being *morigera*.⁷ This scene undermines the value placed on being *morigera*.

⁴ Segal 1971: 22; Williams 19.

⁵ Treggiari, for instance, has identified no fewer than six general areas of married virtue, and argues for a definition of *morigera* and *obsequentia* in the sense "cooperative." (232-53)

⁶ "Youth and a slender body and obligingness, these are the poisons of beautiful women" (*Aetas et corpus tenerum et morigeratio / haec sunt venena formosarum mulierum*); *Vopiscus* fr. 14 (= Nonius 4 L).

⁷ *Men.* 202.

It is not useful to impose positive or negative judgments on the characters based on a narrow conception of the meaning of *morigera*. I suggest that we instead look at the *matronae* in the context of the plays, and ask two questions: 1) Are their actions comically justified within the plot? and 2) Are they, or their actions, funny? The second question is of the utmost importance because along with the generally negative evaluation of *matronae* comes the accusation that they are agelasts, repressive characters who interfere with the holiday fun. Inherent in this judgment is the assumption that the male characters' actions are automatically more apt to be "fun." As I will show, this is simply not true.

Comedy and Society

The unruly women of Roman comedy have been judged as shrewish inversions of good, *morigerae* wives. And this has led to yet more assumptions about the relationship of Plautine marriage to society, and the characters' relationship with the audience. The inverted wives are often thought to be parodic, that is, caricatures aimed at the upstart women gaining economic power in contemporary Rome. Other critics, however, see no connection between Plautine marriage and reality, and envision Plautine marriage in the grotesque terms of Punch-and-Judy farce.⁸ But the domestic situations portrayed in Roman comedy do not run to the extreme violence of such puppet shows, and that argues against the plays being entirely farcical or grotesque in nature. Nor are the unruly women

⁸ Duckworth 284-5; Stärk 69; Petrone 1976: 45, 1977: 219. Christenson 2001: 259 and MacCary and Willcock 17 refuse comment on what the plays' relationship with reality is, while Della Corte feels that the Roman plays are more "fictive" than the Greek (491).

of Roman comedy comparable to those in, for instance, Aristophanic comedy. It is the latter characters who might more plausibly be argued to show complete inversion. For example, in Classical Athens, women were not encouraged to move outside the house or allowed to participate in politics; yet we see *Lysistrata* taking over the Propylaea and resolving Athens' political crises.⁹ The women of Roman comedy never reach this level of fantastic dominance. Their sphere of control is domestic, and quite literally inside the house. In contrast to the Aristophanic model of women taking charge, we must read the domestic side of Roman Comedy as having a relatively naturalistic aesthetic.

Recent scholarship on Plautus has begun to move beyond the inherent unreality of the Saturnalian model in order to explore the plays' relationship with the society that produced them. Gruen (1990) argues for topicality on a very general level, highlighting such themes as military victories and the expenditure of state and private funds. Sadashige (1995) approaches Plautus in terms of the thematic significance that certain objects possess within the plays. McCarthy (2000) explores the staging of the master-slave dynamic in terms of a dialogic battle between farce and naturalism. And Leigh (2004) has analyzed specific plays in relation to the purported agricultural and economic changes that Rome was experiencing. These scholars do not claim that Plautus depicts realistic conditions of slavery, for example, or provides an unclouded picture of the economic situation of Rome. But they do assume that he expresses a cultural notion about the master-slave relationship, or about money. In the same sense, I argue that the

⁹ The issue of Greek women's seclusion is controversial, and I do not mean to suggest that Greek women were imprisoned in their homes. Just's chapter (105-25) nicely covers the scholarly debate, as well as very reasonably noting the gap between ideology and practice.

plays can tell us something about cultural notions of marriage and women's roles in it.¹⁰

Because they were written by a member of the society--though one can argue about his marginal place in it, if one wishes--they must picture a society comprehensible to an audience that is not marginalized on any interpretation.

The analogy of a modern American sitcom may elucidate this process. These programs often purport to portray the institutions of modern society such as home, family, workplace, or groups of friends; usually they display "normal" living conditions that are beyond the financial means of average people; usually they portray idealized

¹⁰ I will not pursue the connections between my own work and these studies beyond this introduction. For, while they have similar intellectual contexts to mine (i.e. cultural history), their approaches do not, for the most part, overlap with my interests. Most take a more literary (as opposed to performance-based approach) to the plays, while my goal is specifically to address the audience's relationship with characters. It is true that McCarthy's methodology, especially, shares many features with mine: her acknowledgement of a naturalistic element in Plautine comedy (1-2); her insistence on reading the plays "horizontally," that is, as a group, rather than individual plays in isolation (15); her assertion that we must read the plays without speculating on the individual author's desire or intent (8, 16); her assumption that the plays' logic was a response to audience expectations (15-6); and her belief in the value of the plays as evidence for social life (17).

Despite this overlap, her analysis differs quite considerably from mine. In the first place, she does not address the comic mechanisms of the plays using theories of humor, as I will. Furthermore, her definition of "naturalism" has the ideological implication of affirming the existing order by reproducing it as a familiar world (11-13). As we shall see, my definition of naturalism addresses the *plausibility* of relationships, contexts, and character motivations (rather than the realistic reproduction of a familiar world). Thus, while we share a common assumption that naturalism is more realistic and farce less so, we use this basis to proceed in very different ways. McCarthy tacitly accepts a prevalently Saturnalian explanation for the audience relationship to the comedy; and, despite her assertions of naturalism, states that "this body of comedy makes the audience automatically use a set of assumptions . . . that is the exact opposite of the assumptions they would use in everyday life" (16). I will argue against an entirely Saturnalian nature for the plays, especially in terms of audience reaction. Furthermore, she explicitly reads the plays as literary texts (7-8), and admits that her reading is "not a social historian's reading but a literary reading" that emphasizes the effect of social forces on comic (i.e., literary) forms (p. 17). I, on the other hand, want to emphasize that humor is inseparable from its social context, and cannot be understood in anything but sociohistorical terms.

Finally, McCarthy's take on husbands and wives (115-121) runs opposite to mine. She accepts that the authority of the *paterfamilias* is "naturalistic" (120), and feels that "it is only in contrast to his wife that the older man can seem like a morally justified rebel" (116). I will argue that, on the contrary, the wife is the morally justified party, and her husband is meant to be a negative example and satiric figure. Furthermore, in Chapter 3, I will use this conclusion to problematize the "naturalness" of the absolute household authority of the *paterfamilias*.

I will, therefore, return to Gruen's sociohistorical approach in my concluding chapter.

relationships or families; almost invariably they rely on unlikely coincidences to further the plot. Yet they are realistic/naturalistic in that the relationships they portray among characters correspond to something familiar to their audiences. Even when shows aim to satirize a given situation, the satire must be based on a recognizable form. The writers of sitcoms have no choice but to write out of their own experience of their own society.

In short, comedy is a form of social history, and the comic nature of Plautus' plays is one reason why we should take them seriously. But comedy and laughter are notoriously hard to define and explain. One problem with previous analyses of Plautine comedy is their limited use of comic theory. Here I will review and add to the corpus of comic theory applied to Plautus.

Frye (1957) considers the defining theme of comedy as integration into society. So, of New Comedy he writes:

New Comedy normally presents an erotic intrigue between a young man and a young woman which is blocked by some kind of opposition, usually paternal, and resolved by a twist in the plot which is the comic form of Aristotle's "discovery" . . . At the beginning of the play, the forces thwarting the hero are in control of the play's society, but after a discovery in which the hero becomes wealthy or the heroine respectable, a new society crystallizes on the stage around the hero and his bride. The action of the comedy thus moves towards the incorporation of the hero into the society that he naturally fits.¹¹

It is important to note that Frye does not aim to explain comedy as a phenomenon, but rather to define a genre. The idea of reintegration is by far Frye's most influential contribution, as can be seen in the analysis by Konstan (1983) especially. On the other hand, because of its focus on the resolution, such a definition locates the meaning of

comedy wholly in the conclusion. It explains nothing about how the play itself provokes laughter.

Frye's other widely accepted contribution was his revival of the Aristotelian idea of character types, and his emphasis on the blocking character, both of which Plautine critics have adopted whole-heartedly. Frye's definition of a blocking character is a person who obstructs the romantic plot, who is an *alazon*, and who may or may not be re-integrated at the end.¹² His suggestion that this character is usually paternal has been oft-repeated but usually unexplored. I will expand upon the notion of the blocking character, or rather, insist on a precise application of that term. Too many critics have taken the term very generally, and Segal certainly applies it more broadly than Frye (see below). I will re-examine what it means to be a blocking character, and try to add nuance to the conception of how this character fits into the romantic plots of Plautine comedy.

Finally, Frye allows morality to be integrated into comedy and audience participation. He seems to accept the idea that the main body of the comedy is Saturnalian (that is, that it displays an inverted society), but also believes that the society created at the end of the play corresponds to the moral norms of the audience.¹³ At certain points, too, he nods to the idea of comic justice, by asserting that the ending should satisfy the audience's wish to see the original usurpers in charge brought to justice.¹⁴ Concerning the audience's reaction, he states: "Comedy seems to make a more functional use of the social, even the moral judgment, than tragedy, yet comedy seems to

¹¹ Frye 44.

¹² Ibid. 165, 172.

¹³ Ibid. 169, 171.

¹⁴ Ibid. 44-6, 163.

raise the corresponding emotions [to pity and fear], which are sympathy and ridicule, and cast them out in the same way."¹⁵ This ridicule-sympathy continuum is one feature of Frye's analysis that has been overlooked, for the most part. This oversight is particularly unfortunate, since the continuum is a very useful conceptual tool. It allows for two types of audience response: laughter *at* the characters, and laughter *with* the characters. Frye also constructs a continuum of comedy, ranging from romantic to ironic, and from irony to farce: irony is more realistic, farce is unrealistic.¹⁶

We should consider several of Frye's ideas in more detail. While Frye's focus on the comic conclusion has been limiting, it does express an important point: the audience will likely expect (if not hope) that the lovers will be united at the end of the play. Frye's notion of blocking and helping characters thus provides us with one criterion by which to judge the characters' relationship with the audience. Blocking characters are generally unsympathetic, while helping characters are generally sympathetic. Frye's continuum of sympathy and ridiculousness is also helpful for describing characters. It is important to note that, throughout this study, when I use the word "sympathetic," I intend it in Frye's sense--i.e. as opposed to ridiculous--rather than in a more general sense.

Erich Segal's book, *Roman Laughter* (1971), has without doubt exerted the greatest influence on modern interpretations of Plautine comedy.¹⁷ Segal combines the idea of Saturnalian inversion with a Freudian interpretation to theorize a holiday

¹⁵ Ibid. 177.

¹⁶ Ibid. 177, 285, 290.

¹⁷ Works citing Segal and/or "Saturnalian" or "carnavalesque" influence: Auhagen 342; Bertini; Christenson 2000: 24, 26, 34, and 2001; MacCary and Willcock; Moore 1998a; Perelli; Petrone 1976, 1977 and 1989; Phillips; Ricotelli; Slater 161, 173-4; Stärk 74.

mentality that is opposed to the stern Catonian morals of the day.¹⁸ He adopts Frye's notion of a blocking character (or "agelast," as Segal prefers to call it), but re-defines it as a character who embodies the opposition to holiday fun. When it comes to female characters, he places wives and prostitutes firmly in opposition to one another. The prostitutes are representatives of the pleasure principle, and therefore fun, while the wives represent the reality principle, and are therefore not-fun.¹⁹

Yet several problems remain. The idea of inversion is too broad to provide more than a superficial explanation.²⁰ One must distinguish, to the extent that it is possible, between moral inversion and status inversion. Further, Segal's reading of female characters is inexcusably naive. Prostitutes are pleasurable and wives shrewish inside the world of the play, but bringing the audience into the picture complicates things. Prostitutes, after taking a man for all he is worth, loudly proclaim their victories to the audience. While the duped man might be having fun inside the world of the play, the audience sees him being ridiculed. His wife may not look so shrewish if her husband (usually a *senex amator*) is also an object of ridicule. When it comes to comedy and morality, we will see that some Plautine characters who are not agelasts voice decidedly Roman sentiments about *virtus*, *officium* and other virtues. This fact makes it difficult to say that morality is inconsistent with comedy. It will become apparent that some types of immorality are fun, others are not. Finally, it is worth questioning whether it is possible

¹⁸ Segal 1971: 7-14. While Segal himself never cites Bakhtin explicitly, the idea of holiday reversal is distinctly Bakhtinian. Both Segal and Barber, whom Segal does cite, employ many of the observations found in Bakhtin's idea of *carnivale*.

¹⁹ Wiles 1989, too, follows this reading of wives and prostitutes.

²⁰ Moore 1998a: 18-200 and Wiles 1988: 264 also provide insightful criticisms of Segal.

to display a comic universe that is inverted in *every* respect. If this were to happen, the result would be a world unrecognizable to the audience.

Carnavalesque inversion is only one paradigm for interpreting Plautus' comedy; for the purposes of this study, we need to expand the corpus of comic theory. I suggest that we take a step back and ask about the more general relationship between comedy and society. Douglas' model (1975), for one, explicitly requires that comedy reflect a known social structure even while challenging it. Her view follows Freud's model of a joke as, essentially, a play upon form.²¹ Douglas takes this incongruity-based theory and applies it to society as a whole: humor is the challenging of a dominant structure by a subordinate one, or the superimposition of one less logical paradigm onto a more logical one. The dominant and logical structure represents what is usually called reality or normalcy, and the superimposed structure represents some departure from it. Two important findings emerge from this approach. The first is that there is no such thing as pure inversion, because comedy depends on the interplay *between* two paradigms: for inversion to exist, the challenged paradigm (i.e., reality) must be part of that relationship.

A true story may illustrate this point. A professor asked a student to give a lecture in his graduate seminar. The professor sat in the front row, while the student handed out a text. When the student began the class, she called on the professor, saying "Professor Smith, would you like to begin translating?" This provoked a laugh from the class. Clearly the laughter arose from the class' perception of a role-reversal. But the very fact that these roles were *normally* defined as the domain of a student or professor is crucial to

²¹ Freud 607-13.

the humor of the situation. An outsider who did not know about normal classroom behavior, or who did not know that the person standing at the front of the class was not the professor, would not have gotten the joke. In order to grasp the humor, therefore, the perceiver needs to recognize *both* the reversal and the normal structure simultaneously.

The second finding to be drawn from Douglas' paradigm is that inversion is only *one* possible relationship between the dominant paradigm and the challenging paradigm. There is also, for instance, the relationship of exaggeration--when the superimposed or challenging paradigm takes features of reality and exaggerates them. This exaggeration still creates a sense of incongruity between the "real" world and the comic world.²² The humor thus lies in the difference between the two paradigms, but does not imply a head-on contrast between them. This difference may be the basis for the type of humor that is based on truth--the classic explanation for the observational humor of stand-up comedy. According to Douglas' theory, what have been called the modes of naturalism and farce are not mutually exclusive modes, but rather points on a continuum. Naturalism merely expresses a relationship in which the challenging paradigm is less different than the dominant one, while farce expresses a relationship in which the two paradigms are further apart. This corresponds nicely to Frye's assertion that farce is less realistic, and irony more realistic.²³

Another theorist who should be adduced is Veatch (1998). Veatch has created what is in essence a scientific formula for humor: he has three necessary but not sufficient conditions for humor to occur. The first two express an idea similar to

²² In fact, Sol Saks writes, "exaggeration and incongruity are first cousins." (32)

Douglas' theory: for humor to occur, there must be a subjective norm (N), and some violation of that norm (V). But Veatch also includes a moral dimension. The third condition evaluates how morally committed the perceiver is to the norm. If the norm is a dearly held ethical or religious belief, then a violation of it will tend to produce not humor, but offense. He sums up his results in a chart:

		Perceiver:		
Logic	[Moral] Commitment	Gets it	Is offended	Sees Humor
not-V	none	no	no	no
V and N	weak	yes	no	yes
V and not-N	strong	yes	yes	no

Whatever one thinks of Veatch's chart, his approach enables us to discuss what is funny as well as what is not funny, and I will return to it when analyzing the relationship between morality and comedy.

Finally, there is Corbeill (1996), who suggests that Cicero's invective serves an important purpose: it re-enforces societal values by mocking those who do not behave. I will argue that Plautine comedy also exercised this "controlling laughter" by making certain behaviors subject to derisive, rather than sympathetic, laughter. In this way, we will see that some behaviors are more acceptable and some are less acceptable, even in the comic universe.

To sum up my model of humor so far: I assume that Plautus' comedies were successful and that the audience responded with laughter to them. To explain this laughter, I will work from Douglas' model, and theorize the world of Plautine comedy as

²³ Bermel also identifies farce as inherently unreal.

a paradigm that challenges the dominant normality-based model. I will not, however, assume that the relationship between the two paradigms is one of inversion. When addressing marriage, specifically, I will look for points of contact with "the real world" and try to elucidate what relationship the characters have with Roman conceptions of marriage.

Comic Characters and the Audience

Individual characters and their relationship with the audience require their own set of theories. Aristotle's original conception of the *eiron* and *alazon* is a useful starting point: the *eiron* acts like he is less than he is; the *alazon* acts like more than he is.²⁴ The *eiron*, it seems, enjoys a more positive relationship with the audience than the *alazon*. This can be explained by Plato's formulation of the comic (*to geloûon*) as the opposite of self-knowledge (*gnôthi seauton*).²⁵ The *alazon*, ignorant of his own self, is an object of ridicule. The *eiron*, self-aware but dissembling, shares the joke with the audience because they, too, know that he pretends to be less than he really is. Knowledge and lack of knowledge, in turn, bring us to theories of humor based on superiority, of which there are many.²⁶ The audience laughs *at* an *alazon*, because they feel superior to him, but

²⁴ NE 4.8.

²⁵ *Philebus* 48C-D.

²⁶ E.g., Aristotle *Poetics* 5.1449a. Hobbes, too, describes laughter as "sudden glory" upon perceiving others' defects (*Leviathan* 1.6). Theories based on superiority tend to overlap with theories based on tendentious wit. Bergson, for example, concludes that laughter is intended to humiliate, and cannot be kind-hearted (186-8); at the same time, he acknowledges the humor in self-ignorant comic characters (71). Freud also believes laughter arises from comparison of self with others, though it happens unconsciously (744-8).

laughs *with* an *eiron*, because they share his knowledge of the situation. In this study, I will use *alazon* and *eiron* in a slightly broader way than the original, Aristotelian definition. When I call a character an *alazon*, I mean that character is self-ignorant or ignorant of the reality of his surroundings; when I name an *eiron*, I mean that a character shares superior knowledge with the audience.²⁷

Perhaps now we can turn to the audience's participation in the theatrical experience. Two recent books on Plautus have concentrated on the performance aspect of Roman drama. Slater focuses on metatheater as theatrical self-consciousness, that is, as non-illusory theater.²⁸ His study proceeds from a play-internal standpoint, and analyzes the "controlling character" of the play as the one who controls the play-within-the-play.²⁹ Slater uses the audience primarily as a silent foil rather than concentrating on its relationship with the controlling character.

Moore's book (1998a), on the other hand, focuses explicitly on audience rapport with certain characters. Building on Slater's ideas, Moore looks for textual clues such as asides to the audience, eavesdropping, and musical accompaniment, which suggest that a given character has a connection with the audience. He argues that the characters with such rapport are the sympathetic characters, i.e., the characters that the audience bonds with.

²⁷ My own model is much indebted to Hubbard's discussion of self-knowledge and comedy (1-15).

²⁸ Slater 2000: 14. Slater focuses on six plays which he feels are most illustrative of the non-illusory nature of Plautine drama. It should be noted, however, that while certain aspects of the plays' production would allow the audience a heightened sense of the play's artificiality, we should hardly assume that the audience experienced a sort of Brechtian *Verfremdungkeit* whereby they would be so aware of the play that they could not experience some suspension of disbelief as well.

²⁹ Ibid. 12.

While both Slater and Moore provide a thorough analysis of audience participation, neither one questions the stereotype of *matronae* being the least sympathetic characters. Building on the comic theory I have introduced, it is necessary to expand Slater's concept of a controlling character and Moore's analysis of audience rapport. While Slater uses "control" to describe a character's control of the internal action, I will use it to describe a character's control of audience laughter. My definition stems from the same comic agency as Slater's does: in Slater's view, the characters take over the plot; in mine, they take over the laughter. These two uses overlap to a great degree, as can be seen in the *Casina*, for example, when Cleostrata takes over the last two acts of the play. She orchestrates the action and, at the same time, provokes laughter at others' expense, thus retaining a choke-hold on her rapport with the audience.

But "control" is a slippery word, and the control of the controlling character is extremely tenuous. In his discussion of the *Asinaria*, Slater notes that characters fight for control as playwright of the play.³⁰ But his analysis, while noting that control can change from scene to scene, does not emphasize just how quickly control can be wrested away from one character to another--moment to moment, line to line, and laugh by laugh. In the text, there are clear instances where one character seizes control of the audience's laughter by making a joke at another character's expense. But in the next moment, the previously-derided character will make a joke that plays off the first character's joke, and thereby "recover" the control. These "snappy comebacks" are a way for the character to provoke laughter so as to sway the audience's allegiance. It is important to note that the

³⁰ 45-56, esp. 50-1.

control of laughter is not only control within the play, but also has an effect on the audience.

My concern is specifically how these controlling characters relate to the audience. The ideas of controlling character and audience rapport are especially important for analyzing women's roles, since they are almost always assumed to be the objects of laughter. A character in control of audience laughter, however, is not the object of laughter, but its provocateur, and it is in this regard especially that women have been overlooked. The characters who provoke the laughter are agents; the characters at whose expense the jokes happen are objects.³¹ I will argue that the *matronae* are more often than not controlling characters who make jokes at other characters' expense.

Now the question of audience reaction. If we are going to explicitly locate the meaning of a play in its audience, we must define which audience we mean, or consider the different meanings possible for different audiences, or employ the working model of a single, ideal audience, as Slater and Moore do. Further, we must find some basis on which to predict the reactions of this ideal audience. Scholars have tended to assume what they call "Catonian" morality as the norm for Plautus' audience, and on occasion even to suggest that Plautus himself was promulgating a Catonian platform.³² In the first place, we cannot assign any opinion to Plautus as an individual or "Plautus" as a

³¹ The agency I impart to the controlling character is comparable to that of the Aristophanic comic hero. However, most critics take the Aristophanic hero as a low character who is simultaneously laughed at (due to his base behavior) and laughed with (because he satirizes political and social institutions). See Whitman 21-58; Reckford 65-67, 297-8, 507; and Dover 31-41. Obviously, Plautine characters exist in a somewhat different context, and do not engage in the "low" (i.e. obscene) behavior that Aristophanic characters do. Because of this, it is plausible to have a sharper division between characters who are agents and objects of laughter.

³² Schuhmann 1976: 21-3; Cugusi 291-2.

construction, simply because we have no information about his life or activities outside of playwriting. And even if it is entirely believable that Cato would have had conservative views, we cannot simply project such conservatism onto the entire audience. Cato's is only one view, and it may have been ostensibly unassailable as a moral and political party line, but we cannot assume it was the popular view of the audience. We must not forget that Plautus was writing for wet-nurses, prostitutes, soldiers, *matronae*, and merchants, and not only for the civic officials who funded the festivals.³³

Audience identification is also a tricky subject. The assumption behind much of the scholarly interpretation of *matronae* seems to be that women are always and unquestionably unsympathetic, or objects of derisive laughter, because the (primarily male) audience would sympathize with the male characters. But this does square with the idea that the women take charge of the play and the audience's laughter. There is a clear distinction between controlling audience laughter and being the object of derisive laughter,³⁴ and the *matronae* tend more towards the former.

In fact, the mechanisms of a joke allow a person to identify with almost anyone. Sol Saks, who made his living by writing jokes, provides valuable insight into the process of audience identification:

³³ In the plays, *Poen.* 17-34 (the prologue) gives the most information about the general audience. Livy (34.44, 34.54) reports a change in seating arrangements in 194 B.C.E. that divided the senators from the *populus*. For a discussion of the audience, see Wilson 21-5, Beare 171-5, and Taladoire 21-30.

³⁴ Theoretically, it is possible to be both the agent of laughter and the object of laughter simultaneously (cf. note 30). For the purposes of this study, however, I want to concentrate on the *matrona*'s capacity as comic agent; this aspect of her character has been greatly overlooked, while her role as object of laughter has been overemphasized. An analysis of the *matrona* as both agent and object of laughter would have to be framed in more general terms of Plautine comedy and its mechanisms, and would have to include a re-evaluation of other characters. Such a broad analysis is not possible here.

Identification is also a valuable tool in comedy. Used by writers in the sense of "to identify with," identification means the listener or reader can relate to your characters.

This isn't as circumscribed as it sounds. A middle-aged, white, automobile mechanic does not relate only to middle-aged, white automobile mechanics. He may relate to a king, a black housewife, an oversexed elephant, or an oak tree, if it can talk or think. Just so long as the character has problems or dreams he has experienced.³⁵

Saks' advice is well taken: we should not assume that elite, male Romans can relate only to other elite, male Romans. This point is amply shown by the potential of slaves and prostitutes to be comic heroes. We must recall that the control of the controlling character is negotiable, and changeable. The audience may laugh in recognition at one character in one moment, and another character the next.

Given the complex audience that Plautus was writing for, it is not feasible to run through the possible reactions of every audience member. I will therefore proceed from a play-internal standpoint--that is, I will assume that textual and contextual clues can tell us who is in control of the laughter at most points, rather than assuming one character will automatically be more sympathetic than another. I will employ Frye's classification of characters, and assume that objects of derisive laughter are ridiculous characters, while agents in producing laughter are sympathetic. Note that both types of characters provoke laughter, but for different reasons. A ridiculous character provokes derisive laughter based on a feeling of superiority. A sympathetic character provokes laughter based on recognition or identification. The audience thus has two different relationships with the two types of character. I will, moreover, incorporate the idea of the controlling character

as comic agent, who purposely makes jokes at other characters' expense, and seizes the audience's laughter. I will assume that by doing so, this character creates a rapport with the audience, at least for the duration of the joke. Finally, I will assume that blocking characters are less sympathetic than those allied with the young lovers.³⁶ To sum up my criteria:

Character:

sympathetic	ridiculous
<i>eirōn</i>	<i>alazōn</i>
knows self	ignorant of self
shares audience knowledge	has knowledge inferior to audience
controlling character	non-controlling character
provokes laughter	object of laughter
blocking character	helping character (allied with lovers)

Audience:

identifies with character	feels superior to character
laughs with	laughs at

I should say that these poles are two extreme points on a continuum, and, as with any classification, the categories are not meant to be watertight. By pinpointing which characters fall towards which ends of the spectrum, we may be able to identify the

³⁵ Saks 32.

³⁶ It should be noted that this criterion is taken from Frye's theory of comedy, rather than theories of humor. But despite the fact that Frye's classification of blocking and helping characters is plot-driven (i.e. based on the play's conclusions), it does express one aspect of the play's general humor. Presumably the audience is expecting, if not hoping, that the lovers will be united. The spectators would thus have differing reactions to helping and blocking characters based on this expectation. The plot-based categorization of helping versus blocking characters can therefore be incorporated into a theory of humor.

audience's probable reaction on the basis of a consistent comic theory rather than "common sense" assumptions about particular character types.

My final suggestion is that if there is any Bakhtinian concept we should apply to Plautus, it is Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*, which allows the characters to have individual voices rather than being slavish mouthpieces for their creator's agenda.³⁷ Plautus' comedy has enough points of contact with society to reflect a diverse and sometimes incoherent system, one that had unresolved tensions within it. Moreover, these comedies entertained heterogeneous crowds, so it makes sense that a successful comic playwright would have the means to amuse more than one type of spectator.

Methodology

I have tried to give an overview of the theories and authors who have informed my approach, and I will now address the question of how, specifically, I will analyze the plays. My first step will be to re-evaluate the characters' standing within the world of the play itself: their relationship with other characters and function in the plot. This step may be preliminary, but it is one that has not been carefully applied to many *matronae*. The next step is to move to the level of the audience, and their reaction to the play. Initially, I will employ a single theoretical audience as the recipients of play-internal comic mechanisms. I will continue by asking what relationship the *matronae* and their husbands had with this audience. In my conclusions, I will begin to address the *heteroglossia* I described earlier, that is, the potential of varied audience responses to the characters.

My first two chapters will attempt a comprehensive analysis of Plautine marriage, using the *matronae* as a lens to re-focus previous assumptions. I will begin with analyses of the specific plays and their individual *matronae*, and then attempt to find some commonalities in their actions, motives, and characterizations in a final synthesis. For the sake of organization, I have divided up the plays into those that contain "good" *matronae* and "bad" *matronae* (on the basis of interpretations discussed above). These classifications are loose; in the *Casina*, especially, we will see that there is slippage. But the *Casina*'s ambiguous *matrona* is particularly helpful for pinpointing previous scholarly biases, precisely because she has been erroneously identified as an exception despite the character traits that she shares with other *matronae*. This fact clearly shows the problems with categorizing *matronae* into "good" and "bad," and reveals the critics' own biases in interpreting textual evidence.

Chapter One will cover the *matronae* in four plays: *Stichus*, *Aulularia*, *Cistellaria*, and *Amphitruo*. I have purposely begun with the *matronae* classified as "good" by scholars, since these women should rightly be the exceptions to the rule of shrewish wives. I will attempt to define what makes a "good" *matrona* good. As we shall see, even the good *matronae* defy authority (often assumed to be the defining feature of bad ones), and they also play significant roles in the resolution of the plot. The good *matronae* will prove helpful for addressing the question of morality and comedy as well, since one obvious reason for their classification as "good" is their good, upstanding Roman character.

³⁷ While Bakhtin specifically excluded parody from the possibility of *heteroglossia*, considering it the oldest form of dialogism, Carlson (1992) has recently suggested that it is feasible to expand upon Bakhtin's original concept.

Chapter Two will cover the "bad" *matronae*, the "parade of untamed shrews" that Segal describes.³⁸ These women have received some scholarly attention, and in most cases my analysis of the plays will consist of re-evaluating their characters (as well as other characters in the plays) based on audience reaction. In these plays, especially, I argue for equal-opportunity criticism--that is, criticism that does not assume automatically that the wives are unsympathetic, no-fun blocking characters. Such an approach allows the *matronae* to be agents causing laughter, instead of (or at least in addition to) merely being objects of laughter. I will specifically address the question of how these women function as comic characters. In this regard, the *uxor dotata* must be evaluated along with her husband, usually the *senex amator*. In my analysis, I will address the comedy of both the wife and her husband, and their relationships with the audience. I will show that the *uxor dotata* is by no means an agelast. In fact, she makes jokes on a regular basis. The difference between audience reactions to the wife and husband will return us to the question of morality, and the interaction between comedy and social norms.

Chapter Four will place Plautus' representations of marriage in their sociohistorical context. I will examine the content of the *matronae*'s complaints, and read their own actions against other characters' misogynist sayings as well as in relation to contemporary discourse on luxury. It is often assumed that the wives' sole concern is making their husbands miserable, and that they are sexually jealous. The text does not support such a monologic reading; I will demonstrate the different motives that these women have. Finally, I will return to the larger question of Plautine marriage and its

³⁸ Segal 1971: 25.

relationship to Roman society, and here I will address the realism and/or naturalistic aesthetic of the comedies.

My end goal is twofold, based roughly on form and function. In form, I hope to expand the very definition of *matrona*. The *matrona* is not synonymous with "shrew," nor should she be reduced to a stock character. Even as a literary representation, she has diverse forms: while all *matronae* share certain areas of concern (mostly in the domestic sphere), they are not all the same. There are differences in age, marital happiness, and children.

My second goal is to describe the function of the *matrona*'s role, and indeed of Plautine comedy as an ideological phenomenon. Because the *matrona* has motivations which are understandable in social and legal terms, and because she is a moral force but still an agent of laughter, we should not assume that she is excluded from audience sympathy. By laughing *with* the *matrona*, the audience may be forced to identify with her, if only for a moment, and to laugh *at* characters whose behavior is less acceptable or moral. Thus, a re-evaluation of the *matrona*'s role leads to a re-evaluation of Plautine comedy: if what is moral can also be funny, we may consider the plays as a satiric, rather than escapist comic medium.

Note on the text and translations

All citations and translations for complete Menander plays will be from Arnott's Loeb editions, unless otherwise noted. The text of all Greek fragments is that of Kassel-Austin. I have used Leo's text for the Plautine plays, though I have taken liberties with

the colometry for the sake of readability. All Latin translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Chapter 1

"Good" *Matronae*: *Stichus*, *Aulularia*, *Cistellaria*, *Amphitruo*

In two plays, the *Stichus* and the *Amphitruo*, the *matronae* involved have received a fair amount of scholarly attention, and have been cited specifically as ideals of Roman womanhood:¹ the sisters in the *Stichus* oppose their father because of their desire to remain faithful to their husbands; and *Amphitruo*'s Alcumena thinks she is being faithful, since she is unaware that she is having an affair with Jupiter disguised as her husband. The reasons for these women's goodness are worth examining. As mentioned in the introduction, the underlying assumption is that a "good" wife is *morigera*, in the sense of being unquestioningly obedient. But we should ask how these plays engage with the larger question of negotiating authority. All of the "good" *matronae* defy the authority of a family member, whether it is a husband, brother, or father. The *Stichus* sisters are a perfect example: although they defy their father's authority, they are still considered ideals because of their *univirtas*. When analyzing the expectations about virtuous women, we must also analyze the differing contexts. Furthermore, "ideal" is not equivalent with "funny," nor does it necessarily contribute to the comedy of the plays. We need to place the virtue of these characters in its comic context. Since the women have been considered sympathetic because they are ideal *matronae*, we must reconcile their roles with the relationship between comedy, morality, and audience sympathy.

This chapter will cover four plays. From the *Stichus*, I hope to re-examine the relationship between the *matronae* and authority. In the *Aulularia* and *Cistellaria*, on the

¹ Segal 1971: 22; Duckworth 252, 282.

other hand, the *matronae* do not have as much stage time, but they are important characters for correcting the stereotype of the shrewish *matrona*. Neither of them has received much scholarly attention, but they have been noted favorably by scholars.² Both *matronae* play important parts in the plot resolution, and I will consider what this fact contributes to our understanding of Plautine *matronae*. In addition, we will examine how they, too, negotiate authority. Finally, I will re-examine the *Amphitruo*, and Alcumena's role in particular. In my conclusions, I will reconsider the notion of "good," and reframe it in terms of audience reaction.

Stichus

Insofar as the *Stichus* can be said to have a plot, it is loosely based around the story of two brothers who have married two sisters, Pamphila and Panegyris.³ In the play's opening, we find the two sisters alone onstage, waiting for their husbands to return from a two-year-long voyage. The sisters are worried that their father will try to make them remarry, but they do not wish to do so.⁴ The second scene shows the father and daughters arguing about the possibility of remarriage. After the second scene, the sisters

² *Aulularia*: Della Corte 486; Petrone 1989: 96. *Cistellaria*: Duckworth 257.

³ In the manuscripts, the younger sister is named in the scene-heading of only one transmission, leading many to believe that the name is not originally Plautine (Petersmann 85; Arnott 1972: 74 n.2; Leo app. crit.). However, for the sake of clarity, I will call the younger sister Pamphila.

⁴ Legally speaking, it is unclear whether the father's forcing his daughters to remarry is a possibility. A father's interference in such matters is found even in the Greek originals (cf. *Epitrepontes*), and any attempt to define the marriage as *cum manu* or *sine manu*, which may favor the father's right or not, is thwarted by lack of evidence. For a discussion of *abductio*, see Petersmann 94 and Vogt-Spira 2000b: 164-5. It is possible that the sisters could be considered divorced by abandonment or death, but later jurists make it clear that separation does not end a marriage: it is mutual *consensus*, not cohabitation, that legally defines the marriage (*Dig.* 24.1.32.13, Ulp. 33; Treggiari 54-5, 407-8).

virtually disappear from the stage.⁵ For this reason, I will analyze only the first two scenes of the play in terms of character development: the first scene showcases the sisters' contrasting personalities, and the second scene pits both the sisters against their father.

Before beginning the plot analysis, I would like to make a note about the sisters' age. They have been married for two years and are thus relatively young for *matronae*. But the women speak explicitly of knowing the ways of *matronae* (105) and are identified as *matresfamilias* (98).⁶ The sisters' age may affect how the audience perceives them, but I will leave that question for the conclusion of the chapter, where I will compare them to other "good" *matronae*.

Many scholars have analyzed the sisters' scenes, but few have devoted more than cursory attention to the sisters' characterization. Usually the two sisters are seen as unequivocally sympathetic characters, that is, characters who have morals that the contemporary audience would have viewed favorably.⁷ This sympathetic reading is often contrasted with unsympathetic readings of the sisters' father and husbands, since

⁵ The elder sister appears once more, in the second act, but her function there is merely to act as a foil to the back-and-forth of the parasite Gelasius and the *servus currens* Pinacium. This is an important scene because Panegyris finds out that her husband has returned. But it is just as important to note that owing to her few lines and long silences (e.g. lines 342-55 and 374-89, 13- and 15-line gaps respectively), we cannot infer much more character development from this scene, and we must conclude that the focus is really on the parasite and slave. We may note, however, that as mistress of the house she has control over feeding Gelasimus and chooses not to do so.

⁶ Cf. Owens 393.

⁷ Arnott captures the general trend of scholarship: "Plautus wished to endorse current Roman values about the position of the Roman *matrona* in society and the sanctity of her one and only marriage" (1972: 59). Also Petrone, "le due donne sono credibili eroine di un dramma borghese" (1977: 44); Petersmann, "so sind die beiden Frauen Verfechterinnen des Guten" (38); and Owens, "Even when opposing their father, the women remain paragons of filial *pietas*" (394). Petrone explicitly defines this morality as Catonian (1977: 20-24), while Arnott and Owens define this morality more temporally, i.e. apropos to 200 B.C.

their morals turn out to be questionable.⁸ But the contrast between the sisters' devotion and their father's and husbands' neglect of duty is not played out in the opening scenes--it becomes apparent only in the latter half of the play. It could be, of course, that the sisters are meant to function solely as a literary foil, but that, too, would only emerge later. First, however, we need to consider how the audience would perceive the characters in real time, as they appear on stage. There are three important questions to ask: 1) How seriously should the sisters' morality be taken? 2) Who is the controlling character in the second scene? and 3) How does morality relate to comedy in this play and in general? The sisters' sincerity has invariably been taken for granted, but what if they are devious enough to manipulate their father?

Arnott notes the sisters' use of moral terms in the opening scene and suggests that this language highlights Pamphila as "the moral sister."⁹ Most scholars have followed Arnott's lead and taken the moral terms as conspicuous, straightforward indications of the sister's personalities. While the values being discussed are ones that a contemporary Roman audience would generally consider positive,¹⁰ it does not follow that "moral" is equivalent to "sympathetic." Morality is not always what an audience wants to see, or indeed the only way to judge the sisters' characterization. A Segalian reading, in fact,

⁸ Petrone, for instance, reads the sisters' scenes as a bookend, showcasing good Catonian morality only to highlight its destruction in the "anti-moral" ending (op. cit.). Petersmann, too, contrasts the sisters' morality with their father's role as "grotesk-komische Alte," while Owens writes: "Antipho and his sons-in-law fail to meet their Roman *officia* and give themselves over to Greek indulgence (Petersmann 37; Owens 401).

⁹ Arnott 1972: 57.

¹⁰ However, while Arnott (and Petersmann) assume a Menandrian origin for the women's morality and speech, I favor Owens' emphasis on the "Romanness" of the sisters' characterization. He holds that although this use of moral terms may take its cue from Menander, "foremost in the mind of Plautus' audience would have been the Roman notion of moral obligation, *officium*, and not its Greek equivalent" (392). Thus, while the inspiration may be Menandrian, the audience would not consider the sisters, or their speeches, Greek.

requires that the comedy provide an escape from everyday values. It is no more useful to classify one or the other sister as the more or less moral one. For both are moral, and both are torn in their duties to their husbands and their father. A close examination of only one portion of the dialogue demonstrates this point, and allows readings which examine the sisters' characterization apart from its moral considerations.

Near the end of the first scene, Pamphila tells her sister that even if their father takes them away from their husbands, they must not be angry about it (*minime irasci decet neque id inmerito eveniet* 27-8). Pamphila's statement sparks a tiff between the sisters. When her elder sister responds by complaining--they have no idea where their husbands are, what they are doing, or if they are alive--Pamphila takes this as self-pity, and the result is the following exchange:

PAM. an id doles, soror, quia illi suom officium
non colunt, quom tu tuom facis?

PAN. ita pol.

PAM. tace sis, cave sis audiam ego istuc
posthac ex te.

PAN. nam quid iam?

PAM. quia pol meo animo omnis sapientis
suom officium aequom est colere et facere.
(35-40)

PAM. Are you sad, sister, because [our husbands] do not
take their duty seriously, when you do?

PAN. Damn right!

PAM. Be quiet, then, and make sure I never hear the like
from you after this.

PAN. Why?

PAM. Because in my opinion, it's only right that all
sensible people do their duty and like it.

Pamphila thus chastises her sister and advises her to do her duty even if their husbands fail to do theirs. Arnott's reading of this scene is based solely on the sisters' moral terms, which leads him to try to determine which one is more moral. But even if we accept that the audience is judging by morality, it should be plain that there is no single morally correct course of action. Both sisters realize the moral dilemma: they must go either against their father or against their husbands, and both sisters seem to have a different definition of *aequum* and *officium*. Crucially, we cannot really say which one is *right*. Neither, I suspect, could the audience.

If, for a moment, we abandon morality as a criterion, we can read this interchange as a typical sibling quarrel, not a tragic debate on morality. This is a comedy, after all. Owens is the only scholar who has admitted the possibility of an ironic reading.¹¹ His point is well taken, and breaks away from the traditional interpretation of morality as sympathy. For Owens, the younger sister is the moralizing (rather than truly moral) character--exactly the opposite of Arnott's reading. Even modern critics using ancient morality cannot come to a sure conclusion about which sister is truly moral.

There is no doubt, then, that the sisters profess positive Roman qualities in the first scene. But, as we have seen, the sisters' pious characterization has been read too seriously, their moral terminology has been taken as the entirety of their characterization, and assessments of their relative morality have proved inconsistent. The next scene will provide more opportunities to see the sisters' characterization play out. If we allow that

¹¹ He writes: "However, here we have 'Romanness' with an ironic edge. The younger sister's jingly excess, *unice qui unus*, lampoons the traditional encomium and suggests that Antipho's haste to remarry his daughters is a neglect of his proper *officium*" (Owens 393).

they are fully aware of their father's intentions and intend to oppose him, we may see that they are not as unquestioningly devoted to him as they profess to be. Hence, we must consider whether to read them as naive, clever, or some mix of the two, and see how their characterization compares to Antipho's. If we assume that the sisters have made as positive an impression on the audience as they have on most critics, then we must assume that the burden is on Antipho to win the audience over. Given his entrance and initial characterization, it seems unlikely that he can do this.

Antipho makes a belligerent arrival.¹² He orders his slaves to clean up the house, chastises them for their laziness and warns them that he will be right back. Cut to Pamphila, wondering what to do if her father stands obstinately against them (*offirmabit pater advorsum nos* 68). Panegyris says that they must endure whatever the one with more power does (*pati nos oportet quod ille faciat, quous potestas plus potest* 69). Her wording leaves room for negotiation: because she does not name her father *qua* father, the statement does not necessarily indicate piety, but rather pragmatism. She then states that they must win their case by begging (*exorando*) rather than by openly attacking (*advorsando*); that by wheedling (*gratia*) they might get what they want; and she concludes that to attack openly would entail disgrace and wrongdoing (*advorsari sine dedecore et scelere summo haud possumus* 70-2).

This exchange between the sisters is crucial. The main question is how to take *advorsando* as opposed to *exorando*. Most commentators take Panegyris' statement literally, and assume that she honestly rejects all possibility of opposing their father. But

¹² One may compare Pericplectomenus' first entrance in the *Miles Gloriosus* (156-59).

she rejects only direct opposition. Her concern is for keeping up appearances, since it is inappropriate for daughters to fight openly with their father. Nor is Pamphila concerned exclusively with decorum. She has a very practical motivation: indirect opposition is more likely to be successful than direct confrontation. This passage can therefore provide a clue to the sisters' intentions. They know their father will try to persuade them, but they intend to fight him nonetheless, and they have a strategy for doing so. This argues against their being entirely naive, even if they are as moral as their language suggests. In fact, Pamphila's final statement is, "I know our dad: he's beggable" (*novi ego nostros: exorabilest* 74). Depending on how clever we think the sisters are, this line can be read as a statement of blind optimism or of devious strategy.

Antipho speaks next, wondering whether it is better to approach the sisters gently or threateningly (*leniter an minaciter* 78-9). He decides that being nice is not an option. He will trick them by pretending he wants to be married again, and thus "wage war" on them (*eis gerere bellum* 80) as well as bully and terrify them, acting as if they have admitted their guilt (*sic faciam: adsimulabo quasi quam culpam in sese admiserint. perplexabiliter earum hodie perpavefaciam pectora* 84-5). Antipho's decision suggests that he is already anticipating resistance from his daughters. His plan thus argues for the sisters' cleverness: he knows that the fight ahead will be tough, so he creates a tough plan. Even before the moral contrast becomes apparent later in the play, Antipho's characterization is contrasted with the sisters' the minute he sets foot on stage: the sisters are deciding on an indirect, verbal course of action, while their father is planning a

warlike attack. Given the visual placement onstage, the drama would be heightened by the contrast not only in strategy but also in theatrical space.¹³

A moment before the meeting, the battle plans continue. Just before the father and daughters see each other onstage, Panegyris announces her plan to kill their father with kindness: she says they will make the first move by kissing him (*ferre advorsum homini occupemus osculum* 89). When their father protests this osculation, they begin fretting about his chair and trying to put cushions beneath him. Pamphila once again affirms their devotion, but quickly returns to the topic at hand:

numquam enim nimi' curare possunt suum parentem filiae,
quem aequiust nos potiolem habere quam te? postidea,
pater,
viros nostros, quibus tu voluisti esse nos matres familias.
(96-8)

Since daughters can never worry too much about their
father,
is it very right that we think anyone is more powerful than
you?
[We even consider] our husbands less, for whom you
wanted us to be dutiful wives.

Pamphila reaffirms Antipho's power over them with the word *potior*, and, in the same breath, demonstrates that it was the father's choice that determined their husbands--a clever rhetorical trick. Her wording allows ambiguity: she seems to be telling her father that he still has ultimate authority over his daughters, though they are married. But her

¹³ Given the arrangement of lines, it is not likely that the sisters leave the stage before their father enters, and their presence onstage grants them the capability of eavesdropping while Antipho lays his plans. However, since Pamphila professes to hear Antipho's voice only as he is entering their house, the audience may be expected to suspend its disbelief and assume that the sisters cannot hear Antipho's speech. The fact remains that the sisters and the father are onstage at the same time, providing a visual contrast in addition to the characterization suggested by the text.

mention of her father's choice of husbands is not an incidental one. It will become the basis for her sister's resistance a short while later. Pamphila could be naive, but it begins to look more likely that she has an ulterior motive in constructing this scenario.

Antipho then begins talking about his supposed desire to remarry. He claims that he has come to his daughters as an inexperienced student to teachers, since they will know about the ways of good women (*nam ego ad vos nunc imperitus rerum et morum mulierum / discipulus venio ad magistras: quibus matronas moribus / quae optumae sunt esse oportet* 104-6). The sisters first try to put him off of the idea by telling him he will have a difficult time finding a woman as good as their deceased mother. When he insists on quizzing the sisters about finding a good wife, they offer all the appropriate responses about women: that the best kind of woman is one who does not cause any gossip (113-4), does nothing inappropriate (122), and stands by her man in good times and in bad (124-125). In the end, Antipho confesses that he was testing them (*edepol vos lepide temptavi vostrumque ingenium ingeni* 126) and announces his real purpose, which is to take them back to their paternal home (*abducere domum* 128). He tries to sway them by bringing up their poverty, and Panegyris replies that he gave her to be married to a man, not to money. Panegyris then stresses the importance of a willing bride, saying that an unwilling wife is an enemy to her husband (*hostis est uxor invita quae ad virum nuptum datur* 140). When Antipho objects that they are refusing to follow his fatherly command (*persequi imperium patris* 141), Panegyris responds that they *are* following it, because they are remaining with the men he chose for them (*persequimur, nam quo dedisti nuptum abire nolumus* 142). This statement returns to her sister's earlier affirmation of

her father's power. He is the ultimate authority, but his decision two years ago is thus irrevocable in her construction of events. According to this logic, she is not opposing her father, because obeying his authoritative decision (made two years ago) is equivalent to obeying his authority now.

As regards the question of who is the controlling character in this scene, there are two options. In the first scenario, the sisters are answering truthfully, and their answers merely reflect their sincere devotion, making them straight men to their father's controlling character. Even Owens concurs: "Antipho is stymied by his daughters' unassailable virtue . . . Even when opposing their father, the women remain paragons of filial *pietas*."¹⁴ It is particularly interesting that Owens feels the need to impart agency to the sisters' *virtue*, rather than the sisters themselves. However, this observation provides a good summation of how the scene would work if the sisters were not at all tricky or clever.

I find it more compelling to allow the sisters some depth of characterization. In the first place, they have a convincing ulterior motive for promoting the qualities of good women: they are really justifying their own behavior. But they are also beating Antipho at his own game. He is the one trying to trick them, and in this scenario, they match cleverness with cleverness. In fact, they manage a nifty rhetorical trick by emphasizing their father's power and reminding him that the marriage was his doing in the first place. In this way, they can obey both their father's will (that is, the will to marry them off two years ago) and still remain faithful to their husbands. A further aspect of the sisters' logic

¹⁴ Owens 394.

is its emphasis on *constantia*, another important Roman virtue.¹⁵ While the term *constantia* is not used explicitly in the text, it lies beneath the sisters' construction of events. The sisters, by keeping to their word, are remaining constant; the father, by changing his mind, is not.

The sisters' sophistry has fooled even modern scholars analyzing the play--they too have assumed that the sisters are entirely sincere about their piety, and have ignored the possibility of an ulterior motive. If the sisters are clever, they are really the ones in control of the situation--or, even if they are not entirely in control, they can at least match wits with their father's authority. At any rate, we must admit that the father's plan to trick the girls is unsuccessful: whatever he was trying to prove, he does not achieve. Thus, even if he is in control of the scene when he is quizzing them, his ultimate victory is foiled. In this sense, Antipho is no different from any other *senex amator* (as he will turn out to be in the end). His daughters oppose him, yet in every modern scholar's analysis they come out as the more sympathetic characters. Defying paternal authority, then, is not a basis on which modern scholars have defined *matronae* as "bad."

The *Stichus* thus presents not one, but two "exceptions" to the rule of shrewish *matronae* and blocking characters. But how can we reconcile their "exceptional" nature with the fact that they are disobedient characters--they foil their father's plan--and that they may take control of the scene? We should keep in mind that their sympathetic reading has been inextricably linked to their Romanness, their devotion to *officium*

¹⁵ Hellegouarc'h 283-5. This scene neatly demonstrates Hellegouarc'h's two facets of *constantia*: following the demands of one's conscience in all events, and keeping one's word (284). Hellegouarc'h further connects *constantia* with *fides*, a virtue which is explicitly mentioned in the text (285).

(regarding both their father and their husbands), and their good matronly character. One could argue that their stubbornness and control of the situation is based on a good, Roman set of virtues. Roman virtue, however, is precisely the feature that Segal reads as opposing fun. How can we reconcile the two opposing notions of how Roman morality and comedy work in this Plautine comedy?

One factor contributing to the sister's favorable reception is the fact that they get the first word. They start the play by stating their case, rather than being described by other characters while offstage. In other plays, too, it will be important to make the distinction between the speeches of female characters and the descriptions given by other characters. In addition, the daughters are proved right within the first 300 lines of the play, when we find out their husbands have returned. Thus, their stubbornness and/or patience is rewarded, as well as justified.

How, then, do we account for the comedy of the beginning scenes? One could read it according to Owens' idea of irony--the ostentatious repetition of moral terms could create a comic exaggeration, and as Owens suggests, this could produce a sort of political parody, in which the sisters are repeating sound bites that the audience would recognize. If this were the comic mechanism, it would work separately from the plot, since the topical/comic humor would be based wholly on wordplay and the incongruity of such words being used by young women. As I have suggested, one part of the comedy may be that the sisters are bickering, as siblings do, and the incongruity of their lofty words and their petty fighting would add to the humor of such a situation. This angle would also allow the sisters to play off each other as individuals rather than as twin voices of Roman

virtue. Much of the comic potential would depend on delivery, and this is certainly a facet of performance that is entirely unrecoverable to us. But I hope to have shown that the sisters' use of moral language need not be a straightforward indication of their characters or their relationship with the audience.

In the second scene, it is impossible to say who is right in the debate between filial and spousal duty, and so the scene's morality is not necessarily a good gauge for its comedy. I think it more likely that the audience would laugh at the interaction between the characters and their trickery--whether the father is being defeated by dull-witted sincerity or by fiendish cleverness--or at the contrast between the father's inconsistency and his daughters' consistency. Importantly, though, there seems to be no way for the audience to laugh *with* the father in this scene. Therefore, we must admit that this scene is crucial in showing that women opposing authority figures can be humorous, and that there might be an element of comic justice in this scene. If we accept Petersmann's assessment that the sisters represent "ein Idealbild antiker Matronen,"¹⁶ we must allow that the ideal *matrona* was no shrinking violet, but was willing to defy authority figures to protect her values, and that this could be the basis for fun.

Aulularia

Scholarship on the *Aulularia* has concentrated, unsurprisingly, on the miser Euclio, the most forceful character in the play. But the *Aulularia* also presents an

¹⁶ Petersmann 38.

interesting *matrona*, Eunomia, whose very name promises a good moral character.¹⁷ The plot of the play centers around Euclio's obsession with his pot of gold. Euclio's daughter, Phaedria, was raped at a festival by Eunomia's son, Lyconides. For various reasons, Phaedria becomes engaged to Eunomia's brother and Lyconides' uncle, Megadorus. Eunomia helps to resolve the romantic crisis by intervening on her son's behalf and convincing her brother not to marry Phaedria. However, Eunomia does not receive her own analysis in any article or commentary.¹⁸ Even Lefèvre's admirably thorough commentary on characters does not mention her; his analysis of the two scenes in which she appears concentrates on the person to whom she is speaking, rather than Eunomia herself.¹⁹ The only critical assessment consists in Della Corte's brief and Petrone's briefer mentions of her as "wise."²⁰ Given that she has attracted no other, negative assessment from critics, I classify her as a "good" *matrona*.

We meet Eunomia in the second scene, after a scene portraying Euclio's obsession with his gold and his abuse of his old servant Staphyla. Eunomia enters speaking with her brother Megadorus. She begins the conversation with an elaborate *apologia*, and immediately reveals a surprising characteristic: self-loathing and misogyny.

velim te arbitrari, med haec verba, frater, mei fidei tuai rei
causa facere, ut aequum est germanam sororem.
quamquam haud falsa sum, nos odiosas haberi;
nam multum loquaces merito omnes habemur,

¹⁷ Or at least good housekeeping. Greek *eunomia* ("good order") could have the sense of generally keeping things in good order or of good laws, indicating good moral order (as for example, in the poetry of Tyrtaeus and Solon). Hofmann 350 and Petrone 1989: 96 both note the significance of the name.

¹⁸ Ricotelli's work is a very recent addition that analyzes Eunomia's interaction with her brother, but does not concentrate on the characterization as much as the sociolinguistic aspects of the scene.

¹⁹ Lefèvre 2001. Character analysis, 19-38; analysis of Act 2, Scene 1, 56-61; Act 4, Scene 5, 89-90.

²⁰ "La saggia e composta Eunomia," Della Corte 486; "la buona Eunomia . . . una saggia matrona," Petrone 1989: 96.

nec multam profecto repertam ullam esse
 <aut> hodie dicunt mulierem <aut> ullo in saeclo.
 verum hoc, frater, unum tamen cogitato,
 tibi proximam me mihique esse item te;
 ita aequom est, quod in rem esse utrique arbitremur
 et mihi te et tibi <me> consulere et monere;
 neque occultum id haberi neque per metum mussari,
 quin participem pariter ego te et tu me ut facias.
 eo nunc ego secreto ted huc foras seduxi,
 ut tuam rem ego tecum hic loquerer familiarem.
 (120-34)

I want you, brother, to know that I'm talking to you on account of my fidelity and your business, as is fitting for a related sister. I think I am not wrong in saying that we [women] are considered annoying: for we are deservedly known as being all talk--and these days they say you won't find one silent women in a lifetime.²¹ But, brother, consider this one fact: I am your relative and you are mine. And so it is right that we ponder each other's affairs, and that I advise and counsel you, and you me; and that nothing be kept secret nor muttered about timidly, so I don't make you an equal participant, or you me. For this reason I have now led you outside, in secret, so that I can speak to you here about our family business.

In short, she says that although women are rightly held to be too talkative, she should be allowed to discuss some family business. This speech is important for establishing Eunomia's character. But as with the *Stichus* scenes, there are two possible readings of Eunomia's character, both centering around the fact that, although she claims to see talkativeness as a vice, she herself circumlocutes her way around to her main point. One reading of this scene could take Eunomia as a comic *alazon*, pretending to be wise but wholly unaware of her own behavior as she complains about talkative women, while being one herself. But, in another reading, Eunomia shows herself to be a master orator.

²¹ Wagner's commentary humorously includes Lambinus' note: "Ego tamen, qui cum haec scriberem, annum aetatis agebam LVI, duas mutas mulieres vidi" (93). In the interest of modern science, however, I must adduce numerous linguistic studies which have confirmed that, while men always *think* that women

She speaks humbly, apologizes for her impertinence, and begs to be allowed to speak. She repeats typical misogynist statements and demonstrates the subordinate position expected of a woman. Yet her choice of language insinuates her right to be involved. She uses words that emphasize her position as kinswoman and family participant: *germana soror, proxima, particeps pariter, familiaris*. And her repetition of "you and me" (in lines 120, 127, 130, 132 and 134) makes the reciprocal nature of her relationship with Megadorus clear. This speech allows Eunomia to suggest (eventually) that her brother needs to get married.

Even after establishing her right to meddle in family affairs, Eunomia does not get to the point. After the speech, Megadorus tells her to give him her hand (*Da mi, optuma femina, manum!* 135). She, pretending not to understand that he is addressing her, asks where this best woman is. This move again demonstrates her humility. She denies that there is any *optuma femina*, since one is worse than another (*alia alia peior est* 139-40). Her brother agrees. After more waffling, she finally makes her suggestion:

MEG.	quid est id, soror?
EUN.	quod tibi sempiternum
	salutare sit: liberis procreandis--
MEG.	Ita di faxint! ²²
EUN.	--volo te uxorem
	domum ducere.
MEG.	ei, occidi.
EUN.	quid ita?
MEG.	quia mihi misero cerebrum excutiunt
	tua dicta, soror: lapides loqueris.
EUN.	heia hoc face quod te iubet soror!
MEG.	si lubeat, faciam.

talk more than men, in quantitative terms, men in fact talk more than women. For a very readable introduction to the issue, see Trudgill and Trudgill.

²² Stockert and Goetz-Scholl assign this interjection to Megadorus, but Leo and others include it in Eunomia's lines, following P.

EUN. in rem hoc tuam est.
 MEG. ut quidem emoriar prius quam ducam.
 sed his legibus si quam dare vis, ducam:
 quae cras veniat, perendie foras feratur.
 his legibus dare vis? cedo! nuptias adorna!
 (147-157)

MEG. What is it, sister?
 EUN. Something that will do you eternal good. Making babies--
 MEG. Gods grant it!
 EUN. --is why I want you to get married.
 MEG. You're killing me!
 EUN. Why do you say that?
 MEG. Because your words bash my brain, sister: you're speaking stones!
 EUN. Do what your sister orders you!
 MEG. If you like, I'll do it.
 EUN. It's in your best interest--
 MEG. --that I die before getting married!
 But if you wish that I marry some girl under these conditions, I'll do it: Let her come in the front door one day and be carried out the next. You want to give me a girl under these terms? Then go ahead, get the wedding ready!

In the next few exchanges, we find out that Eunomia has in mind a lady of middling age with a massive dowry (*media aetas . . . maxima dote* 158-9). Megadorus then holds forth on the evils of marriage at an older age and large dowries, and announces that he wants to marry someone else (162-9). The following exchange results:

EUN. dic mihi, quaeso, quis ea est, quam vis ducere uxorem?
 MEG. eloquar.
 nostin hunc senem Euclionem ex proximo pauperulum?
 EUN. novi, hominem haud malum mecastor.
 MEG. eius cupio filiam--
 virginem mihi desponderi. verba ne facias, soror!
 scio quid dictura es: hanc esse pauperem. haec pauper placet.

EUN. di bene vortant!

(170-5)

EUN. Please tell me, who is this girl you want to marry?

MEG. I'll tell you: You know that poor old man Euclio
next door?

EUN. I do--not a bad guy, I guess.

MEG. I want his daughter--
to be engaged to that girl, I mean. Not a word,
sister! I know what you'll say: she's poor. But I
like her, poor as she is.

EUN. Good luck to you.

This scene and its depiction of the brother-sister relationship warrant careful analysis.

The crux of most scholarly debate has been Megadorus' quick change from horror to acceptance of marriage, which most scholars have seen as a flaw due to faulty translation, or at least as an insertion for comic effect.²³ But it has also been suggested that Megadorus undergoes no real change of heart; he merely realizes that his sister's suggestion will allow him to marry the girl with whom he is already infatuated.²⁴ He is enthusiastic about the idea of having children--or, more literally, about the idea of *making* babies (*liberis procreandis*, 149). The possible *paraprosdokion* in lines 172-3 (*eius cupio filiam--virginem mihi desponderi*) further supports this reading. When Eunomia mentions marriage, he says, "You're killing me!" because it is sex he cares about, not

²³ Lefèvre's discussion covers all recent scholarship and he himself concludes that "in the original, Megadorus does not bristle against marriage, but rather confides his intention to marry to his sister, in order to ask her [opinion], due to the unusual combination of youth marrying age; or he gladly jumps at the equivalent proposal coming from her. By introducing Megadorus' refusal, Plautus creates the possibility for inserting a satire on (married) women par excellence." Lefèvre, in fact, considers Megadorus' conversion "ein förmliches prodigium" (2001: 56-8).

²⁴ "Because Megadorus was already infatuated with Phaedria before Eunomia's intervention, her advice to her brother serves no function in the plot, but again is a contribution significant to the theme. The dialogue between Eunomia and Megadorus' interest is not in marriage as such, but has its source solely in desire. In terms of the categories of popular Roman psychology, he is motivated by irrational passion rather than by customary duty which, as Eunomia makes clear, would enjoin him to contract an advantageous alliance" (Konstan 1977: 314 = 1983: 41).

marriage, and that allows him to be both enthusiastic about the girl *and* opposed to marriage at first. When he realizes that marriage to the girl will fulfill his real desire, he himself suggests the marriage.

Both explanations for Megadorus' behavior have made Eunomia superfluous to the plot.²⁵ But Eunomia at least suggests the idea of marriage, which Megadorus has not previously considered despite his apparent infatuation. She thus adds an important motivation to the plot. And Eunomia's influence on her brother is palpable, both in this scene and later. Her initial misogyny is an act: despite entreaties, at the first sign of resistance she becomes imperious, and orders her brother to do what she says, using the imperative (*Heia, hoc face quod te iubet soror* 248).²⁶ We do not get to see much of an argument, however, because Megadorus gives in. While it is true that he does not accept his sister's choice of bride, he is ostensibly following her advice to marry. As a result, she does not pursue the argument, but wishes him good luck (though perhaps angrily or sarcastically). Furthermore, the relationship *between* the two characters is the basis for the comedy of the scene, and we should not underestimate Eunomia's role in it.

In Act Four, Eunomia's ability to influence Megadorus is confirmed by her son Lyconides' role. Lyconides enters and confesses that he raped Phaedria (the same girl whom Megadorus loves), then asks Eunomia to tell Megadorus what happened. She says she will do so, and is confident that she can persuade Megadorus to break his engagement

²⁵ For Lefèvre, see n. 22 above; for Konstan see n. 23; also Konstan 1977:59: "there is nothing in particular to motivate her intervention, but it suffices that we sense the influence of the Lar."

²⁶ Ricotelli has noted this, too; contra Lefèvre, who considers Eunomia's self-condemnation to be equivalent to any other misogynist remark made by men, saying that these jokes work independently of who is speaking them (59). In this case, I think that Lefèvre overgeneralizes and obscures character development.

(687). After this short exchange, both mother and son exit, intent on speaking to Megadorus together. Lyconides entrusts his mother with breaking the news because he thinks she will be an effective go-between, perhaps because of her tact.

In the end, Megadorus agrees to let Phaedria marry Lyconides, and Euclio most likely agrees to use his gold to dower the girl.²⁷ Though Eunomia's part in the play is small, she actually has a very important role: not only does she motivate the plot, she also helps resolve the plot crisis. Her suggestion of marriage provides a convenient excuse for Megadorus to make his move on the girl in the first place, and her intervention (albeit offstage) is integral to the resolution; she ensures that Megadorus peaceably ends his plans to marry Phaedria. This point is notable because it argues against Konstan's (and other scholars') tendency to write Eunomia's character off as expendable. Furthermore, her role in the plot argues against the stereotype of the *matronae* as blocking characters. In this case, Eunomia actively *helps* her son in his love affair and achieves the expected happy ending via social integration.

Eunomia provides a model of appropriate matronly power by intervening when necessary and opposing her brother's lust-based desires, as well as by being an agent in the plot's resolution. But is she funny? She may or may not be. In her interactions with both her son and her brother, she could play the straight man to their impassioned lovers.

²⁷ This is the scenario that Nixon and Konstan assume, but the end of the play is lost. When Lyconides confesses to Euclio in Act Four, we learn that Megadorus has agreed to break the engagement (783), and the wedding preparations have already been made (784). The text breaks off soon after, but, given that both young people are citizens, we must assume that they get married, probably using the preparations made by Megadorus. Euclio's use of the gold to dower his daughter is supported by the Lar's initial statement that he has let Euclio discover the gold specifically for getting his daughter married (77).

On the other hand, there are reasons to consider her comic potential. Ricotelli believes the humor would lie in the inversion of the power structure of the normal brother-sister relationship, while Lefèvre seems to assume that the misogynist jokes would be the source of the audience's laughter. Both of these readings are possible. Just as with the *matronae* in the *Stichus*, however, Eunomia's words need not be taken strictly at face value. One source of humor may be the fact that her politeness is an act. In this case, she is an *eiron*, pretending to be less than she is. Her switch to the imperative, which blows her cover, thus might provoke a laugh. The audience's response to Eunomia in this scene depends in great measure on her brother's characterization. Interpretations of Megadorus have ranged from dirty old man to humanitarian sage,²⁸ but his interest in Phaedria makes him at least a little suspect. Eunomia's role as the voice of reason, therefore, could be perceived in different ways. If Megadorus is sympathetic to the audience, then Eunomia may appear as an interfering old biddy. But if, like other *senes amatores*, he appears ridiculous, and is an object of the audience's derision, then Eunomia may have the audience's sympathy. In fact, since she is working to unite the lovers, she is more likely to be aligned with the audience, while Megadorus, as a blocking character, is not. As with the *Stichus*, humor may also arise at the portrayal of sibling relationships, which many in the audience could recognize.

Most importantly, regardless of whether or not she is an active agent in creating laughter, we cannot say that Eunomia opposes the "holiday fun." In the first place, she does not actually stop Megadorus from getting engaged to the young lady. And as it

²⁸ Positive: Hofmann 8; Lefèvre 2001: 102-3, 146-8. Negative: Moore 1998a: 161-4; Konstan 1983: 41-2.

turns out, there is no room for Megadorus' love affair in the play's conclusion: he must give up Phaedria so that she may be united with the *adulescens*. We can see, then, that Eunomia's role as her son's intercessor, while small, still contributes to the play's happy ending, regardless of her relationship with her brother.

Cistellaria

Phanostrata, the *matrona* in the *Cistellaria*, is another character who does not receive any separate notice in commentaries.²⁹ It is true that her role is small, and she appears in only a few scenes. But she is an interesting, and in some ways unique, *matrona*. In fact, she is a *matrona* with a past: as a young woman, she was raped by Demipho, by whom she had a child. She abandoned the child and eventually married Demipho, but only after he had married another woman and then become a widower. Demipho's first child, by Phanostrata, is Selenium, who is a courtesan in love with a youth named Alcesimarchus. Demipho's second daughter, by his late first wife, is left unnamed, but is engaged to Alcesimarchus. Alcesimarchus' father, an unnamed *senex*, is trying to break up Alcesimarchus and Selenium.

In other respects, Phanostrata is similar to Eunomia. Whether she knows it or not, she is actively helping to further the love affair between Alcesimarchus and Selenium. By

Megadorus' characterization is discussed in depth in Chapter 3, pp. 172-6.

²⁹ Duckworth does name Phanostrata among his positive *matronae*, calling her "human and pathetic" (257). Thamm, although he analyzes the scenes (58-9), does not address her characterization.

The *Cistellaria* is badly mutilated in some parts, making it difficult to describe the entire plot. The first two scenes of Act One (1-148) make it clear that Selenium is in love with Alcesimarchus, as she confides to her friend and fellow-courtesan Gymnasium. The third scene is a delayed prologue given by Auxilium, who explains the details of the plot (149-202). Act Two is mutilated after the first twenty lines, but in one of the more coherent sections, Alcesimarchus' father has come looking for Selenium, in order to make her give up Alcesimarchus. While talking to himself, the *senex* spots Selenium's fellow prostitute Gymnasium:

She's keeping (me?) from the greatest wealth and and a big and rich dowry. [But lo!] a decked-out little woman--she's really nifty! Even though I'm an old horse, I think I could make that little filly whinny, if I were to get her alone.

49

In addition to being a *senex amator*, Alcesimarchus' father seems most interested in marrying his son to get possession of his daughter-in-law's dowry. The text breaks off again after line 370, but an unmutated scene follows in which Alcesimarchus begs Melainis to let him marry Selenium (492-535).

At this point Phanostrata enters with her manservant Lampadio. Lampadio has been searching for Phanostrata's daughter and, after finding a lead, is showing Phanostrata the house that belongs to Selenium's adoptive mother. In this scene, Phanostrata is very anxious to hear about her daughter. She says, "Go on, my heart waits to hear what happened! (*age perge, quaeso. animus audire expetit / ut gesta res sit* 554-5). Phanostrata is not happy to hear that the woman who adopted Selenium was a prostitute (564, 573). Lampadio promises to investigate further, and Phanostrata begs him to take care (*Lampadio, obsecro, / cura!* 595-6).

In the next few scenes, Lampadio tracks down Halisca, a maid, and proceeds to interrogate her in Phanostrata's presence. Phanostrata plays "good cop" to Lampadio's "bad cop," and in fact, Lampadio calls Halisca over by saying, "A good woman and a bad man want you" (*bona femina et malus masculus volunt te* 705). Lampadio reiterates what a bad piece of work Halisca is (*mala mers, era, haec et callida est* 727; *nequam bestia et damnifica* 728), but Phanostrata encourages Halisca to speak, and tells Lampadio not to interrupt (734, 751). She coaxes Halisca with kind words and gently impresses on her the importance of the matter, saying, "I make you my partner in securing my salvation" (*sociam te mihi adopto ad meam salutem* 745). In the end, Phanostrata follows Halisca into Melainis' house to meet Selenium (773). In the final scene, Lampadio informs

Demipho about Selenium's discovery (774-81), and the epilogue assures the audience that the business will be completed inside (782-7).

Although the incompleteness of the play limits the certainty of any conclusions, it is clear that Phanostrata is not an imperious *matrona*. She shows her concern for the girl she abandoned, and treats the old servant Halisca very kindly, despite the fact that Halisca is holding up the investigation. If we assume that the audience is most concerned with the lovers being united, then they should be hoping for Phanostrata to find and identify Selenium. In this sense, she should be more sympathetic than Alcesimarchus' father, who is trying to break up the lovers, and who is a *senex amator*. As we shall see in the next chapter, *senes amatores* rarely stand at the top of the sympathy scale. At any rate, Phanostrata is perhaps the nicest Plautine *matrona*, but also the least funny. Any comic potential she might possess is contained in her interactions with her slave Lampadio: she restrains his overzealous interrogation, which might provoke a laugh. Nevertheless, as an active agent in furthering her daughter's love affair, she represents another counter-example to the stereotype of *matronae* as blocking characters.³¹

Amphitruo

The *Amphitruo* and its resident *matrona* Alcumena have already received a great deal of scholarly attention. In fact, Alcumena's role has been the crux of a recent shift in scholarly interpretation. Duckworth and most scholars after him considered Alcumena

³¹ It should be noted here that in the *Epidicus*, Philippa plays a similar role to Phanostrata. But Philippa, while a mother, is not identified as a *matrona* because she is not married, and she will therefore not be covered here.

the embodiment of an ideal, faithful wife, and her battered innocence the basis for the "tragic" element in the play.³² One should keep in mind, however, that the very fact that determines the "tragedy"--the audience's superior knowledge of the real situation--can also be read as the superiority that is defined in theories of comedy. Perhaps this is the basis on which recent critics have begun to read the *Amphitruo* not as tragicomedy, but as farce, and Alcumena as bawdy slut rather than ideal wife.

The farcical interpretation springs from factors that might undermine Alcumena's credibility as perfect wife, such as the references to her pregnancy and her interest in sex.³³ These readings have several problems. First, they assume derisive laughter at Alcumena's expense. But as we shall see, the text does not support Alcumena's character being an entirely passive object of laughter. Moreover, they put too much weight on the pregnancy jokes. These jokes appear in the text, to be sure, but the context of the play argues against the assumption that pregnancy equals infidelity. The audience knows the whole story from the beginning, including the fact that Alcumena is pregnant with Amphitruo's baby as well as Jupiter's. The fact of her pregnancy, therefore, does not contradict her fidelity. Finally, it is ill-advised to pursue theories that rely so heavily on costuming, for which we have no contemporary, extra-textual evidence.

³² "The chaste, noble and patriotic sentiments of Alcumena sound thoroughly Roman. . ." (Duckworth 257); "everything the Romans admired in a wife" (Segal 1971: 22). For the most complete and up-to-date bibliography on Alcumena as idealized tragic figure see Phillips.

³³ Perelli feels that Alcumena's character is "parodic," meaning that the audience would laugh *at* her because of her boldness, elite status, and adultery. Phillips suggests that the repeated textual references to Alcumena's pregnant state would have been reflected also in her costume, creating a running "pregnant lady joke." Christenson has pursued Phillips' line of reasoning, and argues that Alcumena's costume would have been so exaggerated as to represent her in terms of Bakhtin's grotesque realism (2001). Finally, Phillips, Segal 1975 and Christenson 2000 have described Alcumena as sexually insatiable and lust-driven.

I do not deny the possibility of a farcical reading or, indeed, the presence of farcical elements in a non-farcical play. However, I think it is very important to define what we mean by farce. Even Phillips and Perelli, who explicitly state that the play is "farcical" or "parodic," tend to slip into using the word "irony" or "ironic." These two kinds of comedy may be related, but they imply very different things about the audience/play dynamic and the type of comedy involved. Farce is associated with exaggeration to the point of being unreal, and relies on the audience's sense of superiority (presumably in some moral sense) to produce derisive laughter at ridiculous characters' expense.³⁴ Irony also relies on the audience's superiority, but only in an intellectual sense: the audience's superior knowledge allows them to laugh at the characters' ignorance. However, irony also implies at least one *eiiron*, that is, a character whose knowledge is shared with the audience. Importantly, this type of comedy is generally more subtle and naturalistic, allowing the audience to engage with the characters more.³⁵

Another point worth emphasizing is that this play is not an anomaly. The mythological nature of the play has been a red herring, and an excuse to isolate it from other Plautine works. Segal's arguments for the play's normality, however, have provided a good basis on which to re-integrate the play into the Plautine corpus.³⁶ And despite its mythological content, the play embodies a very Roman set of social values. It is, in fact, the most realistic play in terms of fighting spouses: there is no physical violence and no

³⁴ Bermel devotes a chapter to the inherent unreality of farce (18-34). He notes that farce "flouts the bounds of reason, good taste, fairness, and what we commonly think of as sanity" (20). He further locates the unreality in characters who are unengaging enough to be brutalized for amusement, and in improbable situations (22). Frye, too associates farce with unrealism and irony with realism (50).

³⁵ Note that this differs from McCarthy's conception of a self-conscious dialogue between naturalism and farce. I argue, rather, for a unified type of humor which is more naturalistic than farcical.

scurrilous insults, but there are very real accusations of adultery (*stuprum*). Perhaps because the spouses' aggression is more subtle, it has been difficult for scholars to see the humor in it. Recent critics, on the other hand, have taken the most primitive elements in the play (i.e., sexual jokes and broad physical farce) and used them to explain the humor to the exclusion of any serious or realistic themes. We need not place this play at either extreme; there is the possibility of a reading that incorporates some of the realism but also allows for humor.

The play begins with the longest of Plautus' prologues, delivered by Mercury. An important theme emerges: Mercury's concern with establishing the morality of the play,³⁷ which appears in Mercury's playful use of the words *bonum*, *malum*, *iustum*, and *iniustum* (26-37) and concludes with Mercury's assuring the audience that Jupiter fears *malum* as much as anyone. This encouragement, while playful, sets the tone for the actors' interaction with the audience, and guides the audience's responses throughout the play. Mercury then announces that his play will be a tragicomedy (59, 63). The word *tragicomoedia* has received much critical attention, and it is generally agreed that we should not expect genuine tragedy.³⁸ But Mercury's reassurance is not entirely a joke: it is true that, at least at some points in the play, tragedy seems imminent. By emphasizing the comic element, Mercury predicts the happy ending required by the genre. Both the concern with morality and the reassertion of a comic ending will be continuing themes.

³⁶ Segal 1975.

³⁷ Although Moore (1998a: 67-8) warns against taking didactic moralizing seriously, Mercury's purpose is not to *instill* good morals in his audience; rather it is to reassure the audience that the play's characters will not offend the audience's morality.

Mercury finally gets down to business and narrates the plot (97-140). Amphitruo is married to Alcumena, but he has gone into the army, leaving Alcumena pregnant. Since Amphitruo's departure, Jupiter has taken a fancy to Alcumena and has slept with her, and she is now pregnant with twins, one from each man. Jupiter has disguised himself as Amphitruo, and is inside with Alcumena now. This information is important background for the play, and most scholars assume that Plautus added it for the sake of the audience's comprehension. But the phrasing Mercury uses and his ordering of events may give us insight into how the plot would be received by the audience.

It is crucial that Mercury establishes right away that Alcumena is married (*nupta* 99) and pregnant by her husband (*gravida* 103). Jupiter is described as a paramour who began to love Alcumena without her husband's knowledge (*amare occepit . . . clam virum* 107) and borrowed the use of her body (*usuramque eius corporis cepit sibi* 108). The mention of the husband, as well as the physical nature of their love, makes it clear that this is genuine adultery. When Mercury says that Jupiter has made Alcumena pregnant, he makes a special effort to remind the audience that she is pregnant with twins, one from each father (*nunc de Alcumena ut rem teneatis rectius / utrimque est gravida, et ex viro et ex summo Iove* 110-11). By adding this detail, Mercury does two things: he plays upon societal fears about paternity (a danger of female adultery) but at the same time, he allays those fears--the audience knows exactly who the fathers are.³⁹

³⁸ E.g., Moore, who says that *tragicomoedia* is not "a separate serio-comic genre, but a kind of one-sided generic battle, in which comedy triumphs over tragedy in response to the desire of the audience, even when the verses themselves are tragic" (1998a: 114).

³⁹ Fears about paternity and babies resembling their fathers are voiced in Juv. 6.88-91 and 598-601; Calpurnius Flaccus *Declamation* 2; Hor. *Odes* 5.21-4; Macrobius *Satire* 2.5; Sen. *Controv.* 9.1.17, 1.4.12, 7.5.13-15. Cohen discusses such fears in the context of the Augustan law on adultery, 116.

After Mercury mentions that Jupiter is sleeping with her right now (*et meus pater nunc intus hic cum illa cubat* 112), he adds that Jupiter has also made the night longer so that he might take his pleasure with her for as long as he wants. These details add a lurid edge to the scenario, indicating the copulating couple's physical proximity as well as Jupiter's lust. And it is only now that Mercury mentions that Jupiter has taken on Amphitruo's appearance. As Christenson notes, his delay in giving this information has titillated the audience and "made the affair seem all the more salacious."⁴⁰ But the audience should feel some relief too--at least Alcumena is not *knowingly* committing adultery. This point is made all the clearer a short while later, when Mercury gleefully adds, "she thinks that he's her husband, when she's with an adulterer!" (*illa illum censet virum suum esse, quae cum moechno est* 134-5). These two lines encapsulate the recurring theme of the play: there is actual adultery going on, but it is not committed consciously by Alcumena.

If the first prologue provides background information, the second prologue (delivered after some stage business between Mercury and Sosia, the servant whom he imitates) concentrates on the happy ending. This suggests that the real drama in the play is process-driven; the audience knows the ending, but does not know how it will be achieved. Though Mercury continues to describe Jupiter's dalliance in lascivious terms, he also assures the audience that things will turn out all right in the end--while at the same time emphasizing the trouble that will precede the happy ending. Mercury will fill the entire house with deceit and insanity (*erroris ambo ego illos et dementiae / complebo*

⁴⁰ Christenson 2000: 160.

atque omnem Amphitruo familiam 470-1) so that Jupiter can enjoy himself longer. Nevertheless, Jupiter will return the spouses to their former harmonious relationship (*denique Alcumenam Iuppiter / rediget antiquam coniugi in concordiam* 475-6). Mercury also confesses that, although there will be a fight between the spouses (*nam Amphitruo actutum uxori conciet / atque insimulabit eam probri* 476-7), Jupiter will turn uproar into peace (*seditionem illi tranquillum conferet* 478). Mercury then repeats that Alcumena is pregnant with twins, one from each father, and tells the audience that they will be delivered in one birth for the sake of Alcumena's honor (*honoris gratia* 486) but also-- importantly--so that no suspicion of *stuprum* will land on her and so that their affair will be kept secret (*et ne in suspicione ponatur stupri / et clandestina ut celeretur consuetio* 489-90).⁴¹ He ends by saying that no one will blame Alcumena (*nemo id probro / profecto ducet Alcumena* 492-3), since it would be wrong for a mortal to take the blame for the act of a god.

The first prologue ensured the audience's understanding of the plot; the second ensures (or at least tries to script) their reaction. This prologue is in fact a prophecy--not only of how the play will turn out, but also of the possible disturbance the audience might feel. This raises the question of what exactly might upset the audience. Certainly, concern for marital concord is not a feature of most Plautine prologues, or of Plautus' plays in general. Plautine *stuprum* usually involves sex with an unmarried girl,⁴² and is usually resolved at the end of the play. But this *stuprum* is ongoing, geographically

⁴¹ These lines were bracketed by Leo, and Christenson follows, claiming that they are nonsensical and follow awkwardly on the purpose clause (2000: 227). This is wrong, as we shall see.

⁴² As in *Aulularia* 36, *Casina* 82 and 887, *Poenulus* 99, *Truculentus* 821.

proximate, and involves female unchasteness.⁴³ As the play develops, Alcumena's adultery will also be connected with loss of *pudicitia*, which is the result of *stuprum* in later authors.⁴⁴ Moreover, the word *seditio* emphasizes the mutiny of wife against husband. These words, combined with Mercury's description of the previously happy marriage, set an entirely different tone for this play than for others involving a married couple. By giving the audience advance reassurance about the play's end, however, Mercury also quells any worries that the adultery will destroy the marriage, and leaves the audience free to wallow in the lasciviousness of the adultery. The same pattern of salaciousness without moral consequence will surround Alcumena herself.

Mercury ends his second prologue by announcing that "Amphitruo" (i.e. Jupiter) and his borrowed wife (*uxor usuraria* 498) are coming out of the house. Finally, Alcumena herself enters, along with Jupiter. Alcumena displays clear disappointment at the departure of her "husband," while Jupiter emphasizes his love for her and his duty to the republic (*rem publicam* 524). Mercury (disguised as the slave Sosia) begins as a third-party eavesdropper to their dialogue, but eventually joins in their conversation.

Alcumena's standing in this scene is difficult to interpret. Recent critics have assumed that she enters as a sexually charged, grotesque figure.⁴⁵ Perhaps because the scene does not have the same potential for tragedy as later scenes, it has been easy for recent scholarship to focus on its general lasciviousness. But the question is how we

⁴³ Though *stuprum* in *Casina* 201 involves a passing reference to a wife cheating on a husband, it is a general saying and a joke that is clearly not to be taken seriously.

⁴⁴ Fantham 1991: 271-5.

⁴⁵ "Alcumena's demeanour in this scene is more like that of the caricatured shrewish wife of bourgeois comedy or even the Plautine *meretrix*. . . Alcmena herself displays an active interest in sexuality that hardly befits the idealized Roman *matrona*" (Christenson 2000: 229).

should place Alcumena in the already-salacious atmosphere created by Mercury's prologue. There are two issues at stake here: the first is Alcumena's sexuality; the second is her relationship with Jupiter (which is mediated by Mercury), and its effect on the audience.

The issue of Alcumena's sexuality is one that, in my opinion, has been over-emphasized and misunderstood, especially at this point in the play. Her raciest comment is her response to Jupiter's claim that he loves her:

experiri istuc mavellem me quam mi memorarier
prius abis quam lectus ubi cubuisti concaluit locus.
heri venisti media nocte, nunc abis. hocin placet?
(512-4)

I would prefer to get firsthand experience of that, rather than having it told to me. You're leaving before the part of the couch where you lay has warmed up. You arrived in the middle of the night, and now you're off!⁴⁶

Although Alcumena's relationship with her husband is remarkably affectionate for a Plautine couple, one could argue just as well that it is sensual rather than sex-crazed, and in keeping with the general atmosphere of the play. It is notable to see a Plautine wife, and especially a pregnant one, expressing any affection, let alone physical affection, for her husband. However, the question is one of significance and degree: this affection

⁴⁶ The translation is Christenson's, slightly modified (2000: 232). About line 512, Christenson writes, "that she is thinking primarily of sex is shown by 513-4," and regarding those lines he claims that "Alcumena is an unabashed sensualist. . . not even Alcumena's obviously forthcoming parturition is allowed to curb her sexual appetite." Christenson's argument that the next lines prove the sexual meaning of *experiri* is weak. In fact, if we want to pinpoint a sexually-charged word in these lines, it would be *lectum*. But while the mention of a bed (or even the constellation of *lectum*, *experiri* and a midnight arrival) might be slightly risqué, it hardly suggests that Alcumena is a sex fiend.

need not be the sole defining feature of Alcumena's character, nor should the mere presence of physical affection be taken for uncontrolled lust.

Turning to her relationship with Jupiter (whom she of course thinks is her real husband Amphitruo), Mercury's asides shape how the spectators respond to the dialogue between Jupiter and Alcumena. Twice Mercury comments on Jupiter's manipulation of Alcumena. The first time he says, "He's a really clever con artist (after all, he is my father)--watch how smoothly he'll charm the woman!" (*nimis hic scitust sycophanta, qui quidem meus sit pater. / observatote <eum>, quam blande mulieri palpabitur* 506-7). He repeats the word *palpare* later: "Isn't he doing what I said? He renders her meek by his charm" (*facitne ut dixi? timidam palpo percutit* 526). By making these comments, Mercury reveals something about Alcumena's standing: in effect, he admits that Jupiter is bullying her, even if he does so along with a little smooth talking. The audience laughs at Jupiter's manipulation of Alcumena, and Mercury's comments enhance that laughter.

Jupiter's superior standing is confirmed both by the irony of his comments and his stance as *miles gloriosus*. He remarks that Alcumena must prefer Amphitruo to Jupiter (511) and claims he loves her more than any mortal (516). These ironic remarks allow him to play on the audience's superior knowledge as well as his own omniscience. In the end, Jupiter quells Alcumena's complaining with patriotic sentiment: he tells her he must return to the army, so that people don't say he puts his wife above the state (*ne me uxorem praevertisse dicant prae re publica* 528). He also gives her a golden bowl that he received because of his bravery (*ob virtutem* 534). These military terms allow him to adopt a noble posture, despite the fact that he has just committed genuine adultery (i.e.,

stuprum with a married woman) and borrowed another man's wife. Thus, the audience might laugh at his pretensions of nobility, but unlike a typical *miles gloriosus*, he is not joking about his own power.

In this scene we should not read Alcumena merely as a sex-starved or grotesque character. The audience might have a laugh at her expense when Jupiter manipulates her, or because she thinks that Jupiter is her husband; but if we allow a more subtle and naturalistic irony (as described above, p. 47), then the laughter is not necessarily derisive, nor does it preclude sympathy. In fact, it is probable that Alcumena's obedience to Jupiter (whom she thinks is her husband) would be seen as a positive virtue.

The second act is very long, and its second scene covers almost 250 lines (633-881). The scene begins with Alcumena's entrance and her ode to *voluptas* and *virtus*. Her first four lines set up a fairly restrained view on pleasure: that it is rare (*parva res est voluptatum in vita atque in aetate agunda* 633) and that good comes with bad (*voluptatem ut maeror comes consequatur* 635). She then relates this sentiment to her own experience, concluding that she felt more pain at her husband's departure than pleasure at his arrival (*plus aegri ex abitu viri, quam ex adventu voluptatis cepi* 641). Even given that *voluptas* can mean "sexual pleasure," Alcumena's moderate approach should make us wary of using the ode to justify a too-sexual reading. She does not unabashedly sing the praises of sex; she relates *voluptas* to her husband, and she notes that pleasure is hard to come by and tinged with grief. Again, we can read Alcumena's characterization as sensual, and not sex-starved. It is also important that she emphasizes her love for her husband, concluding her musings by saying, "I feel very alone, since the

man is absent whom I love more than all others" (*sola huc mihi nunc videor, quia ille hinc abest quem ego amo praeter omnis* 640). That is to say, even if Alcumena is singing the praises of sex, it is *married* sex she praises.

She concludes her aria in a military vein:

sed hoc me beat
saltem, quom perduellis vicit et domum laudis compos
revenit:
id solacio est.
absit, dum modo laude parta
domum recipiat se; feram et perferam usque
abitum eius animo forti atque offirmato, id modo si
mercedis
datur mi, ut meus victor vir belli clueat.
satis mi esse ducam.
virtus praemium est optimum;
virtus omnibus rebus anteit profecto:
libertas salus vita res et parentes, patria et prognati
tutantur, servantur:
virtus omnia in sese habet, omnia adsunt
bona quem penest virtus.
(641-53)

But at least this gladdens me, that he has been victorious and come home with a measure of praise. This is my consolation. He may be absent, so long as he returns home after getting glory; I will endure and endure again his leaving with a brave and steady spirit, if only this profit is given to me, that my husband is famed as a victor in war. I should think that's enough for me. Bravery is the best reward; bravery certainly goes before all other things: freedom, health, life, property and family, land and kin are protected and preserved by it: bravery holds all things in itself, and all good things are present for one who has it.

Alcumena's military panegyric may not be entirely serious, but it plays into Jupiter's own description of his military bravery and nobility. Alcumena's ode to *virtus* represents her attempt to comfort herself after her husband's departure, as well as reaffirming her

moderate attitude towards life's pleasures and pains. Her husband's *virtus* is the good that comes with the bad. Thus, this ode may be amusing, and it may even be racy, but it is not necessarily an overtly sexual burlesque.

The audience's response to Alcumena in this scene is different from that in the previous scene. Here, Alcumena addresses the audience herself, without Mercury mediating and without Jupiter manipulating. Alcumena's noble words would not cause any offense, certainly, and in this comic context, her philosophizing should be taken as amusing. Presumably the audience still feels some sympathy for Alcumena, since she seems to genuinely miss her husband. And they cannot judge her as an adulteress, since she has no idea it was not her real husband who visited her. In fact, her affection for her husband, her moderate take on *voluptas*, and her praise of *virtus* are positive virtues, and her connection with the audience is strengthened by her ability to amuse the audience.

The next portion of the scene shows the real Amphytruo returning, along with the real Sosia. Amphytruo declares his love for his wife and his expectation of a longed-for homecoming (*edepol me uxori exoptatum credo adventurum domum / quae me amat, quam contra amo . . . certe enim me illi expectatum optato venturum scio* 654-8), while Alcumena expresses her surprise and her suspicion that he is testing her (*atque id se volt experiri, suom abitum ut desiderem* 662). But, she concludes, she will not take him back unwillingly (*haud invita* 663).

Amphytruo finally greets Alcumena, affectionately if formally: "Amphytruo happily greets his longed-for wife . . . have you been well? Do I arrive welcome?" (*Amphytruo uxorem salutat laetus speratam suam. . . valuistin usque? expectatu*

advenio? 676-9). Alcumena's countenance is chilly, as indicated by Sosia's remark that he has seen dogs get a warmer reception (679-80). But Amphitruo continues his affectionate greeting, telling Alcumena that he is happy to see her pregnant and beautifully full (*et quom te gravidam et quom te pulchre plenam aspicio, gaudeo* 681). Amphitruo's genuine enthusiasm to get home and his affectionate greeting re-affirm the marriage's *concordia* which Mercury previously mentioned, and set the stage for comedy when Amphitruo's expectations are thwarted.

In fact, Alcumena responds by asking why he is acting as though he has not already seen her, and why he is making fun of her. The dynamic of the rest of this scene is fairly simple: Alcumena tells the truth and nothing but the truth, but Amphitruo, not knowing about Jupiter's visit, believes she is lying and grows more and more agitated.⁴⁷ This scene will take an ugly (or tragicomic) turn, however, when Amphitruo begins to suspect his wife's infidelity.

Sosia will play an important role in this scene as the controlling character. He makes asides to the audience on a regular basis, and shapes its response to the spouses' fighting. He also participates in the dialogue and generally makes the situation worse by encouraging Amphitruo. Thus, Sosia takes the initiative in producing laughter and enjoys the primary relationship with the audience.

Things start to heat up after about fifty lines:

AM. at pol qui certa res
hanc est obiurgare, quae me hodie advenientem domum
noluerit salutare.

⁴⁷ As Segal notes, the scene bears some resemblance to the one in *Menaechmi* where the prostitute Erotium mistakes one twin for the other (1975).

SO.
AM.

inritabis crabrones.

tace.

Alcumena, unum rogare te volo.

AL.
AM.

quid vis roga.

num tibi aut stultitia accessit aut superat superbia.

(705-9)

AM.

Well, one thing's for sure, this woman is in a quarreling mood, since she refused to greet me today when I came home.

SO.
AM.

You're stirring up a hornet's nest . . .

Quiet.

Alcumena, there's one thing I want to ask you.

AL.
AM.

Ask whatever you want.

Whether you've suddenly become stupid or just arrogant?

Amphitruo, who has been merely puzzled until this point, now begins to get mean. While *superbia* is connected with haughty *uxores dotatae*, it is never openly used by a husband to a wife elsewhere, nor is it appropriate: the audience knows that Alcumena is not actually haughty. *Stultitia*, too, is a very harsh insult.⁴⁸ When Alcumena asks why he asks that sort of question, he responds, "Because you used to greet me as chaste women usually greet their husbands" (*ut pudicae suos viros quae sunt solent* 712). Once again, the previous happiness of their marriage is recalled, the better to emphasize the contrast. In addition, we find out that Amphitruo considers Alcumena *pudica*, which is another set-up for her fall from grace.

At this point in the scene, Amphytrou may be angry, but he is not hostile. Both Sosia and Amphytrou try to find an explanation by telling Alcmena she is crazy (*gravidā insania* 719, *delirat* 727) or sick (*impliciscier* 729). These attempts at rationalization at

least show that the two of them are trying to make sense of her behavior, rather than just being antagonistic. That is not to say that the predicament is good. Significantly, Amphitruo stops calling Alcumena *uxor* and starts calling her *mulier* in line 728, and he and Sosia will continue to address her as such for the rest of the scene (739, 755). This change in terminology signals that the situation is going downhill fast.

The situation is further exacerbated when Alcumena, in an attempt to make Amphitruo remember the previous night, reminds him that he dined and slept with her (*immo mecum cenavisti et mecum cubuisti* 735). At the mention of sleeping with someone, Amphitruo seems unnerved, answering, "What's that?!" (*Quid est?* 735), but still keeps his cool, and ironically suggests that they perform a sacrifice to Jupiter, presumably to ward off evil influence. Alcumena responds with "Go to hell!" (*Vae capiti tuo* 741)--a very strong expression from wife to husband.⁴⁹

The three characters wrangle about the details of her story, and Alcumena brings up the golden bowl that Jupiter/Amphitruo gave her. The real Amphitruo is further perplexed, since he had been planning to give her just such a bowl. Alcumena sends for her bowl from inside the house, while Amphitruo sends for his chest, which should contain the bowl. When Alcumena shows the bowl to Sosia and Amphitruo, Sosia

⁴⁸ This use occurs in only one other instance: Menaechmus addresses his wife as stupid (*stulta*, *Men.* 110). But Menaechmus' marriage is on the rocks from the beginning of the play. In this play, however, the couple's good marriage makes the insult even harsher.

⁴⁹ In fact, it is one of very few occurrences where the expression is used by a woman, and the only occurrence where a wife uses it to her husband. Although Christenson (citing Gratwick) notes that "*vae* can be 'strongly repudiative' . . . or an expression of anguish," he chooses to translate it as "Blast your impudence!" (2000: 264). This expression, however, does not quite capture the verbal intensity of telling a spouse to go to hell.

Now the real trouble starts:

AM. You're saying we came here last night?
AL. Yes, and right away you greeted me

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and I you, and I gave you a kiss.
 SO. I don't like that first bit about the kiss!
 AM. Go on.
 AL. You took a bath.
 AM. And after I bathed?
 AL. You slept.
 SO. Oh, great.
 Go on, ask away.
 AM. Don't interrupt. Go on, keep talking.
 AL. Dinner was served; you ate with me, while I
 reclined.
 AM. On the same couch?
 AL. Yes.
 SO. This party doesn't sound good.
 AM. Just let her speak. What happened after we ate?
 AL. You said you were falling asleep; the table was
 cleared, and we went to bed.
 AM. Where did you sleep?
 AL. In the same bed with you, together in the bedroom.
 AM. You've destroyed [me]!.
 SO. What happened to you?
 AM. This woman has just killed me.

It is important that Amphitruo stresses Alcumena's agency. On its own *perdidisti* could mean either "You've destroyed me" or "You've been destroyed." But the usual expression for "I'm dead!" is *perii*. If there was any doubt, Amphitruo clarifies when he says that Alcumena has literally "given him to death." When Alcumena tries to intervene, Amphitruo tells her not to even speak to him (*ne me appella* 810), then announces that he is dead because she has besmirched her chastity while he was away (*perii miser quia pudicitiae huius vitium me hinc absente est additum* 810-11). Only now does Amphitruo admit the fact of his wife's adultery, the most serious marital accusation found in all of Plautus. Even if husbands are attacking their wives on other grounds, nowhere else is a wife's *pudicitia* called into question. This, then, is the suspicion of

stuprum that Mercury prophesied, and it is a serious offense rather than a spousal squabble. A philandering husband may annoy his wife, but he is not necessarily committing legal adultery; a philandering wife, on the other hand, is a serious legal problem, especially if she is pregnant. When Alcumena tries again, addressing him as *mi vir*, he denies that role: "Am I your husband? Don't address me by a false name, false woman!" (*vir ego tuos sim? ne me appella, falsa, falso nomine* 813).

In response to Amphitruo's claim that he is not a *vir*, Sosia adds insult to injury, remarking, "it's a sticky situation if a woman is made from a man/husband" (*mulier facta est ex viro* 814). This remark may be an offhand insult on Sosia's part, but it gets at the psychological heart of adultery in a patriarchal, honor-based culture. If Amphitruo's wife has committed adultery, he is metaphorically emasculated, hence his distress about not being a man.⁵¹ The interchange between Amphitruo, Alcumena and Sosia is a real crisis point in the play. When Amphitruo realizes that his wife has been unfaithful, he refuses his own role as her husband, and unwittingly admits his own emasculation by cuckolding. In addition, he questions Alcumena's *pudicitia*, and will continue to do so for the rest of the scene. The latter issue is unparalleled in any Plautine play, and constitutes a topic serious enough to risk being un-funny.⁵²

The spouses begin to fight in earnest. Alcumena, understanding that Amphitruo is accusing her of adultery, retorts by asking how she has done wrong if she has "been with"

⁵¹ Christenson notes that in Sosia's mind, "Amphitryon has just abrogated his masculinity when he ordered Alcumena not to call him her *vir*" (2000: 271), but does not talk about the larger significance as it relates to adultery. Cohen discusses adultery as it relates to male honor (111-120).

⁵² I mean this in terms of Veatch's model (as described in the introduction, pp. 11-12). I will discuss the implications of this model in more detail below (p. 72).

her own husband (*Quid ego tibi deliqui, si, cui nupta sum, tecum fui* 817),⁵³ and claims this accusation shames her lineage (*istuc facinus, quod tu insimulas nostro generi non decet* 820). Alcumena's statement ups the ante of the fight, and connects her chastity not only with the domestic home, but also with family honor. Alcumena, suspecting that Amphitruo is thinking of legal action, says that if he tries to get her on a charge of adultery, he will not be successful (*tu si me impudicitiai captas, capere non potes* 821). She even offers to bring in witnesses (*testes* 835) for her case, which indicates that she is now thinking in legal terms. When Amphitruo refuses to believe her, she swears by Juno, the *materfamilias* par excellence, that she has been free from *impudicitia* (831-4). It is, of course, ironic that Alcumena would swear by Juno, since Alcumena is Jupiter's unwitting mistress. On the other hand, the ironic oath demonstrates Alcumena's genuine sincerity.

At this point in the dialogue, it is worth asking whether the audience is laughing at Alcumena or with her. Given the audience's knowledge of the situation, it is possible that both types of laughter occur. It is true that the audience laughs from a point of superiority. On the other hand, the audience's laughter at Alcumena's unwitting perjury is not the same as derisive laughter provoked by another character at Alcumena's expense. It is important to note that though Alcumena perjures herself, she does it unwittingly, nor has she misapprehended the situation through stupidity--after all, Jupiter looked like Amphitruo when he visited her. At the very least, this portion of the scene demonstrates that Alcumena, far from being a tragic, passively suffering heroine, is willing to take action. As soon as she understands that she is being accused of *impudicitia*, she defends

⁵³ Christenson, citing Varro and Adams, takes *esse cum aliquo* as "a genteel euphemism for sexual activity"

herself vociferously and offers to bring in witnesses. This agency, too, argues against the audience laughing at her as a passive object, without any sympathy whatsoever.

Another round ensues, and Amphitruo brushes off Alcumena's oath, saying, "You're a woman, you swear oaths brazenly" (*mulier es, audacter iuras* 836), which leads Alcumena to reiterate that swearing oaths is perfectly appropriate for one who has not done wrong and who is chaste. When Amphitruo accuses her of being honorable in words only (*verbis proba* 838), she responds with another defense of her honor:

non ego illam mihi dotem duco esse, quae dos dicitur,
sed pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupidinem,
deum metum, parentum amorem et cognatum concordiam,
tibi morigera atque ut munifica sim bonis, prosim probis.
(839-42)

I don't consider my dowry to be what is called "dowry," but my chastity and modesty and controlled desire, fear of the gods, love of parents, and harmony with kinsmen, so that I am agreeable to you and helpful by means of my goods and useful to honest people.

In response to this declaration, Christenson notes that despite "conventional values,"

Alcumena's often praised words should not be considered outside their dramatic context. The audience will catch the abundant ironies here, above all the fact that this pregnant and sexually insatiable *matrona* who vaunts her possession of traditional Roman values is in fact entangled in a web of adultery and deceit. P. is not caught in some sort of dilemma here . . . but is merely exploiting his audience's awareness of the real situation for humor at Alcumena's expense.⁵⁴

(2000: 271).

⁵⁴ Christenson 2000: 274.

Indeed, Christenson himself seems to be in a dilemma. He admits the very real fact of Alcumena's adultery, but still wants to focus on broad sexual farce and Alcumena as the passive object of the audience's laughter. It is certainly ironic that Alcumena thinks she has been faithful, but we should note again that her declaration is not based on stupidity, for example, which might make her the object of derisive laughter. And, importantly, Amphitruo is just as clueless as Alcumena. In fact, Alcumena's knowledge of the situation is in some sense superior to Amphitruo's--she has accurate knowledge of her evening activities, even if she does not know her lover was Jupiter--thus Amphitruo is also the object of the audience's knowing laughter. It may be better, then, to read this scene as ironic, that is, as playing on the audience's superior knowledge. This reading places both Amphitruo and Alcumena in an inferior position, and allows the audience to laugh at both of them--but still retain some sympathy. The real divide may be between the mortal and divine characters: the audience shares its knowledge with Jupiter and Mercury, who are true *eirones*. Yet the audience may still sympathize with Alcumena and Amphitruo as mortals being manipulated by immortals.

Amphitruo is disturbed enough to threaten divorce. He asks Alcumena if, after a witness confirms his story, there is any reason not to punish her by separation from marriage (*numquid causam dicis, quin te hoc multem matrimonio* 852). She says that if she has done wrong, then there is no reason (*si deliqui, nulla causa est* 853). He and Sosia then exit.

This very long scene, and especially its finale, deserves careful consideration. First and foremost, the couple is not quarreling about any small matter. Amphitruo has

accused his wife of adultery and is threatening divorce. Second, the insults hurled from one spouse to the other are extraordinary. Insults such as *impudica* from a husband, or *vae capiti tuo* from a wife, are not found in any other Plautine husband-wife interaction. Most other spousal fighting is indirect: in *Casina* the two spouses fight by means of their slaves; in *Menaechmi*, *Asinaria* and *Mercator* the insults are, for the most part, not hurled directly but spoken to other characters. The most extraordinary aspect of this scene, however, is the fact that there have been so many indications of the couple's previously happy marriage and affection, something that we do not find in any other play with fighting spouses. This fact alone is enough to make us take notice, and wonder if the fighting might not disturb the audience. Furthermore, we have noted that Alcumena does not take Amphitruo's abuse lying down. She is willing to stand by her story, and even brings up the idea of legal witnesses first. While her defense of fidelity may be ironic, it indicates that she is not merely the passive victim, either of Amphitruo's accusations onstage, or of the audience's laughter. Finally, we must consider the length of the scene. Broad farce is somewhat limited in its comic resources; if the joke were merely a padded, pregnant Alcumena defending her honor, it would get old after the first hundred lines.⁵⁵

It seems as though there is a qualitative change in the type of humor from the first part of the scene to the second. In the first part, Alcumena's behavior is explained as being the result of delirium or possession, partly because there is no insinuation that she has done anything wrong; her insistence on the truth is merely amusing to the other two players. The comedy is simply that of misrecognition. But what happens after

⁵⁵ This is not to deny that Plautus can beat a joke into the ground. In the beginning of this play, for

Amphitruo says "*perdidisti*"? It is true that this phrase alone could be taken comically, as in "You're killing me." But after that moment, things take a more serious tone within the world of the play: Amphitruo and Sosia are no longer amused.⁵⁶ In fact, we must look to the audience's laughter for the existence of humor. Are they still laughing, and if so, what are they laughing at, especially when threats of divorce are being thrown around? Their own superior knowledge is one explanation. They know more than any of the characters do, and they laugh at both Amphitruo's and Alcumena's distress. Laughter is made all the easier because they know from the prologues that things will work out in the end. It is possible, however, that their laughter now has a slightly nervous edge given the intensity of the fighting onstage. In fact, this is a perfect explanation for why Jupiter shows up to give a third prologue.

After flattering the audience, Jupiter reassures them yet again:

nunc huc honoris vestri venio gratia,
ne hanc incohatam transigam comoediam.
simul Alcumenae, quam vir insontem probri
Amphitruo accusat, veni ut auxilium feram:
nam mea sit culpa, quod egomet contraxerim,
si id Alcumenae innocenti expetat.
(867-73)

Now I come for your sake, so I won't leave this comedy incomplete. I have come to bring help to Alcumena, whose husband Amphitruo accuses her of wrongdoing, though she's innocent: the blame should be mine, if he accuses Alcumena about the thing that I arranged.

instance, the jokes between Sosia and Mercury (who looks like Sosia) run from line 330-462.

⁵⁶ In fact, the contrast between serious and comic is made explicit in Alcumena and Jupiter's discussion of serious versus joking behavior (see below, pp. 68-9).

Jupiter adds that he will imitate Amphitruo and stir up the greatest deceit against their household (*in horum familiam / frustrationem hodie iniciam maxumam* 874-5), before bringing the thing out into the open (*res fiat palam* 876). He also repeats that he will help Alcumena in time (*in tempore auxilium feram* 877) and even reward her with a painless birth (879). Jupiter is obviously trying to comfort the audience and reaffirm Alcumena's innocence.⁵⁷

Alcumena comes out fighting, and addresses the audience again:

durare nequeo in aedibus. ita me probri,
stupri, dedecoris a viro argutam meo!
ea quae sunt facta infecta re esse clamat,
quae neque sunt facta neque ego in me admisi arguit;
atque id me susque deque habituram putat.
non edepol faciam, neque me perpetiar probri
falso insimulatam, quin ego illum at deseram
aut satis faciat mi ille atque adiuret insuper,
nolle esse dicta quae in me insontem protulit.
(882-90)

I can't stand to be in the house. To be accused of wrongdoing, adultery, and shame by my own husband! He claims that the things that happened, didn't really happen, and he accuses me of things that never happened and that I didn't admit; and he thinks that I will consider this neither here nor there. I won't, by God, and I won't suffer being falsely accused of wrongdoing, without me leaving him or him apologizing to me and his swearing in addition that he's sorry he said what he said against undeserving me.

This soliloquy allows Alcumena a chance to plead her case and bond with the audience.

She lays out the charges in strong terms (*probrum, stuprum, dedecor*) but sticks to her

⁵⁷ Even Christenson has to admit this point: "Jupiter's address here reflects Plautus' desire to control the play's reception," and "Jupiter focuses on *what might be an issue* for some audience members" (2000: 277-8; italics mine).

story, and reiterates the fact that she knows what happened, even if Amphitruo denies it. As we will see, her threat to leave is not an idle one. Later in the scene, she will pronounce a divorce formula. In the meantime, Jupiter has remained onstage unnoticed. Eavesdropping characters do have the potential to divert the audience's attention, but in this case three factors suggest that Jupiter's presence does not necessarily distract the audience: 1) he remains silent until Alcumena has finished her monologue; 2) he thus does not make any side remarks that provoke laughter at Alcumena's words; and 3) his unnoticed status does not last a very long time. In fact, after her monologue he prepares to make peace with her:

faciundum est mi illud fieri quod illaec postulat,
si me illam amantem ad sese studeam recipere,
quando ego quod feci, id factum Amphitruoni offuit
atque illi dudum meus amor negotium
insonti exhibuit, nunc autem insonti mihi
illius ira in hanc et male dicta expetent.
(891-6)

I must do exactly what she demands if I really want to keep her in love with me: since what I did stood in Amphitruo's way and my love affair just threw this business his way, now his wrath against her and his harsh words come home to me, though I'm innocent.

Though Jupiter may ironically protest his innocence, he does admit his guilt in bringing trouble to an innocent couple. In the rest of the scene he follows through on his promise to tell Alcumena everything she wants to hear. Yet she does not prove to be a pushover. In fact, when she does notice him, she merely notes that she sees the man who accuses her, and repeats the accusations: *sed eccum video qui me miseram arguit stupri, dedecoris!* (897). Jupiter ironically addresses her as *uxor*, then asks why she is turning

away from him. She answers him in a chilly tone: "That's how I am. I always hate to look at my enemies" (*ita ingenium meumst: inimicos semper osa sum optuerier* 900). This insult is unparalleled in the extant Plautine corpus, just as the previous ones have been. Jupiter tries to play dumb--(*heia, inimicos?* 901)--and she reminds him that he falsely accuses her. He tells her she is too angry (*nimis iracunda* 903) and tries to touch her. She responds:

potin ut abstineas manum?
nam certo, si sis sanus aut sapias satis,
quam tu impudicam esse arbitrere et praedices,
cum ea tu sermonem nec ioco nec serio
tibi habeas, nisi sis stultior stultissimo.
(903-7)

Can't you keep your hands off me?
Really, if you're sane or have any common sense at all, you
won't try to have any conversation at all--whether serious
or joking--with the woman you think and say is an
adulteress. If you do, you're stupider than I thought.

It is another serious insult when a wife calls the husband not only stupid, but the stupidest man alive--*stultior stultissimo*. Furthermore, Alcumena is getting her revenge for being called stupid by the real Amphitruo (in 709). Remarks such as these could provoke laughter at Jupiter's expense. He is attempting to manipulate her, but by rebuffing him, Alcumena becomes the agent of producing laughter, rather than its object.

Jupiter tries to pacify her, telling her that he never really thought she was unfaithful, but was testing her spirit (*periclitator animum* 914) just to see what she would do. He concludes by saying that he just spoke to her as a joke, for the sake of fun (*equidem ioco illa dixeram dudum tibi / ridiculi causa* 916-7). Alcumena will have none

of it, and asks why he didn't bring the witness they had agreed on. Jupiter tries again, saying that something said in jest (*dictum per iocum* 920) shouldn't be turned serious (*serio praevertier* 921). Alcumena parries by mentioning her hurt feelings, implying that these, at least, are serious. Jupiter begs her forgiveness (*da veniam, ignosce, irata ne sies!* 924), and Alcumena answers:

ego istaec feci verba virtute irrita;
nunc, quando factis me impudicis abstini,
ab impudicis dictis avorti volo,
valeas, tibi habeas res tuas, reddas meas.
iuben mi ire comites?

(925-9)

I have proved your words invalid with my honor.
Now, since I kept myself free of unchaste acts,
I want to keep away from unchaste words.
So good bye. Take your things and give me mine.
Will you tell my attendants to come with me?

Alcumena's order to separate their belongings is a clear sign of divorce.⁵⁸ In fact, these words provoke Jupiter to swear an oath by Pudicitia herself that his wife is chaste, and Alcumena swiftly leaves her anger behind. Clearly, all Alcumena wanted was to have her wifely chastity recognized.

Next Sosia appears and remarks upon how nice it is to see the couple made up (*tranquillos* 958, *in concordiam* 962). Jupiter reiterates what a good (*diligens* 973) wife Alcumena is, but after the others go inside he tells the audience that he really wants to spend a little more time with his borrowed wife:

volo deludi illunc, dum cum hac usuraria

⁵⁸ Rosenmeyer argues that for the formula to be binding, Alcumena would actually have to leave the house. For the formula, cf. *Cas.* 212 and *Cic. Phil.* 2.28.69; McDonnell; and Watson 1965: 48.

uxore nunc mihi morigero.
(980-1)

I want him [Amphitruo] to be distracted, while I amuse myself with his borrowed wife.

Jupiter ends the scene as the controlling character. Despite his declared good intentions, and his reconciliation with Alcumena, it turns out that he just wanted more sex. In the end he succeeded in manipulating her, but she gave him much more trouble here than in previous scenes.

After the ensuing scene, there is a large lacuna, but from the remaining fragments the action is fairly clear. Alcumena eventually comes out of the house, to be met by the real Amphitruo. That he continues to accuse her is indicated by several lines:

AL.(a) exiuravisti te mihi dixisse per iocum.
AL.(b) nisi hoc ita factum est, proinde ut factum esse
autumno,
non causam dico quin vero insimules probri.
AM. cuius? quae me absente corpus volgavit suom?
(frags. 7, 9 and 10)

AL.(a) You swore that you spoke to me in jest.
AL.(b) If it didn't happen just as I say it did, I admit there is
no reason why you shouldn't accuse me of
wrongdoing.
AM. Whose [wrongdoing]? The woman who made her
body public property while I was gone?

Obviously, more confusion follows from the fact that Jupiter/Amphitruo has forgiven Alcumena, while the real Amphitruo has not. That the spouses' fighting is no less fierce is shown by the fragment spoken by Amphitruo. He has gone from calling Alcumena an adulteress to implying she was a whore.

Near the end, there is a scene where the two Amphitruos meet face-to-face, from which we have two lines spoken by the real Amphitruo and/or Jupiter/Amphitruo:

AM.(a) manifestum hunc optorto collo teneo furem flagiti.
AM. (b) immo ego, hunc, Thebani cives, qui domi uxorem
 meam
 impudicitia impedivit, teneo, thesaurum stupri!
 (frags. 15-16)

AM. (a) I have this thief red-handed, with his neck in a
 noose of adultery.
AM. (b) Nay rather, Theban citizens, I have the man who
 tripped up my wife in unchastity right in my home,
 that storehouse of adultery!

These lines demonstrate that Amphitruo's concerns with *impudicitia* and *stuprum* have not yet been resolved, but we do not know what role, if any, Alcumena plays in these scenes.

At any rate, we do not see Alcumena again. Act Five resolves the plot when the slave woman Bromia enters and narrates the story of Alcumena's delivery, first to the audience, and then to Amphitruo. The prologues' promises are confirmed: Alcumena is fine, she has delivered twins, and the birth was painless. Jupiter enters and addresses Amphitruo.

primum omnium Alcumenaе usuram corporis
cepi et concubitu gravidam feci filio.
tu gravidam item fecisti, cum in exercitum
profectu's: uno partu duos peperit simul.
eorum alter, nostro qui est susceptus semine,
suis factis te immortalis adficiet gloria.
tu cum Alcumena uxore antiquam in gratiam
redi: haud promeruit quam ob rem vitio vorteres;
mea vi subactast facere. ego in caelum migro.
 (1135-1143)

First of all, I borrowed Alcumena's body and by lying with her, made her pregnant with a son. You also made her pregnant, although you left for the army. She has borne both sons in one birth. One of them, who was gotten by my seed, will carry you to immortal glory with his actions. Return to your former favor with Alcumena: She did not deserve the blame for which you would divorce her; she was coerced by my power. Now, I'm leaving for heaven.

Amphitruo accepts Jupiter's explanation, announces that he is going inside to his wife (*ibo ad uxorem intro* 1145), and tells the spectators to applaud. Alcumena is freed from blame, and Amphitruo is re-united with his wife and child.

When analyzing this play, I argue that we should take the word *tragicomoedia* seriously, not because actual tragedy occurs, but because potentially tragic situations arise. In order to explain the play's humor in general, I suggest we return to Thomas Veatch's theory of humor. Recall that Veatch was concerned with the violation of norms, but allowed for offensiveness to occur if the perceiver was morally committed to the violated norm. This is exactly the situation in the *Amphitruo*: the content of the play grapples with more serious marital problems than other Plautine plays. After setting up a previously harmonious marriage, the plot comes close to destroying it. It exploits genuine adultery as a theme, and shows spouses fighting and threatening to divorce each other. I have suggested that the prologues' repeated reassurances serve a purpose. By emphasizing the happy end, and even acknowledging that the audience might worry at certain points, Plautus hopes to avert any offensive violation of norms.

This comic mechanism allows Alcumena's adultery to be sexy, but not offensive. However, the humor here invites a far more sophisticated analysis than simply assuming

the audience's holiday spirit would allow them to observe adultery without any moral compunction. The mythological setting, combined with the constant re-assurance of a happy ending, allows for a relaxation but not total destruction of morals. This framework allows for a portrayal of adultery which is fun enough to give the audience some pleasure, but realistic enough to make them think twice about it.

Allowing more realistic social structures into the play helps us define its comedy better. As noted in the introduction, even those scholars who have read the play as farcical or parodic cannot help using the word "irony." According to Northrop Frye, irony "passes through the dead center of realism," while farce is so unrealistic as to be non-mimetic, hence its penchant for masks.⁵⁹ Frye's definitions accurately reflect the pendulum of scholarship on the play, but irony is a more compelling basis for the play's humor. Jupiter and Mercury are *eirones* in the true Aristotelian sense of pretending to be less than they are. Alcumena and Amphitruo are more difficult to define as characters. They are certainly not *alazones*, pretending to be more than they are. But they are ironic in the more general sense of the word, in that the audience's superior knowledge makes their statements, as well as their fighting, ironic and therefore amusing. As I have argued, however, if we allow either of them any measure of sympathy from the audience, they are no longer simply the objects of the audience's derisive laughter.

In analyzing Alcumena's character, I think we can safely say she is one of Plautus' more complicated *matronae*. In the beginning, we see her being manipulated by Jupiter and committing adultery though innocent. As the plot unfolds, however, she holds her

⁵⁹ Frye 285, 290.

own, and neither submits meekly to Amphitruo's accusations nor to Jupiter's flattery. While Amphitruo threatens divorce, she is the one who pronounces the actual divorce formula. And when Jupiter tries to flatter her into submission a second time, she makes jokes at his expense. Thus we should not assume Alcumena is the passive object of all the jokes in the play. She and Amphitruo are equally clueless, and if the audience laughs at their ignorance, it laughs at both of them. If we revise the characterization of Alcumena as a nymphomaniac, and allow for more subtlety in her sensuality, we can see that the audience would have some sympathy for her. She is a committed wife, and her unknowing adultery is not allowed to besmirch her character, as even Jupiter assures us.

The *Amphitruo* is a complex play filled with paradoxes and it will always provide interesting fodder for scholarly analyses. Even so, Alcumena should not be isolated from other Plautine *matronae*. Both because of her own identification as *materfamilias*, and because her relationship with her husband, we must include her character in order to comprehensively describe Plautine marriage. Furthermore, we can see parallels with other Plautine *matronae*. Like the *Stichus* sisters, Alcumena is concerned about virtue and about protecting her home and family. But, like the "bad" *matronae* we will examine next, she shows clear comic agency in her moral task. Unlike any other *matrona*, however, Alcumena's morality is put into question, even despite her own ignorance/innocence. This fact is what makes Alcumena unique, and allows her such depth of characterization.

Conclusions

What can we conclude from looking at Plautus' "good" *matronae*? Several features stand out. The first is that it is possible for *matronae* to defy authority (or at least construct their own version of authority) and still be perceived as "good," which contradicts the usual logic that assumes *uxores dotatae* are automatically unsympathetic because they oppose their husbands. The *Stichus* sisters oppose their father, despite critics' persistence in emphasizing their obedience. Whether their opposition is sincerely moral or whether they are actively deceiving him, they do not bow meekly to their father's will. In fact, they employ a clever rhetorical strategy to win the argument. Eunomia, too, opposes her brother although she engages in rhetoric about a woman's proper place. Finally, Alcumena defies her husband and Jupiter.

These women are removed from accusations of shrewishness precisely because they say and do the right things. In fact, the women's perceived humbleness about their proper places and their appropriate morality has prevented critics from seeing that they do actually oppose other characters. Another way to see the women's sympathetic reception is in terms of comedy: they become agents of laughter, perhaps even controlling characters, if only for short periods of time. Alcumena makes the audience laugh at Jupiter's expense when she rebuffs his advances, and the *matronae* in the *Stichus* may make the audience laugh at their father.

Aside from their inherent "niceness," these women also contribute to the plots of the plays in various ways. Eunomia and Phanostrata are most obviously agents in resolving the plot crisis: Eunomia by assuring her son's marriage, and Phanostrata by finding her daughter. In the case of the *Aulularia*, Eunomia may at first appear to be the

blocking character, since she opposes her brother's love affair with the young lady. Indeed, this play brings up an important nuance to Frye's notion of blocking characters: there can be (and often is) more than one romantic plot. Usually, the *matrona* is blocking an inappropriate love affair, and this distinction between appropriate and inappropriate love affairs will become important in other plays. Eunomia and Phanostrata further the correct love affair, that of the young lovers. Therefore, it is clear that they are not true blocking characters.

In terms of authority, creating laughter, and furthering the plot, we have seen that the *matronae* are not merely agelasts, blocking characters, or unsympathetic because they defy authority. But this brings us to the difficult question of how these plays reflect the society of the time and its morality. These plays, especially, are important for deconstructing the idea of total inversion. We should first distinguish between status inversion and moral inversion. Some of the *matronae*'s behavior might be explained by a status inversion: the women all oppose authority figures, such as fathers, husbands, and brothers. Such opposition could represent an inversion of the expected power relationship, and in Segalian terms, the reversal of roles would be funny.

I am not content, however, to explain the humor of the plays as entirely Saturnalian. Since these *matronae* are moral, shouldn't they be interfering with the holiday fun? As we have seen, that all depends on the plot. The *Stichus* sisters do not hang around long enough to see their husbands' debauchery, but their absence means that they do not interfere with the revelry. In the *Aulularia*, Eunomia turns out to be the voice of reason (and morality) in the play, and in this case, appropriate behavior intersects with

comic justice: the appropriate couple is brought together at the end, and the old man is rid of his lust-based engagement. In the *Amphitruo*, Alcumena, the unwitting adulteress, does not prevent any holiday philandering from happening--she actually engages in it. But the play's conclusion, in which the married couple is brought back to their former *concordia*, is another case where comic justice and morality overlap. From these plays, it is clear that not *all* morality is opposed to comedy; furthermore, the slave-revel at the conclusion of the *Stichus* demonstrates that not all plays return to everyday morality at the end. And, importantly, the moral *matronae* are not getting in the way of holiday fun or comic justice.

It is obvious that the questions of audience and critical sympathy and morality are intimately linked. When considering these questions, we should also consider whether the moral characters are sympathetic or ridiculous. Moore has argued that deliberate moralizing is humorous, and should not be taken seriously.⁶⁰ But there is a difference between moralizing and morality. A moralizing character is all the more ridiculous because he himself is not behaving according to societal norms. The *Stichus* sisters have a more complex problem. They are moralizing about their duty in order to foil their father, but, importantly, they are also *acting* morally, and sympathetically. Alcumena moralizes, and she is an adulteress--but an unknowing adulteress. Since she does not know that she is cheating, we cannot really say she is immoral. Thus, her character has been read as both sympathetic and ridiculous. In short, morality is not automatically un-

⁶⁰ Moore 1998a.

comic or unsympathetic. It can be, to be sure, but the good *matronae* have shown that there is a range of possible audience responses.

Chapter 2

"Bad" *Matronae*: *Casina*, *Asinaria*, *Mercator*, *Menaechmi*

Scholars invariably describe Plautus' *uxores dotatae* in negative terms: domineering agelasts, shrews, objects of parody, and characters who oppose the holiday fun of the Saturnalia.¹ My first goal will be to show that the modern designation of agelast is entirely unjustified: the *uxores dotatae*, far from opposing laughter, frequently cause it. And to combat the notion that the audience's laughter is derisive, and directed *at* the *matronae*, I will show that the *matronae* make jokes at the expense of other characters, and therefore direct the laughter not at themselves but others. In short, *matronae* are controlling characters more often than not.

As for the accusations of shrewishness, these must be considered within the broader framework of Plautine marriage. It is true that Plautine characters make jokes about marriage and *matronae*,² and that these reflect a misogynistic sentiment present in Roman society. But jokes are one thing; these women's actions are another. In fact, the women's active roles as comic agents will complicate a superficial reading based solely on patriarchal misogyny. And there are additional factors to be considered. The first is the *uxor dotata*'s usual partner, the *senex amator*. Curiously, while scholars must admit that the *senex amator* is comic, they see him as somehow sympathetic, or at least more sympathetic than the *uxor*.³ But the *senex amator* must be re-evaluated along with the *uxor dotata*. If she is funnier than many scholars have assumed, he is, if anything, more

¹ E.g., Duckworth 255; Segal 1971: 23, 25, 29 and *passim*; Moore 1998a: 159-60; Schuhmann 1977 *passim* and 1978: 99-101; Stärk 1990.

² *Asin.* 900; *Aul.* 154-7, 167-9; 1184-6; *Epid.* 178-80; *Men.* 127-34, 159; *Mil.* 679-700; *Rud.* 895-96, 905, 1203-4; *Trin.* 42, 58-65.

ridiculous, and more apt to be the object of the audience's derisive laughter. The possibility that the audience is laughing more at him than at her will become important when addressing these characters' relative sympathy.

In this chapter, I will use the character of the *uxor dotata* as the basis for a re-examination of marriage on the Plautine stage. I begin with her capacity as an agent of laughter and controlling character in the four plays where she appears: *Asinaria*, *Mercator*, *Menaechmi*, and *Casina*. This will lead to a re-evaluation of her relationship with the *senex amator*, and of the *senex amator* himself. Since, perhaps surprisingly, the *senex amator*'s behavior is almost always punished, albeit in a comic fashion, this will lead in turn to a re-consideration of the nature of Plautus' comedies. Far from encouraging an all-encompassing holiday mentality, the plays reinforce some societal norms. The *matrona* often acts as a comic enforcer, but makes the audience laugh while doing so. And finally, I will consider the satirical (i.e., more realistic) nature of Plautine marriage, and its relationship to everyday life. The laughter provoked by the *matrona* is controlling laughter in Corbeill's sense: it has a direct impact on what is perceived as acceptable behavior.

Casina

The *Casina* is a play about married life. A *senex amator*, Lysidamus⁴, is competing with his son for a girl named Casina. Lysidamus' wife, Cleostrata, is trying to

³ Duckworth 314; Konstan 1983: 54; Tatum 89; Auhagen 432.

⁴ The name is not Plautine, and is derived from the scene-heading of a fourth-century text, but in Leo's edition and most of those following, the character is called Lysidamus. The most recent discussion of the

stop the love affair and help her son. Since the son and Casina are completely absent from the play, the action concentrates wholly on the married couple and their slaves. Although we have no explicit indication that Cleostrata is an *uxor dotata*, she has the means to raise Casina, and her behavior is such that most audience members would assume she was dowered.

Only in the *Casina* has any critic been able to see the *matrona* as a justified, comic heroine. Forehand's analysis (1973), in particular, follows an explanation similar to those I will suggest for other plays: that Lysidamus is an unforgivably ridiculous character whom the audience would rejoice in seeing humiliated. He implies that Cleostrata's actions are *justified* by Lysidamus' foolish behavior and therefore acceptable, and even makes vague suggestions about how this comedy relates to social norms. But Forehand also suggests that the *Casina* is exceptional in its portrayal of spousal relations, a view that other critics have shared.⁵ While I agree with Forehand's analysis, I do not agree that the characterization of Lysidamus and Cleostrata is as exceptional as he believes. I will therefore begin with this play, and identify comic mechanisms and situations that created Cleostrata's "justification." I will use this analysis as a model for other plays. As we will see, Cleostrata shares much with other *matronae*, and Lysidamus' behavior is no worse than any other *senex amator*'s.

name and the manuscript tradition is found in O'Bryhim 91-2. For the sake of clarity I will continue to employ the name Lysidamus, rather than *senex*.

⁵ Forehand classifies Lysidamus' behavior as "foolish and inappropriate," but finds him remarkable because of his complete lack of self-awareness, which tends "to soften our disapproval of the objectionable deeds of other old men (240-1). But, *contra* Forehand, Lysidamus shows self-awareness when he speaks to Alcesimus (515-9). Slater (70-6) and Moore (1998a: 179-80) also discuss the exceptional circumstances of the play. Petrone, too (1989: 100), feels that Plautus takes great pains to justify Cleostrata's behavior. For

The prologue of the play is a long one, and tells the audience everything they need to know, from the background to the play's end.⁶ We find out that a married old man (*senex maritus* 35) lives in the house, and that a foundling named Casina was raised by his wife. When the foundling reached puberty, the *senex* fell terribly in love with her (*amat efflictim* 49), and so did his son (50). Both father and son have commissioned their respective stewards to ask for Casina's hand in marriage. Because Cleostrata recognizes her husband's infatuation, she supports the claim of her son's steward. From the prologue, we already know that the old man is his son's rival and will have to be removed.

We meet Cleostrata early in the play. When her maid tells her that her old man (*senex*) has ordered lunch, Cleostrata launches into a tirade:

St, tace atque abi; neque paro neque hodie coquetur,
quando is mi et filio advorsatur suo
animi amorisque causa sui
flagitium illud hominis. ego illum fame, ego illum siti
maledictis, malefactis amatorem ulciscar
ego pol illum probe incommodis dictis angam
faciam uti proinde ut est dignus vitam colat,
 Acheruntis pabulum,
flagiti persequentem
stabulum nequitiae.

(148-59)

Hush, be quiet and go away; today I'll neither prepare
anything nor have it cooked, since that man opposes me
and his own son because of his own whim and love-affair.
The scandal of that man! I will have my revenge on that

a contrary opinion, see Tatum, who believes that despite laughing at Lysidamus, we still "feel a wry affection" for him (89).

⁶ There are doubts about the prologue's authenticity. Critics agree that some parts are Plautine, some are post-Plautine (see MacCary and Willcock 97; Abel 55-61; Slater 57). While the prologue provides a convenient summary, its authenticity matters little for our argument, however; even if the prologue is not authentic, Cleostrata herself implies or says outright much of the same information in the next scene.

lover with hunger, thirst, abuse, and payback. I'll throttle him rightly with nasty words and make sure he values his life just as he deserves--that fodder for Hell, pursuer of trouble and den of vice!

This is a striking introduction. Cleostrata already knows about her husband's love affair and plans to stop it. Would the audience be upset by her dominance? It seems unlikely. Cleostrata herself describes the father-son competition and shows herself to be on the side of her son. Thus, we already see that the *matrona* is not blocking the youthful love affair. And the audience, knowing that the old man must be defeated in the end, would not be unhappy to see that Cleostrata was a strong character who could give them a good show while getting rid of the *senex*.

Cleostrata announces her intention to visit her neighbor Myrrhina (another *matrona*) just as Myrrhina herself comes out. When Cleostrata explains the situation, Myrrhina's response is not supportive. She asserts that there is no such thing as private property in a marriage (198-202), and counsels Cleostrata not to fight against her husband (*noli sis tu illi advorsari* 204), and to let him have his love affairs (*sine amet* 205). Finally she warns Cleostrata to beware of divorce--her husband could tell her to get out (*ei foras, mulier* 212). The scene between the two women brings up some interesting issues. The characters have been seen as embodying a dialogue between competing notions of marriage, philosophically or legally speaking.⁷ The most pertinent question is whether the audience would sympathize with Myrrhina's lofty sentiments or Cleostrata's legal rights. Given her philosophical bent, it is possible that Myrrhina would appear as a

⁷ Myrrhina's sentiments about common property, for instance, are philosophical tenets that many authors held about marriage (see Treggiari 208-9, 365). Dees has suggested that the two women represent two

moralizing rather than moral character. Given her alliance with the *senex*, albeit indirect, Myrrhina may be less sympathetic merely because of her status as blocking character.

At any rate, any doubt about Lysidamus' ridiculousness is quelled by his entrance.

He arrives singing about the splendor of love:

Omnibus rebus ego amorem credo et nitoribus nitidis
antevenire
nec potis quicquam commemorari quod plus salis plusque
leporis hodie
habeat. . .
qui quom amo Casina, magis niteo, munditiis munditiam
antideo.
myropolas omnes sollicito, ubicumque est lepidum
unguentum, unguor,
ut illi placeam; et placeo, ut videor. sed uxor me excruciat,
quia vivit.
tristem astare aspicio. blande haec mihi mala res appellanda
est.
uxor mea meaque amoenitas, quid tu agis?
(217-29)

I think that love surpasses all things in its splendiferous
splendor, and you can't name one thing that has more savor
or charm today . . . Now that I love Casina, I'm sparklier,
and I surpass spruceness itself in spruceness. I've been
bothering all the perfume-sellers; wherever there was a
nice scent, I put it on, so that she would like me. And she
will, I'm sure. But my wife torments me merely by living.
I see her standing there grimly. I'd better call that nasty
piece of work with some nice talk. O my wife and my
sweetness, how are you doing?

Lysidamus makes perhaps the most ridiculous entrance of any *senex amator*: he not only sings the praises of love, he also announces outright that he has been shopping for perfume. Men wearing perfume risk accusations of effeminacy, no matter what their

different kinds of marriage: Myrrhina is simply speaking from the perspective of a woman married *cum manu*, while Cleostrata, by demanding her *ius*, shows that she is married *sine manu* (113-4).

age.⁸ The audience knows that Lysidamus' lame attempts at sweet-talk will fail utterly, given Cleostrata's temperament and knowledge about his infatuation.

In fact, Cleostrata immediately tells him to keep his hands off of her (229). Lysidamus tries again, telling his Juno not to be so grim with her Jove (230). Cleostrata is not impressed, and tells him to leave her alone (*mitte me* 231). When he persists, she rebuffs him:

CLE. obsecro, sanum est?
LYS. sanus quomodo amo.
CLE. nolo ames.
LYS. Non potes impetrare.
CLE. enecas.
LYS. vera dicas velim.
CLE. credo ego istuc tibi.
(232-4)

CLE. Really, are you all right?
LYS. I'm all right when I'm loving *you*.
CLE. I don't want your love.
LYS. You can't help but have it.
CLE. You're killing me here.
LYS. I wish that were true.
CLE. I bet you do.

It is crucial to note that Cleostrata seizes the opportunity to turn Lysidamus' dead-wife joke to her own advantage. Instead of letting him make this remark as an aside, she makes sure he knows that she knows, and uses her comic agency to make the audience laugh at him, rather than her. She thus steals (or at least competes for) any audience

⁸ On perfume in invective, see Corbeill 163-4. Corbeill, in turn, cites Colin 10-13 for passages about perfume. It is possible that the problem lies less in simply wearing perfume and more in wearing excessive perfume in a public setting--but Lysidamus is clearly doing the latter. (see line 240)

alliance he created with his aside. Lysidamus tries another pet name (*lepos* 235), but when Cleostrata smells the perfume she is unable to contain herself:

Eho tu nihili, cana culex, vix teneor quin quae decent te
dicam,
senecta aetate unguentatus per vias, ignave, incedis?
(239-40)

You good-for-nothing, grey-haired gnat, I can hardly keep
from telling you what you deserve. Are you walking
through the streets, drenched in perfume, at your advanced
age, you idiot?

She further asks, "Doesn't anything shame you?" (*ecquid te pudet* 243), accuses him of being the most worthless old man of all (*senex nequissimus* 245) and of being drunk and wearing wrinkled clothing--a sign of his debauchery in brothels (244-49). She finally tells him, "Go ahead, drink, eat, and lose your shirt at your pleasure" (*Immo age, ut lubet, bibe, es, disperde rem* 250). In other plays, we will see many more instances where married men's debauchery is connected with financial loss. Here, it is not specified whose *res* Lysidamus is wasting on food, drink, and perfume, but whether it is her own, or whether she refers to joint property, Cleostrata clearly feels it affects her.

Furthermore, as the controlling character, Cleostrata uses her superior knowledge to lord it over her ridiculous husband. She reproaches Lysidamus again for forgetting his duty at his advanced age (*te senecta aetate officium tuum non meminisse* 259-60). Being in love, it seems, is connected with forgetting one's duties to the state. When Lysidamus protests, she says that they should both be working together to help their only son (*filio nos oportet opitulari unico* 262-3). Cleostrata's sentiments are clearly the more noble;

veram in viam.
CLE. Per pol saepe peccas.
(364-70)

LYS. But I did think that I would be able to prevail upon
you, dear wife, to marry off Casina to me, and I
even think so now.

CLE. To give her to *you*?

LYS. To me? Oh, I didn't mean to
say that. I meant "me" but said "to him," and since
I really want her for myself--God, I sure have been
babbling right now.

CLE. Yes, and you still are, too.

LYS. For him--I mean, for me--dammit, I've just managed
to get back on the right track.

CLE. You wander from it pretty often.

Cleostrata not only sees through his ploys but uses the slips to make jokes at Lysidamus' expense. She has once again become the controlling character, and she bonds with the audience through shared knowledge of the real situation. Lysidamus, still calling Cleostrata his honey (*mulsa* 372) suggests drawing lots for Casina's hand. Though he does not like the idea, he comments:

Patiundum est, siquidem me vivo mea uxor imperium
exhibet.
(409)

We must endure it, since my wife wears the pants even
though I still live.

In other plays, too, we will see husbands confess their own lack of *imperium*.

Lots are drawn and Olympio (representing Lysidamus) wins. Lysidamus is, of course, elated that he will have Casina. After everyone exits, Chalinus has a moment alone onstage, and he reiterates the ridiculousness of Lysidamus' behavior.

atque id non tam aegrest iam, vicisse vilicum,
quam id expetivisse opere tam magno senem,
ne ea mihi daretur atque illi nuberet.
ut ille trepidat, ut festinabat miser;
ut sussultabat, postquam vicit vilicus.
(427-33)

It's not so annoying that the bailiff won, as much as that the old guy won out with so much effort that she [Casina] will not be given to me, but rather married to him. How the wretch trembled, how he pranced, how he jumped with joy after the bailiff won.

Chalinus, as yet, is not aware of Lysidamus' infatuation, but he still makes Lysidamus the butt of his jokes. And by addressing the audience, he persuades them to see Lysidamus as an object of laughter. Then he overhears Lysidamus brag about kissing Casina (467-8), and realizes that Lysidamus is infatuated. He also overhears Lysidamus' plan: Lysidamus will convince his neighbor Alcesimus to aid him in his debauchery by providing the house, and sending his wife (i.e., Myrrhina) over to Lysidamus' house so wedding preparations can be made. They will claim that Olympio is taking Casina to the country, when in reality they will take her to Alcesimus' empty house so that Lysidamus can spend time with her.

Olympio and Lysidamus begin to talk about preparations for the wedding feast. Lysidamus concludes by telling Olympio not to spare any expense, but to buy generous provisions (*argento parci nolo, obsonato ampliter* 501). The association of love and luxurious banquets will also be seen in the *Mercator* and *Menaechmi*. Chalinus has been

listening, meanwhile, and calls Lysidamus a "most worthless old man" (*senex nequissime* 496) under his breath. After Olympio and Lysidamus exit, Chalinus steps forward and announces that he cannot be convinced not to tell his mistress about this plan. He concludes, "If the mistress is willing to do her duty, the case is ours" (*sed si nunc facere volt era officium suom, nostra omnis lis est* 508-9).

Act Three begins with Lysidamus trying to convince his neighbor to help.

Alcesimus reluctantly agrees to help Lysidamus, but remarks:

ALC. Attatae, caedundus tu homo es; nimias delicias facis.

LYS. Quid me amare refert, nisi sim doctus <ac>
dicaculus?

(528-29)

ALC. Jeez, you're a man sorely in need of a smackdown.

You're acting altogether too delicate.

LYS. What use is being in love, if I'm not clever and
smooth-talking?

Even Alcesimus acknowledges that Lysidamus' behavior is ridiculous and warrants punishment, and the audience already expects to see Lysidamus' downfall. The two men exit, presumably to make preparations for the wedding feast.

Cleostrata enters and announces that she knows her husband's plan. She proclaims that she will not invite Myrrhina over, so that "those worthless old wethers won't be able to have their liberty" (*ne illis ignavissumis liberi loci potestas sit, vetulis vervecibus* 534-5). When she sees Alcesimus she remarks:

sed eccum egreditur, senati columen, praesidium popli,
meus vicinus, meo viro qui liberum praehibet locum.
non ecastor vilis emptu est, modio qui venit salis.

(536-8)

But look, here he comes, that pillar of the senate, that
bulwark of the people, my neighbor, who will provide a
location for my husband's free time. My god, that man isn't
worth the price of a grain of salt.

Cleostrata's sarcasm is not wasted on the audience--her acerbic remarks assuredly
provoke a laugh at Alcesimus' expense. In the interaction between Cleostrata and
Alcesimus, she is the controlling character. Alcesimus expects her to ask for his wife's
help, but she refuses to do so. When he desperately tries to press the matter, saying,
"Don't you need a helper?" (*Non ergo opus est adiutrice?* 547), she replies that she is fine
without one. Alcesimus leaves cursing Lysidamus' name, and calling him a worthless,
toothless old goat (*miser . . . hircus improbus, edentulus* 549-50) who has created
immense scandal (*flagitium maximum* 529). While this abuse is not directed at a present
character, it would still make the audience laugh at the *senex amator*.

Cleostrata re-enters and gloats about her victory over her "worthless old husband"
(*nihili decrepitus vir* 558). Upon seeing her husband approach, she concludes, "You
would almost think he was an honest man, if you looked at that grim face" (*at quom
aspicias tristem, frugi censeas* 562). Cleostrata's ironic comment on Lysidamus'
appearance points up his own entrance, when he arrives boasting of his poor performance
in the courtroom:

Stultitia magna est, mea quidem sententia,
hominem amatorem ullum ad forum procedere,
in eum diem quoi quod amet in mundo siet;
sicut ego feci stultus. contrivi diem,
dum asto advocatus cuidam cognato meo;
quem hercle ego litem adeo perdidisse gaudeo,
ne me nequiquam sibi hodie advocaverit.
(563-9)

It's really stupid, in my opinion, for any man in love to go to the forum [for business] on the day when his love-object waits in prettiness. That's just what I did, stupid me. I wasted the day lawyering for a certain kinsman of mine. I'm happy that he lost his case, by God, since that means I'll never have to be his lawyer again after today.

The humor of this scene works on two levels. Assuredly, male *patroni* in the audience would laugh in recognition at Lysidamus' complaints about the responsibilities of being a good citizen. His excuse of being in love, however, adds a ridiculous note. Lysidamus then admits that his mind wasn't on his case (570-74). As in other plays, being in love is connected with failure to focus on duty. Lysidamus eventually notices Cleostrata, and hopes that she didn't hear him. But, as we find out in the next line, she did (*audivi* 576).

Lysidamus tries pet names yet again, calling her *mea festivitas* (577) and asks if she has invited Myrrhina over. Cleostrata claims that she did invite Myrrhina:

CLE. verum hic sodalis tuos, amicus optumus
nescioquid se sufflavit uxori suae;
negavit posse, quoniam arcesso, mittere.
LYS. vitium tibi istuc maxumum est, blanda es parum.
CLE. non matronarum officiumst, sed meretricium,
viris alienis, mi vir, subblandirier.
(581-6)

CLE. But that buddy of yours, your best friend, had some
sort of quarrel with his wife. He said that he
couldn't send her over, even though I asked.
LYS. That's your greatest fault, you're not coaxing
enough.
CLE. To coax other women's husbands is not a wife's job,
but a prostitute's, dear husband.

Cleostrata is willfully causing trouble between the two friends. She controls the situation, and the laughter, when she turns her husband's accusation into a joke: she

implies that he does not know the difference between a wife and a prostitute. After Cleostrata exits, Alcesimus enters, and the two old men have a short but intense spat, before Alcesimus agrees to send his wife over. This scene demonstrates the effectiveness of Cleostrata's machinations and the credulity of the two men.

Before Lysidamus can leave, the maid Pardalisca runs out of the house, pretending to swoon with terror. She claims that Casina has gone mad, and is threatening to kill whomever she marries:

PAR. per omnis deos et deas deieravit,
occisurum eum hac nocte quicum cubaret.

LYS. men occidet?

PAR. an quippiam ad te attinet?

LYS. vah.

PAR. quid cum ea negoti tibist?

LYS. peccavi:

illuc dicere, vilicum, volebam.

PAR. sciens de via in semitam degredere.

(670-75)

PAR. She swore by all the gods and goddesses that the
man with whom she lay would die this night.

LYS. She's going to kill me?

PAR. (innocently) What does this have to do with you?

LYS. Oh.

I misspoke: I meant to say "him," the bailiff.

PAR. You're purposely leaving the main road for the back
alley.

Once again, Lysidamus is plagued by Freudian slips, and Pardalisca takes advantage of the opportunity to make jokes about him. Pardalisca is without a doubt the controlling character of this scene. When Lysidamus tries to take control of the situation, he fails miserably:

LYS. atque ingratiis, quia non volt, nubet hodie.
nam quor non ego id perpetrem quod coepi,

ut nubat mihi? illud quidem volebam,
nostro vilico.

PAR. saepicule peccas.
(700-703)

LYS. Well, she will be married today against her will,
since she doesn't want to. Why shouldn't I get what
I arranged, that she marry me--I meant to say "my
bailiff."

PAR. You misspeak pretty often.

Paradalisca makes ironic remarks based on Lysidamus' lack of control, just as Cleostrata did earlier. She shares her superior knowledge with the audience, and thus bonds with them.

Act Four begins when Padalisca enters and tells the audience that the two matrons have decked out Chalinus to look like the bride. Lysidamus then enters, conveniently announcing that he will accompany the wedding party:

nam novom maritum et novam nuptam volo
rus prosequi, novi hominum mores maleficos,
ne quis eam abripiat.

(782-4)

I want to accompany the new bride and groom to the
country, lest anyone steal the bride--I know how evil men
operate.

Lysidamus' words are ironic--he knows the evil that men do because he is one of them. But he is still an object of ridicule, since he is the unwitting victim of preparations being made by the other characters. The audience waits in suspense to see how the denouement will bring together the cross-dressed "bride," the grumpy groom, the lecherous old man, and the *matronae*. After the wedding procession, Olympio and Lysidamus are left alone

I burn with hideous infamy, and I don't know what to do
about it nor how to look my wife in the eyes, I'm so dead.
All the disgraces are out in the open, and poor me, I'm dead
in every way.

Chalinus follows hot on Lysidamus' heels, brandishing a club. Chalinus calls to his lover (*amator* 955) and tells him "If you want to fondle me, now's your chance!" (*nunc tu si vis subigitare me, probast occasio* 963). Chalinus jokingly orders Lysidamus back into the bedroom (964), and Lysidamus tries to run the other way--only to run into his wife.

Cleostrata, too, addresses Lysidamus as *amator* (968), and the three instigators goad

Lysidamus:

MYR. quid agis, disarmite?

CLE. Mi vir, unde hoc ornatu advenis?
quid fecisti scipione aut quod habuisti pallium?

MYR. In adulterio, dum moechissat Casinam, credo
perdidit.

LYS. occidi.

CHA. Etiamne imus cubitum? Casina sum.

LYS. i in malam crucem.

CHA. non amas me?

CLE. quin responde, tuo quid factum est pallio?
(974-7)

MYR. How are you doing, twice-/ill-married?⁹

CLE. Dear husband, where did you find
this get-up? What did you do with the staff and
cloak you had?

MYR. I think he lost them in flagrante delicto, while he
was shagging Casina.

LYS. I'm dead.

CHA. Shall we return to bed? I'm Casina!

LYS. Go to hell.

CHA. Don't you love me?

CLE. Hey, respond: what happened to your cloak?

⁹ The *dis-* in *dismarite* can be either from the Greek *dus-*, meaning "badly" or the Latin *dis-*, "twice."

This play concludes by making the *senex amator* the object of the audience's derisive laughter. Aside from the shame that might come from age-inappropriate behavior, this conclusion also imparts effeminacy to Lysidamus. The cloak and staff are symbols of his manhood, and he has been stripped of them.¹⁰ In addition, the fact that Chalinus is still pursuing him sexually (albeit in jest) makes it clear that Lysidamus is being humiliated by the threat of being a passive homosexual object.

When Cleostrata threatens to send him back inside with "Casina," Lysidamus recants, and admits his error as well as begging for forgiveness (1000-1002). He even gives Cleostrata permission to beat him, but at Myrrhina's prompting, Cleostrata decides to forgive him--mostly because she doesn't want to make the play any longer (1006). She announces that she is not angry, and he says he has the most delightful wife ever (1007-8). Finally, she orders Chalinus to give Lysidamus back his cloak and staff (and thus his masculinity). Chalinus does so, but ends the scene by saying:

mihi quidem edepol insignite factast magna iniuria:
duobus nupsi, neuter fecit quod novae nuptae solet.
(1010-11)

A great wrong has been done to me: I married two men,
and neither one did what he should have for his new bride.

Chalinus thus gets the last word.

The epilogue ends by addressing those who would be unfaithful to their wives:

Nunc vos aequomst manibus meritis meritam mercedem
dare.
qui faxit, clam uxorem ducet semper scortum quod volet;
verum qui non manibus clare, quantum poterit, plauserit,
ei pro scorto supponetur hircus unctus nautea.

¹⁰ On the significance of the cloak and staff see MacCary 887-8 and Gold 24.

(1015-18)

Now it is right that y'all give us the fee we deserve by clapping your hands. Whoever does will always take whatever whore he wants without his wife's knowledge; but whoever doesn't clap loudly and to the best of his ability, will have a bilge-water-scented goat substituted for his whore.

This epilogue, a clear ploy to get applause, promises success to philandering men, and might therefore be said to encourage the "holiday spirit." However, it is important to note that this epilogue does not conflict with the overall message of the play. The play mocks age-inappropriate and effeminate behavior; it does not say that adultery is in any way wrong. What is ridiculed is neglecting duty, spending money on lovers' banquets, wearing perfume, and generally losing one's self-control. For a married man, having an occasional assignation with a prostitute was not a problem, nor was it a holiday phenomenon; it most likely happened in everyday life. As I will argue in the final chapter, it is *flagitium*, public scandal, that these plays discourage. Having a mistress in secret, and without your wife's knowledge, may be the ideal and approved way to go about the business.

The *Casina* shows similarities to the other three plays in this chapter, a fact that disproves previous assertions about its exceptional nature. Lysidamus is rendered slightly more ridiculous than the usual *senex amator* because of his penchant for calling his wife insincere pet names, but his declarations about love, and his competition with his son, will be mirrored in the *Mercator* and the *Asinaria*. Moreover, we will see that the situations rendering Lysidamus ridiculous and comically justifying his fall--namely, his self-ignorance, neglect of duty, age-inappropriate behavior and luxurious spending--have

clear parallels in other plays. In fact, the only thing that makes Lysidamus unique is his combining effeminacy with age-inappropriate behavior: not only does he pursue his son's girlfriend, he does so while wearing excessive perfume, and almost ends up married to another man.¹¹ In this regard, we will see some parallels with the *Menaechmi*.

As for Cleostrata, critics cannot help but be impressed by her comic control, and designate her clearly as the most sympathetic character in the play.¹² But while her "skill in planning and execution" are exceptional, as Forehand notes,¹³ her comic agency is not. We will see other *matronae* as controlling characters and agents for producing laughter. Moreover, we will see many parallels in the types of insults used, both by *matronae* and other characters. Words like *nequissimus senex*, *decrepitus*, *nihili*, *caput canum* and *flagitium hominis* will be repeated verbatim, and general insults about the husband's ridiculous behavior will appear in every play. Equally important are the factors inducing scholarly sympathy for Cleostrata's cause: extreme ridiculousness on the part of her husband and her appropriate concern for her son. We will see the same context in other plays.

Another factor in Cleostrata's warm reception may have been the the lack of a prostitute in this play. The prostitute, assumed to be more sympathetic than the wife, is usually felt to provide an unfavorable contrast to the *matrona*. But, as I will argue, this comparison is without basis. As we will see in the *Menaechmi*, both wives and

¹¹ For further analysis of the homosexuality and transvestitism in the play's conclusion, see Cody (esp. 471-6), and Gold.

¹² Moore, 1998a: 166-180 *passim*; Forehand 254.

¹³ Forehand 247.

prostitutes act as controlling characters at the expense of the men with whom they are involved.

Asinaria

The *Asinaria* ends with a bang: the *matrona* Artemona drags her husband Demaenetus, who is in a brothel competing with his son for a prostitute's attentions, out into the street. This "unhappy" final scene, combined with a perceived shift in Demaenetus' character, has troubled critics.¹⁴ Their perturbation is based on the unspoken assumption that the audience should feel sorry or disturbed to see Artemona's abuse of her husband, and that the ending is therefore not comic. I hope to demonstrate, on the contrary, that the play's ending is funny, and "happy" (that is, comically satisfying) precisely because it delivers comic justice, which is in turn linked to the everyday social norms of the community. Artemona, in turn, is a comic agent and a controlling character, and her actions are as comically justified as Cleostrata's were in the *Casina*.

In the first scene of the play, we meet Demaenetus and his slave Libanus. The scene opens with Libanus demanding an oath from Demaenetus on the wife whom he fears (*perque illam quam tu metuis uxorem tuam* 19), and threatening that, if Demaenetus perjures himself, his wife will plague him for the rest of his years (*siquid me erga hodie falsum dixeris, / ut tibi superstes uxor aetatem siet / atque illa viva vivos ut pestem*

¹⁴ Konstan suggests that the end restores Demaenetus to his status of *paterfamilias* through humiliation (1983: 51, 1978: 218). Wright is less optimistic; he writes, "Without exception, the characters are as unsympathetic as their actions are unedifying" (507). Slater agrees with Wright's pessimistic interpretation,

oppetas 20-22). Thus, it is established from the beginning that there is no love lost between Demaenetus and his wife. Nonetheless, it is crucial to note the difference in Libanus' and Demaenetus' attitudes. Libanus emphasizes that Demaenetus *fears* his wife, and makes jokes involving her death (40-2), while Demaenetus uses fairly mild insults, calling her "pushy and unobliging" (*inportunam atque incommodam* 62). This is significant because it creates an initial impression of Artemona's characterization that will last until her appearance much later in the play.

Demaenetus eventually admits what he wants from Libanus, but prefaces his statement with a long monologue:

omnes parentes, Libane, liberis suis
qui mi auscultabunt, facient obsequium¹⁵
quippe qui mage amico utantur gnato et benevolo.
atque ego me id facere studeo: volo amari a meis;
volo me patris mei similem, qui causa mea
nauclerico ipse ornatu per fallaciam
quam amabam abduxit ab lenone mulierem
neque pudit eum id aetatis sycophantias
struere et beneficiis me emere gnatum suum sibi.
eos me decretumst persequi mores patris.
nam me hodie oravit Argyrippus filius,
uti sibi amanti facerem argenti copiam;
et id ego percupio obsequi gnato meo.
volo amoris obsecutum illius, volo amet me patrem.¹⁶
(64-77)

All parents who listen to me, Libanus, will indulge their children, so that they will treat their son more like a friend. And I am eager to do this myself. I want to be loved by my family, I want to be similar to my father, who for my sake dressed up like a sailor and stole the woman I loved from

finding hope for "the spirit of revelry and holiday" only in the epilogue and concluding on this basis that the play is "not emotionally satisfactory" (68).

¹⁵ The MSS. and Nonius give *obsequellam*, which Leo keeps, but which some editors have changed to *obsequentiam*. None of these changes alters the sense substantially.

¹⁶ Leo brackets this line.

her pimp by deceit. It didn't shame him, even at his age, to play tricks and to buy me, his son, for himself by means of favors. Today my son Argyrippus asked me to help him out with money since he's in love. I yearn to indulge my son. I want to foster his love affair, and I want him to love me as a father.

Demaenetus paints himself as an indulgent father, and places himself in the tradition of other kindly helping characters.¹⁷ But he takes this idea too far. In the first place, his use of *obsequium* is suspect: a parent should not show *obsequium* to a child.¹⁸ Moreover, the behavior of Demaenetus' father is certainly not dignified. Giving money to a son to buy a girlfriend might create sympathy. But stealing the girl himself, dressing up in a costume, and proceeding by trickery all add a ridiculous element to the story. It is especially ironic that Demaenetus remarks that it was not shameful (*non puduit*) for his father to act this way, since this is exactly the sort of behavior that should shame an older man. When Demaenetus says he wants to adopt the *mores* of his father, the audience should perceive some irony.¹⁹ Following a father's *mores* is generally a good thing. However, in this case, the *mores* are bound to lead to ridicule.

¹⁷ Cf. Periplectomenus in the *Miles Gloriosus*, Callipho in the *Pseudolus*, and Micio in the *Adelphoe*. Konstan labels these "avuncular role[s]" but notes that it is "extraordinary, even unique, that a *paterfamilias* should assume this role" (1978: 217, 1983:50).

¹⁸ Though I have translated *obsequium* and *obsequere* as "indulge," the word itself can have a negative connotation. Hellegouarc'h suggests that *obsequium* consists of submitting to another's desires without question, and that it is generally pejorative (217). That depends on the status of those involved. In comedy, *obsequium* is shown by children to parents (*Bacch.* 459, *Cist.* 84) and by slaves to masters (*Capt.* 418, *Curc.* 87, *Epid.* 348, *Merc.* 150, 158, *Heat. Tim.* 827). This is appropriate. Occasionally, *obsequium* is shown between those of equal rank, whether slaves (*Cas.* 449) or free men (old men in *Andria* 822, *Heaut. Tim.* 152). This is less appropriate. But nowhere else is it shown by a parent to his child. For *obsequentia* from wife to husband, see Treggiari 238-41.

¹⁹ This is not to imply that Demaenetus is an *eiron*. Here I use irony in a more general sense, to mean that the audience knows better than Demaenetus. The fact that Demaenetus' irony is unwitting suggests he is, in fact, an *alazon*.

Thus, Demaenetus' family history and relationship with his father are somewhat suspect, though not necessarily damning in a comic situation. His relationship with his own family, too, reveals some irony:

quamquam illum mater arte contenteque habet,
patres ut consueverunt: ego mitto omnia haec.
praesertim quom is me dignum quoi concredere
habuit, me habere honorem eius ingenio decet;
quom me adiit, ut pudentem gnatum aequomst patrem,
cupido esse amicae quod det argentum suae.
(78-83)

Although his mother keeps a tight leash on him, as fathers are accustomed to do; I let these things go. Especially since he thought me worthy to confide in, it is right to respect his inclinations. Since he approached me as a modest son should, I am eager for him to give money to his girlfriend.

Pudens, with its implications of modesty and chastity, is not a word that one would normally connect with a young man who is trying to buy his girlfriend from a *lena*. But Demaenetus' construction of the situation reveals his lack of understanding. While he acts as though his relationship with his son is close, he fails to see that his son was simply asking him for money. Demaenetus' self-representation as the lenient parent also backfires, because he admits that he lets his wife rule the roost. A few lines later, Demaenetus sums up his relationship with his wife in one sentence: "I took her money, and sold my control for a dowry" (*argentum accepi, dote imperium vendidi* 87). The audience would undoubtedly laugh at the very common notion of a man being ruled by his dowered wife. But when Demaenetus has admitted his own culpability, would the

audience identify his character as sympathetic? It seems unlikely.²⁰ Demaenetus' unrealistic portrayal of himself and of the situation suggests that he is a comic *alazon*, a character who is laughable precisely because he does not know what is going on.

Demaenetus' own construction of events is shown up by Libanus' more realistic take. When Demaenetus explains that Libanus must defraud him to get the money, Libanus replies, "How can I defraud you--you've got nothing in your pocket--unless you've defrauded your wife?" (*Ten ego defraudem, quoi ipsi nil est in manu, nisi quid tu porro uxorem defraudaveris* 94-5). Libanus provides a reality check for Demaenetus, and confirms that Demaenetus has no real power. Demaenetus then tells Libanus to defraud anyone he can, whether it be himself, his wife, or his wife's servant Saurea. The scene ends when the two agree on a plan to deceive Saurea on the pretense of buying an ass.

At the end of the first scene, the audience already has its initial impressions of both Demaenetus and Artemona. Artemona is not described as being particularly scary; while Demaenetus claims that Artemona is *importuna* and *incommoda*, these are hardly words that strike fear into the hearts of men. It is Libanus who implies she is fearsome--to Demaenetus, at least. But Demaenetus is a coward, and while helping his son might seem admirable, his delusions make him ridiculous, and suggest that the audience is already laughing *at* him, rather than with him. As far as the audience is concerned, Libanus may be the most sympathetic person so far--he is the clever slave, and by making

²⁰ Konstan notes that the circumstance "casts some suspicion on the character of Demaenetus' sympathy for his son . . . His desire for the boy's affection in place of respect is tarnished, because he does not have the title to respect. He sold it, as he confesses" (1978: 217, 1983: 50-51). Slater notes, "When we learn that he

asides to the audience and jokes at Demaenetus' expense, he is the comic agent controlling the laughter in the scene.²¹

We do not see Demaenetus again until the last act of the play, and his re-appearance corresponds almost exactly with his wife's first appearance. The middle portion of the play concentrates on the slaves getting the money, with a few scenes devoted to the young lovers' plight. On the other hand, two scenes following the initial dialogue have some bearing on the audience's perception of Demaenetus' character.

At the beginning of Act Two, we meet Cleareta--*lena* and mother to Philaenium. Demaenetus' claims to authority are further undercut by the effective *imperium* which Cleareta exercises over her daughter. In the first scene, Demaenetus' son Argyrippus²² complains to Cleareta about not being able to see his girlfriend, claiming that "she does these things by your order, she obeys your authority: you are her mother and her master" (*Tuo facit iussu, tuo imperio paret: mater tu eadem era's* 146). Cleareta responds with the typically cool logic of a *meretrix*, explaining that she is only doing her duty (*officium* 173) and that she cares about money, not love. She ends by suggesting that if Argyrippus wants Philaenium to himself, he should engage her in an exclusive contract. Cleareta adds that there is another man, Diabolus, who is ready to engage Philaenium on contract if Argyrippus does not come up with the money. Cleareta's manipulation of Argyrippus makes her the controlling character, and she makes the audience laugh at him. While

has lost the father's role to his wife, however, we suspect that he will not be any more successful in keeping control of this play than he has been in keeping control of his marriage" (58).

²¹ Slater, too, notes that Libanus gets the strong exit from this scene, and leaves Demaenetus trailing behind (58).

Cleareta's *imperium* is not an entirely positive virtue (hence Argyrippus' accusation of despotism), she does show the parental control that Demaenetus is unable to exercise. It is ironic that Argyrippus, who suffers too little *imperium* from his father (and perhaps too much from his mother), is arguing against Cleareta's effective *imperium*.

In the third act, we see Cleareta interact with her daughter. Cleareta is enraged that Philaenium is thinking about love, not money, and accuses her daughter of being willful: "Are you so minded, that you are completely free from the authority of your mother? (*An ita tu's anima, ut qui expers matris imperi sies?* 505). Philaenium claims that *pietas* propels her (507), to which Cleareta responds, "Is this keeping filial duty, to diminish your mother's authority?" (*Hocinest pietatem colere, matris imperium minuere?* 509). Cleareta continues to berate Philaenium, ending with a classic guilt-trip. She suggests that while Philaenium is pining away and waiting for Argyrippus' money, she will bring starvation upon her own mother (529). Cleareta's lecture seems to work, and Philaenium ends the scene by saying, "You have raised an obedient daughter, mother" (*Audientem dicto, mater, produxisti* 544).

Cleareta's overbearing character verges on *Mommie Dearest*, but there is no doubt that she is a parent in charge. The fact that the word *imperium* is repeated in both scenes with Cleareta, and that Demaenetus uses the word to refer to parental authority, cannot help but invite a comparison between the two parents. Even if Cleareta is too harsh with her *imperium*, Demaenetus has no *imperium*.

²² Havet (*Rev. Phil.* 29 (1905), 94-7) suggested that this character should be identified as Diabolus, the rival who appears later in the play, and some scholars have followed this suggestion. Lowe is the most recent scholar to defend the assignment of the lines to Argyrippus (158-161), and I follow his arguments.

At any rate, during the middle of the play we must assume that the audience is waiting anxiously to see if Libanus and his fellow servant Leonidas can get the money which will unite the lovers. In this reading, the slaves and the young lovers are on the same team, and allied with the audience; Demaenetus is (presumably) on the team as well; it has been implied that Artemona is not.

In the end, the two slaves are successful, but when they give the lover Argyrippus his money, the audience finds out that there is a catch:

LI. hic inerunt viginti minae bonae, mala opera partae;
 has tibi nos pactis legibus dare iussit.
AR. quid id est, quaeso?
LI. noctem huius et cenam sibi ut dares. AR. iube
 advenire, quaeso:
 meritissimo eius quae volet faciemus, qui hosce
 amores
 nostros dispulsos compulit. LE. <patierin,
 Argyrippe>,
 patrem hanc amplexari tuom? AR. haec faciet
 facile, ut patiar.
 (734-39)

LI. Here inside [this bag] there are twenty good minae,
 gotten badly. [Your father] ordered me to
 give them to you on one condition.
AR. What is it, pray tell?
LI. That you give him one night with her, plus dinner.
AR. Tell him to come, please.
 We will do whatever that most deserving man
 wants, since he put my love affair back together
 after it was shattered.
LE. Will you really allow your father to have his way
 with your girl here?
AR. This [bag] makes it easy.

Demaenetus' "sudden" change of character is revealed at a point when he is not even onstage. The change itself reflects badly on Demaenetus; the deal was already set, and

now he alters the terms. But the introduction of the twist is a dramatic necessity: the initial romantic crisis, which concerns the money, has just been solved. The revelation of Demaenetus' father as *senex amator* creates a new crisis that must be solved. Obviously, the solution will involve removing Demaenetus from his son's love affair. This solution is made more difficult when we find out that Demaenetus has taken the initiative. When Argyrippus repeats his order that the slaves should tell his father to go inside, Leonida replies that Demaenetus is *already* inside (*iam dudumst intus* 741). He says that Demaenetus entered through a back alley because he was afraid that his wife would find him out (*ne uxor reciscat metuit* 743), and adds, "If your mother should find out about the money . . . what could happen . . ." (*de argento si mater tua sciat, ut sit factum . . .* 744).

These last lines are explicit foreshadowing--but the suspense does not happen because the audience is *worried* about Demaenetus. Quite the opposite: his posture as a helping character has just been removed, and he is now a blocking character. The audience knows that he must be eliminated as rival, and they are looking forward to it. Because they know how much Demaenetus fears his wife, they may even be anticipating Artemona's entrance.

Act Four serves to heighten the suspense and provide some comic relief. Argyrippus' former rival Diabolus is dictating his contract with Philaenium to his parasite. The audience knows that Diabolus is no longer a threat to Argyrippus, so their laughter is provoked by the absurd amount of control Diabolus writes into his contract. At the end of the scene, the two go inside Cleareta's house, only to re-emerge seconds later. Diabolus is enraged to find out he can no longer buy Philaenium's services:

sequere hac. gone haec patiar aut taceam? Emori
 me malim, quam haec non eius uxori indicem.
 an tu²³ apud amicam munus adolescentuli
 fungare, uxori excuses te et dicas senem?
 praeripias scortum amanti atque argentum obicias
 lenae? suppiles clam domi uxorem tuam?
 suspendam potius me, quam tu haec tacita auferas.
 iamquidem hercle ad illam hinc ibo, quam tu prope diem
 nisi quidem illa ante occupasset te, effliges scio,
 luxuriae sumptus suppeditare ut possies.
 (810-19)

Follow me here! Shall I remain quiet about these things? I would rather die than not tattle on this man to his wife. Do you think you can do a young man's job with a girlfriend, then excuse yourself to your wife and call yourself an old man? That you can steal a whore for a lover and throw money at her madam? That you can pillage your home secretly from your wife? I would rather hang than let you get away with these actions secretly. By God, I'll go right now to that woman, whom I know you'll ruin if she doesn't get the best of you, just so that you can have the money for luxurious spending at hand.

Diabolus' motives are obviously suspect. But his accusations are telling. Most important is his juxtaposition of youth and age: *munus adolescenti* and *senex* in lines 812-13. This is a clear indication that Demaenetus is engaging in age-inappropriate behavior; we will see this accusation repeated, and the audience has every reason to agree that the behavior is inappropriate and not fun or sympathetic, given that Demaenetus' behavior is blocking the young lovers. In addition, Diabolus accuses him of stealing from the household.

Diabolus' accusations bring us to a problem; he is essentially accusing Demaenetus of age-inappropriate behavior and stealing. These accusations involve moral judgments that correspond with everyday norms. According to a theory that does not

²³ Leo has *ain tu?* instead of *an tu*.

permit everyday morality to enter into comedy, we should find breaking these norms funny. However, Demaenetus has just lost the audience's sympathy by revealing himself as a *senex amator*. More importantly, with Diabolus out of the way, Demaenetus is the only rival and blocking character to his son's romance. Demaenetus' age-inappropriate behavior is there not sympathetic. Moreover, his role as object of ridicule argues against his being "fun," in the sense of the audience identifying with his behavior.

Diabolus concludes by telling his parasite, "Go on, make trouble for him, stir up a dispute, tell her that he is drinking together with his own son at his girlfriend's house" (823-5). Two things are important here. The first is the explicit mention of stirring up trouble. This statement is predictive, and guides the audience's expectations: they now anticipate an exciting final act. The second important feature is Diabolus' specification that the parasite should mention Artemona's son. As we will see, the son's presence will be an important part of Artemona's concerns and will provide another charge against Demaenetus, that of corrupting his own child.

The stage is now set for the final denouement. Act Five begins with a tableau of Argyrippus, Demaenetus, and Philaenium. It is clear from the dialogue that Demaenetus is sleazy and Argyrippus is miserable, while Philaenium grins and bears it.²⁴ Argyrippus emphasizes his love for Philaenium (831, 845) but admits that *pietas* requires him to allow his father free rein (831). Demaenetus, on the other hand, begins by saying, "It doesn't bother you, does it, son, that I'm lying with her?" (*numquidnam tibi molestumst, gnate mi, si haec nunc mecum accubat?* 830). He insists that he still wants to be loved

²⁴ Pace Konstan, who classifies the scene as "pathetic and rather touching" (1978: 220, 1983: 54).

and not feared as a father (835), but when his son cannot produce a smile on demand (837-40), Demaenetus becomes distinctly unlovable. In reply to Argyrippus' plea that he would prefer his father to pick any other woman (845), Demaenetus replies, "But I want *her*" (*At ego hanc volo* 846). Finally, Demaenetus turns to a guilt-trip and says, "You *will* endure this one day, since I gave you the power to be with her for a whole year and I gave you the money" (*unum hunc diem perpetere, quoniam tibi potestatem dedi / cum hac annum ut esses atque amanti argenti feci copiam* 847-8). Demaenetus has finally found his paternal *potestas*, but he is now abusing it. Since Argyrippus is miserable and Demaenetus is unrepentant, there is no hope for Demaenetus' character to be redeemed. In fact, he must be punished.

Enter Artemona. We should recall that Demaenetus' own comments before her entrance are limited to two lines, fairly generic, and (as revealed above) rendered untrustworthy by his own behavior. The slaves' comments, on the other hand, have merely stressed that Demaenetus fears her and is dependent on her for money. While these remarks are negative, they do not suggest that Artemona is particularly fearsome.

When Artemona does come onstage, she is eavesdropping and musically accompanied. Both of these are generally taken as signs of a sympathetic character.²⁵ She is in shock after learning that her husband is unfaithful, and worse yet, corrupting her son:

Ain tu meum virum hic potare, obsecro, cum filio
et ad amicam detulisse argenti viginti minas
meoque filio sciente id facere flagitium patrem?
(851-3)

²⁵ On eavesdropping see Moore 1998b: 34-40 and Slater 134. On music see Moore 1999.

Are you saying that my husband is drinking here with his son, and that he has brought twenty *minae* to his girlfriend's house, and that this father is committing this outrage with my son as witness?

Artemona may not be happy that her husband is at a prostitute's house, but she is more concerned about her son.

The next exchange reveals that Artemona, rather than being fearsome, is actually rather naive:

ART. at scelestā ego praeter alios meum virum frugi rata
siccum, frugi, continentem, amantem uxoris
maxime.

PA. at nunc dehinc scito illum ante omnes minimi
mortalem preti
madidum nihili incontinentem atque osorem uxoris
suae.

ART. pol nī istaec vera essent, numquam faceret ea quae
nunc facit.

PA. ego quoque hercle illum antehac hominem semper
sum frugi ratus;
verum hoc facto sese ostendit, qui quidem cum filio
potet una atque una amicam ductet, decrepitis
senex.

ART. hoc ecastor est quod ille it ad cenam cottidie
ait sese ire ad Archidemum, Chaeream,
Chaerestratum,
Cliniam, Chremem, Cratinum, Diniam,
Demosthenem:
is apud scortum corruptelae est liberis lustris studet.
(856-67)

ART. But wretched me, I thought my husband was worth
more than the others: sober, honest, self-restrained,
and most loving towards his wife.

PA. But now you know that he is the most worthless
man of all: drunk, not at all self-restrained, and
most hateful towards his wife.

ART. By God, if these things weren't true, he would never
do what he's doing right now.

- PA. I too always thought he was an honest man before now: but by this action he shows his true self, when he drinks and whores together with his son--that broken down old man!
- ART. *This* is why he went to dinner every day: he says he's going to Archedemus', Charea's, Chaerestratus', Clinas', Chremes' Cratinus' Dinias', Demosthenes': He's really being a corrupting influence on his children, and hot for brothels.

Because Artemona reveals her previous opinion of her husband, she seems pitiable more than terrifying at this point. But two themes emerge: Artemona's concern for her son, and Demaenetus' age-inappropriate behavior. We should also note that it is the parasite, not Artemona, who starts with the age-based insults by calling Demaenetus *decrepitus*. Artemona will soon agree.

At this point, Artemona's characterization is questionable. She can be read as ridiculous because of her naivete: she obviously had no idea what her husband was doing. But her concern for her son is admirable, and as I have already argued, moral virtue is not incompatible with sympathy. Given that Demaenetus is not winning any sympathy, she is, at least, not wholly un-sympathetic, nor is she particularly fearsome.

The parasite suggests that Artemona order some maids to whisk Demaenetus off home (*iubere ancillas rapere sublimem domum* 868). But Artemona announces she wants to make him miserable (*miserum habebo* 869), to which the parasite responds "He will be, as long as he's married to you" (*ita fore ille, dumquidem cum illo nupta eris* 870). Artemona shoots back "I agree" (*ego censeo* 870).²⁶ This snappy comeback seizes the

²⁶ This translation follows Leo's punctuation of a full stop after *ego censeo*. Line 871 is a crux, making its interpretation, as well as its connection to line 870, unsure.

laughter from a bitchy-wife joke and re-allies the audience with Artemona.²⁷ By agreeing with the remark, Artemona does not confirm her belief in her own inherent shrewishness; rather, she asserts that she will make Demaenetus miserable in the future. She makes the audience laugh at her no-good husband, and not herself. Furthermore, this comment shows that Artemona, by seizing control, is becoming a comic agent in her own right.

Artemona then lists more offenses:

sum etiam rata hominem in senatu dare operam aut clientibus
ibi labore delassatum noctem totam stertere.
ille opera foris faciendo lassus noctu <ad me> advenit:
fundum alienum arat, incultum familiarem deserit.
is etiam corruptus porro suum corrumpit filium.
(871-75)

I thought that the man worked hard in the senate or for clients and
snored all through the night because he was exhausted from
working.
But he came home tired at night because he was doing yardwork:
He plowed another's field, and abandoned his own unsown.
He, already corrupt, further corrupts his own son.

Artemona's accusations have a clear moral/social duty embedded in them: they describe the appropriate actions for a *paterfamilias*--going to the Senate and attending to clients--but only to emphasize his neglect of them.²⁸ The field metaphor is likely sexual, but it may also be a general saying about attending to one's duties at home. Finally, Artemona is still concerned with the corruption of her son.

²⁷ It is possible that *censeo* has a political sense here, given the mention of *senatus* a few lines later. But Lodge does not identify this line as one in which *censeo* is used in its political sense ("*proprie*" 1924: 251), and *censeo* is frequently used simply to mean "think" (ibid. 151-2).

²⁸ Segal (1971:120) suggests that lines such as this "stress the lofty rank of the comic victim." It is unclear whether Segal is making a class-based argument here. It is true that there are class considerations in Plautine comedy, and possibly in this line. But the seriousness of the character's standing is certainly doubtful, given that we have already seen Demaenetus' fall from grace.

The parasite suggests that Artemona bash the man openly (*manifesto opprimere* 876), to which she replies that there is nothing she would rather do (877). The parasite encourages her one last time:

PA. possis, si forte accubantem tuum virum conspexeris
cum corona amplexum amicum, si videas, cognoscere?
AR. possum ecastor. PA. em tibi hominem. ART. perii!
(878-80)

PA. So, do you think you might be able to recognize your husband if he happened to be lying on a couch, wearing a crown, and snuggling with a girlfriend?
ART. Sure. PA. Well, there's your man. ART. I'm dead!

At this point we know that Artemona sees her husband. But the parasite's description of his attire serves two purposes: it emphasizes the revelry going on inside, but it also adds another note of ridicule to Demaenetus.

The action then turns to Demaenetus and Philaenium. Notably, only after Artemona is onstage and eavesdropping do we see her husband hurling his most hurtful insults. First he claims that nothing can induce him not to steal a *palla* from home as a gift for Philaenium (884-6). This statement establishes that Demaenetus is sleazy enough to steal from his wife. When Demaenetus steals a kiss from Philaenium, he remarks that it is much sweeter than one from his wife, since her breath smells worse than bilge-water (898-900).

While misogynist jokes and invective against women are certainly a part of Latin literature, in this scene we have a different context than in other genres. The fact that Artemona is eavesdropping, and thus aligned with the audience, combined with the fact that Demaenetus' behavior is clearly not winning him any sympathy, suggests that

Artemona belongs at the sympathetic end of the scale, while Demaenetus falls towards the ridiculous end of the scale. Thus, an audience that would certainly laugh derisively at Demaenetus' jokes in other contexts might be inclined to feel a little sorry for Artemona having to hear them from her own husband. When Artemona remarks that Demaenetus is "investing with interest" (*faenerato funditat*) and that she will take revenge on him by kissing him, she performs the same trick as before, and plays a misogynist joke off for her own gain. By getting the last word, Artemona makes the audience laugh, and gains the upper hand as well as the connection with the audience.

Argyrippus' presence also changes the reception of these misogynist jokes. He is disturbed by his father's abuse:

ARG.	quid ais, pater?
	ecquid matrem amas?
DE.	egone illam? nunc amo, quia non adest.
ARG.	quid cum adest?
DE.	periisse cupio.
	(899-901)
ARG:	What are you saying, dad?
	Don't you love mother at all?
DE.	I, love her? I love her now, when she's not here.
ARG.	What about when she <i>is</i> here?
DE.	I wish she were dead.

The audience would laugh at these jokes, but would also see that Demaenetus was pitted against his own son. In fact, on the scale of the audience's sympathy, we see that Philaenium and Argyrippus are higher, while Demaenetus is lower.

At this point, Artemona turns to revenge. She says, "Just you wait until you return home. I'll make you know how dangerous it is to speak ill of a dowered wife"

(*sine venias modo domum, faxo ut scias / quid periculi sit dotatae uxori vitium dicere* 902-3). At this point, Artemona does not seem to be planning on confronting him until he gets home. But when Demaenetus toasts his wife's death while throwing the dice (905), Artemona decides (and outright says) that she can't take it anymore (907). The parasite suggests it would be best to confront him face-to-face (*in oculos invadi optimumst* 908) and leaves.

The parasite's departure clears the stage, and now Artemona is, without a doubt, the controlling character of the scene. Upon entering the house, she first turns on Philaenium, and asks what Philaenium is doing with her husband. Philaenium quickly protests that it wasn't her idea, and that Demaenetus is boring her to death (920-21). From this point on, Artemona's wrath is focused on her husband. She repeats her phrase "Rise up, lover, and go home!" (*surge amator, i domum*) multiple times, and uses Demaenetus' own words against him: she lets him know that she knows that she is hateful to him, that her breath smells, and that he intends to steal her *palla*. This, again, allows Artemona to use her superior knowledge to get the last word. By addressing her husband sarcastically as *amator*, and repeating his insults back to him, she makes Demaenetus the object of the audience's laughter.

It is very important to note that, in addition to becoming the controlling character, Artemona has been the provocateuse of laughter, and not its object. She continues to provoke laughter as she directs the action. For instance, when Deamaenetus is first caught:

DE.	nullus sum.
ART.	immo es, ne nega, omnium pol nequissimus.

(922)

DE. I'm no one!
ART. That's not true--you're the most worthless
man of all. Don't deny it.

Remarks of this sort leave no doubt that Artemona is willfully making jokes at Demaenetus' expense. She is making the audience laugh at *him*, not at herself.

Further, Artemona is allied with the two lovers. When she accuses Demaenetus of planning to steal her *palla*, Philaenium and Argyrippus are quick to jump in:

ART. iam subrupuisti pallam, quam scorto dares?
PH. ecaster, qui subrupturum pallam promisit tibi.
DE. non taces?
ARG. ego dissuadebam, mater.
ART. bellum filium.

(929-31)

ART. Haven't you already stolen my cloak to give to the
whore?
PH. Actually, he promised [me] that he was *going* to steal
your cloak.
DE. Won't you shut up? ARG. I tried to dissuade him,
mother.
ART. Good boy.

Artemona's alliance with the lovers argues for her sympathetic reception by the audience. Especially with the slaves offstage, the two young people are the most sympathetic characters, and Demaenetus is the character who is blocking their potential happiness. It is clear that Artemona, by opposing him, is helping the lovers and amusing the audience.

The quarrel continues:

ART. istoscine patrem aequom est mores liberis largirier?
nilne te pudet?
DE. pol si aliud nil sit, tui me, uxor, pudet.

PH. immo intro potius: sequere hac me, mi anime.
 ARG. ego vero sequor.
 (938-41)

ARG. I was telling him not to do you wrong, Mom.
 PH. (to Artemona) Don't forget about the cloak!.
 DE. (to Argyrippus) Won't you tell her to lay off?
 ART. (to Demaenetus) Go home.
 PH. (to Demaenetus) Give me a kiss on your way out?
 DE. Go to hell!
 PH. I'd rather go inside. (to Argyrippus) Follow me in, my love.
 ARG. I am!

These are the last words spoken by the characters, and they are hilarious. Argyrippus and Philaenium are gloating over Demaenetus' deserved comeuppance while Artemona drags him out. The last line shows that the lovers are united--a typically happy ending. More important, the lovers are united in revenge with Artemona, and Demaenetus is the sole object of that revenge.

The epilogue of the play was apparently spoken by the whole troupe of actors.

hic senex siquid clam uxorem suo animo fecit volup,
 neque novom neque mirum fecit nec secus quam alii solent;
 nec quisquam est tam ingenio duro nec tam firmo pectore,
 quin ubi quicque occasionis sit sibi faciat bene.
 nunc si vultis deprecari huic seni ne vapulet,
 remur impetrari posse, plausum si clarum datis.
 (942-7)

Even if this old man had some fun unbeknownst to his wife,
 he didn't do anything new or remarkable, or different than anyone
 else.
 Nor does any man have such firm willpower in his mind that he
 won't do well by himself if the opportunity arises.
 Now, if y'all want to save this old man from a beating,
 We think it can be done, if you applaud loudly.

This epilogue is in great measure responsible for the solemn nature of past interpretations of the play's final act. In the epilogue alone have most critics seen the holiday mentality that they so crave. But that is because they have taken the epilogue just as over-seriously as the play itself. This epilogue cannot simply conjure up the spirit of holiday revelry to "save" an unhappy ending, nor does it contradict the general themes of the play. Like the *Casina's* epilogue, it shows that male adultery is not a problem. But this play did not argue against adultery per se; it argued against inappropriate behavior: making a spectacle of oneself, as Demaenetus' father did; losing control of oneself, or being so in love that one forgets one's self and duties; and playing the young lover when one is no longer young. In fact, as in the *Casina*, this epilogue implies that visiting a prostitute is generally acceptable when it is kept a secret. The epilogue does not imply that Demaenetus was in the right; it implies that the holiday spirit will be most apparent in the audience's ability to forgive and save a worthless and ridiculous *senex amator*.³⁰

I have argued that the *Asinaria's* denouement is a masterfully-crafted meting out of comic justice. Demaenetus' character is not entirely sympathetic from the beginning, nor is Artemona an unsympathetic shrew. In fact, Demaenetus is rendered ridiculous from the start by his self-ignorance and age-inappropriate behavior, which is insulted by several characters, and in the course of the play he becomes unsympathetic by his role as blocking character. These factors justify his downfall, and Artemona's role as comic avenger, just as they did in the *Casina*. Artemona, on the other hand, shows

³⁰ We may compare the epilogue to the *Bacchides*, where the troupe asserts that the two men would never have gotten themselves into such trouble (*flagitium facerent*) had they not been worthless from the start (*nihili . . . ab adulescentia*) (*Bacch.* 1207-10).

admirable concern for her son, and does not take revenge on her husband until he has spoken his most hurtful insults in her hearing. Her alliance with the lovers and Demaenetus' rivalry with his son further her connection with the audience. The last scene therefore constitutes an ending which the audience would consider both just and humorous. In fact, given the great pains that Plautus took to demonize Demaenetus in the final scene, the beating of Demaenetus could be no more disturbing than the beating of a pimp or other blocking character.

It is equally important to note that Artemona's active role as comic avenger prevents her from being merely the butt of Demaenetus' abuse or the audience's laughter. The dialogue of the last scene plainly demonstrates that she is the one controlling the action and making the audience laugh, a phenomenon which has a clear parallel in Cleostrata's control at the end of the *Casina*. Artemona, like Cleostrata, "steals" the laughter from her husband. Artemona furthers her son's love affair, just as Cleostrata did. We should see Artemona, like Cleostrata, as a justified comic heroine.

The issue of age-appropriate behavior as presented in this play and the *Casina* should make us re-evaluate the relationship of Roman comedy and morality. Holiday mentality does not equate with the removal of all moral judgments. The fact that other characters generally make jokes at the expense of the *senex amator* demonstrates that this character is meant to be ridiculed by the audience. This, in turn, argues that the age-inappropriate behavior described in the play itself is a moral judgment that exists simultaneously in the world of the play and in the spectators' minds.

In fact, even theorists like Frye and Segal imply that the ending of a comic play restores a certain morality, or returns to a shared set of social norms. In this play, and perhaps in general, critics have simply been too literal about reading the *end* of the play as "the moral part." In the *Asinaria*, the dramatic action of the plot demonstrates that a concern for the social norm of age-appropriate behavior runs throughout the play. Hence, we cannot say that the world of Plautine comedy is devoid of all morality.

In fact, we should begin to ask if the play does not impart or reinforce some social norms by ridiculing those who violate them. For what else can the *senex amator* signify to the audience? Surely the audience does not identify with this ridiculous figure. Rather, they hope that they are not him. And the plays do not merely suggest that the men's behavior would be acceptable if they were not caught. The derisive laughter emphasizes that the uncontrolled behavior in and of itself is not appropriate. The success of the young lover's romance, on the other hand, does encourage license in love--as a vice of youth, which even Cicero would later claim had to be forgiven.³¹

This question of audience identification lies at the heart of assumptions about sympathy. It is often assumed that the audience was exclusively or predominantly made up of Roman men, and that they would identify with characters who were also men. But even given that assumption, if we assume that in their holiday escapism these men want to see themselves as young bucks, we must admit that they are not identifying with Demaenetus--they are in fact identifying with Argyrippus. Argyrippus, in turn, is perfectly allowed to frequent brothels, have a girlfriend, and be kind of stupid, because he

³¹ E.g. *Cael.* 42, *Sen.* 12.

is young. Demaenetus' character, on the other hand, is not allowed to be overly emotional or stupid, and is punished for his behavior.

Mercator

Compared to other *senex amator* / *uxor dotata* plays, the *Mercator* has received relatively little scholarly attention. In the nineteenth century and beyond, it was considered one of Plautus' less worthwhile plays, both because of its style and because of its "obscene" content.³² This is surprising, since the dialogue is some of Plautus' best, and nothing in this play is any more obscene than usual. For our purposes, the play demonstrates the character development of the *senex amator* most expansively, and demonstrates how the *uxor dotata*'s role fits in with other characters who joke about the *senex amator*.

The plot of the *Mercator* bears many similarities to that of the *Asinaria*: both have a *senex amator* in love with his son's concubine, as well as an *uxor dotata* who makes a fool of her husband. But in the *Mercator*, there are two sets of fathers and sons: Demipho, the first *senex amator*, and his son Charinus; and Lysimachus, another old man, and his son Eutychus--all of whom know each other. Charinus has bought a girlfriend, Pasicompsa, in Rhodes and returned home with her. The *uxor dotata* Dorippa is married to the *senex* Lysimachus, while we never see Demipho's wife. Lysimachus at first seems to show a little more sense than Demipho. Through a close reading of the

³² For an excellent summary of nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism, see Lefèvre 1995: 9-13. For a contrary view, see Norwood, who thought it was Plautus' best play (53).

play, however, it becomes clear that Lysimachus too has fallen under Pasicompsa's spell and become a *senex amator*.

In the *Mercator*, even more than in the *Asinaria*, age-inappropriate behavior is noted and ridiculed by a variety of characters, including Dorippa. But she does not have much stage time, since she does not make her first entrance until about half-way through the play. Thus, she has not received much critical attention. However, even passing remarks tell us how her character has been read: Lefèvre characterizes her as "überlegen-ironische," and Nixon's stage directions also indicate that her lines are to be spoken with dry irony.³³ Using "irony" to describe her comedy implies that she is an *eiron*, the one who pretends to less knowledge than she has, and shares this knowledge with the audience. And so she is: in her initial interactions with her husband Lysimachus, she suspects him (but does not accuse him outright) of being in love with a prostitute, a suspicion which the audience would recognize as justified. In order to understand her role, however, it is necessary to examine the play's general treatment of the *senex amator*, and to show how much time is devoted to making the *senes amatores* look ridiculous.

The first act of the play is notable for its lengthy expositions. The prologue is delivered by Charinus (1-110). We learn that he has just returned from Rhodes, and that he was sent there because he fell in love with a *meretrix*, to whom he was losing his father Demipho's money (*res patris* 43). Charinus tells us that his father Demipho berated him, and related his own stern upbringing, in which work was its own reward and he never had time to love (61-79). After the prologue, Charinus' slave Acanthio runs up

³³ Lefèvre 1995: 34; Nixon *passim*; cf. also Enk 150.

urgently. Through him we find out that Charinus' father Demipho has boarded the ship looking for his son and has seen the girl (181). Demipho asked who she was, and Acanthio told him that Charinus had bought her as a maid for his mother (201). After that, Demipho began to fondle the girl (*subigitare* 203-4). Charinus is now in a tizzy, because he did not want his father to find out about Pasicompsa at all, and now he is worried that his father will not believe such a pretty girl could be a maid (209-10), nor does he feel it is right to lie to his father (209).

These two scenes provide quite a bit of information about Demipho. We learn about his stern upbringing, only to find out in the next scene that he has taken a sexual interest in Pasicompsa. His status as a *senex amator* is established, but so too is his previously respectable behavior. On the other hand, he may have been lying. His goal, after all, was to chastise Charinus' behavior. In fact, Demipho will soon contradict what he told his son and remark that he has loved in his youth (264). It is impossible to know whether the audience would find Demipho's character suspect. But, at any rate, the rivalry between father and son has already been established, and we know the father is destined to lose. We also know that Charinus is a good son--he left for Rhodes because he did not want to cause trouble for his family, and now he is ashamed to lie to his father.

Act Two begins with Demipho's entrance. He has a long, bizarre monologue about the dream he had last night, which involved a beautiful she-goat (*formosa capra* 229) that was the object of his affections (*bene velle illi visus sum* 245). But the she-goat caused no end of trouble: she devoured the neighbor's wife's dowry, upset the she-goat he already owned, and was finally taken away by a goat kid. This dream accurately, if

metaphorically, describes the plot of the play. Demipho has already discerned the significance of the she-goat after his visit to the harbor:

atque ego illi aspicio forma eximia mulierem,
filius quam advexit meus matri ancillam suae
quam ego postquam aspexi, non ita amo ut sani solent
homines, sed eodem pacto ut insani solent.
amavi hercle equidem ego olim in adolescentia,
verum ad hoc exemplum numquam, ut nunc insanio.
unum quidem hercle iam scio, periisse me;
vosmet videte ceterum quanti siem.
nunc hoc profecto sic est: haec illast capra;
verum hercle simia illa atque haedus mihi malum
adportant, atque eos esse quos dicam hau scio.
sed contiscam, nam eccum it vicinus foras.
(260-71)

I saw there a really beautiful woman, whom my son had brought as a maid for his mother. After I saw her, I fell in love, not like a sane man, but just as crazy men do. I loved this way once, in my adolescence, but I was never as crazy as I am now. I know one thing--I'm done for. You'll see what I'm worth. This is how it goes: that girl is the she-goat. But, by God, that monkey and that goat-kid are bringing me trouble, and I don't know who they are. But I'll shut up, since my neighbor's coming out.

Here we see that Demipho is madly in love, and knows it. He himself admits that his passion is more appropriate for youth than age (264), but that even in his youth he was never as crazy as this (265). His status as *senex amator* is confirmed, but his relationship with the audience is debatable. Since he admits that his love is inappropriate to his age, he maintains some self-knowledge and does not quite come off as an *alazon*. But the audience knows that he is already in competition with his son, which may make him less sympathetic. Certainly, as the play progresses, Demipho's self-knowledge decreases and his ridiculousness increases.

Lysimachus enters, giving instructions to his slave and unwittingly playing out

Demipho's dream:

LYS. profecto ego illunc hircum castrari volo,
ruri qui vobis exhibet negotium.
DEM. nec omen illud mihi nec auspicium placet.
quasi hircum metuo ne uxor me castret mea,
atque illius haec nunc simiae partis ferat.³⁴
(273-6)

LYS. I want you to castrate that goat, who's causing you
trouble at the farm.
DEM. (Aside) I don't like this omen or augury! I'm afraid
that my wife will castrate me like that goat, and that
she will play the part of that monkey.

Though made unwittingly, Lysimachus' joke already puts Demipho in an inferior position and makes the audience laugh at his expense. Demipho's fear of metaphorical castration, combined with the prophetic dream, suggest to us that Demipho is in for trouble. After the two old men greet each other, the scene focuses on Lysimachus making fun of Demipho's ridiculous behavior. Their first exchange concentrates explicitly on

Demipho's age:

DEM. quid tibi ego aetatis videor?
LYS. Acherunticus,
senex vetus, decrepitus.
DEM. pervorse vides.
puer sum, Lysimache, septuennis.
LYS. sanum es,
qui puerum te esse dicas?
DEM. vera praedico.
(290-93)

DEM. How old do I seem to you?
LYS. Close to death, an ancient old man, pretty worn-

³⁴ Leo brackets 276.

down.
 DEM. Your vision is skewed. Lysimachus, I'm a seven-year-old boy!
 LYS. Are you sane, saying you're a boy?
 DEM. I am.

Lysimachus concludes that Demipho must be referring to the second childhood of senility, but Demipho rebukes him, saying he's twice as potent as he ever was. This dialogue sets the tone for the men's relationship throughout the play: Lysimachus will continue to make fun of Demipho's age-inappropriate behavior, while Demipho will feebly defend himself. Moreover, Lysimachus' jokes will have their expected effect on the audience: Lysimachus is the controlling character in this relationship, and he will continuously make the audience laugh *at* Demipho.

Not that Demipho isn't already ridiculous. He finally, and cagily, admits that he is in love:

DEM. hodie ire in ludum occepi litterarium,
 Lysimache. ternas scio iam.
 LYS. quid ternas?
 DEM. amo.
 LYS. tun capite cano amas, senex nequissime?
 DEM. si canum seu istuc rutilum sive atrumst, amo.
 (303-6)

DEM. Today I began grammar school, Lysimachus. I
 already know three words.
 LYS. What three?
 DEM. "I love you."
 LYS. Your grey head is in love, you worthless old man?
 DEM. Whether my head is grey, red or black, I'm in love.

Lysimachus' insults parallel Artemona's in the *Asinaria*: both mention grey hair (*canum caput*) and decrepitude (*decrepitus*). Both characters also say that such behavior defines a *nequissimus senex*. The fact that Lysimachus, who is Demipho's contemporary and

equal, uses these insults should make us reconsider Artemona's use of them. We cannot now say that her description of Demaenetus originates solely from her unpleasant, prudish, or sexually jealous nature. We must admit that both her insults and Lysimachus' are based on a more common conception of age-appropriate behavior.

In fact, Lysimachus repeats *decrepitus* a few lines later:

LYS. nam meo quidem animo vetulus decrepitus senex
tantidemst quasi sit signum pictum in pariete.

DEM. nunc tu me, credo, castigare cogitas.

LYS. egon te?

DEM. nihil est iam quod tu mihi suscenseas:
fecere tale ante alii spectati viri.
humanum amarest, humanum autem ignoscerest:
ne sis me obiurga, hoc non voluntas me impulit.

LYS. quin non obiurgo.

DEM. at ne deteriorem tamen
hoc facto ducas.

LYS. egon te? ah, ne di siverint.

(314-23)

LYS. In my opinion, a decrepit, little old man is about as
much use as a picture painted on a wall.

DEM. Now you're trying to chastise me, I think.

LYS. I am?

DEM. There's nothing you can be angry with me about:
Other respectable men have done it before me.
It is human to love, and it is also human to forgive.
Don't quarrel with me, please; my will doesn't
propel me in this matter.

LYS. I'm not quarreling.

DEM. Then don't think less of me.

LYS. Think less of you? God forbid.

Demipho's self-defense is the culmination of his behavior throughout this scene. He began by claiming he was a child young enough to attend school, which was ridiculous

enough coming from a sixty-year-old man.³⁵ That claim also showed that Demipho's self-awareness from the previous scene was fading fast. However, his defense that "other respectable men have done it," and his plea that it is not really his fault, may be more ridiculous still. Even his claim that "to love is human" is suspect. While this sentiment might normally find a soft spot in the audience's hearts, Lysimachus' presence and continual jokes make it unlikely. His sarcastic final remark, "Think less of you--God forbid," makes the audience laugh all the more at Demipho's outrageous behavior. Lysimachus departs, and Demipho announces his plans to go to the harbor and try to persuade his son to sell him the girl.

After Charinus is bullied into giving up the girl and both depart, Lysimachus comes to pick Pasicompsa up for Demipho. As we see Lysimachus' reaction to Pasicompsa, it is revealed that he may not be as sensible as we previously thought. Pasicompsa sweet-talks Lysimachus, repeatedly addressing him as *mi senex* (503, 508, 525), and making provocative remarks about how it usually goes better for bad girls than good ones (511). Lysimachus, for his part, does not seem immune to her charms. He tells her not to ruin such pretty eyes with crying (501) and tries to comfort her. However, Lysimachus still seems ahead of the game. He tells Pasicompsa that he is going to give her a sixty-year-old sheep to tend and fleece. The sheep is obviously Demipho, and the metaphor of fleecing sheep is one that is used of prostitutes getting what they want from unsuspecting men.³⁶ The fact that Lysimachus is able to see how Pasicompsa operates

³⁵ We find out from Lysimachus that Demipho is sixty (line 524).

³⁶ E.g., the Bacchis sisters, addressing two old men, extend the sheep metaphor over many lines near the end of the *Bacchides* (1122-1139).

shows that his wits are not entirely gone. The scene ends when Lysimachus tells Pasicompsa that, though he is not her owner, she will stay at his house for the day since his wife is away in the country. While this scene does not make Lysimachus a *senex amator*, it shows that his willpower is not as strong as we might have expected. We should also consider that Pasicompsa is plying her meretricious trade.³⁷ While she acts helpless to get the old man's sympathy, he reluctantly resists her charms.

Demipho enters and confirms his own ridiculous status as *senex amator*.

tandem impetravi ut egomet me corrumperem:
emptast amica clam uxorem et clam filium.
certumst, antiqua recolam et servibo mihi.
decurso spatio breve quod vitae relicuomst
voluptate, vino et amore delectavero.
nam hanc se bene habere aetatem nimio aequius.
adulescens quom sis, tum quom est sanguis integer,
rei tuae quaerundae convenit operam dare;
demum igitur quom sis senex, tum in otium
te conloces, dum potes ames: id iam lucrumst
quod vivis. hoc ut dico, factis persequar.
interea tamen huc intro ad me invisam domum:
uxor me exspectat iam dudum esuriens domi;
iam iurgio enicabit, si intro rediero.
verum hercle postremo, utut est, non ibo tamen,
sed hunc vicinum prius conveniam quam domum
redeam; ut mihi aedis aliquas conducat volo,
ubi habitet istaec mulier. atque eccum it foras.
(544-560)

At last I've achieved my own corruption! I've bought the girlfriend and kept it from my wife and son. I've decided to take up my old ways and please myself. With such a short time of life left, I'll enjoy pleasure, wine, and love. For it's only too just to treat myself well at my age. When you're a young man, and your blood is hearty, that's the appropriate time for taking care of business; at last, when

³⁷ As George notes, she is still presented as a passive object for possession, who must wheedle whoever owns her. (83-5)

you're old, you should give yourself free time, while you're still able to love--for then, every day you live is profit. I will follow up on what I've said with action. But meanwhile, I'll look in on my home: my wife has been waiting hungrily for me for a long time now. She'll do me in with quarreling, if I go inside. But, be that as it may--I won't go in. I'll drop in on my neighbor before returning home; I want him to rent a house for me, where that girl can live. But look--there's my neighbor.

This speech furthers Demipho's characterization as *alazon*. Pretending to be philosophical, he now claims that old age is the right time for pleasure and love. This is clearly in opposition to societal norms about old age. Demipho's use of *otium* is also significant: old age can be the time for leisure, but Demipho perverts the meaning of this word. Later in the play, we will see that even the idea of *otium* is still connected to men's duties to the state. While Demipho's behavior can be classified as a Saturnalian role-reversal, we should note two things. The first is his by now absolute self-ignorance, which guarantees his status as object of laughter. The second is the fact that role-reversal in and of itself may be funny but not sympathetic; as we saw in the *Asinaria*, age-inappropriate behavior is not necessarily something that the audience is supposed to identify with or forgive. They laugh at, and not with, the character. The fact that Demipho is in competition with his son is also a factor: he is a blocking character, and a ridiculous one at that. So while we can describe Demipho's behavior in terms of role-reversal, we should also remember what this means to the audience. Finally, Demipho's fear of his wife is worth considering. We have already seen that Demipho is misbehaving and has good reason to fear his wife. Moreover, the earlier mention of castration is still

in the audience's mind. The audience is expecting Demipho to be castrated, at least metaphorically, and they will expect a wife to arrive at some point as a comic avenger.

The next scene (562-87) shows more interaction between Lysimachus and Demipho. Noting Demipho's eagerness to get inside, Lysimachus calls him a castrated old sheep (*vervex* 567), and accuses him of having bad breath and being a hairy goat (*ieiunitatis plenus, anima foetida, senex hircosus* 569-70). We should note that the nature of the insults has changed: they have gone from criticism based on age-inappropriate behavior to more general insults appropriate to invective. The question is whether Lysimachus is now jealous of Demipho, having seen the girl. If so, the dynamic with the audience may have changed: they may laugh at Lysimachus' insults, but they may also laugh at Lysimachus himself now that he too is in love. Lysimachus suggests setting up a dinner to get Pasicompsa in the mood, and the two men leave to set it up. The fact that the two are shopping together may indicate that they are now sharing an interest in the girl. In his last line, however, Lysimachus warns Demipho that he must get Pasicompsa out of the house soon, because he fears that his wife will come back from the country (586-7).

Lysimachus' words prove prophetic. After a brief interval where the two young men discuss the possibility of finding out more about Pasicompsa's birth, Dorippa enters with her old servant Syra (667) saying that she has returned because of her woman's intuition (*ingenium* 668). While Syra carries their things inside, Dorippa makes an offering to Apollo:

Apollo, quaeso te, ut des pacem propitius,
salutem et sanitatem nostrae familiae,

meoque et parcas gnato pace propitius.
(678-80)

Apollo, I beg that you kindly give my household peace,
health, and propriety, and that you kindly spare my son.

Dorippa shows that she is a pious woman, and that she, like Artemona, has special concern for her son. Moreover, since Dorippa's son has no love affair going on, we know that she cannot be a blocking character. This suggests that her initial reception is sympathetic. In addition, as I have suggested, the old men are already in a position to be laughed at, and Demipho certainly deserves a comeuppance. Lysimachus, depending on whether or not he is overtly in love with Pasicompsa, may also deserve some comic justice. In fact, the audience will now be waiting for the fun to start, since they know that there is a courtesan in Dorippa's house.

Syra returns, very agitated, and tells Dorippa that there is a hooker in the house (*mulier meretrix* 685). Dorippa goes inside to investigate, and Lysimachus enters, announcing that he has hired a cook. Almost immediately, Dorippa re-enters. After he greets Dorippa, Lysimachus asks how the country folk (*rustici*) are doing, and Dorippa replies that they are behaving much more chastely than the city folk (714). She proceeds to question Lysimachus mercilessly about the girl--who she is, whose she is, and what she is doing inside. Lysimachus plays innocent, and whines:

LYS. non possum, ita instas; urges quasi pro noxio.
DOR. scio, innoxius.
(723-4)

LYS. I can't, you're pushing me so much; you press
me as though I'm guilty.
DOR. (Sarcastically) Oh, I'm sure you're not.

After more blustering, Lysimachus claims that he was made an arbitrator (*iudex*) in the girl's case (733). Dorippa is unconvinced:

DOR. *iudex? iam scio:
nunc tu in consilium istam advocavisti tibi.*

LYS. *immo, sic: sequestro mihi datast.*

DOR. *intellego.*
(735-7)

DOR. Judge? Oh, I'm sure. And now you've called her
into counsel with you.

LYS. No, it's like this: she was given to me for
safekeeping.

DOR. I see.

Dorippa has the upper hand in this scene. Her husband frantically tries to make excuses, and squirms as Dorippa makes it clear that she does not believe him. Moreover, her remarks, though brief, contribute to the ironic character that Nixon and Lefèvre saw. It is worth noting that by reading Dorippa as an *eiron*, we must admit that she is sympathetic. An *eiron* operates by pretending to be less than (s)he is. In this case, rather than accusing Lysimachus outright, Dorippa feigns ignorance; by doing so, she shares her knowledge (or at least suspicion) of the real situation with the audience and uses it to torment her husband. This makes the audience laugh at the husband.

Things go from bad to worse when the cook arrives, and, in Dorippa's presence, proclaims the benefits of cooking for a lover: the lover will be occupied looking, embracing, kissing, and chatting (*videre, amplecti, osculari, alloqui* 745), so the cooks will take home most of the food. Lysimachus frantically tries to deny that he has ordered the lovers' meal, but the cook will not be stopped.

COC. *haecin tua est amica, quam dudum mihi*

te amare dixti, quom obsonabas?
 LYS. non taces?
 COC. satis scitum filum mulieris. verum hercle anet.
 LYS. abin dierectus?
 COC. haud malast.
 LYS. an tu malu's.
 COC. scitam hercle opinor concubinam hanc.
 (753-57)

COC. Is this the girlfriend who you told me you were in
 love with, while you were shopping?
 LYS. Shut up, will you?
 COC. She's a fine piece of work. Maybe a little old. . .
 LYS. Get the hell out of here, OK?
 COC. She's not bad.
 LYS. But you are.
 COC. Really, I think she'll be a fine concubine.

Here we find out that Lysimachus is, without doubt, a *senex amator*. He *has* fallen in love with Pasicompsa, and he has even shared that information with the cook.³⁸ In this interaction, the cook is the controlling character and comic agent: he makes Lysimachus the object of the audience's laughter, while Lysimachus tries desperately to escape his wife's wrath.

The cook continues to get Lysimachus into hot water. He reminds Demipho that this cannot be his wife since he just said she was in the country. Moreover, he adds, Lysimachus said he hated her like a snake (*dixeras te odisse aequae atque anguis* 760).³⁹ Lysimachus appeals to his wife, telling her he never said any such thing, but Dorippa

³⁸ It is, of course, debatable whether the cook is telling the truth about Lysimachus' infatuation, and if he really does not know who Dorippa is. If he does know, he is feigning ignorance and willfully getting Lysimachus in trouble. If he does not, he is merely the unwitting agent of Lysimachus' destruction. However, given that the cook has a distinct purpose, i.e., to get his pay, and that he makes a fairly pointed nasty remark (about Lysimachus fearing his wife, 768) we should identify him as an intentional comic agent rather than an unintentionally-harmful dimwit.

³⁹ Leo considers this line corrupt and brackets *aequae*.

responds: "Do you deny it? It's clear you hate me" (*Etiam negas? palam istaec fiunt, te me odisse* 763-4). The cook, ostensibly trying to make things better, tells Dorippa, "No, no, he didn't say he hated you, but his wife, who's in the country" (765). Finally, Lysimachus outright tells the cook that Dorippa is his wife, at which point the cook suggests that Lysimachus is afraid of her (768). The cook makes Lysimachus squirm, just as Dorippa did. Finally, after being paid, the cook leaves. At this point, Dorippa cannot stand it any more, and she demands that Syra get her father (787-8). She leaves, never to return.

Both Dorippa and the cook make jokes at Lysimachus' expense. Lysimachus, on the other hand, cannot successfully direct the audience's laughter. It is still possible that the audience would feel sorry for him, given that he is not the puffed-up and delusional *senex amator* that Demipho is. In addition, he is not the one who bought Pasicompsa. Thus, his crimes are forgivable. But it is important to note that Dorippa, far from being the lone and shrewish voice of morality, works in conjunction with other characters in the play: Lysimachus himself condemned Demipho for exactly the sort of behavior that he is now practicing, and the cook, too, makes Lysimachus the object of laughter. All of this is to say that Lysimachus' behavior is not rewarded.

Lysimachus arrives cursing Demipho and Pasicompsa, and as he enters his house, he suggests to his wife that they might as well enjoy the dinner he bought. Syra returns, looking for Dorippa, and runs into Eutychus. Seeing Syra, Eutychus asks if his mother is back. Syra replies: "Yes, and with good result for herself and her household!" (*Sua quidem salute ac familiai maxuma* 811). When Eutychus asks what has happened, Syra

tells him that his father has introduced a girlfriend into the house (*amicam adduxit intro in aedis* 813), and that when his mother came back, she found her at home (*adveniens mater eam offendit domi* 814). Eutychus is concerned, and goes inside to check the situation out. Before departing, Syra delivers a monologue on the double standard of fidelity, which again implies Dorippa's innocence and Lysimachus' bad behavior.⁴⁰

The final scene begins with Demipho trying to soothe Lysimachus, who is worried about his wife. Before long, the two young men re-enter. Eutychus tells his father that Dorippa has been pacified (*sedatam* 962, *placida et placata* 965) and formally addresses Demipho: "I announce to you that you have no girlfriend" (*tibi amicam esse nullam nuntio* 966). Eutychus levels his accusations at Demipho:

EUT. nam te istac aetate haud aequom filio fuerat tuo
adulescenti amanti amicam eripere emptam argento
suo.

DEM. quid tu ais? Charini amicast illa?

EUT. ut dissimulat malus!

DEM. ille quidem illam sese ancillam matri emissee
dixerat.

EUT. propterea igitur tu mercatu's, novos amator, vetus
puer?

LYS. optume hercle, perge <tu>, ego adsistam hinc
altrinsecus.
quibus est dictis dignus, usque oneremus ambo.
(972-78)

EUT. Why, the impropriety of a man of your age, to seize
his son's sweetheart, when he's young, and loves
her, and had bought her with his own money!

DEM. What's that? She, the sweetheart of Charinus?

EUT. (to his father) How the villain dissembles!

DEM. But he said he had bought her as a maid for his
mother!

⁴⁰ The monologue will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

EUT. So that was why you purchased her, young lover?
Eh, old boy?

LYS. A good point, by Jove! Keep it up, son, I'll station
myself on the other side of him! Let's both give
him a good load of the language he deserves!

Demipho's ridiculous and age-inappropriate behavior is made an object of derision. The
rest of the scene focuses on Demipho being insulted by Lysimachus and Eutychus.

Eutychus accuses him of injuring an innocent son (988) and concentrates on getting
Demipho to give Pasicompsa back to Charinus. Lysimachus returns to making fun of
Demipho, calling him *larva* (980-81) and lecturing him on age-appropriate behavior.

LYS. temperare istac aetate istis decebat artibus.

DEM. fateor, deliqui profecto.

LYS. etiam loquere, larva?
vacuom esse istac ted aetate his decebat noxiis.⁴¹
itidem ut tempus anni, aetatem aliam aliud
factum condecet.
nam si istuc ius est, senecta aetate scortari senes,
ubi locist res summa nostra publica?

DEM. ei, perii miser.

LYS. adulescentes rei agendaest i magis solent operam
dare.

(982-7)

LYS. At your age, you should be governed by civility.

DEM. I confess, I was wrong!

LYS. Are you still talking, worm?
Your time of life should be free from obnoxious
behavior. For just as there are different years of life,
different actions befit different times of life. For if
this situation were acceptable, and old men went a-
whoring in their advanced age, where would the
most important affairs of state hang?

DEM. I'm done for.

LYS. Young men ought to be busy doing those things.

⁴¹ Leo brackets this line.

Here, Lysimachus makes the connection between age and civic responsibility explicit. When Demipho repents, and says he only want his son's forgiveness for the injury, Lysimachus sarcastically says: "Beg him to overlook the delectations of your hot young blood!" (*ora ut ignoscat delictis tuis atque adolescentiae* 994). Eutychus threatens to tell Demipho's wife, but decides not to in order to shorten the play. It is agreed that all will go inside and discuss their business, and Eutychus reassures his father once again that his mother is not angry.

The epilogue is delivered by Eutychus:

immo dicamus senibus legem censeo,
prius quam abeamus, qua se lege teneant contentique sint.
annos gnatus sexaginta qui erit, si quem scibimus
si maritum sive hercle adeo caelibem scortarier,
cum eo nos hac lege agemus: inscitum arbitrabimur,
et per nos quidem hercle egebit qui suum prodegerit.
neu quis quam posthac prohibeto adolescentem filium
quin amet et scortum ducat, quod bono fiat modo;
siquis prohibuerit, plus perdet clam qua si praehibuerit
palam.
haec adeo ut ex hac nocte primum lex teneat senes.
bene valete; atque, adulescentes, haec si vobis lex placet,
ob senum sercle industriam vos aequom est clare plaudere.
(1015-26)

Before we go, I move that you pass a law for old men to keep and be restrained by. Whatever sixty-year-old, be he married or single, takes a whore, if we find out about it, we will treat him in accordance with the law, and we shall think him foolish; and by our doing, whoever goes through his own property will be a pauper. Nor shall anyone prevent his adolescent son from loving and whoring, so long as he does so within due bounds; if anyone does stop his son, he will lose more financially than if he had provided the money in the first place. Let the law hold old men starting tonight. Good-bye, be well, and you young men, if you like this law, it's only right that you clap loudly, for the sake of the old men's enthusiasm for trying.

The epilogue emphasizes the same themes that have been prominent in the rest of the play: age-appropriate behavior, especially when it comes to having love affairs, and money. Any man who does not behave in an age-appropriate manner is foolish (*inscitus*), as has been amply demonstrated by the action of the play. In this regard there is a clear intersection of social norms and comic justice. Demipho's punishment at the end parallels Demaenetus' in the *Asinaria*: it is deserved, comically just, and funny to the audience. Further, this prologue, like the others, puts a high value on being discreet. Once again, the threat is contingent on being found out.

In the *Mercator*, age-appropriate behavior is a constant theme. The fact that multiple characters make fun of Demipho shows that insults about age are not solely the prerogative of *uxores dotatae*: in this play, we see a young man, an old man, and a cook making jokes at the *senex amator*'s expense. From this play, we can better define how morality intersects with comedy. The holiday spirit can forgive vices--as long as they are age-appropriate. The young man who bought a girlfriend gets to keep her, and even if Charinus is extreme when it comes to emotions, he is forgiven precisely because he is an adolescent. The old men, however, appear ridiculous when they try to pursue love affairs. Lysimachus is punished when his wife comes home unexpectedly. The cook makes things even worse, but Lysimachus eventually learns his lesson. Demipho, on the other hand, needs the final taunting in the last scene to admit that he was wrong and return to his proper place as a responsible old man. Thus, societal norms about age are enforced rather than overturned. This enforcement occurs not only at the ending, but

throughout the entire play: Demipho's ridiculous behavior is a continual butt of jokes and source of the audience's laughter.

As I have shown, Demipho's and Lysimachus' status as objects of derision should make us question the assumption that Dorippa would be unsympathetic. She is no different from other characters who make jokes at the expense of the *senes amatores*. Her behavior may be moral (she is concerned about her son and her household), but it also fits in with the comic lesson of the play. We should not assume that the audience would react differently to her than to any other character making jokes.

Menaechmi

Leaving plays about married life, we now turn to a play about escaping married life. The *Menaechmi* may be the play that inspired Segal's Saturnalian model,⁴² and it is certainly the play that best fits a model associating prostitutes with pleasure and wives with duty. The Menaechmus who lives at Epidamnus has an unhappy marriage, and we see his relief when he escapes from his wife into the arms of his favorite prostitute. His wife, an unnamed *matrona*, could be the least sympathetic married woman in Plautus. However, we need to examine the play in the same terms as the other *uxor dotata* plays. The Menaechmi are not *senes amatores*; in fact, one is addressed as *adulescens* (135). Yet, while age-inappropriate behavior is not the issue at stake, other behavior makes Epidamnian Menaechmus a ridiculous character. Because of this, the *matrona* has scenes similar to those between the *senes amatores* and their wives. We should be careful not to

⁴² Segal (1969) treats this play in a separate article.

read Epidamnian Menaechmus too easily as the primary character with whom the audience identifies, nor should we assume that his wife is entirely unsympathetic. Finally, the play can show us something about the contrast between wives and prostitutes onstage and how the audience's reading of the situation might differ from the characters'.

We know from the prologue that two brothers were separated as toddlers and brought up in different towns: one in Epidamnus, one in Syracuse. Syracusan Menaechmus is on his way to Epidamnus to find his brother. In addition, we learn that Epidamnian Menaechmus has an *uxor dotata* (61). After a monologue by the parasite Peniculus, Epidamnian Menaechmus makes his entrance, arguing with his wife:

Ni mala, ni stulta sies, ni indomita imposque animi,
quod viro esse odio videas, tute tibi odio habeas.
praeterhac si mihi tale post hunc diem
faxis, faxo foris vidua visas patrem.
nam quotiens foras ire volo,
me retines, revocas, rogitas,
quo ego eam, quam rem agam, quid negoti geram,
quid petam, quid feram, quid foris egerim.
portitorem domum duxi, ita omnem mihi
rem necesse eloqui est, quidquid egi atque ago.
nimium ego te habui delicatam; nunc adeo ut facturus
dicam.
quando ego tibi ancillas, penum,
lanam, aurum, vestem, purpuram
bene praebeo nec quicquam eges,
malo cavebis si sapis,
virum observare desines.
atque adeo, ne me nequiquam serves, ob eam industriam
hodie ducam scortum ad cenam atque aliquo condicam
foras.

(110-24)

If you weren't troublesome, stupid, uncontrollable, and mad, you would hate what you see is hateful to your husband. If you act like this to me after today, I'll make sure you return to your father as a divorcée. For, as many

times as I try to go out, you hold me back, call me back,
and ask me where I'm going, what I'm doing, what business
I'm transacting, what I did while I was out. I feel like I've
married a customs agent, since I have to tell you whatever I
did and whatever I'm doing. I've kept you too delicately;
now I'll tell you what I'm going to do in future: since I
supply you well with maids, food, wool, gold, clothes, and
purple dye, nor do you lack anything, you'll watch out for
trouble if you're smart, and stop spying on your husband.
And furthermore, so you won't be spying in vain, I'll take a
whore to dinner and go out on the town for your trouble.

This passage introduces the Plautine marriage in a way that has been taken as the norm: loveless, verbally abusive, and generally unhappy. There is no doubt that most married men in the audience would chuckle at Menaechmus' complaints, and think of their own wives' bothersome habits. Aside from the initial insults, the bulk of Menaechmus' complaints focus on his wife's questions when he goes out. Obviously, Menaechmus feels that his wife is questioning him because she suspects his activities, and that he should not have to be answerable to her. He implies that a good wife should unquestioningly accept his comings and goings. This is a male fantasy, with which most married men in the audience would probably agree. Menaechmus' complaints, however, have been privileged to an astounding degree by modern critics for reading the rest of the play.⁴³ Plautus' audience's reaction to this soliloquy was most likely based less on a profound philosophical conception of marriage and more on personal experience, and the audience's allegiance will change in the course of the play.

⁴³ Modern critics tend to use *morigera* as the sole characteristic on which to judge a marriage, as discussed on p. 3. Williams has the most thorough article on *morigera*, and Treggiari distills Williams' discussion into three pertinent ideals: that of faithfulness to one man, that of wifely obedience, and that of the eternal marriage-bond (230). However, she expands greatly on the meaning of these ideals (232-61).

Another important issue is that of economic resources. Menaechmus feels that he has done his duty by providing his wife with goods, some of which are luxurious, some of which are not. I will return to the question of money and luxury in the next chapter. The essential component to recognize is that, in Menaechmus' own definition of marriage, he fulfills his duty merely by providing his wife with goods. However, since the audience already knows that his wife is an *uxor dotata*, his claim of providing her with goods may seem questionable.

At any rate, the audience would likely sympathize with Menaechmus at this point, especially given that he is the center of audience attention. But this relationship changes very soon. After hearing Menaechmus' rant, the parasite Peniculus, as yet unseen by Menaechmus, comments:

illic homo se uxori simulat male loqui, loquitur mihi;
nam si foris cenat, profecto me, haud uxorem, ulciscitur.
(125-6)

That man over there pretends he's abusing his wife, but he's talking to me; if he dines out today, he punishes me, not his wife.

This comment changes the audience's focus, and perhaps their view of Menaechmus. By making this joke, and keeping himself as an unseen observer, Peniculus allies himself with the audience, and invites them to observe Menaechmus through his own eyes--as a meal-ticket. Peniculus will become the controlling character, and his constant presence will provide cues for the audience's reaction to Menaechmus.

Menaechmus then addresses the audience directly, asking where the "married lovers" (*amatores mariti* 128) are. He frames his interaction with his wife in military

terms, and asks the audience if they will not congratulate him on his valiant fight (129). He then produces a *palla*⁴⁴ and announces that he has stolen it from his wife and is bringing it to his whore (130), saying, "This is a fine, noble, charming, and artfully done deed!" (*hoc facinus pulchrumst, hoc probumst, hoc lepidumst, hoc factumst fabre* 132). But in the next breath, he admits that the *palla* is being carried straight to financial loss (*ad damnum deferetur* 133).

Menaechmus' own logic is important for understanding the limits of inversion of social norms. Importantly, he admits that he is bringing financial loss (*damnum*) on himself by visiting a prostitute--clear indication that, though holiday morality may have lifted some constraints, it has not eradicated all social definitions, even within the world of the play. The association of prostitution with *damnum* is found all over Plautus and is admitted by prostitutes themselves. But it is not at all a fantasy; the audience should have no trouble believing that real prostitutes' goals are financial. None of this is to say that Menaechmus is less funny. But it is important to remember that even at this point in the play, we cannot say that all definitions of right and wrong have been suspended or totally inverted.

Peniculus reveals his presence, addressing Menaechmus as *adulescens* (135). This is the only time we see a direct reference to Menaechmus' age. It is uncertain whether Peniculus is making a joke by calling him a young man, but it is certain that Menaechmus is not a *senex*. A younger age is also suggested by Menaechmus' apparent

⁴⁴ Sadashige(95-105) has an interesting analysis of the *palla*'s function in this play. In her reading, the garment serves not only as a marker of gender, but also as a marker of female identity-- the *palla* delineates the *matrona*'s standing. Thus, its transference to Erotium blurs the women's identities.

lack of children. Menaechmus then shows off the *palla* to Peniculus, comparing himself to a picture of Ganymede:

MEN. dic mi, enumquam tu vidisti tabulam pictam in
pariete
ubi aquila Catameitam raperet aut ubi Venus
Adoneum?
PEN. saepe. sed quid istae picturae ad me attinent?
MEN. age me aspice.
ecquid adsimulo similiter?
PEN. quis istest ornatus tuos?
(143-6)

MEN. Tell me, did you never see a picture painted on a
wall, where the eagle was seizing Ganymede or
Venus seized Adonis?
PEN. Often. But what do those pictures have to do with
me?
MEN. (putting on the *palla*) Just look at me.
Don't I look just like them?
PEN. What kind of get-up is that?

Menaechmus is unwittingly comparing himself to a passive homosexual (Ganymede), or a passive heterosexual (Adonis), which is only the beginning of jokes about his effeminacy. From indications in the next scene, it seems likely that Menaechmus actually puts on the woman's cloak and wears it until he gives it to Erotium. In fact, Menaechmus' cross-dressing will be a running joke throughout the play.

Menaechmus then demands that Peniculus smell the cloak, to which Peniculus replies: "It's best to sniff the upper part of a woman's garment, for from that part the nose is tainted by an unsavory odor" (*summum olfactare oportet vestimentum muliebre/ nam ex istoc loco spurcatur nasum odore inutili* 167-8). When Menaechmus accuses Peniculus of being too daintily disgusted (*fastidis*), Peniculus replies, "So I should be"

(*deceit* 169). This interchange is rife with satiric implications. The associations of nose, smell, and oral sex make "smelling" the lower portion of a woman suggest cunnilingus.⁴⁵

By showing his disgust, Peniculus announces the social implications of Menaechmus' action--Menaechmus is not only ridiculous, but risks accusations of improper sexual behavior. Menaechmus may be funny because he is prancing around in a woman's garment, but he is crossing the line of social respectability. Peniculus draws the audience's attention to this fact and makes Menaechmus the object of laughter.

Erotium now enters, addressing Menaechmus as her sweetheart (*anime mi* 181).

Menaechmus, overwhelmed by emotion, cannot contain himself:

MEN. ut ego uxorem, mea voluptas, ubi te aspicio, odi
male.

ERO. interim nequis quin eius aliquid indutus sies.
quid hoc est?

MEN. induviae tuae atque uxoris exuviae, rosa.
(189-91)

MEN. I hate my wife so much when I see you, darling.⁴⁶

ERO. Yet meanwhile you can't help wearing her clothes.
What's this?

MEN. My wife's castoffs and your cast-ons, my
love.

The comment about hating one's wife is one that we have seen already in the *Asinaria*.

The audience laughs at this joke, but even if Menaechmus has regained their alliance, he does not retain control of the audience's laughter. When Erotium indicates that he is wearing the *palla* and makes a joke about it, he is again made the object of laughter.

Peniculus then tells him to either take off the *palla* or dance (195-7), another joke

⁴⁵ On these associations, see Richlin 26-8.

implying effeminacy.⁴⁷ Both these remarks encourage the audience to laugh not only at Menaechmus' cross-dressing, but also at the implications it has for his sexuality.

Though Peniculus and Erotium band together as comic agents who make fun of Menaechmus, it is Peniculus who primarily controls the audience's laughter. While Menaechmus romances Erotium, Peniculus makes asides to the audience. These are of the utmost importance for interpreting the audience reaction to both Menaechmus and Erotium. Peniculus, for one, doesn't believe that Erotium is sincere, saying: "A prostitute is sweet only so long as she sees something to grab" (*meretrix blanditur, dum illud quod rapiat videt* 193). Peniculus' main focus is Erotium's financial motives. For instance, when Menaechmus presents the *palla* to Erotium, she responds enthusiastically:

ERO. hoc animo decet animatos esse amatores probos.
PEN. qui quidem ad mendicitatem se properent detrudere.
MEN. quattuor minis ego emi istanc anno uxori meae.
PEN. quattuor minae perierunt plane, ut ratio redditur.
(203-6)

ERO. That's the spirit that should inspire real lovers.
PEN. (aside) --at least those who are eager to be
impoverished.
MEN. I bought that there cloak last year for my wife--it
cost me four minae.
PEN. (aside) Four minae lost forever, when the account is
figured.

Peniculus forces the audience to focus on the financial nature of the transaction between Erotium and Menaechmus, and his reckoning of accounts reminds the audience that

⁴⁶ On reading this line, one cannot help but think of Frank Burns' inept compliments to Major Margaret "Hotlips" Houlihan on the television series *M*A*S*H*.

⁴⁷ As Corbeill 129 notes. For a more general analysis of dancing in invective, see Corbeill 135-9.

prostitutes are equivalent to financial loss.⁴⁸ Peniculus' presence and remarks take away from the "romance" between Erotium and Menaechmus. By exposing Erotium, Peniculus must also cast light on Menaechmus' credulity. Despite Menaechmus' belief that Erotium lives to be obliging to him (*una vivis meis morigera moribus* 202), Peniculus' comments show that this is not the real situation. The audience, then, would be forced to reconsider "romantic" relationships with prostitutes and women who were *morigerae*.

A final consideration in the scene is Menaechmus' own role as amorous *miles gloriosus*. Upon entering he claims that Erotium must judge a contest: there will be a battle (*proelium*) of drinking at her house, to see who is the better wagger of war (*bellator*) in her legion (*legio* 184-7). Further, when he presents the *palla* to Erotium, he claims that his theft rivals that of Hippolyta's girdle and that Hercules never had such danger (200-202). These claims, already ridiculous, would be rendered even more so by Menaechmus' effeminate attire and questionable sexuality.

Erotium agrees to provide dinner, and the two men decide to drink while the cook shops for provisions. The first act, then, presents Epidamnian Menaechmus as quite a ridiculous character. While he begins the play in alliance with the audience, Peniculus quickly takes over the role of controlling character. Erotium, when she is not manipulating Menaechmus, allies herself with Peniculus to make fun of Menaechmus. This puts Menaechmus at the bottom of the sympathy scale. Menaechmus' effeminate behavior is the equivalent of a *senex amator*'s age-inappropriate behavior in terms of

⁴⁸ It is of course ironic, that Peniculus, himself a source of *damnum*, should be concerned about

provoking audience laughter: it is funny because it is ridiculous, a fact that is clearly indicated by other characters' remarks about it.

The next act begins with the arrival of the Syracusan Menaechmus. The comedy of errors begins when the cook happens upon Syracusan Menaechmus and mistakes him for Epidamnian Menaechmus. Next, Erotium enters, and before she sees Syracusan Menaechmus, she reveals her true feelings about Epidamnian Menaechmus:

sternite lectos, incendite odores! munditia
inlecebra animos amantium.
amanti amoenitas malost, nobis lucrost.
sed ubi ille est quem coquos ante aedis esse ait? atque
 eccum video.
qui mihi est usui et plurimum prodest.
 (353-8)

Set the couches out, and light the incense! Neatness
is an enticement to the soul of lovers.
Kindness is a trap for the man in love, but a profit for us.
But who does the cook say is at the door? Oh, I see.
It's the very man who is useful and most beneficial to me.

In these lines, Erotium frankly acknowledges Menaechmus' role as financial benefactor to her house, as well as her own manipulation of him. These lines confirm the insincerity of her earlier endearments to Menaechmus, already noted by Peniculus.

Erotium approaches Syracusan Menaechmus and his slave Messenio. Menaechmus is suspicious, and gives his wallet to Messenio to see whether the prostitute loves him and not his money (*scibo utrum haec me mage amet an marsuppium* 385-6). Because Erotium has already gotten something from Epidamnian Menaechmus, she does not ask for anything from Syracusan Menaechmus: she offers him her services for free.

Menaechmus' financial well-being.

After a while, Menaechmus decides to go along with everything she says and see what happens (418-20). Erotium then escorts Syracusan Menaechmus into her house.

The next scene begins several hours later, when Peniculus enters and announces that he has been ditched by (Epidamnian) Menaechmus (446-65). Immediately after this monologue, Syracusan Menaechmus enters from Erotium's house, assuring her he will take the *palla* to the embroiderers. The fact that Erotium is evidently already asking her benefactor to improve upon his gift reminds the audience that she is using Epidamnian Menaechmus as a source of financial gain. As Peniculus remains to the side, Menaechmus announces:

pro di immortales, quoi homini umquam uno die
boni dedistis plus, qui minus speraverit?
prandi, potavi, scortum accubui, apstuli
hanc, quoius heres numquam erit post hunc diem.
(473-6)

Immortal gods, to what man have you given more when he
hoped for less? I ate, drank, had a whore, and walked away
with this cloak, whose owner will never see it after today.

He concludes: "I've never done so well at so little expense" (*minore nusquam bene fui dispendio* 484). Syracusan Menaechmus, unlike Epidamnian Menaechmus, is not deluded about the nature of his relationship with Erotium. He knows that the relationship with her is financial, a trade of goods for services, and rejoices in the fact that he got a freebie. In fact, he takes advantage of her by appropriating the *palla* for himself.

Peniculus confronts Syracusan Menaechmus, who of course doesn't recognize him or understand why Peniculus is angry. Peniculus tries to remind him of the events of his theft of the *palla* from his wife (509), to which Menaechmus responds that he has no

wife (509-10). When Peniculus reminds him that he put on the *palla*, Syracusan

Menaechmus is incensed:

vae capiti tuo!
omnis cinaedos esse censes, tu quia es?
tun med indutum fuisse pallam praedicas?
(512-4)

Go to hell! Do you think everyone's a passive homosexual,
just because you are? Are you telling me that I was
wearing women's clothing?

Syracusan Menaechmus is obviously not the type of man to wear a dress and is outraged that anyone would suggest the idea. The audience has quickly found out that Syracusan Menaechmus shares none of Epidamnian Menaechmus' effeminacy or lack of financial sense. Peniculus, frustrated by his unsuccessful attempts to get dinner, exits and threatens to tell Menaechmus' wife about his affairs (518-19).

A maid then comes in from Erotium's house and tells Syracusan Menaechmus that Erotium wants him to take a bracelet to the jeweler's. She reminds him that he stole the bracelet from his wife's jewelry box long ago (531-2), and asks him to have some earrings made for herself. Menaechmus asks for the gold to make them, but when she claims she will pay him back later, he refuses the task. Once again, the prostitute's (and her maid's) financial motives are demonstrated, as is Syracusan Menaechmus' monetary acumen. Furthermore, the mention of the bracelet shows that Epidamnian Menaechmus has been stealing from his wife for quite a while.

At the end of the third act, it is worth asking how the audience would respond to the contrast between the two Menaechmi. Epidamnian Menaechmus, true to his town's

name,⁴⁹ deludes himself about his relationship with Erotium and continues to pour his household resources into his relationship with her. Syracusan Menaechmus, on the other hand, has no household (we have already found out he is unmarried), but does not spend anything, and in fact steals some valuable items from Erotium. It is uncertain whether we are meant to admire Syracusan Menaechmus' superior emotional and fiscal IQ, or whether we should recognize that his good fortune relies in part on the previous investments of resources made by his look-alike brother. But because Epidamnian Menaechmus has been portrayed in a ridiculous manner, and because he has almost never been the controlling character, it is unlikely that the audience feels much sympathy. His brother, on the other hand, has not done anything ridiculous, and has been the controlling character of the misrecognition scenes.⁵⁰

At the beginning of Act Four, we meet the *matrona*, who enters with Peniculus and speaks in a typical fashion:

egone hic me patiar frustra in matrimonio,
ubi vir compilet clanculum quidquid domist
atque ea ad amicam deferat?
(559-61)

Shall I suffer a marriage wherein my husband steals
whatever is in the house and takes it to his girlfriend?

We should note that the *matrona*'s complaint is fiscal. She is not upset about her husband *seeing* the prostitute, but about his stealing her property to give to the prostitute.

Peniculus, playing much the same role as the *Asinaria*'s parasite, eggs her on, saying that

⁴⁹ At least to a Latinophone's ear. The Greek name Epidamnos would sound like the Latin *damnum*, "financial loss."

she will catch him drunk, garlanded, and taking her own stolen *palla* to the embroiderer's (563-4). The two spot Menaechmus and step aside to ambush him. The audience waits to see what will happen next.

Epidamnian Menaechmus now enters, grumbling about how business kept him stuck in the forum and made him late for lunch with Erotium (571-99). Menaechmus, like a wayward *senex amator*, privileges pleasure over business.⁵¹ He is afraid that Erotium will be angry, but hopes that the stolen *palla* will placate her (600-601). This means he has just admitted to the theft in his wife's presence, although he does not know it. Peniculus and the *matrona* step out of their hiding place and the scene now focuses on the interaction between Menaechmus, his wife, and Peniculus. His wife tells him he will pay interest on the theft (*ne illam ecastor faenerato abstulist* 604) but Menaechmus plays dumb:

MEN.	quid illuc est, uxor, negoti?
MAT.	men rogas?
MEN.	vin hunc rogem?
MAT.	aufer hinc palpationes.
PEN.	perge tu.
MEN.	quid tu mihi
	tristis es?
MAT.	te scire oportet.
PEN.	scit, sed dissimulat malus.
MEN.	quid negotist?
MAT.	pallam--
MEN.	pallam?
MAT.	quidam pallam--
PEN.	quid paves?
MEN.	nil equidem paveo.

⁵⁰ Leach notes a similar contrast between the two characters, noting Syracusan Menaechmus' "ability to control his fate in the adventure" (39). Her use of "control" has none of the modern scholarly implications, since her article pre-dates Slater and Corbeill.

⁵¹ Cf. Lysidamus' rant in *Cas.* 563 ff., where he gloats about losing his client's case and justifies his actions with a defense of being distracted by love.

PEN. nisi unum: palla pallorem incutit.
 at tu ne clam me comesses prandium. perge in
 virum.
 (606-11)

MEN. What's the matter, wife?
MAT. You're asking me?
MEN. (pointing to Peniculus) Do you want me to
 ask him?
MAT. Get your paws off me.
PEN. (to *matrona*) Keep it up.
MEN. Why are you mad at me?
MAT. I think you know.
PEN. He does know, but the bastard is
 pretending.
MEN. What's the problem?
MAT. A cloak--
MEN. Cloak?
MAT. A cloak that someone--
PEN. What are you afraid of?
MEN. I'm not afraid of anything.
PEN. Except one thing: the cloak makes you pale.
 You shouldn't have eaten lunch secretly from me.
 (to wife) Keep at the man!

In this scene, Peniculus is still the controlling character to a great degree, but the scene also alternates between dialogues: Menaechmus and his wife fight, then Menaechmus and Peniculus fight, and so on. In the interactions between Menaechmus and his wife, she is the controlling character. She knows that he has stolen the cloak, and will make him squirm until he admits it. Her superior knowledge of the situation gives her a bond with the audience that Epidamnian Menaechmus does not have.⁵² Thus the scene plays out in

⁵² It might be argued that Menaechmus is playing the *eirōn*, since he pretends to be ignorant of his own actions. However, it is crucial to note that he is not a smart person pretending to less knowledge: the previous scenes have established that he is not very bright. Also, the alliance of Peniculus and the wife against him clearly shows that he is the object of audience laughter.

a fashion parallel to what we have already seen between a *senex amator* and his dowered wife.

There is an interlude wherein Peniculus lambasts Menaechmus for lying and for dining without him (610-19), and then Menaechmus and his wife start up again:

MAT. ne ego mecastor mulier misera.
MEN. qui tu misera es? mi expedi.⁵³
numquis servorum deliquit? nam ancillae ut servi
tibi
responsant? eloquere. impune not erit.
MAT. nugas agis.
MEN. tristis admodum es. non mi istuc satis placet.
MAT. nugas agis.
MEN. certe familiarum aliquoi irata es.
MAT. nugas agis.
MEN. num mihi es irata saltem?
MAT. nunc tu non nugas agis.
MEN. non edepol deliqui quicquam.
MAT. em rursum nunc nugas agis.
MEN. dic, mea uxor, quid tibi aegre est?
PEN. bellus blanditur tibi.
MEN. potin ut mihi molestus ne sis? num te appello?
MAT. aufer manum.
(619-627)

MAT. God, I'm a miserable woman.
MEN. Why are you miserable? Explain to me.
One of the slaves did something wrong, didn't they?
The maids or slaves talked back to you? Tell me.
This won't go unpunished.
MAT. You're talking crap.
MEN. You're too grim. I don't like this.
MAT. You're taking crap.
MEN. You must be angry with one of the house-slaves.
MAT. You're talking crap.
MEN. You're angry with me, then?
MAT. Now you're not talking crap.
MEN. I didn't do anything wrong.

⁵³ Leo deletes these lines.

MAT. Ah, you're back to crap.
 MEN. Tell me, dear wife, what's bothering you?
 PEN. (to wife) The lovely man sweet-talks you.
 MEN. (to Peniculus) Can't you not bother me? I'm not
 addressing you, am I?
 MAT. Get your hand off me.

Menaechmus, instead of merely playing dumb, now constructs the implausible scenario that his wife is upset about something the servants did. But the *matrona*'s stalwart refusal and censorial posture make it clear that his story is not working, and that he is the one under pressure. The audience is laughing at him, because his wife makes jokes at his expense.

Menaechmus and Peniculus continue quarreling because Menaechmus claims (truthfully) that he never meant to ditch Peniculus, while Peniculus rubs it in that he has told Menaechmus' wife everything. The *matrona* finally accuses him outright, saying "a certain Menaechmus" (*Menaechmus quidam* 649) took the *palla* from the house. Finally, Menaechmus more-or-less admits he did it:

MEN. sed ego illam non condonavi, sed sic utendam dedi.
 MAT. equidem castor tuam nec chlamydem do foras nec
 pallium
 cuiquam utendum. mulierem aequom est
 vestimentum muliebre
 dare foras, virum virile. quin refers pallam domum?
 MEN. ego faxo referetur.
 MAT. ex re tua, ut opinor, feceris.
 nam domum numquam introibis, nisi feres pallam
 simul.
 eo domum.
 PEN. quid mihi futurum est, qui tibi hanc
 operam dedi?
 MAT. Opera reddetur, quando quid tibi erit surruptum
 domo.

(657-64)

MEN. But I didn't give it, I only lent it.

MAT. Really, I don't give away your shirt or cloak for anyone to borrow. It's right that a woman lend women's clothing, and a man lend man's clothing. You will bring my cloak back home, then?

MEN. I'll make sure it is brought back.

MAT. For your own good, I think--for you'll never get inside the house, if you don't bring it back immediately.

I'm going home.

PEN. What will I get, since I helped you?

MAT. The favor will be returned, when something of yours is stolen from your house.

The *matrona* succeeds in making her husband admit his behavior and her dominance of the situation begs the question of whether a woman on top is anything that would disturb the audience. In this case, Menaechmus' previous ridiculous behavior, as well as the fact that both his wife and the parasite conspire to make him the butt of jokes, suggest that the audience would have no problem laughing at him. And it should be noted that the comedy of this scene is not the type based on misrecognition. Though the wife's discovery was based on Peniculus' mistake, the interaction between husband and wife is based entirely on what Menaechmus really did and shows a certain amount of comic justice. Finally, we should note that the *matrona* makes a joke about women's and men's clothing, tapping into the general derision about Epidamnian Menaechmus' penchant for women's dresses.

But audience sympathy is ever-changing. After the *matrona* exits, Menaechmus is left alone onstage and crows over his victory. He is not displeased that his wife has locked him out, because he thinks that he will soon be locked in happily with Erotium

(668-71). He plans to get the original cloak back from Erotium and buy her a new one. At this point, the audience may be waiting to find out what will happen (672-4). They know that Syracusan Menaechmus has already taken Epidamnian Menaechmus' place at Erotium's table and in her bed. In addition, they may know better than Menaechmus that Erotium will not be so cheerful at letting him have the cloak back, since she has already given it to Syracusan Menaechmus to be embroidered.

Erotium at first welcomes Menaechmus with open arms. But when he asks for the cloak, trouble ensues. Thinking that she has already given it to him, Erotium accuses him of setting her up and trying to cheat her (685-6). She then emphasizes that it was given as a gift (688-9), and tells him that he is no longer welcome in her house. Of course, Erotium herself no longer possesses the *palla*, since she gave it to Syracusan Menaechmus. Nevertheless, we may see an element of comic justice in Epidamnian Menaechmus' thwarted expectations. Erotium is not only upset because she does not have the cloak; her insistence that the *palla* was given as a gift also emphasizes that the *palla* is now hers, and that he should not be asking for it back. Thus, Menaechmus sees that Erotium is a fair-weather girlfriend who does not want to give back her gifts. It is quite possible that the audience could still feel sorry for him, but it is just as possible that his reception is the result of his being an *alazon*, unable (or unwilling) to see the truth about his relationship with Erotium. Epidamnian Menaechmus bewails the fact that neither his wife nor his mistress believes what he says, and decides to consult his male friends (699-700). He then exits.

With Epidamnian Menaechmus out of the way, the comedy returns to mistaken identities. The next scene involves the *matrona*, her father, and Syracusan Menaechmus. The *matrona* approaches Menaechmus in a tizzy, reproaching his audacity and his strange attire. He, puzzled, insults her back, accusing her of being a bitch like Hecuba (714-16) and crazy like Deianira (755). In addition to his financial prowess, Syracusan Menaechmus shows hearty courage and does not cower in the presence of the *matrona*. In fact, though she is a stranger to him, he has no problem reviling and insulting her. In this scene, he is the controlling character, and he makes the audience laugh at the *matrona* by cracking jokes at her expense.

Soon her father, whom she has summoned in the meantime, arrives. He approaches Syracusan Menaechmus, who, of course, does not recognize him. Menaechmus seems to think that the *matrona* is accusing him of having broken into her house and stolen a *palla*. Menaechmus denies everything, and when the *matrona* declares that he looks sick (828-9), he decides that since they think he is insane already, he will now act *really* insane. For the rest of the scene he terrorizes the *matrona* and her father, calling on Bacchus to save him from the rabid bitch (*rabiosa femina canis* 837) to his left and the bald goat (*hircus calvus* 838) to his right. He chases them both offstage, feigning a mad rage, but decides he had better leave before they come back (880). In this scene, too, Syracusan Menaechmus is the controlling character, provoking the audience's laughter by terrorizing the *matrona* and her father.

The father-in-law comes back with a doctor, and Epidamnian Menaechmus re-enters, complaining about his life (900). Another misrecognition scene follows, and yet

another when Syracusan Menaechmus' slave Messenio runs into Epidamnian Menaechmus. Eventually, the two Menaechmi meet (1090), review their life stories, and discover that they are twin brothers. Syracusan Menaechmus shows Epidamnian Menaechmus the *palla* (1139) and explains how Erotium took him for Epidamnian Menaechmus, and the two brothers share a laugh. The slave Messenio is freed, and it is agreed that Epidamnian Menaechmus will hold an auction to sell his belongings before joining his brother in Syracuse. The epilogue consists of Messenio reading off the auction list:

auctio fiet Menaechmi mane sane septimi.
venibunt servi, supellex, fundi, aedes, omnia.
venibunt quique licebunt, praesenti pecunia.
venibit uxor quoque etiam, si quis emptor venerit.
vix credo tota auctione capiet quinquagesies.
nunc, spectatores, valet et nobis clare plaudite.
(1157-62)

Menaechmus' auction will be a week from tomorrow morning. Slaves, furniture, land, house, everything will be for sale. They will be sold however we can, for ready cash. Even the wife will be for sale, if any buyer comes for her. He'll get nearly 500 from the whole auction. Now, spectators, good-bye and clap loudly for us.

This epilogue, unlike some others, cannot be said to restore social norms.⁵⁴ In fact, it descends deep into fantasy, which allows Epidamnian Menaechmus to leave his town and sell his wife in order to join his brother. He escapes any moral consequences of his actions and frees himself of the social bonds that kept him in Epidamnus. This fantastic ending shows that everyday morality and normality do not always come through at the

⁵⁴ Cf. the epilogue to the *Stichus*, which ends with a slave-revel.

end of a play. But because of this fantastic element, we should not take the suggestion of selling the wife too seriously. It is true that it plays off of the unpleasant character described by Syracusan Menaechmus in the latter part of the play; but it does not change the fact that the wife's domination of Epidamnian Menaechmus is funny because of Menaechmus' own ridiculousness, and because he deserves the browbeating.

In other ways, the play is similar to the others in this chapter. Though he is not a *senex amator*, Epidamnian Menaechmus is a ridiculous character: from the moment he puts on the *palla*, he is accused of effeminacy by Peniculus, Erotium and (indirectly) his own brother. Epidamnian Menaechmus' effeminacy is the equivalent of a *senex amator*'s age-inappropriate behavior. The fact that these behavior patterns are the butt of other characters' jokes, and the object of the audience's laughter, shows us again that even in a holiday world some behaviors are discouraged. Even if we revive the question of the Greek setting for a moment and assume effeminacy is a vice associated with Greeks, this fact makes Menaechmus' behavior no less ridiculous. The audience's laughter still reinforces a Roman standard of sexuality, not a Greek one. The audience is not expected to laugh forgivingly at charges of effeminacy, *cinaedus*-hood, or *os impurum*.

Epidamnian Menaechmus is ridiculous and is never the controlling character. Syracusan Menaechmus is always the controlling character and enjoys the results of Epidamnian Menaechmus' attempts to have fun. He gets the better of Erotium, the *matrona*, and the *matrona*'s father. He does not delude himself about financial transactions and would never consider wearing a *palla*, because that is the mark of a

cinaedus. His competence is the perfect foil for Epidamnian Menaechmus' incompetence.

The comic nature of the play can tell us something about what is funny/permitted and what is not. If we assume that Syracusan Menaechmus is the most sympathetic/funny character, we can see that it is not a problem to use a prostitute's services or to steal her possessions. Nor is it a problem to abuse one's wife verbally when she gets too uppity. But it is not as acceptable to delude oneself about a relationship with a prostitute, dress in women's clothing, or steal from one's own household, as Epidamnian Menaechmus does. The audience can laugh at both these characters, but its laughter is derogatory in one case and sympathetic in the other.

Returning to the *matrona*, this play demonstrates that audience sympathy is mutable, and that there is a continuum of audience sympathy along which all characters, including female ones, should be judged. In her interactions with her own husband, the *matrona* is in charge, and she makes her husband the butt of jokes--as do other characters. But when Syracusan Menaechmus takes over, he shows the *matrona* up and makes her the object of laughter. The *matrona*'s standing is relative, but she is not automatically the least sympathetic character in the play. Even if we admit that the Syracusan Menaechmus wins out in the end, we should not assume that the audience would feel sorry for Epidamnian Menaechmus when his wife abuses him.

A final conclusion we can draw from the *Menaechmi* concerns the nature of the relationship between a wife and a prostitute. Previously, critics have been content to read this relationship exclusively through Epidamnian Menaechmus' eyes. But, as I have

argued, the audience would not necessarily identify with Epidamnian Menaechmus. In fact, his own reading of his relationship with Erotium is incorrect. He believes that she lives for his love; the audience, on the other hand, sees her financial motives, encouraged by Peniculus' remarks. Epidamnian Menaechmus' interpretation of his marriage must also be suspect, given his general incompetence. His financial analysis of his responsibility is undercut by the fact that he is stealing from his own wife and household. His wife's view, on the other hand, should be taken a little more seriously. Even her father, who re-affirms that a wife should not worry about drinking and whoring, agrees that stealing from the house is a problem. And Syracusan Menaechmus, who behaves in a somewhat questionable manner otherwise, does not steal from his own wife.

Conclusions: Husbands

The *Casina*, *Asinaria*, and *Mercator* clearly demonstrate that the *senex amator* is a ridiculous character. He is laughed at by other characters, and the jokes made at his expense inspire the audience to laugh at him as well. When a character's wife makes these jokes, this does not change their impact; she merely participates in a general trend. Contemporaries, friends, parasites, and slaves make derogatory comments about men's age-inappropriate behavior. Further, the insults are similar regardless of character: grey hair, decrepitude, *nequissimus senex*, and animal terms such as *vervex* and *oves*. Finally, the *senex amator*'s ridiculousness is emphasized by the fact that he is almost never a controlling character. He makes jokes at his wife's expense (as do other characters) and

for those moments has the audience's attention; but in the overall scheme of things, he is there to be laughed *at*, not with.

Despite his ridiculous actions, the audience does not necessarily hate or despise him. After all, these plays are not tragedies. Different audience members would have different reactions to the *senex amator*. A young male audience member might be harshest, since he is unable to see his inevitable old age, while an old man might sympathize most. A middle-aged man would fall somewhere in between--either hoping that he himself did not appear that way or thinking about men he knew who were *senes amatores*. The women in the audience would certainly find this character amusing, and possibly familiar. Prostitutes, especially, would be most likely to have seen an older man who wanted to play the young buck. Importantly, even if the audience regards the *senex amator* with varying degrees of sympathy, no audience member wants to *be* him. No audience member wants to be the old man so unaware of his own age that he looks like an idiot. Even if the audience members laugh with recognition ("I know I'm not like that, but Quintus sure is!") they do not put themselves in the *senex amator's* shoes.

The *senex amator's* status as object of ridicule is significant for Roman conceptions of age. This topic is a large one, and has been the subject of two recent books,⁵⁵ from which I will draw a very general picture of old age in later literature. In scientific and moralistic literature, old age is portrayed as a time when physical pleasures were dulled; while elegy might grieve at this loss, philosophical texts encourage their

⁵⁵ Parkin and Cokayne.

readers to treat it as a blessing rather than a curse.⁵⁶ Generally, old men were expected to serve the republic with their wisdom, although there were some writers who encouraged the idea of retirement (*otium*).⁵⁷ These texts present an ideal of old age in which sexual (and other) desires subside, leaving an older man free to devote his energies to cultivating wisdom, enjoying intellectual pursuits, and using his age and experience to help the state.⁵⁸

The reality was, of course, different. Cicero himself married a woman quite a bit younger than he, as did Cato. These acts, however, could be justified in the context of marriage as an institution for producing legitimate children; a man's reproductive years far outnumber a woman's, so it was socially defensible for a man to marry a much younger woman (ostensibly) for the sake of children.⁵⁹ However, this logic defends an older man's right to marry rather than sexually pursue young women in extra-marital affairs. Satire and invective, in fact, brutally mock lecherous but impotent old men and sluttish old women.⁶⁰

Plautine comedy participates in the same ideology of old age as do the later texts.⁶¹ Merely describing the *senex amator*'s behavior as an inversion of the typical behavior does not adequately describe the audience's response to the character. The

⁵⁶ See especially Cic. *Sen.* 12.39-18.66; Cokayne 115-16. Parkin also summarizes Roman images of age (57-89).

⁵⁷ E.g., Cicero and Plutarch for public participation (Cokayne 94-103) and Seneca for retirement (Cokayne 104-111).

⁵⁸ I concentrate here on the positive qualities associated with old age; for the negative aspects see Cokayne 59-90.

⁵⁹ Cokayne 122-7, Parkin 193-202.

⁶⁰ Cokayne 120-2 and 134-52.

⁶¹ Cokayne briefly notes this aspect in the *Mercator*, and concludes that the role of the *senex amator* "underlines how an elderly respectable father and citizen was expected not to behave" (119-20). Parkin includes comedy and invective in the same comic function (87).

audience is not laughing at the incongruity in a neutral way; it is laughing derisively at a ridiculous character. That laughter reinforces societal norms by making age-inappropriate behavior its object and discouraging the spectators from acting in such a way. Moreover, this reinforcement is not a result of re-integration at the end of the play, but is a phenomenon occurring throughout.

If audience members fantasize themselves in an escapist romance, they must do so through the young couple. The older men in the audience can re-live their youthful experience and pretend that they are the young bucks hotly pursuing their girlfriends (or rescuing them from pimps). In the plays, the sons, unlike their fathers, do not get punished; in fact, they usually get the girl. While the young men's behavior is also ridiculous at times (it tends toward melodramatic whining), the other characters in the plays do not make nearly as many jokes at the young men's expense as they do at the old men's. The young man's love affair, therefore, is tacitly privileged over the older man's love affair. The successful love affair is the holiday escape, but it is still a socially acceptable one. Young men who drink, dance, and whore are not the most upstanding citizens, but their youth gives them license--even according to Cicero. Thus, the plays allow young men to behave in a manner that is questionable, but still age-appropriate.

If youth is the time to party, then older age is the time for duty. In all of the plays, there is an explicit link between foolish, love-struck men and the neglect of *officium*. Demipho, Lysidamus, and Menaechmus come back from the forum complaining of their work there, and admitting that they have not performed their duties adequately. Far from letting the audience escape the workaday duties of life, the monologues of these

characters emphasize the tediousness of it. The men in the audience would laugh in recognition of the description, and might sympathize with the old men complaining about it. But, importantly, the men's rejection of their duty is *not* rewarded in the end. Their negligence is part and parcel of their unsuccessful love affair.

Social norms hold true for effeminate behavior as well as age-appropriate behavior. Other characters make jokes at the expense of Epidamnian Menaechmus and his habit of wearing his wife's *palla*, and his own brother explicitly links this behavior with pathic homosexuality. In the *Casina*, too, Lysidamus wears perfume and is pursued by another male in the play's conclusion, and these effeminate behaviors are clearly meant to be objects of the audience's laughter. Effeminacy, just as age-inappropriate behavior, is fair game for ridiculous laughter and is not necessarily a forgivable "holiday" trait.

It may be argued that the Greek setting affects the audience's perception of the characters, especially given the general connection between Greeks and effeminacy. But the Greek setting is irrelevant to the play's reproduction of Roman social values. Even if the characters' effeminate behavior is somehow more expected because they are supposed to be Greek, that fact does not change the clear intent of the other characters' jokes: the effeminate behavior is the object of derision, whether it is "Greek" or not, and these characters are presented to the audience as negative examples, whether of Greekness, effeminacy, or both.

A final factor to note is the men's attitudes towards money. Men in love arrange luxurious feasts in the *Mercator* and *Casina*, and they steal from the household in

Asinaria and *Menaechmi*. Loss of emotional control is thus linked with financial incontinence. While other characters do not joke about this behavior as much as effeminacy or age-inappropriate behavior, it is still a topic to be laughed at. And it is the men who are spending the money, rather than the women. This will become important when analyzing the plays' relationship with contemporary discourse surrounding luxury, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

All of this is to say that the plays enforce morals on a selective scale: young men misbehaving are rewarded; old men misbehaving are punished. Young men's sexual activities are permitted, but effeminate behavior is not. And luxurious spending is associated with characters who are rendered ridiculous by other behaviors. In sum, even if the plays allow some escapism, they also reinforce expected roles in society.

Conclusions: Uxores Dotatae

The *uxor dotata* is the natural partner of the *senex amator*. Far from being a blocking character, she furthers the love affair of the young couple in every play that contains a romance. Nor is she an agelast. But her comic role can be read in different ways. In the traditional scholarly view, these women on top are clear examples of holiday inversion. This is based on the assumption that women were expected to be obedient and docile (*obsequens* and *morigera*), which the imperious *matronae* are obviously not. The inversion of the women's roles causes laughter *ipso facto*. The other explanation for these women's comic roles is parody: though it is not stated, this implies a

greater degree of realism, in that it assumes an exaggeration or distortion of normal behavior. But this explanation requires that the women be the objects of laughter.

Even the inversion explanation can be exploded. In the first place, *obsequens* and *morigera* are only two virtues associated with ideal wives. Susan Treggiari has suggested that many other virtues were ideologically prized in a wife.⁶² Most of these virtues (such as chastity, fidelity, modesty) are not inverted in these plays. More precisely, we should describe the inversion as one of power: in the "normal" (or idealized) power structure of a marriage, the husband makes the decisions. So we must distinguish between inversion of power structure and inversion of some ideal qualities. Further, if we accept the explanation that the *matronae* are parodic characters, we must admit that this is the comedy of exaggeration, that is, that it plays off of some realistic feature. We must then ask how exaggerated they are, or, to put it another way, in what ways they are realistic. Finally, we must admit that even parodic *matronae* are no more ridiculous than their husbands.

I have argued that these women's roles as controlling characters argue for a more nuanced view of their comic potential, and against their being automatic butts of jokes. That is to say, even if the audience may laugh at role-reversal or exaggeration, it does not automatically laugh derisively at the *matronae*, or especially at their relationship with other characters. This is not to deny the presence of misogynist and anti-wife remarks: as we have seen, not only the *senes*, but also other characters make bitchy-wife and dead-wife jokes. The audience would laugh at these jokes, and at these moments, they would

⁶² Treggiari 232-261

be laughing *at* the women. However, these are momentary instances, whereas the women's role as controlling character is a more general phenomenon. Since the women are such active agents in producing laughter, there are grounds for placing them more towards the sympathetic end of the scale and less towards the ridiculous. Finally, while we should not put too much stock in the "winner," we should still consider that the *matronae* are not the scapegoats of comic punishment in the conclusion.

Allowing the *matronae* to be something less than totally inverted and totally ridiculous should make us re-examine the basis of their comedy. In the next chapter, I will consider the content of the *matronae*'s complaints about their husbands, which reflect more realistic expectations in marriage than have previously been conceded.

Chapter 3

Conclusions: Marriage in the Time of Plautus.

In the last chapter, I discussed the comic mechanisms surrounding Plautine marriage, particularly the *uxor dotata* and *senex amator*. I concluded that the comedy involving spouses is not based entirely on holiday inversion, and in fact reinforces social norms and age-appropriate behavior. But a larger problem lies in understanding marriage as a topical feature of Roman Comedy: namely, its relation to the events of contemporary Rome. Some have suggested that Plautus' *uxores dotatae* are a parodic reaction to real events that gave women more financial and even political power; others have denied any relationship between Plautus' women and real life.¹ And even astute critics such as Treggiari and Gruen have been surprisingly uncritical when using Plautine men's complaints (especially Megadorus' speech in the *Aulularia*) to assess the position of real *uxores dotatae* as pampered wives or representatives of women's luxurious spending.²

In this chapter, I will re-examine the relationship between Plautine marriage and society. I will again use the *matrona* to focus the discussion, by examining the content of the *matronae*'s complaints, as well as other characters' complaints about *uxores dotatae*. I will examine three general areas of topical interaction: financial, social, and familial/domestic. By expanding on the relationship between marriage, money, and social expectations, we may more accurately assess what these characters can tell us about contemporary marriage, or at least representations of it. In fact, as I shall argue,

¹ Reflecting changes: Schumann 1977, 1978; Grimal; Gruen 144; Treggiari 329-31; Llinás 89. Unrealistic: Duckworth 284-5; Stärk 69; Petrone 1976: 45 and 1977: 219; Christenson 2001: 259.

² Gruen and Treggiari *loc. cit.*

Plautine comedy is a useful source for exploring the conflicting ideals and expectations surrounding marriage and its gender roles. I will explore points of contact between the plays and contemporary legal and social conditions, as well as between Plautine marriage and later representations of married life.

Because we have virtually no contemporary historical evidence for Plautus' time, we are reliant on later authors for information. Livy, our main historical source, was writing nearly two hundred years later. Legal sources range from late imperial jurists such as Justinian, to quotations from Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*. While it is true that we must be cautious about using these later authors' constructions of the past as historical documents, we have little choice if we are to attempt historical inquiry. We must either choose to rely cautiously on the later documents, or say nothing at all; I believe the former is preferable to the latter. Thus, my first step will be to attempt a reconstruction of the social and legal circumstances that would have affected *matronae* in Plautus' time.

Legal background: manus, dos, and money

Because so much interpretation of the *matronae* is tied up in their relationship with money, we should re-examine the circumstances surrounding this topic. The following excursus is meant to lay the foundations for interpreting what the *matronae* and their husbands say about money. I am less concerned with the truth or falsehood of any characters' assertion than with general plausibility. That is to say, I am interested in whether the characters' interactions about money have a demonstrable relationship with

contemporary historical circumstances (insofar as we can reconstruct them from later sources).

When analyzing marriage, Plautine scholars tend to focus on the issue of *manus* (legal control).³ The assumption is that a woman married *cum manu* would have no legal claim to her property, while one married *sine manu* would have some claim. The reason scholars have focused on *manus* rather than the dowry itself (*dos*) is simple: *manus* is mentioned in the Twelve Tables, whereas *dos* is not, and it is safest to focus on laws that were likely extant at Plautus' time. Unfortunately, the question of whether a given marriage is *cum manu* or *sine manu* is not one that can be definitely proved from the textual evidence.

For our purposes, the issue *manus* is irrelevant for dowry, at least for the duration of the marriage. In the Ciceronian period, a dowry became entirely the husband's at the time of marriage, whether the woman was *in manu* or not.⁴ And since the legal drive away from this tendency appears only much later,⁵ it seems likely that the Ciceronian rule, or something close to it, applied at the time of Plautus. But the dowry is absorbed into the husband's property only during the marriage, and this rule does not preclude the woman from recovering her dowry after the marriage dissolves. When discussing dowry as it pertains to Plautine plays, I suggest we focus on the idea of a dowry as an asset potentially recoverable by the woman. As Treggiari neatly puts it, the dowry is "legally

³ For instance, Dees, Slater 79, and Watson 1967: 31 on the *Casina*; Petersmann 94 and Vogt-Spira 2000b: 164-5 on *Stichus*; Vogt-Spira 2000a: 23-4 on the relation of Greek *kureia* to Roman *manus*.

⁴ Treggiari 325; Cic. *Top.* 23.

⁵ Treggiari 325-6.

his and potentially hers."⁶ It is exactly this potential that would still allow a married woman to be concerned about "her" property, whether *in manu* or not.

As I already mentioned, the Twelve Tables (at least what we possess of them) do not mention dowry at all. But they apparently mention divorce and, more relevant to our discussion, the division of property after divorce. Cicero says that when Antony divorced Volumnia, he did so according to the Twelve Tables, by taking her keys and telling her to take her things (*illam suam suas res sibi habere iussit ex duodecim tabulis, clavis ademit, exegit*).⁷ This divorce formula, and variants of it, are mentioned in Plautus.⁸ The only question, then, is whether the personal property (*res*) mentioned in the divorce formula includes the *dos*. Watson suggests that originally this was not the case; the *res* simply meant personal items and clothing.⁹ But he also acknowledges that the clause should not be taken literally and that its primary intent was "to show that a divorce was intended."¹⁰ Although we cannot say definitively that the woman's *res* included her *dos*, this scenario is possible.

Watson's picture of fifth-century Roman law is as follows (emphasis mine):

Dowry was a recognized social institution. Yet there was no mention of it whatever in the XII Tables, and we know only that *cautiones rei uxoriae* and *actiones rei uxoriae* only came into existence very much later. We are entitled to conclude that there were *no specific legal rules on dowry*. Things given to the husband as dowry simply became part of his general assets, and were in no way

⁶ Ibid. 365.

⁷ *Phil.* 2.28.69.

⁸ As, for example, when Myrrhine warns Cleostrata to beware of her husband telling her to get out (*ei foras, mulier*) in *Cas.* 212. Rosenmeyer has discussed this and other examples of the divorce formula on the Plautine stage, while McDonnell concentrates specifically on women's use of the divorce formula.

⁹ Watson 1965: 48.

¹⁰ Ibid.

distinguishable from his other property. . .if the husband died first, all his estate (including dowry) fell to be divided in the ordinary way. If the husband divorced his wife for a matrimonial fault, neither she nor anyone else could demand the return of the dowry; if the husband otherwise put away his wife he had to pay a severe penalty to her irrespective of whether or not she had received a dowry.¹¹

I agree with Watson's assessment. But we must keep open the possibility of legal development between the time of the Twelve Tables and that of Plautus. There is one further piece of evidence that pertains to marriage, pertaining more to Plautus' time: Gellius' statement on the divorce of Carvilius Ruga, which took place around 230 B.C.E.

Memoriae traditum est quingentis fere annis post Romam conditam nullas rei uxoriae neque actiones neque cautiones in urbe Roma aut in Latio fuisse, quoniam profecto nihil desiderabatur, nullis etiam tunc matrimoniis divertentibus. Servius quoque Sulpicius in libro, quem composuit de dotibus, tum primum cautiones rei uxoriae necessarias esse visas scripsit, cum Spurius Carvilius, cui Ruga cognomentum fuit, vir nobilis, divortium cum uxore fecit, quia liberi ex ea corporis vitio non gignerentur . . .¹²

It is handed down to memory that for nearly 500 years after the founding of Rome there were neither actions nor guarantees for a wife's property in Rome or in Latium, since it was by no means wanted, and also there were no marriages broken up at that time. Even Servius Sulpicius, in the book he wrote about dowry, said that guarantees for a wife's property first seemed necessary on the occasion when Spurius Carvilius, whose *cognomen* was Ruga, a noble man, divorced his wife because she could not bear children due to some physical defect.

¹¹ Watson 1975: 38-9.

¹² Aulus Gellius, *NA* 4.3.1.

The case is fairly simple: Carvilius Ruga divorced his wife because she could not bear children. But because she had not done anything wrong, *per se*, Servius Sulpicius suggests that she was not liable to legal punishment. Further, this feeling extended to her property, and the fact that she was not at fault suggested the need for protecting the property of wives divorced for no fault. Treggiari rightly notes:

Gellius specifically states that Servius Sulpicius Rufus, Cicero's contemporary, in his book on dowry said that Ruga's divorce showed that *cautiones rei uxoriae* (guarantees for a wife's property) were needed. Sulpicius is decisive on such a point. It is significant that the property guaranteed as recoverable in the event of a divorce is called the wife's. During the marriage, it was presumably called *dos*, as it certainly is from now on . . . whereas before the husband had a right to retain the dowry, subject to certain sanctions, by the second century the wife had a right to have the dowry restored to her.¹³

In later law, a woman who was divorced without fault could recover her dowry.¹⁴

Between 230 B.C. and legal codification of this recovery, it seems likely that the notion of the dowry as *potentially* the woman's still existed.

I suggest that this is the legal background against which we should read Plautine marriage: there were not yet any written laws about dowry, as far as we know, but these plays were without a doubt written after 230 B.C.E. The fact that there was a notion (legal or otherwise)¹⁵ of dowry as a recoverable asset, combined with the lack of a written law, perfectly explains the behavior of the *uxores dotatae*. The husband might technically have been in charge of the dowry; however, if divorce was as easy as the

¹³ 1991: 325.

¹⁴ Ibid. 325-6.

plays make it seem (or even if not)¹⁶ the wife would have every reason to compel her husband not to squander a dowry that she would legally get back. In short, I argue that the Plautine couple is reflecting a real and contemporary legal problem: the tension between the husband's legal right to the dowry during marriage, and the wife's ability (if not legal right) to recover her dowry.

A further aspect of dowry worth exploring is its function, a topic even less well attested than the dowry itself. Scholarly opinion is divided on the relationship between dowry and the maintenance of a wife, but some scholars assume continuity between Plautus and later laws.¹⁷ We know that, by Ulpian and Diocletian's time, the dowry was meant not only for women's maintenance but also for the household at large.¹⁸ As we shall see, the dowry's use will be another point of tension between husband and wife. Let us now return to the plays themselves, which are intimately connected to the contemporary concerns of dowry, luxury, and spending.

Money: luxuria and damnum

Having established a likely relationship between the wife and her (potential) property, I will now examine the larger issue of women and spending. Plautus' plays are

¹⁵ Dixon has convincingly argued, for example, that Polybius' wording regarding dowry settlements highlights the gap between the men's legal ownership and the women's notional possession (1985: 160-63).

¹⁶ Divorce was apparently always available for men, though usually for an offense on the part of the wife, and was relatively common, if not encouraged, by the time of Cicero (ibid.).

¹⁷ Treggiari assumes that the dowry carried with it a duty to keep a wife in a manner commensurate with the dowry based on Plautine evidence (331) but admits that juristic evidence for the connection between dowry and maintenance is relatively late (332). However, she concludes that "the basic responsibility of supporting the wife was the husband's and he was expected to use the dowry" (338). Dumont (36-40) agrees, and notes the correspondence between later jurists' opinions and *Men.* 120 and 801-2. Gardner and Watson baldly state that a wife had no legal claim to maintenance (Gardner 68; Watson 1975: 31).

¹⁸ Dumont 36, 40.

roughly contemporary with the Lex Oppia, a sumptuary measure passed in 215 B.C.E. and repealed in 195 B.C.E. Our information about this law comes primarily from Livy's account of the debate surrounding the law's repeal: Livy is supposedly reporting Valerius' speech in favor of the repeal and Cato's speech against the repeal (34.1-8). The Lex Oppia forbade women to wear gold and purple, and to ride in carriages. But the law's relationship to Rome's wartime economy is debatable.¹⁹ Culham (1982), in particular, emphasizes that the law did not *take* anything, and suggests that it was not even really aimed at women because they could not technically have any property of their own. Rather, the law tried to curb elite men from competing indirectly through women. This interpretation is important, because it highlights the gap between the stereotype of women as conspicuous consumers and the actions of the women (and men) themselves.²⁰

Plautus' plays obviously participate in the contemporary discourse about women and luxury. But understanding how these ideas are used on the comic stage is important for interpreting the plays' relationship with their audience. As we have seen in the previous chapter, men's complaints about *uxores dotatae* are not always borne out by the characterization of the women themselves. The same applies to men's complaints about women's luxurious spending. I will first examine what men say, and how this reflects upon contemporary concerns. Then, I will examine the *matronae*'s own attitude towards

¹⁹ Even the terms of the law are debated: In Culham's view, although Livy wants to imply that the law co-opts private funds for public use, the wording of the law itself describes only a prohibition on possession. However, scholars such as Pomeroy and Abaecherli-Boyce follow Livy's lead and assume the law was confiscatory.

²⁰ As Culham points out, in 210 the women voluntarily gave funds from their dowries to give a golden bowl to Juno.

money. As we shall see, the male and female characters express conflicting notions about money, marriage, and luxury.

As we have seen in the *Aulularia*, the old man Megadorus is upset because his sister is trying to make him marry a well-dowered woman of middle age. He himself would prefer to marry the young lady next door, who happens to be poor. In a tizzy, he has a long tirade against women with dowries. Megadorus' speech has been linked to the Lex Oppia, and even cited as the paradigm for Plautus' views of women.²¹ However, the relationship between that law and this speech is considerably more problematic than previously recognized. There are two issues at stake: first, the content of the speech, and second, Megadorus' characterization.

Megadorus begins by saying that the rest of the richer men (*ceteri opulentiores* 479) should marry the undowered daughters of poor men (*pauperiorum filias . . . indotatas* 479-80), and that this would make the city more harmonious (*multo fiat civitas concordior* 481) as well as creating less ill will (*invidia* 482). As for the women, they would fear trouble more than they do (*illae malam rem metuant quam metuunt magis* 483), there would be less luxurious spending (*sumptus* 484), and things would be better for the majority of the population (485).

Megadorus then constructs a theoretical *uxor dotata*:

nulla igitur dicat: "equidem dotem ad te adtuli
maiores multo quam tibi erat pecunia;
enim mihi quidem aequomst purpuram atque aurum
dari,
ancillas, mulos, muliones, pedisequos,
salutigeros pueros, vehicla qui vehar."

²¹ E.g. Schuhmann 1977; Culham and Treggiari, *loc.citt.*

(498-502)

Then no woman would say: "I brought you a dowry much greater than the money you had. So it's right that I be given purple, gold, maids, mules, mule-drivers, footmen, messenger boys, and carriages I can be driven in."

This portion of the speech corresponds most conspicuously with the Lex Oppia: purple, gold, and carriages were the items prohibited to women. But our analysis must not stop here. First, we must note that this is a man speaking for, and in fact constructing, a woman.²² In actuality, no Plautine *matrona* says anything of the sort. Certainly, men's conceptions of dowered women might run along the lines that Megadorus describes, but this is not straightforward historical evidence for women's spending.

The next and longest portion of Megadorus' speech lists the items on which the dowered woman spends money.

nunc quoque venias, plus plaustorum in aedibus
videas quam ruri, quando ad villam veneris.
sed hoc etiam pulchrum est praequam ubi sumptus petunt.
stat fullo, phrygio, aurifex, lanarius;
caupones patagiarum, indusiarii,
flammarii, violarii, carinarii;
stant manulearii stant murobatharii,
propolae linteones, calceolarii;
sedentarii sutores, diabatharii,
solearii astant, astant molocinarii;
petunt fullones, sarcinatores petunt;²³
stropharii astant, astant semul sonarii.
iam hosce absolutos censeas: cedunt, petunt
treceni, cum stant thylacistae in atriis
textores limbularii, arcularii.
ducuntur, datur aes. iam absolutos censeas,
cum incedunt infectores corcotarii,

²² Wyke has discussed the rhetoric of adornment to define women.

²³ Leo brackets this line.

aut aliqua mala crux semper est, quae aliquid petat.
(505-22)

Now, go where you will, you may see more carriages among the houses than in the country when you go to a farm-house. But this is even light, in comparison with when they ask for their expenses; there stands the scourer, the embroiderer, the goldsmith, the woollen-manufacturer, retail dealers in figured skirts, dealers in women's under-clothing, dyers in flame-color, dyers in violet, dyers in wax-color, or else sleeve-makers, or perfumers; wholesale linen drapers, shoemakers, squatting cobblers, slipper-makers; sandalmakers stand there; stainers in mallow color stand there; hairdressers make their demands, botchers their demands; bodice-makers stand there; makers of kirtle take their stand. Now you would think them got rid of; these make way, others make their demands; three hundred duns are standing in your hall; weavers, lace-makers, cabinet-makers, are introduced; the money's paid them. You would think them got rid of by this; when dyers in saffron colors come sneaking along; or else there's always some horrid plague or other which is demanding something. (trans. Riley)

This portion of Megadorus' list mines a different comic vein than does the previous portion. Though it follows the theme of luxurious spending and feminine adornment, the main source of its comedy is not necessarily misogyny. Its items do not in fact correspond to the Lex Oppia as we know it. In fact, what it represents is a husband's handling (or underestimation) of household expenses. Given that the household described is elite, at least some of these items are necessary for keeping up appearances. If the women are doing the ordering but the men are paying the bills, the men might not understand the relationship between the interminable bills, feminine attire, and their own reputation. In fact, given that running the house was the job of the *matrona*, it is entirely possible that the man would have no idea how to do it.

The men in the audience could laugh at this speech for various reasons: one reason is certainly that they identify with the stereotype about women's luxurious spending. But there are other reasons as well: because they recognize the feeling of paying multiple bills for orders they have not placed, or because they too define women through their puzzling obsession with attire²⁴, or (if they are not elite) because rich people spend their money on such ridiculous items. But the women in the audience could laugh too, because they have heard their husbands complain about bills they did not understand. Finally, there is the possibility that the audience laughs simply at the outlandish exaggeration: lists of this sort are a comic device used as far back as Aristophanes. In short, the humor of this speech does not depend entirely on misogynist factors.

We should also ask how Megadorus' characterization contributes to the audience's reception of his speech. Some scholars have taken him as a kindly old man or a stern Catonian figure--and have also assumed that these would be sympathetic to the audience.²⁵ Others have suggested more nuanced readings. Moore, for instance, analyzes Megadorus' tirade as a parody, while Konstan emphasizes Megadorus' questionable motives and suggests that Megadorus decries dowered women because he is in love with a penniless young thing.²⁶ In fact, Konstan argues that the *Aulularia* as a whole reinforces cultural notions about the necessity of a dowry, and that Megadorus'

²⁴ Cf. Wyke, *loc. cit.*; Sashadige also discusses women's clothing as identity (105).

²⁵ Humanitarian: "Über den Gegensatz der Klassen stellt [Megador] den ethischen Gesichtspunkt: Man solle mit rechtschaffenen Menschen gemeinsame Sache machen *mores boni* sind wichtiger als jede Mitgift" (Hofmann 1977: 8); Catonian: Lefèvre 2001: 102-3, 146-8.

²⁶ Moore 1998a: 161-4. See also his chapter on metatheater and morality, in which he argues that moralizing characters are always suspect (67-90). Konstan 1983: 41-2

speech "runs exactly counter to the role of the dowry in the entire play."²⁷ Megadorus' character is therefore at odds with the play's ultimate goal of uniting the young lovers--the point being that if Megadorus is rendered ridiculous by his exaggeration and suspect by his motives, then his tirade, while funny, does not support his claims, or the claims of others who voice such opinions. His role may, indeed, be a parody of Catonian morality. While his rant against female luxury confirms the existence of a certain stereotype about women's spending, at the same time, the credibility of that stereotype is undercut by being put in the mouth of a ridiculous character.

In the *Menaechmi*, too, we hear men's opinions on women and luxury. While reproaching his wife, Menaechmus claims that she has nothing to complain about, since he provides her with maids, food, wool, gold, clothing, and purple dyed cloth (*quando ego tibi ancillas, penum, / lanam, aurum, vestem, purpuram / bene praebeo, neque quicquam eges* 120-2). Later in the play, her father repeats this sentiment: "since he keeps you in gold and clothing, and provides you rightly with maids and food, it's better to keep a sound mind [than get upset]" (*quando te auratam et vestitam bene habet, ancillas, penum / recte praehibet, melius sanam est, mulier, mentem sumere* 801-2).

The items in the *Menaechmi* are slightly different from those in the *Aulularia*. The gold and purple are the same, and are luxury items. Maids and food, however, are not. Maids, though obviously not a feature of the poorest households, are not necessarily luxurious, and both maids and *penus* (provisions) serve the interests of the house, and not

²⁷ Ibid. 2.

only the *matrona's* whim.²⁸ The gold and purple may have been added as a topical joke, since there may have been actual dowries that included them, but the other items are more neutral. Furthermore, this list is not nearly as exaggerated as Megadorus'. The speakers' standing is also different than Megadorus' in the *Aulularia*: when Menaechmus first addresses his wife, he most likely receives a sympathetic ear from the audience. The *matrona's* father, too, has an entrance that establishes him as a relatively likeable character. The implications of the speeches are also slightly different: in Megadorus' speech women expect luxury; in the *Menaechmi*, men insist on it. And while Megadorus rejects the idea of spending money on these items, Menaechmus accepts them, albeit grudgingly. But though the characters differ in their presentation, all agree on one thing: marriage is defined by financial duty and benefits. When men talk about marriage, it is an economic relationship they describe.

The women, however, have different views. Some reject the financial definition of a marriage entirely. The *Stichus* sisters tell their father that they married husbands, not money (*non argento . . . sed viro* 136). Alcumena, too, rejects the traditional definition of dowry and redefines it in terms of virtues (*Amph.* 839-42). Furthermore, no *matrona* (dowered or otherwise) ever asks for gold, purple or carriages. In fact, prostitutes are the

²⁸ *Penus* is later defined by Scaevola as "things to eat and drink used by the *paterfamilias*, his wife, children, and their attendants and animals" (Gellius *NA* 4.1). It is clearly meant to serve the entire household, rather than just the wife (Dumont 29-31; Treggiari 389-90). Maids who came with the dowry, while technically belonging to the wife, often performed services that benefited the household, such as cooking or watching the children (Dumont 36; Treggiari 375). This differs from the retinue of slaves described in *Aul.* 498 ff., and even by Cato (Livy 34.3.9). Finally, we should note that prostitutes have slaves and maids: *Truc.*, *Men.*, *Pers.* etc.

women who demand luxury items.²⁹ *Matronae* are most concerned about economizing household resources rather than spending them on clothing or jewelry. Cleostrata expresses frustration with her husband's debauchery and perfume buying, telling him, "Go ahead, lose your shirt!" (*disperde rem, Cas.* 247). Dorippa's complaint is specifically in response to her husband's announcement that he has hired a cook, and she says that no financial loss (*damnum*) will surprise her after this (*Merc.* 784).

When the women do mention their dowry, it is used as a demand for better treatment, not for luxury goods. In the *Mercator*, for instance, when the *senex* Lysimachus has just announced his expenditures on a lover's banquet, his wife Dorippa says:

miserior mulier me nec fiet, nec fuit,
tali viro quae nupserim. heu miserae mihi.
em quoi te et tua, quae tu habeas, commendes viro
em quoi decem talenta dotis detuli,
haec ut viderem, ut ferrem has contumelias.
(700-704)

There never was and never will be a woman more
miserable than me, since I married such a man--poor me!
Just see the husband to whom you're supposed to entrust
yourself and your belongings! Just see the man whom I
brought ten talents of dowry, just so I could see this, and
suffer abuse!

Dorippa cites her dowry--but only to imply her husband's mismanagement of it. Her expectation based on a large dowry is framed in terms of propriety, not luxury. She implies that the real problem is her suffering abuse (*ferrem has contumelias* 704).

Artemona, too, mentions her dowry in response to her husband's insults, and makes no

²⁹ *Truc.* 51-6; *Men.* 524-7, 539-42. It should be noted, however, that these requests are usually for gold in

financial demands whatsoever (*Asin.* 898). Cleostrata's complaints also center on respect: she says she is badly married (*male nupta*, *Cas.* 172), and despised at home (*despicatur domi* 184). Finally, the *Menaechmi matrona* complains of being taken for a joke (*ludibria habeor*, 782). We can see that, in the eyes of the female characters themselves, dowry is cited as grounds for better treatment, and not for spending more money.

We should note, however, that men, and not women, are the big spenders in Plautus' plays: husbands are either pillaging their wife's personal belongings (as in the *Menaechmi* and *Asinaria*) or spending the money on prostitutes or luxurious lovers' banquets (as in the *Mercator*, *Casina*, and *Stichus*). This is why we must be very careful not to take a statement like Megadorus' too seriously. Although the men *claim* that wives demand luxury, wives themselves do not ask for luxury. In fact, the wives understand the relationship between a dowry and household economy. Their husbands, who constantly attempt to spend money on banquets, prostitutes, and gifts for prostitutes, do not. Hence, Plautine comedy has a more complex relationship with the contemporary discourse on luxury than is usually conceded. The humor does not consist solely in men maligning women's luxury; it is acted out in the men's spending as well. The men's spending, in turn, must be read in the context of their ridiculousness. Thus, an analysis must not stop at the men's jokes, but must incorporate their characterization and the women's own words and actions. We see that the stereotype of women's luxurious spending is not supported, but problematized by the comic context.

the form of jewelry, or for clothing.

Flagitium and Propriety

If Plautine *matronae* do not expect luxury, what do they want from their husbands? Leaving the question of love for later, we may note first that wives do not expect fidelity from their husbands. Not one *matrona* ever tells her husband to stop seeing prostitutes. The wives merely want their husbands to have a certain type of relationship with prostitutes, one that avoids scandal (*flagitium*) and excessive financial loss (*damnum*).

Recall that, in the last chapter, we saw how the plays made the *senex amator* a target for the audience's derision. The men's age-inappropriate and foolish behavior is derided by multiple characters, and exactly this behavior constitutes the *flagitium* that the wives complain of. On the other hand, the *matronae*'s own concerns are family-oriented: raising children,³⁰ keeping household expenses reasonable, and avoiding scandal.

A tipsy *lena* in the *Cistillaria* offers an insightful look at the expectations of *matronae*. While her drunkenness may make us wary of her credibility as a character, we must keep the context of the play in mind. The *lena* is offering earnest advice to the young prostitute Selenium, and she is giving her advice as one woman in the profession to another. She is not trying to justify anything to the audience, and she certainly has no reason to dissemble:

deceat pol, mea Selenium,
hunc esse ordinem benevolentis inter se
beneque amicitia utier,

³⁰ We have already seen all the instances of *matronae* showing appropriate motherly concern: Dorippa prays to Apollo for her son's well-being (*Merc.* 680); Artemona is more concerned with her husband corrupting their son, which she mentions several times (*Asin.* 851, 867, 875, 932) than with the fact that her son is sowing his wild oats. Cleostrata says that she and her husband ought to help their only son (*Cas.* 262). Finally, Phanostrata is very concerned to find her long-lost daughter (*Cist.*).

ubi istas videas summo genere natas, summatis matronas,
 ut amicitiam colunt atque ut eam iunctam bene habent inter
 se.
 si idem istud nos faciamus, is idem imitemur, ita tamen vix
 vivimus
 cum invidia summa. suarum opum nos volunt esse
 indigentes.
 nostra copia nil volunt nos potesse
 suique omnium rerum nos indigere,
 ut simus supplices.
 eas si adeas, abitum quam aditum malis, ita nostro ordini
 palam blandiuntur, clam, si occasio usquam est,
 aquam frigidam subdole suffudunt.
 Viris cum suis praedicant nos solere,
 suas paelices esse aiunt, eunt depressum.
 (*Cistellaria* 22-37)

It is fitting, my Selenium, that our kind make good use of goodwill and friendship among each other. But when you see those women born from the best stock, those crème de la crème, the *matronae*—how they cherish friendship and how well it is joined among them! But if we should do this same thing, if we should imitate them, we can scarcely live with such ill-will. They want us to be dependent on their resources. They want us to be able to do nothing from our own resources and that we be in need of their money, so that we come to them as suppliants. If you dare approach them, you prefer the exit to the entrance, since they are coaxing to our kind in public, but in private meetings (if there is ever occasion for them) they pour cold water on us. They accuse us of making their husbands a habit, they say we are concubines, and they are out to get us.

There are three main points I want to draw from Syra's speech: 1) that there is a concern for financial resources on the part of both *meretrices* and *matronae*; 2) that *matronae* are aware of prostitutes at all (and vice versa); and 3) that there are different types of relationships with a prostitute. If we compare Syra's statements with the plays

we have already examined, we will find her characterization of *matronae* and *meretrices* surprisingly accurate.

Regarding financial concerns, Syra captures an important fact: both *matronae* and *meretrices* are competing for the same financial resources. This is borne out in plays where a man's involvement with a prostitute leads to pilfering of household items. Without doubt, in the Plautine world prostitutes are associated with financial loss. So, while it may be a drunken exaggeration on Syra's part that the *matronae* want the prostitutes to be financially dependent on them, it is clear that the two groups of women are invested in the same limited household resources. As we have seen, the wives' reaction to this plundering is uncharitable, to say the least, and this may be the *invidia* that Syra is describing.

Turning to the second point, it is generally assumed that *matronae* are ignorant of prostitutes and their function, and thus sexually jealous and frustrated by their inability to control their husband's infidelity. Contrary to this description, wives seem well aware of prostitutes and their function. We have already seen Cleostrata's snappy comeback in the *Casina*, when she tells her husband that it's a prostitute's job, not hers, to coax other women's husbands (585-6). Cleostrata acknowledges the existence of *meretrices* and shows insight into how their role differs from that of a wife: it is the duty of a *meretrix*, not a *matrona*, to be coaxing (*blanda*).³¹

Finally, Syra makes the curious statement that the *matronae* accuse the prostitutes of being accustomed to their husbands, and call them *paelices*. By being indignant at the

accusations, she implies that this is not true. She may be trying to defend the prostitutes' roles, and pinpoint the men as agents, or she may be saying that the accusations are entirely untrue. But her use of *solere* implies that the idea of *repeatedly* visiting a *meretrix* (as opposed to once in a while), is the basis for the wives' accusations. Her objection to the word *paelex* supports the idea that customary habit is the problem. A *paelex* is a concubine, a rival to the wife.³² Though the terms for prostitutes are a slippery semantic area, it is clear that there are differing relationships with prostitutes: hiring an unnamed hooker (*scortum ducere*) differs from having a long-standing relationship, whether with a higher-class prostitute (*meretrix*), a girlfriend (*amica*) or a concubine (*concubina, paelex*).³³ Syra's version of the wives' accusations, then, tells us much: the wives object to their husbands' having long-term relationships with prostitutes, rather than just visiting them.

According to a later commentary on Horace, even Cato the Censor agreed with this sentiment:

Catone transeunte quidam de fornice; cum fugeret,
revocavit et laudavit. Postea cum frequentius eum
exeuntem de eodem lupanari vidisset, dixisse fertur:
adulescens, ego te laudavi, tamquam huc intervenires, non
tamquam hic habitares.³⁴

A certain man came out of a brothel while Cato happened
to be passing by. When Cato saw the man, he called him
back and praised him. But later, when Cato had seen the
man exiting the same brothel fairly often, they say he

³¹ Treggiari notes that there is in later Roman literature a clear contrast between proper deportment for wives and prostitutes, but uses examples such as Martial and Horace (314).

³² A *paelex* is "a mistress installed as a rival or in addition to a wife" (Adams 1983: 355, citing the *OLD*), and Treggiari considers a *paelex* as the female equivalent of *adulter* (264).

³³ Adams 1983: 325-7, 348-50, 355.

³⁴ Pseudo-Acron on Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.31-2.

addressed him: "Young man, I praised you because I thought you visited this place, not because you lived there."

Cato at first praises the young man for finding the appropriate outlet for his lust. But upon seeing that the man visits the brothel too often, he chastises him for living there. Cato's criticism can be read in two ways: either because the man is too lustful, or because he is confusing a brothel with a home. It is the latter confusion that seems to upset the wives of Plautine comedy.

Given that adultery was triangular, i.e., it reflected on both spouses, a husband's having a *paelex* is the closest he can come to committing legal adultery on his wife.³⁵ The wives couch their complaints in exactly these terms: they say their husband has a long-term mistress (*amica*, *paelex*, *concubina*, or *meretrix*). In the *Menaechmi*, for example, Menaechmus and his wife both refer to Erotium as *amica*.³⁶ In the *Mercator*, too, Dorippa and her son refer to Pasicompsa as a mistress (*amica*, *paelex*) numerous times, and clearly differentiate her from a *scortum*.

One aspect of Syra's speech is not borne out in the plays: the face-to-face meeting of *matronae* and *meretrices* in private. In the entire Plautine (and Terentian) corpus, only once do we see a *matrona* come face-to-face with a prostitute.³⁷ Moreover, there is a distinct discomfort with placing the prostitute in the domestic space. It seems that the

³⁵ Treggiari 264.

³⁶ Erotium is described as Menaechmus' *amica* by her cook (300), his wife (561, 652, 741), and Menaechmus himself (599). She is referred to as *meretrix* by Peniculus (193), and later by Menaechmus (906) and Messenio (1134). She is called *scortum* by Peniculus (170) and Syracusan Menaechmus (475, 1142).

³⁷ In the last act of the *Asinaria*.

mixing of *matronae* and *meretrices* violated some basic principle of Roman categorization.³⁸

The *Mercator*, especially, brings together the themes we have been discussing. In Demipho's dream, certain events foreshadow events in the play: two she-goats (representing a wife and a courtesan) will fight if they are in the same house (231); and the pretty little she-goat (i.e., the prostitute Pasicompsa) will devour the dowry of the wife of a monkey (i.e., his neighbor Lysimachus, 239-241). The themes of domestic space (specifically the problem of having a wife and a courtesan in one house), separate spheres for wife and prostitute, and the improper expenditure of money will be central to the play.

In the first place, the play clearly dichotomizes the roles of a wife and a prostitute, and does so in terms similar to Cleostrata's remark. The young man Charinus claims that no one will believe such a pretty girl as Pasicompsa could be a maid (210). Later, his father makes the same suggestion. First he claims that Pasicompsa's looks are out of keeping with the household (*non nostra formam habet dignam domo* 395), and that she will not be able to perform chores (396-400). He continues:

quia illa forma matrem familias
flagitium sit si sequatur; quando incedat per vias
contemplant, conspiciant omnes, nutent, nictent, sibilent,
vellicent, vocent, molesti sint; occident ostium:
impleantur elegeorum meae fores carbonibus.
atque ut nunc sunt maledicentes homines, uxori meae

³⁸ This is true in later literature. In Terence's *Adelphoe*, the old man Demea expresses shock at the idea of a prostitute and mother together in one house: *meretrix et materfamilias una in domo!*? (747). In the *Hecyra*, the *meretrix* Bacchis is distinctly uncomfortable at having to go into the house to meet her ex-lover's wife (788-89). In the *Philippics*, Cicero accuses Antony of mixing prostitutes and mothers--including his own: *mater amicam impuri filii tamquam nurum sequebatur* (2.58); and in the context of general debauchery: *scorta inter matresfamilias* (2.105).

mihique obiectent lenocinium facere. nam quid eost
 opus?
 ego emero matri tuae
 ancillam viraginem aliquam non malam, forma mala,
 ut matrem addecet familias, aut Syram aut Aegyptiam:
 ea molet, coquet, conficiet pensum, pinsetur flagro,
 neque propter eam quicquam eveniet nostris foribus flagiti.
 (405-17)

Because it would breed scandal for such a beauty to be the
 attendant of a wife and mother; when she passed through
 the streets all the men would eye her, ogle her, nod and
 wink and whistle, pinch her, accost her, annoy her; they
 would serenade the house and scrawl my doors black with
 their love ditties. And worse still—people are so
 slanderous nowadays—they would charge my wife and me
 with pandering. What good is that? . . .

I'll buy your mother some big lusty wench, a good one,
 though not good looking, such as befits the mother of a
 family--some Syrian or Egyptian. She 'll grind meal, cook,
 spin, take her thrashings--a maid like that will bring no
 disgrace to her house. (trans. Nixon)

In short, Demipho claims that beauty (*forma*) is incompatible with working in the
 household, and that beauty can taint a *materfamilias* with accusations of scandal
 (*flagitium*) and pimping (*lenocinium*). Despite Demipho's discreditable character (he
 really wants to sequester the girl for himself), we should consider his remarks seriously,
 precisely because he is unwittingly revealing his own intentions. By listing these erotic
 activities, he is actually looking forward to his own relations with the girl. But the fact
 still remains that erotic activity conducted in a household is inappropriate, and reflects
 badly on Demipho and his wife.

More importantly, his son Charinus makes the same assumption--that beauty is
 incompatible with work--and he has no motive for removing Pasicompsa from the house.

Both men assume that *forma* is incompatible with household work and with a *materfamilias*. Demipho has specified a certain dichotomy between the roles of *matrona* and *meretrix*, and the separation of the domestic and other spheres: presumably, a wife is not expected to be beautiful any more than she is expected to be *blanda*. When the two spheres come too close together, the sphere of prostitution infects the sphere of marriage, and both Demipho and his wife risk being accused of pimping (*lenocinium*).³⁹ This concern with bringing prostitution into the house, already articulated in the beginning of the play, will recur several times.

When we turn to the other married couple, we see the play's theme repeated. Lysimachus' wife, Dorippa, returns from the country, and her slave runs out to warn her about a woman in the house (*mulier in aedibus* 684). In response, Dorippa merely asks, "What, a woman?" (*quid mulier?* 685). But when Syra claims it is a *meretrix*, Dorippa's puzzlement turns to disbelief--she says, "Are you serious?" (*Verone serio?* 685). The idea of a prostitute inside the house is what really upsets Dorippa. Syra further specifies that the woman is a mistress (*amica*), and a kept woman (*paelex*). Lysimachus re-enters, and remarks that he has hired a cook (the audience knows this for his lovers' feast with Pasicompsa), and we see that Demipho's prediction has come true: the pretty little she-goat (Pasicompsa) is devouring the dowry of Lysimachus' wife.

When Lysimachus sees Dorippa, he knows he is in trouble because she has seen the woman in the house (*mulierem in aedibus* 707). Lysimachus tries to defend himself,

³⁹ It is uncertain whether Demipho and his wife could actually be prosecuted for this offense. In later law, an owner who pimps his slaves is liable to this charge (Ulpian D.3.2.4, 2-3). But even assuming legal continuity, we must imagine that Demipho does not intend to share Pasicompsa. It is possible, however, that the mere presence of other suitors for a slave could suggest this charge. See also Riggsby.

but Dorippa's suspicions are confirmed when a cook implies that Dorippa is the *concubina* that Lysimachus has been talking about. The term *concubina*, like *paelex*, implies a kept woman, rather than a casual prostitute. At this point, Dorippa cannot stand it any more:

non miror si quid damni facis aut flagiti.
nec pol ego patiar, sic me nuptam tam male
measque in aedis sic scorta obductarier.
Syra, i, rogato meum patrem verbis meis
ut veniat ad me iam simul tecum.
(784-88)

No extravagance or enormity of yours, sir, surprises me.
Good heavens! I won't endure such a dreadful married life,
and have sluts introduced into my own house in such a
fashion! Syra! Go to my father and ask him in my name to
come to me with you at once.
(trans. Nixon)

It is very important to note Dorippa's concerns: they are financial and propriety-oriented. She at no point says that the actual fact of her husband's infidelity upsets her. She is most concerned about the financial loss (*damnum*) that her husband incurs (probably based on her observation of the preparations for the feast), and about the *flagitium* that ensues from bringing prostitutes into the house (*in aedis*). Her demand that Syra get her father shows that these are concerns serious enough to warrant outside intervention. Dorippa then exits into the house.

Lysimachus runs after Dorippa, and the old slave Syra is left alone onstage. She then delivers a monologue that addresses the sexual double standard applied to men and women.

ecastor lege dura vivont mulieres
multoque iniquiore miserae quam viri.
nam is vir scortum duxit clam uxorem suam,
id si rescivit uxor, impunest viro;
uxor virum si clam domo egressa est foras,
viro fit causa, exigitur matrimonio.
utinam lex esset eadem quae uxori est viro;
nam uxor contenta est, quae bona est, uno viro:
qui minus vir una uxore contentus siet?
ecastor faxim, si itidem plectantur viri,
si quis clam uxorem duxerit scortum suam,
ut illae exiguntur quae in se culpam commarent,
plures viri sint vidui quam nunc mulieres.
(817-829)

My god, women live under a harsh law, and one that is much harsher to them than it is to men, poor things. For if a man takes a whore unbeknownst to his wife, and the wife finds out about it, the husband goes unpunished. But if a woman even sets foot outside the house without her husband knowing about it, there's cause for the husband to divorce her. If only the law were the same for man and wife! For a good wife is content with one husband; why should a man be any less content with one wife? I'll warrant that if husbands were punished the same way, whatever man took a whore without his wife's knowledge, just as those women are divorced who bring fault upon themselves . . . more men would be alone than women are now!

This monologue is quite astounding for its time in that it even questions the double-standard inherent in Roman marriage.⁴⁰ Nor is the comic context such that Syra

⁴⁰ As Moore notes (1998a: 164-5), "The speech does provide a striking introduction of the wife's perspective into a theatrical genre that is more often than not antagonistic to *matronae*."

is apt to be the object of the audience's laughter. But it brings us back to what women expect from a marriage. A good wife is expected to have one husband; and while a husband can philander, a wife cannot. Importantly, the idea of meeting a prostitute secretly comes up again, and the wife's unhappiness is predicated on her discovery of the husband's assignation. If Syra can acknowledge the double standard onstage, we can assume that it made sense to the members of Plautus' audience. But rather than reading it as a proto-feminist statement calling for legal equality, we must situate it in the context that we have already seen: it simply points out that women, having discovered their husband's adultery, can do nothing. It is most likely a call for discretion on the husbands' part. Discrete, offsite adultery is what the other plays have also suggested, and what the *matronae* expect. Moreover, this limitation is perfectly in line with the societal standards of the time: an accepted (and explicitly acknowledged) double standard would not encourage women to expect fidelity.⁴¹ Discretion, on the other hand, is a virtue more broadly applicable than fidelity.

At the play's conclusion, we see Lysimachus' and Dorippa's son, Eutychus, try to make peace for the couple. He repeats the accusations, saying his mother is very mad (*irata*) that his father not only brought his mistress into the house (*in aedis*) but also brought her face-to-face (*ob oculos*) with his mother (923-4). Eutychus makes the same distinction that Syra did: he says that although the father brought a *scortum* into the house (923), his mother thought it was a long-term girlfriend (*amica* 925). The problem, again,

⁴¹ See Cohen, esp. 112-13, on the Roman double standard.

is the idea of a long-term girlfriend, already a potential rival to the wife, being installed in the home.

The *Mercator* brings together the themes discussed so far: financial concerns, propriety, and dowry. The abuse of money is a problem in and of itself, but the play also highlights the *matrona's* concern for social propriety, or to put it another way, avoiding scandal (*flagitium*). Nor is Dorippa the only *matrona* to complain about *flagitium*: the *Menaechmi matrona* also complains about her husband's *flagitia* (720). Cleostrata, the *matrona* of the *Casina*, claims her husband is a "scandal of a man" (*flagitium illud hominis* 151). The *Asinaria's* Artemona, too, describes Demaenetus' behavior as *facere flagitium* (853). The concern with propriety plays into the same comic mechanism discussed in Chapter 2. The wives accuse their husbands of making themselves publicly scandalous--and so they do. Thus, the women do not ask for fidelity but discretion. Moreover, the women's status as comic agents should lead us to conclude that their demands are not meant to be the object of laughter.

What is the larger function of these "unruly women" who guard against *flagitium*? I have argued that the *matronae* are not mere inversions, anti-types, or objects of derision presented for men's enjoyment. Rather, they are funny, yet moral, agents. As I suggested in the introduction, previous scholarship has reduced the *matrona* to a single value: that of being *morigera* or not. But that distinction is not useful, and the *matronae* should not be separated into "bad" or "good" categories. In fact, they are all "good", that is, they all act in accord with contemporary social norms. Moreover, by providing models of behavior which run against the socially accepted ideology of being *morigera*, these

women provide more than just a momentary lapse, meant to reaffirm the normality of the prevailing order. In deconstructionist terms, their unruliness widens the discursive field, so to speak, and provides a new and competing model of feminine behavior.⁴² Plautus' characters widen the definition of *matrona*: far from reducing it to the single quality of *morigera*, they show a multifaceted definition of the role. If these women are not *morigerae*, then they are faithful, chaste (for the most part), modest, and competent to run a house.⁴³ Conversely, the women who are ostensibly *morigerae* (such as Erotium) are not trustworthy.

Concordia (?): Plautus' Unsentimental Family Ideal

Finally, let us turn to the question of how Plautine marriage relates to "real" marriage. It was in 1986 that Rawson, writing about Roman marriage, called for more work to be done on the subject, and especially for a closer examination of the conflict between ideal and practice.⁴⁴ Her call has been answered by historians of family history. Despite the undisputed function of marriage as an institution for producing legitimate

⁴² This analysis is similar to what Davis and Rowe suggest. Davis, discussing the role of women on top in early modern Europe, suggests that the "ambiguous woman-on-top of the world of play made the unruly option a more conceivable one within the family" (145). Rowe, a film theorist, analyzes female characters as comic agents who reverse the gaze of the viewer, and make a spectacle of the spectator (12), an act which she considers a powerful tool for change. She concludes: "When men make jokes about women, they assert their already-existing social power over them. When women make jokes about men, they invert--momentarily--the social hierarchy." (19) While neither of these theorists works on antiquity, their observations nevertheless have relevance for the topic.

⁴³ By my admittedly feminist reading of the *matrona*, I neither intend to over-optimistically accentuate the positive, nor to deny the misogyny inherent in Roman culture. I do insist, however, that we consider the polyvalence of Plautine comedy. Every senatorial man in the audience, even if inclined to laugh at the *matrona*, would also be forced to laugh at the excess of the *senex amator*. As second-class citizens bound by patriarchal norms, prostitutes might laugh all the more with the *matronae*, and at the *senex amator*. And slaves and non-elite members of the audience would certainly laugh from a position of class--perhaps

children, and its wide disparity from the modern Western ideal of romantic love, it is agreed that *concordia*, spousal harmony, was a prized quality in a marriage.⁴⁵

Furthermore, scholars now acknowledge that genuine spousal affection was not uncommon, and that emotional support was something expected from family members.⁴⁶

Treggiari points to the exiled Cicero's letters to Terentia as sincere demonstrations of affection and pain at separation.⁴⁷ Those letters, of course, were written before Cicero divorced Terentia and married Publilia, a much younger woman. The reasons for Cicero's divorce are debatable. Plutarch considers Terentia's neglect the most plausible reason for the divorce. However, he notes that Terentia accused her husband of being smitten by the charms (*erôs*) of a young lady; while Tiro claimed that Cicero re-married for money, because he had many debts.⁴⁸ Dixon suggests that part of the reason for Cicero's decision was Terentia's willfulness and even deceptiveness in managing family finances.⁴⁹ At any rate, there is clearly some financial negotiation after the divorce, involving how much Terentia will pay to their son as an allowance.⁵⁰

Control of money, use of dowry, reasons for marriage, and possible infatuation with a younger woman--all familiar themes from comedy, and (apparently) from life. Cicero's letters to Terentia make his change in affections clear, but only by means of their

for them, all of the concerns of the Plautine couple would seem like the ridiculous prerogatives of people with too much time and money.

⁴⁴ Rawson 26.

⁴⁵ Treggiari 251-3; Dixon 1992 86, 105-6.

⁴⁶ Dixon 1991: 104-6; Dixon 1992: 26-7, 83-90; Treggiari 241-51.

⁴⁷ Treggiari 253-255 on *Fam.* 14.1, 2, 3, 4. Treggiari also notes that Cicero had ulterior motives, but still believes the letters were relatively sincere.

⁴⁸ *Vit. Cic.* 41. Plutarch adds that Antony accused Cicero of throwing out the wife with whom he had grown old.

⁴⁹ 1986: 103-4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 106-11.

brevity and brusque tone. Cicero, as a public figure and Roman male, could only speak as such. He could not call Terentia names, or speak frankly about what happened. As for Terentia herself, we hear her voice in only one sentence of Plutarch's report.

The comic stage, on the other hand, gives us both sides of the story (albeit through a skewed, male-authored perspective). Sadly, most authors of Roman family history ignore comedy. But comedy, with its twin requirements of norm and challenge-to-norm, is the perfect means by which to see the conflict between ideal and practice. *Concordia* is the ideal norm that lies behind the challenging paradigm which Plautus constructs, and it is clear that Plautine marriage engages with the same idea of spousal harmony and *concordia* that later texts will. Separating Plautus' plays into those involving "good" or "bad" marriages misses the point. The plays do not create the "sentimental" idea of family that Dixon describes. On the contrary, Plautus' plays have a comic, and perhaps more realistic, relation to *concordia*; that is, *concordia* is the background against which the plays impose another paradigm.

Even in the two plays that are most obviously concerned with *concordia*, the *Stichus* and the *Amphitruo*, we do not see perfect marriages.⁵¹ Alcumena, because she is unwittingly committing adultery, displays fidelity but not chastity. In the *Stichus*, despite the sisters' admirable virtue, their newly-returned husbands apparently ignore them in favor of a banqueting and cavorting with slaves. In the plays that pit *uxores dotatae* against *senes amatores*, *concordia* is still a central focus, even if it is not demonstrated in

⁵¹ In the *Amphitruo*, the word *concordia* is used explicitly, as well as being implied by the characters' actions. In the *Stichus*, the sisters discuss an ideal marriage in terms of martial concord (101, 124-5, 140, 284); say that wives should be *socias* (44), stick through good and bad (124-125); and conclude that an unwilling wife is like an enemy: *hostis uxor invita* (83).

quite the same way. Both spouses have expectations about the marriage: the only problem is that they cannot agree on the terms. The women want their husbands to leave their clothing and dowry untouched, not to establish long-term relationships with prostitutes, and, most of all, not to bring them inside the family home. The women also want the husbands to recognize that it is not their job to be *blanda*. The husbands, on the other hand, want total financial control and unquestioning obedience.

Even if womanly subjection to the *paterfamilias* was a Catonian ideal, there was a conflicting expectation that a woman should be competent to run the house and manage the finances. Furthermore, as we have seen, disputes about money were inevitable given the gap left by the laws governing the use of dowry during the marriage and its recovery after the divorce, and the gap between women's power over "their" money and men's control over the household. Finally, the plays complicate the ideal that sex and marriage were separate issues: although a man could philander, legally and socially speaking, Plautus' plays show how indiscrete adultery could bring disastrous results to the household.

Plautus' humor plays upon the difference between idealized *concordia* and more realistic demands on marriage. It also serves an important social function. for its audience--that of a reality check. For all that *concordia* was extolled, one suspects that, like most virtues, it was easier said than done. However, the satirical critique inherent in Plautine comedy ultimately may have contributed to the goal of marital *concordia*. For every *matrona* who worried about looking like the un-*morigera* wives onstage, there was a husband who worried about looking like the *senex amator* or the effeminate

Menaechmus. For any spectator who had read who was sentimentalizing his relationship with a prostitute, the Plautine prostitute served as a warning.. As in modern times, the publically private world of comedy made the spectators feel better about their own, un-ideal lives, while at the same time exercising a controlling laughter that urged spectators to follow social norms.

Importantly, spectatorial reaction is based on an inherent comparison of self to stage. Whether one laughs *at*, and separates oneself by a feeling of superiority, or laughs *with*, and connects oneself with the character, one still recognizes the essential form being portrayed. This, then, is the naturalism of Plautine comedy. Far from presenting a Saturnalian inversion of everyday morals, it reproduces the norms of the community while simultaneously exaggerating them. The characters serve as an expression of the Roman imaginary,⁵² that is, the abstract ideological space in which the individual can see himself. Plautus' plays, moreover, portrayed relationships recognizable not only to Plautus' contemporary audience, but to later Romans such as Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian. The fact that these plays spoke to an audience so diverse in time and place is a testament to their essential "Romanness" and to their value, both as beginning of truly Latin literature and as sociohistorical source.

⁵² I use this term both in its Lacanian sense (to describe the individual's relationship) and its Althusserian sense (to describe the larger society).

Appendix: Evidence for Greek Wives Onstage

Introduction

There is no extant female role in Greek New Comedy that clearly corresponds to the Roman *matrona*. Nevertheless, some scholars have assumed a corresponding role, often based on conflated Greek and Roman evidence.¹ I myself am convinced of the Romanness of Plautus' plays and *matronae*; however, for the sake of those who are skeptical about the Romanness of the marriages in the Roman plays, this appendix will examine the evidence for the existence of a *proto-matrona* in Greek New Comedy—both in Menandrian plays and in those fragments of other authors which are useful. Since the *matrona* herself is variable in age and socio-economic class, I will include all evidence that suggests the appearance of married women onstage. My goal is to demonstrate the problems with assuming a Greek equivalent to the role of the *matrona* based on the Greek texts.

I will examine several aspects of the Greek evidence. The first is simply when and if married women appear onstage. The assumption that *proto-matronae* appeared regularly onstage must be analyzed in terms of the Menandrian plays and other fragments, rather than in terms of conflated Greek and Roman New Comedy. The second question is what (if anything) we can say about the characterization of these women,

¹ Married women have not been covered extensively, but have been included in surveys of female characters. The most extensive existing survey, that of Post, is a good starting point, but it does not focus exclusively on New Comedy. It also conflates Greek and Roman New Comedy. Webster (1960), too, makes liberal use of Roman adaptations when surveying Menandrian plots, though he is not specifically concerned with women's roles. Fantham (1975), who specifically addresses women's roles, is especially brief about the roles of married women. Citing only Menander's *Plokion* and its Roman adaptation, she still confidently asserts that there is a Greek equivalent to the Roman *matrona*. Others who assume the equivalent: Fraenkel 416; Grimal 86-7; Stärk 70, 73; Schuhmann 1977: 53.

especially regarding their relationship with other characters. This question is more difficult to answer given the sparse and decontextualized nature of the evidence. The final, and most difficult, question is how these married women would fit into the plots of Greek New Comedy.

In order to answer these questions, I will treat several types of evidence. Menander provides the most secure evidence simply because a whole play and several large parts of plays are available for analysis. But even in Menander's intact plays there is only one sure example of a married woman onstage. Therefore it will be necessary to adduce fragments, both of Menander and of other authors. Testimonia and plot summaries, too, will prove useful, as will titles that show feminine endings. Adapted plays, when we have sufficient evidence from Greek and Roman authors, will be included. Finally, I will examine later authors who discuss the characters of Menandrian comedy.

My end goal is twofold. First, I want to demonstrate that the connection between the married women in Greek comedy and their Roman successors is tenuous, at best. Second, I want to suggest that, at least based on the Greek evidence presented here, Plautus' *matronae* are a distinct, original, and Roman creation. The plays of Terence, though important for the ultimate question of adaptation, will not be treated here, as they fall outside the scope of this dissertation.

Before embarking on this survey, it is necessary to say a word about the simple term *gunê*. This is the most basic word for "woman" but can also be used in a variety of other settings. Standing alone, it can be used to mean "wife," but it can also be

strengthened by adding the adjective "married" (*gunê gametê*). The vocative *gunai* is especially important, since I will be examining quotes containing this vocative as possible evidence for married women onstage. Unfortunately, the vocative form is especially flexible, and covers a wide range of semantic meaning and sociolinguistic registers. Drawing from other dramatic genres (tragedy, bucolic poetry and mime), we can get a sense of its many uses.

Gunai can obviously be used as an address from a husband to a wife. We see many straightforward uses of this in tragedy.² But it is also used to address a woman who is a complete stranger.³ In terms of social status, *gunai* can be used as an address from an inferior to a superior: messengers and heralds regularly address women as *gunai*.⁴ Choruses, too, use *gunai* to address queens, such as Atossa and Clytemnestra.⁵ On the other hand, choruses use the same term to address women who were of higher status but are now slaves, such as Cassandra, Andromache and Hecuba; and even to address nurses.⁶ From tragedy, too, we can see that *gunai* alone does not give any sociolinguistic context; it can be used in a very hostile situation, as a term of pity, or between friendly

² For instance, Agamemnon to Clytemnestra, Jason to Medea, Oedipus to Jocasta, and Admetus to Alcestis.

³ This is particularly apparent in Euripides' *anagnorisis* plays: Orestes to Iphigenia before he recognizes her, *IT* 483, 496, 542 and 546; Menelaus to Helen, pre-recognition, *Hel.* 557, 563; post-recognition, 779. Ion to unrecognized Creusa, *Ion* 238, 244, 255, 263, 289, 309, 329, 333, 372, 379; Admetus to his new bride (actually Alcestis), *Alc.* 337; Orestes to un-recognized Electra, *Elec.* 1106. In Theocritus, too, a man addresses an unknown woman as *gunai* (*Id.* 15.73).

⁴ To the chorus leader in *Bacch.* 1033; to Deianira in *Trach.* 193 and 366; to Iocasta, *OT* 934; to Hecuba, *Hec.* 504, 508 and 518; to Hecuba, *Tro.* 237.

⁵ To Atossa, *Pers.* 156 and 623; to Clytemnestra, *Ag.* 17, 351, 1407. These women are also addressed by the chorus as *basileia*, making it clear that they are royal (*Pers.* 623, *Soph. El.* 988).

⁶ To enslaved noblewomen: Cassandra, *Ag.* 1296; Andromache, *Andr.* 117, 141, 302; Hecuba, *Hec.* 106, *Tro.* 573. To nurse: *Trach.* 880, *Med.* 136.

acquaintances.⁷ Finally, it should be noted that *gunai* can be used as an exclamation, usually of lament, when the woman is not actually onstage.⁸ In the dialogues of Theocritus' *Idylls* we see *gunai* used as an address between older married women who already know each other, and in other Theocritean poems, *gunai* is used as an address to a mistress.⁹ In a mime of Herondas, a cobbler addresses his female customer as *gunai*.¹⁰ And in Menander himself, two women of approximately the same age, one just-married and one a courtesan, who do not know each other, address each other as *gunai*.¹¹

From this brief survey, it is clear what a problematic term *gunai* can be. In and of itself, it can mean *woman* or *wife*. In its vocative form, it can be used in the most intimate situations (husband to wife or lover to mistress) and the least intimate (between strangers); as a friendly greeting or a hostile address; from a man to a woman or between two women. In situations where there is a clear context, it is usually obvious how *gunai* should be translated, whether as "wife," "woman," "ma'am," or "lady." But, importantly, most of our evidence for Greek New Comedy consists of fragments without any context. It is therefore imperative that we do not assume every instance of *gunai* in a fragment is referring to a wife onstage, or indeed to a wife at all.

⁷ For example, Hermione and Andromache are clearly hostile to each other, but address each other as *gunai* (*Andr.* 207, 237); Teucer to Helen after he announces how much he hates her (*Hel.* 82, 84); Ajax address Tecmessa as *gunai* when he is ordering her around (*Aj.* 93 and 685). *Gunai* expressing pity is usually accompanied by other words, such as *dustêne gunai* (chorus to Hecuba, *Tro.* 573; to Medea, *Med.* 357), *talaiphrôn gunai* (chorus to Tecmessa, *Aj.* 903); *polla talaina* (chorus to Cassandra, *Ag.* 1296). For an example of a friendly interchange, see Aegeus to Medea, *Med.* 703 and 720.

⁸ *Alc.* 463; *Med.* 1274; *Eur. El.* 497 (in the exclamation of the dying Agamemnon as reported by the chorus).

⁹ As address between women in *Id.* 15.12.; from lover to mistress in *Id.* 2.132 and 3.50.

¹⁰ *Mimiamb* 7.70 and 79.

¹¹ *Epit.* 859 and 866.

Menander's Plays

I will begin by examining the only intact role for a married woman: Pamphile in Menander's *Epitrepontes*. In this play, Pamphile has recently and legally married Charisios and is living in his house. He, however, has abandoned her because he has discovered that she was raped before the marriage, and is pregnant as a result of that rape. Charisios is living with his friend Chairestratos while he decides what to do. Pamphile's father Smikrines threatens to remove her from the house because he is concerned about Charisios' behavior (he has been frequenting a brothel, 691), though Pamphile does not wish to be removed (656-7, 715-16). The play centers around what will happen to her: there is the possibility that she will be sent back to her father's home, or divorced. In the end it turns out that Charisios is the one who raped her, thus solving any problems with the marriage.

At one point in the play, the courtesan Habrotonon calls Pamphile *numphê*--bride (873). This is a telling description of Pamphile's situation. It designates her status as newly married: that is, it implies both her married state *and* her young age. Pamphile's actions in the play show her struggle to negotiate her own role as wife. Her father Smikrines announces his intention and his right to take Pamphile away from her new home (657-8), but when he attempts to persuade her to leave her no-good husband, Pamphile tells him that he is not acting like a father, but rather a master (*despotês* 716). Pamphile is determined to keep her status as wife, despite her father's attempts to remove her from the house.

My point in discussing Pamphile is to show that she is *not* a character who translates easily into a *matrona*. She is newly married, and must fight to establish herself as a wife, rather than a daughter still under her father's control.¹² In addition, her role in the plot is still essentially that of a raped maiden; the plot's resolution depends on her marital status being proved (in this case simply because her rapist is the same man she marries) so that her child can be legitimate. This is not the role that *matronae* play in Roman adaptations. Pamphile's role suggests that when married women appeared on the Greek stage, they did not necessarily have the household standing and experience that Plautus' Roman *matronae* did. This evidence coincides nicely with Lape's (1998) theory that Menandrian plots concentrate on uniting the family in a marriage legitimate under Solonian law. If this is the chief concern of the Menandrian plot, there is little room for already-established wives, outside of recognizing long-lost children.

We do occasionally *see* older married women on the Menandrian stage: in the *Epitrepontes*, for example, we see the slave Syros speaking to his mute wife. But a proto-*matrona* will be neither just-married, nor mute, nor a slave. She will have been married for some time, at least long enough to establish herself as head of the household (the equivalent of a *materfamilias*), she will have opinions as strong as Roman *matronae* do, and she will play a significant role in the plot.

In some cases, scholars have assumed a character corresponding to the *matrona* based on their own line assignments. Even in the *Dyskolos*, the most intact Menandrian

¹² It could be argued that this situation applies to the *matronae* in the *Stichus*. However, those *matronae* do not have to fight to establish themselves as *matronae*--they are explicitly identified as such. In addition, their father's goal is to re-marry them for financial reasons, perhaps reflecting the Roman comfort with

play we possess, a role has been assumed for Sostratos' mother despite there being no textual evidence.¹³ The lines in question occur at the beginning of Act Three, when Knemon leaves his house and tells his old slave-woman Simiche not to open the door for anyone until he returns. He then encounters a group of worshippers coming back from the shrine of Pan. In an aside, Knemon complains about the crowd while an unnamed speaker makes preparations:

A,
Πλαγγών, πορεύου θάπτον· ἤδη τεθυκέναι
ἡμᾶς ἔδει.

ΚΝΗΜΩΝ
τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν τί βούλεται;
ὄχλος τις· ἅπαγ' ἐς κόρακας.

A.
αὔλει, Παρθενί,
Παιός· σιωπῇ, φασί, τούτῳ τῷ θεῷ
οὐ δεῖ προσιέναι.

ΓΕΤΑΣ
νὴ Δί' , ἀπεσώθητέ γε.
ὦ' Ἡράκλεις, ἀηδίας· καθήμεθα
χρόνον τοσούτον περιμένοντες.

A.
εὐτρεπῇ
ἅπαντα δ' ἡμῖν ἐστι;

ΓΕΤΑΣ
ναὶ μὰ τὸν Δία·
τὸ γοῦν πρόβατον· μικροῦ τέθηκε γάρ.

A.

financial motives for marriage and divorce, whereas here the father wants to remove Pamphile to the paternal home because of her husband's bad behavior.

¹³ The papyrus cast-list does not contain the part of Sostratos' mother, but Arnott considers this an "omission" (1979: 182-3) despite the fact that it is unparalleled for a speaking role to be omitted in this way. Ritchie assigned some lines to Sostatos' mother by way of conjecture, and curiously, Arnott has adopted this practice, saying, "This character's intervention in the dialogue during this scene is an attractively bold conjecture of modern scholarship for which, however, there is *no written evidence* in the cast list and marginal or interlinear part-assignments of the Bodmer papyrus" (Arnott 1979: 250; italics mine). In my opinion, boldness is not preferable to textual evidence.

οὐ περιμένει τὴν σὴν σχολήν. ἀλλ' εἴσιτε·
κανᾶ πόρχειρα, χέριβας, θυλήματα
ποιεῖτε. ποῖ κέχηνας, ἐμβροντητε σύ;
τάλαν·

KNHMON
κακοὶ κακῶς ἀπόλοισθε!

SPEAKER A
Hurry, Plangon! By now the sacrifice
Should have been over!

KNEMON (aside)
What's the meaning of
This devilry? A horde! To hell with them!

SPEAKER A
Play Pan's hymn, Parthenis. They say one shouldn't
Approach the god in silence.

GETAS
By Zeus, you've
Arrived here safely! Heracles, how tedious!
We've been kept waiting such a long time!

SPEAKER A
Is
Everything ready for us?

GETAS
By Zeus, yes -- at least
The *sheep* is. The suspense has all but killed
It!

SPEAKER A
Poor thing, it can't wait for your convenience!
In you all go! Prepare the baskets, water, cakes.
What are you staring at, you imbecile?

KNEMON
You filthy scum, to hell with you!¹⁴

Ritchie and Arnott assign the lines of Speaker A to Sostratos' mother. This is completely without textual basis. The reason behind the line assignment may be the context. In an earlier line, Sostratos tells us that his mother is fond of making offerings, and plans to do so today (268-71). Sostratos' mother does end up in the shrine of Pan. At the end of the play, Gorgias apparently leads the two brides-to-be out of Knemon's house and into the shrine, and Sostratos says, "Mother, receive them" (*mêter, dekhōu tautas* 867). Even this later line does not guarantee the mother's appearance: characters often address other characters who are offstage.¹⁵ In the *Samia*, too, we find a parallel situation: Arnott assigns Nikeratos' wife a role as a mute character, even though there is no secure evidence for her presence onstage.¹⁶

Returning to the scene itself, we must consider the context. The band of worshippers is undoubtedly the one that Sostratos' mother is leading. Between Knemon and the cook's mention of a large group (*okhlos* 405, 432) and Getas' mention of "the damned women" (*kakistai* 405), we know that there is large band of women involved in the procession. But the fact that she is addressing Plangon, usually a young woman's name, suggests that this is a group of young women, or at least a mixed group. But, while it is likely that Sostratos' mother is present in the group, textually speaking, there is absolutely no reason to assume that she is the speaker, especially given her conspicuous

¹⁴ 430-43. The translation is Arnott's, as will be all translations of Menander unless noted.

¹⁵ About this scene, Arnott states, "Clearly his mother receives them, but whether in the original production this would have been imagined only as taking place behind the door of the shrine off stage, or visible to the audience, with Sostratos' mother standing at the entrance to the shrine, cannot now be established" (1979: 329).

¹⁶ Arnott 2000: 13. In that play, Nikeratos mentions his wife twice, though we do not see her (204 and 418). Nikeratos later enters addressing his wife (421), but the rest of the scene makes clear that she is not onstage, and that Nikeratos was addressing her while she was inside the house as he walked out the door.

absence from the cast list, or that she is singled out in any way. The speaker could be any one of the women involved in the procession.

From these Menandrian plays, which are the two most complete, I hope to have established that the mere mention of a female character, and even a direct address to her, is not equivalent to her appearance *onstage* as a character. This caution is especially important when examining the evidence for married women, for whose roles we have so little data that it is tempting to take any fragment we can get. Yet scholars have persisted in assigning such characters as mute roles, especially in the less intact plays. The *Aspis*, for instance, is a story about deceit: the plot involves an old man's attempt to fake his own death in order to stop another old man from marrying his niece. Arnott lists the daughter and another young woman (involved in a different plot) as possible mute roles despite there being no textual evidence. There is also no plot-based reason that we should see them; they are discussed at length as part of the scheming between the old man and his slave, but the action of the play focuses on the men's trickery, not the women themselves. After the plan is formed, for instance, the old man remarks that he must tell his wife and daughters, but there is no reason to think we see this dialogue.

There are other clear examples of women mentioned who do not appear onstage. We have only to look at the Corinthian mother mentioned in the prologue to the *Perikeiromenê*, who is only part of the background narration and not an actual character. Another parallel situation exists in the *Dyskolos*, where the daughter's mother, who is mentioned, is never actually seen. Assigning mute roles implies that these characters are

singled out in some way. But, even if we assume that the character is onstage in a large group, as Sostratos' mother may be, we have no reason to think that this character is given an individual identity. Nor does just any third-person mention imply a character's presence. Examples such as these should serve as reasons to be extremely cautious with the fragments, which abound with third-person mentions of women.

The next Menandrian play I will examine is the *Georgos*. This play is not very well-preserved: it consists mainly of one large (87-line) papyrus fragment, which preserves a dialogue between two women, Philinna and Myrrhine. Arnott lists Myrrhine as "an old woman whose present marital status is uncertain" and Philinna as "an old woman, perhaps Myrrhine's former nurse."¹⁷ Philinna is addressed by Myrrhine as "dear" (*philê*) and "little old lady" (*gradion*), while Philinna calls Myrrhine "child" (*teknon*).¹⁸ These terms make it very likely that Philinna was Myrrhine's nurse, but Myrrhine's own status is more difficult to determine. From a conversation between Myrrhine and the slave Daos, we find that Myrrhine has a son, Gorgias, and a daughter, whom an old man, Kleainetos, plans to wed. After the slave leaves, Myrrhine confides in Philinna that the daughter is already pregnant. Thus, it is clear that Myrrhine is a mother; but the question of whether she has a husband is left unanswered. Gorgias is working as a hired laborer for Kleainetos, apparently because of Myrrhine's and his own poverty,¹⁹ which suggests that the family may be lacking a breadwinner.²⁰ I would cautiously assign Myrrhine the role of a single mother. But this means that, socially speaking, she may fit into the role

¹⁷ Arnott 1979: 103.

¹⁸ Lines 33, 54 and 25, respectively.

¹⁹ Arnott 1979: 78.

of a widow or old woman, rather than a wife. We cannot identify her as a proto-*matrona*, simply because we do not have enough of the play to confirm her marital status or her behavior at any point.

The final Menandrian play I will examine is an extended fragment of the *Kitharistes*, in which we find several third-person references to married women. In the opening, the old man Phantias is speaking with a second character. Phantias is bragging about his daughter, who is a freeborn citizen of a Greek city (*eleuthera*. . . *kai poleôs Hellênidos* 36-40). The other speaker then asks him why he did not bring his wife and property (*ti gar ouk êgages entautha tên gunaika kai tên ousian?*), to which Phantias responds that he does not know where on earth she is (*ouk oid' hopou gês estin*) though it has been a long time (*tôn khronôn ontôn macron* 42-45). Phantias goes on to conjecture that it may have been a shipwreck; the two men are walking to market and apparently walk offstage at this point. Directly afterwards, another married man comes on stage. Speaking about his son, he admits that the son has inherited his own spendthrift ways, and that he cannot blame this on the mother. Thus we have two married men mentioning their wives, one missing, one (presumably) present. Unfortunately, we hear nothing more about these women. The last third of the play is completely lost, and the papyrus summary is so badly mutilated that it provides more questions than answers. The words *philtatê*, *gamou*, *mêtera*, and *lathrai* appear at line ends, without much else to support them (1-26). Because the extant fragments show two fathers talking about the coming marriage of their children, the *gamou* could refer to this or either of the old men's current

²⁰ As Arnott notes, "It would be a neat irony if Kleainatos finally turned out to be Gorgias' real father,"

marriages. The *philtatê* could refer to a beloved daughter or beloved wife. The *mêtera*, at least, must refer to the wife of one of the old men. But as usual, we have no direct evidence for the appearance of these women onstage.

Analyzing the (more or less) intact Menandrian evidence, we have been unable to confirm that there was a role corresponding to that of the Roman *matrona*. The plays with the most context have shown us just-married or mute wives, but no established, individually named wives. Other roles assigned to wives have been without textual basis. We have not seen any indication of the feisty personality or individual agency that characterizes Plautine *matronae*. The most promising evidence has been Myrrhine in the *Georgos*, but the mutilated state of that play has made it impossible to determine her marital status.

Fragments

We must now turn to the fragments, Menandrian and otherwise. I will carefully review the evidence contained in these fragments, and attempt where I can to construct some context for where wives might appear.²¹ Given the problems with third-person mentions, the two most trustworthy types of evidence are direct quotes containing a vocative, and summaries of individual plays. In the Menandrian corpus, out of over two hundred fragments which refer to women, there are only four fragments that indicate the

considering that Gorgias already thinks of him as a father (1979: 117).

²¹ I use both Edmonds' *Fragments of Attic Comedy* and Kassel-Austin's *Poetae Comici Graeci*. Edmonds is more concerned with providing dramatic context, but is thus more speculative. Kassel-Austin (hereafter K-

possible presence of a married couple onstage. Other authors add three further citations, bringing the total to seven, and I shall address these seven fragments first.

There is one papyrus fragment that is clearly a conversation between a husband, his wife, and their son:

ΣΜΙΚΡΙΝΟΥ ΓΥΝΗ (?)
πτέρυξ χιτωνίσκου γυναικείου διπλή·
ἐ]κρυπ[τε γὰρ σῶμ' ἡνίκ' ἐξεπέμπομεν
πρὸς τὴν ξένην σε τὴν τότε αἰτοῦσαν τέκνα
].νεστί ἀλλὰ τῷ βεβαμμένῳ
]τ' ἔχουσα χρώματος φύσιν
πέριξ ἰώ]δους τοῦν μέσῳ δὲ πορφύρας

ΣΜΙΚΡΙΝΗΣ (?)
ἦ]δη καὐτὸς ἐμβλέπω σε, παῖ,
]ηται καιρὸς ὥς παρ' ἐλπίδας
φ]ημι λαμπαδηφόρου
]ντος ὑπεραγωνιῶν

ΣΤΡΑΤΟΠΗΑΝΕΣ
]τι, μήτερ, ἀλλὰ τί
ὀνόμα]τος ὃ νομίζω καλεῖν

].εις τὸν χρόνον ἐλίσασά τε
]ν ἡ τύχη
σύ]μβολον
τάτύ]χημα, παῖ,
γ]αμουμένη
]λα γνωρίση
ἐκβά]λλων τέκνα
]ας φανεῖς
]λαβεῖν .[
]α παιδί[
]καλω.[
]κ[

ΣΜΙΚΡΙΝΟΥ ΓΥΝΗ

A) are more precise regarding textual and grammatical commentary. Because of this, I will use K-A's text, but cite the fragments with both numbers.

ἴωμεν εἴσω δεῦρ[ο καὶ γὰρ Μοσχίων
ἄνερ, ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶ.²²

SMIKRINES' WIFE (?)

Half of a woman's dress that's folded double--
It cloaked your body when we sent you [to]
[That] foreign lady who then wanted children.
] is [], but with the dyed
] having a shade (?) [of green]
[Around each side,] and crimson in between.

SMIKRINES (?)

] now I too look at you, my son,
] time has [] beyond our dreams
I [say (?)], a torch bearer
] being in great distress

STRATOPHANES

] mother, but what
name (?)] that I usually call . . .

***²³

SMIKRINES' WIFE

Let's go inside here. [Moschion, you see, (?)]
My dear, is there.

The sequence of vocatives (*mêter*, *pater*, *paî*) are sure proof that the mother, father, and son are onstage and speaking to each other. Further, the mother is describing the identity token(s) she left with her son as a baby. That this is a recognition scene is confirmed by the remainder of the fragment, in which Stratophanes asks if Moschion is his brother. This fragment is the most convincing piece of evidence for an older, established wife onstage. Unfortunately, while the presence of the husband and wife is clear, the tone of their conversation and their relationship is not.

Three Menandrian fragments seem to be from a husband addressing his wife. I will begin with the one that is attached to a named play, *Hiereia*. A papyrus fragment gives us the summary of the *Hiereia*, but the first section is in a badly mutilated state.²⁴ This is particularly unfortunate, because the background information and plot both seem quite involved. Arnott summarizes:

These disconnected phrases do not permit any secure reconstruction of our summariser's version of the plot antecedents and early stage action of the *Hiereia*, but the information provided by the virtually complete text that follows . . . enables us to infer or guess that the title figure was raped as a young girl a generation ago and bore a son who was brought up by a female neighbor. Later on, either before or after she began to serve the goddess Cybele as priestess or healer, the title figure married a man different from her raper, had a daughter by him but was widowed some time before the stage action of the play began. The female neighbor, who may have been single or married when she began to foster the priestess's child, either was already or later became the mother of a son and daughter of her own. When the staged action of *Hiereia* begins, all these children have grown up and the man who committed the rape has been suffering probably from a psychosomatic illness and visited the priestess as a patient hoping for a cure . . .²⁵

The intact text that follows confirms that the romantic plot involves the neighbors' real son and the priestess' daughter, as well as the neighbors' foster daughter and the son of an old man. The neighbors' son sends his mother to talk to the priestess about arranging a marriage, but while the women are talking (*lalousôn de tôn gunaikôn*, 55) the old man becomes suspicious, which apparently creates a plot crisis (the text breaks off again at

²² Text and translation taken from Arnott, who assigns the lines to the *Sikyonioi* (2000: 264-9). K-A also attribute it to the *Sikyonioi*, and thus include it as a complete play instead of among the fragments. The papyrus was originally designated as *P. Sorbonne 72* (= *P. Ghôran I*, frag. 22 Edmonds).

²³ Arnott considers lines 292-302 too mutilated to provide a sensible translation.

²⁴ *Ox. Pap.* 1235 = Men. test. i K-A = Men. 635 Edmonds = Arnott 2000, lines 618-25.

²⁵ Arnott 2000: 621.

this point). Nevertheless, the play ends with a triple wedding: the priestess marries the old man, the neighbors' daughter marries the old man's son, and the priestess' daughter marries the neighbors' son.

The mention of women talking does not firmly establish that this action happens onstage. But it is certainly possible that we see the mother and son talking before she goes off to arrange the marriage. In fact, another quote, which Kassel-Austin attribute to the *Hiereia*, also mentions a mother speaking:

ἔργον εἰς τρίκλινον συγγενείας εἰσπεσεῖν
οὐ λαβὼν τὴν κύλικα πρῶτος ἄρχεται λόγου πατὴρ
καὶ παραινέσας πέπωκεν, εἶτα μήτηρ δευτέρα,
εἶτα τηθὶς παραλαλεῖ τις, εἶτα βαρύφωνος γέρων,
τηθίδος πατήρ, ἔπειτα γραῦς καλοῦσα φίλτατον.²⁶

. . . to fall onto the couch of relations.

Where my father, first taking a glass, began to talk, and after
toasting, drank. Then mother spoke second, then some nurse started
chattering, then a loud-voiced old man, then the father of . . .

This fragment exemplifies a common problem: the action is narrated after the fact by an unknown speaker, but this narration does not guarantee the presence of the mother onstage at any point.

The fragment of this play that does address a woman is not easy to assign to a particular character.

οὐθεὶς δι' ἀνθρώπου θεὸς σῶζει, γύναι,
ἑτέρου τὸν ἕτερον· εἰ γὰρ ἔλκει τινὰ θεὸν
τοῖς κυμβάλοις ἄνθρωπος εἰς ὃ βούλεται
ὁ τοῦτο ποιῶν ἐστὶ μείζων τοῦ θεοῦ·
ἀλλ' ἐστὶ τόλμης καὶ βίας ταῦτ' ὄργανα
εὐρημέν' ἀνθρώποις ἀναιδέσιν, Ῥόδη,
εἰς καταγέλωτα τῷ βίῳ πεπλασμένα.²⁷

²⁶ Men. *Hier.* fr. 186 K-A.

²⁷ Men. fr. 245 Edmonds = Men. *Hier.* fr. 188 K-A.

Wife/woman, no god will use one man to save
Another. If a man by clashing cymbals
Can lure the god to do just what *he* wants,
The one achieving this is mightier than
The god! But these are tools of reckless folly
And violence, devised by shameless men, Rhode,
And forged to make a mockery of life.

Arnott takes Rhode to be the name of the neighbor who fostered the priestess' child, and adds: "These words were presumably addressed to her by a husband who disapproved of attempts by the priestess to heal sick visitors at the shrine of Cybele."²⁸ It is true that *gunai* could be addressed to a wife. But there are other possible readings, given the generic nature of the word *gunê*; Rhode could be the name of the priestess for all we know, since the fragment is cited without any context and we have no cast-list.²⁹

The name Rhode appears in another fragment in which a woman is being directly addressed about wifely behavior:

τοὺς τῆς γαμετῆς ὅρους ὑπερβαίεις, γύναι,
τὴν αὐλιαν· πέρας γὰρ ἡῦλειος θύρα
ἐλευθερία γυναικὶ νειόμισται βίου·
τὸ δ' ἐπιδιώκειν εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν τρέχειν
ἔτι λοιδορουμένην κυνὸς ἔστ' ἔργον, Ῥόδη.³⁰

You leave the bounds, ma'am, proper to a married woman; namely,
the foyer of the house. For the front door is decreed as the limit for
the life of a free woman. To chase and run into the street is the
province of a barking dog, O Rhode.

This fragment may or may not belong to the *Hiereia*, and may or may not refer to the same Rhode.³¹ Regardless of whether the two fragments belong to the same play, the

²⁸ Arnott 2000: 637.

²⁹ Cf. *Ion* 1454, where Creusa addresses the priestess offstage, and Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.72.3, when Cleomenes addresses the priestess on the Acropolis.

latter fragment still has some interpretative problems. The second Rhode fragment seems more secure in that it talks specifically about married women. But we do not know who is speaking the lines. It could be a husband addressing his wife, but it could also be anyone else addressing a married woman. Even if it is a husband, which most have assumed, the precise nature of his reproach is debated. Some feel that he criticizes his wife's chastity, while others feel that the main criticism is that his wife took a private fight out into the street.³² Both of these readings must be based on the sense of *loidoroumenên*. While the image of the barking dog does imply that the husband is criticizing some feature of his wife's behavior, we should not ignore the significance of the geographical reference. Telling a woman that the house ends at the front door embodies the very Athenian (as opposed to Roman) desire to keep women within the *oikos*.³³ Finally, given that we have no context, we cannot say whether the character speaking these lines is credible; his or her reproach might be undeserved.

³⁰ Men. fr. 546 Edmonds = Men. fr. 815 K-A. The text cited is from Stobaeus. The alternate version, found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, has slightly different wording but entirely the same sense.

³¹ Edmonds tentatively assigns this fragment to the *Hiereia* (785) but his hesitation is entirely reasonable given that characters' names are repeated with great frequency. K-A note that these two passages are the only two to mention the name Rhode, but they must mean in Menander only, because there is another fragment of Philemon that mentions a Rhode (see below). Gomme-Sandbach feel that the repetition of the names is "not an adequate reason for assigning this fragment also to be from that play" (715).

³² Despite others' reading the passage as "de muliere parum pudica," K-A feel the passage is "de uxore litigiosa quae ne foras quidem proferre iurgia vereatur" (388). They are in agreement with Gomme-Sandbach who opine: "Note that this fragment does not say that a married woman will not go outside her house, but that she will consider her house ends at the front door, and therefore not continue the private business of quarrelling with her husband so that it goes on in the street" (715).

³³ This issue is controversial, and I do not mean to suggest that Greek women were totally secluded. Just's chapter (105-25), nicely covers the scholarly debate, as well as very reasonably noting the gap between ideology and practice. We should note, however, that ideologically, there are differences. The idea of women's quarters is Greek, and the idea that women should stay inside is nowhere mentioned in Roman comedy, nor do we find reproaches comparable to this one. In the *Menaechmi*, for instance, the *matrona* follows Menaechmus out the door to abuse him, and, though he criticizes her behavior, he does not reproach her for taking the fight outside.

To make matters more complicated, the name Rhode is also used in a fragment that clearly refers to a courtesan.³⁴ Granted that the prostitute Rhode is not the same as the courtesan Rhode, it is important to note that this name, unlike some others, does not automatically indicate a certain character type. In fact, we find a similar situation with the name Nikostrate:

ἀγαθῆς γυναικὸς ἐστίν, ὦ Νικοστράτη,
μὴ κρείττον' εἶναι τάνδρὸς ἀλλ' ὑπήκοον.
γυνὴ δὲ νικῶσ' ἄνδρα κακὸν ἐστίν μέγα.³⁵

It is the mark of a good woman, O Nikostrate, not to be more powerful than a man, but rather subservient. It is a great evil for the woman/wife to rule the man/husband.

At first glance, this appears to be a straightforward quote from a husband giving his wife advice about marriage. But, as with the Rhode fragments, we do not know who the speaker is, and we find that the name Nikostrate refers to a courtesan in another fragment.³⁶ Obviously, Nikostrate does not have to be the same person in the Philemon and Archedikos fragments, although the two authors were contemporary. But in this case, both quotations *could* refer to the same woman, who is a courtesan. Although Stobaeus (the source of this quotation) explicitly lists it as "advice about marriage"

³⁴ Athenaeus quotes a line from Philemon's *Phasma*: "Rhode drank a cup of unmixed wine. She toasted you" (ἔπειν ἡ' Ῥόδη/ κυμβίον ἀκράτου· κατασέσειχ' ὑμᾶς ἄνω. Phil. fr. 84 Edmonds = Phil. *Phas.* fr. 87 K-A). Athenaeus further comments that the verb *kataseiein* is used for making toasts at drinking parties (*en tois potois*). The line clearly suggests a description of a symposium. A wife would not have been present at a drinking party, nor should she have been drinking at all. Further, the fact that *Phasma* is the model for Plautus' *Mostellaria* (in which no wives appear, though they are talked about) makes it difficult to imagine what place a wife would have had in the plot.

³⁵ Phil. fr. 132 Edmonds = Phil. fr. 120 K-A.

³⁶ "Very early this morning I took curvy Nikostrate, called "Dark-whirler" because she whirls around in the darkness" (Νικοστράτην τιν' ἤγαγον πρώϊην σφόδρα / γρυπὴν, σκοτοδίνην ἐπικαλουμένην, / ὅτι δίνον ποτ' ἦρεν ἀργυροῦν ἐν τῷ σκότῳ Arkhedikos fr. 1 K-A and Edmonds). Athenaeus, quoting from Arkhedikos, explicitly states that this is spoken by a house-slave (*oiketês*) talking about courtesans

(*gamika parangelmata*), the saying is just as believable if it is a generic statement about the superiority of men to women. Given the flexibility of *anêr* and *gunê*, it is possible that Stobaeus simply took a more generic statement (spoken to a courtesan) and applied it to marriage.

Both the names have the same curious association with advice about married behavior and with a prostitute. While there is a plausible explanation for the Nikostrate fragments, the Rhode quotations are more puzzling. Certainly, names of these character types may simply be less clearly defined than those of other character types, and they may be able to designate any woman. Nevertheless, the puzzling collocation of statements about marriage combined with names that are given to courtesans shows that Rhode and Nikostrate cannot be names that designate only married women or prove beyond doubt the presence of married women onstage.

Another fragment about spousal harmony contains a vocative that is frustratingly ambiguous:

οὐκ ἐὶ λογίζ[η]ι πλοῦτ[ο]ν, ὦ Κλ[. .
 ἀνδρὸς [ό]μόνοι[α]ν καὶ γυναικὸς . [
 ἐκ τοῦ [φι]λεῖν θ[] υτ[]ς ὁμοιο[ι
 ἐπὰν ὁ μὲν θλ[ιβό]μενος οἴκαδ[
 πάνθ' , ἢ [γ]υ[νῆ] δέ] μηθαμοῦ τα []ι
 ἀλλην ὁμότ[ιμ]ος εἰς τὸ κοιν[]ς
 κατά[μα]θε τ[ῆ]ν μέλιτταν, ὥ[ς] οὐδεν []ει
 ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ' [] ταῦτὸ ταχὺ δ[
 πολὺ · [τ]ὸ γὰρ ἐ[ῖς]ενεχθὲν ἀ[]ζ[
 ἐπὰν δ' ἀναγκασθέντες ἀνθρώπω[
 συνζῶ[σιν α]ὐτοῖς ἐκάτερος [] []
 ποίαν κ[α]τ[ὰ] λόγον οὐσίαν σωσειεν ἄν

(*hetairides*). Edmonds assigns the fragment to middle comedy, while K-A list the author as 3rd- /4th-century B.C.E.

τὸ δὲ [] ἀσυτέτα ἀγῶσμεσσι³⁷

You're wrong about wealth, O Kle[]. Harmony between husband and wife is [?]. From love and not from harmony . . . when he [comes (?)] home afflicted, and the woman nowhere . . . but equally honored in common . . . Consider the bee, how it . . . nothing from outside, but . . . swiftly the same thing . . . when two people are compelled . . . they live together, each for himself . . . how, reasonably, can they save their estate?

Here, as in previous fragments, we have a statement about married life, one which concerns the agreement (*homonoia*) between spouses. Because of the mention of living together (*sunzôein*) it seems certain that *anêr* and *gunê* here refer to husband and wife. But the identity of the speaker is impossible to know since the addressee's name is lost in the lacuna.³⁸ The emphasis on mutual *homonoia* makes it difficult to know which spouse is speaking, or even if this is a dialogue between spouses. The advice could also be given by a third party. Edmonds reads the last line as containing a second-person address ("you are bothering"), which would be a stronger indication of a dialogue between spouses.

Even if we accept that it is a dialogue, the import is unclear. The notion of a good woman being like a bee appears in both Semonides and Xenophon.³⁹ Xenophon is especially similar, since he is talking about the separate spheres for men and woman, and the appropriateness of women staying inside and men working outside. Our fragment has the same concern. But this still does not show which spouse is speaking. It could be a

³⁷ Apollodorus fr. 13A Edmonds = Apollodorus fr. 14 K-A, from a 2nd-century B.C.E. papyrus. It is not known whether it is Apollodorus of Gela or Apollodorus of Carystus.

³⁸ Edmonds assigns these lines to a wife addressing her husband Kleonomos, while Wilamowitz suggested a Kleainetê, a woman's name.

³⁹ Semonides 7 (Campbell), Xen. *Oek.* 7.32-7.

rebuke from a husband to a wife, or from wife to husband. As we will see below, women did give advice to their husbands. At any rate, we must admit that this fragment, while tantalizing, does not provide sure evidence for a married woman onstage.

The next Menandrian fragment which may include an address to a wife comes from the play *Orgê*, for which we have no plot summary. The quotation is hard to interpret not only because of this lack of context, but also because of its mythological theme:

καίτοι νέος ποτ' ἐγενόμην κάγω, γύναι,
ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐλούμην πεντάκις τῆς ἡμέρας
τότ'· ἀλλὰ νῦν. οὐδὲ χλανίδ' εἶχον· ἀλλὰ νῦν.
οὐδὲ μύρον εἶχον· ἀλλὰ νῦν. καὶ βάψομαι
καὶ παρατιλοῦμαι νή Δία, καὶ γενήσομαι
Κτήσιππος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ·
κῶθ' ὥς ἐκεῖνος κατέδομαι καὶ τοὺς λίθους
ἀπαξάπαντας· οὐ γὰρ οὖν τὴν γῆν μόνην.⁴⁰

I was young once, woman, and I didn't wash myself five times a day then; but I do now. Nor did I have a fancy cloak. But I do now. Nor did I wear perfume. But I do now. And I will dye my hair and pluck my hair, by Zeus, and I will become Ctesippos, not a man, and like him, I will eat stones all at once, and not just earth.

In introducing this quotation, Athenaeus provides us with the myth of Ctesippus, who sold his own father's tomb to support his luxurious living.⁴¹ Given the reference to his youth, the person speaking these lines is presumably an older man in some heightened emotional state that prompts him to imagine himself as Ctesippus. It is tempting to see in this quote a prototype of the *senex amator* in Roman comedy, but that is not a certain reading. Unfortunately, the term *gunai* renders this fragment as ambiguous as the others. This could just as easily be the speech of an old man taking his anger out on his servant.

⁴⁰ Men. *Org.* fr. 363 Edmonds = Men. *Org.* fr. 264 K-A.

Further, we don't know much about the woman herself, why he is telling her this, or what her role in the plot was.

For the sake of thoroughness, I will include three quotes from Philemon that show the difficulty of interpreting the word *gunê*:

σαυτὴν ἐπαινεῖς ὥσπερ' Αστυδάμας, γύναι⁴²

You praise yourself, ma'am, like Astydamus.

ἡ μὲν χελιδὼν τὸ θέρος, ὦ γύναι, λαλεῖ⁴³

The swallow chatters only for the summer, woman.

τοιούτος ὁ βίος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου, γύναι·
εὐφραυνόμεσθ' ἐλάττον' ἢ λυπούμεθα.⁴⁴

That's how a mortal's life is, woman: we are less knowing than suffering.

Any of these fragments could be taken as reproaches to an unruly wife. In the first case, Photius cites the line to tell the story of Astydamas' boastfulness; in the second, a scholiast to Aristophanes is referring to the talkativeness of litigators; in the third, Stobaeus is talking about the pains that are part of human life. But none of these authors indicate the character speaking or being spoken to, and the word *gunê* is so ambiguous that we should not assume these are quotes from a husband to wife.

The last quotation I will address seems to be spoken by a woman talking to her husband. It comes from a Menandrian play without a plot summary, called

Epangellomenos:

⁴¹ Athenaeus 4.165e-166a.

⁴² Phil. fr. 190 Edmonds = Phil. fr. 160 K-A. Note that this fragment appears in Photius and Suidas with ποτέ instead of γύναι, but the sense must be the same since the pronoun is feminine.

⁴³ Phil. fr. 208 Edmonds = Phil fr. 154 K-A.

τὸ σὸν ταπεινὸν ἂν σὺ σεμνύῃῃ, καλὸν
ἔξω φάνεῖται, φίλ' ἄνερ· ἂν δ' αὐτὸς ποιῇς
ταπεινὸν αὐτὸ καὶ τιθῇς ἐν μηδενί,
οἰκεῖος οὗτος κατὰ γέλως νομίζεται.⁴⁵

If you honor your estate, dear husband, it will look fine to the outside world. But if you yourself put it in the rank of nothing, the family property will seem laughable.

Finally, we hear a married woman speaking for herself. But we are left frustrated if we want any information about the wife's character, age, or role in the plot. Some scholars have assumed that this is a wife speaking negatively to her husband.⁴⁶ But, while the content of the quotation is some sort of suggestion to the husband, we do not know its tone. It could be friendly advice, not-so-friendly criticism, or a sharp rebuke. It could be delivered gently by a younger wife, or more forcefully by an older one. And, as with the husbands' reproaches, we do not know if it is justified by the surrounding action. So, while this fragment shows clear evidence of a wife onstage, her characterization is unclear.

The preceding quotations comprise all of the (directly spoken) fragmentary evidence we have for onstage dialogues between husband and wife, and each of the fragments is questionable for one reason or another. Those that clearly indicate a married couple onstage, such as the unidentified papyrus fragment and the wife's address to the husband, do not give us much characterization or age. The quotes addressed to *gunai* are almost all ambiguous because of the generic nature of the word, nor do they tell us what

⁴⁴ Phil. fr. 145 K-A.

⁴⁵ Men. *Epang.* fr. 160 Edmonds = Men. *Epang.* fr. 124 K-A.

⁴⁶ K-A cite this as "virum ab uxore compellari." The choice of verb is telling: while *compellare* can mean simply "address," it is much more frequently used with a negative connotation, in the sense of "rebuke,"

sort of character is addressing the woman. Note that the only fragment which gives any indication of the wife's age is the fragment referring to Ctesippus; if the speaker is addressing his wife, she is presumably an older woman, though given Greek marriage practices we would not expect her to be as old as him. But here the vocative *gunai* must be treated with caution; as indicated earlier, this term is extremely flexible. Even assuming that he is addressing his wife, we must admit this fragment tells us more about the husband's character (or at least his state of mind) than the wife's. Thus, while these fragments confirm the onstage presence of married women, they tell us little about their characterization. Because we cannot say anything about the women's tone or behavior, we cannot call them *proto-matronae*.

I will now turn briefly to other direct quotes that might refer to married women. The first in this category is the vocative use of the word "mother." We have two instances of this; the first is Menandrean, the other is from Philemon.

ἀπολεῖ με τὸ γένος. μὴ λέγ', εἰ φιλεῖς ἐμέ,
 μήτερ, ἐφ' ἐκάστωι τὸ γένος. οἷς ἂν τῇ φύσει
 ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχει μηδὲν οἰκείον προσόν,
 ἐκεῖσε καταφεύγουσιν, εἰς τὰ μνήματα
 καὶ τὸ γένος, ἀριθμοῦσιν τε τοὺς πάπποις ὅσοι.
 οὐδένα δ' ἔχουσιν ἰδεῖν ἂν οὐδ' εἰπεῖν ὅτῳ
 οὐκ εἰσὶ πάπποι. πῶς γὰρ ἐγένοντ' ἂν ποτε;
 εἰ μὴ λέγειν δ' ἔχουσι τούτους διὰ τινα
 τόπου μεταβολὴν ἢ φίλων ἐρημίαν,
 τί τῶν λεγόντων εἰσὶ δυσγενέστεροι;⁴⁷

Race destroys me. If you love me, mother, don't speak about clan to each person. For those who are good by nature but have no home, flee there, and they count how many ancestors they have. You couldn't recognize anyone nor could you speak to someone for whom there are no ancestors, could you? Even if they aren't able to

"reproach," "abuse" or even "accuse." I suspect that the connotations are made easier due to the mental picture of *uxores dotatae*.

⁴⁷ Men. fr. 835 K-A.

say because of some geographic dislocation or paucity of friends,
why are they any more ill-clanned than those who do speak?

ἐτεκές με, μήτηρ, καὶ γένοιτό σοι τέκνων
ὄνησις, ὥσπερ καὶ δίκαιόν ἐστί σοι.⁴⁸

You bore me, mother, and you should have the profit of your
children, just as is right.

We can assume that both these lines are spoken by adolescent or young adult characters, though we have no sure indication of gender. They would both fit in with a foundling plot, in which the speaker is addressing his/her real or adopted mother. The first quote, especially, would suit a character who had been abandoned and did not know who his parents were. On the other hand he/she may be concerned about the lineage of his/her prospective love-object. The latter quote, with its emphasis on profit (*onêsis*), suggests a prostitute speaking to her greedy pimp of a mother. Hence the difficulty with lines addressed to "mother": the title does not always equate with biological motherhood, and prostitutes could be mothers too. Thus, these quotes do not confirm married women, let alone proto-*matronae*, onstage.

Finally, two fragments must be examined, which contain vocatives that could be addressed to married woman in charge of a household: *despoina* and *kuria*.

Unfortunately, we do not have much context for them:

κυρίαν οὐ φασὶ δεῖν λέγειν ἀλλὰ κεκτημένην, τὸν δε
κεκτημένον μὴ λέγεσθαι ἀντὶ τοῦ δεσπότου . . .
Φιλήμων κυρίαν.⁴⁹

They say that one must not say "mistress" but rather "she
who owns," but one must not say "he who owns" instead of
"master" . . . but Philemon says "mistress".

⁴⁸ Phil. fr. 156 Edmonds = Phil. fr. 144 K-A.

⁴⁹ Phil. fr. 223 Edmonds = Phil. fr. 190 K-A.

Presumably this fragment is describing how a slave should address his or her owner, and those who actually owned the slaves were most likely to be adults and heads of household: in the *Dyskolos* the slave Geta does refer to the mother of the house as *kektêmenê*.⁵⁰

A papyrus fragment indicates that *despoina* could also be used for a younger woman. The first column of the papyrus preserves a number of half-lines:

] ἦττον, ὦ δέσποινα, σὲ
 μ]ὲ τὸν πατέρα τε· τουτοῖ
]όντα τὸν τῶν γεγονότων
]ν, ὡς ἔοικε, πραγμάτων.
]τός ἐστιν ἢ μάτην
]τουτοῖ μὲν οὖν ὁρῶ.
 ν χαῖρε πολλά, Φαίδιμε.⁵¹

. . . less, mistress, you,
 [m]e and your father. this . . .
 of what has happened . . .
 . . . as it seems, of things. . .
 is he (?) or in vain
 I see that very man. . .
 Hello, Phaidimus.

If the father mentioned is the father of the woman addressed, she is most likely a young woman rather than an older, married head of the household. The following columns show a dialogue between Nikeratos, who is angry because of something he has just found out, and his daughter, whom he addresses by the vocative *thugater*, so presumably the

⁵⁰ Men. *Dysk.* 412.

⁵¹ Adesp. 103E fr. b Edmonds = fr. adesp. papyr. 1017 K-A = *P. Ghoran* II = *P. Sorbonne* 72^r. Arnott excludes this papyrus from Menandrian authorship (2000: 418-19). The punctuation of the text is questionable. Edmonds assigns the first four lines to a servant, and the last two to a maiden, presumably the daughter of the house, while K-A decline to punctuate.

daughter is the same as the *despoina*. Thus, the only use of this address we see is for the young woman.

A final quotation seems to indicate a woman onstage simply by its content:

τρεις μόνους σκώληκας ἔτι· τούτους δέ μ' ἔασον
καταγαγεῖν.⁵²

Only three threads left; let me spin these out.

Spinning is an exclusively female activity, and one that wives were supposed to do at home. But since the title of the play is *Pontikos* ("The Man from Pontus"), and we have no plot summary, we have no idea who this woman is. It could be an old maid, or a slave woman.

This concludes our summary of fragments by or to a married woman.⁵³ We have seen that the evidence is difficult to interpret. The most certain fragments are: that showing a mother, father, and son onstage at the same time, and suggesting the mother's participation in an *anagnorisis*; the husband addressing his wife; and the wife addressing her husband. The other fragments are not secure. Even the fragments that securely identify a wife's presence onstage cannot tell us much about her characterization without their context.

Testimonia and Titles

The next category of evidence for married women on stage is testimonial evidence. For example, Donatus tells us that in Menander's *Andria*, the husband talks to

⁵² Epigenes fr. 1 Edmonds.

his wife the way he talks to his freedman in Terence's *Andria* (*senex ita cum uxore loquitur ut apud Terentium cum liberto*).⁵⁴ Looking at the first scene of Terence's version, we can see that the freedman Sosia's role is not characterized very strongly: he plays the straight man while the old man Simo proceeds with the exposition of the plot. If we do want to infer anything about characterization from Donatus' statement, the wife in Menander's version must have served much the same function.

A *testimonium* which gives us more information is that of Cornutus; because of its textual problems I have included an apparatus:

πρὸς δὲ τὸ ὅτι παρασκευαστικόν ἐστὶν ἀκροατῶν τὸ
προοίμιον, ἐκεῖνό (Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ τοῦ Νουμηνίου) φησιν, ὅτι
ὅτε μὲν παρασκευάσαι δεῖ, τότε παρασκευάσομεν, ἐὰν δὲ ὥσι
περὲσκευασμένοι περιττὸν προοιμιάζεσθαι· τοῦτο δὲ καὶ
Μένανδρον εἰδέναι· ἐν γὰρ τῇ Ἐπικλήρῳ δικάζομένων τοῦ
τ' ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ τοῦ παιδίου δικάζοντος οὐκ
ἔθηκεν οὐδετέρῳ προοίμιον διὰ τὸ τὴν εὐνοίαν προϋπάρχειν
†τοῦ ἀνδρὸς, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα ἰδίᾳ
διελεγόμεθα.†⁵⁵

7 ff. διὰ τὸ τ. εὖν. πρ. τ. ἀνδρὸς post 9 διαλεγόμεθα transp. Kayser. τοῦ
ἀνδρὸς aut delendum aut in τοῦ παιδὸς mutandum esse censet Finkh. τοῦ
ἀνδρὸς. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πρ. τ. γυν. <τὴν> ἰδίαν διαλεγόμεθα Seguerius.
ὁμοίως τοῦ ἀνδρὸς πρ. τ. γυν. ἰδίαι διαλεγόμενου Wilamowitz. τοῦ ἀνδρὸς
<καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς. ὁμοίως> δὲ καὶ < * * * τῷ ἀνδρὶ προοίμιον οὐκ ἔθηκε
τῷ > πρὸς τὴν γυν. ἰδίαι διαλεγόμενοι Graeven.

Regarding the prologue that is intended to prepare the audience, he (Alexander) says that we should prepare them when it is necessary, but if they have already been prepared then a prologue is superfluous (and that) Menander knew this. In the *Epikleros*, when the husband and wife are being judged and their child is doing the judging, he (Menander) gives a prologue to neither, because

⁵³ It is necessary to mention that Edmonds attributes other New Comic fragments to women. These attributions are in no way supportable from the content of the fragments, and in order to make this survey as brief as possible, I shall not treat those fragments here. They are Men. fr. 608, 328, and 806 Edmonds.

⁵⁴ Donatus ad Ter. *Andria* v. 13.

⁵⁵ *Rhet. Gr.* 1.359.21S = Men. fr.163 Edmonds = Men. test. 128 K-A. The apparatus criticus is a shortened version of K-A's. Note that the MS has διελεγόμεθα for the final word, but Edmonds has corrected it to διαλεγόμεθα in his edition.

goodwill already exists for the husband. It is just as if we are speaking with the wife in private/apart (?).

This fragment attests to the existence of a husband, wife, and son, and the fact that the child is making a judgement on his parents, but does not illuminate the actual staging clearly. The number of emendations attests to the difficulty of interpreting the corrupted end of the text. The main logical difficulty stems from the fact that Cornutus says Menander gives a prologue to neither person (*oudeteros*), which implies one of two, after mentioning three characters. It would make sense, for instance, if the staging included husband and wife being judged in front of the son. But it would also make sense if there were only two characters onstage at this point. Perhaps this is why Finkch wants to make the goodwill (*eunoia*) apply to the son, rather than the husband; if the wife is for some reason onstage separately (*idiai*), he may be envisioning the father and son in a separate scene. The reading of *dialego* is also a problem. Wilamowitz and Graeven both change it to agree with the husband, rather than making it apply to the audience. According to this reading, the staging could represent a private conversation between the husband and wife. On the other hand, keeping the verb in the first person implies either that the wife is alone onstage at some point, or that she addresses the audience apart from other characters so that the audience feels as though it is having a *tête-à-tête* with her.

We should concentrate on what this fragment can and cannot tell us. We know that there is a matter of dispute between the husband and wife, but we do not know whether the actual dispute is brought onstage or not, because Cornutus only mentions the point at which it is being decided. Further, the nature of the spouses' discussion is not certain: it may be a deliberative matter, or it may be the more heated fight we see in

Plautine comedy. Finally, the staging surrounding the dispute, and its resolution, is not clear from the fragment. Nevertheless, the fragment gives evidence that there was a wife onstage, whether she was talking to her husband or the audience, and shows that she was old enough to have a grown child. But we cannot know for certain how to relate this information to the *matronae* of Roman adaptations since we cannot characterize the wife merely from this fragment.

A further quotation mentions husband-wife, but has the problem of also mentioning Euripides:

ἀνδρὶ πρὸς γυναῖκα καὶ πατρὶ πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ θεράποντι πρὸς
δεσπότην, ἢ τὰ κατὰ τὰς περιπατείας, βιασμοὺς παρθέων,
ὑποβολὰς παιδίων ἀναγνωρισμοὺς διὰ τε δακτυλίων καὶ διὰ
δεραίων· ταῦτα γάρ ἐστι δῆπου τὰ συνέχοντα τὴν νεωτέραν
κωμωδίαν ἃ πρὸς ἄκρον ἤγαγεν Εὐριπίδης.⁵⁶

Husband against wife, father against son, servant against master, or circumstances involving changes of fortune, violations of virgins, substitutions of infants, recognitions by rings and necklaces. These, of course, are the themes which constitute the New Comedy, and the treatment of which Euripides brought to perfection. . .

(trans. Edmonds)

It is possible that the husband-against-wife theme appeared in New Comedy. But there is also the danger that the author is conflating Euripidean plots with New Comic plots. If we compare Menander (at least what we know of him) to Euripides, we find that the majority of spousal animosity lies on the side of Euripides--one need only think of Medea or Helen. Further, what is meant by "husband against wife" is unclear. It could just as easily refer to the dispute between Pamphile and Charisios in the *Epitrepontes* as to an

⁵⁶ Phil. fr. 224A Edmonds = Phil. fr. 153 K-A (from Satyrus, *Life of Euripides*).

unhappily married couple, as we see in Plautus. We should therefore be cautious about using this fragment to reconstruct women's roles in Greek New Comedy.

The same caution applies when analyzing a particular papyrus, *P. Didot*, that consists of a forty-four-line monologue spoken by a woman who is trying to convince her father not to re-marry her.⁵⁷ This fragment has been assigned to both Euripides and Menander on stylistic grounds.⁵⁸ However, I believe that the length of the monologue, as well as its tone, argues for a tragic context, whether the author is Euripides or not. We do not find any female monologues of this length in the extant Menandrian plays. Thus, as with the testimonium above, we should not assume it is evidence for comic wives onstage.⁵⁹

I will now turn to play titles and plots that might imply the presence of married women on stage. Pollux cites a play called <Hai> *Philadephoi*, "The Girls Who Loved Brothers," which Edmonds compares to Plautus' *Stichus*.⁶⁰ But the article is uncertain; in the manuscripts of Pollux, we find both *en toîs Philadelphoîs* and *en taîs Philadelphaîs*, while Kassel-Austin cite the play merely as *Philadephoi*. We possess no plot summary, and the fragments are so small as to provide no plot information. While it is likely that the play involves two brothers marrying two sisters, it is impossible to determine when the

⁵⁷ *P. Didot* 1 = *P. Louvre* 7172 = adesp. papyr. fr. 1000 K-A = Nauck 953 (Euripides) = Koerte 1 (Menander).

⁵⁸ Arnott and Gomme-Sandbach exclude the fragment from Menander. For a complete bibliography on the subject, see K-A.

⁵⁹ Petrone 1976 discusses this monologue as a possible model for Plautus' *Stichus*. With both these testimonia, I do not mean to imply that Euripides or tragedy could not have influenced Roman Comedy; however, this appendix is intended to address only the question of whether there exist proto-*matronae* in the Greek New Comic plays that were adapted by Plautus.

⁶⁰ Men. fr. 502 Edmonds = Men. fr. 394 K-A = Pollux 10.94.

marriage takes place: it could be background information from the distant past, or the marriage could complete the play.

Articular ambiguity is also a problem with *Didymai/Didymoi* (*Twin Sisters/Brothers*).⁶¹ However, the fragments tell us more about the plot, and we have one quote which suggests that a marriage is (or has already been) involved:

συμπεριπατήσεις γὰρ τρίβων' ἔχουσ' ἐμοί
ὥσπερ Κράτητι τῷ Κυνικῷ ποθ' ἡ γυνή.
* * *
καὶ θυγάτερ' ἐξέδωκ' ἐκείνος, ὥς ἔφη
αὐτός, ἐπὶ πείραι δούς τριάκονθ' ἡμέρας.⁶²

You'll walk around and wander with me,
like the wife of the Cynic Krates once did. . . .
And he gave away his daughter, and he said that
it was a trial run of thirty days.

But the future tense of *sumperipateô* does not tell us about whether the marriage has taken place or will take place; it merely tells us that the wifely wandering will occur in the future. The second half of the fragment is more vexing: it speaks of a father giving his daughter away in marriage, in the past tense (*thugater' eksedôke*). But we do not know what relationship this fact has to the title characters or the wife addressed in the first half.

The final play in this trio of evidence is the *Imbrioi*, for which we have the beginning of a papyrus summary:

ἡ δ' ὑπόθεσις· δύο πένητες ἀλλήλω[ν] . . . βίον Ἰμβρον ᾠκησαν
κ[αί] διδύμας ἀδελφάς ἔγη[μαν] κοινοποιησάμενοι π[ᾶσαν]

⁶¹ Men. fr. 117 and 118 Edmonds = Men. fr. 114 K-A.

⁶² Ibid.

ἅμα καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξιν. [φιλο]πόνως δὲ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ
θάλατταν ἐργαζ[ομ] . . .⁶³

This is the plot: Two poor brothers . . . make a life for themselves
on Imbros and marry twin sisters, sharing everything in common.
They work very hard on land and sea . .

This fragment leaves no doubt that a marriage is involved, and comparing it to the other
summaries from this papyrus, it seems that the marriage took place fairly early on, or
could even have been completed long before the play began. But due to the loss of the
remaining summary, we do not know how much of a role the women played in the plot.
One fragment suggests that the speaker is seeing a man named Demeas after a long
while:

δι' ὅσου χρόνου σε, Δημέα βέλτιστ', ἐγώ[⁶⁴

How long it's been, friend Demeas, since. I've . . . you.

A second fragment is clearly the address of a child to his/her father, since it contains the
vocative *pater*.⁶⁵ Given that Demeas is usually an old man's name, and given the
presence of a child (though most likely fully grown), I am inclined to think that the twin
marriages are a background event.⁶⁶ The old man may even be one of the brothers. In
any event, the fragments do not give us any sure evidence for women on stage.

Comparing *Imbrioi*, *Didymoi*, and *Philadelphoi* gives ample demonstration of the
frustrating nature of the evidence. While all three of these plays involve twin or sibling

⁶³ Ox. Pap. 1235 = Men. fr. 246 Edmonds = Men. *Imbr.* fr. i. K-A.

⁶⁴ Men. fr. 246A Edmonds = Men. *Imbr.* 191 K-A.

⁶⁵ Men. fr. 247 Edmonds = Men. *Imbr.* fr. 191 K-A.

⁶⁶ Cf. the prologue of an untitled, anonymous play, which mentions the marriage of two brothers named
Demeas and Sosthenes, but says that sixteen years have passed since (adesp. fr. 103A Edmonds = adesp. fr.
papyr. 1008 K-A = *Pap. Argenter* 53). Arnott excludes this fragment from the Menandrian corpus on the
basis of style (2000: 416-17).

double marriages, the differing relationship of these marriages to the plots is shown even by the meager evidence for each play. Further, the marriages do not guarantee the presence of wives onstage. It is precisely for these reasons that we should exercise extreme caution in comparing these Greek plays to a play such as the *Stichus*. In that play, we do see the wives of two brothers who have been away on business for several years. But we have no firm evidence for a Greek precedent.

Some titles imply not a double marriage, but a single woman. I will discuss here only those titles with the possibility of indicating a married woman. The first, and most promising title, is *Apoleipousa*, "The Woman Who Left."⁶⁷ That this could refer to a married woman is shown by another fragment:

"ἀπέλιπε" μὲν ἡ γυνὴ τὸν ἄνδρα λέγεται, "ἀπέπεμψε" δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν γυναῖκα. οὕτω Μένανδρος.⁶⁸

It is said that a woman "left" her husband, but that a husband "sent away" his wife. So it is in Menander.

Thus, the title *Apoleipousa* could refer to a runaway or divorcing wife. However, this does not mean that the wife in question is the equivalent of a *matrona*. As we saw in the *Epitrepontes*, it is possible that the wife is just-married. In addition, other plots involving women of questionable status, such as *Perikeiromenê* or *Misoumenos*, suggest that the crisis point of a woman leaving her established home is a mark of a plot involving younger women. In fact, the women in these plays are not in a legal marriage, but in a common-law marriage. The *Apoleipousa* could refer to a woman who left either a legitimate marriage, or a more questionable situation. The same problem is found with a

⁶⁷ Diph. fr. 17 Edmonds, Apoll. Gela fr. 1 Edmonds (= fr. 1 K-A), and Apoll. Car. fr. 4 K-A.

title such as *Apokleimenê* ("The Woman Locked Out").⁶⁹ While it seems likely that the locking out was the result of a quarrel between the woman and her live-in lover, that is no guarantee that they were married.

Pyrrha is a title that seems promising, but there are several women by that name.⁷⁰ As a wife, this could refer to the wife of Deucalion, or the wife of Prometheus.⁷¹ Another reading takes the name as the one that Achilles adopts when he dresses as a woman. Edmonds also considers the possibility that *Pyrrha* is an adjective, used to designate a red-haired woman. Thus, we have another case where the title *could* indicate a married woman onstage, but there is no other information to support the reading.

Another title, *Androphonos*, either means "Man-killer" or "Husband-killer."⁷² If we take the *anêr* as "husband" we seem to have a plot that verges on tragedy. However, in another fragment, the courtesan Gnathaina is described as *androphonos*.⁷³ So the title *Androphonos* could be another play about a specific courtesan. A final adjectival title to examine is *Aischra*, or "The Ugly Woman."⁷⁴ This could refer to an ugly wife, since we do have quotations complaining about them. But, as we have seen, even these third-person quotes do not guarantee the presence of the woman onstage. The ugly woman could also be a potential bride, rather than an already married woman. The multiple plays with the title *Epikleros* will also be discussed below.

⁶⁸ Men. fr. 994 Edmonds.

⁶⁹ Posidippus fr. 1 Edmonds = Posidippus fr. 2 K-A.

⁷⁰ Diph. fr. 68 Edmonds.

⁷¹ Cf. Epicharmus' *Pyrrha* and *Prometheus*.

⁷² Baton fr. 2 Edmonds.

⁷³ Philippides fr. 5 Edmonds = fr. 5 K-A.

Adaptation

A final category of evidence, and by far the most vexed one, is the set of plays for which we have Greek and Roman evidence to compare. In terms of intact plays with *matronae*, there is only one play of this nature. Menander's *Sunaristôsai* ("Ladies Lunching") has long been identified as the original for Plautus' *Cistellaria*, based on a comment of Festus as well as similarities between the fragments of the plays. But in instances such as these, we must be very careful not to conflate Greek and Roman evidence. In this case, the *matrona* in Plautus' play should not be assumed to have a Greek counterpart without sure evidence. The Greek play does have women's roles, but none of the fragments confirm the presence of a proto-*matrona*: the names preserved on a later mural are Philainis, Plangon, and Pythias.⁷⁵ Philainis and Pythias are certainly courtesans and Plangon is almost certainly a young girl.⁷⁶ Obviously, none of these roles corresponds to a *matrona*.

Another fragment gives evidence for women speaking, but the content of their speech argues against their being married:

Woman A: ἂν ἔτι πιεῖν μοι δῶ τις.

Woman B: ἀλλ' ἡ βάρβαρος
ἅμα τῇ τραπέζῃ καὶ τὸν οἶνον ᾧχετο
ἄρας' ἀφ' ἡμῶν.⁷⁷

Woman A: Would someone give me a drink?

Woman B: But the foreign woman took the wine and the table
from us when she went away.

⁷⁴ Euphron fr. 2 Edmonds.

⁷⁵ Men. *Sunaristôsai* fr. ii. K-A. For another analysis of the fragments, see Thamm.

⁷⁶ These roles have clear correspondence to the roles of Selenium, Gymnasium, and Gymnasium's mother in the *Cistellaria*. See also Charitonidis et al. plate 5.1, 71-2, and 41-2.

⁷⁷ Men. fr. 449 Edmonds = Men. *Sunaristôsai* fr. 335.

Given the lack of context, one may wonder whether these lines should be attributed to women; given the title, however, let us assume that they are. Kassel-Austin tentatively assign this line to Philainis, partially based on the Plautine *lena*'s reference to drinking. This line assignment makes sense, since a courtesan would be associated with symposia and drinking. And, since the association of old women and drinking is one that goes back to Aristophanes and continues in Menander, we can guess that Philainis is the equivalent of the older *lena*. The second reference is to a foreign woman (*hê barbaros*). It is difficult to know who this might be; it could be a young woman of the type who will turn out to be a citizen. It could also be another courtesan, or a person that we never actually see. But again, this fragment does not provide evidence for a married woman.

That the Greek version ends in marriage is confirmed by another fragment:

ἀστέιον τὸ μὴ
συνάγειν γυναῖκας μηδὲ δειπνίζειν ὄχλον,
ἀλλ' οἰκοσίτους τοὺς γάμους πεποιηκέναι.⁷⁸

It's better not to invite women nor to give dinner to a crowd, but
rather to celebrate the wedding at home.

This fragment, along with a mention of a women's marketplace,⁷⁹ seems to imply that there were women onstage in this play. In the *Cistellaria*, too, Selenium is found to be a citizen and united with her beloved. It seems sure that both plays involved a young woman and a courtesan; that both involved the young woman's romantic involvement with a young man and eventual discovery of her citizenship; and that both involved a

⁷⁸ Men fr. 454 Edmonds = Men. fr. 340 K-A.

⁷⁹ γυναικεῖα ἀγορὰν τὸν τόπον οὗ τὰ σκεύη τὰ τοιαῦτα πιπράσκουσιν . . . ἐν ταῖς Συναριστώσαις Μενάνδρου τὸ ὄνομα (Pollux 10.18 = Men. fr. 456 Edmonds = Men. *Sun.* fr. 344 K-A).

courtesan, who is the adopted mother of the young woman. In the *Cistellaria*, the *matrona* is the biological mother of the young woman, and it is possible that in the Greek play the girl's mother makes an appearance. But we do not have any fragments showing her involvement, and we cannot assume she appears. In fact, in the *Cistellaria* the *matrona* Phanostrata appears for only a short while, looking for her grown child. This scene could have easily been added in, even if there was no corresponding scene in the Greek original. In conclusion, the fragments of the *Sunaristôsai* provide no sure evidence of a character corresponding to that of Phanostrata appearing onstage, and the plot of the Greek original is not such that it *requires* her presence.

Another play for which we have corresponding Greek and Roman evidence is the *Plokion*. Aulus Gellius preserves many fragments when comparing Menander's version to Caecilius' version, and among these fragments there are references to a wife. Gellius prefaces the lines for his audience:

Dehinc lectio ad eum locum in quo maritus senex super uxore divite
atque deformi querebatur, quod ancillam suam, non inscito puellam
ministerio et facie haud illiberalii, coactus erat venundare suspectam
uxore quasi paelicem . . .⁸⁰

The reading had arrived at the place where an elderly husband
bewails his marriage to a wealthy and ugly wife, because he has
been made to sell her servant-girl, a sufficiently capable and not ill-
looking maid whom she suspects is his concubine . . .

Gellius also mentions that the old man has married an *epikleros*.⁸¹ The first quotation cited concentrates on the wife's physical ugliness:

⁸⁰ NA 2.23.8.

⁸¹ NA 2.23.14.

ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων ῥιν' ἐπὶ κληρὸς ἢ καλὴ
 μέλλει καθευδῆσιν· κατείργασται μέγα
 καὶ περιβόητον ἔργον. ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας
 ἐξέβαλε τὴν λυποῦσαν ἣν ἐβούλετο,
 ἵν' ἀποβλέπωσι πάντες εἰς τὸ Κρωβύλης
 πρόσωπον, ἧ τ' εὐγνώστος οὖσ' ἡμῇ γυνὴ
 δέσποινα· καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἣν ἐκτήσατο
 ὄνος ἐν πιθήκος, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον
 ἐστίν. σιωπᾶν βούλομαι τὴν νύκτα τὴν
 πολλῶν κακῶν ἀρχηγόν. οἴμοι Κρωβύλην
 λαβεῖν ἔμ' ἐκκαίδεκα τάλαντα προίκα καὶ
 τὴν ῥιν' ἔχουσιν πῆχεως. εἴτ' ἐστὶ τὸ
 φρυγάμ' ὡς ὑποστατόν μ' αὖ τὸν Δία
 τὸν Ὀλύμπιον καὶ τὴν Ἀθηναίαν, οὐδαμῶς.
 παιδισκάριον θεραπευτικὸν δὲ καὶ λόγου
 τάχιον ἀπήχθω· πῶς δέ τις ἂν ἀντεισάγοι;⁸²

That lovely heiress will sleep on both nostrils; she's done a great and wondrous deed. She threw the girl out of the house whom she wanted gone, so that all would look towards Crobyle's face, and my wife would be well known as the one in charge. And the vision that she's established is an ass among apes, as they say. I wish to remain silent about the night that began the many troubles. Dear God, to think that I got Crobyle with eleven and a half talents of dowry and a cubit of nose! And how can I put up with her snoring? By Olympian Zeus and Athena, no way! And I've lost that little girl, cleverer than I can say. How could anyone replace her?

Gellius compares Caecilius' version of this speech, in which the man claims that even if he kept silent, there would be evidence enough from his wife's looks and actions (*ita me uxor forma et factis facit, si taceam, tamen indicium*), and claims that while he waits eagerly for her death, he is a living dead man (*egomet mortuus inter vivos*). He also concentrates more on her actions than Menander's Laches did: he says she beats him by wailing, begging, opposing and quarreling (*ita plorando, orando, instando atque obiurgando me obtudit*).

⁸² Men. fr. 402 Edmonds = Men. *Plokion* fr. 296 K-A.

Gellius continues:

idem ille maritus senex cum altero sene vicino colloquens et uxoris locupletis superbiam deprecans haec ait:

ΓΕΡΟΝ. ἔχω δ' ἐπίκληρον Λάμιαν· οὐκ εἴρηκά σοι
τοῦτ'; εἴτ' ἄρ' οὐχί; κυρίαν τῆς οἰκίας
καὶ τῶν ἀγρῶν καὶ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀντικρυσ
ἄχομεν, Ἀπολλων, ὥς χαλεπῶν χαλεπώτατον.
ἅπασι δ' ἀργαλέα' στίν, οὐκ ἐμοὶ μόνῳ,
υἱῷ πολὺ μᾶλλον, θυγατρί.
B. πρᾶγμ' ἄμαχον λέγεις.
Γ. εὖ οἶδα.⁸³

The same old husband, speaking to a neighbor, bewails his rich wife's arrogance thus:

Old Man. I have a beast of an heiress for a wife. Didn't I tell you that? We chafe at her being mistress of the lands and everything else, Apollo, the worst of difficulties! But we're all sacrifices, not me alone--my son has it worse, and my daughter.
Speaker B. You're talking about an unwinnable situation!
O.M. I know it well.

Gellius then provides Caecilius' equivalent interchange, which we find has been expanded to include a remark about the wife's bad breath. But Caecilius' adaptation matters little for the question at hand: does this speech indicate the wife's presence onstage, either in the Menandrian original or in Caecilius' adaptation? Certainly not. Even in Plautus' *Mostellaria*, Simo complains about his wife without the audience ever seeing her.⁸⁴ We may look to the *Asinaria* for insults similar to Caecilius': in that play, when the husband is telling the prostitute about his wife, his wife is eavesdropping; but

⁸³ N.A. 2.23.12 = Men. fr. 403 = Men. *Plok.* 297 K-A.

⁸⁴ *Most.* 695-6, 700-709.

this situation is unparalleled in other Roman Comedy. Based on the speech alone, we should not assume the onstage presence of the wife in the Greek original.

The one piece of evidence that suggests the wife's presence is the mosaic in the House of Menander on Mytilene. These mosaics show scenes from several Menandrian plays, and even identify the act or scene from which they are drawn. There is a mosaic for the *Plokion*, which names the characters Crobyle, Moschion, and Laches. As the publishers of the mosaics note, there is a physical correspondence between the description we have just read and the character portrayed in the mosaic: she is described by the authors as "a married woman, ugly, though not necessarily very old, remarkable for her long nose, and especially talkative."⁸⁵ The authors are working off of Pollux's list of masks, and want to identify Crobyle as Pollux's "Chatterbox." Other authors have wanted to identify Crobyle as a courtesan or *lena*, based on the mask.⁸⁶ However, it seems most likely that she is the wife about whom Laches is complaining in the two fragments.

The main question is whether Crobyle's presence in the mosaic is an indication of her presence onstage, in the plays. This question is made more difficult by the fact that the mosaics are dated to the later third century C.E., and it is not known whether Menander's plays were being put on or not, though the publishers assume that Menander's play were still well known at that time.⁸⁷ For two other mosaics, we have well-preserved plays which we can compare: the *Samia* and the *Epitrepontes*. In both these cases, the

⁸⁵ "Une femme mariée, laide mais pas nécessairement très âgée, remarquable par son long nez, et spécialement bavarde" (Charitonidis et al. 71).

⁸⁶ Webster 1956: 85.

⁸⁷ Charitonidis et al. 12, 104-5.

scenes pictured in the mosaics correspond to those found in the plays. Thus, there is a precedent for assuming that the scene portrayed was one that was contained in the play. In fact, the publishers reconstruct two possible scenarios for this "rich and dominating woman."⁸⁸ In the first, Laches is reproaching Crobyle for forcing him to sell his slave; in the second, which the authors think is more likely, Crobyle is imposing her plans for marriage upon her son, and the father is defending him.⁸⁹

Given the scenes which correspond to other plays, it is probable Crobyle appeared onstage in Menander's *Plokion*. However, the publishers of the mosaics, in constructing a scenario for this "dominating woman," have taken Laches' complaints too much to heart. Their perception of her role has undoubtedly been affected by the image of shrewish *matronae* in Roman adaptations. In the first place, it has been shown that the connection between *matronae* and their Greek models is far more tenuous than has been assumed. We should be especially careful about analyzing Crobyle's characterization--that is, her tone and behavior--from an unspeaking, unmoving mosaic. Even combining the mosaic with her husband's words, we have seen in Roman comedy that it is not a good idea to characterize wives simply according to their husbands' statements.

We should exercise even more caution with fragments that complain about women's ugliness or behavior, and have no pictorial evidence accompanying them. These may be spoken about characters who never appear onstage, and they may be spoken by characters whose credibility is low. Nevertheless, they are fairly common. I present two examples:

⁸⁸ "Une femme riche et dominatrice," *ibid.* 32.

αἰσχρὸν γυναῖκ' ἔγημας ἀλλὰ πλουσίαν·
κάθειδ' ἀηδῶς ἥδεως μασώμενος.⁹⁰

You've married a woman ugly but rich; go to sleep kneading away.

. . . ἦν οὐδ' ὁ πατὴρ ἐφίλησεν οὐδεπώποτε
παρ' ἧς τὸν ἄρτον ἢ κύων οὐ λαμβάνει,
μέλαινα δ' οὕτως ὥστε καὶ ποιεῖν σκότος.⁹¹

[a girl] . . . whose father never loved her, and from whom the family
dog wouldn't take bread, so dark as to create night from day.

The idea of the ugly woman, and the rich but bossy heiress, bring us closest to the idea of the *uxor dotata* in Plautus. But was there a Greek equivalent to this character? Certainly, the same cultural logic was employed in Greek and Roman sayings: Marrying a woman with money is a bad idea because she will have power over you.⁹² In the first place, this logic is directly opposed to women's legal standing, at least in Greek law.⁹³ Further, similar cultural logic in Greek and Roman plays, especially espoused by male characters, does not guarantee how this woman appeared, or that she appeared at all, in the Greek originals.

Here I would like to address the complications that arise when translating an *epikleros* into an *uxor dotata*, in terms of the very real differences in legal procedure and

⁸⁹ Ibid. 33.

⁹⁰ Philippides fr. 28 Edmonds = Philippides fr. 29 K-A.

⁹¹ Diph. fr. 92 Edmonds.

⁹² It should be noted that aside from remarks about *epikleroi*, there are general sayings about marrying women with money (e.g., Anaxandrides fr. 52.4-6 K) or women with a large dowry (Alexis *Manteis* fr. 146 K., Antiphanes fr. 146 K, Plut. *Mor.* 13f-14a).

⁹³ Vogt-Spira discusses the literary representation and legal status of Greek dowered wives (2000a: 21-6).

standing which we find in Greek and Roman law. Culturally speaking, an *epikleros* differs from an *uxor dotata* in terms of age, source of money, and legal standing. According to Athenian law,⁹⁴ a woman became an *epikleros* "if a man died leaving behind him no sons but only a daughter or daughters, and if he had not married the daughters to men whom he adopted."⁹⁵ The *epikleros* automatically became liable to a legal mechanism called *epidikasia*, which was a procedure allowing her nearest male relatives (legally ranked in a certain order) to claim the right to marry her.⁹⁶ This mechanism took place even if she was already married; in that case, the nearest male relative could still claim her hand and force the dissolution of her marriage, and according to Isaïos 3, this was not uncommon.⁹⁷

If the daughter is unmarried when her father dies, we must assume that she is fairly young. In the *Aspis*, for instance, we see just such a situation: a young woman (*korê*) becomes an *epikleros* when her brother dies, and as part of the plan to prevent her from marrying an older man, another character fakes his own death so that his daughter will appear to have become an *epikleros*.⁹⁸ But, despite the legal implication that an *epikleros* was young, the *epikleroi* discussed in the *Plokion* and *Epikleros* fragments were old enough to have grown children. It seems that the label of *epikleros* stuck with a

⁹⁴ I will discuss the *epikleros* in terms of Athenian law simply because it is the most coherently described legal system. Some Menandrian plays are set in places other than Athens--the *Perikeiromene*, for instance, is set in Corinth--but there is no way to know whether other laws treated an *epikleros* differently. Further, it is debatable whether such plays actually employ foreign legal mechanisms or whether they follow Athenian law despite their foreign setting. Schaps treats the isolated evidence for *epikleroi* in other legal systems (42-7).

⁹⁵ Harrison 132.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 10-11, 132.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 11.

⁹⁸ Men. *Asp.* 141, 348.

woman regardless of her age.⁹⁹ On the other hand, we must be cautious about reconstructing plays with the title *Epikleros*. Given the evidence of the *Aspis*, it seems possible that these could refer to younger women as well as older ones. This is a clear difference from the *uxores dotatae* we see on the Roman stage, most of whom are old enough to have grown children.¹⁰⁰

Another factor to consider is the Athenian concept of *kureia*. In Athenian law, a woman had to have a legal *kurios*--a guardian/legal representative. The *kureia* of an unmarried woman transferred from her father to her husband upon marriage, although the father retained some control over his daughter.¹⁰¹ At any rate, it was difficult if not impossible for an *epikleros* to be legally independent, given the legal pressure for levirate marriage and the necessity of a *kurios*. This is equally true of a woman's inheritance: there is no evidence that the law gave her any special rights over her own money.¹⁰² In Roman law, too, a woman had a *tutor*, a legal representative. However, the main difference here lies in the fact that in Greek law, a woman's *kurios* not only represented the woman, but actually had control of the dowry; whereas in Roman law, as far as we can tell, the *tutor* was a representative, who did not necessarily receive the money.¹⁰³

A Roman *uxor dotata* is very different from an *epikleros*, legally speaking. In the first place, her father can be alive and well, as we see in the *Menaechmi*. The source of her money was dowry (*dos*) rather than a legal inheritance. The issue of dowry in the

⁹⁹ Schaps (25-6) also discusses the range of ages for *epikleroi*.

¹⁰⁰ The possible exception is the *matrona* in the *Menaechmi*, whose age is uncertain.

¹⁰¹ Harrison 30-1.

¹⁰² The woman never had any possession of the money. It either belonged to her husband or her children. Schaps describes the dowry as being passed from the *kureia* of one family to another (27, 106-7).

time of Plautus is complicated, and has been discussed in Chapter 3. It should suffice to say that Roman law made it much more plausible for a woman to recover her dowry for herself, and thus have some legal control over it, than Athenian law did. Because of this fact, it is fair to say that, culturally speaking, the "threat" of a woman with money was more realistic in Roman law than in Athenian law.

All of this is to say that we should be extremely cautious with plays involving *epikleroi*, whether in the title or elsewhere. We do not possess *any* speech which is spoken by an *epikleros* herself. We have only other characters' descriptions. Even if we admit that the same cultural logic exists in the Greek and Roman plays, the actual legal mechanisms differed. In addition, the age of an *epikleros* is more flexible than that of an *uxor dotata*. In short, despite the similar cultural logic behind sayings about *epikleroi* and *uxores dotatae*, we should not assume absolute equivalence between the two, either as legal entities or as characters in a play. Nor should we assume that mentions of *epikleroi* are equivalent to their presence onstage.

Later Reception of Menander

As a final consideration, I think it is worth examining the many later commentaries on Menander's style and characterization. These general statements are valuable for reconstruction of cultural history, since they reflect what people defined as "typical" characters in Menander. They come from many different times and places, yet they show a remarkable consensus on the types of characters that Menander was known

¹⁰³ Dixon discusses the gap between the legal necessity of a tutor and its actual effect on their financial

for. In Rome, courtesans seem to be Menander's best-known female characters. Ovid writes:

dum fallax servus, durus pater, improba lena
vivent et meretrix blanda, Menandros erit.

As long as the deceiving slave, harsh father, wicked lady-pimp,
and coaxing courtesans shall live, Menander will exist.¹⁰⁴

If Ovid himself is not conflating Greek and Roman types, it seems that there was a Greek equivalent for the *lena* as well as the *meretrix*. But no *matrona* or *materfamilias* is mentioned. Quintilian, on the other hand, does not even single out female characters when discussing Menander's style:

. . . necesse est secundum condicionem controversiarum plures
subire personas, patrum filiorum, <caelibum> maritorum, militum
rusticorum, divitum pauperum, irascentium deprecantium, mitium
asperorum.¹⁰⁵

. . . [he] necessarily takes on many different characters according to
the requirement of the discourses--those of fathers and sons, of
bachelors and husbands, soldiers and farmers, rich and poor, angry
and begging, gentle and brusque.

While the last three pairs consist of adjectives in the genitive plural, and thereby could theoretically be applied to women as well as men, it seems unlikely that we can infer any particular type of female character from them.

An unknown scholiast to Dionysius of Thrace did note women, but was describing both Aristophanes' and Menander's character types:

control (148-150, 168-70).

¹⁰⁴ *Ov. Am.* 1.1.17-18 = Men. test. 90 K-A.

¹⁰⁵ *Inst.* 10.1.69 = Men. test. 101 K-A.

τουτέστι μιμουμένους γυναῖκας νέας ἢ γράϊδας ἢ δεδοικότας
ἢ ὀργιζομένους ἄνδρας.¹⁰⁶

i.e., imitating women young and old, men fearful and angry.

But while men are defined by their emotional traits, women are simply classified by age, making it difficult to draw conclusions about character types. In the second century C.E., Hermogenes mentioned Menander when he talked about the "simple style":

παρὰ τῷ Μενάνδρῳ μυρία ἂν εὖροις τοιαῦτα καὶ γυναῖκας λεγοῦσας
καὶ νεανίσκους ἐρώντας καὶ μαγείρους καὶ παρθένους θρυπτομένας
καὶ τινας ἄλλους.¹⁰⁷

In Menander you may find innumerable examples: women speaking, young men in love, cooks, coquettish maidens, and so on.

Here, at least, we see women mentioned, but I do not think we should take *gunê* as designating anything more than women in general. Finally, Libanius, a grammarian from the fourth century, writes:

κεκλείσθαι τοῖς ὑποκριταῖς τὸ θέατρον, ἵνα μὴ τραγῳδὸς
εἰσελθὼν Πασιφάην μιμήσῃται τὴν ἐξοκέϊλασαν εἰς ἀλλόκοτον
ἔρωτα, μηδ' αὖ κωμῳδὸς τὰς παρὰ Μενάνδρῳ τεκούσας.¹⁰⁸

the actors were locked out of the theater, for fear that a tragedian should go in and imitate Pasiphaë, or a comedian Menander's newly-delivered mothers.

In Libanius' time, it seems, Menander was most known for his raped-virgin plots.

A final consideration is the general tone of Menander's plots. Plutarch is well-known for saying that Menander was just the right kind of dinner entertainment because he got husbands "in the mood" with his morally-appropriate eroticism.¹⁰⁹ Plutarch is

¹⁰⁶ Men. test. 152 K-A.

¹⁰⁷ PI 2.3 = Men. fr. 942 Edmonds = Men. test. 116 K-A.

¹⁰⁸ Men. fr. 941 Edmonds = Men. test. 127 K-A.

¹⁰⁹ *Moralia* 712c.

describing affairs with prostitutes, however, and does not address any husband-wife relationships portrayed onstage. Ovid also implies that Menander is appropriate reading material for young persons:

fabula iucundi nulla est sine amore Menandri,
et solet hic pueris virginibus legi.¹¹⁰

None of cheerful Menander's stories lacks love,
and he is usually read by boys and young women.

Even Psellus, an eleventh-century C.E. grammarian, describes Menandrian comedies as *megaloprepê*.¹¹¹ All of this is to say that, despite the few mentions of quarrelling spouses, married strife did not strike later critics as an overwhelming theme of Menandrian comedy.

Conclusions

We have seen that married women do appear in Menander's plays: Pamphile in the *Epitrepontes*, as well as two unnamed women speakers who appear in fragments. In addition, we have quotes that may be spoken from husband to wife. But the sum total of these fragments is seven out of thousands. More important than their small number is their lack of characterization. Pamphile alone provides a character with context; the rest do not tell us anything.

Plot summaries, testimonia, one mosaic, and dialogue from *epikleroi* plays mention older wives, and suggest that quarreling spouses were a part of some Greek New

¹¹⁰ Ov. *Tr.* 2.369-70 = Men. test. 92 K-A.

Comic plots. But the summaries and testimonia are frustratingly vague about the actual staging, and even the *epikleroi* plays should be treated with extreme caution and not assumed to be the equivalent of Roman *uxores dotatae*.

The conclusions we can draw are few. But it is better to have a clear picture of what we do not know: we do not know that there was a character equivalent to a *matrona*. Aside from Pamphile, we do not know how the married women who did appear were characterized, how old they were, or how much stage time they had. We have some idea of their roles in the plot: we have a secure connection between a married woman and an *anagnorisis*, and the *Plokion* mosaic suggests that the mother is somehow involved in her son's betrothal. While the latter plot is one that will appear in Roman comedy as well, we should still keep in mind that the mother's appearance must be based entirely on the evidence of one late mosaic, and that we have no extant dialogue for her.

Given all of these facts, we may cautiously suggest that the role of married women, while present in the Greek texts, was expanded greatly by Plautus.¹¹² In addition, the evidence we have seen for the Roman *matronae* suggests that they are not mere copies of their Greek predecessors, and that they reflect distinctly Roman conditions and legal standing.

¹¹¹ Men. test. 161 K-A.

¹¹² Because this dissertation concerns Plautus, I will not address the question of Terentian *matronae* here. Moreover, Terentian adaptation is its own phenomenon and would require a separate method of analysis, since Terence is generally felt to remain truer to his Greek originals than Plautus.

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