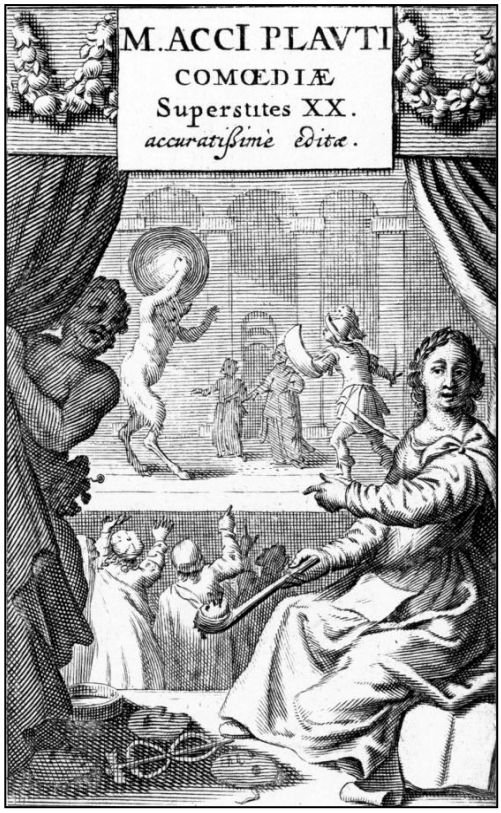
AN INTRODUCTION TO PLAUTUS THROUGH SCENES

Selected and Translated by Richard F. Hardin



'Title page for Titus Maccius Plautus, Comoediae Superstites XX, 1652'
Lowijs Elzevier (publisher) Netherlands (Amsterdam); 1652 - The Rijksmuseum

Preface

This collection celebrates a comic artist who left twenty plays written during the decades on either side of 200 B.C. He spun his work from Greek comedies, "New Comedies" bearing his own unique stamp.[1] In Rome the forerunners of such plays, existing a generation before Plautus, were called *fabulae palliatae*, comedies in which actors wore the Greek *pallium* or cloak. These first situation comedies, Greek then Roman, were called New Comedies, in contrast with the more loosely plotted Old Comedies, surviving in the plays of Aristophanes. The jokes, characters, and plots that Plautus and his successor Terence left have continued to influence comedy from the Renaissance even to the present. Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors, Taming of the Shrew, Merry Wives of Windsor,* and *The Tempest* are partly based on *Menaechmi, Amphitruo, Mostellaria, Casina,* and *Rudens*; Molière's *L'Avare* (*The Miser*), on *Aulularia*; Gelbart and Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, on *Pseudolus*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Casina*, and *Mostellaria*; David Williamson's *Flatfoot* (2004) on *Miles Gloriosus*; the Capitano in Commedia dell'Arte, Shakespeare's Falstaff, and Jonson's Bobadill all inherit traits of Plautus's braggart soldiers.

I have assembled this collection of scenes with several audiences in mind, besides, of course, readers who like to laugh. First, those (like me) also interested in the classical tradition, comedy above all, and its history. Then I hope to interest people who like doing comedy as well as reading it, feeling the threads tying ancient to modern comic plots and characters. Most or all

of these scenes are suitable to use for audition or separate performance. Readers or actors may, I hope, go on to read or see or produce complete plays by Plautus. Which ones to choose? They could do worse than turn to the ones that led Shakespeare, Molière, and Sondheim to write their imitations.

I hope that these readers will appreciate the playwright's inventive comic genius and discover his remarkable variety in tone, characters, and situations.

First, his inventiveness; second, his variety. I think most classically educated people now understand that Plautus was not a hack translator of superior (lost) Greek dramatists. Nevertheless, there still exists the major error regarding his comedies exemplified in Andrew Stott's *Comedy* (Routledge, 2005): that Roman comedy "was built almost exclusively on plots and characters so similar that to modern readers the genre seems narrow and formulaic" (21). In a similarly frequent misrepresentation, no less a critic than Northrop Frye (*Anatomy* 163) declared, "What normally happens" in Plautus and Terence is that a lover's desire is resisted by "opposition, usually paternal," until the boy gets the girl. It's baffling that this was accepted when Plautus's most familiar comedy to readers of English, *Menaechmi*, rewritten by Shakespeare as *Comedy of Errors*, bears absolutely no resemblance to this pattern, nor do many other Plautine comedies. *Amphitruo* violates the supposition that New Comedy is all about the lower classes; *Rudens*, that such comedy must occur in cities; *Captivi* and *Menaechmi*, that there must be a love or lust interest; *Casina* that women are necessarily subordinate.

The excerpts from Plautus here collected include characters' monologues and dialogues from a kind of comedy supposedly built on character "stereotypes." That misleading word implies that all his old men, slaves, prostitutes, or lovers are pretty much the same. Yet these types vary widely among themselves, his characters sometimes even manifesting a certain

inwardness. Both before and since his time, plots involving boasters, swindlers, saucy boys, loose women, and drunks have persisted as dependably comic–and human. The arrogant soldier, the servant more clever than his master, the doddering old lover are just a few of the types still being recycled in films and on stage and television.

A brief list of Plautus's more common character types, usually labeled as such in his *dramatis personae*, contains some of those that comic dramatists and fiction writers still use:

Adulescens (the young man, usually a lover or friend thereof)

Ancilla (maidservant, sometimes accentuating some feature of her mistress)

Lena (procuress, sometimes a meretrix's mother, sometimes bibulous)

Leno (pimp, the lowest person on the Roman comedy moral scale)

Matrona (married woman, sometimes coping with a difficult senex)

Meretrix (prostitute, often translated "courtesan," a notch above "scortum," ordinary whore, though "courtesan," being anachronistic has lately yielded to "sex worker," "working girl," etc.)

Miles (soldier, usually "gloriosus," a braggart)

Parasitus ("parasite," a hanger-on or moocher, always hunting for a free meal or an angle)

Puer (Usually means a boy, sometimes playful or roguish, the word also can mean slave)

Senex (an old man: may be "iratus" or crabby, generous, sometimes "amator," a lover, sometimes just fed up)

Servus (slave: subtypes include clever, stupid, craven, loyal, loyal-but-abused. Plautus probably invented the clever slave, the best example being Pseudolus, in the play of that name.)

Virgo (free young woman, usually representing a love interest, seldom on stage)

Plautus composed almost all his surviving plays in complete plots, with discernible beginning, middle, and end. Yet a number of his scenes (not meaning official subdivisions), including some that I offer here, possess a life independent of the original whole. The con-man (*sycophanta*) in *Trinummus* appears in only one scene, yet that is about the only funny scene in the play. Some of the *cantica* or sung monologues in the plays have this life-of-their-own quality, like Ballio's swaggering harangue to his slaves early in *Pseudolus*. Often Plautus will import a scene into his play from a Greek comedy different than the one on which most of that play is based. This practice was being criticized a generation after Plautus as "contamination," the Latin word *contaminatio* appearing in Terence's prefaces.[2] In effect, Shakespeare "contaminated" *Menaechmi* in *Comedy of Errors* with material from *Amphitruo*. So the *scene* deserves some consideration as a separate unit, like the *act*. Who can say that Plautus never built an entire play around one or two scenes that first came to him either from Greek or Roman comedies or from his own imagination?

A word about the original circumstances of producing Plautus, much of which is uncertain.(Among the many relevant valuable sites on the Internet a good starting point is at wikiwand.com/en.Theatre; a recent book with original essays on every aspect of Plautus is Dorota Dutsch and George Fredric Franko, eds, *A Companion to Plautus*, see List of Works Cited.) Roman comedy was written in verse: not the accentual kind we know in English but quantitative verse, measured in long and short syllables. The comedies were performed on festive occasions, along with other entertainments or *ludi*; in Plautus's time there were at least four such feast days a year, though we know very few dates of first performances. Until long after Plautus actors performed on temporary stages built for the purpose then dismantled. They

were professionally organized, each acting company (called the *grex* or flock) having a boss and consisting of free and slave males. (A colorful picture of theatrical conditions appears in my first section, "Preliminaries," from the play *Poenulus*.) The stage was long and shallow with two or three house fronts, separated by alleyways to permit spying or concealment. On the audience's right was the way to the forum (downtown), to their left, the way out of town or to the harbor. Actors wore soft shoes or sandals (*socci*–the boot was for tragedy) and garments colored dependent on character type. Opinion now tends to hold that they wore masks. A *tibicen* or flute-player played on a reed instrument, two long pipes joined at the mouthpieces. About Plautus's life little is certain. Titus Maccius Plautus was surely a stage name. Some of his first plays were written during the second of the wars with Carthage (Punic Wars). The playwright was said to be from Sarsina in Umbria and to have been a slave at one time. His comedies remained popular in Rome centuries after his era. In his discussion of comic oratory, Cicero admires the simple and unaffected style of Plautus (*De Oratore* 3.12).

Many passages in this collection address the audience in "asides" with no concern for the imagined fourth wall separating stage and audience. In one play a character needing a disguise is told to consult the acting troupe's props manager. In another a character offers a drink to the flute player providing music for the theater. Early modern critics sometimes disliked Plautus because they felt such theatrical self-reference "unclassical." Some characters reveal their inmost fears and wishes in lines that were sung, called *cantica*, not unlike moments of self-revelation in musical theater today. Most speakers communicate, directly to us, a humanity still recognizable despite the intervening clutter of history. Comic characters in Plautus's era display thoughts, moods, and motives shared with people now, just as do characters in ancient tragedy and epic. They tend to incorporate more broadly comic elements than those of Plautus's successor,

Terence (active from 166 to 160 B.C.), who generally avoids the comedy of fools, absurdities, and jokes. Act and scene divisions were eventually designated in the Renaissance and have become conventional in editions since.[3] This translation aims at a non-intrusively accurate and idiomatic American English version, stylistically in accord with Plautus's own language, the *sermo familiaris* of Rome–as Questa says, "the language of good everyday conversation used first by Naevius and then the other authors of *palliatae*, with the morphological, lexical, and syntactic characteristics that this language had at the time."[4] This accordingly differs from more casual, albeit livelier, renditions found in some modern translations. In translating, I have consulted (and cited in the bibliography) several commentaries on the plays. The ancient text of Plautus contains many disputed gaps (which specialists call "lacunae") and readings, most of which I do not discuss; I rely chiefly, but not always, on the Latin of W.M. Lindsay's Oxford Classical Text edition. (Throughout, I use line numbers from the Latin text, so readers may easily consult both the Latin and other translations.) My longstanding interest in comedy of the Renaissance and beyond has led to comments on influences and echoes in later comedy: I am more interested in the continually present Plautus than the Plautus of 200 B.C.

I first read Plautus in a high-school fourth-year Latin course, a simplified and bowdlerized *Mostellaria*; I was hooked, but not until decades later did I have a chance to study him further. To prepare this collection, I spent seven years reading all the plays and working up translations of the chosen scenes. Occasional notes refer to informational material, textual matters, and interesting critical interpretations. The selections first gathered in "Preliminaries" will help orient the reader into the nature of Plautus's theater and, arguably, into his "philosophy" or outlook regarding the human situation. In staging, information from some notes,

such as that on drawing lots in *Casina* (n. 14), needs to be communicated to spectators. After "Preliminaries," scenes are organized thematically, if rather subjectively. As noted earlier, recent decades have produced a great many valuable studies of Plautus, some that illuminate the path between ancient and modern comedy. Some critics have fruitfully debated the question whether his comedies are thematic or are purely ludic–in a holiday spirit without any social agenda or message. Others have explored the existence and implications of his "metatheatrical" elements–features sometimes indicating that the comedies are about comedy, the plot is about plot-making, the stage is the world. No one can say now what Plautus meant by "comoedia," or even if it would have occurred to him to ask the question.

For the present, if not forever,

It's a question best avoided altogether.

Acknowledgement

The merits of this book would be far fewer, without the imaginative, informed, painstaking advice of Professor Michael Fontaine of Cornell University.

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PRELIMINARIES

The Playwright Speaks, Gods and Humans, Philosophy

The Playwright himself speaks in the theater (*Poenulus*, 1-45.)

The Preface has mentioned the temporariness of Roman theaters in the time of Plautus; year-round public theater did not then exist. The following prologue or prefatory speech gives a rare picture of the casual chatter, snacking, and other holiday behavior that could surely make performance a headache for the acting troupe. Plautus is fond of outside intrusions into the theater, as when he drops the curtain (metaphorically) midway through Curculio *(act 4) so the* choragus *(stage manager, producer) can remind his viewers of all the scenes of human venality that surround his site of performance in Rome–the locations that tend to attract the whores or the liars or the gluttons.*

New Comedy owes much to traditions of tragedy and other early genres, hence Plautus's initial parody here of a moment in a now-lost tragedy. Parodying of heroic and tragic action provides several Plautine jokes. Fraenkel notes that the opening lines of this prologue are from Ennius's Achilles[5] *rather than Aristarchus, as the Prologue claims. Niall Slater discusses this speech as typifying the "invention and playfulness which characterizes the beginnings of Plautus's comedies," including his "toying with the audience's generic expectations."*[6] *Classical scholarship today views this audience as sophisticated, even knowledgeable about such matters as the playwright's Greek models*.[7]

(Enter Prologue in military attire)

PROLOGUE. I'd like to recall Aristarchus's tragedy *Achilles,* from which I take my beginning: "Silence! Be quiet and hear this, the histor-ionic commander orders you to listen!"

Those who came hungry and those who had a good lunch should sit on the benches and watch. If you've eaten, so much the better; if not, fill up on comedy. If someone has everything needed to make lunch at home, it's really stupid to come here and sit unfed.

[*Addressing the public announcer*:] "Stand forth O herald, and make the people give ear!" I keep waiting to see if you know your job, public announcer. Unless you speak out you may find yourself silenced and starving. [*The announcer fails to quiet the crowd*.] Yes, now sit down again and maybe you'll get double your pay.

Everyone, do the right thing and listen to my orders. I'll have no dirty old perverts sitting on the stage, no lictor rustling about with his clattering clubs, no usher sidling around in full view taking people to their seats while an actor's on stage. If you're a slacker who's slept too long at home, you should be willing either to stand when you get here or to refrain from sleeping.

Slaves should not take up seating space that could go to free men–or else they should buy their freedom. If they can't they should go home. That way they'll avoid the double punishment of getting beat black and blue here by the lictor's clubs, then again by the whippers at home, when the master returns and they haven't done their job.

Nurses, leave the little ones at home, don't bring them to the show. We don't want you craving a drink and the babies dying of hunger or bleating in the aisles like little goats. Ladies: watch quietly and laugh quietly. Lower the jangling of your melodious voices and talk your chit-chat at home, so as not to annoy your husbands here the way you do there.

Something for the directors of our entertainment: no actor should be given a prize unjustly or be left out of the running because of favoritism. Second-rate artists should not be preferred over good ones.

Also there's something I almost forgot. You waiters like to rush around to the snack shop while the plays are going on. Get over and raid them now while the time's right, while the pies are nice and hot.

These orders are published on behalf of the historionic empire. In the name of Hercules, let each subject commit this important body of law to memory.

Dreams: The theater in our head (*Rudens,* 593-614)

Unjustly exiled from Athens, Daemones lives on the north coast of Africa with his wife and a few slaves. In his visionary dream the nesting swallows represent his long-lost daughter, taken in slavery, and her equally victimized girlfriend. They will, that day, wash up on his shore after a shipwreck that will save them from their "owner," the pimp Labrax, who is the monkey in this dream. (On monkeys, compare a more comical dream by an old fellow in Mercator*, below.)*

Plautus, ever conscious of plays as creations, sees himself as dreamer and dream-maker. The playwright-as-god and life-as-dream-or-play give rise to jokes throughout the Roman author's comedies; both metaphors came easily to playwrights in the Renaissance like the author of The Tempest, *demonstrably influenced by* Rudens. *Daemones is reporting a prophetic dream; he has yet to encounter the shipwrecked girls or their pimp when he says this:*

DAEMONES. Wondrous how the gods put on plays for us mortals
With wondrous dreams in our sleep.
No rest for us even when we sleep.
For instance, last night
I dreamed a strange and mysterious dream.
It seemed a monkey struggled to climb up to a swallows' nest
But could not pull it down. So the monkey came, it seemed,
To ask me the loan of a ladder for his monkey business.
"Swallows," I objected, "descend from Philomel and Procne."
I served him notice that nothing shall disturb my people.
And he did rage exceedingly.
It seemed that he threatened me and went to law,
Whereupon, somehow, I angrily grabbed the monkey by the scruff
And locked up the vile beast in chains. Now all day
It's baffled me, this dream, and I cannot guess what it means.

Gods and Humans: Slapstick (*Amphitruo*, 354-460)

The heroic general Amphitruo (elsewhere spelled "Amphitryon") has just returned from victory and has sent his manservant Sosia to his palace to prepare the household for his arrival. Jupiter (Jove) lusts after the general's wife, Alcumena, and, having disguised himself as her husband, is now in bed with her, leaving Mercury to guard the door. The god so enjoys the unsuspecting wife that he orders the dawn to be delayed. When Sosia arrives in the inexplicable darkness, Mercury disguises himself as Sosia and takes his name, answering the door. Because Mercury "assumes not only Sosia's appearance but his character," it has been thought that the comedy enacts the experiences of struggling with the self; Sosia-Mercury may well be "a stranger talking to himself."[8]

The comedy, then, partly centers on divine abuse of humans, of both noble and ordinary humans. The myth implies that Amphitruo is ennobled by Jupiter's cuckolding because his wife gives birth to Hercules as well as the couple's own son. The comedy suggests the fame may not be worth the price. This scene led to the coining of the French word sosie*, meaning a person's double.*

(*Mercury has been speaking with Sosia, who holds a lantern because of the inexplicable darkness, in the doorway of Amphitruo's palace.*)

MERCURY. I don't know how you're "part of this household." If you don't get away from here right now, "part of this household," I'll see to it that you are not received in a householderly way.

SOSIA. I tell you that here is where I live and am one of the slaves.

MER. But you know what? Unless you get out of here I'll see to it that you're elevated.

SOS. How's that?

MER. If I pick up my club, you won't be able to get away and you'll be carried up the hill to the graveyard.

SOS. But I insist I am part of the household in this household.

MER. If you're not getting out of here immediately, please say how soon you want your beating.

SOS. Are you demanding that I leave home after returning from abroad?

MER. This is your home? SOS. I say yes. MER. So who's your master?

SOS. Amphitruo, who is now commander of the Theban army, to whom Alcumena is married.

MER. What are you talking about? What's your name?

SOS. Thebans call me Sosia, descended from the house of Davos.

MER. Don't you come around here with your concoction of lies and patched-together deceits, you brazen pillar.

SOS. No, sir, I'm coming here with patched-together clothes, not deceits.

MER. But you're lying again. You're really coming here with your feet, not your clothes.

SOS. Yes, in fact. MER. Now, in fact, take this for lying (*beats him*).

SOS. Hey–I don't like that, in fact!

MER. Hey–in fact this defies your liking. This "in fact" really is for sure, not a matter of opinion.

SOS. I beseech your protection! MER. You dare to say you're Sosia! So who am I?

SOS. I'm a dead man.

MER. That's putting it mildly compared with what's about to happen. Who's your master now?

SOS. You are. With your fists you have made me yours.[9] (*Turning to audience*) Citizens, help a fellow Theban!

MER. So, scumbag, you're crying for help? Speak up, why have you come here?

SOS. To be someone you can destroy with your fists.

MER. Who's your master? SOS. I'm Amphitruo's Sosia, I say.

MER. The more lies you keep saying, the more you'll be beaten (*beats him*). I'm Sosia, not you!

SOS. (*Aside*) If only the gods could fix it so you could be me instead, and *I* could give *you* a beating.

MER. Still muttering? SOS. I'll be quiet now.

MER. Who's your master? SOS. Whoever you want.

MER. So then, who are you naming now? SOS. No one unless ordered by you.

MER. You were saying you were Amphitruo's Sosia.

SOS. I made a mistake. I meant to say I'm Amphitruo's associate.

MER. I knew for sure that there was no slave named Sosia in our family except me. You've made a mistake.

SOS. Would that your fists had.

MER. I'm that Sosia you said you were a while ago.

SOS. I beseech you that you grant me a truce so I won't be beaten up.

MER. Sure, let's have a truce for a little while if you want to say something.

SOS. I will not say anything unless we make peace, since you have superior strength in fists.

MER. Say what you like, I won't hurt you. SOS. Can I count on your reliability?

MER. Mine, certainly. SOS. What if you're lying?

MER. Then let Mercury turn his wrath on Sosia.

SOS. Listen. I am now allowed to say freely anything I like. (*Pause*) I am Sosia, slave to Amphitruo.

MER. Yet again?

SOS. I've made peace with you, I've entered a treaty. I'm speaking the truth.

MER. (*Beats him*) Take that!

SOS. Do whatever you like, do however you like, since you have superior strength in fists. But regardless, whatever you're about to do, I will not, by Hercules, refrain from speaking about this.[10]

MER. Today, as long as you live, you will never make me not Sosia.

SOS. By god, it's certain *you* will never make *me* not belong to our household; and except for me we have no other slave Sosia who left here with Amphitruo for the army.

MER. (*To audience*) This guy's not thinking straight.

SOS. The failure you accuse me of is all yours. Damn it! Am I not Amphitruo's slave Sosia, who left here together with Amphitruo in his army? Didn't our ship, which carried me, arrive this very night from the Port of Perseus? Didn't my master send me here? Am I not standing now in front of our house? Isn't the lantern in my hand? Am I not speaking? Am I not awake? Didn't this man just beat me with his fists? By all that's holy he did, for even now my jaws are hurting. So why do I hesitate? Why don't I go into our home?

MER. What's that? Your home? SOS. Yes, absolutely!

MER. But everything you've just said is lies: the truth is that I am Amphitruo's Sosia. For on this very night our ship weighed anchor from the Port of Perseus. We captured the town where the ruler Pterela ruled, we took the Teleboan regions by force of arms, and Amphitruo himself cut

down King Pterela in combat.

SOS. (*Aside*) I myself don't believe myself when I hear him reporting those things. He's certainly memorably commemorating the things done there. (*To Mercury*) But listen: What was given to Amphitruo by the Teleboans?

MER. The golden bowl King Pterela used to drink from.

SOS. (*Aside*) He's got it! (*To Mercury*) Where is the bowl now?

MER. In a chest. It's marked with Amphitruo's mark. SOS. What is his mark?

MER. The sun rising with his four-horse chariot. Why are you trying to trip me up, you trash?

SOS. (*Aside*) His argument has been convincing. I'm going to have to find another name. I don't know how he's learned these things. Now maybe I can snare him with the right kind of questions. (*Thinks*) So things that I myself did by myself in the tent when no one was around–no one could say now what those were.

(*To Mercury*) If you're Sosia, what did you do in the tent when the army was in the heat of battle? I'll yield if you can tell me.

MER. There was a container of wine from which I filled my jug.

SOS. (*Aside*) He's on the right track.

MER. I poured it in unmixed with water, just as it came from its mother.

SOS. (*Aside*) That's what was done. I drank down a jug of straight wine in there. I wonder if he was hiding in that jug.

MER. Well, have I succeeded with my argument that you aren't Sosia?

SOS. Do you deny that I am? MER. Of course I do. Who would I myself be?

SOS. By Jove, I swear that I am and I'm not speaking falsely.

MER. But I swear by Mercury that Jove doesn't believe you. I'm sure he believes me not swearing rather than you swearing.

SOS. Then tell me who I am, if not Sosia? I ask you.

MER. As soon as I don't want to be Sosia, you'll sure be Sosia. Now, while I do, you'll get beaten silly if you don't get out of here, low life.

SOS. (*Aside, raising the lantern to look at Mercury's body as Mercury closes the door*) No doubt about it. When I see him and consider my own form, my appearance (I've often looked in the

mirror), he's very similar to me. He, too, has clothes and a hat. He's as like me as I am: Leg, foot, haircut, eyes, nose or lips, cheeks, chin, beard, neck–everything. What more need be said? If he has a scarred back, nothing is more alike than this likeness.

But when I think it over, I'm certainly the same I've always been. I know my master, I know my house, I'm soundly in my senses. I'm not obeying what he says, I'll go knock on the door.

How much philosophy does a man need? (*Pseudolus* 667-87)

This speech by Plautus's most memorable clever slave (acted by Phil Silvers in A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*) is, says M.M. Willcock in his edition of the play "probably the finest such speech in all the plays of Plautus." (Below, I use Willcock's perfect rendition of the Plautine sentence beginning "Opportunity.") In this scene, Pseudolus has just encountered Harpax, servant to the Macedonian officer who is delivering to the pimp, Ballio, the money still owed on the girl loved by Pseudolus's young master. Harpax has refused to hand over the cash to Pseudolus, who is unknown to him, but his arrival has given Pseudolus an idea for a trick he might use to seize the money and snatch the girl for his boss. Harpax has left him with the letter to Ballio accompanying the payment.*

PSEUDOLUS. Immortal gods! With his visit, this fellow has been my salvation. What he's brought on his way here has kept me from going off course on *my* way. Opportunity herself could not have come more opportunely than the opportuneness of this letter's arrival. This delivery provides me with a complete package of everything I need. My tricks are right here, all

my deceits, craftiness, the money, my young master's girlfriend. So now, all stout-hearted, how famous I'll make myself! I already had my mind made up and planned I could do what I needed to save the little lady from the pimp. But now it will actually be done this other way.

Fortune, this one goddess on her own can prevail over the wisdom of a hundred learned men. And here's the truth: any man who uses what Fortune has dealt him will excel, and we'll all say that he is wise. When we know a fellow's advice turns out well, we say he's wise, though if things go badly, we'll call him a fool. We're all fools and don't know how mistaken we are when we crave some benefit, as if we could ever know what's good for us. We're unmindful of the things that matter while we pursue what matters not at all. And with all our sorrow and suffering, it turns out that death steals upon us unawares. But enough philosophizing for now–I'm talking too much for too long.

FAMILY

Brother and sister converse (*Aulularia*, 120-77)

Tell-tale names, as usual, are assigned: the brother, Megadorus, "giving grandly," and sister, Eunomia,"well ordered." (The Elizabethan master of tell-tale names is Ben Jonson, a Plautus disciple.) The two siblings occupy a minor story line in this play about a miser, Euclio, who grabs a pot of gold meant for his daughter's dowry. Megadorus, unknown to his sister, is about to make the great gift of offering his hand in marriage to the miser's daughter, nine months pregnant after being raped during a festival. Eunomia, middle-aged or, like her brother, beyond middle years, worries that Megadorus should have children and a good wife in his old age. There is a pleasant openness about family matters, as opposed to the miser's grim secretiveness, abusiveness toward his servants, and injustice toward his only other family member, his daughter (who never appears onstage, though we hear her cry out in childbirth near the end). Megadorus combines teasing with tenderness. Eunomia's seeming aversion to members of her own sex may signal a bad experience in her seemingly misogynist brother's past, though his conduct could in part be a role he enjoys playing. My reading is governed, among other influences, by the meaning of Megadorus's name, though it is also possible to read his plans as motivated by his aversion to dowries and the trouble they bring (the subject of a later monologue). In opposition to reading the character as a senex amator, *Questa sees the siblings as middle class, well-off, frugal but well meaning. Eunomia alludes to her brother's "situation" (translating "res," an ambivalent, comfortably vague term), perhaps not wanting to rile him up*

by being too specific on this delicate topic. The two stand just outside their home so the servants inside will not hear. In all of Shakespearean comedy there is no scene of sibling intimacy like this one.

EUNOMIA. I'd like to have a few words with you, my brother, as a real sister should, about a worry of mine and about your own situation. I know we women can be thought bothersome. People rightly called us great chatterboxes. They say you can't find a silent woman nowadays–or ever. But think about this, my brother. You are all the family I have and I'm all you have. So it's only right that we talk over both our situations and exchange ideas and words of advice about them. No secrets or fears should hold you or me back from sharing our concerns. That's why I've called you aside out here to talk about this family situation.

MEGADORUS. Best of women, put your hands in mine.

EUN. Where is she, this best of women?

MEG. You.

EUN. You're saying that?

MEG. If you disagree, so will I.

EUN. You really should tell the truth–there's not one single woman could be called best. Any

one of them is just worse than some other.

MEG. I think so too. And on that point, my sister, I'll never argue with you.

EUN. Please lend me an ear.

MEG. It's all yours, to inform and command as you wish.

EUN. I'm here to advise you about what I think is best for your situation.

MEG. As you see fit, sister.

EUN. I'd like (*pause*)...

MEG. What, sister?

EUN. Something that would give you lasting pleasure, for you to have children...

MEG. If only the gods were willing!

EUN. I want you to marry, to bring home a wife.

MEG. Ah! The word that kills.

EUN. Why?

MEG. It strikes at my poor heart like a stone.

EUN. Please–do as your sister begs.

MEG. (*pause*) If that's what you really want, I will.

EUN. This is for your own sake.

MEG. I'd rather die than take a wife. But if you can find me one, I'll marry–on this condition. She shall be welcomed here tomorrow and carried out feet first the next day. On this condition give me whatever wife you like and we'll hold a wedding.

EUN. I can get one for you with a very large dowry, brother, and of quite a good family–a woman of middle years. If you want me to propose to her for you, I'll do it.

MEG. Now would you mind if I ask *you* something?

EUN. Sure–ask whatever you want.

MEG. A man past middle years takes a wife of middle years into his home. If the old fellow

happens to get her pregnant, don't you know the name they give the boy will be Posthumus? I'll save you now from wasting your energy. Thanks to the grace of the gods and the work of our forebears I'm rich enough. I want no part of those passions, cliques, inflated dowries, shout-fests, power-games, ivory studded carriages, gowns, royal raiment, expenses that will reduce a man to slavery.

EUN. Mind telling me about the woman you'd marry?

MEG. Sure. Do you know this rather poor old fellow next door, Euclio?

EUN. I do—not a bad sort, I'd say.

MEG. I want his virgin daughter to be betrothed to me. Let's not argue, sister. I know what you're going to say—she is poor. I like her poor!

EUN. May the gods bless you.

MEG. My hope as well.

EUN. What about me? Is there anything you want from me?

MEG. Stay well!

EUN. You, too, brother. *(Exit)*

MEG I'll go meet Euclio, if he's home. *(Enter Euclio)* But look, I see him. The fellow is returning home from somewhere.

WOMEN

Women Supporting Women (*Casina,* 170-216; *Cistellaria,* 15-49; *Mercator,* 817-29; *Rudens,* 220-89).

In Casina *an old man, Lysidamus, conspires with his neighbor and a slave to send a beautiful young servant girl to his country estate where he can enjoy sex with her at will. His wife, Cleostrata, and the neighbor's wife, Myrrhina, discover the conspiracy and join in a revenge plot. Here, Myrrhina first hears about the men's scheme. At first she mistakenly thinks her friend refers to "property" (the slave girl) obtained in common and thus necessarily controlled by the husband. Later in the play she will grow more sympathetic to Cleostrata. Shakespeare incorporates something of this plot into* The Merry Wives of Windsor, *where the old would-be lover is Falstaff. As this scene opens, Myrrhina walks up to the house, and Cleostrata, who is crying, opens the door...*

CLEOSTRATA. Myrrhina, hello!

MYRRHINA. Hello indeed! But please tell me why you seem upset.

CLEO. That's the way women are when they live in an unlucky marriage. Whether at home or abroad, disturbing things are always happening. But I was just going over to your place.

MYRR. And I was just going to see you. What upsets you bothers me, too.

CLEO. You know, it makes good sense, I think, that I love none of the neighboring women more than you. And I could ask for no more from any of them than what you've shown to me.

MYRR. Well, I love you and am visiting to find out what's going on.

CLEO. In my own home I'm being shown the worst sort of contempt.

MYRR. What! And why is that? I hope you'll tell me all about it. I swear I haven't heard the least thing about your quarrel.

CLEO. My husband behaves toward me with the worst sort of contempt, and I'm not allowed to speak for what's rightly mine.

MYRR. If what you're saying is true that's remarkable, for a husband cannot take possession of what is rightly his wife's.

CLEO. Against my will he has demanded a maidservant from me. She is mine, brought up at my expense, and he wants to give her to his farm-steward. But he himself is lusting after her.

MYRR. Listen to me, you'd better calm down!

CLEO. But surely we can talk now. We're alone.

MYRR. True, but how *can* she be yours? For it is most fitting that the honest wife should hold no private property secretly from the husband. And whatever she has is not properly separable from him, but in my opinion anything you have belongs to your husband.

CLEO. Everything you say, then, goes against your friend.

MYRR. Shush, silly, and listen to me. Don't set yourself against him. Let him love, let him have what he desires, so long as nothing is lacking for you at home.

CLEO. Are you serious? You are actually talking against your own interests.

MYRR. Silly, you need always to avoid hearing certain words from your husband.

CLEO. What words?

MYRR. "Woman, depart from this place." (*A formula for divorce*)[11]

Mothers and Daughters *(Cistellaria,* 15-49)

Cistellaria *opens with a scene of ladies at lunch. Two young daughters of prostitutes, probably destined for that trade, Selenium and Gymnasium, have just finished lunch with*

Gymnasium's mother, a procuress, or lena, *the only name given her in the play. They are leaving the house of Selenium's boyfriend. The* lena *shares a fondness for wine with other old women in Plautus, like Leaena in* Curculio.

LENA. *(To Selenium)* We were pleasantly received today, though something was not quite to my liking in the manners of your household.

SELENIUM. Please tell me what that was.

LEN. I never got much to drink, and what there was had been watered way down.

GYMNASIUM. Please! Is that any way to talk here?

LEN. Nothing wrong or out of place in this–we're all friends.

SEL. You know, I like you both because you look after me and treat me nicely.

LEN. *(Sings)* It's the right thing, Selenium, dammit, my dear,

That we girls should stay friends and maintain our good cheer.
See how the friendships of ladies with class
Keep them together, whatever may pass.
But even if we try to follow their way
We can still barely cope with their envy each day.

They want us to be poor and depend on their aid,

Deprive us of things with which they've got it made.

If you ask them for help, you'll wish you never had.

Oh, they flatter the lifestyle of girls who are bad,

But privately douse our hopes with cold water,

Calling us their men's whores, us and our daughters.

Because your mother and I are freedwomen, we have both been prostitutes. Your fathers lived off what they earned from attending the popular assemblies, so I reared this girl *(points to Gymnasium)* as your mother did you. And it wasn't out of pride that I've trained her for the prostitute's life, but from a need to eat.

An Old Serving Woman Complains about the Double Standard (*Mercator*, 817-29)

Syra is slave to Dorippa who is one of two old men's wives in this comedy. They rightly suspect their husbands are up to some naughtiness. Syra admits to being 84 years old (l. 673), and speaks with the inelegantly simple (therefore comic?) logic of a woman who in a long life has learned one thing well about the condition of women in her society.

By Castor! Women live under a hard law,

More miserable than men, much more unjustly so.

For if a man, unknown to his wife, keeps a girlfriend,

And if the wife finds out about it, the man goes unpunished;

If the wife steps out secretly on her husband

The judgment is for the husband, the marriage is over.

If only the same law governed the wife as the husband;

For a good wife will be happy with one husband,

So why shouldn't a husband be happy with one wife?

By Castor! I guarantee, if men were punished in the same way

When one of them kept a girlfriend unknown to his wife,

Just as those women now who deserve it are divorced for their offense,

There would, unlike now, be many more ex-married men than women.

The Perils of Palaestra (*Rudens* 220-89)

This scene could have shown up at any time in popular media from antiquity until the present: shipwrecked heroines fleeing villainous clutches, seek rescue in a wilderness. Palaestra washes up on shore, not knowing that her long-lost father, Daemones, lives not far away. Exhausted, she sings a despairing song and faints. Next, this scene opens with another girl from the same ship, Ampelisca, also captured by the pimp Labrax, entering and voicing her own despair. She has not yet noticed the unconscious Palaestra. Salvation will come not far away, with the Priestess of Venus. The stage has bushes and on one side a small shrine.

AMPELISCA. What is better for me, what makes more sense, than that I should drive life from my body? Life is so bleak for me, so many thoughts of death are in my heart. Things have come to the point of life's end–I no longer cling to the hope that should lend me delight. I've run all through this place, I've crept through every possible hiding place, searching with eyes, ears, and

voice for my companion slave girl. I don't find her anywhere and can't think where else to go, how else to look. In all that time I've seen no one I might ask. There is no more desolate ground than this countryside. (*Pause*) Well, if she's alive I'll stay alive. I'll not stop my search.

PALAESTRA. (*Regains consciousness; thick undergrowth conceals her from her companion during alternating sung lines*.)

Whose voice nearby do I hear?

AMP. I'm frightened. Who speaks nearby?

PAL. Good Hope, I beg you, come to my aid.

AMP. Will you save a poor girl from this fear?

PAL. (*Speaks*) A woman's voice sounded in my ear, I'm sure of it.

AMP. It's a woman–a woman's voice came to my ear, I'm sure of it.

PAL. Can it be Ampelisca, I beg to know? AMP. Is it you I hear, Palaestra?

PAL. But I'll call out her name so she'll hear me. Ampelisca!

AMP. Yes, who's there? PAL. It's me, Palaestra.

AMP. Speak, where are you? PAL. Heavens, in the worst distress!

AMP. I'm your companion, and my share of distress is no smaller than yours. But I long to see you.

PAL. And I the same.

AMP. Let's follow the sound of our voices, step by step. Where are you?

PAL. Here I am. Come on, come to me, this way.

AMP. I'm trying. (*They touch through hedges before seeing each other*.)

PAL. Take my hand. AMP. Take mine.

PAL. Tell me, are you alive? I pray you are.

AMP. Now, since I've felt your touch, you make me want to live. How hard it is to believe this, that I am holding you. My Hope, I beg you, hold me in your arms. How completely you relieve my pain.

PAL. You say just what I was going to say. But now let's leave this place.

AMP. You should say where we will go.

PAL. Let's follow along the shoreline.

AMP. I'll follow where you wish, but shall we tramp around here like this in wet clothes?

PAL. Things as they are have to be endured as they are. (*They proceed across the stage, stopping before Venus's shrine. Fay ed. Offers stage direction here, l. 254: "As the girls are going toward the shore, stage right, it follows that the shrine is back stage right*," stage left being Daemones's farmhouse.) But tell me, what is that?

AMP. What? PAL. Please look, the shrine.

AMP. Where is it? PAL. On the right,

AMP. I see a place that seems fit for gods.

PAL. It seems such a delightful place, people must be living not far away,

PAL. and AMP. (*Sing*)

Whoever this god is, I beg

Deliver us from our suffering.

Provide some aid

To poor, afflicted women.

(*Ptolemocratia, Priestess of Venus, emerges from the shrine door*.)

PTOLEMOCRATIA. Who are these who seek the favor of my patroness? The voice of them praying has moved me to come outside. They speak to a good and propitious goddess, a patroness not grudging but most kind.

PAL. and AMP. Good day, mother.

PTO. Good day to you, girls. But where have you come from, with wet clothes and, if I may say, so wretchedly dressed?

PAL. We've come from a place not far (*gestures toward the sea*), but we've been brought here from far away.

PTO. Were you carried across the sea in a wooden horse?

PAL. Of course.

PTO. If so, it would have been more proper to come clothed in white and provided with offerings for a sacrifice. People don't usually come to this shrine looking as you do.

AMP. We who've both been washed up from the sea–where do you expect us to get offerings for this place? (*Both girls kneel, embracing the priestess's knees*.)

PAL. Now we clasp your knees, in need of aid. In an unknown place we despair. We beg you will receive us into your home and will save us–that you will pity two women in distress. We have no place to go, nothing to hope for. We possess nothing more than what you see.

PTO. (*Helping them to their feet*) Give me your hands, both of you rise from your knees. I feel merciful, as any woman would, but life here is poor and meager. I can hardly provide for my own life. I serve Venus at my own expense.

AMP. Please tell me, is this Venus's shrine?

PTO. Yes, such as it is. I am called priestess of this shrine, but all I have I will share so far as my resources permit. Now come inside with me.

PAL. Mother, you treat us with loving and kindly regard.

PTO. That's as it should be. (*All exit into shrine*.)

WIVES

Heroic Mother-to-be (*Amphitruo* 633-653**)**

The wife of the heroic commander of the Theban army, Amphitruo, would seem to belong in a tragedy, a victim of Jupiter's lust and her husband's suspicions–yet gods and heroes, as Mercury observes in his long prologue, belong in tragedy, not comedy. Mercury escapes this anomaly by calling the play a "tragicomoedia"–initiating a dramatic concept that fascinated critics and playwrights in the Renaissance. Was Mercury-Plautus joking? The term did not start a new dramatic vogue in antiquity, but it did in the sixteenth century. Yet tone is inscrutable here. Some take Alcumena as a serious character (thus Kleist in his Amphitryon*), others as a figure of farce (thus E. F. Watling, in the introduction to his excellent Penguin translation, and David Christenson in his excellent Cambridge edition). The Renaissance inclined unanimously toward the serious: editions often printed the word* virtus*, in Alcumena's meditation, with all capitals. Here Alcumena has just enjoyed the return and sexual attentions of her victorious husband, who is really Jupiter in disguise, only to see him depart in haste for his troops. Her womb now carries both her husband's son and Hercules, son of Jupiter.*

Alcumena is a victim not only of the gods but of Plautus's fondness for using doubles to create comic scenes of mistaken identity. The twins of Menaechmi *are real look-alikes, while those of* Bacchides *(The Bacchis Sisters) create confusion in their names; the unknowing brothers in* Captivi *and the imagined twin sister next door in* Miles Gloriosus *are variations on this plot device.*

The image of a hopeful future in the figure of the very pregnant wife is supported by her words, joining the language of war with that of childbirth. Her vir *(man, "husband") leads to her concluding praise of* virtus *("manly honor"), also appropriate in that her son Hercules will, at least when sober and sane, embody this quality. Expected childbirth, which will occur at the climax of the play, suggests the union of joy and pain that is the subject of her opening lines. More than any other character in the play, she is thus a figure of tragedy-and-comedy. In* Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare imported from this play the comic scene where the resident twin is shut out of his own house, as will happen to Amphitruo later in this play. Shakespeare's melancholy Luciana embodies the same sentimental undercurrents that Alcumena brings to this play.*

ALCUMENA. In the lives and affairs of humankind there's little enough pleasure compared with all the pain and trouble. So in life we must prepare for both; the gods are pleased to follow pleasure with pain. At the very moment when something good comes along, you'll find still more harms and headaches. I'm finding that out just now; I know it from my very own experience. I was granted a moment of pleasure in being allowed to see my husband for just one night. Then, before dawn, he suddenly left me here.

(*Song*) Here you see me now, alone,
For the one I love alone
Is flown from here.
My husband's going grieves me more deeply
Than his presence pleases.

But this at least bestows some joy:

He has won in war, awash in praise,

Brought comforting and peaceful days.

Let him go. At least he retreats from our home leaving the fruits of praise. With a bold and determined heart I can endure to the last, can bear his parting firmly, if only with this reward: that my husband is famed as victorious in war. That will do for me.

(*Song*) Manly honor is the best reward.

Only manly honor matters most.

It defends and supports liberty and life,

Security, property, family,

For fatherland and future.

Manly honor transcends all else,

All good is ours when graced with manly honor.

The Elizabethan critic William Webbe translates these last seven lines as evidence of the moral profit offered by Plautus's comedies:

Verely vertue doth all thinges excell,

For if liberty, health, living, or substaunce,

Our Country, our parents, and children doo well,

It hapneth by vertue; she doth all advaunce;

Vertue hath all thinges under governaunce:

And in whom of vertue is found great plenty

Any thing that is good may never be dainty.[12]

A Wife Stands Accused (*Amphitruo,* 799-860)

The faithful wife of the previous scene, Alcumena, is charged with infidelity. Plautus made a comedy (somewhat) of what had hitherto been a tragedy: the story of the conception and birth of Hercules from Jupiter's adulterous union with Alcumena, wife of the Theban prince Amphitruo. Jupiter takes advantage of the husband's absence at war, disguises himself as the husband, and sleeps with the wife, pretending to have returned from a successful battle. Then Amphitruo himself does return, expecting to surprise her; when Alcumena registers no surprise he becomes puzzled and suspicious. Nothing funny in this scene. In the "Preliminaries" here in my collection, Mercury took the comical slave Sosia's identity as part of the ruse, showing that human identity means nothing to the gods. Here, just arriving on stage, are the couple, Sosia, and porters handling luggage. The strange mix of jealousy, tragedy, and comedy anticipates that in Othello.

AMPHITRUO. So you're saying we'd already arrived here yesterday?

ALCUMENA. I am, and, on arriving, you and I exchanged greetings and I offered you my kiss.

AMP. *(Aside)* I don't like what she said at the start just now about the kiss. *(To ALC)* Go on.

ALC. You washed up.

AMP. What then, after I washed up? ALC. You reclined.

SOSIA. *(Aside, prompting AMP)* Excellent! Very good! Now keep the pressure on.

AMP. Stop interrupting! *(To ALC)* Go on speaking.

ALC. Dinner was served. You dined with me as I lay beside you.

AMP. On the same couch? ALC. The same one.

SOS. Uh-oh! I don't like this about the dinner party.

AMP. Just let her tell her story. After we dined, what then?

ALC. You said you were sleepy. The table was cleared, we left to go to bed.

AMP. Where did you sleep? ALC. In the same bed with you, together, in the bedroom.

AMP. You've destroyed me.

SOS. What's the matter with you?

AMP. This woman has just handed me over to death.

ALC. What's the matter now, please? AMP. Speak not to me.

SOS. What's the matter with you?

AMP. I'm a dead man, for while I was gone from here her chastity succumbed to vice.

ALC. By all that's holy, say, man, why I am hearing this stuff from you?

AMP. I'm supposed to be your man? False woman, speak not to me with this false name.

SOS. *(Aside)* If he's had a name change from "man," this is sticky business. A woman?

AMP. Some magician or other has been deceiving this woman.

ALC. By the kingdom of the supreme being, by Juno, the mother of his family, whom it is exceedingly right I should venerate and fear, I swear that, except for you alone, no one has touched my body with his body so as to make me unchaste.

AMP. If only this were true.

ALC. I'm telling the truth, but to no avail, since you don't want to believe it.

AMP. You're a woman, you're a bold swearer.

ALC. She who has done no wrong should be brave, should speak on her behalf with confidence and spirit.

AMP. Quite bold!

ALC. As a chaste woman should be! AMP. Chaste in words.

ALC. I don't consider what is usually called a dowry to be my dowry. Rather, it is chastity *and* modesty, temperate desires, fear of the gods, love of parents, peace-loving among family members, obedience to you. And may I be generous in my good deeds and a supporter of the upright.

SOS. Lord, if she's telling the truth, she's the perfect woman in every way.

AMP. I am so utterly bewitched that I don't know who I am.

SOS. You are utterly Amphitruo. Take care you don't happen to lose yourself, the way people are getting changed lately, ever since we've come back from abroad.

AMP. Madam, the subject under inquiry certainly won't be forgotten.

ALC. By heaven, you'll find me ready and willing for it!

AMP. What are you saying? Answer this for me: what if I bring your cousin Naucrates here from the ship? He sailed on the same ship together with me, and if he denies facts that you say are facts, what will be the right thing to do with you? Can you give any reason why I may not put an end to this marriage?

ALC. No reason at all if I have done wrong.

AMP. So we agree. You, Sosia, take them inside *(pointing to Alcumena and the porters)*. I'll bring Naucrates back here with me from the ship. *(Exit)*

SOS. (*To Alcumena*) Now that there's no one around us, tell me the truth, seriously. Is there another Sosia inside who looks like me?

ALC. Will you get away from me, slave worthy of your master?

SOS. If you order me to, I'm leaving.

ALC. It's just thoroughly stunning how my husband could want to accuse me falsely of such an

evil act. Whatever's going on, I'll soon find out from my cousin Naucrates. (*Exit)*

In the presence of Naucrates, both Amphitruos will come on stage, but Jupiter, because he knows everything, is as able as Amphitruo to answer every test question put to him. The resolution comes soon after, with Hercules' birth. Jupiter's voice from heaven then explains all.

Couple Draws Lots (*Casina* 353-423)

Casina grew up as a foundling and slave in the home of Lysidamus and Cleostrata. Lysidamus, an old lecher, wants her to marry Olympio, the overseer on his farm, so that he may enjoy the girl whenever he visits the farm. Cleostrata, knowing his plan, wants her to marry a house slave, Chalinus, who serves the couple's son. The wife seems to control the purse strings in this marriage, as in that of Asinaria*. Husband and wife agree to choose Casina's spouse by drawing lots as the two candidates stand by. At first, Cleostrata and her man Chalinus do not notice Lysidamus and Olympio, already on stage.*

CLEOSTRATA. Chalinus, tell me clearly what my husband wants of me.

CHALINUS. By Pollux, to see you dead and cremated outside the city gates.

CLE. By Castor, I think he does want that.

CHA. But I don't think it, I *know* it for certain.

LYSIDAMUS. (*Still unnoticed, aside to Olympio*) I have a more talented work force than I suspected: I have this soothsayer in my own home! Why don't we draw our battle standards together and close with those two? Come along! (*Moves out to Chalinus, addressing him*) What are you doing?

CHA. (*To Lysidamus*) Here are all the things you required: your wife, the lots, the urn for drawing them, and me myself.

OLY. (*Glaring at Chalinus*) There's one person more than I would like on hand here.

CHA. Hah! It looks that way to you, but I am your cattle prod now, jogging the memory in a shriveled heart. You're already sweating with whip-fear!

LYS. Shut up, Chalinus.

CHA. Make *him* shut up!

OLY. Hey, force *him*! He's used to being on the receiving end.[13] (*Obscenely gestures with hips*)

LYS. Put the urn here, give me the lots, pay attention. (*To Cleostrata*) And yet, my wife, I thought I'd be able to get you to give me Casina as a wife, and I think so even now.

CLE. That she'd be given to *you*!

LYS. Yes, to me... Oh! That's not what I wanted to say. When I meant to say "to me," I said "to him" (*stammers*)–and when I meant "for me"... heavens! I've been speaking incorrectly for some while now.

CLE. Heavens! You've also been acting incorrectly,

LYS. To him–no, damn it, to me–damn! (*Pause*) I've scarcely gotten back on track.

CLE. You're very damn often off!

LYS. This is what happens when someone longs so eagerly for something. But we both, I and he, agreeing on your rights, beg this one thing of you.

CLE. What's that?

LYS. I would ask, my honey dear, that you do a favor for this overseer of ours regarding that girl Casina.

CLE. But I will not, and I don't think I should.

LYS. Well then, (*shrugs*) let's give out the lots on both sides.

CLE. Who'll say no?

LYS. I rightly judge that this is the best and fairest way. Afterward, if things happen as we wish, we'll be glad; if otherwise, we'll calmly accept that. (*To Olympio*) Take your lot, look and see what's written on it.

OLY. The number one.[14] CHA. It's not fair that he's given his lot before me.

LYS. (*To Chalinus*) Take this one, please. CHA. Give it to me.

OLY. Wait! One thing just came to me. See that there's not another lot under the water.

CHA. You jerk, do you think I'm you? LYS. There isn't any. Just calm down.

OLY. Let this be lucky and fortunate for me (*about to put lot in urn*).

CHA. Great misfortune, rather!

OLY. (*Draws back his hand, reacting to Chalinus's curse*.) By all that's holy, I think that's *your* fate. I know your kind of piety. But wait–is your lot made of poplar or fir?

CHA. What do you care?

OLY. ‘Cause I’m afraid it’ll be floating on the water’s surface.

LYS. Bravo! Be careful. Now both of you throw your lots in here. (*They drop them in the urn.*) There you are. Wife, shake them up.

OLY. Don’t trust your wife. LYS. Don’t worry.

OLY. By heaven, I believe she’ll bewitch the lots if she touches them.

LYS. Quiet! OLY. I’m being quiet. I beseech the gods...

CHA. That today you’ll be yoked and chained. OLY. ...that she may be mine by lot.

CHA. That by Hercules you should hang feet-down.

OLY. (*To Chalinus*) That you may have your eyes blown out your nose for you. What are you so worried about? The noose ought to be ready for you–you’re done for.

LYS. Both of you, listen! OLY. I’ll be quiet.

LYS. Now you, Cleostrata, so you won’t later be suspicious or say I’ve been dishonest in this process, I give you yourself permission to choose the lot.

OLY. You're killing me!

CHA. (*Aside, indicating Olympio*) He's getting a break there.

CLE. (*To Lysidamus*) You're being generous.

CHA. (*To Olympio*) I beg the gods your lot will run away from the urn completely.

OLY. What's that? Just because you're an escaped slave, you want everything in the world to follow your example?

CHA. I really hope your lot dissolves in the process, as they say once happened to Hercules' children.[15]

OLY. And I hope you're going to get so hot from the whip that you yourself will dissolve.

LYS. Pay attention, Olympio! OLY. (*Pointing to Chalinus*) If this mythologist will let me.

LYS. Let good luck and Fortune be with me.

OLY. Right! And with me. CHA. Not!

OLY. Yes, by Hercules! CHA. Yes, by Hercules, with me!

CLE. (*To Lysidamus, indicating Chalinus*) He will win, you'll live in poverty.

LYS. (*To Olympio*) Hit that horror in the face! Come on, let's have some action!

CLE. (*To Olympio*) Don't you lift a finger!

OLY. (*Asking Lysidamus*) Hit him with closed fist or open palm?

LYS. Whatever you like. OLY. (*Hits Chalinus*) Take that!

CLE. Why did you hit him? OLY. Because my Jupiter said to.[16]

CLE. (*To Chalinus*) Hit him back on the cheek like he did you. (*Chalinus hits him.*)

OLY. I'm getting killed! I'll die from his blows, Jupiter.

LYS. (*To Chalinus*) Why did you hit him? CHA. Because this Juno of mine said to.

LYS. (*Aside*) If my wife shows she's in charge while I'm alive I have to put up with it.

CLE. (*To Lysidamus*) My man ought to be allowed to speak just as much as yours.

OLY. Why did he curse my prayer for good fortune?

LYS. I'm warning you, Chalinus, to beware of trouble.

CHA. Timely counsel, now that my face is bashed.

LYS. Go ahead with the lots now, wife. You two, pay attention. (*Aside*) I'm struck with fear. I don't know where I am. I think I have heart tremors. There's been throbbing for some while, a pounding in my chest from anxiety.

CLE. I have the lot. LYS. Draw it out.

CHA. Are you defeated now? OLY. Show me!... Hurrah! It's mine!.

CHA. This is just awful. CLE. Chalinus, you're beaten.

LYS. Since the gods have helped us, Olympio, I am jubilant.

OLY. It happened because of my and my ancestors' sense of remorse and piety.[17]

LYS. Go inside, wife, and prepare the wedding celebration.

CLE. I'll do as you say.

LYS. Don't you know that it's a long way to the villa where he's taking her?

CLE. I know.

LYS. Go inside and start preparing, even though it distresses you. CLE. Okay.

LYS. Let's go in, too–we'll urge them to hurry. CLE. Am I being slow?

LYS. (*Aside, to Olympio, indicating Chalinus*) While he's around, I don't want any more discussion. (*Exit all, in different directions*)

UTOPIA

Gripus Makes a Big Catch (*Rudens*, 906-37)

Rudens *was mentioned earlier as a source for* The Tempest. *Both plays touch on the analogies of dream or play with life. In both, a just man has been unjustly exiled to a remote spot on the coast of north Africa; his daughter is a significant character in the plot, finding a husband in the process; some shipwrecked interlopers seek to undo the happiness of the place. Both plays begin with a terrible storm, apparently brought on by spirits in order to right past wrongs; the lost are found and wrongs are righted. Gonzalo's dream of Utopia in Shakespeare is anticipated in Gripus's imagined establishment of his own "kingdom." At least one scholar argues that the model for Caliban is the ape or chimp.*[18] *If true, a source of Caliban may be the talking ape that appears to Daemones in the dream from this play quoted above in the "Preliminaries," threatening to violate his daughter.*

Gripus, slave to a poor and sympathetic master, the exiled Daemones, enters hauling a fishing net stretched around a large wicker chest. The name of the celebrity singer mentioned, Stratonicus, who lived in the time of Alexander the Great, may have appeared in the now-lost source play by Diphilus.

Neptune, my patron, down in the briny fish-crowded pits, has my thanks.
He's sent me home from his chambers laden with something lovely.
My skiff, now safe, has delivered me a new, rich catch from the sea waves.

Wonderful! Unbelievable how sweetly this fishing trip has turned out for me.

Didn't get so much as a minnow–just what I've got in this here net.

(*Sings*)

So as I awoke deep into night,

Restless, I thought:

"Better do something more gainful

Than sleeping or resting."

So in the wild tempest I aimed

To try and ease the load

Of my poor master, of my own slave's lot.

Serving was my only thought.

(*Speaks*)

A very lazy fellow is a worthless guy, the sort I really hate.

A guy has to wake and look alive if he wants to do his job right.

Damn it all, he shouldn't wait around for the master to get him up and moving.

Fellows that just want to sleep, you see, end up with nothing but trouble. (*Here perhaps the actor would look directly at a sleeping member of the audience*.)

(*Sings*)

Now me, since I was up and restless,

I may have found a restful life,

If that's what I'd like.

I found this in the sea–

Whatever's inside it's for me.

(Speaks)

Whatever's inside, it's heavy. I figure there's gold in there, and

There's no one but me that knows about it.

Now this is your chance, Gripus, to set yourself free.

See, this is what I'll do, this is my plan.

I'll go up to the master smartly and cleverly.

I'll promise to purchase my freedom a little at a time.

Then when I'm free, and only then,

I'll look into buying farmland, houses, some slaves.

Then do some trading in big ships.

I'll be looked on as a king among kings.

Then just for fun I'll start building, and like Stratonicus the music man–

(*Sings*)

I'll be carried around to all the towns,

I'll be such a celebrity, I'll create a big city,

A monument to my fame and my deeds,

And give that city just what it needs–

A name: GRIPUS.

(Speaks)

There I'll make firm my great foundation.

Well, now, I've got all worked up laying out great affairs in my head, so I'll just look into this chest. (*Takes bottle and bread from pocket and sits*.) For now, this king is going to have his banquet without anything fancier than vinegar and salt.

He is interrupted by another slave who will accuse him of stealing the chest. A tug of war ensues.

Thomas Heywood translates part of Gripus's song in his Rudens-*based comedy*, The Captives, or the Lost Recovered *(1624). This monologue is spoken while the Clown watches and overhears:*

> I will dissemble, as most rich men do,
> Plead poverty, and speak my master fair,
> Buy out my freedom for some little sum,
> And being mine own man, buy lands and house.
> That done, to sea I'll rig ships of mine own,
> And since the sea hath made me up a stock,
> I'll venture it to sea. Who knows but I in time
> May prove a noble merchant.[19]

HOME

Leaving Home (*Mercator*, 830-73)

Charinus, the young master, thinks he can no longer live with his family because his beloved slave girl, whom he has brought into his home, has been kidnapped. He enters in traveling clothes, a military cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, determined to search the world until he finds her. His young friend Eutychus, on another part of the stage, enters jubilant because he knows where the girl is, and wants to prevent Charinus's rash departure. The "Athens" he leaves is, of course, really Rome. Enk, p. 267, finds the opening speech organized like a Greek tragic choric song into four-line stanzas: strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The scene as a whole seems a burlesque of serious drama because Charinus is not tragic, merely unhinged by love.

CHARINUS. Hail and farewell to you O stones, lintel above and porch step below.
Today I raise this foot from my father's home for the last time ever.
For me, the use and enjoyment, living in this home and caring for it are now nothing.
Murdered, handed over to others, I am a dead man!

Penates, gods of my parents' hearth, Father Lar of all this house,
Into all your hands I commend you: defend and prosper the works of my family.
For me, other household gods, another Lar, another city and country.

I shrink from the men of Athens.

For where honesty and honor decline day by day,

Where you can never really tell your dear ones from the disloyal,

Where everything you love most is torn from your heart,

There, I say, even given a throne, the heart could have no home.

(Eutychus enters with good news for Charinus, saying this prayer to Fortuna. At first neither sees the other.)

EUTYCHUS. Goddess, sustaining the hopes of gods and men, likewise the mistress of men,

I give thanks to you because you have brought the fulfillment of my hope.

Is there any god who is as happy as I am now?

What I was searching for was at home.

I found six companions: life, friendship, civic liberty, happiness, festivity, and play.

In finding them, I have all at once driven out the worst things:

Anger, hate, bitterness, weeping, exile, poverty, alienation, stupidity, ruin, and obstinacy.

Let it come to pass, O gods, that I meet with Charinus soon.

CHAR. *(To audience and still unaware of Eutychus)* I am, as you see, dressed for travel. I've cast off pride. I myself am my own comrade, lackey, horses, groom, arms-bearer. I myself am my own commander; my same "I" serves under myself; I myself bring my baggage train. O, Cupid, what power you have! For you easily do things that make anyone hopeful, then instantly

drive that person from hope once more to hopelessness.

EUT. I'm wondering where I should go to look for him.

CHAR. For sure I'll go look for him wherever they've abducted her. No river will stand in my way, no mountain, not even the sea, not heat or cold. I fear neither wind nor hail, I'll endure storms, undergo hardship, the hot sun, thirst; I'll not yield or rest, whether by night or day, until I truly find my beloved or my death.

EUT. A voice comes to me, if my ear be true.

CHAR. Attendant spirits for travelers, may you defend me.

EUT. Jupiter! Is that Charinus standing there?

CHAR. People of Athens, farewell.

EUT. Stop there, Charinus!

CHAR. Who calls me back?

EUT. Hope, relief, victory!

CHAR. (*Still not recognizing his friend*) What do you want from me?

EUT. To go with you.

CHAR. Go and find another companion. The companions who hold me fast will not release me.

EUT. Who are they?

CHAR. Anxiety, misery, dejection, tears, sighs.

EUT. Away with those companions! Look! Come back here!

CHAR. If you want to talk with me, come over here!

EUT. Stand still!

CHAR. You do me wrong to keep me from hurrying on. The day's almost gone.

EUT. You'd do better to hurry over here to me as fast as you're "hurrying on" that way. A favorable wind is blowing this way–that way brings rain. Calm here, all turbulence stirring there. Turn back to shore, Charinus! See the rain and black clouds threatening the other way? On the port side, see how heaven shines as if the gods would have you turn back to them?

CHAR. (*Aside*) He awakens my religious feelings. (*To Eut.*) I'll come back.

EUT. A wise choice. (*Crosses stage to meet him*) Turn your thoughts and steps toward me.

(As they recognize each other Char. starts to faint.)

EUT. O Charinus, take my arm.

CHAR. (*Near fainting*.) Take hold, do you have me?

EUT. I do. CHAR. Hold on!

EUT. Don't be afraid. I'll restore you to the joy you once had.

(Exit EUT. Supporting CHAR.)

Returning Home in Triumph (*Epidicus,* 206-35)

The play is named for a clever slave who must navigate between the expectations of an old master and his son, the disagreeably fickle young master, who demands that the slave either obtain the money to buy a woman or suffer torture or death. Here Epidicus is reporting to the father, Periphanes, and his friend, Apoecides, that soldiers from the local legion have just been sent home, and all the local prostitutes have turned out to welcome them. Among these women he claims to have seen the "sorceress" who the father thinks wants to entrap his son. Plautus's

editor Ernout calls the slave's description a scene of photographic realism: "the arrival of the victorious army met by the procession of all the courtesans of Athens adorned in their finery."[20] *Epidicus walks up to the two old men.*

EPIDICUS. Listen up! All the soldiers are ordered home from Thebes by the legion.

APOECIDES. Who knows for sure about this?

EPI. I know for sure about this.

PERIPHANES. You know this? EPI. I do.

PER. How do you know it?

EPI. Because I've seen the streets full of soldiers. They're turning in their arms and leading their animals away.

PER. Terrific news!

EPI. And then what a lot of captives they're leading! Little boys and girls in twos and threes, in some cases fives. People are running through the streets all trying to view their sons.

PER. By heaven, a great moment!

EPI. And then a great number of prostitutes, every one in the city, came out there, all dressed up to see their boyfriends, snatching at them. How could I determine that, you will ask? Because many of them carried nets under their dresses. When I came to the city gate, I saw *that woman* waiting for him, and four flute girls waiting with her.

PER. "Her," Epidicus?

EPI. That woman you son has hopelessly, desperately loved for many years now. On her account he's in a hurry to lose his property and reputation, and yours. *She* was waiting for him at the city gate.

PER. Did you see this sorceress?

EPI. Yes, but dressed up, decked out, and spangled so delightfully, so elegantly, so singularly!

PER. What was she wearing? Would you say her dress was high class or low class?

EPI. It was square cut, like a rain basin, as they say of such garments.

PER. How could she be wearing a rain basin?

EPI. What's so remarkable about that? As if there were not women strolling the streets wearing

entire houses. But when tax season comes around, men say they can't afford to pay–though they *can* shell out to those women, who demand a heavier tax! What about those who find new names every year for their dresses? There's the see-through tunic, the thick tunic, the fringed mantle, the little chemise, the embroidered dress, the yellow marigold or saffron dress, the sub-par or next-to-worthless dress, the wraparound, the royal or exotic one, the sea-blue or dove-colored, the beeswax or nut-colored one–all high nonsense! They've even taken a name from a dog breed.

PER. How's that?

EPI. They call it the Laconian.[21] These are all names that deliver men to the auctioneers.

DRINKING

Drunks on the Stage (*Miles Gloriosus*, 816-66)

This excerpt is almost all of act 3, scene 2 of the comedy (recall that these divisions appear post-Plautine). Palaestrio, the clever slave, outside the house of the braggart soldier, finds the low-level slave Lurcio (called a "puer," slave and perhaps a boy, in the cast list), drunk after joining the slave Sceledrus in a raid on the master's wine cellar. Sceledrus, we hear, has passed out inside. Some editions call the slave "Lucrio," but the spelling chosen here allows for the entirely apt translation as "Lurch" used by Deena Berg. The early lines set up a verbal pun on words here translated as "snoring" and "snorting" (used by Berg, George Duckworth, and Peter Smith). Other versions of "snorting" are "swigging" (Nixon, DeMelo), "gulping" (H.T. Riley), and "pouring" (Segal). There is some evidence that the text intends for Lurcio's words to be mispronounced, like those of stage drunks in later comedy.[22] *Some translators convey the sense of inebriation simply by inserting ellipsis marks in certain lines. Surely a comic actor would, and still may, take whatever liberties he may choose in delivering Plautus's lines. The name Philocomasium, at the end, is that of the heroine and love-interest in the play. This is Lurcio's only scene, and is a good example of Plautus's frequent vaudeville-like duologues, sometimes called "double acts," between a straight man and a clown. (Another Plautine drunk, in* Mostellaria, *is Callidamates, sidekick of the young prodigal Philolaches, entering at l. 313.) Palaestrio finds Lurcio outside and unsteady on his feet.*

PALAESTRIO. (*Calling into the wine cellar*) Hey, Sceledrus, unless you're too busy to come out here, it's Palaestrio calling.

LURCIO. Sceledrus is not on duty.

PAL. So what's he up to now?

LUR. He's asleep, snorting.

PAL. What do you mean, snorting?

LUR. I wanted to snay... snoring. But it's because when you snore it's just like, sort of, snorting.

PAL. Listen, is Sceledrus sleeping in there?

LUR. His nose sure isn't–it's making plenty of noise.

PAL. So the wine steward took secret snorts from the wine pot while he was mixing nard in the wine jars. Listen, you thug, you're his assistant wine steward, listen...

LUR. What are you asking?

PAL. What made him fall fast asleep?

LUR. His eyes, I guess. (*Starts to wander off*)

PAL. That's not what I'm trying to get out of you, loser. Come over here. You're a dead man right now if I don't get the truth. Did you draw the wine for him?

LUR. I did not draw it.

PAL. You deny it?

LUR. I deny it for sure, by Hercules, because he ordered me not to tell. Nor indeed did I draw out two quarts into a pitcher, nor did I dink...drink it down right there, hot, for lunch.

PAL. So you didn't drink any?

LUR. May the gods take my life if I drank any–if I *could* drink any!

PAL. If? LUR. Because I chugged it down fast. It was so hot it burned my throat.

PAL. Some get drunk on wine, others keep swilling vinegar-water.[23] (*Speaks using air quotes in the following.*) This wine cellar is entrusted to a "faithful steward" and his assistant!

LUR. By Herc'les, you'd do the same if it was entrusted to you. Just because you can't do the same, now you're jealous.

PAL. So did you or did you not ever draw wine before this? Answer me, you crook! And just so you know this, I'm telling you, if you lie, Lurcio, you'll be crucified.

LUR. Really? This is so you can report on what I've said, then after I'm thrown out of this cellar of plenty, if you step into the job, you can get yourself another assistant steward.

PAL. I won't do that, I swear. Come on, tell me the truth.

LUR. I swear I never saw him bring out any wine, but... it was like this... was like this: *he* would order *me* to do it, then *I* would bring it out.

PAL. This is what led to those wine jars often being stood on their heads.

LUR. The jars were not, by Hercules, so much in danger of falling, but in the cellar there were some places just a bit too slippery.[24] A two-quart pot was nearby for the wine jars. It was filled up time and again. I saw it full and needing to be emptied. It was a very serious task. When the pot was celebrating the wine jars would start teetering...

PAL. Go, go! Get inside now! You've been holding a bacchanal in the wine cellar. Now, by Hercules, I'm off to get the boss from the forum.

LUR. (*To audience*) I'm a dead man! The master will have me tortured if he comes home, when he hears what's been going on and since I didn't tell him. By Hercules, I'll run away somewhere and postpone my ill-fated day. I beg you, don't betray my confidence to him! (*Starts to leave*)

PAL. Where are you heading? LUR. I'm going elsewhere. I'll be back shortly.

PAL. Who has sent for you? LUR. Philocomasium.

PAL. Go on, come back right away.

LUR. All the same, I beg you, if the punishment is to be shared between us, that, all the same, you will accept my share in my absence. (*Exit*)

An Intoxicating Interval (*Pseudolus,* 1246-1285)

It's "act 5" and Pseudolus, who has bet his old master, Simo, he can do the impossible, is celebrating his impending freedom, drunk and wearing a corona or garland. As always with this play I consult Willcock's text, what follows being one of the comedy's more problematic passages (besides the speaker's being drunk). Pseudolus enters from partying with his young master, barely able to stand and walk, near Simo's front door.

PSEUDOLUS. (*Staggering*) What's this? Is this how you want to be, feet? Standing up or not?

Or do you prefer that someone pick me up as I lie here? Mercy! If I fall down you will suffer! You want to carry on carrying on? Ha! You better do what I say today.

(*To the audience*) The big problem with wine is first he takes over your feet–he's a tricky wrestler. I'm really truly and properly drunk. So well fed, with such elegance, worthy of the gods, (*gestures toward the place he just came from*) in such a handsome place we were so handsomely entertained. What purpose would be served if I beat around the bush? *This* is why a man loves life. Here are all pleasures, all delights are in this. I esteem it near to divinity!

For when a lover embraces his beloved, when he joins lips to lips, when one grips the other with unconcealed exchange of tongues, when breast presses against breasts, or bodies are intertwined in desire, her white hand offers her chalice of sweetness in a toast to the most loving kind of friendship. There's no annoying one another or taking part in silly conversation. There's ointments and perfumes and ribbons to be given out, and sumptuous little garlands, but no skimping on servings. Let no one ask me how I behaved. That's how the young master and I merrily spent this day after I accomplished my whole project as I intended against the enemy, now routed.

I left them lying, libationing, and loving with their escorts, my escort in the same place, in her heart and soul a willing participant. But after I stood up they asked me to dance. (*Demonstrates a dance step*) I laid this on them, elegantly enough, very much in the correct style. Fact is, I'm deeply informed on the Ionic dance-moves. But I stepped playfully, this way, wearing a mantle. They clapped. "More, more!" they kept shouting to me to make me repeat. I began again, this way (*demonstrates*); I felt doubtful about it. I was also going back toward my girlfriend so she would make love with me. When I turned around, down I went. That was the unhappy end of the performance.

So while I was struggling up on my feet, whoops! I almost got wine all over my pallium. Lord, what terrific fun I was for them with my fall. Someone gave me a pot of wine. Drank it. Then I changed my pallium, took it off. Then I left till I could sober up a little. Now I'm coming from my young master to my old master to remind him of our treaty. (*Knocks on Simo's door*) Hey, open up, open up! Somebody tell Simo I'm here!

Birthday Party (*Stichus* 683-756)

The first half of Stichus *celebrates with feasting the return of two brothers thought lost at sea; the latter features a feast of slaves: Stichus, given the day off to celebrate his birthday, his friend Sangarinus, and their shared girlfriend, Stephanium. The two male slaves are from the households of the two brothers, and Stephanium, whom I call Stephanie, works for the same family as Sangarinus. In no other play does Plautus have the theater's flute-player, visible but not onstage, join in the action with the characters. Doorways of the two houses are in the background; a bench is in the foreground. As for the slaves' song and dance (a canticum) it embodies the benevolent theme of egalitarianism that Amy Richlin finds throughout this play, which is spoken in the song's last line (731): "ego tu sum, tu es ego, unianimi sumus."*

(*Sangarinus and Stichus emerge from the two houses. Stichus carries a large wine jar and a picnic basket.*)

SANGARINUS. Let's go out there, you bring the feast, and I'm appointing you wine commander, Stichus. For sure today's party will be a success in every way. We're being

generously treated, being allowed to use this garden. I want every passerby to be invited to join the fun.

STICHUS. (*Slightly vexed that his friend is taking over his own party*.) That's okay so long as the passerby brings his own wine. With this (*shows the wine jar his master gave him*) nobody is going to have fun but us. Let's look after ourselves, just us two.

SAN. (*Takes the picnic basket*) This menu will do for our party–nuts, small beans, olives, sweet bits of bread, lupine bits, broken pastry bits.

STI. Who needs more? A man in service should spend modestly not lavishly. To each his own. When the rich are at home, they'll drink from their boat-shaped bowls, their tankards, their mugs, but for us it's plain Samian crockery. Still we go on drinking, still we go on doing our jobs as best we can.

SAN. Let's play rock-paper-scissors[25] to decide where we should recline.

STI. (*Setting contents of basket on the bench*) For sure, your place is at the head. And so you can know your important role, I'm dividing our holdings: see, now choose which province you'd like.

SAN. What's that about "provinces"?

STI. In mixing the wine, would you rather have the governorship of water or of Bacchus?

SAN. Clearly wine is the clear choice. But while my girlfriend and yours is dressing and dining, I want you and me to have fun. I appoint you commanding general of this feast.

(*They start munching and drinking*.)

STI. A rather witty thought comes to mind: we're entertaining ourselves here on the hard bench of the Stoic philosophers rather than on a soft liberal couch.

SAN. But I say nothing is sweeter than this. Meanwhile, general, why is my cup running low? Look (*holding up the wine jar*) how little wine we've drunk.

STI. As many cups as you have fingers on one hand. The Greeks say:

Five or three drink up,

Four will bring bad luck

SAN. I drink to you (*refills*). If you're smart you'll mix in a little dab of water here. (*Raising his cup first to the audience)* The best to you, the best to us, best to me, best to our girl Stephanie.

STI. Drink if you're drinking.

SAN. No loitering for my part.

STI. (*Somewhat irritated*) By Pollux, enough drinking! If only our girlfriend were here. That's what's missing, nothing else. This is great fun. I drink to you. Now you take the wine. (*Passes jar*)

SAN. Know what I really crave? a few bits of meat.

STI. If the stuff here disappoints you, it's all there is. Here's water (*passes it to San. to mix with his wine*).

SAN. Right! (*Turns to the house musician*) Have a drink, flute player. (*Flute player waves him off.*) What? You've got to have a drink, no backing down! Why hesitate about what you know you have to do? You're supposed to drink so take it. Hasn't our audience already paid for it? Timid? That's not who you are. Drink it, I say. Take that flute out of your mouth!

STI. (*Aside, referring to San., by now the drunker of the two*) When he's getting soused it's his way or the highway. I'm against us drinking everything up. We won't be capable of anything afterward. (*The piper finally drinks.*) Jeez! A whole glass emptied just like that!

SAN. (*To Flute player*) Now then. You hesitated but it didn't do you any harm. Finished? Put the pipes to your lips again. Blow your cheeks out quick, like a deadly serpent. (*As flute plays San. starts to dance*.) Come on, Stichus, whichever one of us gets out of step it'll cost him a drink.

STI. Right you are. As long as those who play our game are both treated fairly.

SAN. C’mon then, watch (*Dances*). If you do less than five, I’ll take your five on the spot.

STI. What you propose is fine and fair. (*Dances*) Now look at the first number *I’m* doing for *you*. (*Dances several complicated rounds, singing solo then, at “You’re I,” alternating lines with San.*)

This is clever,
Two rival lovers loving and happy--
Same game, same dame,
Same gluttin, same sluttin.
Keep most in mind,
You're I, I’m thee,
Both one love, we with me
We're we together,
Both forever,
Jealous never.

(*Also at “You’re I,” both dance together, no longer competing. Then they collapse on the bench.*)

SAN. Oof! Enough! I don’t want to get worn out. I’d like a different game now.

STI. Shouldn't we call out our girlfriend? I bet she'll dance.

SAN. I'll drink to that. (*Both rise now, unsteady on their feet*.)

STI. (*Calls toward the door where Stephanie will emerge*) My sweet, loving, delightful Stephanie, come out to your lovers. You've made yourself pretty enough for me.

SAN. Most prettiest.

STI. (*Calling out again*) Make your fun-loving lovers more loving by arriving on stage.

SAN. We've both been seeking you, my honey Stephanie. We've sailed the seas. Maybe you'll love our loveableness and will take us both on–I mean in.

(*Enter Stephanie, primping*.)

STEPHANIE. I'll join your fun, my darlings, for as lovely Venus loves me I would have come out to join you guys if I hadn't been fixing myself up for you. That's how a woman's mind works, you know. She's fine only when she's elegant, clean, decked out, hair fixed–fine, yet still not finished. A wanton woman fails more quickly through coarseness than she can ever conquer through comeliness.

STI. Said with such charm! SAN. Nothing less than the language of Venus!

STI. Sangarinus. SAN. What?

STI. I hurt all over.[26] SAN. All over? That's too bad.

STE. Where should I lie at the feast?

SAN. Which side would you like?

STE. I want to be with you both. I love you both.

STI. (*Aside*) My cash reserves just took a beating. I'm broke!

SAN. (*Aside*) Any notion of freedom just left town.

STE. Pretty please, give me a spot to recline–if you really want me.

STI. *If* I want you!

STE. I desire you both.

STI. As the gods love me, this day cannot end without her dancing. Come and dance, my honeyed loveliness. You lead, I'll follow.

SAN. (*Joining the other two, addressing Stichus*) You'll not beat my time or soothe my itch. (*The exit dancing together. Stephanie leaves a drink from the wine jar for the flute player.*)

TEACHER

Lydus: Tutor, Slave, Misogynist (*Bacchides* 109-169, 368-84, 437-48)[27]

In Bacchides, *Lydus is the tutor (thus a slave) to Pistoclerus, the young lover of one of the Bacchis sisters. Lydus loathes prostitutes, and perhaps all young women, as interfering in what he calls the philosopher's "life of moderation." First, below, is a dialogue between tutor and ex-student, Pistoclerus. Lydus accosts the young man as he is about to enter the house of the sisters. Pistoclerus is dressed for a party, crowned with a garland, and followed by one or more slaves carrying drinks and food for the event. The beginning and end turn on the verb* sequor, *"follow": at the start Lydus says, "I'm following you," (*te sequor, *l. 109); toward the end, Pistoclerus twice orders Lydus, "shut up" (*tace*) and "Follow me" (*sequere me, *ll. 137, 169), in effect reminding the tutor of the change in their relationship. The name Lydus may ironically pun on* ludus, *the festive "game" being the occasion for these plays.*

LYDUS. I've been quietly following you, Pistoclerus, for a long time now, waiting to see what you're up to in these party clothes. As the gods love me, it seems to me that even Spartan Lycurgus could get into naughty business here. Where are you headed now, going that way with such a retinue?

PISTOCLERUS. (*Pointing to the Bacchis house*) Right here.

LYD. Here? Who lives in that place?

PIS. Love, Pleasure, Beauty, Joy, Mirth, Merriment, Chatting, Kissing.

LYD. What dealings have you with these most harmful gods?

PIS. Evil are those who call good things evil. You're not speaking truthfully of the gods. You're not being honest.

LYD. So is there any god named Kissing?

PIS. You never knew he existed? O Lydus, you're a man without culture. You whom I thought wiser than Thales are dumber than a barbarian dolt–to be your age and not know the names of the gods!

LYD. I don't like the way you're dressed.

PIS. This was made for me; I'm the one who decides what I like.

LYD. So you're starting to talk back to me! Even if you had ten tongues, the correct thing for

you to do is to keep silent.

PIS. Lydus, we need not live all our lives by school rules. To my mind, the more important thing now is that the cook fix these provisions in keeping with the excellence of the food.

LYD. You... you've now wasted yourself and me and my hard work. I've so often shown you the right way, all in vain.

PIS. I've wasted my hard work just as you have yours; your "way" has profited neither you nor me.

LYD. O obdurate heart!

PIS. You annoy me, Lydus. Shut up and follow me.

LYD. (*To audience*) Now look at this fellow. He calls me not "teacher" but "Lydus."

PIS. (*Aside*) It doesn't seem right or appropriate that someone's teacher should be mingling with the company on hand when that someone is in the house snuggling with his girlfriend, and when he's kissing and other guests are snuggling.

LYD. So tell me, is that what these provisions are for?

PIS. That's certainly what I have in mind; how things will turn out is in the hands of the gods.

LYD. Will you be with a girlfriend? PIS. When you look you'll find out.

LYD. On the contrary, you *won't* be with her, I won't allow it. You're going home.

PIS. Let it go, Lydus, trouble is near. LYD. What "trouble"?

PIS. (*Coldly*) It's been a long time since I was your student.

LYD. O abyss, where are you now? How gladly I'll embrace you. I'm seeing far more than I sought. Far better to have done with living than to go on living now. For a pupil to threaten his teacher! I'll have nothing to do with bloody-minded students like him. In his strength he would crush weak and powerless me!

PIS. I'm thinking I will be Hercules to your Linus.[28]

LYD. By Pollux, I'm very afraid I'll be Achilles' friend Phoenix, telling of your early deeds and then reporting your death to your father.

PIS. Enough stories.

LYD. (*Confused, speaks both to audience and to Pistoclerus*) He's lost all sense of shame... Lord

knows, when you acquired this shameless attitude you went astray, and not at a desirable age... This is a dead man... Is your father at all in your thoughts?

PIS. Am I your servant, or are you mine?

LYD. A worse teacher than I taught you this stuff. You've learned this far more easily than the things I taught you back when I wasted my time. By all that's holy, you were a wicked deceiver then, when you hid your offenses from your father and me.

PIS. Until now, Lydus, you've been allowed to speak freely. That's over. Follow me and shut up. (*Both exit into the house of the Bacchis sisters.*)

Later, Lydus emerges alone from the sisters' house, apparently stunned by the shock to his moral sensibilities. This monologue parodies the poetic theme of the paraclausithyron–the lover's speech before the closed door of the beloved, also used in Curculio *and* Truculentus*–though Lydus loathes loving. One editor suggests that he delivers the first line while still in that house.*

Release and open wide this gate of Hell, I beg you! (*Door opens, Lydus steps out*)

For me it's truly that and nothing else but that. For no one comes here but those who've abandoned all hope of living a life of moderation. The Bacchis sisters are not Bacchises but raging Bacchants. Away from me ye sisters, drinkers of men's blood! Your house is furnished richly and splendidly for men's utter dissolution.

As soon as I saw that stuff I right away took to my heels.

Am I the one to tell about what's gone on in secret, Pistoclerus? Should I conceal from

your father your scandalous behavior, the damages you've inflicted, your hangouts? The things you've done in there bring no honor to you or to me. With them, by your disgraceful conduct, you have made both your father and me, your friends and relations, all partners in your crime. *(Pause for reflection.)*

So! Now it's decided, before you add more evil to what's done: I shall tell your father at once! I shall shed any blame for me in this and shall openly declare to the old man that he should quickly extricate you from the filthy mire here. (*Exit in search of the father, Philoxenus*.)

Like several monologues, the foregoing has various addressees. The first line, parodying serious drama, is spoken as if to gods of the underworld. The next lines address the audience, then the absent Pistoclerus ("you"). A short while later, leading Philoxenus, his old master, to the Bacchis house, Lydus fumes about the loss of the good old virtues in today's youth. Used to be they'd play sports rather than chase girls. Philoxenus agrees: "The fashion is otherwise now, Lydus." The teacher fumes in response:

Well, I know that for sure. Once upon a time a lad would have won the people's vote for public office before disregarding his tutor's advice. But now, even before he's seven years old, if you lay a hand on him the boy will immediately bash the tutor's head with his writing board. When you go to the father to complain, the father says something like this to the boy: "That's our son, already able to defend yourself against a wrong!" The teacher is summoned: "Now then, you worthless old man, don't you dare touch the boy for something like that, done in a moment when he was feeling his oats!" The tutor goes about wearing an oily linen strip like a lantern. He departs, the law has spoken. Can the teacher retain his authority here in this sort of arrangement,

if he is himself the first to be beaten?

The tutor served as a perfect agelast in the holiday atmosphere of a Plautine comedy. Feckless pedant-tutors like Holofernes in Love's Labors Lost *persist in Renaissance comedy.*

DOCTOR

Hear how he's saying crazy stuff? (*Menaechmi*, 890-957)

In this play about identical twin brothers who discover each other after a childhood separation, the resident *twin is angry with his wife, parasite, mistress, and servants because his infidelity has been revealed. His wife and father-in-law (called only senex, "the Old Man") just talked to the* visiting *Menaechmus twin, who recognized neither of them. The wife, whom her husband had called a mad dog, was fearful and angered. The old man, fearing insanity, left to summon a physician. Now the visiting twin has left and the* resident, *his real son-in-law, has come on the scene. The doctor's pinch in the scene explains the name of Shakespeare's Doctor Pinch in his rewriting of this episode in his* Comedy of Errors. *Doctor and Old Man enter in consultation, approaching center stage.*

DOCTOR. Tell me, old sir, what you said his disease is. I need to know whether it's bewitching or brain fever. Is it watery dropsy or lethargy that's holding him down?

OLD MAN. But that's why I've brought you, so you could tell me and make him healthy.

DOC. This is a very easy matter; he'll be healthy, I promise you, word of honor.

OLD. And look, the man himself. Let's watch what he does.

(*Enter <u>resident</u> Menaechmus, talking to himself.*)

MENAECHMUS. Damned if this day hasn't wronged and wrecked me!

My parasite has made public everything I thought private.

He's filled me with dread and disgrace.

My Ulysses has meant angst for his Agamemnon. (*Pause.*)

If I survive this, I'll evict that guy from his livelihood.

His? I'm a fool to call what's mine his.

He was raised on my food, at my cost; I'll take the man's life.

(Speaks with sarcasm) Now, that courtesan has done things as a courtesan should.

Because I ask her to return the mantle to my wife,

She says she gave it to me. *(Pause)* Damn well done! I sure am a sad case!

OLD. Can you hear what he's saying? DOC. He claims he's a sad case.

OLD. I want you to go to him.

DOC. (*As he approaches, Menaechmus rolls back his sleeve*.) Good health to you, Menaechmus. Tell me, why are you baring your arm? Do you know how much worse you're making your illness?

MENAECHMUS. Why don't you go hang yourself.

DOC. (*Pinches Menaechmus's arm*) Feel anything? MEN. (*Shouts*) Of course I do![29]

DOC. (*Confiding in Old Man*) This thing cannot be checked, even with an acre of hellebore. (*To Menaechmus*) But what do you say, Menaechmus?

MEN. What do you want?

DOC. Answer me this question: do you drink red or white wine?

MEN. Why don't you go hang yourself?

DOC. Now he's starting to show the first signs of insanity.

MEN. Why not ask me if I prefer to eat scarlet, crimson, or pink bread? Or if I eat scaly birds or feathered fish?

OLD. Weird! Hear how he's saying crazy stuff? Why don't you give him some medicine before the insanity takes over?

DOC. Just be patient. I'm going to probe him a little more.

OLD. You're killing him with your chatter.

DOC. Tell me, do your eyes ever glaze over?

MEN. What? You think I have glass eyes, you idiot?

DOC. Tell me, ever have your guts rumble? What do you feel?

MEN. When I'm full they never rumble; when I'm hungry, then they rumble.

DOC. (*To Old Man*) On that he sure didn't answer me like a mad man. (*To Menaechmus*) Do you sleep soundly till daylight? Fall asleep easily when you go to bed?

MEN. I sleep soundly if I've paid off the people I owe money. But may Jupiter and all the gods damn you, question man!

DOC. (*To Old Man*) Now the fellow is starting to rage. To judge from those words, better watch out!

OLD. Rather, he's a wise Nestor with those words, compared with how he was a while ago, when he was saying his wife was like a mad dog.

MEN. What, me? OLD. You were talking crazy, I say.

MEN. Me?

OLD. You did! You even threatened to run over me with a four-horse chariot. I myself witnessed this, I myself bring these charges against you!

MEN. *(Feigning madness)* But I declare that *you* stole Jupiter's sacred crown. I know *you* were locked up in jail for that and when released I know *you* were whipped with rods, with your neck under a fork.[30] Then I know *you* murdered your father and sold your mother. Have I answered your outrages with enough outrages for a sane man?

OLD. Doctor, please hurry and do what you're going to do. Can't you see the man is insane?

DOC. You know what's the best thing to do? See to it he's brought to my house.

OLD. You think so?

DOC. Absolutely. There I can cure the man as I see fit.

OLD. Do as you think best.

DOC. (*To Menaechmus*) I'll have you drink hellebore for twenty days.

MEN. But I'll have you strung up and stuck with goads for thirty days.

DOC. Go get some men to take him to my place.

OLD. How many are needed?

DOC. The way I see him raging, no fewer than four.

OLD. They'll be here soon. You keep an eye on him, doctor.

DOC. No, I'm going home so things that need readying will be readied. You tell your slaves to bring him to me.

OLD. I'll make sure he gets there.

LOVER

Nothing but trouble (*Truculentus,* 22-76)

The first speaker is Diniarchus, a handsome, twenty-something man, well dressed though a bit dissolute (maybe hung over) in appearance, slightly rumpled and needing a shave. The time is shortly after the coming of peace following the second Punic War, a narrow escape for the Romans. It's interesting that scortum *(whore, lower class than the familiar* meretrix*, prostitute traditionally, if misleadingly, translated as courtesan) is used 6 times in the last 30 lines of this speech and only twice elsewhere in the whole play. "Love" (*amor*) in Plautus as in Ovid and others usually refers to sexual passion.*

DINIARCHUS. A lifetime's not enough for a lover to find out how many ways there are to die. Venus herself, with all her power over the entire race of lovers, could never tell you how many ways a lover can be tricked or undone or fettered with flattery. So many soothing words about this, so many tantrums over that, so much swearing to the gods.

Mercy! False oaths, too, and gift giving! It all starts with the yearly payout. A guy gets a little for that–maybe three nights. Meanwhile she's testing you to see if you're generous or miserly, asking for money or wine or oil or flour.

A fisherman will cast his net and pull up the lines once the net drops down. When he draws in the net he's careful that the fish doesn't escape. He entangles a fish as it swims back and forth in the net till he can land it. So it is with landing the lover, provided he gives what is

asked, is free and not frugal. Nights follow nights, he finally swallows the hook. Once he drinks the cup of pure love, and the drug works its way into his heart, he's caught–his property and reputation, too.

Let's say the whore gets angry with her lover–the guy dies twice, in his heart and in his wallet. If another is beating his time with her he dies again. If he seldom has a lucky night, that can be soul-killing; he's a happy man if he gets lots of visits, but that's wealth-killing. Before you give her a single gift she's ready with a list of a hundred. Maybe she's lost a gold thingy or her jacket is torn or she's buying a maid, or a silver plate or a bronze plate or a recliner or a Greek chest or–there's always something the lover must buy for his whore.

And we always do our utmost to keep these doings secret. We'd rather lose our wealth, our honor, our very selves than have our parents and relatives find us out. If only we'd let the family know what we've concealed, they'd temper our distemper so we could pass our accumulated treasures on to the younger generation. I'll bet if we did that there'd be no more whores and pimps, and fewer ruined men than now.

For there are more pimps and prostitutes around these days than flies in hot weather. Just the number of whores and pimps who sit near the moneylenders, not to mention elsewhere, are way too many. In fact I'm sure there are almost more whores than weights for the moneylenders' scales. I'd say these people are of no consequence to bankers that I know of except as account books where money lent at interest is recorded. Accounts received, I mean, not paid out.

So in conclusion, now that our enemies are defeated, in our great nation of many men, when we're idle and at peace in our affairs, everyone who has stuff to give away should become a lover.

Can't Live on Love (*Asinaria*, 521-31)

This speaker in Asinaria *is a prostitute, Clearata, who is now training her daughter for the trade. Daughter (Philaenium) is in love with the kid next door (Argyrippus) whose mother holds all the purse strings and wants son (also husband) to have nothing to do with these women. Cleareta's feelings are mutual as long as the son will not provide her daughter quid pro quo.*

CLEARATA. What have you got to say? I saw you acting like a really reckless woman. How many times have I forbidden you to speak to Argyrippus, son of Demenaetus, to invite him here, to gaze at him? What has *he* given *you*? What has he had sent over to our house? Or maybe you think that loving words are your gold, that clever talk can replace gifts? You freely give your love to him, freely run after him, freely beg him to come visit you. You toy with your gift-givers but are wasting away with love for those who are toying with you? If someone promises you that you'll become rich if his mother dies, should you wait around for that? God in heaven! The great danger that's likely for us and the household is that we ourselves will starve to death while we're waiting for her to die. Unless Mister Tear-shedder brings me here, right away, twenty minae in silver, as God is in heaven he will not darken our door. He's used his poverty routine on me for the last time.

Love or Money? (*Trinummus*, 223-275*)*

The speaker or singer of this canticum *in* Trinummus *is Lysiteles, a young man in love with his friend Lesbonicus's sister. His friend is the typical careless youth of Roman, Jacobean,*

Restoration, and much later comedy. His own more conservative nature brings him to this reflection on the choice of life: should one pursue love and self-indulgence or business and responsibility? The meditation (outcome no surprise since his name means "profitable") takes the form of a legal argument, as indicated with the speaker's adopting the role of both judge and advocate.

LYSITELES. While sorting through many things in my heart
I get vexed, reflecting:
I worry and weary myself and fret.
Although my mind is now my master mentor,
This is not clear, not well understood:
Which path should I follow?
Which is the better way for my life?
Should I follow the path of love or security?
Where lies the greater pleasure of a full life?

It's this that isn't clear enough for me: I think if I am to manage this rightly so as to resolve which road to take, I should act as both judge and advocate in this case. That I'll do, that'll do. First, I'll speak on the arts of love and how they develop.

> Love never expects any but the passion-driven man
> To hurl himself into his snares.
> Love seeks him, hunts him,

Flatters him with lies, counsels him to his harm,

Smooth-tongued Love, grasping, lying, finicky,

Greedy, dainty, plundering, winsome,

Corrupting, whorehouse-haunting, threadbare

Gossip-monger.

When the lover falls suddenly to arrow-like kisses,

On the spot his wealth melts away, falls to ruin:

“Buy me this, honey, please if you love me.”

To which Mr. Cuckold:

“Light of my life, it’s yours. Also that. And if you want

Something else bought, I’ll buy it.”

To which (he’s strung up for more flogging) she asks for more,

Not having done enough harm--

Still more to drink, more to eat, more to buy.

One night, and then her whole staff troops in: the dress folder, the anointer, the purser, the fan-bearers, the girls in charge of sandals, the girl singers, the girls with the treasure boxes, the messengers, the message returners, the bread-and-food filchers.

As for him, omnigenerous, he becomes a penniless paramour.

When in my heart I summon up these things,

When someone is worth far less than his needs,

Then... it's down with you, Love! I don't love you, you're no friend.

It's sweet to eat and drink,

Yet love's taste is bitter, it's enough to break hearts.

The lover avoids the forum, flees from family,

He himself flies from finding himself.

His friends don't want him to be called their friend.

Love should be rebuffed in a thousand ways,

Should be kept far away and should stay away.

He who falls in love is ruined more completely

Than if hurled from a high rock.

Love, down with you, and take your stuff with you, Love.[31]

Never befriend me, go torture those miserable men you enslave.

I am determined to devote my mind to profitable work,

Unconcerned by the great mental labor.

Good men strive to win for themselves

Property, trust, honor, glory, and esteem.

This is the reward for the upright.

Therefore, I choose to live among the good rather than with evil deceivers.

Good Boy Gone Astray (*Mostellaria*, 85-156)

The young heir Philoxenus has, in his father's absence, turned his home into a party house, the party having continued for months now, if not years. (On long parties, recall Lorelei in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*: "I always seem to lose all of my interest in a party after a few days.") His comparison of the life of a man to that of a house is entirely apt because he has in fact allowed the place to become run down, like himself. He is in the dire straits of the lover as described in the last few excerpts. The slow, measured way in which he communicates his simple ideas suggests he is drunk.*

PHILOXENUS. (*Speaking directly to the audience, unsteady, with perhaps a few hiccups*) I have pondered and long reflected on a subject that has occupied my inmost feelings, and I've been considering, for rational discourse, if I have any rationality left–this question: What is a man like when he is born? What does he resemble? Now I've come up with this analogy.

In my judgment, a man when he is born is like a new house. I will explain my thinking on this point. I know that when you understand my words, you yourselves will not say otherwise than I do. Listen while I say my piece on this topic. I want you to know as much about this as I do.

As soon as a house is ready and perfect, completely and neatly finished, people praise the builder and applaud the building. Then they try to obtain the house plans; they each want their place to be like his, and in their construction spare no expense. But when some reprobate moves into the place, neglectful, with indolent servants, disorderly and lazy, then defects invade the house, a good one though badly cared for. And here's what often happens. A storm comes and breaks up the roof tiles and rain gutters, then the careless owner doesn't want to replace them.

Rain comes, soaks the walls, rain runs quite through them, rots the wood, destroys the builder's work. The house becomes less liveable, though this is not the builder's fault. Most people behave this way. If something can be patched for a buck they'll put off doing the work until the walls fall down, then the whole house is rebuilt.

I've been stating my point about houses; now I want to convince you that men are like houses. In the first place, parents are the builders of children; they build on the foundation of their children. They diligently raise up and ready them on stable ground. So that the children may be beautiful and useful for their own and the community's benefit, they spare nothing, believing that spending on them is no expense at all. They polish them, teaching them reading and writing, law and justice. They exert themselves in their own hard work and expense so that others will strive to bring up boys like theirs. When they send them off to serve in a legion, they hand them over to the care of some family member. By now the offspring are quite far from the builder, but the payoff for their year of service comes in seeing how the building turns out.

As for me, while I was in the builders' care I was a good, decent boy. Later, when I left to reside under the rule of my own inclinations, I immediately and utterly lost the builders' protection. Enter Sloth: that was my storm, and with its coming, hail and downpours. This wrested from me upright living and the sense of shame. It also immediately unroofed me.

After that I made no attempt to conceal my shame. Without delay, Amor came as a downpour in my heart. He soaked through my breast, thoroughly drenched my heart. Now, all at once, property, trust, reputation, manliness, honor fled. I became worn down by immoderate use. And heaven knows the timbers stink from their dampness! I seem unable to patch my house, it is all always falling down. When the foundation goes no one can help.

My heart aches to think what I am now and what I was. No youth was more

accomplished than I in athletic competitions–discus, javelin, running, using weapons, riding: I used to love and live for these things. I was a guide for others in frugal living and toughness. All the best guys looked for lessons from me. Now what I've discovered by my own native wit is that I am nobody.

OLD MEN

Barely making it (*Menaechmi*, 753-74)

Plautus's The Brothers Menaechmus *was his most popular comedy in the Renaissance, widely translated and imitated, most memorably in Shakespeare's* The Comedy of Errors. *Two long-separated identical twins create delightful situations of mistaken identity in a play of doubles that sustains delight until the final recognition scene or* cognitio *(to use a familiar term in Renaissance theories of comedy). Plautus also plays with doubles in* Amphitruo *and* Bacchides.

Old men, with their aches and discomforts, have always been fair game for comedy. This "senex" is a reminder that the "old man" in Roman comedy is not always the "angry father." Some are generous, some seek to restore sexual vigor, and some, as here, are just befuddled. In Aululariа*, Megadorus also speaks out against women who are "dowry-backed fierce things" (*dote fretae, feroces*). In* Asinaria *the dowried wife dominates over the husband.*

*In this scene the wife has summoned her father to intervene in her quarrel with her husband. Daddy is in a tight spot; he's too old for this but feels some loyalty to his daughter. In the whole passage, the number of the speaker's line-opening "but's" (*atque, sed *or* verum*) attests to his reluctance.*

OLD MAN. I'm old but something needs doing. I'll move these feet, force them forward–but I can't kid myself into thinking it's easy. Lost my quickness, you know. Old age has taken root

deep inside me. It weighs down my body, my strength has left town. Old age–bad company for a sick man! When it comes it brings most of the worst things there are, and if I think of all of them... but I'm talking too much.

But here's the thing that worries my heart and soul: what can this trouble be that made my daughter suddenly send for me? I'm pretty sure why it is that she wants me, why she brought me here. I just about know what's the matter: I'm thinking some kind of argument with her husband has happened. That's how it goes with these women, these dowry-backed fierce things who lord it over their men. And often the fellas are not free of blame. But there ought to be a limit to what a wife is allowed, and, damn it, no daughter ever called daddy for help unless there's been a breach of trust or a fight. But whatever it is, I'll know now. Look, there's she herself in front of the house, and I see her husband all downcast. It is what I've been suspecting it is. I'll go up to her and say hello.

Postscript: Gratwick explains the Roman-ness of the marriage situation here.[32] *While the Athenian wife could never own property, her Roman counterpart was "a person in her own right" and could inherit property on her own: "in Plautus's generation increasingly legalistic explicitness about 'his' and 'hers' (or 'her people's') in marriage contracts will have been a recent and vexatious business." This old man, no more eager than fathers today to get involved in their children's matrimonial disputes, is torn between his love for his daughter and a masculinist desire that women be subject to their men.*

That's *My* Goat! (*Mercator*, 225-251)

Demipho, father of a wayward son, is the titular merchant in Mercator. *Plautine plays*

resist easy dating, but most scholars have agreed that this is among the early plays. If so, the playwright from the start had no qualms about making a patriarchal fool in a largely patriarchal society. The dream (in act 2 scene 1), which resemble Daemones' dream in Rudens*, quoted above in the "Preliminaries," concerns the married speaker's newfound passion for a woman slave that his son has supposedly bought for his mother. In fact, the son has purchased her for himself. This is not a prophetic dream, like that of Daemones, though it tells the shallow old dreamer something about himself if he were to ask. Demipho speaks alone:*

DEMIPHO. Wondrous how the gods bring on plays for us mortals
With wondrous dreams in our sleep.
For instance, last night
I was the leading man in this dream.
It seemed to me I'd bought a beautiful girl goat.
I didn't want any harm to come to her from the goat I had at home.
If both of them met up all hell would break loose.
So I seemed to entrust my purchase to the care of a monkey.
Soon after, this monkey came to me loudly protesting
And pleading. Said the coming of that girl, I mean goat,
Had wrought nothing but disgrace and damage. Said seemed like
The goat I'd lent him wouldn't stop eating
His wife's dowry. Strange, I thought, that the girl goat
Would be devouring the monkey's wife's dowry.
The upshot was, the monkey wanted me to

Rush right over to his house and take her back,

Otherwise he'd hustle her back to my place and my wife.

And it seemed, by heaven, I liked my girl goat extremely well,

But had no way to care for her.

I was all the more tormented over what to do.

Meanwhile, a boy goat came to me,

Began telling me he'd kid-napped the goat from the monkey,

Began to taunt me.

And I did grieve that I'd suffered the loss of my girl–I mean, goat.

The animal characters in the dream invite comment because the main group, goats and monkeys, are pure comic types. Demipho here sees all the people who mean the most to him as goats–his wife (the goat he has at home), his son (the "kid"), and his would-be girlfriend (somehow "girl-goat" translates better here than "nanny goat," let alone "doe," which appears to be the correct designation for a female goat). The monkey represents Demipho's friend and neighbor Lysimachus, who emerges just after the dream narration ordering one of his servants to castrate a troublesome buck goat on his farm. Lysimachus is fussy, impudent, and uncooperative, as monkeys can be; they also can be seen as caricatures of us in our unguarded drollery–flattened out "comedy people." Worse, they were regarded by Artemidorus, in his book on dreams (2.104), as wicked charlatans.[33]

Old Man Charms a Somewhat-Virgo (Continuing *Mercator,* later, 499-543)

Continuing from the previous passage, Demipho wants to get the new girl, Pasicompsa ("all elegance"), away from his wife's interference, and has enlisted the aid of his neighbor Lysimachus. After Demipho has her spirited away from his house and sold to his old neighbor on his behalf, Lysimachus is to keep her at his place briefly, while his wife is in the country. (Wife will return unexpectedly.) Lysimachus, another doddering would-be lover, another senex amator, *thinks perhaps he could befriend Pasicompsa and profit by getting into her good graces. No one knows that Pasicompsa had already been living abroad with Demipho's son, Charinus, for two years. Girl and purchaser talk at cross-purposes: the girl at first thinks she has been sold away from Demipho's house to Lysimachus; then she thinks her real love, the son Charinus, rather than Demipho, has arranged for her abduction. She may or may not know what Lysimachus has in mind, though her tone becomes less ambiguous as the dialogue develops. The two characters, on the way back from the slave market, are about to enter Lysimachus's house.*

LYSIMACHUS. (*To audience*) I've given friendly support to a friend. I bought this piece of merchandise because my neighbor asked me to. (*To Pasicompsa*) You're mine. Come along, if you will. Quit crying. You're behaving very stupidly, you'll ruin your eyes this way. Actually, in your situation you should be laughing rather than crying.

PASICOMPSA. Please, old sir, in heaven's name, talk to me!

LYS. Ask whatever you like.

PAS. Why did you buy me?

LYS. Why you? So you will do what is needed; by the same token I'll do what you need me to do.

PAS. For sure, I'll do, to the best of my ability and know-how, what I think you want.

LYS. I won't make you do anything really hard.

PAS. Lord! As a matter of fact, my old sir, I've not learned to bear heavy loads or tend herds in the country or care for children.

LYS. Wanting to be good will be good for you.

PAS. Heavens! Then I'm a dead girl, poor me.

LYS. How's that?

PAS. Because in the place where I was brought here from, the women who usually get what's good are the bad ones.

LYS. You might as well say there are no good women.

PAS. I'm not saying that at all. I don't make a habit of saying stuff I think everyone knows.

LYS. (*Aside*) Lovely! Her talk is worth more than it cost to buy her! (*To Pas.*) I want to ask you this one thing.

PAS. I'll answer what's asked.

LYS. Tell me what name I should call you.

PAS. Pasicompsa.

LYS. A name given you for your beauty. But tell me, Pasicompsa: if necessary, can you spin a fine woof?

PAS. I can.

LYS. If you can do the fine work, I'm sure you can spin delicately.

PAS. As for wool-working, I take second place to no one my age.[34]

LYS. By heavens, woman, I think you're a great little lady, old enough already, since you know how to do your duty.

PAS. I've sure learned my lessons. I won't permit my work to be criticized.

LYS. There! By Hercules, that's the spirit! (*Points to Demipho's house*) Look, I'll give you a sheep. It'll be your very own and sixty years old.

PAS. So ancient, my dear old fellow?

LYS. The breed is Greek. If you take care of it, it will do very well; it'll be shorn quite nicely.

PAS. Out of respect for you, I'll be grateful for anything you give.

LYS. Now, little lady, so you don't get the wrong idea, you're not my property, don't think you are.

PAS. So I beg you, tell me, whose am I?

LYS. You've been bought again by your master (*points to Demipho's house, or as she thinks, Charinus's*). I made the purchase, he asked me too.

PAS. (*Happily*) If he's keeping his word with me, my spirits are revived.

LYS. Yes, be assured, that fellow will make you free. Heavens, he's desperately in love; yet today was the first time he saw you.

PAS. Oh, but it's been two years since he and I have been together,

LYS. What's that you say? It's been two years that he's been with you?

PAS. For sure. And we pledged ourselves to each other–I to him and he to me–I with my man and he with his woman, on our honor not to hug and kiss with anyone else but him with me and me with him.

LYS. Good heavens! He couldn't even sleep with his wife?

PAS. Please don't tell me he's married! He's not, surely, and will not be.

LYS. Well, I wish he weren't. Lord, lord, how he did lie![35]

PAS. There's no boy I love more.

LYS. Right, silly, he's just a boy. Actually it's only the other day since his teeth fell out.

PAS. What about his teeth?

LYS. Nothing. Follow me, if you would. He asked me to provide a place for him at my house, since my wife is currently in the country. (*Exit*)

Senex Amator: An Indecent Scene (*Casina,* 875-936)

Lysidamus, Plautus's worst (i.e., best) senex amator *plans to have his country slave Olympio marry the beautiful Casina, a foundling raised in his household; he will then be able to sleep with Casina whenever he likes. His wife, Cleostrata, her neighbor Myrrhina, and her maid Pardalisca trick Olympio into marrying a young male slave disguised as Casina, elaborately swathed like a Roman bride. The old master's plan was for Olympio to hand Casina over to him after leaving the bridal ceremony. In this scene Olympio emerges on stage, tattered and beaten for trying to bed his "bride," the disguised Chalinus. A fragmentary Atellan farce (a native Roman type of comedy) called "Maccus the Virgin," is an analogue to this scene. Olympio does not at first notice the three conniving women on stage. (In translating I've consulted the commentary of McCary and Willcock.)*

OLYMPIO. (*To audience, though the women hear him*) Where can I run to? Where can I hide? How can I hide the shame? Master and I have so disgraced ourselves with our wedding that I'm ashamed and afraid we're both the butt of ridicule. But stupid me, I'm now doing something new: a man is feeling shame who was never ashamed till now. Listen to me while I report what happened: it's worth the trouble for you to hear this. It'll be so laughable when you hear about the disturbance I just caused inside.

With my marriage newly conducted in there, I abducted her straight into a private room. But it was dark as the bottom of a well. While the old man is not around, I say, "Lie down." I get her situated, prop her up, calm her down, coax a little, aiming to complete the marriage before

the old man can.

Then I begin to slow down since I have to keep looking over my shoulder for fear the boss will turn up. First, to get our debauchery underway, I ask her for a kiss. She repels my hand and doesn't even let me kiss her. So now the more I hurry the more I desire to have my way with Casina, to relieve the old man of that job. I bolt the door so the old man won't break in on me. (*Women come forward*.)

CLEOSTRATA. (*To her servant Pardalisca*) Go ahead, you talk to him.

PARDALISCA. (*To Olympio*) Please sir, where's your new bride?

OLY. (*To audience*) Good grief, I'm a dead man! They know my story!

PAR. Now, step by step– (*duet follows*)

Admit it all, it's only fair:
What exactly went on in there?
What did Casina do and say?
Did she properly obey?[36]

OLY. Spare me telling all, I pray.

PAR. Come now, like a valiant man,
Tell us how it first began.

OLY. Pity me in all my shame!

PAR. Tell us boldly, all the same.

(*Speaking*) Say, then, after you two reclined, I want you to recall what happened.

OLY. It's so embarrassing.

PAR. Your story will warn others against doing what you did.

OLY. (*Thinking out loud*) ...a great disgrace.

PAR. The suspense is appalling, why are you stalling?

OLY. Wow! PAR. What? OLY. Weird! PAR. What?

OLY. (*Remembering*) Ugh! It was huge! I was afraid it was a sword. While I was checking to see if she had a sword, I grabbed the handle. (*Trails off thoughtfully*) Yet now that I think about it, she didn't have a sword. A sword would have been cold.

PAR. Speak up!

OLY. But it's embarrassing.

PAR. Surely it wasn't a radish?

OLY. It wasn't.

PAR. Surely not a cucumber?

OLY. For damn sure it wasn't any kind of vegetable. But this is certain, whatever it was, it never was wilted by blight. Yes, whatever it was, it was well grown.

PAR. Explain–what finally happened?

OLY. When I was trying to seduce Casina, I said, "Please, my little wifey, why are you rejecting me, your husband, this way? I didn't do anything at all to deserve this treatment; I just longed to have you for myself." She didn't say a word and bunched her dress around the thing that makes you women women. When I saw that that path had been cut off, I asked that I might take another way.

MYRRHINA. He tells quite a lovely story.

OLY. Her kiss scratched my lips with whiskers as if she had a beard. While I was on my knees she kicked me out of bed with both feet in the chest. I fell headlong, she fell on me and smashed my face. Without a word I fled outside dressed as you see me. May the old man drink from the

same cup that I did.

PAR. A great story! But where's your cloak?

OLY. I left it in there.

PAR. Now what? Have we played a delightful enough trick on you?

OLY. Absolutely. But I hear the door creaking. Surely she's not following me?

SAUCY BOYS

Paegnium (*Persa*, 201-50 and 276-99)

Boys, pueri*, appear in* Bacchides, Captivi, Miles Gloriosus, Mostellaria, Persa, Poenulus, Pseudolus*, and* Stichus*. Paegnium is one of Plautus's busier boys. In the first scene he torments the maidservant Sophoclidisca during this uniquely servant-centered comedy. Both are carrying written messages on tablets from master or mistress to a person living next door. In what precedes this, each has sassed the message-writer. They begin on opposite sides of the stage. Although they detest each other, they are eager to know why each is going to the other's house.*

SOPHOCLIDISCA. (*Aside*) Here's Paegnium.

PAEGNIUM. (*Aside*) This Sophoclidisca is the maid of the woman I'm being sent to.

SOP. (*Aside*) Lately people are saying that no kid can be worse than this one.

PAE. I'll call her over. SOP. I'll have to stop.

PAE. I can't get around this obstacle.

SOP. (*To Paegnium*) Hello, Paegnium, you delightful boy. What's up? How are you?

PAE. Sophoclidisca. Gods... Gods love me. SOP. What about me?

PAE. However they feel about it. But let them treat you as you deserve. I hope they regard you with loathing and treat you that way.

SOP. Quit your bad-mouthing.

PAE. When I talk to you as you deserve, I'm right-speaking, not bad-mouthing.

SOP. So what's happening? PAE. I'm standing by you, looking at a wicked woman.

SOP. As far as I'm concerned, I've certainly never known a worse kid than you.

PAE. What have I done or said to anyone that's so bad?

SOP. Heavens, whenever there's an opportunity.

PAE. Nobody ever claimed that. SOP. Lots of people know it's true!

PAE. Bah! SOP. Hah!

PAE. You judge what they think by what you think.

SOP. Sure. I admit I am what a servant in a pimp's household should be.

PAE. Exactly. I rest my case.

SOP. But what about you? Do you admit you're what I insist you are?

PAE. I'd admit it if I were. SOP. You can go now, you've won.

PAE. So you go now! SOP. Tell me this–where are you going?

PAE. What about you? SOP. You tell me, I asked first.

PAE. But you'll know later. SOP. I'm going not far from here.

PAE. I'm also not going far. SOP. So where is it you're going, dirt bag?

PAE. Unless I find out first from you, you'll never know the answer you're asking for.

SOP. Heaven knows, unless I hear the answer from you, you'll not know today.

PAE. So that's how it is. SOP. Yes, that's how it is.

PAE. You rotten woman! SOP. You vile kid!

PAE. Suits me! SOP. Sure doesn't suit me!

PAE. What do you mean? You're sure not hiding where you're going, vilest of women?

SOP. Do you persist in concealing where you're bound, rottenest of kids?

PAE. You're just answering with the same words I said. Get lost now, since that's what you really want. *I'm* finding out nothing. I'm off. SOP. Wait!

PAE. I'm in a hurry. SOP. Pollux! So am I.

PAE. (*Notices the tablet she's concealing in the folds of her dress*) What have you got there?

SOP. (*Notices that he's concealing something in his half-hidden left hand*) What's that *you* have?

PAE. Nothing at all. (Conceals his hand.)

SOP. So show me your hand. PAE. This hand?

SOP. Where's that other one, your thieving left?

PAE. It's at home, I didn't bring it here. SOP. You have something or other there.

(*Playfully snatches at his clothes*)

PAE. Stop fondling me, you prick-teaser. SOP. But if I like you?

PAE. You're setting about this all wrong. SOP. Why?

PAE. Because you love nothing when your love is unreciprocated.

SOP. Better to awaken at this young and newly blossoming age so when your lovely locks turn gray you don't have to live in perpetual degradation as a slave. You don't even weigh sixty pounds yet.[37]

PAE. But in that kind of warfare, boldness wages war much more effectively than weight. But now I'm just wasting time here.

SOP. How so?

PAE. Because I'm preaching to a convert. But I'm moving on.

SOP. Stay! PAE. You're annoying. (*Both look away glumly*.)

(*Plautus often wrings every drop from a scene of conflict or suspense, but here perhaps he*

should have resisted the inclination. In the text this banter continues tediously until both agree to show each other the message they carry, at which point it appears that neither can read.

The two exit. A few minutes later enter Sagaristio, slave of another family and a friend of the main character, the slave Toxilus, Paegnium's boss. Paegnium then (l. 276) returns to the stage.)

SAGARISTIO. Where's Toxilus, your master?

PAE. He's where he wants to be, and he doesn't have to consult you.

SAG. Tell me where he is, you little viper.

PAE. I tell you I don't know, you consumer of elm-switches.

SAG. Are you disrespecting your elder?

PAE. You started it. My boss says that though I work as a slave, I should have a free tongue.

SAG. Will you tell me where Toxilus is?

PAE. I'll tell you to drop dead forever.

SAG. You'll bleed under the scourge today.

PAE. Because of you, dummy? Hell! I wouldn't worry about that even if I raped your face,[38] carrion corpse.

SAG. I know you now, you're a fancy boy.

PAE. So I am. What's that to you? But I'm not a fancy boy for no reason, like you.

SAG. So cocksure!

PAE. Damn right I am. I'm sure I'm going to be free, something you'll never hope to be.

SAG. Could you just quit bothering me?

PAE. You talk about stuff you can't do.

SAG. Go to hell.

PAE. You just go home–everything's ready for you there.

SAG. (*With irony*) He's binding me over for trial.

PAE. And I hope you go from there to prison. SAG. What's that?

PAE. What's what? SAG. You're still bad-mouthing me?

PAE. To put it simply, since you're a slave, a slave can curse you.

SAG. Oh yeah? (*Menacing with fist*) Look what I'll be giving you!

PAE. Nothing, because you have nothing.

SAG. May all the gods and goddesses damn...

PAE. (*Interrupts*) As a good friend, I want what you want.

SAG. And it'll happen unless today, if I corner you, I plant you six feet under with my fists.

PAE. You plant me? It's you that'll be planted by others before long, on a cross.[39]

SAG. May the gods and goddesses... You know what I was about to say if I couldn't hold my tongue. Will you get lost!

PAE. (*As he exits into Toxilus's house, to audience*) No problem for me to get lost, since I'm late and my shadow is already feeling its beating when I get in this house.[40]

SAG. May the gods and goddesses damn that kid! He's evil like a sneaky snake with a forked tongue. By Hercules, I'm glad he's gone away!

Pimp's Boy (*Pseudolus,* 767-89)[41]

Boy characters usually stand somewhat apart from the main action to joke and jibe, though readers will find in this speech, by the boy serving the pimp Ballio, a level of pathos that Plautus or his spectators may not have felt. This boy is what Sharrock calls a "pop-up" character, one with no other appearance in the play.[42] *He speaks alone on stage to the audience.*

Let's say there's a boy whom the gods grant the office of serving a pimp. If they also grant him ugliness, then for sure, as I see it in my heart, they have granted him an awful situation and many hardships. For example, this office has fallen to me, where I'm surrounded with miseries great and small. And I can't find myself a lover, someone to love me, so that I might eventually make myself look a little more handsome.

This very day it's the pimp's birthday. Everyone from top to bottom was threatened that if they did not buy him a gift today, tomorrow they would suffer the severest tortures. Heavens, in my situation I don't know what I can do! Tomorrow I'll have to enjoy what wool feels like when the fuller beats it.

Sadly, I'm still too small for you-know-what! And poor me, by Pollux–if someone would only weigh my hand down a little with a payment of coins, I think I could, somehow, grit my teeth, even though they say you-know-what causes great pain. But I need to grit my voice and speech: there's the master returning home and bringing a cook.

Pinacium (*Stichus*, 275-320)

In Stichus*, Pinacium enters running, with fishing gear, not noticing the parasite Gelasimus, already on stage. He is running because he has news that the two young masters in the family, thought dead, have returned after a long time at sea. If he is first to bring the news he can expect a reward, so he must reveal nothing to Gelasimus. Throughout his monologue to the audience he is moving across the stage, toward the house of Epignomus. The comedy of his excitement, as well as his door-beating and shouting at the end of the scene, is increased if he is a smallish boy.*

PINACIUM. (*To audience*) Mercury, who they say brings news to Jove, never brought news as newsy to his father as the news I'll bring to my mistress. That's why I hold a heart full of joy and gaiety: no one could help boasting or really trumpeting. I'm bringing all the pleasures that arouse love, all beautiful things. Joy overflows my banks and fills my heart!

Hurry, Pinacium, move those feet with work from honest words. Now it's in your power to win praise, glory, honor–come to help your distressed mistress, who has pitifully been awaiting her husband Epignomus's return. She has longed for her man with all the desire any lover could have. Now, Pinacium, follow your heart, run as fast as you can, care nothing about anyone else, push through the street with your elbows (*mimes this action*), silence the street! If a king stands in your way, don't hesitate to knock down his royal highness himself.

GELASIMUS. (*Aside*) I would ask why pretty-boy Pinacium is running so gleefully. He's

carrying a fisherman's pole, bucket, and hooks.

PIN. (*Stops to reconsider, still unaware of Gelasimus*) But in the final analysis, I think my mistress ought more properly to be *my* supplicant, send legates to me, and gifts of gold, and a four-horse carriage for my transport–I can't possibly go on foot. So I'm going back. I think I myself ought properly to be approached and supplicated. (*To audience*) Or maybe you think that what I know amounts to trifles. I'm reporting such good news from the port, transporting so much joy, that my mistress herself, unless she knew about it, wouldn't dare even pray to the gods for it. Then might I play games with it? I don't like that and don't think it's what a man ought to do. Thus, for my message, it seems more appropriate that she be aware and beg me to share the message with her. Boldness should accompany good luck.

But now that I think about it, how could she find out that I knew this? I can't help but go back and tell my revelation to my mistress, relieve her sorrow, and add to my ancestors' good deeds. I'll supplant the fame of Agamemnon's messenger Talthybius and every other messenger. (*Begins running in place*) At the same time I'll start training to run in the Olympic games. Well, not enough space here, too bad! (*Notices he has arrived at the house of Epignomus.*) What's this? I see a closed doorway. I'll go knock on the door. (*Knocks loudly, shouts rudely*) Open up and hurry, get the door open, no stalling! THIS OFFICE IS BEING HANDLED TOO SLOPPILY! (*Beats harder on door, starts kicking it*) Look how long I've been standing here and pounding. DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO SLEEP IN THERE? I'll try and see whether my elbows or feet are stronger on the door. (*Tries once or twice.*) This door! I do so wish it would run away from its owner and then get a beating. (*Pause to rest*)

PIN. I'm worn out with knocking.

(*Gives a final loud knock*)

This is the last straw, woe to you!

GEL. (*Aside*) I'll go and talk to him. (*To Pinacium*) Hello to you.

PIN. Hello to you too. GEL. Now you've become a fisherman?

PIN. How long has it been since *you* ate?

GEL. Where did you just come from? Why are you carrying that stuff? Where are you hurrying to?

PIN. You shouldn't bother about something that's none of your business.

GEL. (*Points to bucket*) What's in there? PIN. What you're going to eat, snakes.

GEL. Why are you so irritable? PIN. If you had any decency you wouldn't be bothering me.

GEL. Can I get the truth out of you? PIN. You can. Today you'll have no dinner.

COOKS

*Greek comedy also had a cook (*mageiros*), but with a difference. In* Pseudolus*, about half of the scene where the cook is on stage is provided by Plautus rather than a Greek playwright.*[43] *Willcock notes, regarding comedy cooks, "The essence of the cook is that he is an outsider, hired in the market for a family occasion, often a wedding, and thus given entrance to the house. As a source of humour, cooks are characteristically (a) boastful, (b) light-fingered."*[44]

In Pseudolus*, Ballio the pimp and his boy slave enter with a hired cook and his staff, including another boy, all loaded with food and equipment for his birthday banquet.*

No Ordinary Cook (*Pseudolus*, 790-891)[45]

BALLIO. (*To audience, the cook overhearing*) People who call that place Cook's Forum speak stupidly. It's a forum of fakers, not makers. Even if I dedicated myself to finding a worse man for the job, I could not have brought one worse than the one I'm bringing–chattering, bragging, lacking in taste, useless. Hell has not wanted to take him in so as to make sure there'd be someone left here to cook offerings for the dead, for he can cook only the things they like.

COOK. If you thought that's the sort of person I am, why did you bring me here?

BAL. Deficiency–there was no one else. But why were you alone, with no one else sitting in that forum as a cook?

COOK. I'll tell you: I've become a less-approved cook not because of my own inability but on account of human avarice.

BAL. Why do you say that?

COOK. I'll explain. It's because, since people come to fetch a chef right away, no one looks for the best or most appreciated one. Instead they hire the cheapest one. It's for this reason that today I was sitting alone in the forum. Those other wretches are drachma-a-day drones, but nobody can get me up and running for less than two drachmas. Likewise I don't fix meals like other cooks, who will cook a whole pasture in their pans. They make their guests into grazers, offering them weeds, then cook those weeds with other weeds. They set before them sorrel, beets, cabbages, spinach. They throw in coriander, fennel, garlic, horse-parsley, then they stir in a pound of asafetida. Criminal mustard is ground up, which makes the cooks' eyes water as they grind. Whenever these guys cook, when they season they don't season with seasonings but with screech-owls that chew up the entrails of the gutsy guests. This is surely why people around here lead such brief lives, since they stuff stuff like this into their stomachs, dreadful to speak of, not just to eat. People are eating plants that animals won't eat.

BAL. What's this? You use seasonings to make people live longer, then condemn seasonings?

COOK. I mean to tell you! For anyone who regularly eats food that I compose can even live to be two hundred. When I have put tchitchilander in the pans, or cepolanderum, or soraccia, or

seceptis (*all fabrications*), the pans start sizzling by themselves on the spot. These seasonings are used for the finny tribe. For the terrestrial animals I use your chichisirander or your hapalopsis or your cataractria.

BAL. Bah! May Jupiter and all the gods damn your seasonings and all these lies of yours.

COOK. Allow me to speak. BAL. Speak and go hang yourself.

COOK. When all the bowls are sizzling I uncover them all; this aroma flies to heaven with outstretched hands.

BAL. An aroma with outstretched hands? COOK. My bad, not thinking.

BAL. What then?

COOK. I wanted to say "with outstretched feet." Jupiter dines on this aroma everyday.

BAL. If you don't get a cooking job what does Jupiter dine on?

COOK. He goes to bed without dinner.

BAL. Go hang yourself! Is that why I'm paying you today?

COOK. I do admit I'm a very costly cook, but in my trade I give value for money wherever I go.

BAL. Yes, in thefts committed.

COOK. So you're wanting to find a cook without the talons of an eagle or a kite?

BAL. So you're wanting to go cook somewhere and not have your talons bound up while you cook? (*To Ballio's accompanying boy*)[46] Now then you, who belong to me, I order you at once to remove everything that is ours away from him; then keep your eyes on his eyes. Wherever he looks, you will look there too. If he walks somewhere, let your feet stay with him; if he stretches out a hand, let your hand be extended with his; if he picks up what's his, let it be picked up; if he picks up what's ours, you grab it by the other end; if he stays, you stay likewise; if he squats here, you squat. I'll also provide guards for each one of these workers.

COOK. Just calm down...

BAL. I ask, tell me, how can I calm down letting you into my home?

COOK. Because today I'll fix you up with my soup sauce, as Medea cooked old man Pelias, whom they say she made from an old man into a youth again with her medications and drugs.[47] I'll do likewise for you.

BAL. Whoa! Are you a poisoner?

COOK. Heavens, far from it! I'm a server of man.

BAL. Hmm. At what price would you school me in one particular cookery lesson?

COOK. Which?

BAL. That I could be a server of you not stealing from me.

COOK. A little if you trust me; if not I wouldn't accept a hundred. But are you having this dinner today for your friends or enemies?

BAL. Good grief, for friends, of course!

COOK. Why not invite enemies rather than friends? Because I'll season such a dinner for your guests today, and prepare it with such tasty tastiness that I will make anyone who takes any part of the food chew off his own fingers.

BAL. I beg you, by Hercules, before you give some to any of the guests, first you eat some yourself, and your underlings too, so you'll chew off your thieving hands.

COOK. Perhaps now you don't believe the things I told you.

BAL. (*Exasperated*) Don't be annoying. You chatter too much–shut up. (*Pointing to his house*) Look, I live right there. Go in and cook dinner–hurry!

A Miser's Cook (*Aulularia*, 398-459)

In Aululariа*, the miser, Euclio, has found a pot of gold that was intended for his daughter, but he wants to conceal and keep it for himself. His older next-door neighbor, Megadorus, has offered to marry the daughter; Euclio agreed, providing Megadorus pay for the wedding feast. The bridegroom-to-be has hired a caterer (as we would call him), Congrio (compare "conger eel"), to help his own cook, Anthrax ("charcoal"), with the preparations, and Congrio has brought along a number of kitchen helpers to work in Euclio's house, next door. In the scene that follows, Euclio desperately fears that the cooks in his house will find and steal his precious gold. The scene opens with Anthrax entering from Megadorus's house, talking to his workers, within. Fearful that these workers will steal his pot, Euclio has quite forgotten that the cooks have to work in his house*.

ANTH: Dromo, scale the fish, Machaerio, bone the eels as best you can. I'll go next door and ask Congrio if we can use a bread pan of his. And you there! If you know how, fix that chicken for me, slicker than a beardless dancing boy. (*Shouting heard within*)

But what's that noise coming from next door? Oh lord, I'll bet it's the cooks doing their work. I'm going inside in case some of that trouble starts here. (*Exit to Megadorus's house*. *Enter Congrio from Euclio's house, limping in pain, holding his head, a cook's knife in one hand, also his kitchen workers carrying firewood.)*

CONG: (*To audience*) Oww! All you citizens, countrymen, indwellers, neardwellers, foreigners, show me a way to escape. Clear all the streets! Until today I've never come to cook for Bacchants at a Bacchus shrine where they battered poor me and my staff so badly with clubs. I hurt everywhere, I'm dying for sure from the way that old man has worked me over like something in his gymnasium. Oooh, poor me! By Hercules, I'm dying! *(Euclio's door opens and Euclio appears, brandishing a large stick of firewood.)* The shrine is opening, there he is, coming after me. I know what I need to do–I learned from that old guy *(picks up a stick)*. I never saw anyone provided so conveniently with wood. He's driven us all outside, me and these workers, our arms loaded down with "clubs."

EUC: Come back! Now where are you headed? Hold on, hold on!

CONG: What's that you're yelling, stupid?

EUC: I'm turning your name in to the three police commissioners.

CONG: Why?

EUC: Because you're carrying a knife.

CONG: A cook is supposed to have a knife.

EUC: Why are you threatening me with it?

CONG: *(Aside)* I think my big mistake is not sticking it in your ribs.

EUC: There's not a worse man alive today than you, and there's not one I would more willingly hurt on purpose.

CONG: By Pollux! Even if you say nothing, it's quite clear. *(Pointing to Euclio's "club")* The thing speaks for itself. Those clubs have tenderized me more tender than any girlie-man. But why are you manhandling us, you beggarly-looking man?

EUC: Why? You ask why? Have I done anything except what's right? *(Threatening)*

CONG: By Hercules, lay off! If this head of mine survives you'll get yours!

EUC: By Pollux! I don't know what's going on, now that your head is surviving. But back inside what business did you have there in my absence when I hadn't asked you in? I demand to know.

CONG: So shut up. It's because we've come to cook the wedding feast.

EUC: What do you care, you criminal, if I eat my food cooked or raw? You're not my keeper.

CONG: I need to know: will you or won't you allow us to cook this meal?

EUC: And *I* need to know: are my things going to be safe in my own house?

CONG: If only I could safely get *my* things that I brought into your house. I could care less about getting yours.

EUC: I know. No need to lecture me, I understand.

CONG: Why is it that all of a sudden you forbid us to cook dinner here? What have we done or said other than what you want?

EUC. So, you crook, making every corner of my house and my rooms into a public walkway, are you still asking questions? If you'd been at the hearth, where your business was, you wouldn't have come away with a split skull. There are good reasons why that happened to you. So now you can just hear what I have to say. If you so much as come any nearer to this door, unless I've asked you to, I'll make you the most hapless of humans. Now you've heard me. *(Exit)*

CONG. Where are you going? Come back! May the goddess Laverna be with me: unless you have my pots and pans returned to me, I'll stand here in front of your house and cry out against you. What to do now? *(Touches his head wound)* I'm sure I came here under an unlucky star. Drawn here by a denarius! Just the doctor's bill will cost more than that.
(Euclio enters again, hiding the pot of gold under his mantle. To audience, while gesturing to the pot:)

EUC: You can damn sure bet this will stay with me. Wherever I go I'll be carrying it on me, and be sure, too, I'll not let it be exposed to the kind of dangers there are in there *(points to his house, then turns to the cook staff)*. So go on in, everybody, fry-cooks and flutists. If you like, even bring in the chef's drove of drudges. Make it, fake it, shake it as much as you like!

CONG: It's about time now that you've filled my skull with cracks from your club.

EUC: Go on in! You were brought here to cook not to orate.

CONG: *(About to enter Euclio's house)* Listen, old man. I'll be sending a bill for a beating. I was brought here for baking not for basting.

EUC: So take me to court. Get out of my hair. Either go cook the feast or get out of my way and be hanged!

CONG: You can drop dead! *(Exit to house with workers)*

Cook Spills Beans (*Mercator*, 741-90)

Recall, in an earlier scene from this play, that a young lover has brought an attractive slave girl from abroad to serve in his parents' household and to be his secret squeeze. His father, Demipho, falls for the girl and persuades his neighbor, Lysimachus, to conceal her. Here, Lysimachus's wife, Dorippa, having unexpectedly returned from the country (she has a

counterpart in A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*), has discovered the girl and mistakenly thinks she's her husband's mistress. Lysimachus has hired a cook to make dinner for Demipho, the girl, and himself. The cook will mistakenly think Dorippa is the girlfriend Lysimachus boasted about. Cook and staff, loaded with food and drink, show up just as Dorippa is beginning to catch on. Husband, wife, cook, and staff are on stage.*

COOK. *(to staff)* Let's hurry it up, now, now! I have to cook dinner for an old lover-boy. And now that I think about it, we're cooking it for us, not for the one who hired us, since a lover, if he has what he loves, regards that as food: seeing, hugging, kissing, talking; so as for us, I'm confident we'll go back home well supplied. But look, here's the old guy who hired us.

LYSIMACHUS. *(Aside, furtively)* Look now, I'm a dead man! The cook is here.

COOK. We've arrived. LYS. (*Loud whisper*) So leave!

COOK. Why should I leave? LYS. Shush! Go away!

COOK. I should go away? LYS. Go away!

COOK. You're not going to have dinner? LYS. We already did.

COOK. But... LYS. *(Aside)* I'm dead and buried!

DORIPPA. My, my! The people who ordered these things to be brought to you, did they make you that girl's advisor and protector?

COOK. *(To Lysimachus, indicating Dorippa)* Is she the girlfriend you were saying you were in love with, a while back when you were buying the food?

LYS. Can't you be quiet?

COOK. A fine figure of a woman, but by Hercules, she's old!

LYS. Will you go hang yourself! COOK. She's not bad.

LYS. But you are! COOK. By Hercules, I'll bet she knows what to do in bed!

LYS. Won't you go away? I'm not the man who hired you "a while back."

COOK. What's that? By Hercules, you're the very man.

LYS. Argh! Miserable me!

COOK. Of course, your wife's in the country. A while back you said you hated her like snakes.

LYS. I said such a thing to you? COOK. Yes, to me, by Hercules.

LYS. (*To Dorippa*) May Jupiter never love me if I ever said that, my wife!

DOR. So you deny it? All this makes it obvious that you do hate me.

LYS. I insist I don't.

COOK. No–he didn't say he hated you, but his wife, and he said his wife's in the country.

LYS. This is her! Why are you tormenting me?

COOK. Because you said you didn't know me. But you seem afraid of this woman.

LYS. I'm wise enough to know she's my only love. COOK. Do you want to test my skill?

LYS. I don't. COOK. Then pay me.

LYS. You'll get paid tomorrow. It'll come. Now go away!

DOR. *(In tears)* Oh, poor me!

LYS. Now I'm proving the truth of that old saying, "A bad neighbor means bad luck."

COOK. Why are we standing here? We should be going. If something unpleasant happens, it's not my fault.

LYS. Poor me, I'm destroyed!

COOK. Now I know what you want–you really want me to leave.

LYS. I'll say I do!

COOK. Give us a drachma and we'll go.

LYS. I will.

COOK. So command it! Someone can get it while they put down their food baskets.

LYS. Just get out! Can't you stop tormenting me?

COOK. *(To staff)* Go put all this food at that old man's feet. Later on or tomorrow I'll have these containers picked up. Follow me. *(Exit)*

Cook as Seer (*Curculio*, 251-73)

The cook here serves the main character, Phaedromus, whose parasite, Curculio ("the

weevil"), is coming to lunch. The cook wants Palinurus, a slave and a confidant of Phaedromus, to go shopping for him. In keeping with the idea that cooking has mystical associations (pretended by the cook in Pseudolus*, in the scene above), this cook also has a talent for interpreting dreams which he displays here, even for a character as low as the pimp, Cappadox, whose house is also on stage. On stage is also a temple of the healing god Aesculapius, not unrelated to digestive health, subject of a sparkling essay on this play by Michael Fontaine.*[48] *In front of Phaedromus's house, the cook calls out to Palinurus, who is in conversation with the pimp.*

COOK. Palinurus, why are you standing around? Can't you go shop for the things I need so lunch will be ready for the parasite when he shows up?

PALINURUS. Please hold on while I interpret a dream for this guy *(indicating Cappadox, who is offstage).*

COOK. You yourself, when you've dreamed something, always tell it to me.

PAL. I admit that.

COOK. So go shopping for what I need.

PAL. *(To Cappadox)* Meanwhile you can tell your dream to him. He's better for you than I am and he can take my place. What I know, I know it all from him.

CAPPADOX. As long as he helps me.

PAL. He will. *(Exit to forum)*

CAP. (*Aside*) In having deference to his teacher, he behaves as few do. (*To Cook*) So work your skills on me.

COOK. Though I don't know you, I'll advise you.

CAP. Last night in my dream I thought I saw Aesculapius sitting far distant from me. He seemed neither to approach me nor to have any regard for me.

COOK. Of course. The other gods will do likewise. Obviously they concur concordantly among themselves. It's no wonder things haven't turned out well for you–you would have done better had you slept at the Temple of Jupiter, who helps pimps like you to always tell the truth.

CAP. Well, if everyone who ever bore false witness wanted to sleep there, there wouldn't be enough space on the whole Capitol Hill.

COOK. Now hear this. Seek the favor of Aesculapius for fear some great evil may befall you, the evil that was shown to you in your sleep.

CAP. You've done well; I will go and pray. *(Exit into the Temple of Aesculapius)*

COOK. *(Aside)* And may this situation end badly for you! *(Exit into Phaedromus's house)*

SLAVES

How to Tell a Slave from an Aristocrat (*Captivi,* 293-332)

The captive slave Tyndarus has agreed with his young master, also a prisoner, to trade places with him so that his master, Philocrates, pretending to be the slave, can act as messenger from their captor, Hegio. If he gets to the other side, will the aristocrat keep faith with his slave?

Hegio wants to exchange the two for his own son, held prisoner by the captives' army. In this scene the real aristocrat, Philocrates, looks on silently while Hegio and Tyndarus confer. The scene is rich in irony, partly because Tyndarus will eventually discover that he is in truth a legitimate son of Hegio's family. Here he implicitly pleads the case for understanding a slave's plight and observes the critical role played by Fortuna in anyone's identity. The audience may have thought of such incidents in the recent war with Carthage. But some believe that Plautus is not preaching equality in such moments but simply joining in the anti-authoritarian spirit of the holidays that his comedies celebrate.

HEGIO. So follow me, right this way. *(Aside)* I'll find out what I want to know from this guy. *(To Tyndarus, who, he thinks, is an aristocrat)* Philocrates, this fellow *(pointing to Philocrates)* did the right thing, as the right sort of man should do. I know from him what sort of family you come from–he's made this known to me. If you want to confess the same facts to me, you'll be acting in your own best interest. But from this guy *(pointing to Philocrates),* I know what I know.

TYNDARUS. The slave did his duty when he revealed the truth to you, though my intention, Hegio, was to conceal my nobility, family, and wealth. Now, when I have lost both liberty and land, I don't think it right that he should respect me more than you.[49] The power of my enemy has put my resources on a par with his. I remember when he didn't dare cause me pain with his words; now he does so with his actions. But do you see? Fortune constrains and limits human actions as she sees fit: she has made me, who once was free, a slave. From very high to very low. I who had been used to giving commands must now obey the commands of another. And if I were in charge, as indeed I myself once was as master of a house, I would not fear that he would lord it over me unfairly or harshly.

I've been wanting to warn you of something, Hegio, unless perhaps you don't want me to.

HEG. Speak your mind.

TYN. I was formerly as free as your son; an enemy hand seized liberty from me as it did from him. So he is a slave among us, just as I am a slave now with you. There really is a god who both hears about and sees the things we do. As you treat me here he will deal the same with him there. The one who deserves good will profit; the wrongdoer will be handled accordingly. As you, a father, miss your son, mine misses me.

HEG. I keep that in mind, but do you admit the same things that he just admitted to me?

TYN. I admit that at home my father is extremely rich and that I am extremely well born. But I beg you, Hegio, don't allow my family riches to make your heart too greedy. Even though I'm his only son, my father might think it more suitable that I be well fed and clothed in your home than live as a beggar there, where that would be quite unrespectable.

HEG. Thanks to the gods and my forebears, I'm wealthy enough. I don't think that wealth of any kind always does a person good. I do think that nowadays wealth has rendered many men loathsome. And there are times when it's preferable to lose than to profit. I hate gold. It often falsely convinces many of much. Now pay attention to this and you will know with certainty what I believe. My son, captured in Elis, is a slave there in your home. If you return him to me, you needn't pay out a single penny more, and I'll send you and him *(pointing to Philocrates)* back home from here. That's the only way you'll ever escape from this place.

How to Succeed in Slavery (*Mostellaria*, 859-83; *Aulularia*, 587-607)

Mostellaria *has its clever slave, Tranio, and its long-suffering, faithful slave, Grumio, but the best speech in the play on success in the profession is delivered by a minor slave, Phaniscus– a study in the psychology of the servile. The theme of this speech may have acquired popularity in Rome, because a similar theme appears in Menaechmi 983-84 introduced by "I sing a song you spectators already know."*[50]

PHANISCUS. Slaves who fear beating but never are beaten, they are normally useful for their masters. The ones who fear nothing when they ought to be punished are just pursuing the

wisdom of folly. They make plans to run, they run away. Then, when they're caught, instead of the profit they could be earning, they fill their little purses with pain. That's all the wages waiting for them.

As for me, I study the wisdom of saving my own hide. Let my skin stay intact as always, for I slip from the whip. If I keep an eye out I'll keep my roof intact, so the blows that rain down on others don't rain on me.

See, it always works out that the master is what his slaves make of him: good to the good but tough on the wicked. For instance, take our house. So many of the worst sort live there, wasting wherewithal and whip leather. If they're ordered to go meet master, it's "I'm not going, don't bother me. But I know why *you're* in a big hurry, you're hot to go somewhere. By Hercules, you mule, you want to get out to the pasture!"

So here's my reward for my dedication. I'm the one who goes out. Among so many slaves, I'm the only one who can go out for master. Well, when master finds out about this tomorrow he'll horsewhip them black and blue all morning. I worry a lot less about their butts than mine. I should get a beating? Let *them* be whip meat.

A similar speech comes from Strobilus, the slave of Lyconides, in Aulularia (587-607). *Strobilus (there is some textual confusion about his name), like several slaves of young masters, longs to have his master cured of his amorousness. Lyconides loved and raped a virgin during a festival night and has been nine months searching for her to ask her hand in marriage. She is the daughter of the miser Euclio. Such speeches characterize a slave who is "clever" with a difference. Strobilus speaks seated or crouched by the shrine of Good Faith, onstage.*

STROBILUS. Here's the way I make myself a useful slave: I don't interfere or bother master in his exercise of power. It's only right that the slave who expects to do master's bidding will be prompt to serve master, slow to serve himself. He may sleep, but do so always knowing that he's above all a slave.

A fellow who serves in the service of a master in love, like the one I serve, if he sees the master in the grip of love, I think it's the duty of that servant to draw him back to sanity, not to help him drive himself over the edge. You know how children learning to swim use water wings, so they don't have to work so hard and can more easily use their hands to swim? In the same way I think the servant should support the master who is seized by passion, so he can stay afloat and not sink to the bottom like a depth gauge.

He should know master's wishes so well that his eyes at once perceive what that face desires. Let him hasten more speedily than a fiery four-horse chariot to fulfill whatever master requires. The fellow who does his duties will escape the critique of the lash. He won't spend the work week polishing his leg irons.

Anyway, my master loves the pauper Euclio's daughter, and he's heard that she's now being given in marriage to this Megadorus person. So he's sent me as his partner to find out what people are up to. For the moment, I'll sit here by this holy altar unsuspected. From this spot I can see what they're doing here and over there.

The language here makes it evident that Strobilus shares Phaniscus's obsequiousness. Consider the annoying redundancy and repetition of servus *and related, sometimes juxtaposed, words in lines 589-593. Also revealing of tone are the jarring contrasts of "*censione bubula*" and "*splendorem compedes*" (601, 602: "critique of the lash," "polishing leg irons").*

Toxilus: Clever Slave Triumphant (*Persa,* 753-774)

Toxilus and his friends have managed a successful scam on a pimp, rescuing a girlfriend, the meretrix Lemniselenis, with help from his fellow slave Sagaristio, and the boy Paegnium, all of whom are present in this more-crowded-than-usual scene (5.1). The title of the play comes from the parasite Saturio's disguise as a "Persian" slave trader; Saturio's daughter pretends to be a captive Arab girl, and in an amusing bit of Plautine metatheater perhaps wears a tragic costume.[51] *Toxilus's speech suggests both the festivity of the day, the actual* ludus *of which the play is part, and the wider feelings of joy and relief occasioned by Rome's victory over Carthage in the second Punic War (201 BC). Several such speeches in other plays refer to a national mood of joy, for example Diniarchus's opening speech in* Truculentus. *Toxilus employs Plautus's joking use of military language to describe his plot. The speech moves from the collective (our, us) to the individual (I, my) when referring to the slave's scheme. (At line 759 I substitute* "aliqua*,"* something, *appearing in some editions, for Lindsay's* aquila.*) The day is auspicious because it's Toxilus's birthday as well as his day of victory. Contrast the pimp Ballio's being disappointed on his birthday in* Pseudolus. *Banqueters will of course recline on cushions for the banquet.*

(*Enter Toxilus. During the song enter the beloved Lemniselenis, the boy Paegnium, Sagaristio, and one or two more.*)

TOXILUS. (*Sings*) Now vanquished is the enemy,

The people saved, peace declared, war extinguished,

Security is won, forces and fortresses have held,

Since you, O Jupiter, have upheld us.

And all the other heaven-endowed gods,

I give thanks to you for this generosity,

For I am justly revenged on my enemy.

(*Speaks*) Now, because of this success, I shall divide up and distribute the spoils among my comrades. (*To slaves within*) Come out, I want to give my comrades a proper reception at the entrance in front of the door. (*Enter two or three*) Set up couches here and lay out the usual party things. (*Gesturing to the wine*) First, I want the essentials placed here. With them I'll see to it that everyone has a merry, cheerful, and joyous time. (*To his partners*) Your efforts for me have made it easy to do the things I wanted done. It's a poor sort of man who knows how to accept a favor but doesn't know how to repay it. (*To Lemniselenis*) So come here, come and put your arms around me. Oh, there's nothing sweeter than this! Please, light of my life, shall we not retire and recline right now?

LEMNISELENIS. I want everything you want.

TOX. And so do I! Come, come, then. Sagaristio, you take the highest place on the couches. Yes, do, stretch out. Let us observe this sweet, lovely birthday of mine. Let hands be washed, draw near the table. (*To Lemniselenis*) I give this garland to you, my flower. You will be our mistress of the feast today.

LEM. (*To Paegnium*) Go, boy, begin these entertainments. Starting at the head of the table, ladle

out seven cups each.

TOX. Hurry, Paegnium, make quick with your hands; you're too slow with my drinks. So let's have it! (*Sings while embracing Lemniselenis*)

By the gods

This wished-for day is given me today

Because you, my love,

Because you came to embrace me from the gods above.

PARASITES

It's a Hard Life (*Captivi*, 461-96)

The parasite, who dined at the table of the wealthier citizens in exchange for his entertaining conversation, is one of the character types that Roman comedy inherited from its Greek forebears. The word itself means one who sits at meals beside another, and in Greek comedy it implied a flatterer: the type is part of the characterological cocktail that went into the making of Falstaff. (A Greek named Alciphron included letters of parasites in his collection of fictional epistles.) In this selection from Captivi *the Velabrum is a commercial site in the Roman Forum–not in Athens where this and other Plautine comedies are imagined as being set. The parasite, Ergasilus, has been seen as reflecting the metaphorical captivity of people in general to their appetites and inclinations. The parasite has also been thought to represent the plight of the comic dramatist who must depend on keeping his audience amused to maintain his own welfare.*

ERGASILUS. It's a wretched man who looks around for something to eat and finds scarcely anything. Wretcheder is the one who looks for a while and finds nothing. But wretchedest is he who needs to eat and has nothing. For, by Hercules, everyone has heaped so much malice on me I'd gladly gouge out the eyes of this day. I've never seen a more famished day, one more stuffed with starvation. My guts and gullet are enjoying a holiday of hunger.

The worst possible suffering in the parasite's craft nowadays is when young men want nothing to do with needy jokesters. They could care less about us beat-up Spartan bench-sitters

whose witticisms bring in neither food nor cash. They look for guests who, after they've dined, will reciprocate at their own homes. They themselves go shopping for food, which used to be the parasite's job. They'll leave the forum and hunt up a pimp just as casually as if they were passing judgment in court. They regard our jokes as shopworn and they're all in love with themselves.

Anyway, as I left here a while ago I came up to some lads in the forum. "Hello," said I, "shall we go someplace together?" said I. But they said nothing. "Who wants to come along or has a lunch place in mind?" They were like deaf and dumb, I didn't get one smile. "Where do we go for lunch?" I said, but they just shook their heads. I gave them a funny bit from one of my better routines which used to set me up for a month of dinners. No one laughed.

Right off I knew they had secretly agreed to act that way. They not only didn't laugh, they wouldn't even do as much as an angry dog and show their teeth. I left them and afterward I could see they were mocking me. I went on to others, and others, and still others: all the same! Everyone acted as by one common accord, like the oil merchants at the Velabrum market. I came back here just now since I saw I was being ridiculed. Other parasites were similarly walking around in the forum to no avail.

You can bet I'm going to pursue a Roman-type law all my own. Whoever conspires to deprive us of food and life's necessities, I will impose on them a fine of ten dinners to be given me at a time of my choosing, when the market prices are high. I rest my case!

But now I'll leave here for the port–that's my sole remaining hope for dinner.

A Parasite Likens Bankers to Pimps (Curculio, 494-514)

Toward the end of Curculio *the title character, a parasite, goes on a tirade comparing pimps and bankers. Even parasites, he implies, are better than pimps and bankers. Several brief*

comments interrupt but I delete them in the interest of hearing the solitary voice of "the weevil," the meaning of Curculio's name. Fraenkel finds the style of this speech unquestionably Plautine (80).

So I'm supposed to accept a title certificate from a pimp–a tribe that owns nothing except a tongue with which to deny any debt they owe?

You pimps sell other people, you set others free though they belong to others. You don't really own anything to sell, that's why you can't give anyone a certificate of title. To my way of thinking, your pimp tribe is to society like flies, gnats, bedbugs, lice, and fleas–I look on them with loathing and disgust. You're of no use to anyone. There's not an honest man in town would be caught in your company for fear of being accused, scrutinized, and reviled. Even if he had done nothing, people would say he had lost property and credit.

But by Hercules, I consider you bankers no different. You're every bit the same as them. They at least do business in out-of-the-way corners; you do it in the public marketplace. You break men with interest rates, they do it with seduction and brothels. The people have seen countless laws proposed to restrain you, but once they are passed you break them, finding some escape clause. You look on laws as so much hot water that soon cools. If my words offend the guiltless, I'll say I'm wrong to speak them, but if they fall on guilty ears then I think they need to be said.

(*One commentary declares, regarding this speech, "It is unlikely that there is much serious social satire contained in these lines; the speaker's main objection to lenones [pimps] and bankers is that they get in the way of people who want to have fun." That last sentence implies a purely ludic reading of this and other Plautine comedies*.)

The Parasite's Peripety (*Stichus*, 454-64, 497-504)

Peripety means reversal, of the kind experienced by tragic characters, whose hopes are raised near a play's ending, only to be more soundly dashed. The parasite in Stichus *is named Gelasimus, from the Greek word for laugh (*gelaō*). He rushes to the harbor, hoping to be the first to greet his would-be benefactor, thought to have been lost at sea. He will find that this character, Epignomus, has already been welcomed home.*

GELASIMUS. I've studied my joke books and am as confident as can be that I'll win over the man in charge with funny quips. Now I'm checking out the harbor to see if he's come ashore yet so I can win him with my wit. *(Gelasimus does not see Epignomus enter from the harbor and secretly overhear Gelasimus as he chatters on–thinking out loud as Plautus's people often do.)*

I came down here today on the heels of a wonderful omen! A weasel snatched a mouse, right at my feet! Since this wonder appeared, here's what I've been thinking. Just as that weasel found itself sustenance today, I trust I can do likewise. The omen makes this likely. (*Looks to one side*) Why, here's Epignomus, standing right here! I'll go and speak to him.

(Gelasimus exits and soon returns, downcast, because he found that Epignomus is dining at home with distinguished visitors and has no interest in inviting him.)

GELASIMUS. I sure as hell lost that one, no getting around it! There's one less Gelasimus than a little while ago. For sure, I'll never put my hopes in a weasel again. I've never known a more unreliable animal. It'll change places ten times a day, so why did I ever try to find a good omen for my affairs in it? For sure, I need to get with my friends to find out what legal recourse I have for... starving to death.

CON MAN

Con Man Conned (*Trinummus*, 843-997)

The title of this play is explained in the first line of the scene, below. In a play that is widely recognized as more moral than funny, this scene constitutes the major exception, a duologue of the "double act" type, as it's sometimes called in comic scene-making, featuring a clown and a straight man. The hapless clown is a would-be deceiver, a "Sycophanta" or trickster; but he is no match for the old man, Charmides, just returned from a long stay abroad, who keeps his identity secret while the con man spins his tale. It is also a dialogue between youth and age, in which youth is no match. Toward the end of this excerpt Plautus has one of his many identity jokes, playing on the "acting" that both men perform here: "Who am I, then, if I'm not who I am?" The scene occurs near the entrance to the house of Charmides. Most Plautine comedies, or course, feature a con or swindle of some kind. The Sycophanta has learned his rudiments–he seasons his pitch with phrases like "if you'll pay attention" ("si animum advortes" ll. 897, 939), and he has obtained a disguise from the props manager–odd clothes and an enormous hat, as a traveler from the land of Illyria (a country familiar to audiences of Twelfth Night).

SYCOPHANTA. (*To audience*) I call this day *trinummus,* a three-coin day, for I've hired out my services in the crooked arts for three small silver pieces. I'm arriving from Seleucia, Macedonia,

Asia, and Arabia, places on which I have never set my feet or my eyes. Behold the vile sort of employment that extreme poverty inflicts on a poor man! I'm actually now driven to say, in exchange for three coins, that I received these letters from some fellow–don't know who he is, or for certain if he was ever born.

CHARMIDES. (*Aside, standing apart*) Good lord! This guy is a specimen of the genus mushroom. He's covering his whole self with his head. Looks Illyrian; he's shown up in that sort of style.

SYC. (*Aside*) The person who hired me, when he hired me, took me home, told me what he wanted, first explained and showed what I should do and how to do it. I think if I would add something more this boss would get more trickery for his money. I'm costumed just as he decked me out. It took money to do this. He himself got this outfit from the stage manager at his own risk. Now, if I can cheat him out of this costume, I'll show him I'm a first-rate con man. (*Walks as if looking around at houses.*)

CHA. (*Aside*) The longer I look the less I like this fellow's face. I wouldn't be surprised if he's a burglar or a cutpurse. He's examining the neighborhood, looking around himself and checking out the houses. Hmph! I think he's looking for places he can soon visit to rob. I'd better watch carefully what he's up to and investigate this situation.

SYC. (*Aside*) My boss pointed this area out to me. It's somewhere around these houses that I need to start working my swindle. I'll knock on this door.

CHA. (*Aside*) The guy is making straight for our house. Sure as hell, I think I'd better keep carefull watch tonight!

SYC. (*Beating rudely on the door*) Open up here! Open up! Hey! Who's looking after this door?

CHA. (*Steps forward*) What are you looking for, kid? What do you want? Why this pounding?

SYC. Hey, oldtimer, I already gave my information to the assessors at census time. I'm looking for the place where a young guy, Lesbonicus, lives. Likewise another fellow with a white head like yours, name of Callicles, so said the one who gave me these letters.

CHA. (*Aside*) He's looking for my son Lesbonicus, and my friend Callicles, into whose care I gave my children and property.

SYC. Tell me for certain, grandpa, if you know where these people live.

CHA. Why are you looking for them? Who are you? Where are you from or where are you coming from?

SYC. You're asking a lot of questions all at once–I don't know which to answer first. If you calmly ask one thing at a time, I'll let you know my name, my business, and my reason for coming.

CHA. I'll do as you ask. First, go ahead and tell me your name.

SYC. You start by requesting a great deal. CHA. How so?

SYC. Because, pop, if you began walking before dawn at the start of my name, it would be bedtime before you'd arrive at the end.

CHA. To hear you tell it, one needs to carry traveling expenses for a name like yours.

SYC. There's another, tiny one, sort of like a little wine flask. CHA. What name is that, my boy?

SYC. "Presto"–that's my name, the everyday one.

CHA. Hmph! Rather, it's your trickster one. I'll bet if you said, "Presto," if I were to lend you something, "Presto!"–it would disappear on the spot. (*Aside*) This guy is really a scam artist. (*To Syc.*) But tell me something, young fellow.

SYC. What's that? CHA. What is it you want from these men you're looking for?

SYC. The father of this young man Lesbonicus gave me these two letters. He's a friend of mine.

CHA. (*Aside*) I've got him cornered! He's saying that *I* gave him the letters. I'll toy with him good and proper.

SYC. If you'll pay attention I'll explain as I began to. CHA. I'll pay attention to you.

SYC. He ordered me to give this letter to his son Lesbonicus. Likewise he said to give this other one to his friend Callicles.

CHA. (*Aside*) Great! He's trying to con me but in turn he's setting up to be conned. (*To Syc.*) So where was he?

SYC. He was getting along well.

CHA. Yes, but where? SYC. In Seleucia.

CHA. You received these from him in person?

SYC. Himself. He passed them from his hands into my hands.

CHA. What did the fellow look like? SYC. Some foot and a half taller than you.

CHA. (*Aside*) This raises the question whether I'm taller when absent than when present. (*To Syc*.) Do you know the man?

SYC. You keep asking silly questions. We always have lunch together.

CHA. What's his name? SYC. It's a really good guy's name.

CHA. I'd like to hear it. SYC. He's... oh, damn it... he's, he's, oh, poor me!

CHA. What's the problem? SYC. I've accidentally just swallowed his name!

CHA. It's not nice for someone to keep his friends locked up behind his teeth.

SYC. But just now it was sitting on the tip of my tongue.

CHA. (*Aside*) I got the jump on him in the nick of time.

SYC. (*Aside*) Obviously I'm caught, poor me. CHA. Now have you thought up the name?

SYC. (*Aside*) I'm an embarrassment to gods and men.

CHA. See how well you know the man!

SYC. I know him as well as I know myself. A person may not be able to find something he's actually holding in his hand and seeing with his eyes. Let me think about the letters in his name:

the beginning is a “C.”

CHA. Callias? SYC. That’s not it. CHA. Callippus? SYC. Not it. CHA. Callidemides? SYC. Not it. CHA. Callinicus? SYC. Not it. CHA. Callimarchus?

SYC. You’re not getting it. What’s more, by heaven, I don’t care at all, since I’ll be able to recall it on my own.

CHA. But as a matter of fact, many Lesbonicuses are here. Unless you say the father’s name, I can’t point out to you the people you’re looking for. Say something similar to it, on the chance we can find it through guesses.

SYC. It’s something like “Char.” CHA. Chares? Or Charmides?

SYC. Yes–Charmides! Him, that’s the guy! May the gods strike him dead!

CHA. I said before, you ought to prefer speaking well rather than ill about a friend.

SYC. Didn’t this worthless guy hide between my tongue and my teeth?

CHA. Don’t bad-mouth an absent friend!

SYC. So why did this cowardliest of cowards hide from me?

CHA. If you called to him he might answer to his name.

SYC. By Pollux, I left him with Rhadamant on the island of Cecropia.[52]

CHA. (*Aside*) Who is dumber than I, trying to find out where I myself am? But nothing is too absurd for this business. (*To Syc*.) But tell me, what about what I was asking? What places have you visited?

SYC. Extremely excellent ones in exceptional ways!

CHA. I'd love to hear about them, if it's not too much trouble.

SYC. Oh, I'm only too glad to tell. First of all, we were transported in Pontus to Arabia.

CHA. What? Is there also an Arabia in Pontus?

SYC. There is. This is not the one where incense comes from, but where wormwood is produced, and oregano.

CHA. (*Aside*) This trickster is too clever. But I'm being pretty funny in asking him where I come from, which I know and he doesn't. No excuse except that I want to find out how he'll finally get out of this. (*To Syc*.) But say, where did you go from there?

SYC. If you'll pay attention, I'll explain. I went to the head of a river that arises from beneath the throne of Jove.

CHA. Beneath Jove's throne? SYC. So I say.

CHA. From heaven? SYC. Yes, from the very center.

CHA. So did you climb into heaven?

SYC. Rather, we were carried on a skiff along the river, straight upstream.

CHA. So did you also see Jove?

SYC. The other gods said he'd gone to his villa to pass out food to his slaves. Then...

CHA. (*Scolding*) Then nothing! I forbid you to say another word, and by heaven I'll beat you if you annoy me anymore. No man should be considered honorable who claims to have gone from earth to heaven.[53]

SYC. I'll do just as I see you wish me to. But show me these men I was asking about, the ones I'm supposed to bring these letters to.

CHA. Listen: if you happened to see Charmides himself now, the one you remember giving you those letters, would you recognize him?

SYC. (*Indignantly*) Heavens, do you actually consider me a fool who couldn't recognize a man I've spent a lifetime with? Or that he would be so stupid as to trust me as a stranger with a thousand Philippic coins–money that he ordered me to deliver to his son and his friend Callicles, whom he asked to take charge of his affairs here? Would he place trust in me if he did not know me, and I him, extremely well?

CHA. (*Aside*) Now I'll trick this trickster for sure if I can cheat him out of the thousand Philippics he said I'd given him. I don't know who he is, and before today I never laid eyes on him. If it were a matter of life and death I wouldn't trust him with a bad penny. I must approach this person with caution. (*To Syc.*) Hey, Presto, I want a few words with you.

SYC. A few or a few thousand.

CHA. Do you have that money that you got from Charmides?

SYC. Yes, and what's more, it's in Philippics–a thousand coins, counted out by his hand on the banker's table.

CHA. And you got this for me from Charmides himself?

SYC. (*With sarcasm*) No, I got it from his grandfather or great grandfather, who are dead.

CHA. Young man, hand over that money to me!

SYC. (Suprised) What money should I give to you?

CHA. What you said you got from me.

SYC. Got from you? CHA. That's what I said.

SYC. Who are you? CHA. I am Charmides, who gave you a thousand coins.

SYC. Like hell you are, not today, not ever–at any rate not as far as this money is concerned. Get away from me, you con man. You're trying to con a con artist.

CHA. I *am* Charmides.

SYC. Your claim is a godawful waste of time because I'm not carrying any money. You sneaked up on me timing things just right. Once I said I was carrying money, you became Charmides. You were no such person until I mentioned money. Nothing doing! Just as you made yourself Charmides, you can now get yourself uncharmidated.

CHA. Who am I, then, if I'm not who I am?

SYC. What do I care, so long as you aren't the one I want you to be? For all I care you may be whoever you like. Before, you weren't the one you were; now, you've become the one you weren't then.

CHA. (*With an air of authority*) Do it if you're going to!

SYC. What am I supposed to do? CHA. Give back the money.

SYC. You're crazy, old man. CHA. You said Charmides gave you money.

SYC. Actually, a written note.

CHA. (*Exasperated*) Will you or won't you get a move on and get out of this neighborhood, you bum, before I give orders for you to be beaten?

SYC. Or what?

CHA. Because I am the very Charmides you've been lying about, the man you claim gave you letters.

SYC. Ah! I beg to know, are you really he? CHA. I am, for real.

SYC. Do you really mean it? You're the very one? CHA. I mean it.

SYC. The very man? CHA. The very man, I say. I am Charmides.

SYC. Then you are he himself? CHA. The selfsame. Now will you get out of my sight?

SYC. Indeed, seriously, and because you have come back home–(*pause*) you will be beaten thoroughly on my orders and those of the newly appointed aediles.[54]

CHA. What's this? Still with the ill will?

SYC. On the contrary, as you've arrived safely may the gods damn me if I care squat if you were dead and buried before all this.[55] I've already gotten paid for this gig; you have my heartfelt curses. As for the rest, who you are or who you aren't, I don't care a whit. I'll go back and report to the fellow who paid me those coins that the jig is up. I'm leaving. Live and prosper badly. May all the gods damn you on your return home, Charmides. (*Exit*)

PIMP

A Pimp Has a Birthday (*Pseudolus* 133-87)

Pimps almost always get their comeuppance in Plautus's comedies, rather like moneylenders in early English comedies. Ballio's bluster here, punctuated by asides either to the audience or a bystander on the stage, will make his later fall all the more delightful. The boisterousness and crowded stage are rare in surviving Greek and Roman New Comedy. Slavery in Plautus is a complex subject, but many agree with Erich Segal and Amy Richlin that the playwright abhorred the abuse of slaves in his society. Thus it may be that if Pseudolus, the ultimate clever slave, expresses the thoughts and sympathies of Plautus himself, Ballio is his shadow, the alazon to his eiron. Some have compared Ballio's lines with Molière's miser's speech to his servants in L'Avare, *in preparation for his dinner party. Roscius, the great Roman actor, loved the role of Ballio more than any other, according to his friend Cicero. The lines, being a "canticum," were sung.*

(Dedicated to the memory of Sergeant Billy G. Fowler.)

BALLIO. Out! Get on out here, you lazy bums, not worth your price or your keep.
Ain't no way none of you would do right if I didn't hand out
Whippings to keep you in line.
I never saw so many mule-men with ribs hot from beatings.

(*Aside:* When you beat them, it hurts *you* more. These whip-wasters live by just one rule:

When they get a chance it's steal this, snatch that,

Stash, rob, guzzle, gobble, run away. That's all they're good for.

Why, you'd rather have wolves among your sheep than leave them to watch your house.

But you look at their faces, they don't seem that bad. On the job it's something else.)

Now then, if you don't listen up to your orders,

If you don't get the dumb-ass, don't-give-a-shit attitude off your faces and out of your heads,

I'll have your backs whipped every color of the rainbow,

And not even the walls of a whorehouse in Capua will have as many little pictures,

Not even the zoo on an Alexandrian carpet.

So yesterday I already put out the word and told everybody their area of responsibility.

But you're so airheaded and dimwitted you need a little persuasion to remember your job.

You need to get down to business; and with a little hard work you'll survive me and my persuader.

(*Aside:* Will you look at this, they're not paying attention.) Pay attention! Listen up to your orders!

You'd better lend an ear to what I'm saying, black and blue breed of bastards.

By God your buttside hide will never be harder than my rawhide. (*Pause as he lashes some*.)

What's the matter? Does it hurt? There! That's what a slave gets for dissing the master.

All of you show me your faces and listen up to what I say.

You in charge of the water-urn, keep it full of water. Make sure the bronze pot is full for my

cook.

You, the individual with the axe, I appoint you to the firewood area of responsibility. What?

I don't *care* if it's all nicked and blunted!

You're all nicked and blunted too, but do I stop using you for that?

You, you're charged with getting this place cleaned up. You have your job, get going inside!

You there are officer in charge of laying out dining couches.

And you, clean the silver, set it out too.

All of you see that when I get back from downtown I find things ready.

So you three individuals will sweep and sprinkle, spread and spruce, shine and show off–everything!

Because today is my birthday.

It's only right you should help me celebrate.

Get the ham, pork rinds, tenderloin, sow's udder boiling.

You listening?

I want the leading men in town to think I'm grand, a man with property.

Now get in there and hustle, so there's no delay when the cook shows up.

I'm off to market to get whatever fish is on sale. Boy, you go first so I can watch for cutpurses.

But hold on, I almost forgot to say something else here at home.

You, WIMMIN, are you listening? I've got orders for you.

You while away your lives on frou-frou, fluff, and frivoling, you illustrious girlfriends of main men.

Now I'll know, today I'll find out, which individual works for her freedom

Or for her belly. Who craves prosperity, who just wants a good night's sleep.

Let me know who'll be a freedwoman and who'll be put up for sale–today I'll find out.

Today see to it that lots of loot comes in from your lover boys.

So if the pantries don't get their yearly refill today, tomorrow I'll have you

Humping in the whorehouses.

You all know, today is my birthday.

Where are those guys who call you darling, life-blood, dream girl, babylove, sweetie, honeybun?

See to it that your sugardaddies come to my door on the spot with bushels of sugar.

Why do I contribute your clothes, jewelry, whatever you need? Up to now what have you contributed to me but trouble?

You're all just wicked winos. While you're out glutting your guts I sit here parched.

So now, best thing is I talk to you each individually

So nobody can't say I didn't give her the word. Listen up to your orders!

EPILOGUE

Comedy Of Forgiveness

Wife Forgives Husband (*Casina*, 970-1011)

Plautus often ends by extending forgiveness to all who need it. In this first selection, from Casina*, the stage is crowded as it probably never was in Greek or Terentian New Comedies, where it seems no more than three actors were on the stage at any one time. Present here are the hapless Lysidamus (the senex, the "old man," the boss), Cleostrata, his wife (who has taken exquisite revenge on him), Myrrhina (the wife's friend and co-conspirator), the slave Chalinus, and the slave Olympio. Lysidamus had duped Olympio into marrying a servant girl, Casina, so he could have easy access to her bed; then the wives duped Olympio into a wedding with a boy disguised as that girl, Chalinus, who received him with violence. The old man was also beaten and his clothes torn, so that he thinks "she" must have been a Bacchant. Chalinus is holding the old man's staff, often part of the senex's regalia on stage. Real Casina never appears in this play. Here, Lysidamus enters to find himself cornered, Cleareta and Chalinus on one side, Myrrhina on the other.*

CLEARETA. A very good day to you, lover boy.

LYSIDAMUS. (*Aside*) Argh! Now I'm faced with my wife. I'm between the axe and the altar, and don't know which way to turn. No safety between wolves and dogs. Wolf here (*indicating*

Cleareta and Chalinus, holding the old man's staff, like a club, on one side), bitch there (*indicating Myrrhina and other women*). The symbolic wolf will take action with his club. Damn! I better go against that old quandary and make a choice. I'll go with her (*indicating Myrrhina and turning to go her way*). Hope it'll be better to choose, as it were, the dog.

MYRRHINA. What's up, bigamist?

CLE. (*Draws closer to him from other side*) Man of mine, how is it you show up looking this way? What did you do with your staff? What happened to your cloak?

MYR. I think he lost it in his hanky-panky, while in bed with Casina.

LYS. I'm a dead man!

CHALINUS. (*Stepping forward*) Want to go to bed with me? I'm Casina.

LYS. Go hang yourself. CHA. Don't you love me?

CLE. Say, what happened to your cloak?

LYS. I swear, wife, it was an attack of the Bacchae,[56] those wild women that worship Bacchus.

CLE. Bacchae? LYS. I swear, wife, it *was* the Bacchae.

MYR. Hah! He's messing with you, Bacchae don't put on their wild woman show anymore.

LYS. I forgot. But still, the Bacchae... CLE. *What* Bacchae?

LYS. But if it wasn't possible... CLE. (*Laughing*) Heavens, you're scared!

LYS. I? By Hercules, not true! CLE. Well, you look pretty pale.

OLYMPIO. (*Interrupts, pointing to Lysidamus*) He made me infamously miserable with his vile stunts.

LYS. Won't you shut up?

OLY. I will not, by heaven! You begged me with all your heart to ask that Casina marry me because you were hot for her.

LYS. I did that? OLY. No, Hector of Troy did.

LYS. I'll bet *he'd* have taken you down. (*To Cle*.) *Did* I do what they're saying?

CLE. You're still asking?

LYS. If I did all that, heaven knows I was wrong to.

CLE. (*She motions to him, stepping back toward their doorway*) Just come back in here–I'll remind you if you forget, even a little bit.

LYS. By Hercules, I'd rather just believe you right now. But, wife, (*kneels*) grant me, your husband, pardon for this. Myrrhina, beg Cleostrata: if after this I either lust for Casina, or just hint that I'm beginning to–if I ever, from now on, do anything like that, then, wife, there's no reason why you shouldn't hang me up in handcuffs and scourge me with elm tree switches.

MYRRHINA. (*To Cleostrata*) I do believe a pardon should be granted.

CLE. I'll do as you propose. (*To husband*) I now, less reluctantly, grant you pardon. We shouldn't make this long play any longer that it already is.

LYS. You're not mad? CLE. I'm not mad.

LYS. Can I rely on trusting you? CLE. I'm reliable.

LYS. (*Still kneeling, grasps her knees*) No one has a nicer wife than this one that I have.

CLE. (*To Chalinus*) Go on, give him back his staff and cloak.

CHA. Here, if you want them. But a great wrong has been done to me. I've married two men and neither one did what's supposed to be done to a new bride.

(*Note: Chalinus's first "marriage" is seen above, in the Casina example in the "Old Men" chapter. If the above scene is staged alone an appropriate line-change should be made.*)

A Slave Forgives the Master (*Epidicus* 715-31)

The slave Epidicus's very life depends on being clever, navigating as he must between the devil (his young master) and the deep blue sea (the young one's father). He tricked the father into accepting young master's girlfriend as the family's long-lost daughter. But the fickle son quickly tired of this girl and ordered Epidicus to buy a new girl, making him find the money to buy her himself. That girl turns out in the end to be, in fact, the long-lost daughter, much to young master's disappointment. In the first lines below, Epidicus, his hands bound, is speaking with his old master's senex friend Apoecides. Periphanes, the irate old master, is inside his house, where he will emerge after finding his long-lost daughter, Telestis, waiting there. Since it was Epidicus who found her, Periphanes must cease his anger over the slave's deceits and show his thanks somehow–here with the gift of freedom. Pouting over his initial punishment, Epidicus at first refuses to accept his reward. An editor writes of the ending, "The slave's reluctance to be freed and his treatment of Periphanes as the wrongdoer provide an amusing situation at the end of the play." Not only that, but Epidicus, usually left holding the bag, can put both his masters in their place, for once.

EPIDICUS. Damn it all, it's wrong that I'm standing here tied up, I who this very day found his

daughter.

APOECIDES. You're saying you found his daughter?

EPI. I found her and she's home. But how bitter it is to reap a harvest of ingratitude for one's good deeds.

APO. How tired we both are from searching all day through the city for her.

EPI. I'm tired from finding her, you're tired from searching.

(*Enter Periphanes from the house, speaking to his son and new-found daughter still inside.*)

PERIPHANES. Why are you two pleading for him so forcefully? I understand that I should treat him fairly. (*To Epidicus*) Let me untie your hands.

EPI. (*Sulking*) Don't touch me. PER. Come on, let me see them.

EPI. I refuse. PER. You're not being fair.

EPI. Not today, by heaven! Not unless you give me the satisfaction of being a free man.

PER. Your plea is quite fair and proper. I'll give you shoes, a tunic, and a cloak.

EPI. And what else? PER. Freedom.

EPI. And after that? A newly freed slave has to have something to eat.

PER. You will–I'll provide food.

EPI. By heaven, today you'll never untie me unless you beg me!

PER. I beg you, Epidicus, to pardon me if I unwittingly offended you through some fault of mine. For that reason, be a free man!

EPI. I grant you this pardon unwillingly but am compelled by necessity. Untie me, then, if you like. (*Extends hands and is untied, an actor announces the play's end*.)

A Mouthpiece Earns Two Pardons (*Mostellaria,* 1154-81)

Theopropides is the old master of his family newly returned from a long sea voyage–so long that his irresponsible son, Philolaches, has almost wrecked the household in drunken partying with his friends. In this closing scene the now-penitent son's persistent friend, Callidamates, an intercessor or mouthpiece, makes peace with the old man. (Philolaches, whom we would expect on stage in this closing scene, is absent–because of the three-character-onstage rule?) Forgiveness comes less easily to the scheming servant, Tranio. Earlier, when

Theopropides had returned unexpectedly from traveling, Tranio thought up the deceit of claiming that in the master's absence his uninhabited house had become haunted and was now abandoned. When Theopropides hears his property is lost, Tranio advises him he could earn a little money by selling his story to a comic playwright like Diphilus or Philemon because of its potential for a great comic deception (l.1149).[57] *Callidamates must then step in to save Tranio. Does the old man's easy forgiveness of his son signal that this is comedy at its least realistic and most absurd?*

Enter Callidamates, Theopropides, Tranio (with hands bound)

CALLIDAMATES. (*To Theopropides*) You know that I'm your son's foremost friend. He's come to me since he's ashamed to come to you because of his misdeeds. He knows that you know about all that. I'm begging you now to forgive his folly and his youth: he *is* your son. You do know that at his age guys will fool around that way. Whatever he did, he did together with us. We've been at fault. The money you paid out, the interest on it, all the expenses for buying the girl–we'll put our heads together and cover everything with our own resources, not yours.

THEOPROPIDES. As far as I'm concerned, my son could have no better mouthpiece than you. I'm not angry with him, no rancor. On the contrary, when I'm around he should go right on drinking, loving, doing whatever he likes. If he's mortified at running up all these bills, I think that's punishment enough.

CAL. He's mortified.

TRANIO. Now that he's pardoned, what about me?

THE. You'll be hung up and whipped to death, dirtbag.

TRA. Even if I'm mortified too?

THE. I swear on my life I'll see you dead!

CAL. Show mercy to all. For my sake, dismiss this offense by Tranio.

THE. There's nothing I would like more than punishing that man and laying him low for his crimes. (*Tranio smirks, holding out hands to be untied.*)

CAL. I'm begging, let him go. THE. Look how arrogant the lowlife is.

CAL. Tranio, get smart and back off!

THE. (*To Cal.*) *You* back off begging him about this; I'll force *him* to back off with the whip.

TRA. There's no need for that. CAL. (*To Tra.*) Please, do as I ask.

THE. I don't want you begging him. CAL. (*To Tra.*) I'm begging you.

THE. I said not to beg him!

CAL. (*To The*.) Say all you want. I'm asking you to give him this one break–for me!

TRA. (*To The*.) Why are you so uptight? As if tomorrow I won't offend you again. Then you can justifiably take *both* offenses out on me.

CAL. (*To The*.) Please let my plea be heard.

THE. Alright, go your way, but (*to Tra., pointing to Cal*.) you have him to thank for this. (*To audience*) Spectators, the play is done. Give us your applause!

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Notes

1.The subject of Plautus's uniqueness was much advanced by Eduard Fraenkel's 1922 German book, translated by Tomas Drevikovsky and Frances Muecke as *Plautine Elements in Plautus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The topic received a boost from Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Before and since Segal, there has been an acre of good books, editions, and commentaries in English that bring out the original elements in Plautus.

2.See Fraenkel's chapter 9 on "'Contaminated' Plays" (173-218).

3.The Renaissance editorial practice of dividing the plays of Plautus, and all plays generally, into five acts derives from Horace's *The Art of Poetry* (*Ars Poetica*), which declares that a play should not be longer or shorter than five acts. "Scene" divisions also date from the Renaissance.

4.Cesare Questa, intro. to his ed., Plautus, *La Pentola del Tesoro* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1987), 42. He adds that the language contains nothing of popular, or worse, dialectal or rustic, usage, quoting the well known ancient opinion that if the Muses had spoken Latin they would have used the language of Plautus.

5.Fraenkel, *Plautine Elements* 49.

6.Niall Slater, "Plautine Negotiations: The *Poenulus* Prologue Unpacked," in his *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind* (London: Routledge, 2000), 149-61.

7.See Richard C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and Its Audience* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). *Poenulus*'s prologue is a useful introduction to Amy Richlin's award-

winning *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

8.Quotations from Hazel E. Barnes, "The Case of Sosia versus Sosia," *Classical Journal* 53 (1957): 19-24 (19).

9. David Christenson translates "pignis usu fecisti tuom" (l. 375) as "thanks to your fists you have claimed me by right of occupation." He explains: "According to the Roman legal notion of *usucapio*, continuous possession of another's property results in transfer of ownership." Christenson, ed. *Amphitruo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 212.

10.Hercules has not been born yet, but will be at the end of this comedy. Christenson's note on the remainder of this episode: "Following their mutual claims to Sosia's *identity* [italics mine] (ll. 396-401) the doubles enter into a sort of loosely structured *agon* (i.e. the competitive debate best known from Aristophanic comedy and Euripidean tragedy) that spans the rest of the scene.... Sosia, to his own astonishment, is gradually forced to acknowledge that neither his experiences nor his appearance are unique" (214-15).

11.In *Trinummus* 266, Lysiteles is said to use a divorce-formula against Love: "Go away, Love, keep your property for yourself."

12.William Webb, A Discourse of English Poetrie (1585) in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904) 1:253.

13.Later (lines 460-62), Olympio suspects Chalinus of being Lysidamus's sexual partner.

14.Lots are drawn as follows. The urn is filled with water; the lots (pieces of hardwood, or sometimes hardened clay) are dropped into the water where they sink to the bottom–unless, as Olympio fears, they are light woods, like poplar or fir, that will float on top. Cleostrata will take out the winning lot (at l. 415). See notes on this scene in McCary and Willcock, esp. on ll. 384, 387. Also see Anderson, *Barbarian Play*, 53-57, who observes that, in the Greek original play by

Diphilus, the wife was not on stage.

15.Cresophontes cheated by giving his nephew a sun-dried clay lot, which dissolved in the water.

16.Lysidamus and Cleostrata had already been associated with Jupiter and Juno in ll. 331-37.

17.On Plautus's fondness for the absurdity of a slave claiming "ancestors," see McCary and Willcock, p. 149 on l. 418.

18.Scott Maisano, "Rise of the Poet of the Apes," *Shakespeare Studies* 41 (2013): 64-76.

19.Thomas Heywood, *The Captives or the Lost Recovered* (4.1.24-31), in his *Three Marriage Plays*, ed. Paul Merchant (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1996).

20.Alfred Ernout, ed. and trans. *Epidicus*, in *Plaute* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1961), 3: 113.

21.Laconian or Spartan, is the name for a breed of hunting dogs.

22.Michael Fontaine, *Funny Words in Plautine Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

23.Slaves drank water mixed with vinegar to satisfy thirst.

24."[A]ncient wine jars were tall and often quite thin, with two handles at the neck for ease of lifting; the bottom was drawn out into a long point which gave a grip when the jar was carried horizontally on the shoulder but prevented the jar from standing up unless it was either stuck in soft sand or leaned against something. For use, jars were placed on their sides on a shelf or rack and tipped down as they were emptied until they 'stood on their heads.'" *Miles Gloriosus*, rev. ed. Mason Hammond et al. (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997) n. on l. 850.

25.The suggestion is to play "mica," a Roman hand-game probably like rock-paper-scissors.

26.Perhaps a reference to the male condition known as epididymal hypertension, in which case Stichus should stand in a slight crouch.

27.*Bacchides* is unique in that a fragment of its Greek source, Menander's *Dis Exapaton* (The Double Deceiver), exists, giving a glimpse of how Plautus elaborated on Greek comedies in his imitations.

28.Hercules murdered Linus, his tutor.

29.The doctor is testing Menaechmus's ability to feel pain, which the mentally ill supposedly could not. Hellebore (next line) was a medicine used for insanity.

30.I.e., a yoke, which is a punishment for slaves, not citizens.

31.These words (l. 266) may express a Roman formula for divorce. See above, n. 11,

32.Gratwick, ed, 210 on ll. 766-67.

33.On monkeys and people in Plautus, see Catherine Connors, "Monkey Business: Imitation, Authenticity, and Identity, from Pithekoussai to Plautus, *Classical Antiquity* 23.2 (2004): 179-207.

34.P.J. Enk's commentary, *Plauti Mercator, cum prolegomenis, notis criticis, commentario exegetico,* 2d ed. (Leiden: Sijthof, 1966), pp. 109-10, traces this developing joke about "working with wool" to Greek comedy, including *Lysistrata*.

35.Nixon's translation of line 539.

36.McCary and Willcock note (p. 199) the irony of Pardalisca's invoking obedience here, when she earlier advised the "bride" always to keep her husband subservient.

37.The indeclinable word "pondo" in Sophoclidisca's "octoginta pondo" (l.231) refers to the Roman twelve-ounce "pound." This means that the *puer* Paegnium is a "boy" as well as being a male slave.

38.Ernout, ed. says the phrase "os perciderem" is equivalent to the verb *irrumare* (note on l. 283).

39.Nixon's translation of l. 293.

40.Translation slightly altered to clarify l. 298.

41.On sodomy with boys in Plautus ("pedication"), see Fontaine 216-47.

42.Alison Sharrock, *Reading Roman Comedy: Poetics and Playfulness in Plautus and Terence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 190-93.

43.This is deduced from unique features of Plautine style, especially wordplay (which must, of course, be Latin, not Greek), and such stylistic traits as fantastic claims (e.g., that Jupiter allows only this cook to fix his dinner), mythological comparisons, and accumulation of vivid details (Ballio's catalogue of orders). See J.C.B. Lowe, "The Cook Scene of Plautus's *Pseudolus*," *Classical Quarterly* 35 (1985): 411-16.

44.Willcock, ed. *Pseudolus* p. 125.

45.See Fontaine's lengthy analysis of wordplay in this passage, pp. 86-88 (he renames Ballio as Phallio). In ll. 849-54 he argues (p. 81) for a pun on *coquinare* as "cook" and possible Vulgar Latin "cheat" or "pilfer."

46.Willcock thinks there are two boys (*pueri*) in the play (ed. *Pseudolus*, p. 30). Other editors and translators see only one, as with DeMelo's ed., in listing *personae,* though his stage direction at l. 790 has a boy accompanying both Ballio and the Cook. Duckworth, ed. *Pseudolus*, is probably right that "The *puer* of III, 1 [the ugly boy] is not to be identified with the *puer* of III, 2, who returns with Ballio from the market and is the same boy that attended him in 1. 2 and 1. 3 as a mute character" (p. 96, n. 55).

47.Medusa made Jason's father, Aeson, young again by boiling him with a potion. She saw to it that his brother Pelias died with the same treatment.

48.Michael Fontaine, “A Cute Illness in Epidaurus: Eight Sick Jokes in Plautus’s *Gorgylio* (*Curculio*),” *Quasi Labor Intus: Ambiguity in Latin Literature,* ed. Michael Fontaine et al. (n.p.: Paideia Institute for Humanistic Study, 2018), 27-53.

49.The Latin is deliberately ambiguous. As Gail Smith writes, this clause can mean “that he should fear you more than me” or “that I fear him more than you fear him.” This is consistent with the still unrevealed fact that the captives are brothers, and Hegio their father. Plautus, *Captivi,* commentary by Gail Smith (BrynMawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College, 1985), at line 301.

50.See Plautus, *Menaechmi*, ed. Gratwick, 229.

51.Clara Shaw Hardy, “The Parasite’s Daughter,” proposes that, “the Arabian maiden disguise she wears is a tragic costume (possibly complete with tragic mask)” (29).

52.I.e., on Monkey Island. Recall men as monkeys in selections above from *Rudens* and *Mercator*.

53.In ll. 946-47 Nutting sees a reference to Jove’s abduction of Ganymede to heaven.

54.Nutting observes that the invitation to a beating replaces the expected invitation to dine, at this point. Beating by the “novorum aedilium” (l. 990) “may refer to officials newly appointed on the holiday for which the play was written.

55.I follow Nutting’s text, “di me perdant,” rather than Lindsay’s “di te perdant” here (l. 992).

56.The Roman Senate banned public worship of Bacchus in 186 B.C. Euripides’ *The Bacchae* retells the myth of the god’s crazed women worshipers who tore apart the ruler Pentheus. The audience knew the allusion–compare *Mercator* 469-70.

57.Tranio says, “optumas frustrationes dederis in comediis,” you’d give them the best deceptions for their comedies. The word “frustratio,” deception or trick, means this was essential for good comic plotting.