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## Abstract

### *Plautus and the Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family*

Helen E Barber

In 1991 Suzanne Dixon published an article that suggested that, from the late Republic onwards, it is possible to detect a sentimental ideal of family life at Rome. She also argued that there is a significant paucity of affectionate terminology in Plautus' mid-republican works. My thesis looks for traces of a Roman sentimental ideal in Plautus' comedies. I analyse his plays, being careful to interpret them in the light of comic convention and paying attention to the varying forms of comic drama, and I search for sentimental themes related to wives and husbands, parents and children, the home, and slaves and outsiders. I consider the evidence and arguments used by Dixon and other historians and also look at modern examples of sentimentality (in literature and in other cultural material), using these as a tool to measure sentimentality in Plautus. My overall contention is that Plautus' metatheatrical plays deliberately explored and exploited the sentimental ideology of his original audience. In fact, some of the works' humour depended upon the spectators' knowledge of the ideal and its claims upon their attention; Plautus wryly exposed the tensions that existed between the ideal and the realities of daily life. Plautus' plays were successful and obviously communicated well with his contemporaries. I therefore conclude that sentimental ideology was well known in Rome prior to the late Republic – that it is an enduring concept, discernible in many cultures and eras.

Plautus and the Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD, 2011

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Throughout the thesis, abbreviations of the names of classical authors and works are those used in the Oxford Latin Dictionary and the Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek Lexicon.

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## Introduction

### 1. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?

In 1940 Ernst Lubitsch produced a romantic comedy named *The Shop Around The Corner*. Based on a play by Laszlo, it tells the tale of two young Hungarians. The pair work in the same shop and quarrel continuously, yet both have a similar preoccupation: they have mystery pen pals, with whom they exchange romantic letters. As the film progresses it transpires that the couple are each other's pen pal. Christmas nears and their feud dissolves into romance.

The lovers' story is complemented by subplots involving other characters – in particular an older family man, who supports the hero, and an irascible boss, whose wife is having an affair with a treacherous employee. The boss wrongly suspects the story's hero, but later finds out the truth. The traitor is expelled and the hero acts as a son towards the boss, who, after a moment of despair, mellows and accepts the comfort of his 'family' of faithful workers.

*The Shop Around The Corner*, according to Harvey, was the Lubitsch film, 'most overtly about experiences of love and affection' (1987, 393). Though only a modest box office success, its story attracted significant, continued interest. Two musical versions appeared, one in 1949 and another in 1963, and the latter was revived in 1993. Then, in 1998, the story was used again, in a film that solidified its stars' status as, 'America's favourite onscreen romantic couple': *You've Got Mail* (Turner Entertainment Co., 2002).

The plot paradigm of this film is almost identical to that of its forerunner. Two young people are at loggerheads; they run bookstores in competition with each other. Meanwhile, though both are ignorant of the identity of their correspondent, they communicate with each other via the internet. And at the end of the movie they are happily and romantically united.

Despite the obvious similarities, however, *You've Got Mail* is differentiated from *The Shop Around The Corner* by more than its evocation of modern technology. For instance, the couple in the older film are single at the start of their story; the couple in *You've Got Mail* both have partners, who have to be removed before the internet romance can progress. Then, in great contrast to *The Shop Around The Corner*, there is no family man to give advice to the modern hero. He has a father and grandfather, but both are 'Don Juans' of the first order. Indeed, the father has had a whole series of wives and divorces; his current arrangement collapses as his latest wife runs off to conduct a lesbian affair.

This, then, is how a story, once set in the 1940s, is re-told at the end of the 1990s. Minute analysis is hardly necessary to highlight obvious changes in the moral codes of the two films. In the earlier one, we readily assume that both protagonists are inexperienced; their goal is idealistic, romantic marriage. The subplot, concerning the cuckolded boss, does not undermine, but upholds this. Harvey states that *The Shop Around The Corner* is 'a Lubitschean comedy in which the adultery really hurts' (*ibid*, 396). The wife is cast as a villain, who has broken the rules by not wishing 'to grow old' with her husband. In a symbolic expulsion, her lover is thrown out of the shop by the hero. Certain that the happy protagonists are more 'worthy' characters, we never contemplate the idea that they themselves might, one day, experience pangs caused by unfaithfulness. We take it for granted that their relationship, cemented in a romantic Christmas Eve scene, will last, as all fairy-tale romances do, 'happily ever after'.

Superficially, the modern couple in *You've Got Mail* do not seem to fit exactly into the same mould. They are experienced; they begin their email flirtation whilst living with other partners and are not presented as unattractive because of this. Though they might feel a twinge of guilt, their unfaithfulness does not constitute a serious social violation like the wife's in the earlier film. They live in a society in which people have numerous relationships, in which marriage is an optional extra, probably of limited duration. Logically, therefore, they might not be expected to be interested in living 'happily ever after'...



But logic has nothing to do with it. The spectators of *You've Got Mail* soon realise that a lasting, idealistic relationship remains on the agenda. Several factors encourage them to believe this. Firstly, the existence of the couple's previous partners – an existence which momentarily suggests the acceptability of serial relationships – is subtly passed over. The pair are presented as unsuitable, deserving of rejection. Secondly, the hero speaks ironically of the 'family' created by his grandfather's and father's serial affairs. Finally, when his father seeks to counsel him, saying how easy it is to find a new partner, the hero disagrees; he is not looking for any old partner (or, presumably, series of partners), but for one who meets his ideal.

So, despite its modern backdrop, *You've Got Mail* evokes a romantic, 'happy ever after' ideal in the same way as *The Shop Around The Corner*. This may not reflect modern realities, but perhaps says something about the continuity of romantic aspirations. A review of the film on the internet store, Amazon, reads:

'Yes, it's corny and totally predictable... but one overlooks this when enjoying the sight of two such beautiful people finding *true love*. The gorgeous location photography helps set the *fairy tale* mood...' (2005, my emphasis)

'True love', the language of this review implies, is an ideal – a rather sentimental ideal – belonging to a fairy tale. The box office success of *You've Got Mail* suggests that it is an ideal that appeals to audiences in the fin de siècle West. It also appealed to people in the different world of the 1940s. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?*

## 2. The Sentimental Ideal Of The Roman Family



Image 1

I first became interested in sentimental ideals after reading Suzanne Dixon's 'The sentimental ideal of the Roman family' (in Rawson (ed), 1991<sup>1</sup>). Dixon's article suggests that it is possible to discern a sentimental ideal of family life in Roman source material. This ideal, which may be compared with our own<sup>2</sup> family concept, promoted affectionate conjugal relationships, similar to those portrayed in the films discussed above, and showed an appreciation for young and youthful children<sup>3</sup>. Dixon supports her argument by citing a variety of sources from a wide-ranging period of history<sup>4</sup>. She notes that there were 'tensions' between the ideal and reality, admits that evidence of

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<sup>1</sup> Since Dixon's 1991 article (supplemented by her book, *The Roman Family*, 1992) provides an extensive and focused discussion about Roman sentimentality, it serves as my thesis' chief secondary source/point of reference in the exploration of the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis I assume that Dixon's comparison is primarily with *Western* modern society.

<sup>3</sup> The persons involved in the ideal – husbands, wives and children - thus correspond to those who comprise a typical 'nuclear family': cf. Dixon, 1992, 5. Dixon refers to Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* (1965). Though not the first work to describe the development of the family in evolutionary terms, this is still a key text for students of the family. Ariès argued significantly that a society's attitude to the nuclear family as a whole can be deduced from its attitude to children and childhood. Dixon 1991, 109; Saller & Shaw, 1984, 124; Cunningham, 1995, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> 1991, 99-111 (cf. 1992, 177), citing such sources as Cicero's letters (e.g. *Fam.* 14. 1-5; *Att.* 1.10; 1.18.1ff.; 12.6a); the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*; the *Arca Pacis*; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8.708-13); Statius' *Silvae* (3-5); Plutarch's *Conjugal Precepts* (*Moralia*, 142.E); Pliny's letters (7.5); Fronto's letters (*Amic.* 1.12). NB The majority of the evidence reflects the life and values of upper-class Romans, but Dixon also refers to slave

concurrent unsentimental attitudes can be found<sup>5</sup>, and acknowledges that the analogy with our own cultural norm must be qualified<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, she remains convinced that a sentimental concept did have currency in Rome. Importantly, whilst maintaining that the ideal ‘possibly originated and certainly flourished’ in the late Republic, she also suggests there are indications that mid-republican Roman society was less sentimental. Though she concedes that a paucity of material from the earlier period makes rigorous comparison difficult, she maintains that the mid-republican playwrights demonstrate a significant lack of sentimentality, and she argues that various anecdotes written about early eras show a smaller interest in emotional matters<sup>7</sup>. Her choice of *terminus a quo* accords with the work of other scholars, who have tended to identify signs of family sentimentality *only* in sources that date from the late Republic onwards<sup>8</sup>. My thesis will seek to demonstrate that this emphasis is mistaken: the works of the mid-republican playwright, Plautus, provide ample evidence that a sentimental ideal was current in an earlier Roman era, suggesting continuity in thought rather than change.

### 3. Sentimentality

#### a) Theories of sentimentality

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tomb inscriptions, which describe marital harmony, suggesting that these testify to a wide-spread existence of the ideal (1991, 108-9; cf. Rawson, 1991, 29).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. the attitude to children was not uniform; some evidence suggests a poor appreciation of young children/the childhood stage; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 5.16; Cic. *Tusc.* 1.93. Dixon, 1991, 110; cf. Carp, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> 1991, 99.

<sup>7</sup> 1991, 101-4; 1992, 68-9. Evidence quoted includes Plutarch’s anecdotes of marriage (a comparison of *Aem.* 5 with *Brut.* 13, *Ant.* 10, *Pomp.* 48-9 is suggested) and histories written by Valerius Maximus and Aulus Gellius (V. Max. 2.1.4, Gel. 4.3.2).

<sup>8</sup> Dixon, 1991, 102-103; Rawson, 2003, 1-4; 21 (Rawson believes that an accelerated change in attitudes to children occurred only in the 1<sup>st</sup>-century BC. However, she acknowledges problems in assessing earlier attitudes due to a comparative lack of evidence.); Veyne, 1978, 35, 40-1 (Veyne argued for a development only as the Empire progressed); Wiedemann, 1989, chapters 1 & 6 (argues for development in first 4 centuries AD). Note, however, Bradley’s suggestion that there are signs of sentimentality in the mid Republic (1998, 535-7), and caution and counterarguments expressed about theories of linear development in family dynamics: Dixon, 1992, 18-19; 29; Mount, 1983, 140; Saller & Shaw, 1984, 134; Cunningham, 1995, 9, 27.

In the course of this thesis I will analyse Plautus' plays in search of 'sentimental ideals'. Before doing this, however, I think it advisable to consider the subject of sentimentality itself. The topic is enormous and my discussion will be comparatively brief. Nevertheless, I hope to highlight some aspects of 'sentimentality', with its place in the history of literary criticism, which shape our understanding of the term, and which therefore have significance to my work.

In setting out her definition of the Roman sentimental ideal, Dixon concedes that it 'ignored some of the realities' of actual family life; it existed in partial independence from 'fact' (1991, 111). This independence lends the concept some initial elusiveness, and the modern academics' search for Roman sentiment is further complicated since the word 'sentimental' – with its cognates 'sentiment' and 'sentimentality' – has no absolute meaning in the English language (Ellis, 1991, 4). It has an inherent ambiguity, which is reflected in a wide connotative spectrum. The term has been used both positively and negatively, in common parlance and in aesthetic and literary criticism<sup>9</sup>.

An analysis of the Chambers dictionary (1993 edition) entries for sentiment, sentimental and sentimentality reveals various possible 'positive' connotations. The words have been associated with tender emotions: love, friendship and pity. They have been closely linked with idealism and are related to that warm, emotive concept of the past: nostalgia. 'Refined feelings', discernible in art and literature, may also be expressions of sentiment.

In Dixon's context, these pleasing definitions work well; her presentation of the Roman ideal is, after all, an appealing one. Her article quotes a lament in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*:

'Now no more will your household greet you joyfully, nor your best of wives, nor will your dear children race to snatch first kiss and touch your heart with a silent sweetness...'  
(3, 894 ff.)

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Banfield, 2007.

This passage evokes the image of a home-coming; it provides a poignant expression of nostalgia and makes tender references to members of the nuclear family; Dixon suggests that it encapsulates the ‘joys of family life’ – joys which Dixon assumes her readers will recognise *and* appreciate as sentimental (1991, 99, my emphasis).

The dictionary caters for ‘constructive’ sentimentalism; modern readers understand that the concept *can* be positive. Importantly, modern philosophical thought has sometimes promoted it, too. In the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century, building upon foundations laid out in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), the Third Earl of Shaftesbury produced extensive works that promoted sentimentality. Shaftesbury perceived man as fundamentally good; he suggested that aesthetic appreciation promoted moral belief; he thought benevolence and altruism innate to the human soul – a soul which reflects the harmonious beauty of the physical world (Bernbaum, 1915, 114-20<sup>10</sup>).

Shaftesbury’s arguments were influential. Sentimental philosophy continued to attract critical approval well into the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. New sorts of sentimental literature were produced: authors such as Beecher Stowe (writer of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, 1852) successfully developed sentimental ideologies in their works – works which are still read today (Camfield, 1988, 322 and *passim*). Nonetheless, it must be admitted that even in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, opinion about sentiment’s role in society was divided. Howard suggests that the century’s emotive, moralistic works provoked a ‘deflating impulse’; ‘celebratory’ and ‘stigmatizing’ views of sentiment thus materialised simultaneously (1999, 71). Significantly, the celebratory view gradually lost support. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century it was seldom promoted in academia. ‘Sentimentality’ became embroiled in a

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<sup>10</sup> Bernbaum makes extensive references to Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, in particular to *Enquiry concerning Virtue and Merit* and *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody* (1709-11). Interestingly, 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy not only associated sentimentality with personal morality, it also described it as a privilege. Natural sentiment might be common to all, but only the privileged – the highly cultured, leisured and well-educated – had opportunity to develop fully aesthetic and morally up-lifting sentimental taste (Camfield, 1988, 335; Jefferson, 1983, 519).

struggle between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture. Low or ‘popular’ culture continued to support it<sup>11</sup>, but the elite commonly rejected it, as something ‘easy’, cheap and clichéd<sup>12</sup>.

The tendency of recent literary and philosophical works, therefore, has been to regard sentimentality as a fault, not an asset (Knight, 1999, 411). Dictionary definitions reflect this. They allow for the positive connotations still used by Dixon (and understood by her readers), but qualify them. They admit sentiment’s association with ‘fine feeling’, but note that it may degenerate into mawkish sloppiness. This potential for mutation increases sentimentality’s ambiguity, especially because it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment at which sentimental expressions slide from the ‘refined’ into the ‘sloppy’. The definitions also suggest that sentimental feeling may be insincere or affected. ‘Sentimentalism’ becomes a metonym for ‘deception’; amongst critics there is an inclination to set it in opposition to laudable realism<sup>13</sup>. Note, for instance, Ellis’ attitude in an article about Thomas Gray’s famous *Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard*. A verse in this poem was apparently inspired by Lucretius’ lament<sup>14</sup>. It echoes its details, referring to a ‘blazing hearth’ (the warm centre of the home); a wife and her care; and children, whose eager lisping denotes their childish qualities:

‘For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,

Or busy housewife ply her evening care:

No children run to lisp their sire’s return,

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<sup>11</sup> Cf., for example, Doris Day’s 1945 hit *Sentimental Journey* (concerning a nostalgic trip home) and Adamson’s 1939 hit *The Little Things Which Mean So Much*. This contains the lines: ‘May you never lose the sentimental touch, It’s the little things that mean so much’.

<sup>12</sup> Solomon, 1991, 8 and *passim*; cf. Howard, 1999, 73-4. Note a curiosity: proponents of ‘high culture’ in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century have accepted (as worthy of consideration) certain popular *and* sentimental productions, by writers such as Dickens, from *previous* eras (Warner, 1990, 740).

<sup>13</sup> Midgley, 1979, 385 (Midgley wrote that sentimentality ‘misrepresents’ reality); Knight, 1999, 412-3; Jefferson, 1983 526-7. Describing ‘innocence’ as the particular focus of sentimentality, Jefferson lists a set of sentimental characteristics: ‘sweetness, dearness, littleness, blamelessness, and vulnerability’. These correspond to the childlike qualities Dixon (1991) claims the Romans learned to appreciate in their offspring. However, whereas Dixon implies that, to their credit, the ‘sentimental’ Romans *accurately* assessed the qualities of their children, Jefferson suggests that sentimentality falsely imposes qualities of innocence on the subjects of its attention.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 1982, Note B, p. 258.

Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.' (1751)

However, unlike Dixon, Ellis does not comment on the verse's touching encapsulation of family life; instead, he concentrates on Gray's poem's overall realism, arguing that this *preserves* him from sentimentality. The implication is that this is highly commendable (1951, 1000).

The chequered history of the reception and literary promotion of sentimentality demonstrates the concept's ambiguity. It has provoked polemic reactions, sometimes being perceived worthy of praise, sometimes being roundly condemned. It is worth noting, however, that more balanced views have also been expressed. Jane Austen provides a particularly interesting perspective. Her novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), has been cited as an example of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century anti-sentimental tradition (Howard, 1999, 71<sup>15</sup>), but though it certainly exposes the foolishness of *excessive* sentimentality (sensibility), it neither suggests that sentimentality is valueless *per se*, nor seeks to establish the infallibility of an antithetical, rational 'sense' (Lamont, 1970, x). In the literary burlesque, *Northanger Abbey* (1819), Austen returns to the topic, once more treating it in a balanced fashion. This book, whilst deliberately presenting a satirical picture of 'affected' sentimentality (demonstrating the concept's tendency towards hyperbole and hypocrisy), also promotes two heroines who encapsulate the admirable qualities of sentimentalism. They suffer vicissitudes in a cold, rational world, which prioritises economic and social position over personal values and inclinations (Butler, 2001, 168).

Austen concludes the novel with a question for her readers. She has, by this point, provided a clichéd, sentimental solution for her plot: despite their disinclination to honour social mores and rational sense, both her heroines have been happily and advantageously married. Austen suggests that her audience consider the moral implications of this. Her suggestion is not totally serious: it constitutes a final jibe at didactic sentimental fiction. Even so, readers are encouraged to think about

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Moler (1966, 414-5). Moler surveys the sources for *Sense and Sensibility*, suggesting that it may have been directly influenced by Maria Edgeworth's *Mademoiselle Panache* (1796), which attempts to establish sense, rather than sensibility, as a moral norm.

the novel's idealistic conclusion. Is it the one they wished for? They have been complicit with Austen, laughing at sentimental fiction. If, nevertheless, they are pleased by her heroines' happiness, then they must at least sympathise with sentimental idealism. They may even hope that it is not *impossibly* unrealistic.

Austen challenges us to acknowledge the attractions of sentimentality. The concept may have received continuous intellectual disapprobation, but – perhaps because there is something about it that is essentially appealing – it persists in society. Seeking to counterbalance dismissive intellectual attitudes, Solomon argues that the emotions associated with sentimentality are 'easy' simply because they play essential roles in human ethics and character (1991, 13). If this is so, some sentimentality may be unavoidable – cultural material from *any* era may occasionally, perhaps even inadvertently, contain evocations of sentiment. Consider again Lucretius' lament. This does not *intentionally* extol the joys of family life. It is a satire, written to expose the unreasonable behaviour of persons who refuse to act philosophically. Nisbet writes that it is supposed to sound over-emotional and cliché-ridden. However, he adds that nonetheless, 'humanity seems to break in...' (1986, 127). Lucretius managed to evoke a picture of family life that draws sympathy (a sentimental emotion) from his modern readers. Gray's *unsatirical* imitation – though it *may* avoid bathetic sentimentalism – bears witness to this<sup>16</sup>.

To conclude, then: 'sentimentality' is an ambiguous term *and* concept. Sentimental idealism has been accused of misrepresenting reality; sentimental productions may obscure the hard facts about the periods in which they were conceived; they may be insincere, unpragmatic and mawkish – and they may spawn parodies of the concept itself (cf. examples in Lucretius and Austen)<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, some have argued that sentimentality is a universal human characteristic, not totally without sense. There is, apparently, no such thing as wholly unemotional reason; on the contrary,

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<sup>16</sup>The satirical tone of Lucretius' lament does not necessarily invalidate the use of it in Dixon's argument. She is able to deduce the sentimental behaviour of Lucretius' contemporaries from his scorn.

<sup>17</sup> This is significant; though Plautus' mid-republican comedies *may* have been as unsentimental as Dixon claims, they *might* also take opportunities to poke fun at sentimentality.



individuals with impaired emotional ability have impaired decision-making skills<sup>18</sup>. Sentiment has certainly proved pervasive in the modern era and – if it is truly a natural human characteristic – we may assume that it could have been pervasive in ancient times, too. Plautus provided the popular literature of his day. We must ask if he *could* have avoided sentimentality altogether.

#### b) Introducing significant aspects of family sentimentality

Two aspects of the family sentimental ideal have affected daily life and permeated literature in both the modern and ancient eras (facilitating Dixon's important comparison between the modern and Roman ideal): its focus on domesticity and its concern for morality within the nuclear family. The early upsurge of interest in sentimentality in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century resulted in a sub-genre of comedy that emphasised family morality. In line with sentimental tradition, it highlighted the importance of 'virtue' in relationships, commonly presenting plots that employed overt moralising and contained displays of self-sacrificing virtue (Ellis, 1991, 10-12; 19-20; cf. Novak, 1979, 49). Its values continue to have currency in 'sentimental' artistic productions today and are easily recognised by the modern audience. Furthermore, despite shifts in moral codes (perceptible in film remakes like *You've Got Mail*), the family remains the subject of social, moral and political debate in the modern world. Dixon notes that politicians, journalists, and ministers of religion perpetually propose policies for and pronounce judgements upon it (1992, 20). The family – and what is 'right' for it – was certainly an issue of importance in the recent general election campaign in Britain (Bennett & Sugden, 2010).

Family morality was also a matter of concern in Ancient Rome. Dixon argues that the 'nuclear' family was central to Roman sentimentality<sup>19</sup>; this family triad seems to have been governed by moral ideals. In his *Defence of Plancius*, Cicero wrote:

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Howard, 1999, 68. Howard makes reference to Damasio, A.R. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Putman's, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> See 1992, 103. The Roman terms for the family (*familia*; *domus*) encompassed people outside the family triad, such as slaves; nonetheless, Dixon's belief that the nuclear family still had an important ideological role is supported generally by modern scholars (Cf. Bradley, 1991 (1), 125, quoting Crook, J., *Law and Life of Rome*, 1967, 98; Saller & Shaw, 1984, 124; Martin, 1996, 52, 58 ). NB The evidence used by Dixon and other

‘[...] in my opinion *pietas* is the foundation of all virtues.’ (12.29)

His client, he argued, abounded in it; he both venerated *and* loved his father.

*Pietas* was an essential Roman familial concept. It is Saller’s view that it placed mutual *obligations* on family members, but also involved love and affection. Though it was a duty, jurists regarded it as ‘natural’ – not the creation of civil law (1991, 149). In Roman thought, *pietas* was both an instinctive, emotive response *and* a sign of moral probity. It provides a preliminary example of, and is perhaps fundamental to, the interaction between the sentimental and moral family ideals.

Sentimental Romans, according to Dixon, also expected affection in marriage. It is perhaps curious, then, that when they wrote about successful marriages, they frequently emphasised spouses’ *moral* integrity, rather than their love. Tombstones, for instance, often commemorate marital *concordia* as though it were a sign of virtue (Dixon, 1991, 107-8). It appears that marital harmony was an ideal. Like *pietas*, it *possibly* had both sentimental and moral aspects<sup>20</sup>.

Roman women were also described as ‘virtuous’ when they remained *univiriae*: wives of only one husband<sup>21</sup>. In actual fact, Roman marriages were often arranged, for socio-political reasons; divorce was not unknown – indeed some have thought that it may have been rife amongst the

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historians when describing the Roman family postdates Plautus. The paucity of evidence that makes it difficult to prove family sentimentality in the earlier era also creates problems for the historian seeking to establish ‘facts’ about mid-republican family life. However, it may be legitimate to assume continuity in some aspects of the Roman family: demographic conditions, for instance, are likely to have been the same in the mid Republic through to the Principate; and slaves were common to all periods (cf. Fitzgerald, 2000, 12).

<sup>20</sup> Bradley (1991 (1), 6-8) suggests that *concordia* was a passive concept, innocent of romance, but Dixon cites literary references to demonstrate that it was spoken about in obviously sentimental contexts. 1991, 108, citing: Plin., *Ep.* 3.16. (Arria and Pætus), Ov. *Met.* 8. 708-10 (Baucis and Philemon); Tac. *Ag.* 6 (Agricola and Domitia Decidiana).

<sup>21</sup> In fact, *univiriae* were probably rare, especially amongst the aristocracy (Corbier, 1991, 51, 56-7). Note, however, that the concept, which again has both moral and sentimental elements (connected with faithfulness), became an ideal with such a strong cultural currency that a polite fiction was manufactured so that one twice-married woman, Livia, could be honoured by being spoken of as though *univiria* (Williams G., 1958, 23, quoting Hor., *Carm.*, 3.14.5).

elite<sup>22</sup>. Bradley suggests that, since Roman marriages were not primarily romantic alliances, marital satisfaction (a sentimental goal) and fidelity (a moral one) were probably scarce (1991 (1), 128<sup>23</sup>). High mortality patterns also created a demographic background in which remarriage was frequent<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, it seems possible that the Romans had an *ideal* of marriage, which combined the fulfilment of desires with a sense of duty and commitment. Catullus' promise to a bride seems to imply as much:

‘Your husband is not a frivolous and adulterous type who has surrendered to vice and follows shameful lusts, desiring to sleep away from your tender breasts.’ (61, 20<sup>25</sup>)

The Roman concepts of *pietas* and of marriage seem, therefore, to have encompassed elements of sentimental and moral idealism. Interestingly, the Romans also appear to have had a nostalgic perception of the family. The evidence I have cited all postdates Plautus' mid-republican period. Importantly, however, the Romans who lived in later eras do not seem to have perceived any amelioration in their society; instead they emphasized its 'former', glorious morality, assuming that

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<sup>22</sup> Treggiari, 1991, 40-6. Treggiari argues to the contrary, saying that divorce was not as common as it might have been and was seen as a misfortune. She cites various sources, including the *Laudatio Turiae* and Tacitus' *Ann.* 2.86, which speaks of the precedence given to a girl whose mother had remained in one marriage, compared with a girl whose family (*domus*) had been affected by divorce. Note, too, Cicero's grief when his daughter's marriage failed: *Att.* 11.17. cf. Treggiari, 1998, 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> Bradley suggests that the Roman elite believed that romantic or passionate love was actually unsuitable in marriage, in which procreation rather than enjoyment was the key issue (1991 (1), 127; cf. Dixon, 1991, 104; 1992, 87, & sources such as Lucr. 4.1263-77; Plu. *Cat.mai.* 17.7; *Sull.* 35.3-5; *Praec. Con.* 139). For counterarguments, suggesting that romance *was* sometimes associated with marriage, cf. Rudd, 1981, 150 (citing variety of sources including A.R. *Agronautica* (Book 3); Catul.70; Pl., *Cist.*) & Dixon, 1992, 87 (citing, for example, Ov. *Tri.* 3.3.15-20; Sat. *Silv.* 3.5.; Sulpicia *Carmina omnia*).

<sup>24</sup> Treggiari, 1991, 32; Dixon, 1992, 14; Bradley, 1991 (1), 157-8.

<sup>25</sup> Incidentally, Catul. 61 (25-6) also refers to the husband's obligation to give up his male lover. Catullus' allusion perhaps reflects literary convention (cf. Williams G., 1962, 40). Nonetheless, it is possibly appropriate to note here that Roman attitudes to homosexuality were ambivalent. The 'politically correct' attitude seems to have been condemnation (Williams G., 1962, 39), though it has been argued that homosexuality itself was not necessarily censured, but merely the adoption of a passive sexual role. (Feldherr, 1998, 214, cf. Catul. 16; Edwards, 2002, 63ff.) Whatever the case, homosexuality played no role in the nuclear family ideal; perhaps expressions of condemnation reflect this, stressing the alliance between family and moral ideals.

their forefathers honoured the same moral standards that they wished to promote in their own day<sup>26</sup>. In the absence of evidence to the contrary – and perhaps *with* the support of Plautus' own texts – we may possibly assume continuity in Roman opinion about the importance of morality in the family.

The 'home' has huge significance for the family; consequently it has played an important role in the family sentimental ideal. The word 'home' itself has various connotations; it may describe a country or a city, or a dwelling – a dwelling that is not only physical and spatial, but also an important social arena – the place in which a circle of social relations (a family) validate an individual as a human being (Terkenli, 1995, 324-326). Speaking of the modern family, Lasch states that, in the face of outside threats, men commonly seek 'a haven in private life, in personal relations, above all in the family – the last refuge of love and decency.' (1979, xix<sup>27</sup>) He uses the word 'haven' metaphorically. A haven is a place which offers secure and comfortable shelter; Lasch suggests that the family acts in a similar way<sup>28</sup>. However, he does not limit his metaphor. The 'haven' he speaks about is not only the family, but also the family home<sup>29</sup> – the domestic space into which the family withdraws, a place (ideally) of literal security and comfort (Lasch, 1979 *passim*). A man's house becomes his castle, a place which he has the right to defend – an emotive principle that has consistently been recognized and upheld in modern society, in which the home has been granted a place of sentimental, moral and even religious import (Treggiari, 2002, 92-3; Clark, 1976, 40-1; Schaeffer, 1978, 44).

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<sup>26</sup> Dixon, 1992, 20-4; cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.6.; 3.24. NB 3.24. makes the point of condemning wealth/luxury. Sentimental ideology frequently distances itself from any semblance of avarice (Ellis, 1991, 15). Horace's position as a champion of morality might seem doubtful; the poet also wrote about all sorts of extra-marital relationships. Note, however, Williams' suggestion that the erotic poems are not autobiographical, but reflect literary convention (1962, 40).

<sup>27</sup> Note Lasch's reference to 'decency': he evokes an idea that is both moralistic and sentimental.

<sup>28</sup> NB Dixon refers to Lasch in her description of the Roman sentimental ideal. She also speaks of the sentimental Romans' 'perception of the family as a haven' (1991, 100; 1992, 29).

<sup>29</sup> NB the actual connection between the family and the home is not always immediately apparent, especially in modern history. Not all houses contain families: some are single residences. Nonetheless, some single-residencies may *seem* like homes, if they create in their residents the requisite feelings (Horwitz and Tognoli, 1982, 336, 339-40). It appears that rather than simply being a physical place – the family's base - 'home' is a transferable, emotional concept. This concept probably derives sentimental importance through its association with the family. Humans generally grow up in family environments and their sense of home may be conditioned by this (cf. Terkenli, 1995, 326).

Importantly, this emphasis can also be traced in ancient ideology. The influential socio-historian, Ariès, admittedly argued that the modern concept of the family developed in conjunction with the establishment of ‘private space’ for the nuclear family (1965, 392-400). Upper-class Roman homes were not like the (middle-class) ones generally envisaged in the modern ideal. They were much larger and were designed with a dual purpose: to house a *familia* and to receive the public<sup>30</sup>. Nonetheless, similarities can be traced between modern and Roman domestic ideologies. Romans correlated the idea of ‘houses’ and the family: adultery was thus seen to be an offence against a house<sup>31</sup>. Despite the different size and purpose of houses, a ‘haven/castle’ concept can still be discerned in Roman evidence<sup>32</sup>.

Note, too, that Romans believed that their houses were protected by *lares*. Wallace-Hadrill (1991, 193) suggests that these gods symbolized the unity (a sentimental concept) of *familiae*. The house – the place in which *lararium* stood – and the household shared religious significance, just as the home and family have been correlated in modern ethical thinking<sup>33</sup>.

It is, of course, Dixon’s contention that sentimental idealism is evident in Roman material from the late Republic onwards. However, the literary sentimental ‘home’ concept has never been confined to the Roman late Republic. Wright notes the thematic centrality of the hope of homecoming in the Jewish scriptures (2006, 75). Similarly, Terkenli suggests that homecoming has been a central ideology in Greece since Odysseus (1995, 328<sup>34</sup>). The sentimental theme of the

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<sup>30</sup> Treggiari, 1998, 3. Of course, Roman homes varied in size. However, since much of the evidence for the sentimental ideal is derived from upper-class sources, upper-class homes probably serve as a good focus for my comparison. This is not inconvenient for this thesis; although Plautus did not write about the elite, the houses he describes appear to function like upper-class homes (Cf. Wallace-Hadrill, 1996, 161, for the important influence of the Roman upper-class houses on middle-class homes.).

<sup>31</sup> Treggiari, 2002, 85.

<sup>32</sup> Treggiari, 1998, 6, quoting Cic., *Att.* 1.5., in which Cicero speaks of his Tuscan country villa as a place in which he can find rest from toil. Cf. Treggiari, 2002, 79-81, 88, quoting (amongst others): Cic., *Catil.* 4.2.; *Dom.* 109. Interestingly, the ‘ideal’ of retreating to the country is still current in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There has recently been a proliferation of British television programmes concerned with the purchase of dream country homes (e.g. BBC *Escape To The Country*, Channel 4 *Relocation Relocation*).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Treggiari, 2002, 102-7.

<sup>34</sup> Incidentally, Terkenli notes that the word ‘nostalgia’ (a word with sentimental connotations) is rooted in the Greek, *nostos*, which translates as ‘return home’ (1995, 328).

'home' has had a significant impact on literature for a long time. We can perhaps expect it to be discernable in Plautus.

#### 4. The Nature And Purpose Of Comedy

Before beginning my search for signs of the sentimental ideal in Plautus' comedies, I want to discuss the genre of comedy as a whole. This is necessary because, rather like 'sentimentality' itself, comedy is full of ambiguity, particularly when viewed as an historical source. Some artistic productions strive harder towards naturalism than others; the more naturalistic a genre is, the simpler it may be to use in a search for social customs and conditions<sup>35</sup>. Comedy, however, is *not* best known for its naturalism. In her article about the ideal, Dixon refers to the 'evidence' of comic playwrights, and feels obliged to add a caveat:

'It is surely significant that such uses of *dulcis* and *suavis* are not found in the comic playwrights of the second century BC [...] nor are the images of marriage so closely associated with affection (*although this is less persuasive, given the nature of comedy*)[...]'

(1991, 104, my emphasis)

Dixon has a particular problem with her evidence. It is caused by a common, comic device: a convention that evokes laughter by portraying conjugal strife. Quarrelling spouses are traditional comic figures; their appearance in mid-republican drama is not unique. Therefore, as Dixon acknowledges, it is difficult to deduce contemporary attitudes from their presence in a play.

Unfortunately (for the historian), the 'nature of comedy' is that it *abounds* with conventions, which influence characterisation and plot, generating an 'exaggerated [...] fantastic guise' that

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<sup>35</sup> Zola, 1893. Zola believed that naturalistic writers could write with such scientific accuracy that their work directly reflected 'truth'.

requires 'decoding' before socio-historical inference can be drawn<sup>36</sup>. To make matters worse, comedy also exists in multiple forms; it *varies* its employment of conventions. Unsurprisingly, therefore, its effects and 'nature' have been interpreted in different ways, ever since antiquity. Samuel Johnson famously observed that it, 'has been particularly unpropitious to definers' (1751)<sup>37</sup>.

In the light of this, my aim here is neither to attempt a rigid explanation of laughter, nor a comprehensive survey of its possible forms. Instead I hope first to highlight some aspects of generic development and theory which I believe to have relevance to my argument and then to describe a number of conventions which impact upon my interpretation of Plautus.

Aristotle provides us with a useful – if controversial – starting point for the discussion of comedy. His works not only described the literature of his day, but theorised about how it functioned. As it happens, there is no extant Aristotelian work specifically devoted to comic theory<sup>38</sup>; scholars argue, however, that his existing opus provides adequate indications of his opinion of comedy (Leon Golden, 1984, 283; Janko, 2001, 51<sup>39</sup>). *Poetics* makes some small, direct references to the genre. Certain aspects of the typical comic plot are described:

'Second-best is the structure held the best by some people: the kind with [...] opposite outcomes for good and bad characters. It is thought to be best because of the weakness of the audiences: the poets follow, and pander to the tastes of, the spectators. Yet this is not the pleasure to expect from tragedy, but is more appropriate to comedy, where those who are deadliest enemies in the plot [...] exit at the end as new friends, and no one dies at anyone's hands.' (*Poetics*, 1453a30-9)

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<sup>36</sup> Duckworth, 1994, 273; cf. Saller, 1993, 99-100; Mount, 1983, 137. Saller doubts that comedy directly reflects social realities. However, he also questions the absolute reliability of other ancient sources (histories and legal works).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Duckworth, 1994, 305.

<sup>38</sup> In Janko's opinion such a work once existed - a *Poetics II*. He has, in fact, tried to reconstruct it. However, Janko's work is controversial; he himself admits its limitations (2002, 63, 100, 1-4, ix-x; cf. Heath, 1989, 344).

<sup>39</sup> Note Janko's caution about a straightforward translation of *Poetics* into comic terms, 2001, 66-7.

This statement presents a prototype ‘happy ending’ definition of comedy: Aristotle understood it to be a genre which ends without bloodshed and with reconciliation<sup>40</sup>. But it may also lend support to the commonly held idea that Aristotle held a low opinion of the genre. Aristotle writes that poets create certain plots to please audiences, whose ‘weakness’ causes them to prefer comic structures. His comments *perhaps* suggest that he believed the genre had small educational value: its purpose was facilely to meet audience demand, rather than to instruct or improve.

Aristotle’s view about the moral standard and function of comedy is, however, open to complex and variant interpretations. Another statement in *Poetics* is crucial to the debate. Having spoken first of tragedy and then of comedy, it suggests that:

‘[...] the latter tends to represent people inferior, the former superior, to existing humans.’ (1448a15-18)

Dramatic personalities are separated into two groups. Over the centuries the resulting dichotomy has been understood – and perpetuated – in different ways. Firstly, a social division has been envisaged. Tragedy has been granted the right to parade heroic, noble figures, whilst ‘ordinary’ or ‘mean’ characters have been relegated to comedy (Frye, 1971, 65; Kitano, 2001, 194). Comedy has consequently become the province of prosaic, domestic personalities. Secondly, however, the division has been understood in moral or ethical terms – possibly *as well as* in social ones (cf. Heath, 1989, 345). This ethical division is significant, for a genre which represents morally inferior people might, *ipso facto*, be supposed morally inferior itself. If Aristotle believed that the comedy of his day was necessarily peopled by disreputable people (rather than merely prosaic ones), he may indeed have thought it an undesirable form of drama, one that was unlikely to edify...

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<sup>40</sup> Note the sentimental potential of the ‘happy ending’: it is often families who are reconciled.



But other interpretations of Aristotle's statements *are* possible. Some have suggested that Aristotle actually held comedy in high esteem – certainly in higher esteem than Plato. Plato, interestingly, *had* raised objections to vulgar comedy; he believed that it habituated people to behaviour they would be ashamed of in reality (Janko, 2001, 54, quoting *The Republic*, 10.606c). He also explained laughter in uncomfortable terms; the initial expression of derision or superiority theory has been accredited to him. This suggests that comedy depends largely upon *Schadenfreude* – it provides malicious pleasure, courtesy of the discomfiture of others<sup>41</sup>. Aristotle, however, may have been less disparaging about the genre. Despite believing that comedy's plots were constructed to provide pleasure, and despite describing its characters as inferior, he may still have credited it with a laudable ability to edify.

Intent on proving this, Janko notes that Aristotle's response to comedy's vulgarity was 'nuanced'<sup>42</sup>. Furthermore, he suggests that though the philosopher *was* influenced by superiority theory, he rendered it less malicious. He may even have introduced the possibility of edification through laughter<sup>43</sup>. Janko seems to believe that, in the Aristotelian comic plan, it was *necessary* to show people behaving in an inferior manner. Only thus could their departures from the norm provide a ridiculous, laughable excess, which would enhance the audience's perception of human error, achieving a comic catharsis<sup>44</sup>.

Aristotelian (and Platonic) comic theory – and modern readings of them – introduce a variety of important ideas about the genre and its nature and purpose: its penchant for happy endings; its possible use of feelings of superiority and of '*Schadenfreude*'; its putative aim to edify, perhaps via

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<sup>41</sup> Duckworth, 1994, 306; cf. Janko, 2001, 59, quoting *Philebus*, 47b-50e.

<sup>42</sup> Janko suggests that Aristotle did not think the genre impermissibly vulgar – he merely believed it ought not to be performed to young, impressionable people (2001, 54-55, quoting Arist. *Pol.* 7.17.1336a39-b23). Janko's argument allows him to maintain his point that Aristotle approved of Aristophanes, despite his use of vulgar humour. Cf. Heath, 1989, 345.

<sup>43</sup> 2001, 59. Janko quotes *Po.* I 5.1449a32-7; *Rh.* 1412a19-22. NB Duckworth suggests that even Plato's superiority theory may allow for kindly laughter: we *could* laugh sympathetically at the folly of friends (1994, 307; quoting *Philebus* 48ff).

<sup>44</sup> 2001, 61-66. Janko describes a catharsis as a process in which literary representations induce reason and emotions which correct reactions and teach appropriate behaviour. He maintains that this perception of the concept has generally replaced the older purgation theory (as propounded, for instance, by Nosworthy, 1969), but he admits the idea is still a matter of dispute.

ridicule. But comedy is not a uniform or static genre; it is open to development. In the period between Aristotle and Plautus, a new form of comedy became popular: Greek New Comedy. Little of this is extant in its original form, our chief source being Menander's plays. Evidence suggests, however, that though these works might be said to have *partly* conformed to the patterns described in Aristotle – e.g. the plays have 'happy endings' – they differed from them, too. Instead of presenting comic characters who were obviously 'inferior' to the average man of the day, for instance, they depicted persons with whom the audience might identify. Their common plot paradigm (or mode) has, in fact, been described as 'sentimental'. Rather than offering spectators an opportunity to experience a catharsis whilst laughing at ridiculous people, the new form of drama appears to have encouraged the audience to benefit via a process of sympathy: it presented comic characters who might even be worthy of emulation<sup>45</sup>.

When we reach the works of Plautus, we discover another variation. Plautus' drama (*palliatae*: 'plays in Greek dress') drew heavily on Greek New Comedy, using it as source material<sup>46</sup>. His plays, however, were probably also influenced by less staid forms of drama, which favoured cruder, more farcical humour. The common belief is that they were less serious of purpose than their originals<sup>47</sup>. Plautus seems, in fact, to have reverted at times to presenting plays with 'inferior' characters. It is perhaps impossible to ascertain whether he was aware of Aristotle's theoretical statements. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that he assumed a general knowledge of comic and tragic norms in his audience – norms that *appear* compatible with Aristotle's theory. Thus at *Amphitryon* 50-63, 'Mercury' argues that a play that has gods and nobles in it (superior persons) cannot be a thoroughgoing comedy. And he also assumes that what spectators want *is* comedy – *it*

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<sup>45</sup> Möllendorff, 1994, 307-14, & *passim*; McCarthy, 2000, 3-6 & *passim*. NB Möllendorff suggests that Menander actually developed his sentimental mode of comedy in response to Aristotle, seeking to redress the 'faults' of the genre.

<sup>46</sup> Watling, 1964, 12-13; Olson, 1968, 76.

<sup>47</sup> Duckworth, 1994, 16-17; cf. McCarthy, 2000, 5. McCarthy cautions that insufficient comparative material exists for us to be sure whether the sentimental mode was 'standard' in New Comedy; there may have been some variation.

gives them pleasure (it is not specified if this is due to their weakness!). He will therefore alter a play that *ought* to be a tragedy, just to suit them.

Mercury's words are intriguing. They not only show an awareness of generic norms, they humorously suggest that these norms are *not* absolutely sacrosanct. Plautus intends to manipulate them in the play. It will be the contention of this thesis that for Plautus this was standard practice: he constantly played with his genre. Greek New Comedy plots, with sentimental potential, were mixed with farcical comedy, creating various effects. One of these was, of course, the production of pleasure in the audience. This pleasure might sometimes have been akin to *Schadenfreude* – spectators may have laughed at the foolishness of farcical figures. However, Plautus did not necessarily always set out to induce 'superior laughter': in fact, he may have allowed his audience both to laugh *at* his characters and to sympathise with them (Hume, 1972, 92).

Whether Plautus' mixed form of comedy consequently had a less serious purpose than Greek New Comedy remains, of course, an interesting question. Segal's influential *Roman Laughter*<sup>48</sup> provides a Freudian reading of the plays. Working on the assumption that Roman society was repressive and arguing that comedy functions by providing a release from oppression, Segal suggests that Plautus' purpose was to offer spectators a much needed 'holiday'. They were presented with a world of saturnalian chaos, in which Roman values were turned upside down and rejected as barbarian, in which over-played Greek references ('hyper-hellenization'<sup>49</sup>) emphasised Greek settings, and in which an atmosphere of 'escapism' was promoted<sup>50</sup>.

Freudian theory certainly seems to offer a plausible explanation for the complex relationship Plautus supposedly created with his audience. Spectators may have laughed *with* characters when they provided onstage challenges to repression, and *at* them when they acted as representatives of

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<sup>48</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1968; I quote 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1987.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 54.

<sup>50</sup> Segal, 1987, 10, 13, 16, 18, 35-6; 40; cf. 2001, xviii

repression<sup>51</sup>. However, I have reservations about relying extensively on a Freudian argument, primarily because Freud's ideas about psychology have never been – and perhaps can never be – proved<sup>52</sup>. Freudian readings of literature therefore remain open to serious questions.

In his eagerness to employ Freudian arguments, Segal himself may have exaggerated the dourness of life in Rome and the repressive impact of its patriarchal laws<sup>53</sup>. Hyper-hellenization, another Plautine characteristic stressed in Segal's reading, has also been explained without reference to Freudian theory. Though Moore believes that Segal's escapism theory *does* explain much of the effect of Plautine comedy, he suggests that the plays' Greek settings serve another purpose. In fact, he argues that the settings are often deliberately undermined. Hyper-hellenization is part of the joke – Plautus skilfully teases his audience, pretending that everything is Greek, whilst showing them that it is really all Roman, thus challenging them to acknowledge that the plays reflect their own culture and behaviour as well as, or even instead of, Greek reality (1998, 54, 58). If Moore is correct (and I believe he is), his theory has important implications. It will be my contention that whilst encouraging his spectators to laugh at *and* with his characters, Plautus had two goals: to provide pleasure (perhaps 'relief'), but also to stimulate thought about *Roman* culture. His plays *did* have a serious, 'edifying' purpose after all.

Of course, in seeking to both please and 'edify' his audience, Plautus was obliged to engage with them; he had to be aware of their probable preconceptions and reactions. There is a sense in which all comedy is interactive. It has a culture of its own and functions within the culture of its

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<sup>51</sup> Storr, 2001, 82-90, 86 & *passim*; Leon Golden, 1984, 284; Segal, 1987, 123. Storr quotes *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols ed. Strachey, London 1953-74.

<sup>52</sup> Eysenck warns of the 'utter impossibility' of subjecting psychoanalysis to 'any rational test of truth or falsehood' (1958, 338-9). Even critics sympathetic to Freud acknowledge that his theory is sometimes unconvincing. Storr, for instance, questions his reasoning about pleasure. According to Freud, crude, primary impulses have to be satisfied in order for pleasure to be experienced. But Storr suggests that the human psyche takes pleasure in things other than primary impulses: it delights in skill, form and creativity, not just in saturnalian chaos (2001, 89-90).

<sup>53</sup> 1987, 13, 18. Cf. Saller, 1999, 192-3, 190; 1991, 146-151; 1987 *passim*, Treggiari, 1991, 32. Saller argues that it was untypical of Roman fathers to exploit their full rights; he also claims that *pietas* was mutually binding on children *and* fathers. Furthermore, many adult citizens had no living fathers: consequently, Plautus' audience may not have been burdened by a sense of parental repression. NB when discussing puritanical Roman laws, Segal admits the possibility that they may not have been fully observed. Note, however, his argument that this is immaterial – their very existence created repression (1987, 11).

spectators. The success of each performance depends both upon the spectators' cultural awareness and their knowledge of the genre and its traditions and conventions – *they* have to recognize what is supposed to be funny or satisfying (Havely, 1984, 22-3). Plautus' plays manipulate both contemporary culture and comic conventions. Since my task will be, in part, to read through the conventions to discern cultural attitudes, I draw attention to a few of them here.

Topical Allusions Comedies sometimes contain 'topical' allusions. Playwrights may make satirical allusions to particular persons or events<sup>54</sup>, or they may build an entire comedy against the backdrop of a definite historical/social setting<sup>55</sup>. 'Background' information is often necessary for topical allusions to be appreciated; jokes based on them tend to be ephemeral. However, though the topical jokes themselves may have only temporary significance, the practice of referring to contemporary matters in comedy is a tradition – one I believe Plautus used.

Happy Endings As we saw above, Aristotle's *Poetics* attributes a certain characteristic to comedy: it commonly concludes without bloodshed and with reconciliation – i.e. 'happily'. Comic protagonists frequently encounter difficulties, but usually triumph in the end, often being 'rewarded' with marriage (Hume, 1972, 89). Family reunions are also common to comic plots (Segal, 1987, 209), whether they result from reconciliations, recognition of real identity, or homecomings. Even when a play's *dramatis personae* do not form a 'real family', quasi-family groups often move through a drama's action to achieve greater unity<sup>56</sup>.

Marriage, family reunions, harmonious social milieus are traditional comic goals – as well as essential elements in the sentimental ideal. However, it is necessary to note that the 'happy ending' convention is not always as straightforward as it at first appears. Though happy endings have

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<sup>54</sup> This sort of topical humour is *not* typical of New Comedy; it is more commonly found in Aristophanes. *The Frogs*, for instance, contains biting references to three notorious Athenians: Archedemus, Cleisthenes and Callias (420 ff; cf. explanatory notes 121-3 in Barrett, 1964, 223.)

<sup>55</sup> For a modern example cf. the sit-com, *Dad's Army*, which is set in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and, to a certain extent, relies upon its audience's knowledge of certain British ideals (e.g. the 'Dunkirk spirit'; cf. Palin, 1997, 6.)

<sup>56</sup> NB this is what happens in the Christmas scene conclusion to the film *The Shop Around The Corner*; the irascible boss is restored to his family at the store (see Thesis Introduction 1., above; cf. Harvey, 1998, 398).

sometimes been thought to distinguish comedy from tragedy (Hume, 1972, 87; cf. Martin, 1984, 57), the differentiation is not uniform. Tragedy has occasionally borrowed the happy resolutions of its opposite number<sup>57</sup>. And comedies' endings – though perhaps, to a certain extent, always 'satisfying' – sometimes contain elements that are unresolved or even 'unhappy' (cf. Martin, 1984, 57). Endings may be rendered inconclusive because of a play's overall tone (cf. Hume, 1972, 89). But 'disturbing' elements can also infiltrate the conclusions themselves. The seriousness of the infiltration varies. Sometimes it presents one final 'sting' – a last joke at the characters' expense, which has little impact on the overall happy atmosphere of the play's ending. Sometimes a disruptive element may have the *potential* to be more grievous<sup>58</sup>. Sometimes the disruption is overwhelming; the concluding atmosphere is 'punitive' rather than festive, often dependent upon *Schadenfreude* and on a sense that ridiculous characters have earned just punishment<sup>59</sup>. The wide range of the happy ending convention allows writers to communicate with audiences in several ways. My thesis will suggest that Plautus took advantage of this.

Plots of Deception and Misunderstanding This convention takes two forms. Deceptions may be 'deliberate' (planned in order to fool one character or more) or 'accidental'. They often involve traditional devices – disguise; transvestism; twins; misappropriation of items<sup>60</sup>, which facilitate mistaken *and* usurped identity plots – or a combination of both. Interestingly, *mistaken* identity plots are used repeatedly in 'sentimental' Greek New Comedy<sup>61</sup>, but deliberate deceptions are

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Euripides' *Alcestis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Hume, 1972, 87; noting that happy endings in themselves do not differentiate comedy, Hume refers to the 'happy ending fallacy'.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Its conclusion encompasses three marriages, a reunion, and a reconciliation, but leaves one character 'outside': Malvolio. He rushes from the stage, with a final threat of revenge (375). How disruptive this element is depends largely on how the play is produced; sombre readings have been made – cf. Branagh's Renaissance Theatre Company production (1988).

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Jonson's *Volpone*: in its conclusion severe punishment is dealt out to the majority of the characters. In a reversal of the conventional norm, a marriage is dissolved, a home broken up and the protagonists deservedly lose their place in society.

<sup>60</sup> E.g. the dress in *Menaechmi* (cf. Havelly, 1984, 24).

<sup>61</sup> Beare suggests this was inevitable, thanks to 'real life' Athenian custom, which outlawed premarital interaction with respectable girls. Since it would have been unrealistic for stage heroes openly to court their brides, playwrights resorted to mistaken identity plots. Men had 'hopeless' affairs with girls whose *true* identities were unknown – girls whom they believed to be excluded from marriage - only to discover at their plays' conclusions that the girls were citizen women, whom they might marry after all (1968, 54-5). NB Not

common to more farcical works – and Plautus<sup>62</sup>. Importantly, the deception/misunderstanding convention offered Plautus opportunities to build purposeful relationships with his audience. His plots often involve family members with conflicting desires. At times, he creates more sympathy for one character than another. If we can interpret his deceptions, to decide with whom he wished the audience to have the *greatest* sympathy – the deceivers or the deceived – we may be able to make some useful deductions about his attitude to family desires and ideals.

Fulfilment and Disappointment of Expectation (with Stock Characters, Word Play etc) Comedy conventionally manipulates expectation for specific, generic purposes. Expectation can be ‘disappointed’, provoking laughter by incongruity, irrationalities, or even complete inversions of normality<sup>63</sup>. And it can be fulfilled, creating a sense of satisfaction (Handley, 1970, 4). The fact that comedy is rife with well-known conventions facilitates the manipulation of expectation. Writers may, for instance, employ conventional stock characters (braggarts, misers, lovers, tricksters) in a variety of ways: laughter can be provoked as characters act in accordance with type<sup>64</sup>, or when they surprise the audience by deviating from their usual behaviour. Conventional situations or conversations may be written into a text and humour created as the action or word play either meets expectation, or suddenly disappoints it, with *paraprosdokian* effect.

Importantly, Plautus seems to have faced an audience ‘with a large and rather rigid set of expectations’. Sometimes he would fulfil these expectations exactly. But on other occasions he either strove to *exceed* them – this happens in *Pseudolus*, when Calidorus wallows in being a sentimental lover (238) – or deliberately *thwarted* them. *Casina* does this. Audiences, used to

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all scholars are convinced that custom prevented young couples from getting to know each other before marriage: cf. Brown, P.G. McC, 1993, 202.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Duckworth, 1994, 160, 167-8.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Duckworth, 1994, 307, 320, quoting Arist. *Rh.* 1412a; Segal, 1987, 99, quoting Bergson, 1956, 121. NB that, although, on one level, audiences expect normality – and enjoy it when their expectations are disappointed – on another, they anticipate plots that involve incongruities. Plays which are characterized by numerous conventional qualities naturally develop a logic of their own: a ridiculous normalcy. This can be disappointed, too!

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Sidney, 1595: ‘wee get as it were an experience what is to be looked for of a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus [...] of a vain-glorious Thraso and [...] to know what effects are to be expected [...]’

laughing at nagging unsentimental wives and cheering as husbands get the better of them, are entertained as the matron triumphs (Moore, 1994, 14, 96, 18, 158-180). I hope to show that *many* elements related to the sentimental ideal were suppressed or manipulated in Plautus' plays in a process that exploited *and* engaged audience expectation.

Performance Devices Most plays are not conceived as mere reading texts; arguably, therefore, they can only ever be fully appreciated when seen in performance. In a performance the message of a play's text is interpreted and transmitted to an audience, with audio and visual effects. Some modern texts contain 'stage directions', which determine how scenes are played. They are useful to readers, alerting them to visual humour that is not immediately apparent in scripts<sup>65</sup>. Unfortunately, however, not *all* comedies have them. Plautus' do not. It might consequently be tempting to shelve the question of what happened in his original performances and to discuss the plays as if they *were* reading texts only.

However, I am reluctant to do this. Though Plautus' plays have no stage directions, they do contain information, which helps us to appreciate something of what transpired on stage. Plautus used certain performance conventions which, Moore argues, must be decoded as part of any modern interpretation. Firstly, Plautus uses explicit audience address: actors speak to the audience, rather than to each other. Secondly, the plays employ 'theatrical allusion'. Actors admit the 'theatricality' of their work; they indulge in metatheatre, acknowledging in some way that what they are doing is a performance. Plays-within-the-play, references to characters as actors, and descriptions of disguises as costumes all 'break' the dramatic illusion, highlighting the fact that the play is a story, *being told for the benefit of the spectators*.

Both of these devices are important; they play an essential part in building close actor-audience

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<sup>65</sup> Considering the question of visual humour, Duckworth suggests that the tone of Plautus' texts may have been modified in performance, becoming rather more vulgar (1994, 295). The possibility perhaps needs acknowledging, since any increase in vulgarity would inevitably lead to a decrease in *overt* sentimentality – though it might also serve to highlight a parody of a sentimental ideal.



alliances<sup>66</sup>. Analyses of Plautus' texts show that his characters actually compete for audience attention and sympathy, some more successfully than others<sup>67</sup>. The significance of this is great. Theatrical allusions and audience address were used by Plautus in such a manner that they influenced and/or reflected audience sympathies and reactions – *and* further determined the inherent 'message' broadcast by each work. Hence the need to bear performance and performance conventions in mind when studying the plays.

## 5. Methodology

For the most part, my work in this thesis will be an exercise in hermeneutics; I seek, as Culler puts it, to start with texts, to ask what they mean and to discover, if not 'new and better interpretations', at least some fresh points of interest (1997, 61). The thesis combines literary study and socio-historical investigation. I ask a question which has socio-historical import – was a sentimental ideal current in the Roman mid Republic? – and hope to answer it by a process of literary analysis. Speaking of the relationship between literature and historical context, Watkins comments on a progression in theoretical thinking. Traditionally, history was viewed as the single, objective background context to a work of literature. However, 'new historicism' has questioned the objectivity of historical study; history itself is now regarded as a textual construct – an interpretation, itself open to further interpretation, in accordance with the particular ideas of each reader (1999, 30-31).

In my analysis, the interpretability of text *and* context are of prime importance. Text and context are mutually dependent. The works of Plautus have to be understood in their historical context, but they themselves provide information about their cultural origins. It is my hope to interpret that

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<sup>66</sup>Examples are difficult to find in modern theatre, in which an illusion of dramatic reality is usually maintained (Cf. O'Toole, 2002, 16). A common exception, of course, occurs in traditional pantomime, but see also the sit-com *Allo, Allo*, in which the protagonist, René uses 'to-cameras' to maintain the sympathy of the audience.

<sup>67</sup> Moore, 1998, 1, 3, 8, 24-5 & *passim*.

information, in order to suggest readings of both the plays and of the culture in which they were originally performed.

I shall, of course, bear in mind the fact that Plautus used *Greek* plays as his sources. This *has* led to expressions of concern about their use in socio-historical research: the multi-cultured plays present ambiguities; they are not straightforward reflections of Roman life<sup>68</sup>. However, as we saw earlier, Moore asserts that the plays' Greek settings are often undermined. Plautus makes sure that his audience knows that the plays are really set in Rome. They were never simple translations from the Greek<sup>69</sup>. Indeed, though traditional Plautine scholarship has often concentrated on *Quellenforschung* – seeking 'to analyse the text into those parts which are Roman, created by Plautus himself, and [...] which [...] Greek [...]' (Owens, 1994, 381) – critics have cautioned that this misses the point. Even when the dramatist faithfully followed his Greek originals, 'he infused his versions with his own spirit' (Beare, 1968, 66-7). Segal writes, 'once the play begins, everything becomes "Plautus"' (1987, 6; cf. Segal, 2001, xx-xxii).

Plautus' plays *do* contain Greek references. Some of these are deliberately exaggerated; putative 'Greek' behaviour provokes laughter. However, it is essential to note that the works were written for, understood and enjoyed by *Roman* spectators. Plautus' popularity lasted<sup>70</sup>. In the late Republic Cicero wrote of contemporary performances. He also referred to comic character types, assuming that his fellow late-republicans could identify with them. Cicero's generation do not seem to have distanced themselves from the *palliatae*, despite their ostensible Greek nature<sup>71</sup>. Plautus' own generation presumably felt an affinity with his comic characters, too<sup>72</sup>. They regarded his plays as

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<sup>68</sup> Duckworth, 1994, 272-3; cf. Rawson, 2003, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Fraenkel, 2007, 66; 270-2.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Parker, 1996, 588. Parker allows for Plautus' popularity, but suggests that his plays did not enjoy *continuous* admiration; *Casina* had to be 'reintroduced' to the audience.

<sup>71</sup> NB Plautus' appeal continued after Cicero's time, too. Russell and Winterbottom comment that, though Roman literature was in its 'finest flower' in the time of Horace (i.e. Early Empire), conservative Romans still 'hankered after the older poets, perhaps partly because [...] Plautus seemed more truly Latin in inspiration' (1989, xii; Horace apparently tried 'to woo the public away from the older writers'; cf. *Ars.*, 270 ff. *Ep.* 2. 168 ff.).

<sup>72</sup> Manuwald, 2007, 139-140 (quoting Cic. *S. Rosc.* 46-47) & *passim*. NB Manuwald (135) notes that Cicero's specific references to Plautine characters are comparatively few. For a specific Plautine ref., cf. *Q. Rosc.* 7.

part of their own culture – something which facilitates my search for a *Roman* sentimental ideal in the works.

My argument concerns the question of cultural ideals; I shall necessarily engage in a certain amount of ‘cultural study’. This kind of work involves a complex reading process. Watkins suggests that it is an interactive activity, entailing construction and reconstruction, as readers respond to material not only in accordance with the social sense inscribed within it, but also in accordance with their own pre-established social awareness (1999, 35). Essential to Dixon’s theory of the Roman sentimental ideal is the notion that it bears a resemblance to our own cultural ideal. *My* perception of that cultural ideal therefore becomes, to a certain extent, a ‘measure’ by which I will assess the Roman one.

Cohan and Shires argue that all humans are equipped with a ‘socially learned’, familiar knowledge (i.e. a knowledge independent of intellectual theory), which helps decode culture. They suggest that we are often obliged to read ‘connotatively’, using an ‘ideology’ that, ‘promotes ideas and beliefs which seem true or natural as the result of reasonable, commonsensical observation.’ (1988, 114, 133) Rather than relying on any systematic formula (like Freudian analysis) when assessing both modern and ancient material, my aim in this thesis will be to provide an interpretation of Plautus in line with ‘reasonable, commonsensical observation’. Naturally, I shall not be able to avoid a personal bias in my interpretation; my ‘commonsense’ view of culture – dependent as it is on my own ideology – may differ from another’s. However, I will discuss and use ideas of scholars who write from different points of view. As a result, I hope that the thesis will consist of a balanced, ‘reasonable’ attempt to answer the question, ‘What role does the Roman sentimental family ideal play in the comedies of Plautus?’

The thesis begins with an exploratory chapter in which I take one play – *Rudens* – and note its treatment of four subjects: romance, the home, parent-child relationships, and outsiders to the family. Plautus is commonly thought to have favoured ‘farce’ above more staid forms of comedy, but *Rudens* is sometimes described as one of his *more* sentimental works. I discuss his manipulation

of the genre, its conventions and his audience's expectation, seeking to demonstrate that essential to the play is the assumption that the Roman spectators had a good understanding of a sentimental ideal. Following this chapter there are four others, devoted in turn to: 'Wives & Husbands', 'Parents & Children', '*Dulce Domum*' and 'Slaves & Outsiders'. These consider Plautus' treatment of comedy *and* sentimental concepts in the wider context of the rest of his plays. A final chapter then concentrates on another single play: *Bacchides*. This brazen farce ostensibly offers a different sort of comedy to *Rudens* – nonetheless I shall suggest that it, like all the other plays, provides ample evidence of the sentimental ideal.

Two appendices are included at the end of the thesis. Appendix 2 consists of a chart supplying details of the motifs discussed in the thesis and offering readers a quick point of orientation for Plautus' plays. Appendix 1 provides a comparison of Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (a play I mention in the main part of the thesis) and its source, Terence's *Andria*. Terence was another Roman mid-republican playwright: Dixon's comments about a lack of sentimentality in the comedies of that era pertain as much to him as to Plautus. Therefore, whilst Plautus remains the chief focus of my work, I have given some attention to Terence in the appendix. *Andria* inspired Steele's quintessential 'sentimental comedy' in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century. Terence was cited by Steele as a proponent of sentimentality. My appendix explores this claim, using Steele's deliberately sentimental genre of comedy as an initial point of reference and seeking to demonstrate that Terence's work, like Plautus', manipulates the conventions of the comic genre, simultaneously providing proofs that mid-republican Romans comprehended the sentimental ideal.

Chapter 1: An Exploratory Case – *Rudens*

‘Carrying Affection To Ridiculous Lengths’<sup>1</sup>

1.1. A Prologue To Build Expectation

Literary critics have frequently described Plautus’ *Rudens* as a play with a very particular character. McCarthy recently aligned it with *Captivi* and *Trinummus*: works with a distinctive didactic tone (2000, 167). Earlier, Duckworth commented on the play’s serious nature, describing it as a recognition play, with ‘romantic charm’ (1994, 83, 148), whilst Beare wrote that it was the ‘most romantic’ Plautine work – one that was distinguished by a comparative ‘high moral’ tone and a satisfying conclusion (1968, 61, 64<sup>2</sup>).

This is interesting, for a play that allegedly concerns itself with morality, which is characterized by romantic charm and which provides a satisfying conclusion to a recognition plot (i.e. a plot that involves some sort of family reunion), might readily be supposed to have significant sentimental potential. Dixon (1991, 99) compares the Roman family sentimental ideal with our own ideal – one that has stressed the importance of family ethics and family unity: elements germane to a successful recognition story. But, together with other historians, she also dates the rise in Roman sentimental idealism to a period *after* Plautus. Has she failed to recognize the sentimental possibilities of *Rudens*? Or are the elements described by the literary critics not as indicative of *Roman* sentimental idealism as it may seem?

Importantly, the modern literary assessments of *Rudens* are all relative: its tone is didactic, moral and romantic in comparison with the rest of Plautus’ corpus. The assessments are also made by critics who are aware of a whole gamut of traditional comic productions and who are also

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Watling’s translation of *Rud* 1204 (1964, 144).

<sup>2</sup> NB Beare qualifies the term ‘romantic’, saying that it ought not to be thought to imply a strong ‘love-interest’ in the play.

influenced by modern society, which holds a contemporary perspective on sentimentalism – in literature and in popular culture<sup>3</sup>. This modern perspective is not necessarily injurious or irrelevant. Dixon herself relies partly on a comparison with modern culture to define the Roman sentimental ideal, and I, too, will draw inference from modern culture as I seek to trace a sentimental concept in Plautus' works. But my fundamental concern is to ascertain what Plautus' original spectators gleaned from his plays. What did they expect from comedy? Did the tone of *Rudens* seem exceptional to them?

*Rudens* begins with a prologue, a metatheatrical monologue which appears to be divided into two sections and which addresses the audience directly. Whilst the first section (1-30) engages specifically with the spectators, discussing the gods' interest in human concerns and justice, the second section (31-81) lays the scene for the play itself, relating the background of the ensuing story and describing what is happening to certain key characters as the play starts. Modern authors do not commonly begin works by announcing their intentions in such an explicit fashion, but ancient writers often used prologues to introduce their plots and characters. Their methodology was immensely important. The ancient prologues not only prepared the original audiences to *expect* certain sorts of plays – stories of deception, or of romance, or family reunification – but, according to Moore, also served to woo the necessary good will of the spectators (1998, 10, 13). A survey of the prologue of *Rudens* that ascertains what sort of promises it makes may therefore help to inform us about what the Romans appreciated and demanded of comedy – what subjects, themes and conclusions were likely to please them.

The prologue's first section introduces its speaker, establishing his authority and describing his purpose. He is the god Arcturus, a fellow-citizen of the other gods and a representative of the omnipotent Jupiter, who sends Arcturus and other Constellations to walk among men and observe them. Jupiter is interested in hearing about men's 'deeds, ways, reverence and loyalty' (*facta hominum, mores, pietatem et fidem noscamus*, 11-12). Their interaction with each other is

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Anderson, 1996, 60-1.

important; those who are dishonest and unjust and those who commit perjury for pecuniary gain reap divine judgment (13-26). Jupiter retries their cases and is unimpressed by their gifts and offerings (22-5). But he keeps the records of good men in a different book and is prepared to hear their prayers. Arcturus therefore admonishes the good men within the audience, encouraging them to maintain their happiness by behaving well (*cum pietate et fide* 29).

Human morality is thus established as the prologue's initial theme. There is, *apparently*, a positive emphasis on pious, upright behaviour and a negative one on mercenary dishonesty. The gods' interest in men's social behaviour is stressed – how men interact determines their fate – and it is also suggested that the audience are good, meriting Jupiter's favour.

For the modern audience these emphases are very familiar; they are typical of modern sentimental literature in general and of the sentimental comedy of the Christian era in particular. This genre deliberately assumed a high level of morality amongst its audience<sup>4</sup>. It also presented honest heroes, whose honourable, financially disinterested and pious behaviour received the blessing of an approving Providence. That Plautus' prologue apparently assumes an audience interest in upright behaviour might therefore provide an indication that mid-republican Romans nursed comparable idealistic concepts, and perhaps even comprehended a notion of a divine interest in morality.

An analysis of the prologue's second section initially seems to substantiate this idea. Arcturus announces a plot which abounds with sentimental possibilities. *Rudens*, so it seems, will tell the tale of a good father who, through generosity and kindness, has suffered undeserved losses and been bereft both of home and child (33-39<sup>5</sup>). It will present an innocent girl, who is suffering distress and being abducted over the sea (39-41), and a lover (a citizen 42), who is kept from his sweetheart. There is therefore potential for: 1. romance (both the young man and the girl are citizens – the

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<sup>4</sup> See Steele's Epilogue to *The Lying Lover*, 1704; cf. Parnell, 1963, 529.

<sup>5</sup> The home, children, money and undeserved distress are the frequent emotive subjects of modern sentimental literature. Cf. Ellis, 1991, 10-15, 19-20.

audience will be aware that marriage is the probable conclusion of this tale); 2. a homecoming from sea; 3. a family reunion (76-7).

In stark antithesis to the father, girl and lover, the prologue also promises two villains: a *leno* and his accomplice. The latter comes from Agrigentum – this probably had significance for the Roman audience. Riley notes that its inhabitants were famed for luxurious living<sup>6</sup>. Luxury, in Roman thinking, was often aligned with immorality, being seen as a ‘cognate vice’ with lust<sup>7</sup>. The accomplice is also described as someone who would betray his own city – someone who has an unsentimental regard for home. Both he and the *leno* are dishonestly and mercenarily motivated and prepared to exploit the innocent (47-55).

The villains’ plans, however, have been thwarted before the play begins. The god informs us that he has wrecked the ship carrying the *leno*’s belongings – his household (*domus* 57). The rogue has thus already reaped a *quid pro quo* for his disregard of others’ households – and suddenly it is abundantly clear that there is a link between the two halves of the prologue. The eminently satisfying justice discussed in the first half appears to be the subject of the play itself.

So – for the modern reader and perhaps for the original Roman audience – the prologue as a whole seems to act as a prelude to a tale which will resolve in the ‘happy’ manner typical of a sentimental story. Expectations of such a story might be enhanced by resonances from the *Odyssey*. Odysseus travelled home through the perils of the sea, to be avenged on those who threatened his household. Reunited with his family, all was well that ended well for him. The modern *and* Roman audience might easily be led to assume that all would go well for the good characters in *Rudens*, too.

However, a note of caution must be sounded at this point. Though McCarthy defines *Rudens* as a play with a didactic tone, she believes that Plautus’ habitual dramatic style embraced a combination of two modes of comedy; Plautus mixed his comic types. The first mode, commonly recognized as

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<sup>6</sup> Riley, 1912, footnote to lines 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 2002, 5, 43 (quoting Juv. 6.294-5); 176ff. Cf. Levick, 1982, 53.



typical of Greek New Comedy, McCarthy describes as more sentimental. Importantly, it was characterized by plots that resolved thanks to unlikely but highly fortuitous occurrences – the products of ‘chance’ or divine intervention (i.e. ‘Providence’). The second mode was more farcical. McCarthy suggests that Plautus manipulated both modes in order ‘to fulfil multiple and mutually contradictory fantasies’ of his spectators (2000, 3-6 & *passim*). Those spectators were presumably aware of Plautus’ usual mixed sort of fare. When, therefore, the prologue of *Rudens* seemed to offer them a play in the first mode – with a fortuitous plot controlled by a god – did they *expect* this plot to run its course unalloyed, or did they suspect (or hope) that the work might also contain important elements of farce? Another look at the prologue itself may answer this question.

As well as suggesting that Plautus’ general task in writing included satisfying audience expectation, Moore notes the fact that the playwright *sometimes* entertained his spectators by surprising them. The audience could be misled, expectation could be exploited and conventional themes inverted, in order to provoke a shock reaction – laughter that perhaps had a sting in its tail (1998, 14, 15). The prologue to *Rudens* possibly plays with expectation in such a manner. Its two related sections loudly suggest that the spectators are a moral crowd, who are about to be entertained with a sentimental story, in which a villain will reap divine justice. But the alert Roman audience might well have noticed a topical reference to the provenance of the villain’s accomplice. He comes from Sicily, a centre of farcical theatre in the ancient world (49, cf. Moore, 1998, 57). The sentimentality of this tale, this perhaps suggests, may be disrupted by moments of farce. In fact, farce may *already* have been apparent in the play.

The impact of any prologue is, of course, partly determined by its speaker. In this case we are confronted by a god. If we believe that Arcturus appears *only* as a god, and that he, with that god’s righteous authority, announces a moral plot, we are bound to expect a play in the sentimental mode. If, however, we consider that Arcturus’ divinity may be compromised in some way, other possibilities arise.

Interestingly, Moore maintains that Plautine prologues are often distinguished by the fact that their speakers deliberately step out of role. Discussing the prologue to *Amphitryon*, he suggests that Plautus uses metatheatre to make it clear that its speaker is a human actor *pretending* to be Mercury. This influences the audience's expectations of the play (1998, 21; 111-115). The procedure is significant, because the prologue of *Rudens* possibly functions in a similar way.

Arcturus begins his speech by claiming that he has been sent by Jupiter (1-12). At 31-3, however, he appears to abandon this idea. The reason he has come, he now declares, is to tell us about the plot – which was not written by a god, but by a human. Diphilus' (the original playwright's) stage directions determine the setting of the play: we are reminded of the illusory nature of what we are about to see. It is a story in which Arcturus is a mere actor, carrying out a playwright's plan. Hanson notes that Plautine characters sometime identify themselves with gods, with consequent incongruous and comic effect (1959, 52). Some incongruous visual humour is possibly intended here. In line 3 Arcturus invites the audience to consider his star-like appearance: *ita sum, ut videtis, splendens stella candida...* We cannot suppose that his costume was so splendid as to convince them that he really was a star; perhaps the audience laughed at his claim<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps they also listened more intently to his speech, wondering just where it fitted in the illusion. When the man playing the god discoursed about divine justice, when he flattered the audience about their inherent goodness, when he seemed to promise a play in the sentimental mode, were they supposed to take it all with a pinch of salt? Were they perhaps intended both to laugh and to be on their guard – to adjust their expectations in the knowledge that things might be more farcical than the plot summary would suggest?

In the following sections of this chapter I intend to study the rest of *Rudens* in detail, considering how Plautus fulfils and manipulates the expectation created in his prologue and how he develops the sentimental and farcical potential of his plot. Earlier in the thesis I identified several key aspects

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<sup>8</sup>I am reminded of the burlesque play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which one of the characters carries a lantern to 'disfigure' the person of Moonshine (3.1; 5.1).

of sentimental idealism – its emphasis on morality, on affection and *pietas* in the nuclear family triad, and on the family home. I will focus on these aspects and hope to ascertain Plautus' attitude to these sentimental issues in *this* play. In the process I will make various references to modern works, in particular Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (*TCL*). As mentioned earlier, this is a quintessential 'Sentimental Comedy' from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, which follows the fortunes of the noble hero/lover, Bevil, and which encapsulates elements of romantic sentimentalism that remain familiar to the modern audience, making it an excellent basis for comparative discussion, here and throughout the thesis<sup>9</sup>. Once the chapter about *Rudens* is complete, it will be possible to go on and consider the rest of the Plautine corpus – the plays with which *Rudens* has been contrasted when it has been defined as so particularly romantic and moral.

### 1.2. Romance: 'Journeys End In Lovers Meeting'?

Today's audiences are very familiar with the modern romantic comic mode. It generally works in accordance to a standard pattern: boy meets girl; boy wants girl; boy encounters opposition; opposition is removed; boy gets girl<sup>10</sup>. A work commences, spectators quickly identify the sympathetic hero and heroine and instantly guess their fate: marriage. Marriage provides the happy resolution to *The Shop Around The Corner*; it is the crux of the conclusion of *Northanger Abbey* and of *The Conscious Lovers*. And, as all these stories' characters encounter their fair share of opposition, long-suffering 'romantic' love plays a significant, developmental part in their plots.

The prologue to *Rudens* seems to offer us a play with a similar pattern. We are told about a young man who has fallen for a girl and who has begun to make efforts to win her (42-46). We are informed that this girl is a citizen's daughter – i.e. she is marriageable. However, she needs rescuing from a wicked pimp, whose designs for her would preclude her from happy marriage, and who is

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Appendix 1 for a discussion of *The Conscious Lovers* and its mid-republican Roman source, Terence's *Andria*.

<sup>10</sup> Fry, 1971, 163; Ellis, 1991, 10.

abducting her over the sea (39-40; 51-55). The lover has set off in pursuit, but arrives at the harbour too late to prevent departure (65-6). Fortunately, however, having full knowledge of all these affairs, a 'god' has intervened – on the side of the girl and against the pimp (67-9). He has wrecked their ship and, as the play begins, the heroine is about to come ashore, and the lover to appear on stage (73-8; 80). All of this may lead us to expect *Rudens* to entertain us with a progressive tale about the vicissitudes of two young people, who, thanks to providential help, will eventually be united in love.

At first the play's action seems to support such expectation. In this Roman work we actually meet the troubled heroine, Palaestra. She appears on stage (closely followed by Ampelisca, a fellow female in distress) and delivers a monologue (185ff), describing her destitution and her innocence: excellent sentimental qualities, which some have taken very seriously<sup>11</sup>. The lover, Plesidippus, too, makes an impressive entrance, dressed in cloak and sword and displaying a persevering determination not to give up hope (89-95; 313-15)<sup>12</sup>. With dramatic irony that the audience can appreciate – thanks to the prologue – Plesidippus shows deference to Daemones, unbeknown to him as Palaestra's father, and the pair's conversation foreshadows the relationship they will eventually have (through marriage), as Plesidippus addresses Daemones as 'father' and encourages him to believe that the gods will bless him with a son (103-107). Plesidippus also displays a suitable anger when he hears how his sweetheart has been treated by the pimp – her wrongs, he argues, should have been avenged with the pimp's death (839-841). To the modern audience, all this might lend him the appearance of a swashbuckling hero.

The Roman audience, of course, received the same information from the prologue as we do. Their understanding of the significance of some of its points was doubtless similar to ours. Knowledge of ancient comic convention would also alert them to the fact that the girl in the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Duckworth 1994, 148.

<sup>12</sup> That the heroine of a sentimental story should be weak and vulnerable and her lover bold and heroic, is of course common in the modern paradigm – *vide TCL* & cf. Dixon, 1991, 104-5, which discusses the unequal status of partners in modern and Roman marriages.

prologue is a *pseudomeretrix*. A common figure in comedy, she is a displaced girl with whom a boy has fallen ‘hopelessly’ in love, whose restoration to citizen status during the course of the play will remove her from her false profession and make her a suitable wife<sup>13</sup>. So like us, the Roman audience probably expected Palaestra’s story to end with her marriage. Whether they expected her to feature largely onstage in a romantic role is, however, less certain. Examples of ancient comedy exist, which begin with divine prologues promising intervention on behalf of a girl, and yet which fail to focus continuous, sympathetic attention on the out-workings of the girl’s fate<sup>14</sup>. Plautus’ spectators were possibly hoping for farce, as much as for a typical Greek New Comedy ‘sentimental’ plot. A close reading of *Rudens* might suggest that they actually got more farce than romance – even in the first, dramatic appearance of the distressed Palaestra.

As previously stated, Palaestra’s entrance monologue (184 ff) describes her plight. It draws attention to her innocent suffering, to her loneliness on the seashore, to her destitution.

Sonnenschein’s 1914 commentary on the text identifies a similarity between Catullus 64, 164-170; 184-187, the lament of Ariadne, and Palaestra’s words at *Rud* 205-6, when she complains about her isolation. Catullus’ poem picks up on the themes of lonely suffering and renders them in a suitably tragic manner: Ariadne has lost her place in her father’s home and is left alone on the seashore, complaining in vain to the elements.

Sonnenschein’s comparison is interesting, highlighting the fact that the subjects of Palaestra’s speech have sentimental potential – potential that was exploited in later Roman literature (in an era in which Dixon is satisfied that a Roman sentimental ideal existed). But a comparison of the two speeches also emphasises another point. Ariadne’s distress is caused by Theseus’ desertion of her; her lament is addressed to her lover, whom she would willingly have served (159ff.). This is

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<sup>13</sup> For examples of other *pseudomeretrices* in Plautus and his fellow mid-republican, Terence, see *Cist.*, *Curc.*, *Poen.*; *An.*, *Hau.*, *Eu.*, *Ph.*.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Menander’s *Dyskolos*, which perhaps focuses more attention on the girl’s father’s reintegration into society than on any romance (though marriage plays a symbolic role in the isolation/reintegration plot); also Plautus’ *Aul.*, in which the girl probably never appears, though her marriage and her father’s social isolation are thematically linked and thus of prime importance to the plot.

romantic (if hopeless) love. But in Palaestra's monologue her lover is never even mentioned.

Morality, parents and solitude are the themes with sentimental potential in her speech.

A survey of the linguistic qualities and context of Palaestra's monologue highlights another discrepancy with Ariadne's truly tragic lament. Palaestra's speech is spattered with word-play: alliteration, repetition, assonance and pleonasm. Compare, for example, the alliteration in line 185 '*Nimio hominum fortunae minus miserae memorantur...*' with that in 189 '*hancine ego ad rem natam miseram me memorabo...*', and note the verbal build-up at 205 '*ita hic sola solis locis composita [sum]*'. McCarthy, writing about the use of word-play in Plautus' *Persa*, notes that the 'playfulness of farcical language and the solemnity of ritual language in Latin are almost too close for comfort'. Both rely on alliteration, repetition and pleonasm. In *Persa* Plautus exploits the similarity in a parody which exposes the character of the parasite<sup>15</sup>. In *Rudens* the similarity allows Palaestra's 'prayer' of desperation to slip into a comic self-centred overstatement: a parody of the sentiments it expresses. Its exaggerated nature is further emphasised by the entrance of Ampelisca, with a speech that echoes Palaestra's in content and form, complaining wordily about solitude – when there are actually two girls on stage! (220 ff, in particular 227: *neque magi' solae terrae solae sunt quam haec loca...*).

Spectators who hoped for a sentimental heroine in this play are thus rewarded with a character who simultaneously disappoints, fulfils and outdoes expectation. Though she makes no mention of love, Palaestra is only too acutely aware of the sentimental plight in which she finds herself and enjoys herself declaiming about it. In fact, she bears some resemblance to the conventional foolish lover who appears in other Plautine works<sup>16</sup>.

But what of Plesidippus? Is *he* a romantic or a farcical comic lover? Plautus' comic lovers usually have scenes in which they spend time moaning about their separation from their girls, or extolling their beauties – *vide* Calidorus in the opening scenes of *Pseudolus*. Another of their telling

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<sup>15</sup> McCarthy, 2000, 140 on *Per.* 251ff; cf. Muecke, 1985, 172 on *Trin.* 820-39.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. 2.3., below.

characteristics is their foolish hopelessness – their frequent dependency on others (generally slaves, which leads to a comic inversion of roles). In some ways Plesidippus seems to conform to the standard pattern. He is accused by Ampelisca of being inadequate in the care he took of Palaestra (378-381); he is beholden to his slave, Trachalio, for the protection of Palaestra from the pimp and the establishment of her identity; and he also goes through a besotted lover sequence, in which he is so overjoyed that he can marry his girl that he shows Trachalio exaggerated deference, asking for advice with a series of questions that mount up in a ridiculous fashion (1265ff). But in other ways he breaks the mould. He is seen not as a party-going effete, but as self-determined man of action, chasing after his sweetheart (89ff); resolved in his dealings with the pimp (851ff); and defended by his slave against the accusations of Ampelisca (382ff<sup>17</sup>). If the Roman spectators were expecting him to be a very foolish lover, then they must have been ‘surprised’ by his resolve and reticence.

But if Plesidippus is not as foolish as he might have been, his romantic qualities are muted, too. It is not simply that he displays foolish traits – traits modern heroes, like the punctilious Bevil in Steele’s sentimental comedy, *TCL*, would never have had – nor even that his initial statements of noble sentiment are reduced by the slave Sceparnio’s application of bathos (103ff<sup>18</sup>). He also shows a remarkable lack of interest in his girl. When he hears that the pimp has absconded with her, he does not react with horror about her sufferings, but rather complains that the pimp has made a fool of him. In fact, he becomes more interested in bringing the *leno* to justice than in saving his girl, so much so that when they finally all come together on stage he hardly addresses his sweetheart at all (147; 158; 839ff).

From the modern ‘romantic’ point of view this may seem very disappointing. So might the fact that the play ends without a tableau of the lovers; they don’t meet on stage after it is discovered that

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<sup>17</sup> In defending Plesidippus against the accusation of negligence, the slave actually also defends himself. Even this marks an important difference in characterisation: other Plautine *servi callidi* would not identify in such a fashion with their young masters.

<sup>18</sup> Note in particular 140-1 in which Sceparnio assumes Plesidippus has turned up at the temple of Venus in the hope of a dinner. Sexual desire and the appetite for food are commonly equated in Plautine imagery (cf. *Casina* for prolonged use of this unsentimental theme). Perhaps Plautus intends the audience to pick up on this idea here.

they can marry, and the play's final few scenes are not overly concerned with their fate<sup>19</sup>. Other aspects of the play might also seem anti-romantic: the scenes between Ampelisca and Trachalio (331ff), who are conducting a comic rather than a sentimental 'romance'; the interaction between Ampelisca and Sceparnio, which is replete with sexual innuendo (414ff); and the misogynistic references/depictions of women in the play<sup>20</sup>. These things might not add up to much, taken severally and in and of themselves: after all, Steele's overtly sentimental *TCL* contains some farcical romance and a few close-to-the-bone observations, suggesting that, even to the modern audience, such things are not *necessarily* incompatible with a story that is romantic overall<sup>21</sup>. However, if the rest of a play's plot – like the plot of *Rudens* – shows little sign of romanticism, then even though the work ends with a marriage, it cannot easily be described as a love story.

But if *Rudens* cannot be defined as a love story, this does *not* mean that it is devoid of the sentimental concept of marital affection. The Roman spectators might not have expected – and didn't get! – a well-developed romantic story, but it does not follow that they were inherently uninterested in or ignorant of marital sentimental idealism. In fact, for *Rudens* to function correctly, it is arguable that the original audience *had* to be aware of the possibility of romantic sentimentalism. Palaestra may not mention her love for Plesidippus, but she is nonetheless characterized as a highly sentimental maiden, whose marriage to a somewhat besotted lover is fundamental to the resolution of the plot. Plautus may not develop the couple as a serious presentation of a pair of sentimental idealized lovers, but he does appear to think that his audience will recognize and laugh at mawkish parodies of both heroine and hero.

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson (1996, 62-5) believes the marginalisation of the love story in *Rudens* may have been Diphilos' doing. He points to a supposedly parallel instance in *Casina*. However, since Plautus' sources are unavailable for direct comparison, it is difficult to be certain about precisely who was responsible for his plays' tone. Importantly, in the case of *Casina*, he himself seems to have reduced the love theme; he jests about 'tampering' with the original plot in the prologue (32-34; 64-6). NB Beare (1968, 159) raises questions about the origins of Plautus' prologues and, in particular, mentions the prologue to *Casina*. However, though Moore also raises the same questions – some of the *Casina* prologue definitely post-dates Plautus – he believes that most of it is probably authentic (1998, 225, note 26).

<sup>20</sup> Daemones' wife: 895, 904-5, 1045 & 1202; NB 1113-4, which perhaps hits specially at Palaestra, for it says the silent woman is preferable to the speaking one and she tends to be loquacious whenever she speaks.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Appendix 1.



The Roman audience presumably also laughed at Daemones' misogynistic jokes about his wife. But they must also have been aware that rather than risk a breach with her, he turns the girls out of his house (1045). He also immediately refers to her when he discovers that Palaestra is their daughter (1174, 1179). It is possible that his words and actions are largely determined by the needs of the plot: Plautus has to provide reasons to get the girls on and off stage. However, though the sentiment behind Daemones' actions may be incidental, it perhaps supplies evidence of how the playwright relied on his audience's acceptance of cultural ideals about the family – that even a difficult marriage should be preserved and that a couple share in their affection for their offspring – in constructing his plays.

Plautus most probably also assumed that his original audience would be satisfied with the conclusion of his play. Though the play contains a good deal of farcical material, it also fulfils the promise of the prologue: thanks to the storm brewed up by the god, the good are rewarded, in accordance with the sentimental plot pattern. In the case of Palaestra and Plesidippus their reward is partly marriage. It is perhaps highly significant that the play actually ends with a double marriage: Trachalio gets to marry Ampelisca. The scene in which he rejoices about this is very farcical, each line ending with a repeated '*licet*' (1210ff). It has a strong resemblance to the scene in which Plesidippus rejoices about his coming marriage, in which there is a repetitive use of '*censeo*'. Both '*licet*' and '*censeo*' have formal, legalistic connotations. They were used in the context of forging binding agreements, which must be justly upheld (cf Sonnenschein, 1914, note to 1271f). I suggested above that Plesidippus appears, to the modern point of view, to abandon a sentimental role when he shows more interest in avenging himself on the reneging *leno* rather than in worrying about his sweetheart. But perhaps the modern perspective misses the point. The pimp must be punished in order for standards of morality to be upheld. Social morality plays its part in the overall sentimental scheme; the keeping of promises and legal aspects of the marriage bond are therefore part of that scheme, a fact perhaps made clear by the wry *licet* and *censeo* scenes. Perhaps this is

one of the moments in *Rudens* which demonstrate Plautus' clever combination of the sentimental and farcical comic modes.

### 1.3. *Dulce Domum*<sup>22</sup>: A Haven for the Lost and Lonely?

The home has always played an important role in the sentimental ideal of the family<sup>23</sup>. The house where the family lives is its haven, the safe place to which it withdraws, the place in which it interacts as a group, from which it draws its identity. From the beginning of *Rudens* it is clear that the home is an important concept in this play, too. *Rudens* is the story of Daemones, a man who is in exile, away from his *fatherland*<sup>24</sup>. He is also a man who has lost a daughter, one of the key characters who made up his family in his former land (33-39). When the play begins, the roof of his current residence has been torn off in a storm. Left symbolically without adequate shelter, Daemones is considering repairs when he meets Plesidippus and tells him about the lost daughter and his lack of a son. Plesidippus suggests that the gods will provide a boy (83-107). Thanks to the prologue, the audience knows that this apparently glib prediction will prove true. Plesidippus will be the 'son'. He will marry Daemones' daughter, brought home by the same storm that wrecked the house. With dramatic irony the gods have used the same bout of bad weather to bring about the ultimate recovery of Daemones' family/home.

*Rudens* is, of course, also the tale of Palaestra's homecoming. The prologue tells us that she was abducted from her home as a child. Caught in a pimp's power, she has been in danger of being forced into a profession unsuited to her citizen status, which would exclude her from marriage and the role of a *matrona* in her own house. She is desperately in need of a haven. This is made vividly

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<sup>22</sup> This 'dog Latin' is both the title of a song traditionally sung at Winchester College to anticipate the holidays and, famously, the title of Chapter 5 in Grahame's *The Wind in The Willows*. This novel repeatedly stresses the importance of the home (a haven from the Wild Wood and Wide World) and has been variously described as an *idyll* about animals, or an essay in *nostalgia* or neo-pagan *sentimentalism* (Hunt, 1994, 97).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

<sup>24</sup> '*patria*'. Note how the family, home and country are brought together in this one term. Cf Lewis, 1977, 25ff, for a discussion of patriotic love.

clear when she first appears. Her ship-wrecked state symbolizes her position in life up until now. She is in a strange place, without parents and in need of food and shelter (185ff).

The spectators (both ancient and modern), pre-warned by the prologue and perhaps by their knowledge of conventional recognition plots, expect Palaestra to find ultimate shelter – with her father and then a husband. But they perhaps also suspect that it will take some time for her requirements to be met – otherwise the play would be quickly over. Palaestra's need for a home becomes, in fact, a theme in *Rudens* that develops accumulative power as she goes through a series of false homecomings. First she takes refuge in the temple, then at the altar, then in her parents' home, from which – with great dramatic irony – she is rejected unrecognized and returned to the altar (280ff; 688ff, 879, 1045). Eventually, however, she is acknowledged by her father and taken back into his house, the sentimental plot paradigm of the recognition story complete (1179).

But though the recognition plot has followed its course, uniting parents and child in their home in a manner that arguably both fulfils the sentimental ideal and also relies upon it for proper appreciation in the audience (they have to be satisfied by the conclusion that the sentimental plot offers), the story of *Rudens* nevertheless involves plenty of farce. We have already seen that Palaestra's initial stage appearance has humorous aspects. Her subsequent appearances also have comic moments. She carries on *enjoying* her exaggerated 'distressed maiden' role until, much to her disgust, Trachalio urges her not to be silly (680ff). Even the final reunion is conducted in an atmosphere of farce, as the slave, Gripus, interrupts it with bathetic remarks and Daemones himself – probably with comic hypocrisy – complains that his wife is overdoing the reunion's emotion (e.g. 1144-7; 1203-4).

Not content to provide pure sentiment, Plautus thus once more mixes his comic modes. Interestingly, however, in doing so, I believe he also exploits the conventional 'haven' theme for a specific purpose. He uses it to explore one of the fundamental conflicts within the sentimental plot scheme: the struggle between a romantic sentimental ideal, which focuses on the fulfilment of a

couple's 'love', and the social ideal, which focuses on the stability of the family structure (McCarthy, 2000, 3-4).

As we have seen, no particular attention is concentrated on the romantic aspect of Palaestra and Plesidippus' relationship in *Rudens*. 'Love', however, has thematic importance in Palaestra's story. At the play's beginning she escapes from a pimp, Labrax, who has designs to exploit her to satisfy his customers' erotic 'love'. One of his clients, Plesidippus, happens to have conceived such a strong passion for Palaestra that he arranges to buy her (42ff). Labrax has agreed to conclude negotiations at the temple of Venus – an appropriate location to hand the girl over to her lover (94). Had this handover occurred, Palaestra would, of course, have been in a happier position than she was as Labrax's slave. But her position as Plesidippus' mistress would still have been uncertain. Plesidippus would have been under no obligation to continue to provide for her, should his passion abate at any point, or should he eventually bow to social pressure and leave her in order to marry a citizen<sup>25</sup>. Without citizenship, any haven Palaestra found with him would remain precarious.

Palaestra's series of false homecomings symbolically play out her situation. Her first attempt to find a haven in the temple of Venus – who must be associated with the erotic love of men for their mistresses – meets with some temporary success, but the pimp – an exploiter of erotic love – forces her to abandon the shrine. The altar of Venus provides Palaestra with a slightly more secure position, for there she is not only protected by the abstract power of Venus (and her representative priestess), but by Trachalio, Plesidippus' representative, and eventually by Plesidippus, too (691, 877). They manage to deal with the pimp, but they leave Palaestra in the care of Daemones, who takes her into his house. Since she has yet to be recognized this turns out to be the ultimate false haven; Palaestra narrowly escapes an Oedipal homecoming, for Daemones evidently continues to

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<sup>25</sup> See *Cist.* and *Hec.* for examples of young men obliged to leave mistresses to marry citizens.

consider both her and Ampelisca<sup>26</sup> ‘fair game’ and it is – so he claims – only his wife’s jealousy which prevents him making advances (892, 1045).

Erotic love, when it is offered to a girl who is not protected by citizenship, thus provides poor security in this play. It may result from a true passion (in Plesidippus’ case), but it is unstable and potentially even abhorrent. Importantly, however, *philia* love (a non-sensual friendship/family love) is *also* shown to be wanting in *Rudens*. Indeed, it comes into continuous damaging conflict with *eros*. Daemones lost his Attic home due to his generosity to others, and his family relationship with his daughter was ruined when she was stolen from home to be sold in the service of *eros*. In Cyrene, the man’s continued generosity to strangers requiring his help when sacrificing to Venus gradually denudes him of household equipment. Sceparnio shows caution when approached by Plesidippus, considering him a possible danger to the home, but Daemones is less careful – a trait which may have led to household ruin in Athens (115ff<sup>27</sup>).

Another, perhaps more ironic, clash between *philia* and *eros* occurs when Palaestra is first kindly received by the priestess of Venus and then rudely banished from her parents’ home. The priestess offers Palaestra a ‘mother’s’ love, providing her with shelter (263ff; 406ff), but, not being a real mother, is ultimately unable to protect the girl. However, Palaestra’s real mother does not try to protect her – not so long as she sees her as a daughter of *eros*. It seems that *philia*, like erotic love, can only operate securely when offered to members of the socially approved citizen family.

A resolution is, of course, eventually found to the *eros* and *philia* conflict in *Rudens* – thanks to the fact that Palaestra is finally restored to the citizen status in which she can enjoy both. Though there is plenty of farce along the way – including, perhaps, that close shave with Oedipal tragedy –

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<sup>26</sup> Ampelisca’s experiences in the play repeat and amplify Palaestra’s. She, too, takes refuge with Venus, and under her protection goes to ask Sceparnio for water. He instantly offers her further ‘hospitality’, a euphemism for a sexual relationship. He wants to exploit her, too, but as a just reward for his ill-timed advances, he ends up as Venus’ domestic slave, carrying water for her (403ff, 417, 458ff).

<sup>27</sup> At 126 Daemones actually suggests it was ‘pimp’ types who ruined him in Athens; it is not clear whether he is referring to the fact that his daughter was stolen for use by a pimp, or whether he implies that he lost his fortune by doing business with pimps himself or by standing as surety for friends who were involved with them (cf.33-38). What matters, however, is that his misfortune was caused by pedlars of ‘*eros*’.

Plautus provides Palaestra's tale with the expected fortuitous conclusion of a recognition play in the sentimental mode. But if Palaestra's story concludes in a conventional fashion, the final scenes of *Rudens* perhaps still contain a surprise.

The play's prologue introduced us to Labrax, the *leno*, the exploiter of violated homes, who has earned *quid pro quo* when the ship containing his household goods was wrecked by the god (56ff). The punitive theme, with its links to the *leno*'s offensive attitudes to the sanctity of households, is developed within the play itself.

Labrax and his accomplice, Charmides, wash up destitute on shore in a scene which alternately inverts and echoes the initial appearance of Palaestra and Ampelisca. Unlike the girls, the only comfort they draw from finding themselves together is in the opportunity to cast blame on each other. Labrax accuses his former guest of causing the loss of his household; Charmides rues the day he entered Labrax' house (485ff, in particular 491-2; 497-501). Like Palaestra, Labrax laments the loss of people, as well as goods (553-4). When he hears that 'his' girls are in Venus' temple, he rejoices; but instead of entering the place peaceably, as though it were a haven, he speaks of forcing his way in (570). Whilst Charmides makes an unsuccessful attempt to beg shelter from Sceparnio, who is still protecting his master's home (571ff), Labrax's misuse of Venus' temple proves equally useless. Daemones has had a dream of a monkey that attempted to steal from a swallows' safe nest. The monkey is Labrax and Daemones unites with Trachalio and Plesidippus to thwart him (593ff; 769ff).

Eventually, Labrax himself tries to claim sanctuary from his association with Venus and also appeals to the sanctity of host-guest relations in a house. He says he fulfilled his promise to Plesidippus, meeting him at the shrine, and he requests help from Charmides. However, receiving no sympathy from either of them, he is dragged off to justice<sup>28</sup>.

This seems very appropriate. Labrax's crimes were against the household, against human relationships and the moral imperative to keep bargains faithfully. All these things play a part in

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<sup>28</sup> 863 ff. Note in particular 883, in which Labrax appeals emotively to Charmides using the word *hospes*

sentimental idealism; in a plot that follows a sentimental pattern, it would appear inevitable that Labrax should be brought to justice – that his offences be purged. But the surprise of *Rudens* is that after Labrax has had judgment passed upon him (though this hasn't brought about a change in heart), he returns into the story and the final scenes witness his recovery. He manages to claim back the trunk in which his household goods were stored<sup>29</sup>. And he also gets an invitation to dinner in Daemones' house. Aristotle declared that comedy was distinguished by the fact it resolved with the reconciliation of enemies. Did Plautus carry this idea to a ridiculous length in *Rudens*?

#### 1.4. *Pietas*: Familial Affection – a Virtue Rewarded?

In an early commentary on *Rudens*, Riley suggested that its prologue's reference to Jupiter keeping records of men's deeds is reminiscent of Psalm 56.8<sup>30</sup>. This psalm contains a doctrine that would have been familiar to early modern 'sentimental' audiences (and, despite huge cultural changes, to some spectators today): mainstream, monotheistic Christianity assumes a divine interest in human morality. By contrast, morality appears to have been associated more with politics than with religion in pagan Rome. Moral treatises contain few references to the gods as supervisors of morality; before Christianity, no-one had a monopoly of moral authority, nor the means of enforcing a moral norm<sup>31</sup>. It is commonly thought that Roman religion was *more* concerned with orthopraxis than orthodoxy; it was in principle contractual, based on a system of mutual obligation rather than on a pious individual's submission to divine law<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> See 545 for a reference to the trunk, which makes its symbolic importance to Labrax clear: Palaestra lamented her parents and a lack of home when she washed up on shore; he is concerned about his trunk and his slave girls: the centre of his household is wealth, not the family.

<sup>30</sup> Riley, 1912, note to *Rud.* 21. Psalm 40.6-7 might also be usefully referenced, since it draws together the ideas of a personal written record and of God's disinterest in sacrifice.

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, 2002, 31-32. Edwards concedes that morality did play *some* part in religious thinking: i.e. female chastity was considered important for the preservation of divine favour (44). Note, too, that if morality *was* the realm of politics in Roman society, religion and politics were not disassociated (Beard, 1998, 18-30).

<sup>32</sup> Beard, 1998, 34, 49.

Nevertheless, a concept of a proactive divine sovereignty, which concerns itself with human morality, is discernible in both monotheistic and polytheistic pre-Christian traditions<sup>33</sup>. Though Plautus' original audience may not have been as well-versed in this idea as certain modern spectators, they presumably had *some* knowledge of it – as *Rudens* perhaps demonstrates.

Amongst other things, *Rudens* seems to present a typical conflict story. After discussing divine interest in righteous fair dealing and admonishing the audience to practise two key Roman virtues, 'pietas' and 'fides' (29), the prologue introduces two 'illustrative' characters: a father (Daemones) and a pimp (Labrax)<sup>34</sup>. The former, 'not a bad man' (35), presumably acts *cum pietate et cum fide*; the latter, in ironic paradox, is both true to his type and false by nature (47<sup>35</sup>). These antithetical personalities are rivals, both having an interest in Palaestra. Daemones' interest is justifiable: he is her father. Labrax's is perfidious: he has been exercising false control over the girl, as her '*pseudo-pater*'. The prologue promises to resolve their conflict by punishing Labrax and rewarding Palaestra and her father with a reunion. Such a resolution would uphold morality. It seems, then, that *Rudens* may be a play about divinely-approved, virtuous family affection.

The play begins to unfold and substance is added to the conflict set up in the prologue. Labrax fulfils expectations raised about him. Before he appears, other characters describe him, confirming his attributes: he is the epitome of the stage pimp (124ff; 316-20). When he does appear, his role as *pseudo-pater* is developed. His first entry replicates Palaestra's, parodying her sentimental distress about her lost family with his distress about his lost girls (485ff). A brief reference then links him to Thyestes and Tereus, fathers who were served a meal made of the bodies of their own sons and subsequently vomited. Labrax is accused of preparing such a meal himself; he instantly feels

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<sup>33</sup> The Psalms, of course, have relevance to both ancient Judaism and Christianity; cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 1.20 ff; 17.482 ff; Hesiod, *Works and Days* 215-270.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hanson, 1959, 91-4.

<sup>35</sup> '*ut se aequom est, flocci non fecit fidem...*'



nauseated, but recovers to continue lamenting Palaestra and Ampelisca. *His* nausea is caused by the thought of the loss of his usurped power over other peoples' daughters (508ff<sup>36</sup>).

Labrax is faithless (he reneges on his promise to Plesidippus); he disregards family bonds; and he also shows little piety towards the gods. His crimes against well-run society (which depends upon laws and *fides*), the family and the gods are summed up by Trachalio thus:

<i>fraudis, sceleris, parricidi, peiuri</i>	'A cheat and villain, a perjured, parricidal
<i>plenissimus, / legerupa inpudens, impurus,</i>	monster, lawless, impudent, impure, impious
<i>inuerecundissimus...</i>	past all telling...'

(651-2)

And Labrax, by word and deed, confirms his impious position: he cares nothing for law (724-5); or parenthood (745ff) or for the gods and their servants (671; 783).

Daemones, meanwhile, has been demonstrating his better character, partly with references to his daughter. Though lost for many years, he speaks of her using diminutives, stressing that she was his only child. Sorrowfully, he evokes her in her 'absence', imagining how she must have grown (106; 742-4). Daemones appreciates his daughter: she was small and special; his loss grieves him and he has a clear picture of what he is missing in her now. To the modern ear, at least, this sounds sentimental<sup>37</sup>.

As well as showing a concern for his own child, Daemones proves his worth as a good citizen by respecting other people's offspring. When appealed to for help in restoring Palaestra to her parents, he instantly acquiesces (1080-4). And when it transpires that Palaestra is *his* daughter, he rejoices, acknowledging the gods' involvement in this happy chance: they have rewarded his piety (1191ff).

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Highet, 1942, 463ff.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ariès' fundamental argument in *Centuries of Childhood*: when a society differentiates children, either by idealising them or by depicting them in exact accordance with their proper proportions and typical behaviour, then it shows it has a special interest in children.

Labrax's impiety offends against society, the family and the gods; Daemones' piety respects them all. Hanson argues that the Plautine concept of *pietas* included filial and conjugal duty, whilst also denoting 'general moral rectitude' and respect for the gods (1959, 89ff). Saller suggests that *pietas* was actually a mutually binding duty in the family (1991, 146-151). Perhaps Daemones' *pietas* consists of general moral rectitude demonstrated specifically by his concern for his daughter.

Importantly, Palaestra repays this concern. Though her initial speech lacks romantic allusions to Plesidippus, it does not neglect *pietas*. In the Roman context this is perhaps understandable. A Roman's status and right to marry derived from parentage; only citizen parents (joined in marriage) could produce legitimate children (forming the nuclear family triad). They were therefore of crucial social importance<sup>38</sup>. Palaestra's only hope for marriage and a secure future is therefore in affirming her claim to 'respectable' parents – so she concentrates on them. She declares she has sinned neither against the gods nor her parents; she imagines her parents interest in her undeserved sufferings, caused by the impious pimp (190-2; 198, 215-19). And she subsequently continues to identify with them, weeping for the loss of the casket which would aid their reunion; rejoicing when it is found – even speaking of it as though it represents her parents (386-391; 1144-5).

Palaestra is, in fact, punctilious in her displays of filial piety and, during her first monologue, she makes it clear that she considers that this ought to have earned her divine favour. Like her father, she displays an attitude that combines elements which modern audiences, versed in traditional 'Christian' sentimentalism, might identify as typical of sentimental heroes/heroines. (Labrax, of course, provides an illustrative contrast.) Steele's *TCL* provides us with classic examples of such characters in the modern milieu; furthermore, it ends with a tableau of honest Bevil, rewarded by Providence for his upright behaviour towards his father and his sweetheart, united with them both. This is modern sentimental idealism, seriously embracing romance, morality, filial obedience and providential care to provide its audience with a happy ending<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Evans-Grubbs, 1993.

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix 1.

*Rudens*, with its *pietas* theme, possibly emphasises morality and family unity *more* than most other Plautine works. Plautus frequently wrote reunion stories, but often allowed recognition scenes to occur offstage<sup>40</sup>. *Rudens* not only stages the reunion between father and daughter, but also uses it to reinforce the divine justice theme established in the prologue. The overjoyed Daemones gives credit to the gods (1161; 1164). Palaestra responds, they embrace emotionally and Trachalio remarks that their piety has earned them happiness (1172-6<sup>41</sup>).

It appears, then, that there is some parity between the religious/moralistic theme of *Rudens* and later sentimental works. This should not be overlooked. Nonetheless, I would suggest that for two important reasons, the moral/religious impact of the reunion scene in *Rudens* is not *precisely* the same as that of the archetypal one in *TCL*. Firstly, it is not the play's culminating moment; significant scenes follow which actually see the reinstatement to fortune of Daemones' treacherous rival, Labrax (more about this later). Secondly, throughout the play, Plautus manipulates the *pietas* theme in a manner which suggests that he is not promoting or expecting the same reaction to sentiment as Steele did. He has a different purpose. Indeed, there are indications that Plautus exploited the sentimental/moral aspects of family relationships in *Rudens* primarily (but not only) to make his original audience laugh.

Moralistic sentimentality's abundant potential to slide into excess naturally provided ample comic opportunities. Plautus assumed his audience would recognize and enjoy consequent moments of exaggeration. There is thus comic irony when Daemones laments his lost daughter whilst she, with the audience's knowledge, is on stage with him (742-4). There is a comic moment when the *senex* is appealed to by Trachalio, in a speech which overdoes and parodies a cry for justice against the impious (615ff). The seemingly incidental humour of the moment when Daemones toys with the role of the *senex amans* and exposes himself to the danger of incest (892ff) possibly reverberates in

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<sup>40</sup> Duckworth, 1994, 128-9. Cf. Dér, 1987, 437-8, which argues that Plautus' fragmentary play, *Vidularia*, probably outdid *Rudens* in exploiting the emotional potential of a reunion between parent and child.

<sup>41</sup> 1176 reads : *uolup est quom istuc ex pietate uestra uobis contigit*. Cf. 1191ff, where Daemones reiterates Trachalio's opinion.

the scene when he actually embraces his daughter. The audience, particularly if the actor playing Daemones was very demonstrative in his embraces of Palaestra, would perhaps smile wryly at the memory of the 'good' man's narrow escape from more inappropriate embraces and would certainly laugh at his subsequent absurd criticism of his wife, who *he* says overdoes her reaction (1172; 1203-4).

Palaestra, meanwhile, provides more humour herself. As we saw earlier, her initial speech, with its references to her parents, acts as a parody of sentimentality. Her rather mawkish characterisation is continued at 386ff: Ampelisca makes herself useful, fetching water, but Palaestra sits and weeps for a casket. Her subsequent would-be 'pious' reference to her parents and the casket is neatly undermined by a bathetic remark from Gripus (1144-7).

Plautus thus evokes *pietas* for comic, not purely sentimental, reasons. Importantly, however, his parodies could only have amused his original audience if they had a concept of sentimentality in the first place. This concept need not have been completely negative: it is possible to laugh gently at something when it is shown in excess, whilst admitting its value in its proper condition and perhaps also entertaining an admiration for it as an ideal. Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a novel which parodies sentiment and the sentimental literary genre, but yet suggests the value of sentimentality, demonstrates this<sup>42</sup>. Plautus' purpose in *Rudens* may similarly not have been simply to laugh at the sentimental and idealistic aspects of *pietas*, but also to explore the concept *and* the conventions and premises of the traditional sentimental comic mode.

It is at this point that the reinstatement of Labrax becomes important. The prologue of *Rudens* leads the audience to expect several typical 'happy' plot resolutions: a good man and his innocent daughter will be reunited; a lover will win a bride; a good man will triumph over a villain. All these things will occur thanks to the fortuitous intervention of the gods. Plautus fulfils these expectations in the play – presumably to the satisfaction of the audience (they *like* sentimental resolutions). But he also includes some farce along the way *and* introduces a significant twist; he does not conclude

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

the plot with the reunion, marriage and moral triumph, but with the resurgence of the villain. This resurgence naturally brings into question the providential power of the just gods. Plautus actually allows the confused and miserable Palaestra to raise a point about this power early in the play. It can't really be the gods' will, she argues, to reward her piety with trouble. Divine justice is not demonstrated if the innocent suffer (185ff). Thanks to the prologue, the audience knows that Palaestra's concerns are unwarranted – the gods have been kind *and* just to her. Her consequent story seems to prove as much. But the surprise remains that guilty Labrax also recovers some advantage, despite Arcturus' arrangements.

That the moral scheme set out by divine Arcturus in the prologue should derail in this way might seem odd to us. But, as we saw earlier, the original audience of *Rudens* may have appreciated that Arcturus' role in the play was not simply to depict a god, but also to be an actor playing a god. That actor represents the playwright. His metatheatrical reference to Diphilus (32) draws attention to this and, importantly, also aligns the playwright (and with him his Roman mouthpiece, Plautus) with 'Jupiter'. The writer determines the setting of the play; he also determines what happens to the characters – he metes out 'justice' to them. He has power like Jupiter's – greater than the servant god/actor, Arcturus'. *He* concludes his prologue promising that the young hero of the moral sentimental story will soon appear (80). But the next person the audience meet is a highly unsentimental slave.

This slave immediately undermines Arcturus' pretended divinity, by displaying an ignorance of Arcturus' power: Sceparnio credits Neptune instead with the storm (83-4<sup>43</sup>). He also makes a telling, metatheatrical reference to Euripides' *Alcmene* (86). Euripides was fond of resolving his tragedies with a *deus ex machina*: providential divine intervention. But he also wrote plays in which the moral schemes differed subtly to the one proposed by Arcturus. In *Hippolytus* and probably

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<sup>43</sup> Sceparnio's false assumption might be merely indicative of mortal ignorance, but in this context I think the ignorance also diminishes Arcturus' glory, particularly since his mistake is replicated by the play's other characters. e.g. 358; 486; 699; 906.

*Alcmena*, humans suffer not because of their own faults, but because of the actions of the gods<sup>44</sup>.

Plautus' brief reference to Euripides, placed directly after the prologue, provides a subtle but immediate challenge to its neat moral scheme – the scheme common to sentimental comedy.

As *Rudens* develops Plautus continues to engage with comic conventions: those of the sentimental mode, in which providential intervention corrects human error to provide happy endings and to suggest that all is well with society and its customs; and those of the farcical mode, which questions the authority of the sentimental one (McCarthy 2000, 14). Plautus is well-aware that it is the playwright who determines what happens in a story; he can manipulate dramatic convention to provide the conclusions he – and hopefully his audience – want. In the case of *Rudens*, this conclusion included the reinstatement of Labrax. How Plautus uses that reinstatement to good effect in both the farcical and sentimental comic modes, whilst perhaps also wryly using his 'divine' role as determining playwright to make a particular point to the audience will be discussed in the next section.

### 1.5. Outside The Family: The Rope That Binds

The prologue of *Rudens* introduces Labrax – an enemy of *pietas* and *fides*. Daemones' rival, he is set in opposition to the family and to law-abiding society. Other characters in the play unite as a nuclear family against him: parents, daughter and future son-in-law find happiness together at his expense. And they also act jointly as members of a wider community. Daemones fights the pimp, giving aid to a fellow citizen (742). Palaestra and Ampelisca, unrelated but both slaves of Labrax, benefit from each others' company; the former's family reunion leads to the latter's freedom and prospective marriage with Trachalio – slave to Plesidippus, who has helped thwart the pimp's plans (228; 238-40; 1210ff). Labrax is left without any support. As he is led off to justice, even his

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<sup>44</sup> Lindenberg, 1956, 22-3. Lindenberg uses two vase paintings to reconstruct the probable Euripidean scenario, in which Alcmena suffers innocently (vases: F 149 and F 193, in British Museum *Catalogue of Greek and Etruscan Vases* IV, 1896, 72; 99).

accomplice, Charmides, disassociates himself from him (867-891, in particular 883). The court condemns the pimp and he concludes that all mortals concur in wishing his downfall (1281-5). Thus expressed, the plot paradigm of *Rudens* seems clear: the play witnesses the defeat of an outsider by the family and society. But *Rudens* is full of ambiguities and not the least of these is its inclusion of that outsider in the concluding family feast.

Remarking on the unusual nature of the pimp's banquet invitation, Segal credits it to the tone of universal forgiveness and reintegration in *Rudens* (1987, 81). The invitation might, indeed, be regarded as an outcome of an extremely successful plot in the sentimental mode. Theoretically, that mode could, after all, draw on the idealistic sentimental principle that all men are good at heart<sup>45</sup> to provide an Aristotelian general reconciliation, such as Segal describes. It could also include a punitive theme, to emphasise the moral superiority of its heroes (this happens in *TCL*). *Rudens* shows signs of attempting both these things – Labrax *is* punished before he receives his invitation. But the sentimental impact of his tale is dulled because he does not evolve a 'better self' as a result of his punishment; he is still prepared to forswear himself impiously (1335ff; 1353-5). His reintegration is thus doubly curious. Meanwhile, he is not the only unexpected guest. Daemones' slave, Gripus, is also invited.

Gripus' story provides an intriguing corollary to Labrax's. He does not appear in *Rudens* until after Labrax has been brought to justice (906), and with his appearance the play's ambiguities multiply. At the beginning of the story, Palaestra suffers distress because she has been robbed of her citizen's rights (217-9). Labrax's crime was largely his insistence on calling a 'free girl' his slave (393-4; 649; 735ff). But the heroic Plesidippus relies on another slave, Trachalio, to capture the pimp and 'good' Daemones uses slaves to guard him. Trachalio desires freedom (1216-7); so does Gripus, Daemones' representative slave (928-9). The pious in this tale thus benefit from the use of people who would rather be free, just as Labrax does.

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

This, admittedly, almost certainly appears more incongruous to the modern reader than it would have done to the ancient audience. Slavery was an accepted feature of everyday life in antiquity<sup>46</sup>, not a disgrace to slave-owners (unless, perhaps, the ‘slave’ was a free-born fellow citizen<sup>47</sup>). Nonetheless, the inclusion of Gripus in *Rudens* seems to have been calculated to provoke Plautus’ audience to thought about slavery in general.

Slavery was a matter of philosophical debate in Ancient society (even if this effected no perceptible changes in practice)<sup>48</sup>. The common assumption in Rome seems to have been that slaves were naturally inferior – morally and in other ways<sup>49</sup>. The stereo-typical Plautine *servus* may, at times, seem to bear witness to this idea. But Plautus does not appear to have been content to present one view of slavery. Leigh suggests that the slavery debate may have had particular significance in Plautus’ era due to the Carthaginian wars, in which ‘virtue’ was seen to be a peculiarly Roman characteristic, but during which many Romans lost their freedom to the supposedly cunning Carthaginians – an uncomfortable fact which must have challenged conventional assumptions (2004, 39-47 & *passim*). At the end of the prologue to *Rudens*, with its discourse on virtue, a direct address to the audience perhaps makes a brief, but telling, reference to these wars (82<sup>50</sup>). The play also includes a crucial scene<sup>51</sup> in which Gripus, having found Labrax’s trunk, claims it as his possession, dreams about freedom, but then becomes embroiled in an argument with Trachalio about the morality of his case. They engage in a struggle for possession and Gripus ends up tied up by a rope, in a vivid enactment of the bondage/possession debate (906 ff)<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Fitzgerald, 2000, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Leigh, 2004, 88. Leigh notes that the idea of enslavement by a compatriot was particularly distressing to 4<sup>th</sup>-century Greeks, the culture from which Greek New Comedy sprang.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 182. Moore notes that from at least the 5<sup>th</sup>-century BC *some* Greek philosophers denied that there was a natural difference between slaves and masters; but he also quotes Arist. *Pol.* 1252a, which argues to the contrary.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 182 & 5.1., below.

<sup>50</sup> *ualete, ut hostes uostri diffidant sibi*. Cf. Sonneschein, 1914, 71.

<sup>51</sup> Beare, 1968, 64, thinks this *the* central scene.

<sup>52</sup> Anderson believes that this ‘turning-point’ scene was more melodramatic in Diphilus’ original play, resolving with pathos when Daemones is made arbitrator of a case in which he has unbeknown sentimental interest. Plautus’ version, Anderson claims, ‘sidetracks’ into comic debate about whether the trunk can be considered a fish (1996, 48-53). Whilst not doubting the comic touches during the scene, I do not believe it



The rope that binds Gripus is the one he has used when fishing. Importantly, a maritime theme forms a link between him and Labrax. Both have names connected with fish: Labrax ‘voracious fish’; Gripus ‘fisherman’ (Sonnenschein, 1914, 68). The first part of the play sees Labrax loosing his possessions – including Palaestra<sup>53</sup> – as they are swept *into* the sea. In the second part Gripus tries to establish his right to Labrax’s trunk, which he has fished *from* the sea. Having made a great effort to go fishing, Gripus is certain he deserves to keep his gains. Trachalio disagrees, but Gripus persists in believing in the law of possession: the past matters not – he who has taken something from the sea may hold on to it (915-927; 963-85). He finds it acceptable to snap fish-like<sup>54</sup> at things which do not belong to him.

This mind-set matches Labrax’s. *He* does not care about Palaestra’s origins – the fact she once belonged to her family. Shark-like, he considers her his, even after he has sold her (1230-9 Gripus’ attitude: ‘*Aequom videtur...* etc’; cf. 47, Labrax’s: *Is leno, ut se aequom est, flocci non fecit fidem*). Labrax is proved wrong and, just as the plot of the first half of the play led to his defeat and loss, the second half leads to the routing of his preying (fishing) counterpart, Gripus.

Nevertheless, Labrax and Gripus are differentiated in an essential way: Gripus is a slave, Labrax free. It is true that, *like* Labrax, Gripus is depicted as a stranger to sentimental principles – to *fides* and *pietas*. He is prepared to juggle with ‘faith’ to deceive Trachalio in the choice of arbitrator

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sidetracks altogether from the serious point. NB Lowe endorses the theory that the presence of Palaestra and Ampelisca on stage at 664-882 is a Plautine innovation, used to increase awareness of the girls’ predicament. They are in full sight whilst Labrax fights to possess them (1991, 39). If Lowe is right, this scene would provide a parallel example of Plautus deliberately using visual effects in his exploration of the subject of slavery.

<sup>53</sup> Palaestra is a standard name for a *meretrix*, but also means ‘wrestler’ (Ehrman, 1984, 330-1). Both connotations are appropriate, linking Palaestra to the maritime theme and it to the ‘love’ conflict. The shark-like pimp, intent on exploiting ‘love’, causes her ship-wreck. Ehrman notes that Sceparnio’s description of the girl’s struggle in the sea uses terms reminiscent of a wrestling match. Palaestra escapes the sea, appears on stage, and immediately after she leaves it again, a chorus of fishermen enter and reinforce the themes associated with her character and the plot in general (290-305). They describe their fishing as a struggle for the mean profit/possession of basic necessities, which exercises them like wrestling: *pro exercitu [...]* *palaestrico*[...] (296). They go on to ask for grace from Venus, thus rounding off the ‘fishing’ theme: life, like fishing, can be a wrestling match, often with conflict between the need to possess/profit and ‘love’ – something which in itself involves possession of some sort (honourable marriage bonds or a temporary physical ownership, sanctioned by profit-seeking ‘owner’ pimp).

<sup>54</sup> Note how Labrax theorises early in the play about the putative ‘whale’ which might have swallowed his trunk (545-6).

(1043-4 ‘... *si adhibet fidem...*’) and his desire to possess leads him to oppose action that would unite Palaestra with her father (1080-5). *Unlike* Labrax, however, his struggle for possession of the trunk is determined by his desire for the freedom he thinks it will bring and by the hope of consequently having the right to possess others (930-1). He is thus both a victim of the slavery system and would-be exploiter of it.

From a modern sentimental perspective, Gripus, as part-victim of slavery, might appear slightly more worthy of sympathy than Labrax. To us, the play’s concluding scenes, in which Labrax outwits him and triumphantly reclaims the trunk, might therefore seem surprising. Once again, however, the Roman audience might have been inclined to perceive things differently. When Gripus sought to convince Trachalio of his rights to the trunk, Trachalio objected on the grounds that Gripus was failing to differentiate between the trunk and the fish – to appreciate that the trunk, but not the fish, once belonged to someone else and must be returned (963-986). Trachalio’s scheme of differentiation can perhaps be applied to Gripus and Palaestra, explaining, at last, why some of the slavery in this play seems ‘acceptable’, whilst other slavery is not. Palaestra, who is only a *pseudomeretrix*, is symbolically represented by the trunk (which, of course, also contains her tokens of identity), for she once belonged to a family. They consequently have a right to reclaim her (and her ‘freedom’<sup>55</sup>). Note how Daemones’ instant reaction on regaining her is to decide what to do with her; she is his to care for and dispose of (1197-8). Gripus, who we may assume was born a slave, might, however, be thought of like the fish. He never belonged to a nuclear family and cannot return to such a group<sup>56</sup>. His desire to possess the trunk, which he thinks will bring him freedom and rights to possess others, is thus ludicrous. He is a fool (as might be expected from an ‘inferior slave’) – a fact which is obvious when, intent on his unachievable object, he trusts a self-confessed

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<sup>55</sup> On freeborn status being inalienable, cf. Fitzgerald, 2000, 93.

<sup>56</sup> We see a situation in which sentimental privileges are being reserved for a certain ‘better’ class of persons. It is interesting that this segregation occurred in the ‘idealistic’ 18<sup>th</sup>-century, too. Cf. Thesis Introduction.3. note 10, above.

mendicant (1305-6). Hence he replaces Labrax as an appropriate target for humour in the final scenes of the play.

Importantly, however, Gripus' role as the play's ultimate scapegoat is perhaps also inevitable due to his persistent opposition to a key principle of the sentimental comic mode: that the social *status quo* must be approved of and maintained (McCarthy, 2000, 14). Konstan writes that in the play's scheme the sea represents an area 'beyond the perimeter of the polity'. Gripus' claim to the trunk depends on his belief that the sea can wash away possession rights pre-established in that polity (1986a, 77, 84-5 & *passim*). Gripus' hopes work outside the social system. From a 21<sup>st</sup>-century perspective, we may find this unsurprising; after all, the Roman social system has not done much for Gripus, denying him freedom and a place in a nuclear family. But the Roman audience might have shown him less sympathy. For them, a 'good' slave's place was in his master's *familia*. He was supposed to identify with its interests, just as Trachalio appears to do. Gripus is *not* a good slave; he shows no joy at the reunion in Daemones' *familia*, seeing it only as a blow to himself (1161; 1164-5; 1184-1190).

Significantly, Gripus' negative reaction to the family reunion contrasts not only with Trachalio's and Ampelisca's (representatives of the sympathetic wider community), but also with Labrax's, the erstwhile outsider (1176; 1183; 1365-8). Labrax is swift to congratulate Daemones. His congratulations are sceptically received – doubtlessly with good reason – but his attitude is nonetheless important. Though remaining cheerfully and impiously fickle about ownership and bargains – he says he would have claimed the trunk even if it had belonged to Jupiter and only keeps his oath to Gripus when obliged to by Daemones (1361-2; 1384ff) – he steps into a new role. Having acknowledged that he has lost Palaestra due to a legal ruling (1281-3), he no longer presses his claim to own her. Instead, he insists on his ownership of the trunk and, since his claim agrees with civic law, Daemones supports him (1358-9; 1392-3)<sup>57</sup>. He even offers him a place at the

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<sup>57</sup> Konstan notes that the question of how Labrax earned the contents of his trunk – quite probably through the exploitation of kidnapped girls – is avoided in the play, not forming part of Plautus' scheme (1986a, 80).

banquet, which ends this play in the sentimental mode – the mode which supports established social laws and customs.

Labrax's reintegration into the plot is at last explained: it depends on his willingness to pay lip-service to social norms (in congratulating Daemones), on his willingness to benefit from society's laws and on the good citizen Daemones' adherence to them. In contrast to Gripus, Labrax is now an 'insider', protected by law. That he underwent no change of heart to become one, is a deliberate move by the playwright, which highlights a farcical flaw in the sentimental system.

Interestingly, this flaw has already been pointed out in the play – and by no less a person than Gripus. At 1227-1262 he attempts to persuade his master to keep the trunk. Daemones refuses, placing his faith in the sentimental justice of life, in which, so he claims, wise, selfless and honest men fare well, but thieves ask for trouble. (Note how well this agrees with Arcturus' prologue.) He further comments that Gripus' attitude is typical of a slave: dishonest, their methods lead to deserved captivity, not freedom. Daemones has summed up the credo of the sentimental plot (and expressed the conventional and convenient Roman opinion of slaves). But Gripus remains unconvinced. He remarks that he has heard such ideas expressed in comedy before; more – he has heard audiences applaud them. But he has never known any of the spectators seek to live in accordance with the maxims expressed. Like Labrax, they only pay lip-service to them (1249-53).

With this telling metatheatre Gripus – suddenly Plautus' spokesman – involves the audience, calling into question not only the neat moral scheme of comedies in the sentimental mode, but perhaps also the idealistic moral codes of society. How feasible are they; how well observed – and if not observed, how fair to slaves, doomed to subservience by artificial stereotyping as the less moral members of a 'virtuous' Roman society<sup>58</sup>?

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Moore 1998, 67-8; 80; 89-90. Moore argues that Plautus regarded the association of theatre with moral didacticism with scepticism; whilst he did not seek to subvert morality, he did mock moralising in comedy. Thus Gripus' metatheatre functions to remind the audience of what Plautus thought comedy was really for: not moralising in the sentimental comic mode, but joking in the farcical one.

Gripius is cynical, but the plot of *Rudens* ploughs on in the sentimental mode. It even incorporates Gripius, granting him his freedom and a place at the feast (1410; 1423). The audience cannot attend the banquet (1418-20). They live in the real world, over which the playwright 'god' has no power. But the playwright hopes they will applaud his conclusion. After all, if he has challenged their idealistic sentimental and moral codes, asking them to reconsider them, he has still fulfilled their expectations in this sentimental play – perhaps he has even outdone them, with a happy conclusion that sees all the characters reconciled and drawn willy-nilly into the sentimental scheme.

#### 1.6. Concluding Remarks

*Rudens*, as indicated by the literary critics quoted in the introduction above, is a play in which morality is an extremely important theme. In some ways it differs from most modern sentimental works: it does not focus on 'romance'; it grapples with social restraints caused by ancient laws governing marriage; its exploration/exploitation of the concept of providential power differs from that of some Christian works; it raises questions about slavery not obviously pertinent to modern life. Nonetheless, in basic outline it is a play which unites a pious nuclear family, provides for a marriage and brings someone home: in short, it is a work that follows the plot paradigm of the sentimental comic mode.

It does not, however, do this blindly. It employs farce and parody and challenges the moral schemes and expectations raised in its own prologue, intriguingly relying on audience knowledge of sentimental values in order to be humorous. Palaestra's parodied appearances as the sentimental heroine and her reunion with her parents thus both satisfy the demands of the sentimental plot and provide laughter thanks to their excessive sentiment. Plautus entertains his audience, using farce and metatheatre and questioning whether his comic world – with its engineered, super-abundant happy-endings – bears any resemblance to the real world.

Importantly, Plautus' teasing irony does not prove that his spectators were uninterested or cynical about sentimentalism *per se*, embracing no ideal themselves. His use of metatheatre throughout the work suggests its acute relevance to them. Dixon writes that there were 'tensions' between reality and the ideal of the late-republicans and their descendants (1991, 99). I believe these tensions may have been deliberately illustrated and explored in the plot of the mid-republican work, *Rudens*.

## Chapter 2: Wives & Husbands

### 2.1. Introduction

Bevil: [...] *the mother [...] has not thought fit to consult either him or his daughter in the matter.*

Myrtle: *Pshaw! A poor troublesome woman [...] TCL 2.1.*

Frye maintains that the most common comic plot paradigm begins when a ‘boy meets a girl’ (1971, 163). In modern sentimental literature, the ‘boys’ in question tend to be devoted heroes, whilst their girls are glorious heroines, shining with idealistic light. In the course of their stories these couples typically pass through vicissitudes, proving—despite errors here and there—their inherent worth. Misunderstandings take place; one or both of the pair may seem (to the audience and/or to each other) to ‘fail’; but the comedies end with the lovers’ ultimate triumph.

But modern comedy frequently also presents male-female relationships of an entirely different sort. Thus, though Steele’s supremely sentimental *TCL* rewards two honest men with a pair of innocent brides, it also provides a stark contrast in the comic age, Mrs Sealand. ‘A troublesome woman’, she is not a wife to be prized, but a stereotypical shrewish *matrona*, whose machinations must be thwarted for the play to reach its happy conclusion.

In Plautus’ *Rudens* we glimpse plausible prototypes both for Steele’s sentimental couples (even if Palaestra’s and Plesidippus’ sentimentality is often parodied) and his troublesome *matrona*. More: since Daemones’ roving eye probably gives the possessive Daedalis grounds for her surliness, we also see a depiction of a husband whose devotion has failed. Unsurprisingly, loving and warring couples provide subject material for most of Plautus’ other plays, too. However, though some parity *can* be seen between the positive and negative character types of *Rudens* and *TCL*, it must be admitted that Plautus’ exploration of the marriage theme often differs vastly from that of modern sentimental authors.

Modern comedies generally conclude with happy marriages, set up in accordance with sentimental ideals of mutual affection and compatibility. But only twelve of Plautus' extant plays end with a promise of marriage/or a marriage restored; and of these, a certain number are not exactly jubilant about it. Worse still, from the superficial sentimental point of view, several ebullient farces end with men continuing in extra-marital affairs – though not always that 'happily' either!<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, it is my contention that sentimental themes are still fundamental to Plautus' work. These themes are recognisable to modern readers, steeped in their own culture's sentimental traditions, and must have been familiar to the Roman audience, too, for Plautus relies on an appreciation of them to structure his stories and create humour. I believe the varying presentations of romantic or sexual plots in his plays result in part from his experimentation with contrasting comic modes and conventions. They perhaps also bear witness to a society in which marriage laws and cultural customs were different to ours – marriages were arranged and noncitizens' marriage rights were restricted<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, it is possible that, in various ways, they deliberately explore tensions between Roman social customs and Roman ideals.

The following chapter will consider Plautus' depiction of male-female relationships from several differing angles, seeking to discover how he manipulates sentimental themes within his medium in order to communicate with his Roman audience.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 2 for further details.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley, 1991 (1), 127-8; Dixon, 1992, 10, 53, 58, 90-1; Weaver, 1991, 174.



## 2.2. Love Trap

Indiana: *I will not doubt the truth of Bevil [...] I know his virtue [...]*

Isabella: *Can you say, in your conscience, he has ever once offered to marry you?*

Indiana: *No! But by his behavior I am convinced he will offer it the moment 'tis in his power or consistent with his honor. TCL 2.2.*

Indiana, the heroine of *TCL*, is always sure of one thing: the honour of her protector, Bevil. His intentions are honest, his purposes pure; she *knows* he will offer her marriage. Her audience doubtless believes her, for a wedding provides a natural conclusion to a boy-meets-girl comedy in the modern sentimental mode. Marriage, for lovers like Indiana and Bevil, is a happy and 'honourable estate', conforming to Christian ethics, ending only when 'death us do part'<sup>3</sup>. The traditional plot pattern that leads to it is so well-known that modern audiences usually know what to expect.

Plautus' ancient audience, however, cannot have been quite so certain about what they would see in his plays. They were, we may assume, familiar with *pseudomeretrix* plots, such as that of *Rudens*, in which girls prove marriageable in the end. But they were presumably also acquainted with the conventional themes and plot devices of the playwright's more farcical mode. Whilst only eight of Plautus' twenty-one extant plays actually end with new marriages<sup>4</sup>, only one – *Captivi* – has no 'romance' plot at all. The ancient Roman audience must have been used to comic 'lovers' whose goals were *not* socially approved marriage – like Stratippocles, the *adulescens* of *Epidicus*,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1662.

<sup>4</sup> New marriages planned in *Aul* (we presume); *Cas* (though this only spoken of in the Epilogue); *Cist.*; *Cur.*; *Poen.*; *Rud.*; *Trin.*; *Truc.* Marriage was possibly also on the cards at the end of the fragmentary *Vid.* NB not all of the women married are *pseudomeretrices* - this is not the case in *Trin.*, nor perhaps in *Aul.*, although Euclio's daughter, ignored and unprotected by her father, has been treated rather like a *meretrix*. Note also that one of the plays' *pseudomeretrices* plots actually ends with a girl being saved from an incestuous relationship: Plautus' *Epid.* has no marriage at its end.

who on hearing that his father is planning to get him married, replies that he will never comply – not unless his mistress dies first (362-3).

The Romans did have a cultural rhetoric that spoke favourably of matrimony. Such rhetoric is essential to the situation comedy of *Aulularia*, when Eunomia persuades her reluctant brother to consider marriage beneficial; and when Staphyla glibly wishes the couple well – before remembering the unsuitability of the proposition for her pregnant mistress (144-150; 271-2). Nevertheless, the nagging *matrona* is a very common figure in Roman comedy. Indeed, an acceptance of the misogynistic convention is a prerequisite to the enjoyment of incidental humour in two of Plautus' prologues: that of *Poenulus* (32-35); and that of *Cistellaria* (the delayed second prologue 175). Some Plautine plays entertain spectators with prolonged or repeated sections of witty criticism of unseen wives (e.g. *Trin.* 39-65; 800-1; 1183-5; cf. *Rud.* 895, 904-5, 1045 & 1202; 1113-4); others present the wives themselves, who – as jokes are made at their expense – perhaps appear to substantiate the disparaging remarks (e.g. *Men.* 568-9; *Cas.* 227-234).

On the whole, then, wives seem to fare badly in Plautus' plots. Theirs is not a happy, honourable lot. Moore suggests that they mostly come into the unsympathetic category of 'Other': obvious targets for humour (1998, 158-9). For Segal this is easily explained. Marriage has 'always been invested with a rigorous morality'; it constitutes one of society's fundamental restraints. The Romans were unromantic, but had created an impossible ideal about a moral past. Plautus' saturnalian, misogynistic comedy worked by providing a 'holiday' from the pressures created by this. That wives and not husbands are the butt of the cynical humour is explained by the fact that Plautus wrote for men – and male chauvinists at that (1987, 9-13; 26-7; 172; 213).

This explanation seems reasonable enough. If truly burdened by life in a regimented society, in which arranged marriages had a civil rather than emotional or romantic basis, ancient spectators might well have enjoyed escapist, farcical plots. But Segal's is not the only interpretation. Plautus' *matronae* may be deliberately distorted figures, imported not to provide relief from everyday life, but simply because there is small scope for farcical comedy in accurate depictions of married

happiness<sup>5</sup>. Standard boy-meets-girl plots conclude with marriage because the sympathetic lovers' tribulations are usually resolved at this point<sup>6</sup>. Beyond it, a different type of people must be evoked, belonging to a different sort of comedy. Steele allowed a conventional shrewish *matrona* (and incidentally also a bungling *senex*) to invade the sentimental upright world of *TCL*, creating *punitive* humour in the farcical mode. Plautus' farces may not merely have catered for 'escapism'. They may also have employed punitive humour, creating pertinent challenges to conventional anti-wife jargon and raising questions about 'escapism' and social restraint.

This, I believe, is clearly demonstrated in Plautus' *Asinaria*, a work which employs a well-known farcical device: a role reversal, in which a foolish, love-driven master deliberately places himself in the command of his slave<sup>7</sup>. This saturnalian convention creates humour by the absurdity of its topsy-turvydom. But Plautus' humour once again has a sting in its tail.

The play begins with a surprise. In the usual plot paradigm for an *adulescens* in search of 'free love', one of the chief blocking figures is his father: purse-holder and guardian of a socially-approved familial structure (e.g. Simo in *Pseudolus*, 435-6)<sup>8</sup>. But in the first scene of *Asinaria*, the *senex* Demaenetus claims to be a different sort of man. He himself is suffering, being bound in an undesirable marriage. He wishes to appear lenient, approves of help given to his son and categorically shifts the blocking role onto his wife (47-50; 57-9; 64-79). Aligning himself with the boy, Demaenetus twice defies the social constraints of marriage, ignoring his own obligations – as husband and head of the house – and approving his son's avoidance of a legal union. But he also

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Duckworth, 1994, 284. Duckworth points to *Trin.* 66, *sed hoc animum aduerte atque aufer ridicularia*, with which Megaronides concludes a passage of misogynistic humour, declaring it is time to leave joking and get down to business. This, Duckworth believes, demonstrates that anti-wife humour was conventional, not to be taken seriously.

<sup>6</sup> There are, of course, both modern and ancient comic plots in which the protagonists *are* married couples, who for various reasons enter into new tribulations after their wedding day. Such tales can be sentimental or farcical – or both! For diverse modern examples consider: *Love's Last Shift*; *An Ideal Husband*; *The Scarlet Pimpernel*; *The Awful Truth*; for ancient examples see 2.6., below.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Segal, 1987, 111, and examples from Plautus: *Epid.* 120ff; 378-9; *Mos.* 399-407; *Ps.* 3-118; 232-240; 383.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Konstan, 1978, 216.

becomes embroiled in an important paradox: in his pursuit of freedom from family bonds, he enacts a triple role-reversal, each of which produces a further loss of authority and independence.

Firstly he exchanges places with his wife (a woman who *bought* him with her dowry 87). Secondly, he assimilates himself with his son (a boy theoretically in his power). Thirdly, he asks for a slave's help. This slave speaks the first scene's opening words (16-22), which contain a striking *paraprosdokian*. He begins by appealing to Demaenetus' regard for his son's life and then evokes his master's chief fear: *not* that son's death, but the ongoing life of his wife. Family sentiment is thus built up and then destroyed. And Demaenetus does not rebuke the slave. Considering his 'until-death-us-do-part' status a curse, he connives at the slave's attacks on his family, continuing to ask for aid (23-26; 42-4). The role-reversal is complete: the slave gains the upper-hand and exits with a defiant declaration of independence – perhaps unsurprising in a slave named 'Libanus' (109-114<sup>9</sup>).

Demaenetus and the slave are replaced on stage by the son, Argyrippus (127ff). And it is immediately evident that he is in the same position as his father – hopelessly and paradoxically enslaved. He has tried to purchase free love and ended up in bondage himself. He rails against the *lena*, Cleareta, claiming he has earned a right to her daughter, though he has no power to take her<sup>10</sup>. Cleareta appears and confirms the boy's position: his relationship with her daughter is one of services for cash (172). There is no hope for Argyrippus. His 'love' has got him fastened to the pair, trapped by a dart through his heart (156).

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<sup>9</sup> See in particular 110; I shall go where it pleases me: *ubiquomque lubitum erit animo meo*. Plautus plays with the Greek name ('from Lebanon'), exploiting its resemblance to Latin words with topical connotation: *liber* – 'free' (cf. 274-5; 410-1; 689-90); *Liberalia* – the festival of the puberty rite; *libet* – 'it pleases'. Demaenetus (aping youth) and his adolescent son wish to be free to do what pleases them: indulge their sexual desire. Their slave ends up pleasing himself, as though he were free – and enslaves them (707-711). Cf. Henderson, 2006, 197.

<sup>10</sup> Note how Argyrippus momentarily tries to give his love sentimental qualities, referring to his girl's 'innocence' (innocence is a sentimental attribute), but then slips into speaking revengefully of her. Lowe (1992, 162) looks at 'inconsistencies' in *Asinaria*, seeking to identify places where Plautus has altered the original Greek text. He notes that Argyrippus' threats to Philaenium (NB these include a Roman allusion *ad tris viros*) hardly accord with the image of him as a languishing lover, and suggests that Plautus is more concerned with making his audience laugh, than with great consistency in characterisation. Tortured by 'true' passion, some lovers might, of course, momentarily speak wildly against their partners, only to repent later (cf. *Romeo And Juliet*, 3.73-90). But I believe Argyrippus' overall mercenary attitude belies true passion and that Plautus intends his audience to recognize this.

Having made it clear that both Demaenetus and Argyrippus are enslaved by their desire for ‘freedom’, Plautus presents us with several scenes in which two ‘real’ slaves, Libanus and Leonida, exhibit the typical characteristics of comic *servi*, boasting of deserved punishments (249-503; 545ff<sup>11</sup>). To this level, we realise, their masters have descended. Significantly, the slaves’ appearances are placed around two apparently ‘different’ scenes, in which sentiment tries to take a hold.

In the first the *lena* and her daughter, Philaenium, engage in a dispute. Philaenium makes a sterling effort to stick to the script of a sentimental sweetheart, suffering undeserved distress, showing filial duty and honouring morality (510; 514-15; 537; 539-42). But her efforts are spoiled by remarks from her mother: she sees her daughter as an experienced *meretrix*, albeit one who has not quite learned the service-for-pay rule (527).

In the second Argyrippus and Philaenium appear together, speaking of their last hour and the death they both face, since they must part (594-5; 606-614). They sound very much like Indiana, when she describes how she will die if ever Bevil leaves her (*TCL* 2.2.<sup>12</sup>).

However, Plautus’ lovers do not speak in private. The slaves eavesdrop on them, interrupting their conversation with bathetic remarks (596-605; 616-17). Worse still, the entire conversation scene has been prepared for and already undermined by the slaves, with references to some ‘asses’. These asses were originally beasts of burden, which supposedly bore the rods used to beat the slaves (333-341). They embody the toil and degradation of slavery and, slave-like, they have now been sold. They are represented by their purchase money, which is to be used to buy ‘free love’ from Philaenium – importantly, *not* until death, but for one year only (234-6)! Speaking

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<sup>11</sup> The slaves also attempt to ensnare a stranger, but – importantly – do not succeed. The stranger, in contrast to *senex* and *adulescens*, has no interest in ‘love’; remaining fully aware of what is appropriate behaviour in a slave (no role reversal for him), he does not fall into the slaves’ trap (470).

<sup>12</sup> Lowe, 1992, 163-5; 171, argues that Philaenium is initially depicted in an attractive light – genuinely ‘sentimental’ (cf. Duckworth, 1994, 279-80) – and that her later, stereotypical *meretrix* behaviour is an inconsistency caused by Plautine alterations to the original text. Plautus doubtless did alter the text, but I believe that the play could be acted in such a way that the characterisation remains consistent: so that Philaenium’s sentimentality *always* remains in doubt. The audience knows she has played a part in Argyrippus’ fall into a ridiculous slave-like bondage. They will thus be prepared to expect – and enjoy – her bathetic descent in the end.

figuratively, Leonida expresses a desire to whip the asses if they cry; in the succeeding scene he uses his young master's enslaving, insincere sentiment – which, despite the lovers' wailing protests, has a limiting mercenary basis – to whip him (589-90).

The scene unfolds. Argyrippus attempts to maintain a sentimental front as a master, but is swiftly rebuffed (621-2). He continues to be maudlin, but makes unfortunate references to the power of money to save him (631-7). The slaves begin to play with him. They make a parallel pair on the stage – a visual reminder of Argyrippus' demeaning pseudo-sentimental relationship with Philaenium. The lovers are locked together by mawkish love; the slaves in a conference to exploit it (639ff). They offer Argyrippus money, but he must acknowledge them patrons and commanders of his love to receive it (650-7). The dubious value of mawkish love is exposed, as Philaenium must twice ape its language to please the slaves (664-9; 686-697) and Argyrippus must twice go through actions demonstrating his slide into slavery (kneeling to one slave and bearing another on his back, like an ass), whilst a commentary highlights his fallen status (a homosexual quip and a reference to the mill are aimed at him: they are normally heard of slaves 670, 698, 703, 709).

The depth of Argyrippus' degradation becomes clear at the end of the scene, when there is a further *paraprosdokian*. The boy learns he need not have demeaned himself to gain the money from the slaves. It was already his, the gift of his father (732-3), provided on one startling condition: he must share the girl with him (735-6). The slaves expect Argyrippus to object – just as his father ought to have objected to the comments about his wife in the first scene (738-9. Note the reminder of the wife at 743). But Argyrippus is unsentimentally keen to have Philaenium at any price. He agrees, making a bargain that the audience probably considered as disgraceful as his subjection to the slaves<sup>13</sup>.

The play is reaching its conclusion. It expands briefly to admit a further rival to Argyrippus – Diabolus (746ff). He, too, wishes to buy 'love'. His ridiculously detailed plans for enslaving

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<sup>13</sup> Note Artemona's disgust at her husband carousing with his son: 851-3; 875; 931-3. In traditional Roman thought, it appears to have been considered disgraceful for a father to share even a bath with his son, let alone a girl (cf. Christenson, 2000, note to 993 *Am.*, which cites Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 40).

Philaenium again expose the ‘bondage’ involved in a *meretrix* relationship. But Diabolus’ language and legalistic mindset are possibly reminiscent of a cold marriage contract as well. Both Demaenetus’ and Argyrippus’ slave-like positions are evoked.

So the play ends. Argyrippus is shown reluctantly sharing his girl with his father (836-845). Demaenetus is caught by his wife and the traditional comic finale – a family reunion – is enacted in an ironic punitive atmosphere. Slave-like, both men have earned their beatings. Odysseus’ antitype, Demaenetus, returns home, not into a happily renewed ‘until-death-us-do-part’ marriage, but into a living death (909-911 *Mortuost Demaenetus*). Argyrippus is left with the girl, but his triumph is muted – by the suggestion he may have to share her with Diabolus (913-916) and by Demaenetus’ ominous parting words. The *senex*, having been repeatedly ordered back to his home – his trap – by his wife, finally uses a similar imperative structure to curse Philaenium (cf. *i domum; i in crucem* 921 ff; 940). She reacts, saying she will go inside, *with* Argyrippus. He consents to go, presumably in to *his* perdition... Neither son nor father has perfected an escape.

### 2.3. Wild Oats

Demaenetus and Argyrippus both appear to be the targets of punitive humour in *Asinaria*. But is one of them more ridiculous than the other? Anderson thinks not: he writes that rather than using untimely old love (as represented by Demaenetus) to validate young love, Plautus discredits *all* romantic love (1996, 82). Ryder, conversely, speaks in Demaenetus’ defence. He believes Plautus intended his audience to sympathise with the *senex*, whose wife *is* a dragon (1984, 182). There is, after all, a spattering of misogynistic jokes in the play’s final scene (e.g. 869-70; 894-5); Artemona does behave very shrewishly (anyone might desire to escape from her); *and* an epilogue asks the spectators to beg Demaenetus off a beating, on the grounds that he has done nothing unusual (942-47).

The problem is, however, that it seems unlikely that the audience *will* waste a huge amount of sympathy on Demaenetus. Plautus has not troubled to build much rapport between him and the spectators (nor between them and Argyrippus: neither addresses long monologues to the audience). They have consequently enjoyed the play as unpartisan judges, governed only by their previous knowledge of comic conventions and their own cultural preconceptions. And what they have seen is two men being ridiculously degraded. But was this because of ‘romantic love’? Did Plautus expect his original audience laughingly to dismiss the sentimental love ideal altogether?

The two cases must be dealt with separately. As far as Argyrippus is concerned, I do not believe Plautus intends to use the boy to mock romantic love *per se*. He does, however, expect his audience to recognize parodies of sentiment’s ‘until-death-us-do-part’ language. In common with other citizen *adulescentes* in Greek New Comedy – and in Roman society – Argyrippus is bound by law: he cannot marry any girl he chooses, but only one of citizen birth. He has temporarily circumvented his citizen duty and is sowing wild oats in a typical affair with a *meretrix* – in a relationship that has a mercenary basis. Whilst he *talks* of his relationship with Philaenium in sentimental terms, as though it was founded in love and could last ‘forever’, he allows it to drive him to actions which are far from noble. His ‘love’ provides an example of the negative, excessive and insincere sort of sentimentality that is always an apt target for humour.

Dubious hyperbole is, in fact, the trademark of foolish *adulescentes* in Plautus. They are typically characterized as crazed by ‘love’. To cite but a few: the indecisive Stratippocles of *Epidicus* is desperate about his new girl (64-6); Alcesimarchus indulges in exaggerated self-pity in *Cistellaria* (203-250); hopeful Phaedromus addresses love ditties to a door in *Curculio* (15-30; 141ff); Calidorus goes into ecstasy over a begging letter in *Pseudolus* (20ff). Comic bathos is regularly applied to highlight the boys’ excesses<sup>14</sup>. Even those of them who eventually marry their

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<sup>14</sup> Note that in the examples quoted from *Pseudolus* and *Curculio*, sexual innuendo and references to money reduce the sentiment, just as in *Asinaria*. The sentimental ideal commonly glosses over the financial and sexual element in relationships. See below for further discussion.



girls are not portrayed in a fully sensible light<sup>15</sup>. They are not like heroic Bevil. We saw that this was the case in *Rudens*; crazy Agorastocles alternately beats and exalts his slave in *Poenulus* (129-141); and Alcesimarchus is so unhinged about Selenium that he eventually abducts her – hilariously disrupting the recognition scene that would have given them the right to marry (*Cist.*, 646ff).

The ‘chance’ recognition device which – eventually – *does* allow Alcesimarchus’ marriage, is, of course, typical of a plot in the sentimental mode. ‘Chance’ bridges the gap between the ‘ideal’ (that a desired relationship will go on ‘forever’) and the probable (that social pressure will destroy it. Or perhaps that the fickle nature of desire will cause it to end – *vide* Stratippocles.) In general, Plautus’ plays seem to encourage laughter at improbable romantic aspirations. Nevertheless, they do not discredit them altogether. They expect the audience to recognize – and perhaps empathise – with ‘love’s’ symptoms. Duckworth believes Plautus treated his *adulescentes* sympathetically (1994, 239-40). Certainly, not all of them become the subjects of punitive humour like Argyrippus; not *all* of the plays are set up to expose enslaving false sentiment in just such a fashion as farcical *Asinaria* does.

Meanwhile, Argyrippus’ father is in a different position in the play. He has already conformed to social pressure and married and it seems he has done this outside the plot paradigm of the sentimental mode. ‘Chance’ has not rewarded him with a wife he loves, but with a mere financial asset. Curiously, however, a romantic social ideal still seems to apply to him – binding him, just as young men’s love controls them. When Argyrippus asks Demaenetus whether he loves Artemona, the negative reply produces a *paraprosdokian* that the audience can appreciate all the more because they know that Artemona overhears it. That Demaenetus does *not* protest his love is a shock to her; that he tries to placate her, referring to her as his wife, is an insult; that he has betrayed their ‘until-death-us-do-part’ relationship in adultery is an offence (899-903; 926-34).

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<sup>15</sup> Of course many don’t *know* they will be able to marry at the plays’ start: perhaps this is why their ‘love’ differs little from their fellows’.

Bradley writes that the Roman system of arranged marriages must have undermined ideals related to conjugal love; the probability was high that loyalty between marriage partners did not necessarily entail sexual fidelity (1991(1), 128). In reality many may have strayed from their spouses; but, just as in modern society, in which serial relationships are common, this social fact does not absolutely preclude the concurrent existence of a life-long marriage or relationship ideal<sup>16</sup>. Certainly, Plautus seems to evoke such an ideal; he perhaps even laughs at the distance between it and ‘reality’ – and in his *Asinaria* epilogue teases his audience with the suggestion that they appreciate from experience how large that distance *can* be<sup>17</sup>.

But Plautus possibly does more than ridicule the disappointments of marriage; he may explore contemporary conceptions of ‘morality’. Evidence from the late Republic and early Empire indicates that the Romans had a complex attitude to adultery; there was official condemnation, especially for women, whilst men perhaps accrued advantage by committing the offence (if only by enhancing their powerful masculine image). Ambivalent attitudes to adultery were matched by ambivalent attitudes to sexual activity altogether. Sensual pleasure was described as demeaning: slave or animal-like<sup>18</sup>. Wise men controlled their passions; if a mature *senex* could not do this he was foolish. It seems that this complicated attitude to morality permeated Plautus’ era, too. McCarthy suggests that the comic *senex amator* is routinely disapproved of not because of his adultery, but because ‘age’ excludes him from legitimate erotic pursuits (2000, 67). Demaenetus, I believe, actually suffers ridicule for two reasons: he attempts to continue to sow wild oats when he ought to be more prudent and he fails to maintain a sentimental ideal relationship with his wife (856-9<sup>19</sup>). His case is matched by Demipho’s in *Mercator* and Lysidamus’ in *Casina*.

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<sup>16</sup> See comments related to serial relationships in the sentimental film, *You’ve Got Mail*, in the Thesis’ Introduction 1, above.

<sup>17</sup> I think it would be wrong to assume that no Roman ever achieved anything like the ideal!

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, 2002, 34; 38; 48-9; 196-7, quoting Cic. *Off* 1.105-6; Gel., 19.2.

<sup>19</sup> I note that Artemona is also disappointed by this; she too has been made ridiculous by the failure of the ideal.

*Mercator* presents a classic generation rivalry plot, in which the *adulescens*, Charinus, and his father fight over one girl. The plot has, however, two significant twists: 1) the pair do not know that they are rivals; 2) another *senex* becomes involved and it is *his* wife who plays the role of avenging *matrona*.

Both these ‘complications’ emphasise Demipho’s disgrace. He speaks only after Charinus’ lengthy opening monologue (40ff) has already presented a clear picture of the principles that *ought* to govern a wise *senex* – which Charinus, influenced by his father’s former behaviour, *thinks* govern Demipho. Demipho’s previous hyperactive opposition to his son actually seems to have had the qualities of *hubris*; when he appears onstage the contrast between what he is and what he has claimed to be is palpable. He immediately exposes his own crazy infatuation – ignorant that it is the same as his young son’s. The pair continue to be contrasted against each other, to Demipho’s detriment<sup>20</sup>. Charinus is a young hyperbolic lover *par excellence*<sup>21</sup>; Demipho ought to know better. His ill-timed attempt to sow wild oats earns him the reproach of his neighbour, Lysinarchus, whilst his own refusal to recognize what is age-appropriate makes his foolishness even more clear (290ff; 544ff). His lack of self-control assimilates him to the mere animals of his dreams (229-276; 572-5). He ranks below Charinus onstage, weakly being unable to overhear the latter when he reappears, ironically *still* convinced that his father is properly opposed to profligate love (335ff).

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<sup>20</sup> Moore argues that Demipho and Charinus compete for audience sympathy. Both appear ridiculous, but Charinus aligns himself with the audience more successfully than his father. He speaks about 100 more lines of monologue than Demipho does and frequently and explicitly acknowledges the audience’s presence.

‘Characters like Charinus, who pepper their monologues with *vos, spectatores*, and second-person verb forms gain a connection with the audience greater than that of monologue speakers who do not explicitly recognize the audience.’ (Moore, 1998, 33)

By creating a particular bond between the audience and young Charinus, Plautus involves them more thoroughly on his side of the debate. The play’s message is thus determined in a performance collaboration between actor and audience. (Of course, it *could* be argued that comedy conventionally favours the young: the audience might therefore expect to sympathise with Charinus. Nonetheless, Plautus still has to work to create this sympathy. Furthermore, he has to decide firstly that he *wants* to create the sympathy. Remember, he did sometimes disappoint audience expectation: in *Casina*, acting against precedent, he creates sympathy for the matron, not the ‘hen-pecked’ husband.)

<sup>21</sup> For examples of hyperbole cf. 588ff; 857ff. But note how Charinus actually exploits the typical overwrought hysteria of a lover to control the action at 920ff. He is a canny character, after all - much more successful than his father.

Meanwhile, though Lysinarchus condemned Demipho's incontinent love, he is quick to take advantage of it, promoting a feast at which he will be a participant and enjoying his job of acting as escort to Demipho's girl. Willingly deputising for Demipho, he is swayed by appetite himself. His willingness leads to a comic misunderstanding with his wife, which is significantly conducted in the presence of a cook (a panderer to appetite). *He* makes misogynistic/anti-wife jokes that embarrass Lysinarchus and further underline the play's point: Demipho and his proxy Lysinarchus are precluded by age and social position from safely indulging their passing desires (though there is *some* hope for Lysinarchus; once reconciled to his wife, he may still get to enjoy his dinner! 499ff; 564ff; 692-7; 741ff; 800-2).

*Casina* also presents a generation rivalry plot with a significant twist. In fact, it plays cleverly with the different plot modes<sup>22</sup>. Its prologue and epilogue hint that the story *could* have conformed to the sentimental paradigm, rewarding an *adulescens* with marriage to a *pseudomeretrix*, thanks to a 'chance' recognition – and perhaps also in line with the audience's assumed desire to see 'good faith' triumph, just as in *Rudens* (1-2; 43-6; 79-83; 1012-14). However, the young couple do not appear in the play, according to Plautus' expressed desire, and instead the plot focuses on farcical events connected with a ludicrous *senex*'s infatuation and a slave 'wedding' (47-9; 64-6; 67-78<sup>23</sup>).

The *senex*, Lysidamus attempts to cast himself as the *adulescens* in a sentimental plot. Eager to gain his girl, he tries to use 'chance' to his advantage; and, in the pivotal lot-drawing scene, he goes further and pretends to honour fair dealing, as a sentimental hero should (375-7). With supreme irony, chance *appears* to favour him for a while<sup>24</sup>. However, it soon becomes apparent that in assuming another's part, Lysidamus has disgracefully abandoned his own.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 78ff.

<sup>23</sup> Plautus draws attention to the 'impossibility' of a slave wedding. Note the parallelism: such a marriage contravenes cultural ideals about what makes a family, just as Lysidamus' 'love' for *Casina* does.

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to speculate that in performance an extra dimension *could* be added to the lot-drawing scene. Unperceived except by the audience, Lysidamus could cheat after all, making his false position even clearer.

Like Demaenetus, Lysidamus has swapped roles with his wife; his bitter comment that she is in command is borne out by the action of the play (409). Lysidamus' behaviour, meanwhile, is inappropriate to both his age and marital status (517-19). He is driven by appetite; the play is rife with imagery aligning hunger for food with sexual desire and also emphasising the sensual appeal of perfume (e.g. 149ff; 217-227; 235 ff; 490-501; 511-514; 745-749; 801<sup>25</sup>). Lysidamus is animal-like, variously described as a gnat, wild boar, castrated ram, toothless goat and a stallion (239; 476; 535; 550; 811<sup>26</sup>). And he is also slave-like; his close alliance with the slave Olympio leads to Olympio seizing command (727-40). Their plan for a shared wedding, which derails as the male slave, Chalinus, takes Casina's place, gives occasion for frequent homosexual innuendo, adding and leading to Lysidamus' final disgrace<sup>27</sup>.

The farcical 'wedding' acts, of course, as a parody of a happy conclusion to a sentimental story (Plautus continues to play with the different comic modes). It highlights all the inversions of sentimental idealism that have occurred in the play. Lysidamus and Olympio have constantly misused sentimentality. Imagining his 'marriage', Olympio sadistically uses its language in exaggerated, insincere form to make Chalinus squirm (132-140; note Lysidamus' repetition of the language at 837<sup>28</sup>), whilst Lysidamus attempts to exploit meaningless endearments to deceive his

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Franko, 1999, 5; Connors, 1997, *passim* & 305. Connors notes that the play's women's names are all associated with scents, and also remarks that Lysidamus' interest in perfume is inappropriate for a *senex*. Cf. Edwards, 2002, 68, who writes that the use of perfume was associated with effeminacy.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Franko, 1999, 8. Franko notes that the animal references have connotations of potency or impotency.

<sup>27</sup> 452-466; 806-813; 875ff (Olympio's humiliation which foreshadows and adds to Lysidamus'); 937ff. O'Bryhim notes that the obscenity and homosexual innuendo of the 'wedding' scene shows signs of being Plautus' invention, depending largely on a Roman euphemism for penis: *gladius*/sword. Plautus' additions have farcical qualities and yet serve to underline Lysidamus' degeneration from master/*paterfamilias* to *cinaedus* (one who indulges in unnatural lusts), slave, degraded homosexual partner and *pathicus*. 1989, 89-101.

<sup>28</sup> Note Dixon's comments about the use of vocabulary in Plautus' plays:

'It is surely significant that such uses of *dulcis* and *suavis* are not found in the comic playwrights of the second century BC in connection with children...' (1991, 104)

This statement is tenuous. There are few young children in Plautus' plays – he has small opportunity to refer to them affectionately. Furthermore, though he might not have made fond references to children, Plautus *did* sometimes use affectionate terminology: Duckworth writes that Plautine diminutives sometimes denote smallness of size, but more often express sympathy and affection. However, it must be admitted that Plautus' use of 'sentimental' vocabulary is seldom straightforward; this is demonstrated in the passages from *Casina*. Plautus builds up a list of exaggerated, rhyming 'affectionate vocabulary', and uses it inappropriately, to

wife, Cleostrata (228-9). She, however, is *not* deceived: she does not want his sort of 'love' (233). So she arranges to supply him with the *pseudo*-bride. The mock wedding begins; the 'bride' is taken in to 'her' pair of *pseudo*-husbands, and is advised to perfect a role reversal over 'her' husband, seizing control and deceiving him night and day (816-24). As 'she' does take control in the ensuing scenes, Lysidamus pays for his deception, desertion of his proper role and perversion of the marital ideal.

Cleostrata, in fact, has the upper hand practically throughout *Casina*. She knows Lysidamus' plan and successfully foils it. Lysidamus is so busy making himself ridiculous, he does not guess she plans a counterattack – though the audience are kept informed and aligned against him. He is not even able to keep his own secrets, giving himself away in hilarious 'Freudian slips' (364-9)<sup>29</sup>. And yet the play's epilogue contains a 'surprise' similar to that of the epilogue to *Asinaria*. It suggests that if the spectators applaud the play – which saw the humiliation of Lysidamus – *they* will be granted greater success than him, always deceiving their wives with mistresses of their choice (1015-1018).

This epilogue has been read in various ways. McCarthy believes that the play's conclusion as a whole demonstrates a return to comedy's official view of marriage: that a husband has a right to rebel against his wife (2000, 111; 114). But Moore argues that the epilogue jokes at the spectators' expense, reminding them that although they would normally have been aligned with a man like Lysidamus *against* his wife, they have just had a different dramatic experience, encountering moral issues that have some relevance to them (1998, 179).

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highlight the absurdity of a situation that concerns lust, not love, and in which, in any case, the words are mistakenly addressed to a man. Affectionate terminology is made vulgar, for comic effect (cf. Duckworth, 1994, 334-5). This transformation is, of course, significant. The sentimental ideal is not vulgar – innuendo disturbs the aura of sentimental romance. The more Plautus uses vulgar wordplay (and perhaps comic wordplay of any sort), the less sentimental in tone his plays will *seem*. We should note, however, that Plautus' successful use of the wordplay convention depended upon his audience's ability to decode his text. To appreciate the humour of passages in which affectionate language is used inappropriately, spectators had to be aware of the sentimental *potential* of the language. They needed to be able to recognize when budding sentimental moments were undermined, disappointed or *inverted*, by a misuse or trick of vocabulary.  
<sup>29</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 171-5; Franko 1999, 11. (NB There are moments in the play when Cleostrata's knowledge of her husband's plans lapses, but these possibly result from '*contaminato*', cf. Fraenkel, 2007, 203.)

Early in the play, slave Chalinus is offered either his freedom *or* marriage (290-1). This nonsensical offer perhaps reflects the paradox explored in the work. In contemporary Roman life ‘freedom’ and ‘marriage’ were, of course, indivisible – and yet brought obligations. Once again, Plautus appears to expect his spectators to appreciate the irony of this. They know the compensations/freedoms and drawbacks/responsibilities of citizenship. No matter what their actual behaviour and desires may have been (and perhaps the epilogue teases them about that), it seems that the audience understood that there was a social ideal – one that supported the ‘good faith’ of civilised society wryly mentioned in the prologue<sup>30</sup> – and set a limit to the sowing of wild oats. Not something to be indulged in after marriage.

#### 2.4. Filthy Lucre

The text for the ‘Solemnization of Matrimony’ in the English Common Book of Prayer instructs congregations that marriage was instituted by God as ‘a remedy against sin’, ‘to avoid fornication’. When Stratippocles’ sexual affairs cause his father concern in *Epidicus*, a friend advises the *senex* to get the boy married (190-2). But from what do the Roman *senes* think marriage will protect the boy – extra-marital sexual relationships (unlawful in Christianity and thus frowned upon in modern Christian sentimental tales<sup>31</sup>), or something else?

In a study of the elegist Propertius (born at the end of the Late Republic), Allen suggests that the Romans were traditionally concerned that affairs with *meretrices* led to the loss of three important

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<sup>30</sup> Note how the theme of justice is carried from the prologue through the play to the epilogue: the former asks for a fair hearing, flattering the audience with an assumption that they favour good faith; the latter says that it is only ‘right’ that the play should be applauded, using the same vocabulary as Lysidamus, when he paid lip-service to fair play in the lot drawing scene. ‘Justice’ *seemed* to go awry at that moment – rewarding the deceiver (he got his *true* deserts later). Perhaps this has implications for the ‘justice’ promised in the epilogue – would-be wife-deceivers in the audience *might* be granted temporary success, but there could yet be a final reckoning to pay ... 1014; cf. 375-7.

<sup>31</sup> We saw in the Thesis Introduction that ultramodern sentimental stories, such as *You’ve Got Mail*, are more relaxed about this. For discrepancies in standards required for men and women see 2.5., below.

assets: liberty, reputation and wealth<sup>32</sup>. The Roman moral code did not prohibit extra-marital relationships altogether; in fact, the use of a common prostitute was deemed a lesser evil than a longstanding affair with a *meretrix* – it was not so damaging to the three essential things. In Propertius 2. 24, the poet acknowledges that he has brought shame upon himself by becoming a slave to love, lacking in restraint and courting publicity. His problems are very reminiscent of those of Plautus' mid-republican *adulescentes*, who frequently lose their liberty and reputation for sense when they become enslaved by their mistresses. In *Pseudolus*, Simo neatly sums up his son's faults. He says that the whole city is talking about the boy (loss of *reputation*) for two related reasons: he wants to set his mistress free (a sign that he is *enslaved* by her); and consequently behaves ruinously, squandering the family *wealth* (415-20; 430-2).

Money is a constant cause of trouble for Plautine lovers. Sons need it; fathers try to protect it; slaves steal it. When Stratippocles' father discusses marrying him off, he is overheard by the slave Epidicus, who has just such a felonious plan in mind. But money is also a cause of misery for Plautine husbands. Demaenetus' marriage-trap resulted from the sale of his prerogatives for a dowry (*As* 87); Lysidamus considers Cleostrata a bad bargain (*Cas* 228); the indignant Dorippa declares that her dowry (not love) ought to have purchased her husband's fidelity (*Mer* 700-704). Money is desirable; it is necessary to run a household (spendthrift sons are thus constantly endangering houses: cf. *Mostellaria*; *Trinummus*). But being 'bought' by a wife is appalling; the typical comic perspective is summed up in *Epidicus*: dowries are good money, if they come without unwelcome wives (180). It appears that Plautus expected his audience to appreciate this point fully; a teasing metatheatrical comment in *Mostellaria* applies it to them (273-281). Perhaps few of the spectators truly had smelly rich wives at home – but they were doubtless aware just how possible it was for a man to sell himself in ignominious marriage.

In Rome, the relationship between money, 'love' and marriage was a complex one, in real life as well as in Plautus. Veyne (1978, 40-41) insists that marriage was fundamentally just another

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<sup>32</sup> 1950, 154-5, quoting Prop. 2. 23 & 24.



business arrangement. Segal describes the Roman culture as obsessively avaricious; spend-thrift comedy, he argues, provided spectators with a 'release' from their normal, socially-approved preoccupations (1987, 42-69 & *passim*). However, when it comes to the question of love and money, I believe that both Plautus' extra-marital love plots *and* his gibes at dowries expose an ethical conundrum similar to one encountered in modern sentimentalism – despite important differences in cultural attitudes to ideal sexual behaviour. In both modern and ancient thinking, a desire for money is fundamentally unsentimental – potentially immoral. Modern characters, who marry for wealth and position, are characterized as shallow and earn suitable punishment<sup>33</sup>. Sentimental heroes, like Bevil, constantly disregard wealth (*TCL*, 1.2.). But sentimental couples *still* need money to live. This financial problem is thoroughly explored in Plautus; his plays do not simply provide a release from unpleasant business arrangements.

Plautine lovers are caught in a financial trap. In accordance with fine sentiment, they are so overwhelmed by devotion to their girls that they have no personal desire for money at all. This is Agorastocles' theory in *Poenulus* (328). And the sentimental Alcesimarchus in *Cistellaria* resists his father's attempts to interest him in a dowry (305). In the Plautine world, the lovers' disregard for money gives them a fine excuse for spending lavishly (thus proving the 'quality' of their affection). But then comes the catch: lavish expenditure inevitably reduces them to unromantic money-grubbers, whilst their mistresses' 'love' is tarnished by the money that buys it.

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<sup>33</sup> E.g. Flora from Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856); Crosbie from Trollope's, *The Small House At Allington* (1864). NB various objections have been raised to the equation of Roman and modern family experiences. It has been suggested, for instance, that whereas the Roman elite formed marriages for political and financial reasons, modern matches – particularly since the last century – have generally been matters of romance. However, it is important to note the fact that financial considerations have sometimes played very important roles in the establishment of modern marriages, even in eras renowned for sentimentality. Jane Austen intimated as much in *Northanger Abbey*, published at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century (cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above). In the early 21<sup>st</sup>-century, money still remains a crucial aspect of a marriage alliance. This was demonstrated – in an extreme case – by a legal ruling of May 2006: a woman was granted rights to her ex-husband's tremendous income, on the grounds that, in providing care for their children, she had helped to promote his career. Her lawyer stated that the ruling took her contribution into account: 'The judgement recognizes... that marriage is a partnership.' (Pirrie, 2006). A financial partnership (Cf. Alm & Whittington, 1999, 297-8).

Mercenary remarks frequently bring bathos into a girl's tender declaration. Phoenicium's 'lovingly' expressed wish is – for something in silver (*Ps.* 41-6); Planesium concludes a sentimental encounter by telling her suitor that if he loves her, he must buy her (*Curc.* 213). Time and again Plautus laughs at the gap between idealism and reality. Idyllic love might be selfless and beyond price – but real lovers cannot exist without a visible means of support. The comic modes provide various 'solutions' to the problem. Fathers are tricked and cajoled into supporting their sons' farcical affairs (e.g. *Ps.*; *Mos.*); relationships are continued at punitive expense to lovers (*As.*); and plays in the sentimental mode resolve with *adulescentes* like Alcesimarchus gaining both girl and fortune (interestingly, just as Bevil does!)

But Plautus does more than laugh at the impossible aspects of the ideal (and the idealistic sentimental mode). He relies on his audience's knowledge of the ethical conundrum to make some of his jokes (they have to be aware of it to enjoy the *paraprosdokian* of Phoenicium's wish being for silver). And in jesting about money, he perhaps encourages the Roman audience to reconsider certain aspects of their cultural thinking – and, despite its conundrums, he may sometimes even end up endorsing the ideal.

Take the example of *Aulularia*. In this play, wealthy Megadorus is persuaded to plan a marriage. Significantly, he decides not to ask for a dowry. His motives are unsentimental; he does not give up a fortune for the sake of a girl. He simply wishes to avoid the loss of personal liberty (166-9). In a lengthy monologue he sets out his case: wealthy, extravagant women cause civic unrest and the loss of male authority (475-536). His speech is congruous with many misogynistic comments about comic *matronae*. But it possibly also reflects topical Roman concern. Continued warfare in the Plautine era had removed husbands from homes; women had accrued greater independence and power; as Carthage was defeated, wealth increased and dowry sizes grew. The Oppian Law (215

BC) restricted displays of riches by women; but they united to promote its repeal in 195 BC.

Wealthy wives were a subject of Roman debate<sup>34</sup>.

Interestingly, Megadorus' speech actually undermines the simplistic misogynistic reading of the Roman situation (and the superficial misogynistic comic stance). It is a parody, spoken in the hearing of miserly Euclio, much to *his* delight. The play's plot ultimately exposes the faults of Euclio's world-view; he has foolishly invested his love in gold, instead of social ties and the family. Any speech he approves must be of dubious value<sup>35</sup>. Plautus encourages his audience to consider the dowry question again – to note that *women's* wealth may not be solely to blame for social disruption. *Men's* avarice is also detrimental to the family. Megadorus does not reject the dowry for sentimental reasons, but he is not a 'proper' lover. Consequently, he does not get to marry his girl. But the play, true to the sentimental mode, concludes with a boy gaining both girl *and* wealth<sup>36</sup> – and, *more importantly*, with its chief male character, Euclio's, restoration to a proper (ideal) view of wealth, society and the family<sup>37</sup>.

Meanwhile the farcical plot of *Menaechmi* also draws attention to the detrimental effect of avarice on relationships. Stolen twin Menaechmus begins the story absorbed in the society of his kidnapper and foster parent's home, Epidamnus – a place characterized as a haunt of particularly vicious wastrels and swindlers (57-62; 258-264). Extravagant himself, he is a *senex amans*, combining the roles of *adulescens* and *senex* in his enslavement to both a wife and a mistress. His values are in keeping with his adopted environment. His relationship with his dowried wife is full of double-dealing. He says that he gives her domestic luxuries, which ought to satisfy her ('love' is not part of the bargain. 61, 120ff). But he actually steals from her, taking one of her assets, a mantle, to

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 160-161. Note how this debate possibly gives a specific backdrop to *Aulularia*, just as the events at Dunkirk resonate in *Dad's Army*: cf. Thesis Introduction 4, note 55, above.

<sup>35</sup> 539 ff. NB Megadorus, though genial enough, is rather hypocritical, too. He denounces women's extravagance, then goes on to plan a carouse for himself and Euclio.

<sup>36</sup> The play's ending is fragmentary, but can be assumed to end in a standard fashion.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. 4.3., below.

give his mistress, Erotium (130-134). Erotium is thus paid in the same currency as the wife:

luxury<sup>38</sup>.

Erotium naturally shares the Epidamnian values; her relationship with Menaechmus is one of exploitation (351-9). Menaechmus hopes to enjoy stolen luxury with her, away from his hated wife, but the three are linked together by the purloined mantel, which *he* wears and Erotium wants embroidered (170-174; 189-191; 426-7). Having it is not enough, and once Erotium fears Menaechmus will 'cheat' her of it, she rejects him (688-695). Meantime, Menaechmus' wife is also working to the same value system. She focuses her chief attention on the stolen mantel, demanding its return, not an end to her husband's affair (559-61; 604; 609; 660). She presumably learnt her priorities from her Epidamnian father, who is similarly more concerned by the mantel's theft than his son-in-law's infidelity (790-806). The mantel, of course, has a curiously unstable symbolic importance; it *ought* to stand for sexual pleasure and fidelity stolen from the wife and given to the mistress. But the Epidamnians persistently refuse to see this. For them it is a mere token of the luxury fundamental to their mercenary relationships<sup>39</sup>.

*Menaechmi* is the only extant Plautine play to end with divorce. Divorce is a 'tragedy', the obverse to the weddings which often grace comedy's conclusions. But it is possible in farcical *Menaechmi* because Menaechmus' Epidamnian relationships all have a false basis. He loves neither wife, nor mistress (he contemplated sharing her with a parasite and had no objection when he heard his brother had enjoyed her 185-188; 1143-5). He was caught up in a self-seeking community, consumed with a desire for filthy lucre, where no-one was just or fair (571ff). Playing by its rules, he found its pleasures elusive. He lost both his place with his dowried wife and with Erotium<sup>40</sup>; and,

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 44, 65-70.

<sup>39</sup> Note the probable *paraprosdokian* at 636-45; the scene builds as if 'everything' about Menaechmus' sexual infidelity is about to be exposed, but at the last minute the conversation reverts to the mantel again.

<sup>40</sup> Segal (1987, 50) believes Menaechmus loses his pleasure because he 'wastes' time in business at the forum: he ought to have obeyed the holiday spirit and rejected business altogether. Cf. Golden, 1984, 289. This interpretation, however, perhaps overlooks both the irony of that business in the forum (unfaithful Menaechmus has the gall to complain about its dubious dealings!) and the fact that the 'pleasurable' relationship with Erotium was actually a business arrangement. Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 54-5.

adopted into their crazy world, he finally lost his individual identity – confused with a visiting brother! Both need to go home, reunited in their family, to rediscover normality<sup>41</sup>.

Plautus' audience was probably sanguine about Menaechmus' divorce: his Epidamnian marriage did not 'count'. But we should note that it is possible they still understood *Menaechmi* to contain a message for them. The prologue teasingly reminds spectators that the Epidamnus they see is really in Rome (49-56). Any Roman who apes dubious Epidamnian mercenary values, presumably puts certain social ideals at risk.

## 2.5. Innocent Women

*Sa fille [...] avait cette transparence des yeux [...] cette sérénité de la bouche qui prouvent que l'âme ne conçoit que de saintes pensées... Elle souriait [...], ignorant, la chaste jeune fille, que loin d'elle une courtisane avait sacrifié son bonheur à la seule invocation de son nom.*

Dumas, *La Dame aux Camélias*, 1848.

In the final act of *TCL* Mr Sealand confronts Indiana. He wrongly suspects her of being Bevil's mistress. Initially, he is chiefly concerned that the supposed relationship – *if continued* – could be detrimental to the proposed marriage between Bevil and his daughter, Lucinda. But, when he finally meets Indiana and assesses her social status, he is more greatly shocked. She is an 'accomplished lady', someone whom Bevil ought to have respected...

Both Bevil and Indiana are, of course, actually innocent. Bevil has neither been keeping a mistress (a crime for which a man might be forgiven), nor, more importantly, has he seduced a 'lady'. For Indiana, this is just as well – her status as a heroine depends upon it; *female* sexual innocence – for well-born, well-brought up ladies – was a powerful motif in early modern

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 55, 59.

sentimental idealism. Indeed, the motif was so powerful that the plot of Dumas' *La Dame aux Camélias* hinges upon it. In this novel, courtesan Marguerite gives up wealthy lovers for her one true passion, bourgeois Armand. But she cannot hold on to idyllic happiness; *she* is not innocent. She is persuaded to give Armand up for the sake of his sister, a pure soul, whose life might be blighted by the lovers' relationship. Marguerite's sacrifice is successful; she suffers an ignominious death, but Armand's sister remains serenely ignorant of her history, whilst Armand survives, his status (if not his heart) intact.

Steele and Dumas both assume that their audience will allow for a double-standard in their sentimental ideal. Men, unlike women, need not be excluded from family felicity by former sexual sins. They profit from a division between the women themselves. There are innocent 'ladies', whom they may eventually marry, and women of a lower status, who are theoretically 'fair game'.

Interestingly, this division amongst women is also essential to Roman comedy, although there *are* differences in the manner in which it functions. The ancient status division depends upon citizenship<sup>42</sup>. Citizen girls are accorded more respect. Ideally, the *adulescens* should keep away from them (*Curc.* 30-38); if he chances to get drunk and rape such a girl, he must marry her (*Aul.* 688-9; 738ff; *Truc.* 826-844). Should a citizen maiden temporarily lose her place in society – becoming a *pseudomeretrix* – her comparative sexual innocence will still distinguish her. Either she will not *yet* have begun an affair (*Curc.* 50-51; *Poen.* 281<sup>43</sup>), or she will have had an exclusive relationship with only one man (*Cist.* 76-88<sup>44</sup>). Real *meretrices*, however, are not so lucky. Philematium in *Mostellaria*, for instance, may attempt a veneer of innocence, declaring herself willing to devote herself to one man, but it quickly becomes apparent that she is deluding herself

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<sup>42</sup> This limits social mobility in the ancient world; a noncitizen cannot simply improve his/her situation by the acquisition of wealth and/or education.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Fantham, 1965, 86, note 1. NB in both these cases Plautus actually parodies the sexual innocence motif in scenes full of innuendo.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Auhagen, 2004, 201.

(166-312). She cannot marry and, since age withers, cannot hope to retain her lover forever<sup>45</sup>. The *adulescens* eavesdrops on her conversation, making bathetic asides. Sexual innuendo, mercenary references, and his sudden hyperbolic rejection of all that family *pietas* might require of him (233-4) undermine any fleeting impression of ‘pure’ love. And soon the pair are hosting a drunken party<sup>46</sup>.

Like Steele and Dumas, Plautus assumes his audience’s comprehension of a social system that allows *adulescentes* to sow wild oats, so long as they do it with discretion – *and with the right sort of woman*<sup>47</sup>. Intriguingly, however, Plautus occasionally seems to pause and challenge his audience’s preconceptions about this. We have seen that Plautus frequently uses references to ‘money’ to expose hollow sentiment. In many instances women – dowried wives and greedy *meretrices* – are tainted by association with cash. But sometimes Plautus readjusts the focus, so that women – of all types – appear as the ‘innocent victims’ of *men*’s mercenary activities; their desire for money and for sex are symbolically and detrimentally equated. This happens in the aptly named *Mercator*, in which Demipho and his son, Charinus, bargain at length for a girl (418ff). She hopes for an ‘ideal’, lasting relationship (536-7). This seems foolish in a *meretrix* who must learn to live by pleasing whoever pays (504). But when Lysimarchus is suspected of having procured the girl for himself, his wife’s slave, Syra, suddenly complains about society’s double-standards – though men commit adultery with impunity, women cannot (817-29).

Syra’s comment is doubly curious: firstly, because she is superficially mistaken (Lysimarchus is *not* ‘first adulterer’ in this plot); secondly, because she seems to highlight a ‘new’ aspect of society’s double-standards – once again men are shown to benefit from more licence than women, but this time *after* marriage. The important point about this play, however, is that it deliberately

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Raia, 1983, on the phases in the life of a *meretrix*. For *meretrices*, exclusive relationships are only ever a temporary phase.

<sup>46</sup> McCarthy (2000, 179) suggests that Philematium does have *pseudomeretrix* qualities, but that Plautus chose not to recognize her as freeborn in the end.

<sup>47</sup> Even the stern moralist, Cato, supposedly sanctioned a young man’s *occasional* use of a brothel (Moore, 1998, 140, quoting Pseudo-Acron on Hor. *S.* 1.2.31-2).

blurs the distinctions between the *men* themselves. Acting as Demipho's proxy, Lysimarchus is guilty by association. He may even appear in the undesirable role of a mercenary pimp. Meanwhile, Demipho and Charinus are shown to share the same insatiable appetite whilst haggling over their girl. Charinus fell for her whilst on a trading trip, designed to wean him from another affair (80-84); Demipho falls for her, despite his marital status, when she is brought home as a newly-purchased chattel. Marriage changes nothing: men continue to profit – at women's expense. The spectators probably laugh at Syra's mistake over Lysimarchus. But their laughter at her error may be muted, perhaps because they appreciate that she is not completely wrong after all – and perhaps because her metatheatrical remarks have pertinence for their own social practices<sup>48</sup>.

Plautus' farce, *Truculentus*, may make an even more telling point about Roman society. Its plot revolves around a *meretrix*, Phronesium, who is anything but innocent. In the course of the play, she manipulates three men, extorting all she can get. To do this she blatantly exploits a series of sentimental roles (roles that are well-known to modern audiences; since Plautus evokes them, they must have been well-known to his spectators, too). She pretends to be Diniarchus' confiding soul-mate, intent on loving him forever (387-8; 421-2; 434-440); she profits from a feigned marriage relationship with Stratophanes – though she has no intention of maintaining it (391-3; 418-20); and she is even cynical enough to assume the quintessential sentimental role of a mother (390; 395-400; 449ff). She thus outdoes the false sentimentality of other *meretrices* and their lovers. The play repeatedly draws attention to her greedy wickedness; she is, it seems, representative of all unscrupulous women who live by preying on men (12-17; 22ff; 451ff).

But Phronesium's success depends upon one thing: the men's willing complicity. Diniarchus is perhaps the chief fool amongst them, for right from his first monologue he clearly understands the nature of her game – and yet continues to play it<sup>49</sup>. He knows his actions are contrary to what could

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 164-5.

<sup>49</sup> Self-deluded Stratophanes is possibly naturally more stupid than Diniarchus; he believes 'Phronesium's' child is his, incidentally proving the shallowness of *his* sentiments in ridiculous speculations about its martial



be expected from his family; he knows he is ruining himself, making untenable bargains; he knows that Phronesium plans to trick the soldier using someone else's baby. He overhears the maid Astaphium when she speaks about the greedy wiles of *meretrices*, recognizes that he is their dupe, but yet longs to be told that faithless Phronesium 'loves' him (22ff, 57-63, 77ff, 95-113, 190-193). He is guilty of asking to be deceived.

But there is more. Just as Diniarchus recommences to rail about *Phronesium's* manifest iniquities, threatening to denounce her, the plot shifts and exposes *his* crimes, inviting uncomfortable comparisons. It transpires that the baby purloined by Phronesium is actually his, the offspring of an infamous rape of a citizen girl. Diniarchus is cowed into offering marriage to this girl; however, he *still* clings to his infatuation with Phronesium and goes on to demonstrate his gross dereliction of social and family ideals, by agreeing that she may continue to profit by the baby. He practically prostitutes his own child, whom he ought to protect. Phronesium's crimes become his – and his actions are more unnatural and wicked than hers (758ff; 872-883).

Astaphium sums up the situation. She says men enter the houses of *meretrices* in gangs; whilst one makes love, the others plunder. A rapacious exchange takes place: men take from the women; they snatch back whatever they can. Men, she says, never provide girls with enough security – they always need more<sup>50</sup> (95-112; 210-245). Men are principally to blame. This is made even clearer as the grandfather of the baby again tries to point a finger at women's guilt, but another maid remarks that ultimately a man was responsible for the child; he used his superior strength to rape its mother (809-813).

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abilities (505-511; 521-2). But Diniarchus is more culpable, for he acts foolishly in spite of his better self-knowledge.

<sup>50</sup> This comment might be read cynically: women always want more, whatever they are given. But the idea is that men are the root cause of the problem; women are obliged to fight for security in a male dominated society.

*Truculentus* is a wild, punitive play, ending with Phronesium's triumph. Plautus' audience possibly perceived the *meretrix* herself as being very 'Greek' in character<sup>51</sup>. Nonetheless, the Roman spectators are prevented from distancing themselves altogether from the story, by metatheatre and topical allusions. Astaphium remarks that *they* know what happens in the house of a *meretrix* (105). Well-known Roman rhetoric is evoked as society is depicted as if in a state of dissipated decline<sup>52</sup>; just as in *Aulularia*, women are described as a destructive force arraigned against traditional civic morals. They flood the banks, contrary to Roman laws restricting financial transactions to men; they corrupt society with their ways (13; 64-69; 74-76). And though the prologue teasingly credits the spectators with better and older ways of living (1-8), the play itself constantly aligns them with the play's fools. First there is the culpable Diniarchus, who addresses the spectators in lengthy monologues. They share his knowledge; they eavesdrop along with him when his crimes are being discussed (770ff); they are possibly implicated, when despite his acknowledgement of guilt and his knowledge of Phronesium's character, he continues to act foolishly. Then there is Truculentus, the slave after whom the play is named. He makes only brief appearances in the play, but significantly begins as a representative of the careful old guard, impervious to the wiles of the *meretrices*, before suddenly adopting their new ways himself (256-314; 676-678<sup>53</sup>). No-one can be too sure of his own superiority (and innocence) – as the epilogue teasingly suggests (964-6)<sup>54</sup>!

Plautus manipulates several sentimental motifs in *Truculentus*, exposing certain flaws in Roman cultural thinking. Preconceptions about women – and perhaps about Greeks – are challenged; the dangerous effects of avarice are noted. And, as Diniarchus promises marriage to the raped girl in

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<sup>51</sup> There is some dispute about whether high-class, independent *meretrices* were common in Rome in this era. Plautus' presentation of Phronesium may reflect a vague comprehension of this 'exotic' Greek phenomenon. Konstan, 1986b, 377; Moore 1998, 141-142; Fraenkel 2007, 102-3.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Hemker, 1991, 37; Hor. *Carm.* 3.6 & 24.

<sup>53</sup> NB the prologue actually makes the audience's 'old ways' sound stingy; perhaps Plautus suggests that there is a fine line between those fools who indulge in spendthrift debauchery and those who are parsimoniously avaricious. If this is so, it is no wonder that Truculentus easily slips from his old careful ways into the 'new' manners of the *meretrices*.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 142-157, for 'Roman' emphasis in the play.

accordance with social mores, the limited ability of those mores to provide satisfactory relationships becomes clear<sup>55</sup>. Even if Diniarchus does the ‘approved’ thing in marrying this citizen girl, the ideal will not be achieved as he does not love her. A wedding is planned, but in this play the sentimental mode fails to exert itself; ‘chance’ does not intervene to give Diniarchus the girl he desires. Perhaps Plautus intends his audience to laugh at a frustration which might be only too common in reality. But the important point to note here is that Diniarchus is shown to be largely responsible for the failure of *his* ideal. The essential family ideal itself is not at fault; it is a good thing – that is why its perversion by Phronesium and Diniarchus is so ridiculously ‘wicked’. But Diniarchus’ crimes unfit him for it. Plautus highlights an artificial division in the Roman (and modern!) concept of the ideal and demonstrates that men’s behaviour – their past ‘sins’ – *do* have consequences. They cast shadows as long – or longer – than those of ‘fallen’ women.

As for that other division in the Roman social code – the one which separates ‘innocent’ women from their less fortunate sisters: interestingly, this is dealt with in *Cistellaria*, a play with a very different tone. In this play Selenium appears as the polar opposite to Phronesium. She is desperate to devote herself to the one man whom she loves. She has built up an intimacy with him, based on mutual knowledge and affection. She is prepared to defend him when he threatens suicide. And she is rewarded with marriage in the end. In short, she seems to be the epitome of the Roman version of the sentimental heroine (83-95; 191-3; 238-9; 642-5<sup>56</sup>).

But Selenium is first seen in the company of a true *meretrix*, Gymnasium, and her *lena* mother. These two urge Selenium to consider how a *meretrix* is obliged – because of need – to behave. She should be wary of falling in love; she should seek the maximum profit and be prepared to marry a new man every night; she should be aware of the gulf that separates her from women who can (and have) married. She cannot afford to maintain her ‘innocence’ (40-5; 78-81; 95-7).

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Konstan, 1986a, 160-1.

<sup>56</sup> Note, however, that Selenium’s sentimental speeches sometimes appear to be parodies (like Palaestra’s in *Rudens*), e.g. 59-60.

Ostensibly this pair provide a contrast to Selenium. But in fact Plautus purposely blurs the distinctions between the three. They are presented as intimate friends (1-8; 20-1); Gymnasium acts as a proxy for Selenium in her house and is mistaken for her (104-110; 305ff); Selenium speaks freely about her 'love' and emotions in a manner perhaps lacking in the reticence expected from an 'innocent' girl; and the rhythm of her speeches is not always the distinctive staid one appropriate to her proper station<sup>57</sup>. She is neither true *meretrix*, nor modest maiden. It takes the 'chance' discovery that she is actually a citizen's daughter to separate her finally from her original friends.

Importantly, Plautus provides an intriguing twist to the play's recognition scene. It is delayed and put into danger when Selenium is abducted by her *impatient* lover and her birth-right tokens are lost (631ff; 671ff). Then, even after the tokens have been found again, the playwright declines to provide an onstage, happy reunion scene. Instead he concentrates on Selenium's father, Demipho, making a joke with sexual innuendo about the sudden increase in his family (776-8). Demipho makes his first appearance at the end of the play, but he is an essential character despite that. After all, it was his *impatience* that led to the compromising circumstances of Selenium's birth and early life: he raped her mother (156ff<sup>58</sup>). Father and lover: both men are culpable of endangering Selenium's status *and* her chances of happy marriage.

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<sup>57</sup> Moore (2004, 322-5) remarks that though Selenium begins speaking in the bacchiacs that commonly distinguish *pseudomeretrices* and *matronae*, she does not keep this up. Cf. Zagagi (2004, 170-1). Auhagen (2004, 191) notes that the characterisation of Gymnasium and her mother is also nebulous: they display the cunning and self-centred qualities stereotypical of their profession and yet behave humanely to each other and Selenium.

<sup>58</sup> Konstan (1986a, 101-114) suggests a political reading of *Cistellaria*, in which Selenium's foster mother, Melaenis', aspirations for and defence of her 'daughter' *before* she has been recognized as a citizen highlight problems in a divisive social system. Melaenis believes Selenium's citizen lover is guilty of a breach of faith in appearing to give her up, for he has already committed himself to her *as if in marriage*. (NB when he abducts Selenium, still unrecognized as a citizen, he carries her over the threshold into his house in a Roman gesture again significant of marriage.) In the play, fortuitous citizenship eventually validates the relationship, just as it finally allows Demipho to marry the woman he raped. The story is family-based and sentimental. But it may have a wider symbolic meaning, possibly challenging the Roman social system and political situation (in the period of the Punic Wars, Rome had many allies who perhaps deserved 'better' treatment), pointing out the need for scrupulous honesty in citizens' dealings with true aliens, who in real life, had no final legal means of redress.

*Cistellaria* demonstrates the artificial and contradictory qualities of the Roman social structure and ideal. Women<sup>59</sup> were traditionally divided into those who were ‘innocent’ and marriageable and those who were not. But Plautus seems to invite his audience both to consider whether the division had any real natural basis – and to note once again that it was *men’s* cultural system and their habits that were to blame for keeping certain women outside of the family ideal.

## 2.6. Happily Ever After

Whatever misogynistic stance farcical *senes* take, a cultural understanding that, ideally, the marriage relationship *should* be maintained is fundamental to Plautus’ works. Marital strife is painful – Eutyclus is keen to see his parents reconciled (*Mer.* 953-4); maintaining one’s own marriage ought to be a priority, as Myrrhina reminds Cleostrata (*Cas.* 204-12<sup>60</sup>). Straying *senes* provide *paraprosdokian* jokes, wishing for their wives’ deaths, but in general their stories end with their reintegration into their proper households<sup>61</sup>. The punitive tone of some of the plays’ conclusions may bring into question whether the spouses *can* live ‘happily-ever-after’; there may be little unparodied sentiment in their plots. But though Plautus may use the farcical mode to comment wryly about social ideals and structures, he nonetheless appears to uphold them in the end.

This last chapter section will consider *Amphitryon*, an unusual Plautine play, not least because, although it is concerned with warring spouses, its plot essentially follows the sentimental mode. *Amphitryon* is not like the farcical *senes* in *Asinaria*, *Casina* and *Mercator*: he does not desire a mistress rather than his wife. He and Alcmena pass through vicissitudes to the promise of a ‘happily-ever-after’ marriage renewal at the end of the play. This seems sentimental enough. But in

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<sup>59</sup> Of course, non-citizen men suffered in the cultural system, too. For further discussion of this see 5.2., below.

<sup>60</sup> Myrrinha intends to prevent Cleostrata from rebelling against her husband; ostensibly she fails – even ends up colluding in the rebellion. And yet that rebellion results in the restoration of the husband to his proper role. Myrrinha is perhaps successful after all.

<sup>61</sup> For discussion of the exception of *Menaechmi* see 2.4., above.

a work which deliberately plays with dramatic forms (cf. Mercury's joke about tragic-comedy in the Prologue 50-63), Plautus mixes sentiment with plenty of farce, allowing us to reconsider many of the motifs discussed in this chapter's previous sections in an intriguing new context.

But before looking at *Amphitryon*, I wish briefly to mention another play, *Stichus*, which also shows sentimental potential. It begins with two sisters, whose husbands have long been abroad and whose father is advising divorce and remarriage. They are caught between two duties (rather like Bevil in *TCL*), to their parent and to their husbands, but show enduring loyalty to the latter, even abjuring possible financial gain to remain faithful to the men they love (1-19; 89-101; 130-140). Significantly, their conversation is spattered with Roman moral jargon<sup>62</sup>, like that which is used in the prologue to *Rudens*. They are concerned about doing their duty (*officium*) and observing *pietas*; they care about what is proper and fair (*aequus*) and acknowledge their father's legal power (5-8; 39-46; 69-74; 96-8). In line with the Roman ideal of *univira*<sup>63</sup>, they oppose their own remarriage and are even shocked at their father's hypothetical plan for a new wife (105-125). The sort of woman they recommend to him, however, is a very paragon of submissive patience. The sisters thus whole-heartedly subscribe to the Roman concept of an ideal wife, and if their emphasis on duty is rather higher than on love (reversing the order in the modern ideal), their ideas still resound with sentimental motifs.

Importantly, however, even in the early stages of the play there are curious contraindications. One girl alarms her sister by temporarily allowing her long-suffering, virtuous mask to slip, complaining, shrew-like, of her errant husband (27-47). In time the plot also slips, right out of the sentimental mode<sup>64</sup>. Considered in the light of the play's conclusion, the sisters' opening evocations of sentiment appear as parodies of glib Roman jargon. It seems that Plautus may have intended to

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Owens, 2000, 392.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

<sup>64</sup> There is no onstage reunion between the girls and their husbands; their father falls into the role of the greedy *senex amans*, keen to profit from the wealth and the music girls brought home by his son-in-laws (517-522; 538-573), and the play ends with a drunken slave orgy. NB Fraenkel argued that the move away from the sentimental paradigm is probably Plautine, not copied from the Menadrian original (2007, 190-1).

use the girls' story to challenge and/or tease his audience about their typical cultural perceptions of female roles and moral ideals, in comedy and in real life. This is interesting, for something very similar probably happens in *Amphitryon*.

In Greek myth, of course, both Amphitryon and Alcmena were members of the nobility, characters who would not have been incongruous in a tragedy written in accordance with Aristotelian 'rules'. Indeed, the tragic potential of their story has been exploited in various dramatic versions, from Euripides' *Alcmena* to Kaiser's 1944 *Zweimal Amphitryon*<sup>65</sup>. Perhaps it is unsurprising, therefore, that some critics of *Amphitryon*, have suggested that in Alcmena, Plautus truly did portray an admirable heroine. Plautus' Alcmena is seen as the epitome of Roman virtues (those virtues admired by the *Stichus* sisters): a loving wife; an innocent victim; someone to be taken seriously<sup>66</sup>.

I, however, believe that Plautus had a very different programme for Alcmena. He used her to provide glimpses of the loving, virtuous wife (alerting us to the fact that such a figure was a cultural ideal recognisable to his audience): the woman who greets her returning 'husband' with a kiss (799-800); who is sorrowful at his departure, wishful to prolong her time with him (499ff); who longs to be assured of his constant love (542); who moralises patiently in his absence (633-651); who asserts her virtue when accused (839-42) and who quickly forgives her 'husband' when his welfare is threatened (933-5). But all of these glimpses have strong overtones of parody. In Plautus, Alcmena's position is constantly false. She is never seen in a tender moment with the real Amphitryon<sup>67</sup>. And though she *might* have been characterized in a fashion that enhanced her sentimental aura, emphasising her innocent vulnerability, Plautus chose not to do this. Instead he made his Alcmena culpable of sentimental hubris.

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Lindberger, 1956, 203-223 & *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> Raia, 1983; Slater, 1990, 113; Lindberger, 1956, 8-9; 14; 15-17.

<sup>67</sup> This is important: the true pathos of Giraudoux's *Amphitryon 38* is enhanced immensely because he allows the loving couple to appear together *before* Jupiter's intervention *and* afterwards, when, though still confused, they face their problem together.

Plautus presents us with an Alcmena who considers herself totally innocent (831-8; 882-890). When accused of a crime she has actually committed (though unwittingly), she declares that she does not believe her true dowry consists of money, but of purity, honour, self-control, fear of God, love of parents, affection for her family and loving duty to her husband (839-42. Again *vide* the *Stichus* sisters). She presses all the sentimental buttons, despising filthy lucre, favouring virtuous and loving self-control. But Plautus' comic irony does not affirm this altruistic self-portrait. The play has already shown Alcmena eagerly receiving the gift of the golden bowl; later she demands the return of her goods when threatening to leave Amphitryon: so much for her disdain of lucre (534-7; 928). And as for her virtuous self-control – her sexual relationships are a constant topic of conversation.

We have seen that the Romans had an ambivalent attitude to sex, believing that sensual pleasures might be demeaning. Their social system also divided women into citizens' daughters, who deserved respect and could be married, and non-citizens, with whom wild oats might legitimately be sown. Lucretius 4.1263-77 presents us with another dichotomy, describing the wife's sexual role in terms of procreation, not of pleasure. Marriages were not formed for mutual erotic delight: *meretrices* provided men with such experiences. Plautus generally appears to support a similar sort of differentiation, relying on a cultural perception of what is 'proper' to each relationship to create some of his humour. Blatant sexual innuendo – which reduces 'love' to erotic lust – is thus employed to debunk sentimental affectation in Calidorus' and Philolaches' relationships with their mistresses (*Ps.* 22-28; 60-73; *Mos.* 169-171). Ironically, in *Amphitryon*, all Alcmena's pretensions of innocent devotion to her husband are undermined by similar sexual allusions – precisely because she is not just a wife, but also a 'mistress'<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> We should not assume that Lucretius' aphorism and the conventional humour of Plautus' New Comedy (which reflects the culture of both Greece and Rome, where similar marriage customs prevailed) prove that married couples in the ancient world *never* enjoyed their sexual relationships. The plot of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* depends on the idea that husbands will feel deprived when their wives begin their sex strike (Brown, 1990, 250; Dover, 1974, 210-212). I believe what Plautus does is to manipulate his audience's understanding about what is 'decent' for a wife to express – he plays with a cultural ideal which is very



That kiss, which Alcmena gave her returning ‘husband’, was thus actually received by her lust-driven seducer (as the outraged Amphitryon remarks 801); her complaints about being left alone too soon were also inappropriately addressed to him, and that *after* it had been made clear – with ribald commentary – that the pair had just enjoyed an unnaturally long night together (271-290). The person from whom she requested constant ‘love’ was Jupiter, too; and it was he whom she forgave quickly, without understanding the duplicity of his remarks about his virtuous ‘wife’ (932).

Alcmena’s important central monologue upon virtue (633-651) epitomises her ambiguous position. It is full of slippery word-play. At 633 and again at 641 she uses the word *voluptas*, in a would-be pathetic complaint about the fragility of life’s ‘pleasures’. But the term has already been used to describe Jupiter’s lust for Alcmena (114). She declares herself only able to bear the loss of this ‘pleasure’, because in his absence her husband is displaying manly virtue in military action (641a-651). Plautus plays with the cognates *uir* (husband) and *uirtus* (courage/virtue); the context encourages us to think of sexual prowess. We are reminded of Mercury’s description of Jupiter (131-139), enjoying Alcmena whilst he boasts of military success, in the manner of conventional amorous *milites gloriosi*, who typically brag to and of their mistresses<sup>69</sup>.

Alcmena is, of course, heavily pregnant throughout the play. (The vision of a padded male actor probably created humour in itself.) She is very pregnant when asserting her ‘innocence’ and absurdly aligning herself with the goddess of chastity (930). Her interest in the warmth of her couch

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similar to the modern one. The complex spectrum of human sexual relationships – which spans indiscriminate lust, passionate (possibly ephemeral) desire for a particular person, a romantic love that encompasses sexual and ‘spiritual’ attraction, and a mere dutiful relationship – has always been a subject of philosophical debate. In the modern era controversy and confusion has continued about the sort of love shared by spouses and about the fundamental purity of sex. Various and variable dichotomies have arisen – one is apparent in Molière’s *Amphitryon*, when Jupiter attempts to insist on a distinction between the love a woman gives her lover and that which she owes her spouse (Alcmene significantly resists the notion I.III). However, the important point is that the ‘innocence’ of an early modern sentimental heroine depends upon her sexual purity: she may love her husband – and only him – but is unlikely to speak of this in overtly erotic terms; her sexual passion must not be her defining characteristic. Cf. Singer, 1984, 23-4; 27-8 (for discussion of Platonic theories) & *passim* on modern debate; Lewis, 1977, *passim* (for discussion of the complex relationship between different sorts of love).

<sup>69</sup> Christenson (2000, note to *Am* 504-5) notes that Jupiter fits the *miles gloriosus* role at 504-5, too, when he claims – falsely – that he must depart to do his military duties. Importantly, in evoking the greater importance of war/duty to ‘love’, Jupiter echoes an ideal that is very Roman.

(513) and the details she gives of her evening with ‘Amphitryon’ (735; 799-808) act as further reminders of the sort of pleasures she enjoys. The fact that she has satisfied her sexual appetite (making herself ‘fat’ 664-668) is even linked with her unsentimental lust for lucre, when Mercury compares her shape with that of the golden bowl (534-538)<sup>70</sup>. Her position as an ‘innocent’ sentimental heroine is thus undermined on all sides. Jupiter has made her his mistress – worse, perhaps, for his affair with her is equated with that of *scortatores* (fornicators), who make the most of opportunities. Alcmena may simply be a *scortum* – whore (287-90). She is a ‘wife’ on loan; a participant in filthy ‘financial’ dealing (107-8; 498; 980-1<sup>71</sup>); and her own conversation has not redeemed her at all. In Plautus’ presentation, Alcmena apparently loses all claim to be a noble, tragic heroine.

The Roman context of the play is very important at this juncture – though in a double-edged way. Fraenkel (2007, 58) notes that Plautus’ allusions to legendary characters would have seemed more remote to his native audience than to any Greek spectators. This greater emotional distance may have allowed them to laugh at Alcmena without feeling too many conscience pangs<sup>72</sup>. The play’s prologue informs spectators that the story’s dramatic genre is about to be manipulated for *their* benefit (50-63). This metatheatre may influence the audience to view the play as an exercise in fictional forms rather than a realistic reflection of ‘life’. The plot concerns a ‘god’, who has been improperly imported from the tragic genre; it begins with him extending a night over its correct length; it concerns his irregular relationship with Alcmena, which deposes her from her original noble role. Jupiter is the only character in the Plautine corpus to commit adultery with impunity<sup>73</sup>; everything he does is unusual, possible only in a fictitious work written by a playwright intent on manipulating his own genre for crazy comic effect.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Phillips, 1984, 125-6; Christenson, 2000, 38-43 and notes to *Am.* 633-4, 648-53; Moore, 1998, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Christenson, 2000, 39-40.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Christenson, 2000, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Christenson, 2000, 163, note to *Am.* 135.

But Fraenkel also notes that Plautus does not include passages in his plays that are completely foreign to his audience's understanding. He even uses concepts which are purely Latin<sup>74</sup>. Life on the Plautine stage is never that far away from Roman life. In fact, though the plot of *Amphitryon* may seem remote and exotic in some ways, in others it is highly relevant to the Roman audience. Jupiter not only steals Amphitryon's wife, he also takes his place in his *home* (literally and figuratively<sup>75</sup>). Plautus has been playing with his audience's knowledge of dramatic forms and their cultural concepts – *their* sentimental ideal for the family and the home. He has parodied their notion of the perfect wife. And he has inverted the typical occurrences of a play in the sentimental mode – the usual homecomings and reunions – repeatedly allowing the god, not the real Amphitryon, to enjoy them. From the prologue onwards the spectators have, of course, been aligned with Jupiter and his shenanigans. *They* wanted the story to be a comedy, and so Plautus has effectively manipulated them to laugh at their own ideals – from a safe distance in an absurd play. However, with great significance, he also acknowledges that he *could* go too far with his inversions. Ultimately, he must allow the sentimental mode – and Roman ethics – to triumph. So he repeatedly promises he will do this (473-495; 861-881). Alcmena and Amphitryon *will* be reunited to live 'happily-ever-after' (with two children to round off the happy family!)

*Amphitryon*, like *Asinaria*, *Casina* and *Mercator*, employs farce; that farce makes fun of cultural ideals and social mores – before reasserting them at the plays' endings. Plautus primarily uses farce to entertain. But since he draws upon cultural concepts to make his jokes, it is perhaps inevitable that he also challenges his spectators to reconsider their values and practices. In *Amphitryon* the 'god' Jupiter (who Plautus slyly admits is a man/actor 28; 89-92) assumes the role of an adulterer. He and Amphitryon are equated, sharing the same woman and the same identity; both, in fact, show signs of being *milites gloriosi*<sup>76</sup>. Together with the very sensual Alcmena, they are characterized as

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<sup>74</sup> E.g. *Am.* 303-5, which puns on the Roman naming system. Fraenkel, 2007, 17, 66.

<sup>75</sup> Note how Amphitryon is denied access to his own house and, until finally recognized *outside that house* by a slave at the play's resolution 1073-6, also loses control of his household.

<sup>76</sup> For Amphitryon's military boasting cf. 652-6.

men who, at others' cost, indulge their own self-aggrandising desires (desires Mercury teasingly suggests the audience share, though he *hopes* they will also support justice – and him! 1-85). Once again Plautus appears to comment wryly on humanity, noting both its moral ideals for marriage, the family and society (achievable in the sentimental mode) *and* its precarious ability (because of conflicting desires and needs and social customs) to achieve those ideals in reality.

## Chapter 3: Parents & Children

### 3.1. Introduction

'[...] to his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth [...] He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand, but instead of hard coin [...] his fingers encountered soft warm curls [...] it was a sleeping child – a round, fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head.' Eliot, *Silas Marner*, Chpt. 12.

'A child deserves utmost respect. So if you are planning anything disgusting, you shouldn't disregard his tender years.' Juvenal 14, 47-8.

*Silas Marner* tells the tale of a social outcast who has become besotted with his gold. The gold is stolen, but in its place the outcast, Silas, finds a child. That child (who is described in terms that emphasise all the endearing physical qualities inherent to its stage of life) acts upon the old man as a wholesome cure. Forgetting his gold, he is, 'awakened to life by the redemptive power of love'<sup>1</sup>.

Children hold a special place in the modern sentimental ideal of the family. They have also played key roles in modern literature. Like little Eppie in *Silas Marner*, they often appear in idealized guise, 'invested with the capacity to [...] lead fallen adults back to the paths of righteousness' (Reynolds, 1994, 13). This is interesting, because, according to Dixon, children enjoyed a similar, central position in the Roman ideal. Manson, quoted by Dixon, asserts that from the late Republic onwards, the Romans developed a sense of childhood, which found expression in

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<sup>1</sup> Cover notes, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994.

literature, resulted in a *new* ideal of *pietas* towards offspring, and had a distinctive moralistic quality, as exemplified in Juvenal 14 (Dixon, 1991, 104; Manson, 1975, 45<sup>2</sup>).

It must be admitted that, in contrast to all of this, Plautus' mid-republican works *seem* very coarse – certainly not given to the adulation of children. Understood by certain philologists to be unsophisticated works of slap-stick<sup>3</sup>, they have few roles for infants and those for adult sons tend to be negative. Plautine *adulescentes* rarely have the capacity to teach their fathers righteousness; indeed, many of the playwright's plots focus on altercations between wayward sons and their parents. These facts have persuaded some classicists that the mid-republican Romans were comparatively uninterested in sentimentality. Noting the paucity of child-centred affectionate terminology in Plautus, Dixon dates the growth of the ideal *after* his era. Segal is convinced in any case that the period was oppressively patriarchal – a time when sons felt the full weight of *patria potestas*, a peculiarly Roman power, which gave fathers a theoretic right of life and death over their children (adult children, too)<sup>4</sup>. He therefore suggests that Plautus' depictions of conflict between parents and sons reflect the original Roman audience's frustrations. Plautus' sons wish their fathers would 'drop dead'; the mid-republican spectators had similar, unsentimental desires (1987, 17 & *passim*).

But Plautus' works need not be read in this way. Segal's analysis of Plautine comedy accords with Freudian theory. Importantly, he assumes that Plautus' plays generally work by providing for saturnalian escapism. Their 'Greek' settings are the scene of a 'Roman holiday'. I believe, however,

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<sup>2</sup> Dixon notes an objection personally communicated to her by Saller: he suggests that Manson (1975) overlooks Plautine references to *pietas*.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, 2004, 214. Cf. Norwood, 1923, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Theoretically, Roman fathers could expose their children in infancy, sell them, chastise them, subject them to noxal surrender or force them to divorce (Crook, 1967, 113; Eyben, 1991, 115.) For discussion of *later* applications of *patria potestas*, cf. Arjava, 1998, 164 & Eyben, 1991, 115, 116, 137. NB Eyben argues for an erosion of paternal power in the Empire, but admits that even in earlier periods (including the period Segal believes to have been oppressive) Romans may have acknowledged that children should be treated with respect: Cato apparently believed that a man who beats his child (or his wife) uses violence against 'the holiest of holy things' (Plu. *Cat. Mai.*, 20. 2); Terence's *Adelphi* discourses on the wisdom of treating sons with honour and love (e.g. 47ff).

that Plautus' plays are more varied than the Freudian framework presupposes<sup>5</sup>. The playwright – and his audience – benefited from the broad spectrum of his genre. Far from being unsophisticated, Plautus' plays have complex, multi-layered structures. They employ all sorts of comic devices (parody, farce, inversion etc), in varying comic modes. Thus, though some of the 'farces' fit the generational rivalry paradigm, advancing the escapist desires of sons, others employ punitive humour, simultaneously exposing the foolishness of parents and children (i.e. the audience is not *always* aligned with sons against oppressive fathers: e.g. *Asinaria*, *Epidicus*). And there are other plot types, as well: stories in the sentimental mode, like *Rudens*, in which parental protection is actually seen to be more than desirable – though it is subjected to some parody, too.

Further opportunities are provided by the 'foreign' settings of the plays. Metatheatre undermines the plays' Greek (and other 'foreign') qualities, placing the action firmly back in Rome; hyper-hellenization often becomes part of the joke<sup>6</sup>. Plautus is able to provoke 'superior laughter' at the ridiculous antics of foreigners (who do not attain to Roman standards) at one level, whilst at another he manipulates those foreigners, so that they are aligned with his Roman audience, reflecting *their* behaviour, peccadilloes and social inconsistencies.

It will therefore be the contention of this chapter that Plautus' interactive, self-conscious plays make use of a wide selection of comic devices to explore parent-child themes in a manner that deliberately draws upon Roman culture, challenging and affirming its values<sup>7</sup>. The works may, occasionally, provide vicarious pleasure as sons misbehave; but they also raise ethical questions about family dynamics. The plays may be overtly irreverent; they may lack affectionate terminology, but they nonetheless concern themselves with ideals. These ideals pertain to familial love and the prioritisation of responsibility above personal desire: elements common to the modern sentimental family ideal – and the Roman ideal described by Dixon and Manson.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Maurice, 2007, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 4, above; Moore, 1998, 54, 58.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Manuwald, 2007, 133; 136; 139-140.

### 3.2. Family Economics 1.

Silas Marner is a miser – lonely and bereft of human contact. The advent of the child, Eppie, into his life causes him to reawaken to a proper sense of human values. She is innocent and vulnerable. He must care for and protect her. In return she gives him love: better than gold. The role of children in the modern sentimental ideal is rather similar to that of women. Like women, their innocence in part derives from their ability to love unselfishly and to engender unselfish love in return<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, in much current Western thinking, the idealistic economy that controls relationships between children and parents (or quasi-parents) is one of pure affection. Parents are supposed to have no self-centred or financial interest in their children; and children ‘repay’ them by loving them selflessly, without mercenary motivation.

Juvenal 14 also concerns itself with family economics. It evokes the tender image of a vulnerable child, in a poem that seeks to persuade parents to avoid selfish vices (including avarice and overindulgence) for the sake of their children. A sentimental note is struck, which accords with Dixon’s arguments. She believes that in the era of the sentimental ideal, Romans learned to appreciate children selflessly, for themselves, and that they expressed this in their literature. But, she adds, the ‘conventional wisdom’ of Plautus’ day was different. She believes it is well-represented by *Miles Gloriosus* 703-4, in which the procreation of children is lauded on the grounds that it gives a man an opportunity to provide ‘a memorial to his line and himself’ (1991, 104).

Dixon’s comments are interesting. Whilst I would agree with her that contemporary concepts *are* represented in Plautus’ plays, I am unconvinced that the lines quoted support her ultimate conclusion (i.e. that the plays provide no evidence of a sentimental ideal in the mid Republic). They need to be understood in the comic context of *Miles Gloriosus* as a whole. In this play, the *senex*, Periplectomenus, declares himself wealthy – quite able to afford a wife, but determined not to

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<sup>8</sup> Note how the sentimental qualities of the child Eppie are maintained when she grows up, is offered a better social position and prospect, but altruistically refuses it in order to stay with Silas and marry her first love.



marry. He complains about wives' avarice and states that he has no need for children, as he has many greedy relatives, all intent on inheriting from him (679-680; 685-700; 705-715). He seems to think of all relationships in mercenary terms. His stage-auditors, Palaestrio and Pleusicles, respond by citing Dixon's 'conventional wisdom': if he did marry, Periplectomenus could benefit from having children (682; 703-704). He could get something in return – and not just affection. This certainly all *appears* unsentimental<sup>9</sup>. But, as ever, things are not straightforward in Plautus.

*Miles* is a complex, interactive metatheatrical work. The three men who take part in the conversation about children are the 'heroes' of the play, who, with the audience's full knowledge, bamboozle the eponymous *miles gloriosus*. It might therefore be assumed that Plautus expected the spectators to identify with them, wishing for their success. However, in the scene in question it becomes apparent that, although the audience *are* aligned with Palaestrio, Pleusicles and Periplectomenus, their alliance with the first two is stronger than that with the last. Palaestrio is, in fact, the play's moving figure, whose metatheatrical 'plotting' monologues bind him firmly to the audience he entertains<sup>10</sup>. He plans a series of two 'deceptions' – plays-within-the-play, in which the plotters assume 'false' roles in order to fool the *miles*<sup>11</sup>. But his 'play-acting' is not reserved to the deception scenes. He and Pleusicles are ostensibly a *servus callidus* and a foolish lover, stereotypically known for recklessness. But when they tax Periplectomenus with conventional social wisdom, they take on the incongruous parts of 'the wise'. And in doing this, they hilariously expose Periplectomenus as a man who has adopted not one, but *two* inappropriate roles himself.

Periplectomenus is a bachelor *senex*, who helps an *adulescens* gain a girl. When the surprisingly wise Pleusicles hints that involvement in such an affair is unsuitable to one of his age, Periplectomenus' response is to declare that he is not so very old (618-623). He claims the liberty of

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<sup>9</sup> Note the irony that Periplectomenus rejects the 'unsentimental' wisdom cited by his friends, for selfish, unsentimental reasons of his own!

<sup>10</sup> E.g. 79-155; 259-271; 596-610 (where Palaestrio makes a point of ensuring no-one can overhear him. This is a joke, for of course the spectators hear everything; but in doing so their status as fellow conspirators is enhanced.) cf. 200-218, when attention is drawn to Palaestrio's central 'plotting' role.

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of this cf. 4.3b., below.

youth – the right to indulge himself free from responsibility (678). In wanting neither wife nor children, he rejects his ‘proper’ place in society – and, very importantly, begins to sound like a *senex amans* (a stereotype that the audience would surely have recognized: cf. *Mer.* 546-554). He then goes on to boast of his own social mores – of his excellent society manners and generosity to guests (people for whom he is not obliged to accept ultimate responsibility). And his auditors’ remarks encourage the audience to perceive another comic stereotype in him: he is a genial version of the *miles* himself. Whilst the *miles* basks in the glory of being described as brother to Achilles’ (son of Thetis) and himself claims longevity equal to the gods (60-65; 1079-1083), Periplectomenus’ glowing self-account draws the wry comment that he must have been nurtured by the Graces<sup>12</sup> (649-650).

The effect of this multiple role-swapping is intriguing. Periplectomenus takes on the personalities of two of comedy’s renowned self-deceivers: a *senex amans*, who foolishly believes he can act like an irresponsible boy; and a *miles gloriosus*, who thinks he is a paragon of manly virtues. Such self-deceivers are inevitably unmasked in plays – and Periplectomenus receives the normal treatment. As the scene advances, it becomes clear that he has other reasons for not wanting offspring. He is aware that if he had a child, it would cost him *more* than money and liberty. It would be an emotional drain. He would worry about it and its health (718-722). He would, in other words, recognize its vulnerability and need for protection. Periplectomenus may boast unsentimentally, rejecting marriage and children for financial and hedonistic reasons, but the fact is that he is truly worried about his own incipient sentimentality. Frightened that he could lose his ‘pseudo-youthful’ liberty and end up caring about a needy child, he runs away from family responsibility – a coward, like most comic *milites*. As for Palaestrio and Pleusicles – their recital of glib ‘conventional wisdom’ cannot be taken at face value either. They are not expressing what they really think, but only speaking the lines that will give the *senex* his cues and lead to his unmasking.

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<sup>12</sup> Nixon’s translation of *Venerio*; cf. Hammond et al (1963), note to the consequent wordplay on *ueunstat* in 651: ‘the pun is made possible because of the original meaning of *uenus* = ‘charm’, ‘grace’; its use as the name of a goddess developed later.’ Note that the *miles* himself later claims to be Venus’ grandson (1265).

Of course, for this scene to have its full comic effect, Plautus' original spectators had to be able to decode it. The playwright relied on their knowledge of comic conventions and stereotypes – and also on their ability to recognize conventional social mores and 'real' human responses. His multi-layered play explores the multi-layered culture of his Roman audience. And much of its humour depends upon its exposition of certain incongruities. To appreciate this, the spectators must:

1. assess Palaestrio and Pleusicles correctly, understanding their fundamental, conventional roles (*servus* and *adulescens*);
2. recognize the glib conventional social wisdom quoted by them; it must be a concept known to the Roman audience;
3. realise how ridiculous it is, both for such characters to recite the wisdom *and* for a *senex* (who is supposed to uphold social wisdom) to reject it.

At the same time, however, the spectators must also wryly acknowledge that there is more to having children than creating memorials to oneself. The point about Palaestrio's and Pleusicles' conventional advice is that, taken by itself, it is *too* glib. It overlooks the emotional or sentimental side of relationships. Periplectomenus does not make that mistake – but he *is* in error in trying to 'escape' from the sentiment. He is not an unpleasant character; he is aligned with the spectators against the play's chief foe – the 'real' *miles*. But when he himself plays the *miles* role, he, too, earns ridicule – from an audience who presumably appreciated the value of the sentimental attachments he seeks to evade.

It is interesting to note that the 'conventional wisdom' concerning creating memorials to oneself continued to have currency in later Roman eras – eras in which Dixon believes there *was* a sentimental family ideal. Dio has Augustus evoke the notion when, apparently driven by fears for social and political stability, he tries to persuade the bachelor knights to marry (56.3.4, Dixon, 1992, 111<sup>13</sup>). To me this suggests a continuity in Roman culture, not a development in the late Republic.

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<sup>13</sup> Dio's text is intriguingly ambiguous, suggesting that Augustus *combined* sentimental persuasion with 'conventional wisdom'. Furthermore, though on the one hand it demonstrates that, in his day, *Dio* thought

Aphorisms concerning the positive benefits of producing heirs circulated simultaneously as more selfless, sentimental family concepts in all eras under consideration<sup>14</sup>.

### 3.3. Family Economics 2.

The foregoing discussion about *Miles* aimed to demonstrate two points:

1. that Plautus' works explore his medium, playing with its dramatic conventions, whilst also referring to cultural issues (NB both the conventions and the cultural issues were familiar to his audience, who otherwise would scarcely have enjoyed his plays.)
2. that the mid-republican Romans were aware that a man may have more than one reason for wanting a child.

In this next section I intend to look at two other Plautine works, which also explore the comic genre whilst simultaneously throwing light upon contemporary cultural concepts – concepts concerning children and their place in the family economy. In my previous chapter I noted that lovers – ancient and modern – need funds if they are to marry and live happily. Since lovers are ideally uninterested in finance this fact brings sentimental idealism and practical realism into potential conflict. A similar conflict can be deduced in parent-child relationships in ancient Rome.

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sentimentalism a permissible, political argument (it perhaps does not matter whether Augustus would have agreed), on the other hand it draws attention to Augustus' *Lex Papia Poppaea*, which was formulated because of the elite's putative reluctance to marry and have children. Perhaps parenthood was not their ideal?

<sup>14</sup> NB even Cicero, writer of many affectionate letters, who did not stop caring for his children when they were grown (cf. *Att.* 11, 17; 12, 46), spoke of his offspring in the same context as his possessions, suggesting he valued them in similar ways (cf. Bradley, 1991, (1), 179-80, quoting, *Q.fr.* 1.3.1. & 1.3.6.). He perhaps reflected a dual attitude to children in his culture: Romans may have had no difficulty in combining a sentimental regard for offspring with more pragmatic considerations. Epicurus may have believed children were loved *only* because they were 'useful' (this opinion refuted by Plutarch in *De amore proliis* [*passim*, in particular 495]; cf. Eyben, 1991, 116.) Exposure of surplus or unfit infants remained legal until AD 374, perhaps indicating that others *sometimes* shared his view (Dixon, 1992, 122). But, Epicurus to the contrary, some ancient parents may have recognized their children's usefulness, whilst simultaneously acknowledging a 'natural' affection for them (cf. *Epict.*, 1.23.3-5). Importantly, such dual attitudes do not appear to have been unique to Roman culture. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, for instance, speaks of parents begetting children to support them in their old age (7.18-19), but also refers to natural affection (7.24), and studies have demonstrated that parents have 'invested' in children for more than one reason in some modern cultures, too; children have been essential to families' financial survival, but have nonetheless been the focus of emotional interest (Cunningham, 1995, 108-9).

According to the sentimental ideal, the prime role of parents is to care for and protect their offspring; even Periplectomenus was aware of this. But in the real world, Roman parents needed money, not only to support their children, but also themselves. Poorer parents depended upon their children to work as part of the family economy, whilst the rich were under pressure to ensure that their heirs had enough wealth to maintain their social status (Dixon, 1992, 28; 108-116). This naturally created a situation in which children *might* be selfishly and/or immorally exploited by unloving parents. But it also had the potential to cause friction within a more 'ideal' parenting framework. In seeking to provide for their child, a wise and caring parent might need to prioritise pragmatically, without reference to 'sentiment'. Plautus' works commonly explore these parenting problems; *Cistellaria* and *Persa* provide particularly interesting examples of this.

*Cistellaria* is fundamentally a play in the sentimental mode. It begins with a pair of thwarted lovers, who, thanks to 'chance', are united at its end. But though the plot concerns itself with 'romance', it also depicts several parent-child relationships, in which sentimental issues are also at stake. The cases are ironically contrasted against each other.

a) Alceisimarchus and his father. Alceisimarchus' father is an agelast, who pits himself against the sentimental spirit of the play. His offences are primarily demonstrated when he attempts to separate the boy from Selenium for social and financial reasons. Like Sir John Bevil in *TCL*, he wants his son to marry for a dowry (305). Assessed pragmatically, his motives are 'wise': as far as he knows Selenium is *not* a good match for his child. But his 'wisdom' comes into conflict with his son's romantic aspirations and is probably also brought into doubt when he himself behaves like a ridiculous *senex amans* (306ff. The fragmentary nature of the text makes it unclear how this theme was developed.) He thus falls short of sentimental standards twice, prioritising money and status above his son's romantic love, whilst indulging in an inappropriate sexual flirtation himself. But the *senex* is lucky. Despite his failures, the play's conclusion fulfils his basic parental desires. Selenium is granted the right to a dowry; 'chance' reconciles the father's economic strategy with his child's emotional needs. This is possible because all three of them are citizens.

b) Gymnasium and Syra. In many ways Syra is a stereotypical *lena*. One who has herself lived by selling sex, she is depicted as drunken – a person who overindulges personal appetite (14-18; 120-122). Her ‘grab-all-you-can’ values are similar to merciless Cleareta’s in *Asinaria*<sup>15</sup>. And she declares it a financial necessity to prostitute her daughter, Gymnasium (21-51). She transgresses sentimental ethics twice, exploiting her daughter instead of protecting her, and doing this in order to satisfy her own ‘appetite’. Like Alceisimarchus’ father, she is an agelast, who fails to match the play’s mood. Like him, however, she also displays a certain pragmatic wisdom – wisdom that is strictly unsentimental. When she rejects the ‘ideal’ of marriage and faithful love, she does so because it is a privilege that does not pertain to her class (78-81).

But the stereotyped *lena* does not always remain obviously true to her ‘wisdom’. She twice associates herself with sentimental ideals, seeming to assume their standards. First she prioritises friendship above money, putting up with a loss of income to allow Gymnasium to house-sit for Selenium (104-107). Then she begs Gymnasium to place natural affection above personal gain, to stay with her mother instead of making the most of the fact she is mistaken for the citizen, Selenium (556-568).

Syra’s motives for retaining Gymnasium may, of course, be doubtful. She probably fears the loss of a source of revenue as much as anything else. But it surely would not have been beyond her to have connived at the mistaken identity, in order to exploit Gymnasium in her exalted position. Ironically, the fact that she does not do this probably relates to her unsentimental ‘wisdom’. It reflects her deep suspicions of snobby citizen *matronae* and their respectable family ‘ideal’. She can only envisage one way of life for her daughter: the one which, out of necessity, she herself pursued (21-39<sup>16</sup>).

Syra and Gymnasium are not included in the sentimental conclusion of *Cistellaria*. Syra’s self-assessment – which placed herself and her daughter outside the ideal – is proved correct. Even

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<sup>15</sup>As. 165ff. Cf. Hartkamp, 2004, 256-264.

<sup>16</sup>Note how Phanostrata reacts with horror at the idea that a prostitute may have brought up her exposed daughter; she perhaps substantiates Syra’s claim that *matronae* look down on *meretrices* (564).

‘chance’, in the comic sentimental mode, cannot move them from alien status into a happy family. But Syra’s moments of incipient ‘sentimentality’ are still significant. At one level they add deliberate humour: Plautus’ audience must have recognized their incongruity in a stereotyped ‘hard-nosed’ *lena*. But at another they might perhaps have provoked thought. Some at least of the audience must have noticed that when Syra fears the desertion of her daughter, she reflects the emotions of Selenium’s citizen mother. Both women react with grief at the idea of a lost child. All that separates them in the play is their socio-economic and comic status.

c) Melaenis, Phanastrata and Demipho and Selenium. Melaenis, Selenium’s adoptive mother, is another Plautine *lena* – but one who is, apparently, startlingly unconventional. Some scholars have described her in very positive terms, as a sympathetic mother, or a voice of morality, who highlights aliens’ needs<sup>17</sup>. Unlike Syra, she *attempts* to climb out of her stereotypical natural role as *lena*, into that of a citizen parent. She brings Selenium up well (171-173; cf. similar actions of *matrona*, Cleostrata in *Casina*, 45-6; 81); allows her to devote herself to one man as if in marriage (83-5)<sup>18</sup>; righteously defends her when she seems rejected for the sake of a fortune (454ff, in particular 492-5); selflessly gives her up when her social prospects brighten (631-634). In all this she appears to act in accordance with sentimental standards<sup>19</sup>.

There are, admittedly, some contraindications in Melaenis’ behaviour. She originally adopted Selenium as part of a manipulative plan to exploit a lover (133-144); and possibly only relinquishes her because she must (626-630<sup>20</sup>). Such actions are more typical of a *lena*; Gilula argues that they weaken Melaenis’ moral position (2004, 246). But these *lena*-like moments are only passing<sup>21</sup>. Assuming, therefore, that Melaenis generally appears in the plot in precisely the manner Plautus

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Konstan 1986a, & 2.5., note 58, above.

<sup>18</sup> Some have argued that Melaenis may, in fact, have considered that a marriage contract *had* been entered into: Gilula, 2004, 244-5; Konstan, 1986a, 105-107.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hartkamp, 2004, 253-255.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lefèvre, 2004, 58-9.

<sup>21</sup> Plautus may, of course, have created some unintentional inconsistencies in characterisation whilst adapting the play; it seems that he did make considerable alterations to this work. Cf. Lefèvre, 2004, 58-9; 75.

wanted her to, what can we learn from her largely unconventional behaviour? What was it intended to communicate to the Roman audience?

Syra's unexpected (*paraprosdokian*) moments of sentimentality create humour, but are also thought-provoking. Melaenis' more prolonged sentimental characterisation presumably acts in a similar way. Syra provided one brief mirror-image of a citizen mother; Melaenis persistently acts like one. In doing so she shakes the high moral ground conventionally occupied by citizens in plays in the sentimental mode. And this perhaps raises questions not only about the common comic paradigm, but also about the cultural assumptions behind it.

Melaenis' rivals in the plot are the citizens, Phanastrata and Demipho, Selenium's natural parents. Theoretically, these two have both a legal right to their daughter and a sentimental duty to care for her. Their goal is to assert that right and fulfil their duty; non-citizen and sentimental mode outsider, Melaenis, must give way to them. The conventional plot rewards them with a reunion – one Phanastrata has longed for: it satisfies her emotional need (554-5; 573; 670; 759). But Plautus does not let this pass without ironic comment. A slave notes that Phanastrata is very late in assuming the protective mother's role. Melaenis, who has done the job well so far, did not steal Selenium; she took her in after she was exposed. She was exposed because she was born after Demipho behaved irresponsibly, creating social confusion (as is aptly demonstrated in a deliberately complicated plot 'explanation') by raping Phanastrata (599-621; 760-765). At that point in time, he was a *pater* who failed to live up to the sentimental ideal.

Demipho is, in fact, rather like Alceisimarchus' father. Both seek to provide for their children; they do attempt to act like responsible fathers. But in the course of the plot both are also shown to have come into conflict with the parenting ideal in some way. Nonetheless at the play's conclusion they are 'rewarded' with happiness. Meanwhile, at certain points in their lives, Syra and Melaenis also both contravene the ideal (Syra does so almost continuously). But both have moments when they meet it (or begin, at least, to speak its language.) And yet neither is granted a place in the ideal at the end – simply because they are not citizens. I believe Plautus intended his audience to notice



this (hence his inclusion of the ironic comments about the 'lateness' of the hour for Selenium's parents to assume their proper roles). His main purpose may well have been to poke fun at his own genre: at the sentimental mode which allows 'chance' to resolve all conflicts so nicely for citizens, whatever their behaviour. But it seems quite possible that he also wished his audience to consider their own social structures. They might, perhaps, reflect on the dilemmas faced by 'real' citizen parents, seeking to bring up their children responsibly. But they might also meditate about the 'differences' between citizen and noncitizen parents. Roman society, like the comic world in New Comedy, discriminated against 'aliens'; but was there any 'natural' reason for excluding them from the family sentimental ideal?

*Cistellaria* is a play in the sentimental mode, with a typical 'happy ending'. *Persa*, by contrast, is a farce with a rather bitter conclusion. It is, however, another metatheatrical work that explores parent-child themes and the dramatic form, whilst also manipulating expectations raised by comic conventions and plot paradigms. Telling references are made to the sentimental mode and though the play has a bizarre setting, in a household that does not abide by Roman social laws (a slave remains constantly in charge), there are indications that Plautus intended his audience to decode and identify with a cultural 'message' contained within its lines.

The manipulation of expectation begins from the very start. The first character to appear is Toxilus, and he laments in the style of a love-stricken *adulescens*. This is a joke, for he is actually a slave – one who is usurping the role of a citizen lover. He wants to free a girl from a pimp, just as many *adulescentes* do in the sentimental mode (1-34a). Despite his aspirations, however, Toxilus remains a slave. This is significant because he stays fundamentally true to a slave's stereotypical characterisation; he is an immoral alien to the sentimental ideal. In this guise he seeks to persuade a parasite, Saturio, to help him trick the pimp. He plans to dupe the latter into 'buying' Saturio's daughter, under the impression she is a captive, ready for sale into prostitution.

As Toxilus outlines his scheme one *paraprosdokian* follows another. These jokes all work by upsetting sentimental parenting ideals. Saturio (and the audience) are first led to believe that

Toxilus wants Saturio's permission to sleep with his daughter. Then they are caused to think the slave wants him to sell her (127-8; 134). The assumption is, of course, that a good father would never sanction such ridiculous suggestions: in laughing at the idea, Plautus' audience must have recognized this. But Saturio – after his initial surprise – provides the audience with another shock. He agrees to co-operate in Toxilus' plot. After all, it is, theoretically, less pernicious than he first supposed. None of it will be done for 'real': only in farcical, play-acting pretence.

Saturio's daughter soon appears. And she refuses to view the play-within-a-play as a farce. Instead she sticks to a sentimental script and points out the ethical flaws in her father's plan (336-399). She argues that Saturio is failing to provide for and protect her; in pretending to sell her, he exploits her as if she really were a slave. For the sufferer, there is little difference, morally speaking, between *acting* as though you are going to use them cruelly and actually doing it (341; 360-364; 381-4). In raising these issues, the girl assumes the part of an 'innocent' child, with a sentimental corrective role – like Silas' Eppie, or, of course, like Juvenal's infant (349-351; 355-6; 367-377). Hardy suggests that Plautus may possibly also have intended his audience to identify the girl with a character from a tragedy. This is important because tragic characters were distinguished by their adherence to a moral code shared by the Roman aristocracy<sup>22</sup>. Saturio's daughter thus probably evoked a picture of a Roman ideal for Plautus' spectators: of a 'noble' daughter admonishing her father to protect rather than exploit her.

Saturio, however, resists her influence. Ridiculously claiming he knows *his* duty (357-359), he asserts his power as *pater*, demanding her obedience. She concedes and there follows the scene in which the girl ably tricks the pimp (549ff). This has caused some academic debate. Plautus has been accused of inconsistency in his characterisation, first letting Saturio *talk* of the girl as if she is naturally duplicitous (153), then granting her sentimental qualities in her first scene, before

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<sup>22</sup> Hardy, 2005, 33 & *passim*. Hardy suggests there are indications in the text that the girl actually wore tragic costume.

allowing her to operate like a typically deceitful *meretrix* in the next<sup>23</sup>. I believe, however, that the girl's behaviour in the trick scene bears out what she argued during her first appearance. She cannot fully maintain her sentimental part as an innocent maiden, if her father fails to do his citizen duty and protect rather than exploit her. What he is, she is forced to become. He acts in an irresponsible farce-like manner; she is obliged to assume a farcical role.

Ironically, however, a sentimental air still hangs about the pair of them. Essentially, Saturio is a low character from a farce: a parasite who 'prostitutes' himself to others, inviting the audience's 'superior laughter'<sup>24</sup>. Like Syra in *Cistellaria*, he thinks of his daughter as a replication of himself (*vide* his alignment of her with duplicitous *meretrices*). He obliges her to continue in his own trade – for his own profit – offering for her dowry (her currency) his stock of parasite jokes (390-396). Nonetheless, he is not completely consistent in his parasite role. He makes various incongruous attempts to assume the pious part of a citizen in a sentimental work. He pays lip-service to upright social behaviour (62ff) and, very curiously, even apes traditional stately Roman language when speaking of his 'profession' as though he inherited it (53-61)<sup>25</sup>. This is all ridiculous; in Saturio Plautus presents his audience with a parody of a 'wise' parent, seeking to provide his child with an honourable inheritance, when he actually exploits her in the manner of a pimp. But it is a bitter parody. Saturio's daughter herself points out the deprivation the unsentimental behaviour brings upon her. She loses her real parents (644-647; cf. 381-384); her identity/name (she becomes 'Lucre' 624) and her sense of home (in her false role, forced upon her by her greedy father, she appropriately reassigns her birthplace to the kitchen and will not acknowledge any *fatherland* 630-641)<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Note the alternative theory that the characterisation *is* consistent: the girl merely pretends to morality in her confrontation with her father and later continues to act her part as a wily *meretrix*, when enjoying her conversation with the pimp. Cf. Lowe, 1989, 393-4; McCarthy, 2000, 144.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ergasilus in *Captivi*, who is actually nicknamed '*Scorto*' (69). Whether or not parasites provide sexual favours, they live by flattery in others' households, selling their self-respect and autonomy for the sake of appetite.

<sup>25</sup> McCarthy, 2000, 134, on *Per*, 53-61, noting particularly *maiorum meum/ meorum maiorum* in 53; 55 (Cf. 390).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 150-1.

The conclusion of *Persa*, however, *seems* to revert to wild saturnalian farce – albeit farce with a punitive quality. Toxilus’ plan succeeds; the ‘lovers’ are united; and the pimp is worsted and then mocked in the play’s final scene. A satisfying (if farcical) ‘happy-ending’ appears to have been reached. And yet conflicting dramatic ideas disturb the action once again. By this point the play has witnessed the *pseudo*-reunion between a parent and a child (when Saturio reclaims his ‘lost’ daughter from the pimp 739-752), as well as the reunion of the ‘lovers’. Both these elements are borrowed from a sentimental plot. But both have dubious qualities: the parent-child reunion is only a play-within-a-play; and Toxilus is a poor lover. The play’s final punitive moment is sullied in a similar manner.

Pimps in conventional comic plots earn their punishment by their contravention of social and/or comic ideals. They exploit other people’s daughters (and also seek to gain profit by selling ‘love’ and pleasure). The pimp in *Persa* is no exception and ‘deserves’ what he gets. The problem is that the people who punish him are culpable of the same crimes themselves – and this is made clear in the conclusion itself. Toxilus, chief amongst them, has ‘freed’ his girl from the pimp, only to begin exploiting her himself. During the final punitive moments, she is roughly ordered to do as he bids (836ff). Toxilus’ role as ‘judge’ is actually as unsuitable as his initial usurped part of loving *adulescens* (and, one might add, his saturnalian position as ‘host’ at the final feast). In his command, the play continues to veer towards anarchy. Nothing that the audience sees can be taken at face value; the chief characters swap roles far too often. The result is that questions are raised about the dramatic ‘identity’ and purpose of the play itself.

Interestingly, it is Saturio’s daughter who provides us with a possible key to the work. Though she does not appear in the play’s final scene, the audience is unlikely to forget her. For one thing, the brusque words addressed to Toxilus’ mistress in that scene echo ones spoken earlier by Saturio’s daughter; both girls are obliged to hear and obey (399; 836<sup>27</sup>). For another, she has played a key part in the work – she *is* the ‘*Persa*’. Indeed, there are good grounds for arguing that Plautus

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 157.

deliberately enlarged her role, directing his Roman audience's attention towards her<sup>28</sup>. She is brought into the deception plot by Toxilus and her father. Both of these adopt ridiculously incongruous parts: slave Toxilus alternately plays the lover, the citizen host (753-757) and a prosecutor; Saturio hovers between the role of an upright citizen *pater* and a parasitic pimp. They are intent on forcing the parasite's daughter into a false role, too – that of a duplicitous *meretrix*. The huge metatheatrical irony of this, however, is that in the scene when she seems to assume the part, the girl actually tells no lies. The spectators *see* her in the role of a trickster, but they *hear* her speak the truth. And the pith of the message she conveys is this: that all grasping, faithless citizen behaviour (i.e. all behaviour beneath the true role of a good citizen) is destructive (554-560).

At the time when the girl speaks these words, they are glibly applied to the pimp (561-3; 857). But, of course, by implication they extend first to Saturio (who acts like a pimp) and then to his accomplice, Toxilus. When the spectators are finally asked to applaud the expulsion of the pimp, they approve his punishment; he is paying for his anti-social behaviour. But, importantly, with their applause they also 'dismiss' the farcical saturnalian scene in front of them, with its chief actor, Toxilus, who has been a subversive threat to the stability of the play and the various genres and ideas it represents.

*Persa* is without doubt a complex work. It parodies the sentimental mode and seems to allow unregenerate saturnalian farce to triumph. But I think it would, nonetheless, have been clear to Plautus' Roman audience that Toxilus' stance is ridiculous – destructively unsound. And the important point for us is that in conveying its message, the play uses a picture of an exploitive father. He is a microcosm of corrupt society. The Romans who laughed at this 'inferior' character must have had a clear notion of how an ideal parent (and citizen) should behave.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Lowe, 1989, 392ff.

### 3.4. Parental Power

The Romans, with their far-reaching concept of *patria potestas*, undoubtedly held fathers in high esteem. Those men who combined a paternal role with the responsibility for a house and/or estate (i.e. a *paterfamilias*<sup>29</sup>) had a legal, civic and moral role. They exercised power in the home, but were also obliged to uphold certain standards in the community. Theoretically, this could lead to a conflict in interests; and public opinion (at times, at least) seems to have prioritised state above home. Legendary stories thus extolled fathers who put aside feelings for their sons in order to display their loyalty to the state<sup>30</sup>. Such stories naturally helped create a traditional Roman image of a virtuous but inflexibly authoritarian *pater*. Importantly, this image *still* has currency in some modern studies<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, it has been influential in certain interpretations of Plautus<sup>32</sup>.

Plautus' plays do commonly concern themselves with paternal issues. And, although the works were Greek in origin and ostensibly preserved their 'foreign' settings, evidence from the late Republic suggests that Romans of that period were prepared to recognize potential pictures of themselves in the various comic fathers who appeared on stage (they did not *merely* dismiss the

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Saller, 1999, *passim* for discussion of Roman use of the term.

<sup>30</sup> Livy, Valerius Maximus and Sallust recount tales of early Roman fathers who placed the welfare of the state above that of their families, either condemning their sons to death, or driving them to suicide: Brutus (509 BC); Manlius Torquatus (340 BC); M. Scaurus (101 BC); Fulvius (63 BC). Cf. Eyben, 1991, 121-2, quoting Liv. 2.3-5; 8.7.ff; V.Max. 5.8.1; 5.8.5.; Sal. *Cat.* 39.5.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Dixon, 1992, 44; Saller, 1999, 183. NB. Saller has sought to dispel this image, repeatedly arguing that the importance of *patria potestas* has been misunderstood by scholars. He refers to demographic evidence and cites late marriage of men and pre-modern mortality rates, to prove that few adults remained in *patria potestas*. This, states Saller, must have limited paternal dominance in Rome (1987, *passim*). Furthermore, though Saller acknowledges that Roman families *were* patriarchal – the legal status of the *paterfamilias* transcended that of the rest of his family – he believes that social behaviour cannot be deduced from this. He argues that the *pater* was not automatically regarded as a sombre figure of authority. Valerius Maximus, when reporting the story of Brutus, stresses that he *laid aside* the role of *pater*, to play the part of consul (5.8.1; similarly Liv. 2.5.5). Saller writes that this suggests that severity was not the natural connotation of *pater*, even in legendary times (1999, 192-3; 190). Saller refers to the Roman concept of *pietas* to support his argument. Some have argued that this was a duty, owed by children to their fathers. However, Saller believes that *pietas* placed mutual obligations on family members and involved love and affection, not merely obedience. He refers to the elder Pliny's *pietatis exempla* (*Nat* 7.121ff.) and argues that they do not emphasize paternal authority and filial obedience, but stress deep, loving attachments (1991, 146-151).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Segal, 1987.

characters as remote and foolish Greeks)<sup>33</sup>. Plautus, of course, manipulated his plays to communicate with his contemporary audience; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the mid-republicans reacted to the comic characters in a similar way to the later Roman generation. The question remains, however, did Plautus' presentations of comic *senes* uphold (perhaps in inversion) the stern image of a Roman *pater*? Was the playwright's intention to ridicule 'weak' fathers, who failed to assert themselves properly, or perhaps to mock contemporary paternal 'authority', in order to provide a release from its oppression? Or did he aim to challenge his audience about the 'correct' behaviour of a father – perhaps inviting them to consider their 'sentimental' responsibilities to their offspring? A comparison of four of his plays – *Asinaria*, *Casina*, *Mercator* and *Pseudolus* – may supply us with some answers.

In my previous chapter I discussed how three of Plautus' *senes* – Demaenetus in *Asinaria*; Demipho in *Mercator*; and Lysidamus in *Casina* – bring ridicule upon themselves by refusing to give up the freedoms of youth and accept the responsibilities of a *paterfamilias*. Since they are motivated by illicit love, their initial rebellion is against their wives. But in each case there are consequences for their children (i.e. the other members of the nuclear family, so important to the sentimental ideal). And it is my contention that each of the *senes* runs into trouble partly because he does not correctly exercise his *patria potestas*.

Demaenetus' circumstances are interesting. He begins by disclaiming any desire to resemble a stern father, wishing to be loved rather than feared (46-50). But in abandoning his moral role to control his son, he loses control of himself and ends up in a compromising love affair. He then tries to reassert his authority, futilely ordering the boy to submit 'gladly' to his plan to share a girl (830-850). The result is disaster. Konstan writes that *Asinaria* illustrates the folly of a father trying to command his son's 'sentiment' rather than respect (1978, 217, 219-221). The message seems to be in line with the Romans' legendary material, suggesting that a *paterfamilias* ought to prioritise well-ordered duty above subjective 'feelings'. But it is not the *only* 'message' discernible in Plautus.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Manuwald, 2007, 139, 140 & *passim*.

Demipho and Lysidamus get themselves into a position in which their *patria potestas* is endangered because they abuse it, neglecting the ‘feelings’ of their children. Before the beginning of *Mercator*, Demipho appears to have overdone his role as stern father, forgetting his own fallibility, and even going so far as suggesting it would be better if his wayward son were dead (40-79). He pays for this hubris in the play, and ends up submitting to the son, desiring his forgiveness (991-6). Lysidamus also sins against his children. He abuses his power, sending his son away and refusing to acknowledge his duty to care selflessly for him (60-2; 262-5). Furthermore, he seeks to have an affair with a girl who has been brought up as a daughter in his household (43-6<sup>34</sup>). His subsequent loss of power in his own household is fully understandable.

Demaenetus, Demipho and Lysidamus all have important things in common. Each becomes a rival to his son; and each is punished for his sin of abandoning his proper *paterfamilias* role. Plautus’ audience presumably appreciated this, whilst also finding the punitive endings of his rivalry plots satisfying – supportive of their cultural values. In *Pseudolus*, however, Plautus *apparently* changes tack. He continues to explore the theme of parental authority, playing successfully with the multi-layered Greek and Roman culture of his genre, but presents a very different sort of *senex*. Simo is not a rival in his son’s love affair and ostensibly acts as a stern father should, prioritising law, order, financial sense and reputation over spendthrift behaviour. Though he is supposedly ‘Greek’, he upholds Roman standards concerning self-control, wealth and reputation with remarkable vim<sup>35</sup>. His son, Calidorus, meanwhile, blatantly offends against those standards. He provides a quintessential Plautine joke, seeming at first to show a proper respect for the Roman virtue of filial *pietas*, only to overthrow it completely, with *paraprosdokian* effect (120-2). His rebellion is not unusual: comic sons commonly seek to circumnavigate authority. But *Pseudolus* ends interestingly (though not uniquely: cf. *Bacchides*) without any contrition from Calidorus, and with the humiliation of Simo. Roman paternal authority appears to be vanquished; as the Greek

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. O’Byrhim, 1989, 95-99.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. 2.4., above.



‘saturnalian’ atmosphere persists, there is ample scope for a Freudian interpretation, emphasising how the ‘happy ending’ provides a superlative ‘release’ from constraint. Nonetheless, this may not be the salient point of *Pseudolus*.

The play provides another excellent example of Plautus’ manipulation of the conventions of his own genre. The piece delights in comic devices and is patently self-aware. It starts by presenting a foolish *adulescens*, who uses metatheatre to draw attention to his ridiculously stereotypical behaviour (238); and it concludes neatly when stern Simo has been forced into a submissive role, ironically very much like that of the mawkish boy at the beginning of the play. Just as the complaining Calidorus was obliged to pay deference to the slave, Pseudolus, so finally must the moaning Simo – though he gets shorter shrift (1-103;1320-1324). Pseudolus’ triumph (which supplies the play’s ‘release’) results from the fact that he perfectly exemplifies the comic *servus callidus*. He uses metatheatre to draw attention to his role and ends the play promising the spectators that *they* can carry on being party to his activities by attending a repeat performance the next day. He and his like only exist in the topsy-turvy world of farce, in which deceptions (theatrical illusions) succeed – a world Pseudolus (a plotting quasi-playwright, master of fiction, entertainment and, as his name implies, ‘lies’) has manipulated superbly practically throughout the play<sup>36</sup>; and a world, of course, in which the ‘Greek’ setting is precariously superficial: the play takes place in Rome (and is relevant to Romans) – hence the audience’s invitation to another showing on a second day.

The most striking feature of *Pseudolus* may thus be its exploration of theatricality. Its success, however, must have depended on its original spectators’ ability to recognize – and feel comfortable with – inversions and manipulations of both dramatic *and* social norms. Plautus caters for possible reservations in his audience. Calidorus, having acted his part as the quintessential foolish *adulescens*, disappears before the play’s conclusion. Since he is not present during his father’s

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<sup>36</sup> 387-388; 394-409; 546-552; 562-573a; 702-708; 720-721; 943-4; 1331-5. Cf. Wright (1975, 407ff), who argues that Pseudolus’ initial grip on his world is insecure, because he is too serious; his precedence is only established when he fully adopts the language of a farcical manipulator – i.e. the comic playwright.

humiliation, no direct focus remains on his filial failings. Instead, Simo is faced with Pseudolus<sup>37</sup>. Pseudolus acts as Calidorus' representative and, of course, ought himself to acknowledge Simo's authority. His rebellion – though perhaps not so overtly shocking as a son's – is still against a *paterfamilias*<sup>38</sup>. Pseudolus' insubordination is essential to the farcical humour; only an audience with a clear sense of the respect properly commanded by a *paterfamilias* could find his audacity funny. Importantly, however, Simo's degradation may have provided the Roman audience with more than saturnalian amusement. They may have found it comically justifiable. Despite apparent differences in their stories, Simo forfeits his paternal and household honours in a similar manner to Demaenetus, Demipho and Lysidamus.

From his first appearance in the play, Simo's position is weak. The audience has been preconditioned to oppose him, having been aligned with the plotting Pseudolus for the previous 414 lines. Furthermore, though his anger is theoretically rational, there is a strong suggestion that it is too extreme. Simo might have behaved more leniently, bearing in mind the faults of his own youth (427-444). Like Demipho, Simo is too strict. Unlike him (and Demaenetus and Lysidamus) he does not consequently prove his unfitness for his authoritative role by giving in to the *same* amorous desires as his son. And yet Plautus cleverly manoeuvres him into a *senex amans* role.

Anderson notes that Simo's attitude towards Calidorus is not only too severe, it lacks real concern for the boy's welfare. Very significantly, it places an inordinate emphasis on money<sup>39</sup>. This has dire results. Simo goes on to make an alliance with pimp Ballio, Pseudolus' enemy, against whom the audience has already been firmly aligned (504-555; 584-5; 896-99). The arrangements with Ballio are fashioned to protect Simo's money. His ungoverned appetite is thus for wealth (he

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<sup>37</sup> Note Simo's metatheatre prior to the encounter (1239-1245); this suggests he 'willingly' deserts his *iratus* role for the submissive one, in recognition of Pseudolus' plotting ability. The point again is that clever theatre triumphs in this play; but this deliberate moment of acquiescence to the plot possibly also encourages the audience to bear with the farcical/theatrical humiliation of a *paterfamilias*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Parker, 1989, 246, for Freudian 'explanation' of guilt displacement from son to slave; & Fitzgerald, 2000, 80.

<sup>39</sup> 1996, 149. NB Anderson suggests that the Roman spectators would have perceived Simo's failings as typical of the negative aspects of 'Greek' society. Though this *is* possible - 'superior' Romans may have laughed at *Pseudolus* from a safe distance – Plautus' spectators would still have had to consider what *they* thought 'correct' behaviour in a *paterfamilias* before judging Simo.

contravenes sentimental law) and it leads him to make a hypocritical bargain with a pimp, an exploiter of sexual lust – and the man who has ruined his son. Avarice and lust are equated: Simo is a *quasi-senex amans*.

Ballio, meanwhile, epitomises the bad and/or ineffective *paterfamilias* – he is as superlative in his role as Calidorus and Pseudolus are in theirs. He abuses his power, piling up atrocious threats against his household, whilst uttering complaints that suggest his influence there is limited (133-229). He is pitiless (274), avaricious, thief-like (979-80). A hungry predator, who feeds off others' desires (188-201; 209-221), he egotistically plans a feast to celebrate his birthday – the moment when his rapacious life began<sup>40</sup>. He has no regard for *pietas* – not the *pietas* others should show, nor that which he should display himself (286-294; 367-8; 974-6). He only acknowledges a duty of self-aggrandisement (263-68; 354-6). He embodies Simo's faults in comically exaggerated form and it is fitting that they share their final comeuppance – their transformation from predator into prey, thief into victim. Both suffer an ultimate loss of control over their households. Ballio's house is plundered; thus shamed, he can no longer openly enter it (382; 894-5; 1124-1127; 1234-5; cf. 952-3). And Simo is left to face the triumphant Pseudolus. His final appearance in a submissive role like that of an *adulescens* is both dramatically satisfying (a humorous twist in the very metatheatrical plot) and fully appropriate. He has behaved just like a stereotypical boy, allowing personal desire to govern him (he is still greedy for money at the end 1321-1325), and has not earned the respect of a *paterfamilias*.

Roman legends may have promoted images of stern fathers who were governed by duty rather than their 'feelings' for their sons. Yet in general Plautus' fathers are ridiculed not because they are too generous to their sons, nor because they are 'oppressive', but because they themselves are flawed and selfish, and fail to prioritise their off-spring's needs (which might include appropriate discipline: *vide Asinaria*). To comprehend this, Plautus' audience must have rated altruism amongst

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<sup>40</sup> Ballio is convinced that the cook he hires is a lying thief (790-895). This is stereotypical (cf. *Aulularia*; 321-6; 342-9), but highly appropriate – greedy Ballio's birthday feast will be prepared by someone who deals in his sort of fare.

the ideal qualities of an upright father. This is important, for selflessness and high moral standards are essential to the nuclear family's sentimental ideal.

### 3.5. Parental Love

*'The death of a child is a loss no parent should have to bear [...] I know [I.] was a child who brought joy to all those who knew him and his was a life surrounded by love.'* Gordon Brown, 2009.

*'My son is dear to me, as his own son is to every father.'* *Captivi*, 400.

The death of a child in modern Western society is seen as a tragedy. Such events draw general sympathy, like that expressed by Gordon Brown (2009). For today's society, children are a source of joy; they are loved; their survival is of immeasurable importance. Dixon believes that there is evidence that, by the late Republic, the Romans had developed a similar appreciation for children. They delighted in them as individuals in a special phase of life, showing a capacity to feel genuine loss at their early deaths<sup>41</sup>. This was all part of a general sentimental ideal. But, Dixon argues, there are few signs of equivalent sentimentality in Plautus.

This is a debatable point. On the one hand, despite the fact that Plautus presents few small children, there does seem to be plenty of child-centred sentimental *potential* in his works. The theme of a lost child constantly recurs. Sometimes a 'child' is lost – or estranged – as an adult (e.g. Philopolemus, *Capt.*); sometimes it was lost in early childhood – like Palaestra in *Rudens*. These losses (quasi-bereavements) are frequently described as provoking a profound reaction in parents<sup>42</sup>. And, in the sentimental mode, parental grief is often alleviated by idealistic resolutions. Reunions

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<sup>41</sup> 1991, 99-100, 109-111.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Menaechmus' father died of grief when his small son was stolen; *Men.* 34-36; Hegio mourns both lost sons and is prepared to pay anything to buy back Philopolemus; *Capt.* 30-2; 400; 757-763; Phanostrata longs to recover her daughter; *Cist.* 759.

are the norm; parents receive children back as if from the dead (it is as if they themselves are given life again: *Poen.* 1076-7).

On the other hand, however, Plautus' child-centred plots seldom (if ever) realise their sentimental promise unequivocally. Remarks about parental devotion are undermined by comic bathos<sup>43</sup>. Reunions may be essential to plot paradigms, but are not necessarily climactic moments, sometimes being superseded by other action (cf. *Rudens*), sometimes being subjected to ironic commentary (cf. *Cist.* 760-2)<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, in general Plautus seems to have either toned down the emotional elements inherited from his sources (Greek plays, which were presumably in the sentimental mode) or to have used them to provoke laughter. This certainly might suggest that he *and* his audience were comparatively uninterested in positive presentations of child-centred 'sentiment'.

But Plautus is a subtle writer; his works demand close examination. He may well evoke the parental love ideal for comic effect, but I believe he does much more than laugh at sentiment. He assumes his audience's knowledge (and acceptance) of the concept of love for children and manipulates it to create effects of his own. His work in *Poenulus* exemplifies this admirably.

Sentimental potential abounds in *Poenulus*. The play includes reunion scenes for *four* children lost in childhood: Agorastocles is reunited with his uncle/*quasi-pater* (1035-1077<sup>45</sup>); Adelphasium and Anterastilis with their father, Hanno (1251ff); and, interestingly, a slave, Giddenis, with her son (1141-4). These reunions are brought about by the apparently virtuous actions of a *paterfamilias*. Hanno has been searching diligently for his daughters for years. He has acted out of *pietas* for them (representing also his wife: it is their mutual parental *pietas* – '*nostram pietatem*' – towards the girls, as well as the girls' *pietas*, which the gods reward 1253-5). He expresses himself emotionally

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<sup>43</sup> E.g. the loss of small Menaechmus is remembered at the same time as a financial disgrace (*Men.* 45-6); Hegio's lament for his 'only' son (ironic anyway, because he has two) is parodied by his parasite (*Capt.* 146-150).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Duckworth, 1994, 128-9; 217; & Appendix 2.

<sup>45</sup> Note how the emotion/intimacy of the reunion scene is built: after Agorastocles stops Milphio from treating the 'stranger' disparagingly, Hanno greets him first as countryman (1035), then as family friend (1047), then as uncle (1076-7). Note, too, the emotive reference to Agorastocles' deceased parents: 1066.

about them; and he combines his sense of duty towards them with a religious piety, thanking the gods for their help and accepting that his success is a reward for his pious behaviour (1187-1190; 1251-77; cf. 1137). Hanno's family are united – visibly, in an onstage embrace (1269-1270). He has arrived in time to save the girls from dishonour (1137-1140); to grant Agorastocles the right to marry Adelpasium (1155-1158); to reunite an aged and faithful household slave with her son; and to plan to go home (1419-1420). The audience is being treated to a plot which encompasses all the aspects of the sentimental ideal: parental love and moral *pietas*, conjugal romance and a safe home.

But, for all that, *Poenulus* is *not* sentimental in tone. Right from the very beginning the sentimental themes are undermined. The prologue prepares the audience to expect an alien trickster (skilled in speaking different languages 112-113; cf. 1032-1034), not a righteous man. There is a possible suggestion that Hanno's method of searching for his daughters includes him risking incest, by regularly sleeping with prostitutes before he asks them about their antecedents (107-110)<sup>46</sup>. His first speech reminds the audience that he is a suspicious stranger; it is literally in a foreign language and thus bamboozles the audience. And when the subsequent 'translation' suggests that the 'language' used was deeply pious rather than overtly duplicitous, it simply provides a *paraprosdokian* with a very sardonic twist (930-953). On the one hand, a religious interest seems out of place in this 'trickster'; on the other it is ironically apt, for religion has already been equated with unsavoury ideas in the play – and that by Hanno's daughters.

Hanno and his daughters actually appear to be working from parallel scripts. Their characterisation, like his, is thoroughly confused. If they were true to their type in the sentimental mode (i.e. the stolen daughter/*pseudomeretrix*), they ought to be victimised maidens, desperate to devote themselves to one man. But Hanno's evocation of the gods comes after they have departed to pay their respects to Venus, in preparation to becoming professional *meretrices*. Their attitude is noteworthy. They, too, appear to use different 'languages'. Sometimes they speak – and are spoken

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<sup>46</sup>Franko, 1995, 251; cf. Leigh, 2004, 30, who queries whether the Latin text necessarily implies that Hanno sleeps with the girls.

of – as if they are sentimental ‘innocents’, forced unwillingly into prostitution (281; 292; 300-303; 359-363); sometimes, most ‘unexpectedly’, they seem to relish their prospects – they want to excel in the profession, like *meretrices* in a farce (210-247; 264-270; 283-4; 297-9; 319-323; 337-348). Plautus, as so often happens, appears to be juggling with the different comic modes. In Hanno’s daughters, he wryly evokes overlapping images of two very different character types. And in their father, he mixes up several.

Hanno continuously slips from one role and/or mode (one ‘language’) into another. The tricky farcical alien merges with the sentimental pious father. He then becomes the genial *senex*, prepared to help an *adulescens* win a girl – and as a result is regarded by the play’s *servus callidus*, Milphio, as a ‘natural’ ally, outdoing him in lies (1086ff; in particular 1110). There is a double irony here: when Milphio thinks Hanno is cunningly pretending to grieve for lost daughters, he is actually acting in accordance with his fundamental ‘sentimental role’ – the ‘deceiver’ deceives Milphio by speaking the ‘truth’ (1107-1110)<sup>47</sup>. But Hanno himself soon seems to forget that sentimental role, firstly when he provides a bathetic commentary – à la typical *servus callidus*<sup>48</sup> – to Giddenis’ reunion (1145-6<sup>49</sup>), and secondly when he delays his own reunion with his daughters, in order to tease them – in another gloriously mixed scene, in which they sometimes act and are treated like *meretrices* or *lenae*, and sometimes remember their ‘innocent’ stance; and in which Hanno intersperses pious statements, only to have them treated bathetically by Agorastocles<sup>50</sup>. Finally,

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<sup>47</sup> Franko, 1996, 435.

<sup>48</sup> Franko, 1996, 437.

<sup>49</sup> It is tempting to speculate that there is wry significance in the fact that Giddenis’ reunion is in a foreign language: the slave of an ‘outsider’ Carthaginian, her sentimental reunion is not only mocked, it is more ‘incomprehensible’ than anyone else’s. But it still happens...

<sup>50</sup>The girls return from Venus’ festival for prostitutes, glorying in their success (1174ff; 1192a-1193); they remember their innocence (1185-6); Agorastocles – though he *is* thinking of marriage – continues to anticipate erotic delights in the manner of an *adulescens* contemplating his far from innocent *meretrix* (1196-1200; 1230; 1234-6; 1242). Hanno ‘piously’ evokes the gods *and* his own virtue, to be undercut by Agorastocles’ flippant remarks about Jupiter, combined with ridiculous praise of his girl’s virtue (1187-1191; 1219-1222); Hanno accuses the girls of acting like *lenae* (1239-40). Cf. Franko, 1995, 251. Franko quotes lines ‘1217-1218’, omitted from Leo, who thought their innuendo incongruous: Hanno: *gaudio ero vobis*. Adelp: *at edepol nos voluptati tibi*/ Hanno: *libertatique*. Adelp: *istoc pretio tuas nos facile feceris*. ‘I’ll bring you joy.’ ‘But we’ll bring you pleasure.’ ‘And freedom.’ ‘At that price you’ll easily have your way with us.’

when the family are united in a second embrace, its ideal sentiment is also disturbed, as a jealous *miles* farcically mistakes it for an erotic gesture (1296-1306)<sup>51</sup>.

This (I believe largely *deliberate*<sup>52</sup>) confusion in the play's comic modes and character types is very intriguing. Once again Plautus creates humour by manipulating both his genre *and* his audience's knowledge and expectations of it. He also plays with the 'foreign settings' of the works. In this play, instead of being 'Greek', all the main characters are supposedly Carthaginian. The Carthaginians were the Romans' enemies – typically viewed by them as cunning deceivers. But Plautus ironically suggests that Hanno – his chief Carthaginian – displays exemplary *pietas*: in fact, he prays at more length and with more apparent sincerity than any other Plautine character<sup>53</sup>. *Pietas* was a peculiarly Roman ideal, which encompassed more than even the equivalent Greek notion<sup>54</sup>. Plautus' Roman audience was therefore probably amused first by the surprising idea that a Carthaginian could seek to display *pietas* and then by his (and his family's) 'inevitable' inability to fulfil the ideal exactly. Plautus' evocations of *pietas* in the Carthaginian context thus primarily create a comic not sentimental effect. But that is *not* the end of the story. As Franko notes, Roman *pietas* remains a powerful force in the play: it provides for the happy conclusion (1996, 443, 450). Even the jealous soldier, once corrected of his mistake, acknowledges it, congratulating the family on their happiness (1325-8; 1412-3).

Interestingly, after offering his felicitations, the *miles* shifts the focus of the play slightly; its final moments concern the punishment of a pimp. A pimp is a stereotypical family 'outsider' (cf. 814-16) and enemy of *pietas* – to punish him is to reassert family values. The pimp in *Poenulus* is admittedly less pernicious than other pimps (such as Labrax and Ballio, *Rud.* & *Ps.*). And his opponents have been as perfidious as ever he could be – Agorastocles, perhaps betraying his

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<sup>51</sup> Franko, 1995, 252.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Lowe (1992, 160-1) for the suggestion that 'inconsistencies' in characterisation in *Poenulus* result from Plautus' method of adaptation (rather than his deliberate plan), which sacrificed sentiment and consistency for comic effect.

<sup>53</sup> Hanson, 1959, 92; cf. Franko, 1996, 440-441.

<sup>54</sup> Franko, 1996, 442.



‘Carthaginian’ ancestry, even corrupts a group of Aetolian citizens to bear false witness against him (557-565; 603-604). But, notwithstanding this, *Poenulus* does not abandon the conventional plot-paradigm, in which the pimp must give up ‘stolen children’, returning them to the love and protection of their parents. This all makes dramatic sense – and must have been pleasing to the Roman audience. Importantly, at the play’s beginning, Plautus provided some of his typical metatheatre, to remind spectators that what they were about to see was a fiction, performed for their benefit, in their language (*mostly!*): they had to be prepared to enjoy it, to accept its ideas – even that of a linguistically gifted, ridiculously costumed, role changing (all these things are appropriate to a comedian), cunning Carthaginian/pious ‘Poenulus’ (1-45; cf. reminders at 550- 554; 597-9; 1224; costume: 975-7). By the play’s conclusion the Roman audience must laughingly recognize that, despite Hanno’s given ethnicity and consequent ambivalent characterisation, he has achieved a loving family ideal, in line with common comic resolutions – *and their own ethical concepts*. Whether he has done this because he is not completely Carthaginian after all is a moot point...

Plautus does parody parental love and *pietas* in *Poenulus*. Some of his humour is deliberately ‘unsentimental’<sup>55</sup>. But this does not mean that his Roman spectators remained aloof to the ideal of parental love for children. Some of their laughter must surely have been provoked because they recognized when Plautus’ fictitious ‘foreign’ characters failed to achieve (or achieved in an unexpected manner) an ideal that *was* part of the Roman culture. In *Captivi*, Hegio suggests ‘every’ father loves his son (400). Parental love is a universal human concept – perhaps, just perhaps, even extendable to ‘real’ Carthaginians.

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<sup>55</sup> There are examples of this even in the metatheatrical prologue to *Poenulus*: unsympathetic references to babies & wives (28-35); denial of nuclear family ideal even within outline of sentimental plot – a man longs for children but wants no wife (74); bathetic crudity on conclusion of outline (116-117).

### 3.6. Filial *Pietas*

“‘Dear papa [...] I never meant to leave you [...] I know my duty better now [...]”

*He felt her draw his arms about her neck [...]; he felt her kisses on his face [...]; he felt—oh, how deeply!—all that he had done [...]* Dickens, *Dombey & Son*, Chpt. 59.

*‘He had often been uneasy because [...] he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew a boy ought to love his father.’* Lewis, *The Horse And His Boy*, 1954.

I wish to conclude this chapter by looking briefly at Plautus’ representations of filial *pietas*. Modern sentimental literature often places emphasis on the redeeming love of a child – a child, who carries on showing affection, even when its parents are manifestly undeserving<sup>56</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the child’s ‘love’ is frequently depicted as being fully compatible with its ‘duty’. Virtue (which fulfils ‘duty’s’ demands) is, after all, essential to the sentimental ideal. Thus, throughout *TCL*, estimable Bevil seeks to avoid paining his troublesome father, to whom he feels duty-bound. And in Dickens’ emotive *Dombey And Son*, the innocent heroine lavishes love on her neglectful parent. He wilfully engenders a temporary separation and suffers subsequent deserved disgrace, but she shows supreme virtue in coming to him in his distress, expressing love *and* a sense of duty. This is highly satisfactory from a sentimental point of view – and provides a tear-jerking happy-ending to Dickens’ novel.

Interestingly, Plautus’ presentations of filial *pietas* also combine the ideals of ‘love’ and ‘duty’ (they are not merely concerned with a cold legalistic code). Indeed, the playwright seems to have assumed that his audience would recognize both elements of this very Roman concept. In his plays of generational rivalry there are, naturally, instances when adult children express themselves

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<sup>56</sup> In the Christian context, there is a quality of religious symbolism in this. The child acts in a Christ-like manner, loving the unlovely, despite their faults. Cf. 1 John 4.10-12.

rebelliously. But their rebellion often takes the form of a *paraprosdokian*, such as Calidorus' in *Pseudolus* (120-2). As usual, the *paraprosdokian* works by shocking the audience; and, in cases of rebellion like Calidorus', it achieves this by voicing attitudes that are *not* socially acceptable to the Romans. Importantly, the rebellious sons display feelings that are 'unloving' as well as recalcitrant. Calidorus is selfishly greedy, whilst in *Mostellaria*, Philolaches is not the least pleased to hear he is about to be reunited with his father, Theopropides – there is a suggestion that Theopropides should be sent away again, or even killed (348-406; 427-428; 442-3<sup>57</sup>). Meanwhile, in other contexts, Plautine would-be 'sentimental' characters positively affirm *pietas*. Alcmena, asserting her virtue, claims she 'loved' her parents (*Am.*, 839-42); and *pseudomeretrices*, Palaestra and Planesium, declare they have always been true to *pietas* – despite their long separation from their families. They expect to be rewarded for this: their *pietas* is a sign of moral virtue. But they also react emotionally in their reunions with their families – duty and affection are united (*Rud.* 189-198; 1175; 1202-1203; *Curc.* 639-41).

But whereas Steele and Dickens presumably intended their audience to take their sentimental themes seriously, it is questionable whether Plautus' aims were ever quite so straightforward. In previous chapters we saw how he deliberately parodied Palaestra and too-good-to-be-true Alcmena. Plautus' wry humour often deals with the 'impossible' aspects of idealism. It is therefore worth noting that Steele's and Dickens' sentimental pictures lack realism. In moments of 'real' family tension caused by bad parenting, it is perhaps unlikely that children will continue to love in the intense manner described (particularly by Dickens), and more probable that they will find themselves in an irresolvable conflict between 'duty' and natural emotional inclinations. Virtuous children, who wish to be dutiful, may become 'uneasy' (cf. Lewis, 1954, quoted above) because they do not love their parents – and perhaps cannot 'obey' them. Modern critics of sentimentality

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<sup>57</sup> NB Theopropides expresses hopes for a welcome home & Tranio feigns happiness, emphasising Philolaches' real shortcomings (441; 447-8). For further e.g.s. of parricide jokes, used to suggest ultimate evil, see *Capt.* 549; *Ps.* 367-8.

have complained that it warps the truth<sup>58</sup>. It is unstable – potentially hypocritical and manipulative. Plautus seems to suggest much the same in his exploration of filial *pietas*.

In *Stichus*, Plautus' handling of the theme is fairly benign. He presents two daughters who are in a position rather like Bevil's: to their distress, their father, Antipho, threatens to meddle in their affairs (1ff). They recognize his authority and even prioritise their duty to him over their duty to their husbands (68-9; 96-98). But they still oppose his plan – ironically, using sentimental arguments. They portray their absent husbands as victims, unable to defend themselves; they stress their fondness for them, dismissing the importance of wealth; and argue that they show filial obedience, remaining married to the husbands Antipho himself gave them (129-142). In short, they seek to circumnavigate the emotional pressure put on them by Antipho's demands, by exerting pressure themselves. They manipulate family sentiment with great skill – and this is comically demonstrated in the action as, after having planned their line of attack, they fuss over Antipho with exaggerated care (68-74; 88-98).

The audience, meanwhile, knows that Antipho is playing the same hilarious game; he has no intention of exerting his authority, but simply attempts moral persuasion, with a tall-story about his respectable plans for a new wife (75-86; 103-126). That his paraded virtue (and, by association, perhaps also his daughters') is merely a comic front becomes clear later in the plot, when he tells another tall-story, this time in order to wheedle a flute-girl from his son-in-laws (538-573). Nevertheless in *Stichus*, everything goes well for Antipho's family: thanks to Plautus' handling of the plot, they all succeed in getting what they want – doubtless to the audience's amusement.

The filial *pietas* theme in *Asinaria* is much darker; it is explored through dual cases of a mother, and daughter, Cleareta and Philaenium, and a father and son, Demaenetus and Argyrippus. The *pietas* ideal is symbolically evoked by a conventional 'outsider' to the family sentimental ideal: the *lena*, Cleareta, who enforces her daughter's obedience (504ff)<sup>59</sup>. Unsurprisingly, since she is a *lena*,

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<sup>58</sup> Thesis Introduction 3.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Konstan, 1978, 220.

what she requires from her daughter is not ‘virtuous’ at all and takes no account of the girl’s ‘love’. Philaenium consequently objects that submission to her mother’s demands would be contrary to true *pietas* (506-507). But Cleareta is unimpressed and continues to exert ‘moral’ authority (543-544). The danger of a system in which individuals may manipulate a moral code to their own advantage is thus exposed.

Significantly, outsider Cleareta’s misuse of *pietas* serves to highlight Demaenetus’ parallel failure to live up to the citizen ideal. After setting out his plans to gain his son’s affection (64-67), he, like Cleareta, demands obedience from the boy at a moment when it ought *not* to be given. Argyrippus’ problems are compounded because Demaenetus wants his filial acquiescence to be motivated by hearty love. Argyrippus acknowledges that, according to *pietas*, it ought to be – but he cannot quite manage it (830-850). The important point about filial *pietas* in *Asinaria* is that it is of little value in the face of wilful immorality. Once again, Plautus has used the filial theme to expose the limitations (and potential hypocrisies) of sentimentalism.

But if Plautus laughs at sentimentality’s flaws – in *Stichus*, *Asinaria* and other plays – this does not presuppose complete cynicism about the filial ideal, in him *or* his mid-republican audience. Despite the concept’s openness to corruption, Plautus’ spectators might have held the ideal in high regard. The theme is explored again in *Trinummus*. In this play Plautus inverts comic stereotypes and conventions, providing unexpected humour in the shape of two sons who really are virtuous; indeed, conflict arises between them because they try to outdo each other in virtue (627-716). Both show loving filial deference and the play concludes with the joyful welcome home for a father that was conspicuously absent in *Mostellaria* (301-304; 384; 589-590; 1178-1181). The abundant sentimentality of this supreme ‘happy-ending’ may have provoked laughter in Plautus’ spectators.

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Of course, all the characters in the play are supposedly ‘foreigners’: outsiders to Roman ideals. On one level, it is perhaps no wonder that *none* of them achieve the ideal. But within the fictional world of the play, *lena* Cleareta is *more* of an outsider than citizen Demaenetus. Plautus seems to expect his spectators both to accept this conventional point and to assess the ‘fictional’ social interaction by their own ‘real’ cultural standards. Only thus can they comprehend its evocations of Roman *pietas* and appreciate its message about ‘proper’ behaviour.

But it seems likely that they will also have noticed that the plot of *Trinummus* largely revolves around the discomfiture of a set of people who are convinced that they live in an era of moral decline. Importantly, their pessimism proves to be as comically short-sighted as any ‘blind’ idealism<sup>60</sup>. Plautus’ audience presumably appreciated this point *and* enjoyed the *pietas*-affirming conclusion to the play. This, of course, focuses on a father returning home to a loving child – a remarkable picture, not unlike the one created by Lucretius (and echoed by Gray), quoted by Dixon as indicative of the sentimental ideal<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. 5.3. for further discussion of *Trinummus*.

<sup>61</sup> *De Rerum Natura*, 3, 894 ff. Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

## Chapter 4: *Dulce Domum*

### 4.1. Introduction

*'Welcome home, Toad! Alas! What am I saying? Home, indeed! This is a poor home-coming. Unhappy Toad!'* Grahame, *The Wind In The Willows*, Chpt. 11.

The story of *The Wind In The Willows* (a sentimental idyll<sup>1</sup>) abounds with comfortable domestic scenes and happy homecomings. Readers enjoy the hospitality of Rat and Badger and in Chapter V, '*Dulce Domum*', enter Mole's home: the 'place which was all his own [...]' But, perhaps unsurprisingly in a book that places such thematic importance on domesticity, a plot also develops in which an owner's egotistical behaviour brings his home into danger. One longed-for homecoming consequently goes sadly wrong. Toad is imprisoned and Toad Hall seized by the Weasels and Stoats: the 'outsiders' from the Wild Wood.

The majority of modern readers will readily identify with the bereft, if foolish, Toad. They will approve of his friends' efforts to recover his home and restore his status in the community. And, noting the title of the final, triumphant chapter, they may also recognize that Toad's restoration is in-line with very ancient tradition. His homecoming is likened to the 'The Return of Ulysses'.

We have already seen that the home plays an important part in *Rudens*. This play witnesses the homecoming of Palaestra. It also sees the restoration of her status and of the 'house' of her father. The story follows the 'comic' pattern of the *Odyssey* (and *TWITW*): it resolves happily in the home.

The home is, in fact, an important theme throughout the Plautine corpus. Though not always at central points, there are homecomings of some sort, literal or symbolic, sentimental or ironic, in all the extant plays (see Appendix 2 for details). Various images of ideal homes and ideal

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1.3. note 22, above.

homecomings are presented (e.g. *Am.*, 714-716; *Cas.*, 254-256; *Trin.*, 1072-1081). And although the domestic subject material was doubtless inherited from Plautus' Greek sources, his plays' metatheatrical nature and occasional 'Roman' elements commonly lend the theme a contemporary air.

Naturally, each Plautine manifestation of the domestic theme needs interpreting in its context. Plautus may evoke the sentimental homecoming motif, but he does not confine himself to pure sentimental comedy. Instead, he manipulates both the theme and his genre, playing with expectations raised by domestic plot devices, to produce various comic effects. In *TWITW*, the story resolves happily: sentimental values are upheld; Toad regains his home and his status. But even in this book an unsentimental comic twist is added. Grahame wryly limits the extent of the irrepressible Toad's 'moral' reform – in the last chapter his self-adulation finds new means of expressing itself; he is able to maintain his coveted position as 'an object of absorbing interest to everyone'. The homecoming theme receives similar farcical treatment in Plautus' *Rudens*. And the passages listed as examples above (from *Amphitryon*, *Casina* and *Trinummus*) also have their *apparent* sentiment undermined. Alcmena's warm welcome is given to the wrong person; the home proposed for *Casina* is a duplicitous chimera; Charmides' homecoming is – initially – a fiasco: he is told he has no 'home' to return to. Much the same thing happens in Plautus' other works; Plautus repeatedly seizes upon opportunities to parody and invert the sentimental domestic motif.

That so much of Plautus' humour depends upon this motif is significant. His Roman audience must have had a very strong concept of the ideal, for there is always an assumption that they will recognize and identify with the plays' important thematic pictures of happy homes and blessed homecomings – or their comic inversions! These pictures are, of course, reminiscent of the sentimentality that was parodied by Lucretius in lines quoted by Dixon in support of the Roman sentimental ideal (which she believes resembled our own modern notion)<sup>2</sup>. It seems that Plautus', Lucretius' and Grahame's generations may have shared the concept after all. The following chapter

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.



will consider various aspects of this persistent domestic motif, seeking to demonstrate how Plautus used it to provoke laughter *and* thought in his mid-republican audience.

#### 4.2. 'Home Is Where The Heart Is.'

'Home is where the heart is': this sentimental cliché is construed by the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) to mean that an individual's true home is with the person or in the place that he or she *loves* most<sup>3</sup>. In modern ideology, the term 'home' frequently has emotional resonance. The word describes not simply a place, but a 'feeling' – and a positive one at that<sup>4</sup>. A person's preferences – the things that are dear to his or her heart – inevitably reflect his or her own personality. But the home environment, particularly in childhood, plays a significant role in forming that personality and establishing preferences. The childhood home, of course, is often within a family. There is thus an important correlation between our common sentimental concept of the 'home' and individual (*and* family) identity.

Interestingly, Plautus also seems to have recognized this conceptual correlation. He manipulates it in his works, obviously expecting his audience to understand it, too. We have already seen an instance in *Persa*, when Saurio's daughter is forced into a false role (losing her personal identity) and consequently refuses to acknowledge any homeland or name her father<sup>5</sup>. *Persa* is not alone in its exposition of the home/identity theme. Indeed, Plautus' domestic drama, with its metatheatre (which acknowledges that all actors assume identities other than their own), and its use of the comic convention of mistaken identity, is an apt form for the exploration of the topic. The identical 'twins' plots of *Menaechmi* and *Amphitryon* illustrate this admirably.

*Menaechmi* tells the tale of twin brothers exiled from their home. The Epidamnian Menaechmus (EM) was stolen as a child and, as we saw earlier, his separation from his homeland affects his

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<sup>3</sup> Cambridge University Press 2006, quoted by thefreedictionary.com.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, note 29, above.

<sup>5</sup> 630-647. Cf. 3.3., above.

character, as he imitates the behaviour of his new associates and fails to live up to certain social (and sentimental!) ideals<sup>6</sup>. These ideals are, ironically, fundamentally Roman, for in this play Plautus aligns his spectators with the twins – despite their supposed Syracusan provenance – against the Epidamnians. Thus aligned, the audience is able to assess the qualities of the Epidamnian home. And it proves to be inadequate, being inhabited by a *familia* that is not governed by selfless ‘love’, but by greed. Its deficiencies are repeatedly referenced as Plautus establishes the instability of EM’s Epidamnian (‘foreign’) lifestyle<sup>7</sup>.

Plautus seems, in fact, to have been at pains to paint a picture of a ‘home’ that is an inversion of a family ‘haven’ – and he presumably believed his audience would appreciate this ridiculous and ironic image. Thus, when EM first appears, he complains that, though his house is filled with luxuries, it is made uncomfortable by the persistent spying of his wife, who acts like a customs-officer. (Note the unsentimental mercenary note and the irony that instead of wishing to share his home’s privacy with his wife, EM wants privacy from her.) He threatens to break up the family home, either by expelling his wife, or by abandoning her and the home, to go somewhere else with another girl (110-124). Actually, EM’s desertion is already a *fait accompli*; he commonly frequents Erotium’s house, which – so long as he maintains her favour – she says is more his than his own (361-3<sup>8</sup>). EM is a home-breaker: an adulterer, who respects neither wife nor house – a fact which is

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. 2.4., above.

<sup>7</sup> Leigh notes a persistent prejudice against ports in ancient ideology: they were viewed as pernicious and unstable places, thanks largely to their multi-cultural nature. He suggests that Plautus’ picture of Epidamnus reflects this (2004, 118-123, quoting Pl., *Lg.*, 704b-705a; Arist., *Pol.* 1327<sup>a</sup>11-40, esp. 32-40; Cic. *Rep.* 2.7.1-4).

The ‘foreign’ setting of *Menaechmi* is actually very complex. On the one hand the audience is expected to identify with the twins, lost in the disturbing Epidamnus. On the other, Plautus uses metatheatre to suggest that both the setting and the Syracusan ethnicity of the brothers are only farcical illusions. Everything really takes place in Rome (*Men.* 7-12; 56). This comic twist allows the play to function at several levels. The story satisfies as the quasi-Roman Menaechmi outwit the foreign Epidamnians and return ‘home’. And it also challenges the audience, who must realise that Plautus’ ‘Epidamnus’ is a plausible picture of Rome itself; its errors might be that city’s. Cf. 2.4., above.

<sup>8</sup> This comment is addressed to EM’s brother, but is meant for him.

made clear when he steals his wife's mantel from their residence to take it to his 'second' false home at Erotium's<sup>9</sup>.

Erotium's house also 'inverts' social ideals. Meals, prepared upon the domestic 'hearth', have performed a significant social-bonding function in all cultures and eras<sup>10</sup>. But in Erotium's house, the common domestic comforts – so warmly portrayed in *TWITW* – are perverted. The feast that EM anticipates there is a selfish orgy (170-4; 184-188; 208-213). Plautus provides EM with a would-be companion at the place: the parasite, Peniculus. He is an 'outsider' to the sentimental ideal, having no comforts left in his 'home' at all. There is nothing to keep him there, for he has emptied it of all that he thinks binds a man to any given place (i.e. what he loves most) – not a family, but the food that gratifies his greedy appetite (79-95; 104-107). So he lives by forcing his way into other people's households and is a remarkably suitable accomplice for the 'house-breaker', EM.

EM's house-breaking has far-reaching ramifications. It leads to him wearing a disguise – the mantel he has stolen from his house to take into Erotium's. A metatheatrical passage in the prologue has already pointed out the instability of these stage-houses: they are constantly changing ownership/identity, in accordance with the demands of each play (72-6). EM's theft involves further subtle metatheatre. EM adopts an emasculating role, putting on the mantel, and subsequently 'play-acts' as he pretends concern about his wife's loss, denying what he has done (141-146; 190; 606ff). His identity consequently becomes as unstable as the stage-houses'. Peniculus, who was fully cognisant of the mantel-disguise, is quick to doubt his character. Though he initially describes EM's generosity in glowing terms, he soon becomes convinced that EM has tricked him. So he seeks to unmask him to his wife<sup>11</sup>. The wife, made aware of EM's insincerity, does not trust him; Erotium is

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<sup>9</sup> 127-134. Note how EM's wife is inside their house, behind the door (127; 130), and is described as an 'enemy' from whom booty has been stolen (134). Cf. the wife's insistence that the mantel was stolen from the house (*domus*) and must be returned there: 645; 648; 660.

<sup>10</sup> Powdermaker, 1932, 236-238; Dalby & Grainger, 2000, 8; van der Veen, 2003, 414.

<sup>11</sup> Peniculus' problem is partly caused by the fact he is unable to distinguish EM from his brother; had he, however, trusted EM, he would not have been so quick to disbelieve everything 'he' (and his brother) says.

equally dubious about him (602 ff; 685-695). Confused by the advent of his twin brother, neither will accept his word: the 'true story' he tells about himself is doubted as much as the false one. He is treated as though he is suffering from insanity (a loss of a sense of self). And he ends up banned from both his houses (698-699; 910 ff; 962-4). A character whose identity has been undermined as he played a part-within-a-part, he is also a person who has been exiled ignominiously within his far from idyllic exile<sup>12</sup>.

Meanwhile, his brother, Sosicles (SM), is suffering in his wake. EM's childhood kidnapping instantly led to a loss of identity for Sosicles, who was renamed 'Menaechmus' in memory of his twin (37-43). Now SM is undergoing voluntary exile, as he searches for EM. Together with Messenio, his slave, he disembarks in Epidamnus. Messenio disparages the place, for it is not their homeland and is full of dangers (226-231; 256-264). But SM refuses to listen and, mistaken for EM by the Epidamnians, quickly becomes embroiled in his affairs. Most ironically, he experiences an unexpected, triply-false<sup>13</sup> 'homecoming' at Erotium's. Though naturally confused by his welcome there, SM swiftly assumes the role that is foisted upon him, and, in EM's place, enjoys all the sensual (*not* sentimental) privileges of Erotium's house, before emerging from it – *with the mantel*, which, like his brother, he claims as stolen booty (360-368; 473-7<sup>14</sup>).

The enjoyment comes, however, at a price. When first mistaken for EM, SM is accused of insanity (because he does not seem to know who he is, nor – importantly – where he lives 307-9). In accepting Erotium's hospitality, he technically allows this accusation to stand – he is prepared to be the man the Epidamnians think he is (417-422). And in a subsequent encounter with EM's wife and her father, he himself adopts the role of madman. To feign madness (a lack of self-knowledge) is

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Note that Peniculus claims rights to EM's domestic pleasures as if they shared a family inheritance. This does him no good: as EM's would-be *alter ego*, he earns the same reward as EM and ends up excluded from the house (98-103; 449-450; 487-493; 518-521; 640-2; 663-7; stress on mantel-disguise: 511-512; 608-610).

<sup>12</sup> NB Leigh 2004, 61-2 notes that the family threshold (*limen*) is evoked by the Roman word for a captive's or exile's repatriation: *postliminium*. An exile/captive has been excluded from his family home and only regains his original status on passing into the family *domus* again. EM's story vividly enacts this idea.

<sup>13</sup> SM is wrongly welcomed as if he is EM, to EM's 'false' home, in the city in which both of them are exiles.

<sup>14</sup> Note how Messenio warns SM about entering Erotium's house - she is out to plunder him (338-345; 414-416). But it is SM who emerges with the booty. By entering the house and pretending to be EM, he has assumed EM's dubious 'Epidamnian' characteristics.

the only way to resist ‘kidnap’ into the house of these people, who mistake his identity and are convinced that he is EM: guilty of crimes against his ‘home’ in Epidamnus – and insane<sup>15</sup>.

SM’s ruse succeeds. He escapes, leaving EM to suffer from the actual kidnap attempt<sup>16</sup>. EM calls for help from the Epidamnian citizens. Significantly, however, it is Messenio, a slave from his real home, who comes to his aid (990ff). Messenio himself is temporarily confused about EM’s identity. But he finally recognizes EM as the lost twin (1086ff). And so he reunites him with his brother; the two meet and acknowledge their separate personalities. SM admits, at this point, that Messenio has advised him correctly (1092-1093). In fact, Messenio has been correct all along about one thing: that a real ‘home’ matters. It is thus fitting that he is given the task of selling off the pseudo-household in Epidamnus, so that the brothers can return home (1151ff).

*Menaechmi* is a glorious farce; it exploits the mistaken identity convention to create endless, hilarious confusion. In providing SM with that pseudo-homecoming at Erotium’s, it also manipulates a common sentimental device, giving it a comic twist. Importantly, however, as mentioned before, the spectators remain aligned with the brothers against the Epidamnians throughout the play. This is significant, because no matter how confused the Epidamnians become, the spectators always know which twin is which. The brothers may assume farcical, anti-sentimental roles – wearing a mantel as part of an adulterer’s plot, or pretending to be another man in order to enjoy his mistress – but the audience never forgets who they *ought* to be. The play’s resolution restores them to their true identity, family and home. Plautus evokes the sentimental ‘homecoming’ device again, this time ‘correctly’. He presumably did this to the Roman audience’s satisfaction.

In *Amphitryon* the homecoming motif and identity question are once more coupled together, very successfully. In this play Plautus multiples the ‘twinning’ effect – not in a mistaken identity

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<sup>15</sup> NB it is SM’s denial of ‘his’ house that convinces ‘his’ father-in-law that he is mad. 815-821; 831-832; 844-50.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, this is the second ‘kidnap’ attempt he has experienced in his life; it fails *and* reverses the effects of the first, thanks to the intervention of Messenio. Note another link between house and identity: the slaves attempting to restrain EM think he has lost his senses (identity) and *thus* his household authority.

plot, but in one of deliberate deception. Jupiter and Mercury have usurped Amphitryon's and Sosia's position in their house. Jupiter's game is anti-sentimental, home-breaking adultery; having stolen Amphitryon's identity for this purpose (and induced Mercury to steal slave Sosia's), he prevents their homecoming.

Importantly, it is Sosia who attempts to return 'home' first. As a slave he is closely identified with the house: he, like it, belongs to Amphitryon<sup>17</sup>. He thus proves a fit subject for an exploration of the identity/home theme. Mercury, temporarily determined to be Sosia, denies his prototype entry to the house. They argue at length about who has a right to Sosia's name and personality; about who is part of the household – who must defend the home and who may go inside (262ff, esp. 262-9; 346-59; 398-409). Unable to access the house, Sosia experiences self-doubt (e.g. 410-446). He attempts to reassert himself, saying he knows himself, his master and his house and *will* enter it (447-449). But Mercury defeats him in the end. He departs to seek Amphitryon, to see if he will recognize him. If he doesn't, then Sosia will be at liberty, freed from his old identity, no longer attached to Amphitryon's household<sup>18</sup>. Not altogether an unattractive idea...

But Sosia is unlucky. Amphitryon knows him and, importantly, threatens to demonstrate this by punishing him when they are back in the house – the seat of his power and identity as master (583-84b). Amphitryon's irate tone is significant; his homecoming has been disturbed by Sosia's strange story and he speaks like a vengeful tragic hero rather than a comic one, returning happily to his haven-home. Plautus is playing with his dramatic medium and his comedy of usurped personalities is (hilariously) suffering from confused identity itself and moving towards tragedy. And things get worse. Amphitryon suffers two important 'failed' homecomings. The first is placed shortly after Jupiter/Amphitryon's ironic pseudo-sentimental leave-taking of Alcmena (499-545). In contrast to suave Jupiter, Amphitryon is very irate, first threatening Sosia (551-632), then – after having expressed exalted hopes for a fine welcome (there are elements of pseudo-tragic hubris in this, 654-

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Christendon, 2000, 215, note to *Am.* 399.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Christendon, 2000, 215, note to *Am.* 455-62.

658) – he is severely disappointed by a cool reception (705-7). As Alcmena insists he has already been home, disappointment turns to horror – and a loss of a sense of self. Amphitryon no longer knows who he is (844).

Amphitryon's first homecoming matches Sosia's (both fail) and its degree of failure is amplified by this 'twinning'. Amphitryon, master of his house, expected more from his homecoming than Sosia<sup>19</sup>. A loss of household for Amphitryon is not a means of escape. Without his home and his identity as head of a house, Amphitryon is reduced in status – to Sosia's level. This point is emphasised in the second homecoming attempt, when Amphitryon is treated just like the slave, and denied access to the building by Mercury-Sosia (1018ff). He is not master of his own house any more – and, interestingly, his angry response to this only confirms his loss of identity. A man ought to protect and care for his home and family (the things dearest to his heart), but Amphitryon, beside (or perhaps 'outside of') himself with anger, speaks crazily of storming the place and murdering the inhabitants (1039-1052). *Amphitryon* is closer to tragedy than ever<sup>20</sup>.

But, of course, Mercury began the play with an essential piece of metatheatre, promising the audience a comedy (54-55). There has to be a comic resolution to Amphitryon's identity/household problems. He is finally recognized outside his own house by one of his slaves, who tells him his house has been saved and blessed with offspring (1072ff). He has, at last, come home to an ideal family haven. Once again, Plautus has provided his spectators with plenty of farce throughout the play. But he has utilised a sentimental motif to create a neat happy conclusion. His audience, directly involved in the play from the moment Mercury spoke his prologue, must have recognized and appreciated this, even as it amused them.

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<sup>19</sup> For Sosia's dour expectations of the sort of reception waiting for him at home cf. 155-162.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 123.

### 4.3. Home As A Castle

Alcesimarchus, from *Cistellaria*, is another Plautine character who closely identifies himself with a house. Desperate for Selenium – the dearest object of his heart – to return home, he anthropomorphises their house, saying that *it* is missing her (450<sup>21</sup>). Finally resorting to force, he carries the girl into the house and barricades it, determined never to lose her again (647-650). Alcesimarchus' house has become his castle: the place which reflects his love and the fortress he must defend in order to preserve it.

In the sentimental ideal – both modern and ancient – the home is a place of honour (potentially of quasi-religious import<sup>22</sup>). It, and the family within it, requires protection. Unsurprisingly, therefore, stories about the home often consist of plots in which the 'haven' status of houses is endangered, frequently in conjunction with an assault on some other aspect of sentimentalism. Thus, in *TWITW*, Toad loses his house because of his egotism and stubborn refusal to recognize the homely, ethical wisdom of his friends; Alcesimarchus' household is temporarily dispersed because of his father's mercenary plan to get him to marry a girl he does not love (98-103<sup>23</sup>); and Amphytrion's house is invaded in his absence by a marriage-destroying adulterer (*Am.* 799-811). Homes face all sorts of perils, in real life as well as in comic drama. Plautus' exploration of these threats is rich and varied, demonstrating his and his audience's abiding interest in the theme. Four examples will be considered in the section below.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Slater, 2004, 272-3.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

<sup>23</sup> Note how the home is central to the vocabulary used to describe the Roman marriage: in espousing another girl, Alcesimarchus will 'lead her home', supplanting Selenium in his house (99-100).



a. Neglect

*Aulularia* begins with a prologue spoken by a household god, thus immediately focusing attention on the home. The *Lar* explains he has performed his protective duty to the house of his *familia* for years (3-5). But the *familia* has not been so attentive. The grandfather of the present occupant, Euclio, consigned a pot of gold to the god's care, burying it in the hearth (a significant place: the hearth is the centre of the home; it provides warmth and comfort; it is where the family gathers and where their meals are prepared<sup>24</sup>). But he showed no respect to his house's family, leaving them impoverished, and neglecting their god. His son and grandson have been likewise negligent; only his great-granddaughter has shown the *Lar* proper attention – and it is for her sake that the *Lar* has caused her father, Euclio, to find the buried gold (6-30).

Euclio's characterisation as a man with scant respect for his house is confirmed on his appearance in the play's first scene. Driven by an obsession for his gold and full of fears for its safety, he chases his household slave, Staphyla, out of the house. He trusts neither her nor it. The house is not a peaceful haven for him – and he prevents it from being one for her<sup>25</sup>. Euclio's root problem is that his priorities are wrong. In his avarice, he has neglected his family (he is unaware of his failure to protect his daughter from rape, 74-76) and his house, reducing it from a comfortable home to a barn-like shelter, where the only wall-hangings are cobwebs (82-84). As such, it is not a place into which a man can retire to rest, but a source of worry.

This is made vividly clear a few scenes later. Plautus cleverly manipulates the homecoming device for comic effect as Euclio hurries back home, not eager for comfort and peace, but concerned about the hidden gold. He encounters a neighbour, Megadorus, on the way, who tries to switch Euclio's attention from gold to his family, offering to marry his daughter. But Euclio, worried about his money, is incapable of concentrating on this important family issue and darts

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<sup>24</sup> Treggiari, 2002, 106, quoting Cic. *Att.* 7.11. Cf. Kifleyesus in a study of the Argobba, 2002, 249; 251.

<sup>25</sup> 37ff. Note repeated orders for Staphyla to get away from the house and her objections to these: 40; 44; 46; 55; 67-73.

ridiculously in and out of his house, experiencing abortive and uncomfortable homecomings (200-8; 241-251).

Megadorus, bemused by Euclio's lack of interest, accuses him of disrespect (252-253). Euclio protests innocence, but, interestingly, has actually already proved himself to be a negligent neighbour – an unhelpful citizen. Charity, so the modern saying goes, *begins* at home. A similar idea must have had currency in mid-republican Rome, for having practised total selfishness in his own house, Euclio is shown to be anything but altruistic abroad. Indeed, he is so possessive, he even refuses to share water and fire (essential elements in cooking 89-94). This, for the Roman audience, would have been an important point. As usual, Plautus assumes that his spectators will read the onstage action in accordance with their own cultural values. The symbol of banishment in Rome was the *aquae et ignis interdictio*. Euclio's attempts to withhold these life-necessities from his fellow men would consequently have appeared in a grave light. The Roman spectators must have seen him isolating himself from his community, voluntarily entering a state of psychological exile<sup>26</sup>. Euclio no longer functions properly in his home or in society. He misuses the community, claiming handouts for the poor simply to protect his own interests. Unwilling to trust in his own household, he is incapable of trusting his neighbours (109-117) and *is* guilty of allowing his suspicions of Megadorus to distract him (188-209).

Aptly enough, Euclio's social alienation is most clearly demonstrated by a self-damaging lack of hospitality. As the plot progresses, a neat circle is completed: Euclio is so self-obsessed, he has neglected his house and his family; his relationship with his neighbours has subsequently suffered; and his failure to interact properly with them finally endangers his domestic peace again. He cannot bring himself to buy food for his daughter's wedding feast (an important social-bonding occasion, which Euclio ought to respect), nor does he dress himself appropriately (371-384; 539-540). So

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Konstan, 1986a, 36, quoting Cic., *Phil.* 6.4; Caes., *Gal.*, 6.44. For misers' social isolation see also Lowe, 1987, 131.

Megadorus graciously engages a cook to prepare the wedding feast for him. And a fresh series of references to fire and/or cooking once more highlight Euclio's dangerous false prioritisations.

First he is described as so stingy that he worries about 'losing' fire smoke from his home; then his failure to provide firewood prompts the cook to threaten to use the house rafters instead. After that Euclio confounds an ordinary cooking pot – a symbol of the feast that *ought* to be taking his attention – with his pot of gold, before chasing the cook outside with a piece of firewood, declaring it of no-one's concern but his own if he eats his food raw<sup>27</sup>. No wonder the cook promises to defame him in front of the house (299-301; 357-361; 390-392; 406-414; 429-430; 445-446).

Things look bad for Euclio. However, the good citizen Megadorus' friendly loan of the cook is to have further, important ramifications, leading to Euclio's final self-damaging acts, *and*, ultimately, to his (and his family's) re-integration into society. Made uneasy by the cook's presence in his house, Euclio brings his gold outside, placing it in the temple of *Fides* (449-453; 580-586). Then, as his confidence in the temple is shaken, he takes his gold outside the city walls (667-676). For the Roman audience, the significance of this must again have been great. *Fides* played a major ethical role in Roman private *and* public life; the city walls marked the 'sacred boundary' of the civilized community in which law and order reigned<sup>28</sup>. By removing his gold firstly from his house (the private or domestic scene) and then from the temple (the public arena), Euclio makes his alienation from that community clear. This alienation is disastrous – as becomes obvious when Euclio's gold is stolen and he is left in a state of distress (713ff<sup>29</sup>).

The distress, however, does not last. Deprived of his gold, Euclio begins to wake up to the social realities. He confronts Lyconides, the *adulescens* who raped his daughter, and though he continues

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<sup>27</sup> NB Euclio involuntarily equates himself with animals or uncivilised/undomesticated men, who don't cook their food.

<sup>28</sup> Owens, 1994, 388; Konstan, 1986a, 38. On importance of *fides* in Roman thinking, cf. Franko, 1995b, 162 & *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Moore (1998, 47) notes that up to the point when Euclio's gold is stolen, he has enjoyed a good rapport with the audience, confiding in them, as if they were his fellows (NB the 'gap' between the Roman spectators and 'Greek' characters is thus bridged). After that, he distrusts them as well, believing they are conspiring against him. His alienation is thus experienced personally by the audience – who will also benefit from his consequent conversion.

to confuse his priorities, not realising that Lyconides is confessing to the grievous ‘robbery’ of the daughter, not of the gold, he *is* on his way to recovering both the money and a properly set-up family. Lyconides will assure the money’s return and is prepared to marry the girl (731ff). She will thus get her husband, whilst Euclio will finally do the correct social *and* family thing and offer the gold as a dowry – just as the *Lar* planned. And this will bring him the ability to sleep peacefully – presumably in the haven of his house (25-33; Fragment IV).

The dowry has, of course, been a major point of contention in the play. In one of his less congenial moments, Megadorus evokes common Roman rhetoric, describing and disparaging the extravagance of dowered wives (478-535<sup>30</sup>). He provides a list of domestic luxuries which contrast stunningly with the cobwebs that adorn Euclio’s neglected home. In presenting this contrast, Plautus appears to challenge his audience; they are obliged to consider a current social debate. Stern moralists may have condemned luxury, legislating against it, but Euclio’s miserly behaviour has demonstrated that inadequate, parsimonious care for a family (as represented by care for that family’s house) is as detrimental as overindulgence<sup>31</sup>. The important thing is to get one’s priorities right – and it seems that Plautus is suggesting that the family should command great attention. This is assuredly sentimental.

b. Invasion

It has sometimes been suggested that the story of *Miles Gloriosus* consists of two very distinctive deception plots. In the first, a tunnel allows Philocomasium, mistress of the *miles*, Pyrgopolynices, to evade his house to visit her lover; in the second, the tunnel is forgotten and Pyrgopolynices is hoodwinked into allowing Philocomasium to leave his home by the front door<sup>32</sup>. In point of fact, however, these ostensibly separate plots involve two devices (the tunnel and the

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. 2.4., above.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Konstan, 1986a, 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> Brotherton, 1924, 128-9; Cleary, 1972, 299; Duckworth, 1994, 161-162.

hoodwinking of a partner) that regularly recur in folk stories, either in combination or sequence<sup>33</sup>. Rather than being strictly disparate, they have the capacity to function in a complementary fashion. And a uniting feature of them both is the threat they pose to the sentimental sanctity of a house. A play which triumphantly features such devices might, consequently, readily be supposed to be unsentimental. Nonetheless, I believe Plautus' *Miles* contains a message that affirms domestic ideals. All that is necessary to comprehend this is a correct understanding of Pyrgopolynices' role in the play; and from its first lines Plautus worked hard to assure that his Roman audience's assessment of the *miles* was right.

Pyrgopolynices is introduced in the first scene of *Miles*, when he appears styling himself as an aggressive invader, both military and amatory – a thief of lives and 'hearts'<sup>34</sup>. A delayed 'prologue' subsequently confirms his predilections: the audience is informed that he has recently wormed his way into the house of an Athenian woman and spirited away her daughter, the sweetheart of another man (99-113). To a certain extent, he has been victorious; he has carried off booty in accordance with his own stated *mode de vivre*.

Importantly, however, he is not actually the successful hero he would have the world suppose. Instead, he is a conventional *miles gloriosus*, typified by gross self-exaggeration and a desire for unearned praise. The audience is expected to feel antipathy towards him; and in the first scene a series of confiding asides guarantees their alignment on his opponents' side (19-24; 33-35; 49). The prologue, too, insists upon several important facts. Though Pyrgopolynices likes to think himself a woman-slayer, and is a would-be adulterer (i.e. invader of other men's homes and marriages), women in general despise him. Furthermore, he has not won the heart of the abducted girl; she is desperate to escape his house (88-94; 123-128; cf. 58-71). Pyrgopolynices' boasts thus prove one essential thing – self-deceived about his impact on others' homes and foolishly convinced about the attractiveness of his own, he has assumed a dual false identity – he thinks of himself as a brother of

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<sup>33</sup> Brotherton, 1924, 129, 132 & *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> 1-78, esp. 17-18 (metaphor in which *miles* is compared to a wind that robs a roof of its thatch); 55-68.

the warrior Achilles, and (as will be proved later) a grandson of Venus (60-62; 1265). He commits a foolish hubris: consequently, during the course of the play, the audience may expect him to be unmasked. The false invader will be legitimately invaded – much to the spectators' satisfaction<sup>35</sup>.

The despoiling of Pyrgopolynices takes place in two stages. The first includes the tunnel device, which is outlined in the prologue (140-153<sup>36</sup>). Philocomasium uses the tunnel to outwit Pyrgopolynices and visit her sweetheart next door. Her motivation, of course, is her lack of love for the *miles*. She does not identify with him, nor think of his house as her true home. The *pseudo*-hero has stolen her body, but not seized her heart; he has effectively split her in two. This has curious consequences. An unwilling member of Pyrgopolynices' household, Philocomasium is capable of playing with her own identity, pretending that she has a twin sister. She uses the tunnel to bamboozle Pyrgopolynices, through his representative slave guard, Sceledrus, with the false idea that she can be in two places (two homes) at once (182-3; 237-257; 319-320; 375-376; 380-392; 415-452, esp. 450-452). Pyrgopolynices, the self-styled great warrior, is thus seen to be incapable of holding on to his booty. He, his house and representative, Sceledrus<sup>37</sup>, are under attack – as is made clear by his opponents' use of ironic military language (e.g. 219-230; 334; cf. 813-815<sup>38</sup>). And they are faring badly – dreadful things are going on in the house (cf. 281-282), things which challenge Sceledrus' sense of identity (he begins to doubt himself 402-3; 429-433), expose his poor knowledge of the house (328-329; 339-340), and ultimately undermine Pyrgopolynices' feeble heroic stance.

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<sup>35</sup> Arguably, Pyrgopolynices is suffering from a considerable domestic invasion right from the beginning of the plot: the parasite, Artotrogus', flattery tricks him into giving him food (24; 33-35; 49-51). For Pyrgopolynices' fate being consequential to his duplicity cf. Cleary, 1972, 304.

<sup>36</sup> Note that Pyrgopolynices is himself responsible for the flaw in his household plan which allows the tunnel to be built: he gives Philocomasium a room no-one but she may enter (and is obviously powerless to prevent his own slave from capitalising on this and going in to build a tunnel!) 140-143.

<sup>37</sup> The fact that Sceledrus is Pyrgopolynices' representative and chosen guard perhaps helps to explain the full purpose of the scene at 816-866, when a fellow slave describes how he and Sceledrus regularly rob Pyrgopolynices' own wine cellar, becoming witless with drink. Pyrgopolynices, the powerless *pseudo*-invader, is constantly being invaded by characters fashioned in his own style, in his own house.

<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting the irony of the military imagery in the tunnel device itself: in any conflict a tunnel can be built for evasive or invasive purposes. In *Miles*, to Pyrgopolynices' disempowerment, it appears to function both ways. The tunnel may, of course, also function as a crude sexual metaphor, furthering Pyrgopolynices' emasculation, as his girl's favours are stolen and his 'house' penetrated.

In the second stage of the despoiling, Pyrgopolynices is cunningly persuaded that he has an opportunity to indulge his tastes, by 'invading' his neighbour's house to take his wife (773-802, esp. 800-802; 957-977). He is eager to do this – but unfortunately his desire outruns his tactical skill. Indeed, his half-hearted 'invasion' technique does little to enhance his masculinity. Though he is again referred to as 'Achilles', capturer of cities, the joke is against him, for it is not he who pursues and captures the 'wife' in question, but she who chases him (and that only in pretence). Her mock ardour constantly outdoes his. She talks of being so overpowered by love that she will storm his house, but he is very careful to ascertain that her husband is not in the way before he enters hers. He even accepts the idea of taking money in return for his favours. He is no conquering hero, but a mere prostitute (1052-1055; 1248-1252; 1272-1280; cf. 1166-1168; 1058-1063).

Meanwhile, of course, Philocomasium, is profiting from Pyrgopolynices' distraction. He is convinced that to enjoy his new woman, he must let his old 'love' go. Naturally, he has neither the wit to arrange her departure himself (he has to depend on the slave, Palaestrio), nor the sense to understand she is very willing to go. Indeed, he is such a coward, he finds the whole process rather challenging. Acting, therefore, out of *fear* of a scene with a mere woman, he loads her with gifts – a fact which is emphasised by repeated references. And so, after a parody of a sad departure from home (which is replicated in the leave-taking of Palaestrio, Pyrgopolynices' chief foe), Philocomasium finally escapes, bearing with her a fair proportion of Pyrgopolynices' goods in a triumphant train (973-983; 1094-1103; 1114-1129; 1200-1209; 1301-1304; 1311-1332; 1338; 1339-1375; 1348-1350). Pyrgopolynices' house has been invaded and looted; it only remains that his own unconvincing attack on his neighbour's home should be repelled. This happens in the play's final scene, as the worsted soldier is expelled from the house and physically mishandled outside (1394ff).

Now, at last, Pyrgopolynices admits he has been gulled. He draws a simple conclusion from his experiences: adultery does not pay (1435-1437). Even at this late moment in the plot, however, the *miles* is still somewhat deceived. A confused spectator of a metatheatrical play within a play, he is incorrigibly convinced that he *was* in danger of committing adultery, though the woman he desired

was only *acting* the part of a wife. The conclusion he reaches, in Moore's opinion, is therefore unsound – one last Plautine joke, intended to emphasise the true purpose of the play: unmitigated farce (1998, 76-77<sup>39</sup>). But, though Pyrgopolynices' wits remain befuddled at the end of the play, I am not so sure that his moral inference is inapt or inaccurate. Once already in this work, the audience has been entertained by the prospect of him drawing a correct conclusion for the wrong reason<sup>40</sup>. I believe something similar happens here.

The important point to remember is that Pyrgopolynices is not *just* a spectator in the work. From its very beginning the audience has been aware of his false 'butch' personality; and they have been waiting for him to earn his comeuppance. He styled himself as an aggressive invader and adulterer: a person who disregards the sanctity of the home. And the two deception plots in sequence have punished him for taking this assumed identity. They have shown it undermining his position, allowing members of his own *familia* to capitalise both on the weakened sense of 'self' in his household and his dangerous underestimation of the importance of the home. All this leads very appropriately to the final scene, in which Pyrgopolynices' 'invasive' false identity is unmasked and mocked (1413; 1421). The play's ultimate comic twist, in my opinion, is therefore *not* the soldier's continued confusion, but rather the fact that the overall plot structure supports his glib 'moral' and 'sentimental' conclusion – a conclusion which the Roman audience must have acknowledged, laughingly, to be correct.

c. Treachery

Plautus' *Mostellaria* continuously focuses attention on the domestic theme. It tells the tale of a voyaging *paterfamilias*, Theopropides, who returns home to find his house apparently 'haunted': occupied, so to speak, by a deadly foe. In truth it has actually suffered during his absence due to the

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<sup>39</sup> Moore's argument relies on the idea that *Miles* as a whole functions as an exploration of theatre.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. 1374-1376 when Pyrgopolynices regrets releasing Palaestrio, thinking his action was foolish (it was), because Palaestrio was a loyal servant (he wasn't).



spendthrift activities of his son, Philolaches. The ‘ghost’ that haunts their house might thus be justly described as treachery – the betrayal of home-values by a member of the household. But as the play unfolds, each succeeding scene is rife with references to the house and sentimental family values. And it soon becomes apparent that Philolaches is not the only villain (or ghost) in the piece. The ‘threats’ to Theopropides’ domestic ideal (and, we may assume, the ideal of Plautus’ spectators, who must have judged the play’s action in accordance with their own cultural understanding) are manifold; treachery is widespread in his neighbourhood. We meet it first in the *persona* of the *servus callidus*, Tranio.

In the play’s opening scene, Tranio encounters a fellow slave. He is accused of eating Theopropides out of house and home and, contrary to his master’s commands to care for his estate, of encouraging Philolaches’ excessive exploitation of the home and hospitality. A member of Theopropides’ *familia*, he has betrayed his master’s trust and is ruining both house and son (1; 11-14; 20-33). Only Theopropides’ homecoming, a fellow slave surmises, can save the house and other household property from ruin (77-81).

Tranio is replaced on stage by Philolaches himself. He addresses the audience in a lengthy monologue (84ff), in which he first equates houses with children. Houses that are planned and built with care fall into ruin in the hands of negligent owners; children who are well-nurtured by their parents deteriorate once they are left to their own devices (84-132). He then admits that he is a case in point: his ‘house’ – i.e. character – has been ruined (133ff). He has disappointed his parents’ expectations, failing to live up to the family sentimental ideal.

Philolaches concludes his monologue and then Philematium enters, speaking of the domestic pleasure of a bath (157-8). Philolaches admits in an aside that it was for her sake that he ruined his ‘house’ (161-165; cf. 207). Interestingly, however, the ensuing scene demonstrates that he has probably ruined and betrayed her, too. That he will do so in the future is almost certain: Philematium receives counsel from her maid, Scapha, who points out that Philematium is not a *wife*

– she is not fully identified with Philolaches’ household and cannot be certain of enjoying its domestic ideal perpetually (188-202; cf. 224-226).

Ironically, precisely because she has been excluded from the happily-ever-after ideal, Philematium can only pretend to sentimental love and gratitude. She proceeds to do this in the next scene and her fundamentally false declarations encourage Philolaches to continue in *his* betrayal of the ideal. He makes unsentimental, anti-*pietas* statements: he is prepared to sell his father; he wishes him dead (NB a ghost!), in order that he can disinherit himself of his property for the sake of ‘love’ (229-234). This ‘love’ clearly does *not* have a sentimental basis; it is founded on immoral domestic self-indulgence and is a mercenary arrangement, detrimental to the home (235-244; 295-305).

The next scene introduces more treacherous characters – in particular, Philolaches friend, Callidamates, who has come to share the plunder (the wasting of Philolaches’ house 312). Aptly enough, Callidamates is so drunk he has lost his sense of where home is (333-335<sup>a</sup>). Tranio then re-enters, panic-stricken: his master is returning home. Instead of preparing to greet him joyfully, Tranio reacts as if an enemy host is approaching and his reaction is echoed by Philolaches (348-353; 363-370). Drunken Callidamates (representing the entire company, for it is through self-indulgence they have ruined themselves and Theopropides’ house) responds in a series of *paraprosdokian*/word play jokes, reiterating death-wishes against Theopropides, indicating that either he or his son must ‘die’, and suggesting that Theopropides’ own home should be defended against him (374-384).

Tranio rallies and declares himself prepared to rebuff Theopropides, allowing Philolaches and company to continue to carouse in the house, though they must keep quiet: as though no living soul was in the place (they all prepare to become ‘ghosts’). Philolaches acquiesces, giving Tranio the house keys, and thus formally handing over responsibility for the house to the slave who was declared culpable for his/its decline in the plays’ first lines. Tranio promises to give Theopropides a

better send-off than he will get when he is dead (388-428). The blessed home-coming motif is in the process of being farcically inverted.

This point is carried on into the next scene, when Theopropides returns home, thankful to escape death at sea and expecting a proper sentimental welcome (431-441). Tranio first utters bathetic asides, repeating the death wishes (438-439; 442-443). Then he goes on to pretend to give the home-welcome, before proceeding to frighten Theopropides away from the house (446ff). He comically inverts the real state of affairs (that having ruined the house between them, he and Philolaches desire Theopropides' demise), suggesting that in touching the house door, *Theopropides* has been the death of his entire family (463). He invents a story in which a former owner of the house abused hospitality, betraying and killing a guest, who now haunts the house (ironically, this tale reflects aspects of the truth: 'ghostly' Philolaches, in his extravagance, is still abusing hospitality inside the house, betraying his father's trust, 475ff, esp. 500-504).

Poor Theopropides is frightened away from the house, but shortly returns, having met its former owner, who denies the ghost story. He is in time to overhear Misargyrides, a moneylender, demanding payment from Tranio. Challenged about this, Tranio invents another house-based story, explaining that the money was borrowed from Misargyrides to buy a house. And at this point Theopropides himself falls. Despite having good reason to doubt Tranio (the ghost story having been disproved), he accepts Tranio's new explanation. This is incredible – Tranio expected to be unmasked (562-565) – and is only made possible because Theopropides proves less loyal to his own house than he ought to be. He is easily distracted by Tranio, who appeals to his unsentimental mercenary instinct, suggesting that Philolaches has put through a good deal, buying the house next door (636ff)<sup>41</sup>.

Philolaches had Callidamates to support him in his betrayal of the ideal; Theopropides' foolish behaviour is echoed by another *senex*, his neighbour, Simo, who appears in the next scene. He

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<sup>41</sup> NB how Misargyrides' constant demands for interest in this scene (532-698) emphasise the 'treacherous' and unsentimental nature of the mercenary instinct. A moneylender 'helps' a client, only to ruin him later.

emerges from his house, having just enjoyed its domestic pleasures – a good meal, provided by his wife. However, he is not prepared to think of it as a sentimental haven; betraying his wife's expectations, he is running away rather than staying to make love to a woman whom he married for money, not love (690-710). Tranio predicts he will pay for his behaviour – and then proceeds to deceive him, pretending that Theopropides admires Simo's house and would like to look over it<sup>42</sup>. Theopropides, convinced by Tranio that Simo has sold his house to Philolaches, meanwhile continues in his mercenary attitude, showing little sympathy when Tranio pretends Simo would like the house back (795-802). Tranio assumes a *familia*-based alliance with both *senes*<sup>43</sup>. In fact, however, he gulls both men (betraying their alliance). Joyfully mixing his metaphors, he likens them:

1) to the 'joints' in the house, bonded to each other in a 'marriage'

2) to a picture of preying birds, who are being tormented by a crow – himself (829-839).

They are, in fact, all in the same 'picture': all would-be exploiters and traitors to the home ideal.

There follows a brief, but significant, interlude (858-093), in which two of Callidamates' slaves appear. The first philosophises smugly about how a good slave can avoid punishment. He speaks of himself as if he were a house, which must be kept well-roofed (thus echoing Philolaches' earlier monologue). Though he makes his remarks personal (as Philolaches did), the spectators will now be inclined to apply the salient points to all the characters in the play: since none of them has paid ample attention to domestic sanctity, they have all asked for punishment. Interestingly, however, it transpires that only the play's chief householder (Theopropides) receives full retribution in the play. Perhaps this is because his treachery was so unexpected – so incredibly ludicrous. It becomes representative of all the other characters' foolish behaviour. And as *their* representative, Theopropides is made to suffer.

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<sup>42</sup> 711ff. NB 728-731: Simo approves of Philolaches' behaviour, further associating himself with those whose unsentimental, self-gratifying stance is ruinous to the home

<sup>43</sup> 746; 785. NB after Simo agrees not to speak of Philolaches' bad behaviour, Tranio names Simo his 'patron'. Simo's silence amounts to complicity in the ruin of Theopropides' house *and* transfers Tranio to his own household.

He reappears from Simo's house, well-pleased with the bargain he thinks he/Philolaches has made – and also convinced that he has Tranio well in hand (904-929). This is his ultimate moment of hubris. Swiftly afterwards, he encounters Callidamates' slaves, knocking on the door of his 'old' house. He challenges them, but they do not recognize him and deny that he has any business there (940). He informs them that there is no-one at the house; that Philolaches has moved away. They, knowing better, conclude that he is insane (952). Alienated from his house, he has lost his self-identity. (It is as if he had died and become a ghost). This fact is firmly established as the slaves explain what has really been happening in his house, speaking to him as though he were a stranger (956ff).

Theopropides' illusions are smashed. He realises that spendthrift Philolaches did not buy the house next door (976-9). Still without recognising Theopropides, one slave states rightly that Philolaches' father has been ruined (979). Theopropides is left in a state of metaphorical exile, no longer knowing where he is (993-996).

And things do not get better. Fully distraught, he next encounters Simo. There is an immediate death joke<sup>44</sup> and Simo goes on to refuse Theopropides hospitality (i.e. to shut him out of the house he thought he had bought) and to taunt him by suggesting that he should become Theopropides' guest the next day (in the house that has been ruined, 1004-1007). Simo denies having sold his house and informs Theopropides of Tranio's story that there were plans to enlarge Theopropides' home. This bitter irony causes Theopropides to repeat that he is a ruined man.

He is planning to punish Tranio, when the slave himself emerges from the old house, in disgust. Very ironically, it appears that he is no longer able to haunt it: his fellow conspirators have betrayed him, expelling him from their midst (1041-1050). But Tranio is not done yet. Having failed to regain Theopropides' confidence, he nonetheless outwits him, taking refuge on an altar. He now has somewhere else (another 'haven') to occupy and Theopropides cannot dislodge him (1093ff).

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<sup>44</sup> 1000-1002. Simo says he has just seen the funeral of someone who was recently alive. The implication is that the audience has seen this, too, as they witnessed Theopropides' 'death' at his own front door.

There appears to be a stalemate. But then Callidamates, finally sober, enters on a peace mission. Now in his right mind, he gives Theopropides the correct welcome home and generously offers hospitality: at last Theopropides has the chance to enter a home (1122-1129). Still intent on punishing Tranio, he initially rejects the invitation (1130-1134). But Callidamates, acting the new part of a friend (not a traitor) speaks up for Philolaches, explaining that he is ashamed of his behaviour, appealing to Theopropides' relationship with the boy as his father and asking for forgiveness for him (1153-1161). Theopropides' relents – and after more persuasion also agrees to forgive Tranio.

*Mostellaria* thus concludes with Theopropides' position and identity being acknowledged; the *senex* is once more a *paterfamilias*, in charge of his home. He has exercised his power, forgiving his son and exorcising the household ghost. There are important elements of sentimentalism in this...and yet the sentimental tone of the resolution is 'disturbed' in several significant ways. There is no onstage reunion between father and son (it is as if this is not important); Theopropides actually says Philolaches may continue to live in his chosen fashion – he does not insist on him marrying and conforming to social mores (1164). Furthermore, Tranio, who demands most of the attention during the scene, remains cheerfully unrepentant, even promising to misbehave again the next day (1178-1179). Despite constant references to the ethical domestic theme, it almost seems that Plautus has allowed farce to triumph in this play, upsetting the moral paradigm of the sentimental mode.

But even farce can carry a moral message. Farce in general is about men behaving in a fashion that is contrary to the audience's social expectations. Consequently, it induces 'superior laughter'. And *Mostellaria* is an interesting example of a very particular form of the genre. Like all of Plautus' works, it is a *palliatae*: a play in Greek dress. In his typical manner, Plautus has manipulated its 'foreign' setting with great deliberation. Hyper-hellenization is conspicuous in the play. In the first scene, Tranio's fellow slave accuses him of acting in a Greek manner (22; 64). In the last scene, Tranio makes a metatheatrical remark: he likens Theopropides – who, of course, became the play's chief traitor – to a duped character in a comedy written by a Greek (1149-1151). The implication is

that the whole play has been concerned with the antics of conventional 'Greek' characters, who have behaved in a foolish fashion for the amusement of a Roman audience. If Tranio carries on misbehaving 'tomorrow', it will be in this same context.

But there is a catch, of course. Plautus' metatheatrical comedies are never very remote from his Roman spectators. Philolaches' lengthy monologue<sup>45</sup> proves this point. He addresses the audience, expounding his metaphor concerning the 'house' ruined by personal neglect (i.e. immorality or disrespect for ideals). And he says that the spectators themselves will recognize the truth of what he says: it is *not* a uniquely 'Greek' idea (93-98<sup>46</sup>). The real treacherous ghost of *Mostellaria* is universal, fallible human nature, which may endanger *any* house.

#### d. Capitulation

In our previous discussion of *Truculentus*, we saw how Plautus employs punitive farce throughout the play. Though the characters are ostensibly Greek, metatheatre and topical allusions prevent the Roman audience from distancing itself from a plot that continuously exposes the folly of persons who contravene the sentimental ideal<sup>47</sup>. Interestingly, the domestic theme plays a considerable part in the progression of the work. The sanctity of the 'home' is one of the things its foolish characters fail to respect. During the course of the play three homes come under threat. The aggressive enemy is, of course, the *meretrix*, Phronesium. It is the stated goal of her household to sack the cities (i.e. homes) of the lovers who visit her house (170-1). But her success depends upon one important thing: that each of her victims loses all desire to take care of his own home and possessions. Home is where the heart is – and Phronesium's ridiculous lovers are all beguiled into thinking her house can be their home.

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<sup>45</sup> NB Fraenkel writes that this monologue is essentially Plautine; at this point the Roman comic, for his own purposes, greatly elaborated and extended the original text (2007, 118-119).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. metatheatre at 280-281; 708-709, when the spectators are challenged to consider the consequences of marriages made for money, not love.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. 2.5., above.

Diniarchus provides our first example. He is so besotted with Phronesium that even though he is frankly told what her aims are, he willingly admits that he has land and houses at his disposal, which he will give in the hope of entering her house (170-186). Encouraged to believe his offer will guarantee his welcome, he does indeed strip his own home, allowing its property to be carried into Phronesium's. The slave in charge of the operation points out how detrimental this is; Diniarchus' 'identity' in the community is spoiled at the same time as his house is ruined. And seeing that his master has given up trying to protect himself, the slave sees no reason why he should seek to protect him either (551-574). Diniarchus has lost his reputation and his control of his household. Indeed, hoping to conquer Phronesium, he has reduced himself to the position where he is totally at her mercy. He has a moment of exultation, thinking he *has* ousted his rival, Stratophanes, and gained the access to the *meretrix* (699-710) – but quickly discovers that he has now been supplanted by Strabax. He has willingly sent his household goods into Phronesium's house only to remain excluded, unable to enter the 'home' he desires (726-729; 747-769).

Stratophanes is Phronesium's second victim. Ironically, he is a *miles gloriosus*, who despite his boasts is totally in Phronesium's power. Typically self-deceived, he returns to the house of the *meretrix* in the false belief – carefully nurtured by the campaigning Phronesium – that she is *his* mistress, who has borne his child (482-500). His foolishness is confirmed as, speaking of Phronesium and the child as his family<sup>48</sup>, he ridiculously imagines his 'offspring' gathering spoils. The problem is, however, that the spoils are not for *their* house, but only for *hers*; Stratophanes himself refers to it as this (504-522, esp. 522). Consequently, his 'homecoming' is doomed. He does not return to a loving welcome, but to more demands; he must furnish Phronesium's household with his own possessions.

Even when he does this, however, he does not gain entry to her house (523-548). Instead, he is obliged to witness another man (Diniarchus), emptying his house in favour of Phronesium's.

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<sup>48</sup> Note line 515, in which Stratophanes hyperbolically compares himself to Mars and names Phronesium as his wife.



Stratophanes is taken in by more of the *meretrix's* metatheatrical playacting. Pretending to love Diniarchus and welcome his gifts, she speaks to his slave about the way she has dismissed the soldier from her house, before confirming to Stratophanes that his contributions have earned him nothing (549ff esp. 581-599; 616-618). Stratophanes finds this hard to believe. He still hopes to conquer the *meretrix*, storming her house, and choosing when he enters it himself (634-644). Unfortunately for him, the tactics he employs merely repeat his previous strategy. He continues to give to the 'enemy', providing for her supposed domestic needs, redoubling his promises of supplies in the face of a new rival, Strabax. They are a fool and a madman, competing to ruin themselves to her advantage (893-914; 946-50).

Strabax, of course, is Phronesium's third victim. Actually, his case is slightly different to the others', for he does not endanger his own house, but that of his father (297-304). But he is represented by Truculentus, his slave, who provides the play's most dramatic and sudden capitulation. Truculentus begins by defending his master's house (and, as we saw earlier, traditional Roman values<sup>49</sup>), seeking to curtail Strabax's activities (250-261), but, *despite* his better knowledge (NB 670-671; 697-8), ends by willingly entering Phronesium's home – with a present of money, of course (669- 698). There is no hope for Strabax after that.

Phronesium ends the play in triumph. She has 'punished' all her clients, exploiting a fundamental flaw in their characters. Governed by selfish desires that have no basis in 'ideal' sentiments (there is no real, selfless love), none of them has shown an abiding respect for the 'home' – a point Plautus challenges his spectators to recognize. Having been warned (as all the play's characters were), will *they* have the wisdom to reject Phronesium's (ungoverned desire's) closing invitation to handle their affairs (964-6)?

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<sup>49</sup> 2.5., above.

#### 4.4. Home As A Cage?

*'I don't want to talk like a pig about my wife, but the fact is, she's [...] too full of ideals [...] I didn't want to go home [...]' Sayers, Five Red Herrings, 1931.*

This concluding section briefly acknowledges one of the 'tensions' that exist between the ideal and reality<sup>50</sup>. The home plays a special part in the modern sentimental ideal: it is a positive place – a place to be honoured. But it has to be admitted that in the real world the ideal is not always achieved. Some homes are badly disturbed and broken. Even those that are run along 'ideal' lines (like the one mentioned above in the quote from Sayers) can become claustrophobic – like a cage.

The propensity of a home to resemble a jail is, of course, admitted in Plautus. We have already noted two particular examples in *Asinaria* and *Mostellaria*: Demaenetus is ordered back into his house in a gesture that is definitely punitive; and Simo exits his home on a mission to escape, knowing he will be punished on his return (921-940<sup>51</sup>; 690-710<sup>52</sup>). Given that there are a considerable number of Plautine plots in which men seek to avoid their own homes and/or wives, one *might* be tempted to conclude that his plays reflect a Roman 'reality' – that home life was a burden. This would allow a Freudian interpretation of the works – that they functioned by giving Roman spectators an opportunity to enjoy vicarious escapism, as domestic and social restraints were thrown off<sup>53</sup>.

It ought to be noted, however, that Plautus never actually allows any of his characters to perfect an escape; indeed, if anything, his plots tend to expose the errors in home-life that motivate escape bids, whilst also suggesting that such attempts are both illusory and detrimental. Charinus in *Mercator*, for instance, declares himself ready to go into voluntary exile, leaving his father's home,

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction & Dixon, 1991, 99.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. 2.2., above.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. 4.3., above.

<sup>53</sup> Segal, 1987, 7-13; 26-27 & *passim*.

in order to escape from his love problems. But these were arguably caused in the first place by his father's overbearing discipline, which resulted in an initial, destabilising trip over sea (he met his present girl when abroad). And his friend points out that another trip would only perpetuate his problems (357-8; 644-657; 830-841<sup>54</sup>).

Furthermore, in many cases, would-be Plautine escapists make a fundamental error equivalent to jumping out of a frying pan into a fire. They seek 'refuge' at the house of a prostitute or pimp. These places are traps themselves – the residencies of greedy thieves, who typically offer 'hospitality' merely to exploit their guests (e.g. *Men.* 351-363; *Poen.* 660-661; 672-3). They cater for sexual desire, but do not *necessarily*<sup>55</sup> offer any hope of an ideal, lasting relationship. Thus though the portals of the pimp's house in *Curculio* are addressed in sentimental terms by a besotted *adulescens*, sexual innuendo and references to the gratification of mere appetite (the door is given wine to drink) undermine his protestations of 'love' (15-22; 30-34; 80-81; 88-94; 147-154<sup>56</sup>). To frequent the home of a pimp/*meretrix* is to neglect one's own home and household (e.g. *As.* 871-875) in favour of a household that is not run on ideal lines, for mutual comfort and benefit. Pimp Ballio's house is typical. He abuses his household at great length and then commands them to celebrate his birthday: it is unlikely that any of his *familia* would have enjoyed his hospitality (*Ps.* 133ff, *esp.* 165<sup>57</sup>).

Anderson writes that the central values of New Comedy were the home, family and domestic responsibility (1996, 41). It is true that Plautus subjects some of this material to parody, developing his plays into farces and commenting ironically on certain aspects of the sentimental ideal/mode. But he generally gets his characters home in the end. The lucky ones may find that, as a 'proper' home environment is re-established, they can stay at home *and* enjoy their desires – this happens to Charinus in *Mercator*. The ones who have sinned grievously against the home, like Demaenetus,

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Leigh, 2004, 145-148. For further discussion of *Mercator* cf. 2.3., above.

<sup>55</sup> In a play in the sentimental mode, 'chance' may bless a boy when his girl turns out only to be a *pseudomeretrix*. But in such cases, *she* has to escape the pimp's house and enter the boy's.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Treggiari, 2002, 101, for the 'unrespectable' nature of serenades addressed to a door.

<sup>57</sup> For further discussion cf. 3.4., above.

return to it presumably to learn to do better. Though Plautus may wryly admit the restrictions of home-life, his plays, even at their most farcical, never truly suggest that Roman society should abandon (or wish to abandon) a home-based family ideal. They demonstrate rather that there is no better alternative.

## Chapter 5: Slaves and Outsiders

### 5.1. Introduction

One of the key features of the sentimental family ideal (as defined by Dixon) is that it focuses attention first on relationships between husbands and wives and then on the interaction between parents and children: i.e. it concentrates on members of the nuclear family<sup>1</sup>. The nuclear family has, consequently, engaged much of our attention in previous chapters. However, there is a sense in which family ideals cannot simply be studied in the narrow family context. The nuclear family has a complex relationship with wider society. Society determines the family's legality and social acceptability (a point that was very important in Ancient Rome, where laws controlled who might marry and produce legitimate, citizen children). In its turn, the family acts both as a microcosm of society<sup>2</sup> *and* as a contributor towards the on-going existence of the larger community. Throughout history, there have, therefore, been close ideological links between the family and the community. It is no coincidence that the errors of Plautus' miserly *paterfamilias*, Euclio, affect both his home-life and his interaction within society as a whole<sup>3</sup>. The Latin word *patria* unites the idea of a family 'father' and a country<sup>4</sup>. And modern languages have similar terms: fatherland, *patrie*, *Vaterland*. There is an important continuity in the correlation of the family and the state.

Plautus' domestic plays provide multitudinous opportunities to observe this continuity. But they also reflect two aspects of Roman life, which distinguish it from modern society and which *may* have impinged on its putative 'sentimental ideal'. The first, and perhaps most salient point, is that Rome was a 'slave state'. But it is important to note that it was also a state with a highly developed system of friendship 'duties' and patronage.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction above & Dixon, 1991, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Each family is a mini-state, with its own 'laws' or code of behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 4.3., above.

<sup>4</sup> Note how Roman 'political' titles exploited ideological links, conflating family and state: senators were termed *patres conscripti* and Augustus accepted the title *pater patriae* in 2 BC (cf. Rawson, 2001, 21).

The position of slaves in the Roman family was a peculiar one, involving a significant conundrum. Slaves were regarded as subhuman property. According to the law, they could be sold or tortured at the whim of their masters, and, until Constantine, they were not considered to have any kin with whom they had a right to maintain a relationship<sup>5</sup>. Slaves were typically characterized as naturally immoral and treacherous, less worthy of respect than Roman citizens. And yet society depended upon them ‘faithfully’ fulfilling their duties to their masters – to the *familia* to which they belonged. They might, of course, do this under threat of punishment. But they could, theoretically, do it because they had fully identified with their *familia*. Unlike slaves in Greece, Roman slaves *were*, after all, regarded as part of their master’s *familia*. Moreover, it appears that, in some cases, they did function as loyal family members. Despite their bad reputation, despite their ‘subhuman’ legal status, and despite the fact they were denied their own familial rights, slaves were capable of showing *fides* within the family – they *could* function in the home as part of some sort of family ideal<sup>6</sup>.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider Plautus’ representations both of slave-master relationships and of relationships in the wider community. Assuming that his works show signs of a Roman family sentimental ideal in the first place (as has been demonstrated in previous chapters), what part do slaves and the wider community play in this? Does Plautus expect his Roman audience to dismiss slaves as outsiders to the sentimental family ideal; does he suggest that sentimental values have a role in the wider community?

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Plu.Cat. Mai.*, 21.3-4; Theodosian code, 2, 25.1.

<sup>6</sup>Of course, even when slaves did function as part of a *familia*, perhaps receiving their master’s affection in return for faithful service, a status gap still separated the servile and the free. Cicero was a generous and interested master, whose slaves ultimately showed him the honour of trying to save his life, but he nonetheless censured close relationships with slaves (cf. *Fam.* 14.4; *Att.* 7.2; *Amic.* 20.74; *Plu. Cic.* 47.6; & Bradley, 1991 (1) 144; Balsdon, 1965, 175.) For wider comment on slavery cf. Finley, 1980, 74-76; 93-95; 103-104; Vogt, 1974, 129-141, quoting Val. Max. 6.8., App. *History of the Civil Wars*, 4.13-51, Sen. *Ben.*, 3.18ff.; Pomeroy, 1995, 40; Bradley, 1991 (1), 145; McCarthy, 2000, 170-171 (Note her summary of the ‘fundamental contradiction in slave ideology’); Fitzgerald, 2000, 13. Finley notes an important point that on manumission a Roman slave (unlike a Greek one) automatically became a citizen: ‘a human being unequivocally’ (1980, 97). A society that commonly maintained the theory that all slaves were morally inferior by nature, thus had to cope with the sudden transformation of certain individual slaves from the subhuman to the citizen with rights. For some, this must have posed an ethical challenge (cf. Fitzgerald, 2000, 6-8; 87-9).

## 5.2. Good Slaves?

Plautus' comic slaves have often been described as definitive creations of the Roman playwright himself. Thought to have been coarser than the characters in Plautus' source material, they are also frequently supposed to have enjoyed greater importance. Their triumphant deception plots were, apparently, enthused with a 'Roman' energy, which helped transform Greek sentiment into typical Plautine farce<sup>7</sup>.

It is certainly true that slaves play major roles in many of Plautus' works. The *servus callidus* is a common Plautine character<sup>8</sup>; and Plautus' slaves are often depicted as cheerfully 'coarse' – rogues who are sensual, deceitful, lazy and faithless: deservedly used to punishment<sup>9</sup>. As such, they actually conform well to the general Aristotelian definition of a 'mean' or 'inferior' comic character<sup>10</sup>. But there are also signs that Plautus manipulated his slaves for his own purposes. The multi-cultural nature of his genre played an important part here. On one level, Plautus' slaves appeared as 'hyper-aliens': noncitizens in works with foreign settings. This, it might be presumed, provided the Roman audience with opportunities to indulge in 'superior laughter'. If the ridiculous slaves were typically lazy and deceitful, this accorded with Roman cultural prejudices – concerning Greeks *and* Carthaginians<sup>11</sup>. On another level, Plautus used metatheatre and topical allusions to make his slaves seem very Roman. *Servi callidi* often speak either like parodies of Roman generals or aristocrats, or like Roman slaves, expecting very Roman punishments<sup>12</sup>. And they are commonly

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<sup>7</sup> Fraenkel, 2007, 171-2; Anderson, 1996, 96ff.; McCarthy, 2000, 3-5. Note McCarthy's word of caution: she suggests there is a danger in assuming that Greek New Comedy *always* favoured the sentimental mode above farce.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Appendix 2 for details of the appearance of *servi callidi* in the works.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. *As.* 249-257; 545-576; *Am.* 170-9 (Sosia ridiculously complains of having to work, whilst Mercury's ironic asides emphasise the fact that this is what slaves are *supposed* to do.)

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 4, above.

<sup>11</sup> Leigh, 2004, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Fraenkel, 2007, 159-61; Leigh, 2004, 48, quoting *Per.* 606-8; 753-7; *Ps.* 581; *Cas.* 418; *Mil.* 373; *St.* 303 (for Roman generals/aristocrats); Parker, 1989, 239-240 (for crucifixion as Roman punishment. Cf. *Mos.* 359-

aligned with the Roman audience – and with Plautus himself. They appear as directing figures in theatrical works ('artistic deceptions'), performed for the audience's benefit<sup>13</sup>.

Plautus' slave characters were, then, both essential to his multi-layered humour and instrumental in bringing his works close to his original audience. But did those works engage with issues directly related to that audience's common conceptions of slavery? In my chapter on *Rudens*, I suggested this was the case. I hope to demonstrate it again now, but must first acknowledge several complexities – complexities that perhaps reflect the fundamental conundrum in the Roman attitude to slavery.

I note firstly that Plautus' common characterisation of slaves often seems to pander to (and manipulate) the simplistic assumption that, in every way, freemen are superior to slaves. Thus slaves, such as Gripus in *Rudens*, are inferior personalities; and it is imperative to many plays that their *servi callidi* should be morally dubious. But Plautus' slave characterisation also challenges the simple assumption. Typical comic slaves are not *completely* inferior to their masters, firstly because they are frequently brighter<sup>14</sup> and secondly because there is often a firm bond between them and their masters. They are all equally as 'bad'<sup>15</sup>. This, in itself, creates an ironic sense of fellowship on stage. The slaves and their masters (Pseudolus and Calidorus, Tranio and Philolaches) are associated together – members of the same house, with a joint purpose. Importantly, however, their common values and goals are *usually* unsentimental. They are selfish hedonists. Plautus takes careful note of this, for it allows him to draw wry attention to that other Roman attitude towards

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361; *Mil.* 372); Christenson, 2000, 197, note on *Am.* 280 (Roman punishment); 193, note on *Am.* 257 on Roman notion of *clementia*.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. *Ps.* 387-8; 720-1; cf. Sharrock, 1996, *passim*; & Moore, 1998, 76, on *Mil.* (cf. 3.2., above.) Scholars differ about the strength and purpose of the slave-audience alignment. For some it is crucial to the provision of a 'safe' Freudian release provided by the plays (e.g. Parker, 1989, 246). Others believe the Roman audience would have viewed all the plays' characters as alien; thus distanced they would observe the slave rebellions without any sense of threat (Anderson, 1996, 141).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 182.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *As.* 267-271. Of course, the alignment in immorality between the masters and slaves might partly be explained by the fact that the masters are also 'foreigners' (thus inferior to the Romans). Some humour probably derived from this. However, just as the slaves' foreign ethnicity is undermined in the plays, so is their masters'; metatheatre makes it clear that the foreign settings are only a joke, which might facilitate some ridiculous aspect of the plot, but by no means allows the Roman audience to distance themselves from the characters, nor the points which are being made in the plays.



slaves: the one which paradoxically hoped for sentimental loyalty in ‘bad’ (and badly treated) slaves. So, for example, in *Epidicus*, the eponymous *servus callidus* demonstrates his incorrigible qualities in two plotting monologues, and, in between them, interacts with his young master. Ungrateful Stratippocles speaks of beating the slave and then unreasonably demands his loyal service – no matter what the cost. His ridiculous ‘sentimental’ expectations (he really thinks Epidicus can be emotively influenced into serving him in order to prevent his death) are outdone by the ridiculous fact that bad Epidicus agrees to do as he wants. The audience could not have helped laughing at such incongruity – even if it did reflect a contradiction in their own ideology<sup>16</sup>.

But if Plautus did sometimes highlight contradictory aspects of Roman slave ideology, at other times he appears to have emphasised a curious Roman reality. Despite the seeming impossibility, sentimental loyalty (not the incongruous loyalty of a plotting *servus callidus* for his accomplice master) could be found in slaves. That this must have been so is made clear by the fact Plautus assumes his audience will recognize pictures of the truly faithful slave. Thus, in *Aulularia*, though foolish Euclio insists on stereotyping Staphyla as a rogue, the audience is expected to perceive his error. Staphyla shows attachment to her young mistress, identifying with her in her trouble, acting as her confidant. And the girl calls out for her when in labour – there is a strong bond between them. In *Miles*, too, the spectators are supposed to believe in Palaestrio’s loyalty to Pleusicles; indeed, it is essential to the plot that Palaestrio remains faithful to his old master, alerting him to the whereabouts of his girl and helping to rescue her. They all go home together – a quasi-family<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> 81ff; 158ff; 120-123; 139-140; 146-150. Cf. *Poen.* 129-151; in which Agorastocles & Milphio converse. Agorastocles attempts to use sentimental persuasion to secure the help of his slave in a ‘tricky’ situation, but Milphio notes how ridiculous this is. Though Agorastocles speaks emotively now, at other times he treats Milphio as a mere slave, worthy of no sentimental consideration.

<sup>17</sup> *Aul.* 39ff; 74-76; 271-277; 691; 806-7; *Mil.* 99-133; 1192-3. NB Pleusicles, grateful for the help with Philocomasium, promises Palaestrio freedom at 1193-4; shortly afterwards Pyrgopolynices echoes this promise (1205-7). Two parallel households are set-up – one false, one true – and the parody of a tragic dissolution of a home, created as Palaestrio and Philocomasium pretend to take sorrowful leave of the soldier, acts as a foil to what really happens – the joyful reunification of the other household trio, Pleusicles, Palaestrio and Philocomasium. Cf. *Mer* 681-684; 808-9; & *Men* in which Messenio serves his master(s) very well. There is a good deal of irony in this – i.e. Messenio’s loyalty is slightly misplaced when he rescues EM thinking that he is SM, and he *is* motivated by a hope of freedom. But note that he still hopes to stay with his master after his release. He fully identifies with him (966ff; 1000-1010; 1031-4; cf. McCarthy, 2000, 49).

How many of Plautus' spectators would have pondered upon these pictures of 'loyalty', realising that they undermined the cultural concept of inherent moral inferiority in slaves, is perhaps debatable. Some may have been prompted to acknowledge the 'smallness' of the gap between the slave and the free – especially on occasions when Plautus specifically challenged them to do this. In *Epidicus*, for instance, Plautus ironically allows a muddled citizen to segregate two girls – on the grounds of glib cultural prejudice – only to find out later that he has made a terrible mistake. (Neither of the girls referred to are freeborn maidens, something the *senex* fails to recognize, despite his belief in obvious social differentiation<sup>18</sup>.) And in *Captivi*, Plautus famously explored the subject at length, raising questions about master-slave relationships and 'family sentiment', as well as about the identity and characteristics of slaves.

*Captivi*, like *Rudens*, has been described as one of Plautus' more refined plays<sup>19</sup>. It tells the story of a diligent father seeking to recover his lost son. The prologue, like the prologue to *Rudens*, promises elements typical of plays in the sentimental comic mode. It speaks of a selfless father, who has suffered the loss of two sons and who is prepared to sacrifice wealth to redeem the one whose whereabouts is known (Philopolemus is an Aetolian prisoner of war in Elis and Hegio hopes to arrange a swap between him and Philocrates, one of the Elean POWs he himself has just bought). It draws attention to the workings of 'chance'/the gods (indicating there will be a lucky, 'unplanned' outcome for the characters). And it states that the play will have a more elevated tone than other comedies (22; 51; 30-2; 42-45; 53-58). The play itself then treats the audience to several passages in which sentimental virtues are paraded. The mutual *fides* of Hegio's two POWs, Tyndarus and his master, Philocrates, is stressed; Tyndarus agrees to remain in captivity in Philocrates' place, suffering undeservedly, even to death, for his master's sake; and the play ends with a cocktail of sentimental emotion, as the elated Hegio discovers that 'happy' chance has reunited him with both

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<sup>18</sup> 400-403; the play continues to explore the theme, noting, for example, that the music girl, Acropolistis, really does have a mother, although she is no pukka citizen. Despite society's artificial class segregation, all humans are the same (699-701).

<sup>19</sup> McCarthy, 2000, 167; Franko, 1995b, 174; cf. Segal, 1987, 191ff. (Segal disputes the idea).

of his sons – and spares some moments to reflect on chained Tyndarus’ heroic sufferings, inflicted by Hegio himself, when he had no idea that this particular ‘slave’ was his son (229-230; 238-9; 682-8; 739-744; 938-940; 945-946; 922-925; 994; 1006).

But just as Plautus uses his prologue to *Rudens* to set up and manipulate audience expectation, so does he also use the prologue to *Captivi*. The promise of a sentimental comic plot is thwarted, twisted *and* fulfilled in the course of the entertainment. Conflicting currents can be felt even within the prologue itself. To begin with there is a good deal of talk about a ‘slave deception’ – a device which pertains to farce, rather than to the sentimental mode. Then the speaker also mentions the play’s elevated tone (something that might be expected in tragedy). Subsequent reassurances that, despite the wartime setting, the work will *not* be tragic, sound like overdone protestations (35-49; 58-62). As soon as the play itself starts, these contrary currents become stronger. The prologue’s promises are ironically challenged. The first character to appear acknowledges that he is called ‘*scortum*’, although the prologue stated there would be no such low characters in the plot (57; 69). Then, as Hegio becomes embroiled in his son/slave’s deception, he begins to act as a tragic hero, expressing confidence in his own plan in a manner that amounts to hubris, before reacting with bitter violence when his proud hopes are dashed (498-501; 653-681; 691-694; 751-765). Finally, the ‘happy’ conclusion to the play is equally mixed. The audience is provided with an onstage reunion of a father and his two sons, surpassing the sentimentality of some plots. They also see the reunion of the faithful master and slave. But the sentimental moment is undermined in several ways. Philopolemus adds bathos, cutting short his father’s ecstatic and emotive commentary (928-9; 931-5); and Tyndarus’ greeting for Philocrates is not very warm (1009). And there is the problem of another slave, Stalagmus.

Stalagmus is the slave who originally kidnapped Tyndarus, selling him into slavery. ‘Chance’ brings about his capture at the end of the play, just as it reunites Hegio and his two sons. In some respects this seems very neat. Stalagmus takes the punishment for all the play’s ills – assuaging Hegio’s guilt, by taking Tyndarus’ chains upon himself (1025-8). Since he is apparently the epitome

of the bad slave, this potentially *feels* very satisfying<sup>20</sup>. However, the difficulty is that there are uncomfortable parallels between the men who exchange the chains. Tyndarus was stolen as a child and sold for use in another man's house. This was a wicked act. But it seems that his evil kidnapper was also a child victim of slavery – it is implied that he was *someone's* catamite<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, though Stalagmus does a good job of creating the typical slave persona in the few lines he has – he is 'witty'; he accepts punishment as his due (955-7; 961; 963-4; 971-975; 985; 1028) – Tyndarus has been onstage, in obvious bondage, for much longer. And at times *he* has seemed to suit the slave role admirably<sup>22</sup>. In some respects, he is very like Stalagmus. The final moment, when the chains are loaded onto Stalagmus, is therefore not as straight forward as it seems. Consequently, the conclusion's sentiment is not the only element to be undermined; the punitive moment is simultaneously brought into doubt.

Importantly, the joint ironic treatment of punitive and sentimental themes is not confined to the end of *Captivi*. Right from the play's beginning, punishment and sentiment are treated as concurrent motifs, as Plautus explores the question of sons and slaves and the 'differences' between them. Thus Tyndarus is onstage in chains, a visible reminder of 'punishment', as the prologue explains the plot, stressing that a son has come home without being recognized, to take up the position of a slave in his father's house (Note how a sentimental device is evoked and inverted; Tyndarus' homecoming has been abortive – he has been 'punished' for it: 1-6; 21; 29). The prologue also

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<sup>20</sup> Stalagmus' characterisation is interesting. He does not have time to form an alliance with the audience and does not escape punishment as comic slaves usually do. They are 'bad', but their entertaining alliance with spectators somehow makes them forgivable. But it has been suggested that Stalagmus represents a truly evil slave. Cf. Konstan, 1986a, 70-1; Franko, 1995b, 174; Moore, 1998, 193-4.

<sup>21</sup> 967. It is tempting to assume that Hegio himself exploited the boy Stalagmus, but this is not necessarily fact. Hegio may simply be throwing out a common insult, implicating the slave in a demeaning emasculating role. Whether or not Tyndarus, too, was actually sold by Stalagmus for the sexual satisfaction of his masters is also debatable. The point may be that he *might* have been, for although the text insists that he was treated well as a child, this only emphasises the fact that the part he plays in the plot is emasculating – he is like a typical *pseudomeretrix*, a displaced girl-child, who is rescued by chance from a life of ignominy, usually having just managed to retain her respectability (compare 992 *Capt.*, *bene pudiceque educates...* with *Cas.* 44/79-83). Cf. Leigh, 2004, 90-91; Segal, 1987, 211-212; Moore, 1998, 70-1; McCarthy, 2000, 180. NB McCarthy disputes that there is any suggestion of an erotic relationship between the adult Tyndarus and Philocrates, saying that such homosexuality would have been incongruous in both Greek New Comedy and a Roman play.

<sup>22</sup> For examples of moments when Tyndarus speaks like a *servus callidus* see 266-269; 274-6; 516ff, in particular 529-31.

explains how Hegio's love for his other son, Philopolemus, has induced him, in true sentimental fashion, to disregard wealth<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately, he has used his money to buy Tyndarus, binding him as his slave, in ignorance of their family relationship (27-34). One brother's 'happy' freedom is to be purchased at the expense (punishment) of the other's, though there is little difference between them<sup>24</sup>.

As the plot gets underway, this act of inept discrimination continues to be subjected to ironic commentary. And it becomes obvious that Hegio's unwitting error is not an isolated one. It is remarked that all slaves desire to be free; in their own homes they *are* free. They want to go home, to their own country, and may be prepared to risk punishment by running away (119-124; 197-208). This naturally highlights the supreme irony of Tyndarus' punitive homecoming (he has *not* achieved freedom in his own home). But it also brings the general ideological basis of slavery into significant doubt. Hegio's whole purpose in buying his new slaves is to secure his own son's 'escape' – to bring him home. Yet he sticks to his legal right to punish the men he has bought, and to prevent their getaway attempts. As the slave overseer remarks, everything a master does is right, even when he is wrong (200). Hegio thinks he can decide who is a slave and who not, who 'deserves' captivity and who does not, on the basis of *his* subjective emotion and power as a master. He identifies some people as 'family' and worthy of respect, freedom, and a sentimental homecoming, whilst others he places beyond the familial pale.

That Hegio's confidence in his system of discrimination is misplaced is, of course, made abundantly clear by his failure to recognize Tyndarus. But Plautus goes to great lengths to demonstrate that there is a fundamental problem in hoping to discriminate at all. No-one is really capable of determining who is 'naturally' a slave (deserving of punitive captivity) and who free (worthy of a sentimental family and a home): not Hegio, nor Tyndarus (who is ignorant of his own

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. McCarthy, 2000, 177; 205-6.

<sup>24</sup> When it is explained that Philopolemus is a captive, Philocrates remarks that he and Tyndarus are obviously not the only cowards; Philopolemus' captivity (punishment/subjectation to others' will) is the result of his actions, just like theirs 261-2.

homecoming), nor Philocrates (aptly named ‘lover of power’, who still considers his right to freedom greater than Tyndarus – hence their plan to swap places and trick Hegio into allowing Philocrates to go home), nor, most importantly, the audience, whose expectations are continuously being confused by a swiftly mutating visual and verbal characterisation of both Tyndarus and Philocrates.

It is not only Tyndarus, the twice enslaved freeborn son, who ‘acts’ the part of a *servus callidus* in the play. Philocrates, a new slave, also assumes the role in the play-within-the-play deception put on to fool Hegio. He is the person who arranges everything<sup>25</sup>. With his red hair, he looks the part of a comic slave<sup>26</sup>. He also talks like a slave (e.g. 219-228; 264-276). Tyndarus, meanwhile, pretends to Philocrates’ part, that of a freeborn son, who has only *just* been enslaved, and who is philosophically (and ironically!) aware of the swiftness with which one may change from one status to another (297ff). Of course, the real Philocrates’ recent change in status (from free man to POW) occurred at about the same time as the missing Philopolemus’. The audience will therefore perhaps find it unsurprising that Hegio (who loves Philopolemus as a son and consequently believes he ought to be free) is easily impressed by Tyndarus-Philocrates. He is taken in by the slave’s play-acting and, so long as he is unaware of the deception being practised upon him, credits ‘Philocrates’ (i.e. Tyndarus) with fundamental ‘nobility’, treating him reasonably well<sup>27</sup>. Once he is made aware of the deception, however, he is no longer able to see any nobility in Tyndarus and readily consigns him to even heavier punishment than the captivity he is already in.

For the audience, the irony of Hegio’s change in attitude is immense, multilayered *and* challenging. They have observed him treat Tyndarus with some respect whilst he thought him a son

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<sup>25</sup> Note the irony that Philocrates commands his master, Hegio’s son, as part of their joint scheme to fool that master/father: their alliance is like that of a typical *servus callidus* and rebellious son – cf. Pseudolus and Calidorus.

<sup>26</sup> 647. Cf. Barsby, 2001, 17, note to *Phormio* 50; & cf. *Ps.* 1218.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Franko, 1995b, 158. Hegio trusts ‘Philocrates’ because he is of good family 170; Tyndarus capitalises on this 298-9. Hegio is impressed by both the ‘slave’ and the ‘master’, but is particularly interested in praise of the master 420-421.

(albeit the son of an enemy<sup>28</sup>). They now see him regarding him as a mere deceptive slave. He does this on the evidence of Aristophantes, another of his new slaves. Aristophantes ‘unmasks’ Tyndarus, claiming greater status than him, because, when at home, *he* is freeborn, whilst Tyndarus is only a fatherless slave (544; 574). But the audience knows that Aristophantes has only taken off *one* of Tyndarus’ masks. Tyndarus *is* at home, in the presence of his father. This *ought* to make all the difference by common cultural standards (the cultural standards of the characters in the play and perhaps of the spectators themselves). It does not, simply because Tyndarus’ status and true identity have not been recognized; and they have not been recognized because the play has been intent on demonstrating that slave and freemen do not have such distinctive natures after all. And the spectators are now treated to another twist in the characterisation of Tyndarus. It is shortly after he has gone through his most obvious *servus callidus* scene – frantically trying to persuade Hegio that Aristophantes is mad – and after he has been declared a fatherless slave and earned the most punitive of slave positions in a quarry, that he utters his most impressive, ‘noble’ sentimental speeches, declaring his willingness to die for his master and upholding the idea that he has acted with absolute faith and righteousness (682-744). Meanwhile, Hegio’s ‘tragic’ career reaches its climax. Full of grief for one son and in the belief that his rescue scheme has failed, he blames the other, treating him as badly as possible. The sentimental and punitive themes meet with a clash – and the spectators cannot but be aware of the swift movement from comedy towards tragedy. Indeed, it is possible that this is enhanced for them as Tyndarus assumes his noble role. This, not his *servus callidus* part, is surely his ‘true’ freeborn self... And still Hegio does not recognize him!

The scene’s ironies are mounting up – but Plautus has yet another surprise for his audience. Very significantly, he does not focus on the question of Tyndarus’ individual identity as a son. Instead, he draws attention to Tyndarus’ loyalty to Philocrates as his slave. Faced with Hegio’s wrath, Tyndarus justifies the deception he has just practised on the *senex*, arguing that it was his loyal duty

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<sup>28</sup> Note how, whilst still convinced that he can trust freeborn ‘Philocrates’, Hegio is grandiosely ready to admit that *every* father loves his son., 400.

to preserve his master entrusted to his care, and to send him home to his father. He hopes Philocrates will show him similar loyalty, returning to claim him (682-688; 707-709; 717-720; 695-6; 747-748). Tyndarus' defence depends upon the idea that he has a legitimate, long-term sentimental relationship with Philocrates, which imposes duties upon him that override any duties imposed by Hegio. He presents the picture of an ideal, lasting 'family-style' slave-master relationship that discredits the typical notion of an evil 'outsider' slave, supplanting it with an image of total fidelity. And he challenges Hegio (and the audience!) to admit that *he* admires the picture; that he would like a slave who would show similar loyalty to his family (711-715).

Hegio, interestingly, has already demonstrated a belief in the possibility of devotion between masters and slaves. He was very impressed by Philocrates' and Tyndarus' conversation, when they spoke of their mutual past and obligations, promising fidelity (418-421<sup>29</sup>). He actually concedes Tyndarus' theoretical point now (715). Yet he is still insistent on his right to be angry. The sentimental and punitive forces meet, and the punitive wins, for Hegio no longer believes that the ideal slave can exist for *him*. Having been deceived by Tyndarus, he can only see the evil in him. He consequently has no faith that Philocrates' loyalty to the slave will cause him to return (with Philopolemus, as agreed.) Hegio's problem is that he can only see things from his own perspective. He honours sentimental and idealistic virtues, but only when they prioritise him and his affairs. And he continues to insist on the right of a master to command his slaves, foolishly thinking he may even demand emotional 'loyalty', and believing he has a right to punish harshly any slave who disappoints him (703; 709; 715-721<sup>30</sup>).

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<sup>29</sup> The conversation between Philocrates and Tyndarus is a remarkable piece of metatheatre. The pair have swapped roles, confusing their onstage audience, Hegio. The real audience is aware of the ruse and can laugh at its ironies. And yet some of what Tyndarus says surely represents what he hopes to be the truth. Philocrates, pretending to be Tyndarus, may raise smiles, promising never to be unfaithful to – himself! (425-427). But Tyndarus relies on him to be faithful to his promises, made both in the play-within-the play and in private conversation – when, incidentally, Philocrates admitted the important point that whilst they are both in captivity, the only power he has over Tyndarus is that of sentiment: the memory of past kindness etc. It is evidently a strong power, for Tyndarus is prepared to risk all for it (385-7; 229-248).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Franko, 1995b, 172-173 & Konstan, 1986a, 62-3; 72. Franko notes that Hegio is actually a likeable man, who honours Roman virtues of *beneficia*, *officia*, *gratia* and *fides*. He punishes Tyndarus believing he has disregarded them. Konstan suggests that *Captivi* presents a clash in ethics; the weakness is not in Hegio,



Of course, *Captivi* ostensibly ends ‘happily’. Hegio’s doubts are proved false. Philocrates does return to rescue Tyndarus, affirming their ideal slave-master relationship. He shows that he has been faithful to Hegio, too, bringing the redeemed Philopolemus back with him (930-1; 938-940). Stalagmus has also been picked up, and when he explains what he did with Hegio’s other son, Hegio finally realises who Tyndarus really is. He is to be reunited with both sons and is understandably overcome with emotion. Sentimental forces seem to be more-or-less in control again – until Tyndarus reappears and Plautus provides his audience with a final ‘shock’. Tyndarus does not return a triumphant son and vindicated freed slave, happily eager to greet his father and Philocrates, but as a slave in chains, still speaking of his troubles, still making the bitter witticisms of a *servus callidus* (998-1009). Spectators are reminded of Hegio’s discrimination error – and perhaps of the reason for it: that simplistic cultural ideology to the contrary, it is not easy to distinguish between those who are freeborn and those who are slaves. Their natures are fundamentally the same – potentially worthy of respect, potentially capable of perfidy. Indeed, it seems possible that Plautus increases the irony of the point, wryly suggesting that Hegio has yet to appreciate it. The *senex* admits horror at his mishandling of Tyndarus. But he does this knowing (from others’ evidence) that the ‘slave’ is his freeborn son, who has come home. The knowledge of their relationship suddenly makes Tyndarus’ nobility clear (993-997). It does not, however, go as far as to persuade Hegio that Tyndarus would still have been noble, had he only been Philocrates’ faithful slave. And so, still blinkered by slave ideology, he quickly seizes on the opportunity to transfer Tyndarus’ punishment to Stalagmus.

The significance of this transfer is worth noting. Hegio sees Stalagmus *only* as a fatherless slave. But the discerning amongst the audience may have recognized that Stalagmus is being punished for precisely the same crimes (for betraying Hegio and endangering his son) that Tyndarus has just been acquitted of – simply because he is Hegio’s son. The ‘justice’ of the punitive moment hangs in

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but in the morality of his world, which was ‘fettered by a parochial exclusiveness’ that upheld the ideology behind slavery.

the balance. Theoretically, of course, fatherless slaves were ignoble – pernicious strangers to the sentimental ideal, guiltlessly exploitable as catamites and deserving of punishment. But the play has already shown that such slaves do not really exist: Tyndarus wasn't one; and neither is Stalagmus. He is actually another captive: a Sicilian (887-888). Perhaps if he returned to his own home, he would be treated with consideration there. The curious thing is, however, *he* does not point this out, and – since *his* father is not present – no-one points it out for him. He remains immersed in the part of the stereotyped rogue slave and the play resolves ironically, as he accepts his chains as a just and inevitable reward – in his *master's* home<sup>31</sup>.

The Epilogue to *Captivi* reminds spectators of the play's prologue. It claims – in accordance with one of the prologue's promises – that the play has been exceptionally moral. It has avoided low comic devices (intrigues, plots involving supposititious children etc), typically found in farce. The claim is tongue-in-cheek. The play may not have replicated all the farcical devices overtly, but it has subtly introduced many of them, in clever variations. There has been an intrigue; it did involve a supposititious child<sup>32</sup>. And though the audience may have been presented with an 'improving' tale, which provokes reflection, the play has not religiously conformed to the 'moral' sentimental mode. It has included elements that have challenged or disappointed that plot paradigm. The prologue's promise of 'morality' has thus been fulfilled *and* thwarted in Plautus' typical way. Importantly, two of the prologue's other assertions have been treated in a similar fashion. It was promised that what would happen in the play would be fact on the stage and fiction in reality; and it was stated that war would have no part in the plot – that the play would not be tragic. Whilst, however, there are no battle scenes in *Captivi*, the work is essentially about the displacing effect of international conflict – about a system of slavery which began with the seizure of foreign nationals. The slaves who appear in it are all captives: men who have been torn from their own countries and

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leigh, 2004, 90-91, 97. Discussing the play's evocation of *postliminium* (a legal process that sometimes involved repatriation), Leigh notes the irony that whilst Tyndarus, Philocrates and Philopolemus all achieve a happy *postliminium*, unhappy Stalagmus is the subject of *postliminium*, too, since the process also encompassed an owner's recovery of lost goods.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Segal, 1987, 211-212.

deprived of the right to a 'father'. Their only hope of freedom is to return to their fatherland (208; 300). This system was 'real' enough in the Roman world – on *and* offstage. Of course, *Captivi* is supposedly set in Aetolia, not Rome. On a superficial level this must have created some ironic humour. The Aetolians were considered, by the Romans, to be far from reliable<sup>33</sup>; the play's repeated references to Roman virtues, especially *fides*<sup>34</sup>, would therefore have seemed provocatively incongruous. But on another level the setting merely acts as a convenient cloak: it is a 'fictive' false identity, like the false identities assumed by Tyndarus and Philocrates, in their play-within-a-play. The Roman spectators, who were made party to the captives' deception, were almost certainly aware of the real Roman milieu of the entire play, partially indicated by the specific references to Roman ideas, but, more significantly, perhaps also made obvious by the work's concentration on a topic that was of particular contemporary concern, for both individuals in their families and for the wider community.

Plautus wrote in the context of the Punic Wars. Leigh notes that the capture of Roman soldiers during this conflict created a far-reaching ideological problem for the Romans. There was debate about the right of Roman POWs to return home and reclaim their citizen status. The senate, unwilling to encourage cowardice that would endanger the state, refused to sanction the prisoners' homecoming. They, in effect, insisted on 'punishment'. The populace, however, were governed by feelings of sentiment for the lost members of their families, and wished for their return. The sentimental and punitive clashed and there was potential for a very tragic outcome. (Note how Hegio's moments of bitterness reflect this.) At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century BC, however, T. Quinctius Flaminius, came back to Rome, with numerous former POWs, who had been sold as slaves in Greece and whose release he had achieved. This meant that, despite on-going official prejudice against 'faithless' cowards who betrayed their state by allowing themselves to be

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<sup>33</sup> Franko, 1995b, 155-6.

<sup>34</sup> Franko, 1995b, 155-6, citing *Capt.* 349; 351; 405; 418; 432; 439; 890; 893; 927; 930.

captured, and despite cultural notions concerning the natural inferiority of slaves, large numbers of Romans in Rome during Plautus' era had experienced slavery from both sides<sup>35</sup>.

It appears, then, that in *Captivi*, Plautus tackles a complex topic that was of extreme relevance to his audience. He wryly manipulates a common comic stereotype and, as 'freeborn' men slip in and out of the servile role, he exposes the weaknesses in the cultural concept of inevitable slave inferiority. He shows that slaves can be loyal to their masters (precisely because they are not naturally inferior or without a family sense and are consequently capable of making sentimental bonds). Those Romans in his audience who had had experience of slavery would surely have appreciated this point. However, in introducing disturbances into his 'happy ending' and allowing punitive motifs to clash constantly with (and often overpower) the sentimental, Plautus also seems to acknowledge an ongoing, irresolvable conflict in slave ideology. The senate's refusal to allow the repatriation of Roman POWs after the Punic Wars was greeted with dismay by the POWs' families. They saw their loved ones as individuals, worthy of freedom. Similarly motivated by family sentiment, Hegio always believes that Philopolemus should be able to come home; and once he can see that Tyndarus is his son, he easily recognizes his worth. But if the 'sentimental' was always allowed to have sway, then the familial rights of *every* slave (and every 'traitor' to the state) would have to be recognized – even the rights of the likes of Stalagmus. And that would destabilise the social system. In order for the *status quo* to be preserved, therefore, the punitive still had to have its place. In reality – and also in Plautus' comedy – there could be no 'happy ending' for everyone; some must be denied a place in the sentimental ideal. Of course, it must have helped, if like Stalagmus, they did not *seem* to want or deserve one.

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<sup>35</sup> Leigh, 2004, 60-97, citing (amongst others) Plb. 6.58; Cic. *Off.* 1.39-40; Liv. 22.61.4-10.

### 5.3. Good Neighbours?

Plautus' adaptation of *Captivi* places considerable emphasis on *fides*, suggesting that it plays an important ethical – and often sentimental – part in all social relationships. Without *fides*, Hegio could not have achieved his happy ending. He exercises it himself, remaining loyal to his son Philopolemus, despite his captivity; and he expects others to show it, too. Philopolemus' release depends both upon Tyndarus and Philocrates and their loving faithfulness, and upon Philocrates' father, whom Hegio trusts will show paternal devotion and loyalty, agreeing to redeem *his* son. The resolution of *Captivi* thus results from a *general* atmosphere of idyllic *fides*. That this is so is important, for it is one of the particularly 'Roman' features of the play.

The modern family sentimental ideal has been defined as an ideological concept that pertains to the nuclear family. Its laws, virtues and benefits are all supposed to revolve around the small family group – indeed, for this reason the influential socio-historian Ariès distrusted it: he believed it detrimental to wider communal co-operation<sup>36</sup>. In point of fact, however, even within the modern ideal, sentimental boundaries have proved to be extendible. Servants, employees, friends and 'fictive kin' can be adopted into a quasi-family<sup>37</sup>. And the laws and virtues which govern the family are also expected to govern relationships in wider society: a man's home is not just the place where his family lives, but also his local community and his country. He owes loyalty to and gains benefit from all three places.

What is true of modern society, was also true in Ancient Rome – but more so. Today's society, though it may show some flexibility about certain aspects of sentimentalism, still places importance on individual and family privacy, resenting state interference in this. In Rome distinctions between family, community and state matters were not so clearly defined. The concept of *fides* perhaps reflects this, for it was a virtue that played a part in a highly developed social system, which

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<sup>36</sup> 1965; cf. note 3 Thesis Introduction; Cunningham, 1995, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the plot of *The Shop Around The Corner*, Thesis Introduction 1; for discussion of 'fictive kin' (non-relatives who are accorded honorary family names) cf. Ibsen and Klobus, 1972.

prevented the nuclear family from focusing solely upon itself. It was owed within the nuclear family, but also in the wider family circle, to friends and patrons; to beneficiaries, clients, freemen (like Messenio in *Menaechmus*: 1031-4) and to the state<sup>38</sup>. And it was moral duty, with potential emotional power – confirming its compatibility with sentimental idealism<sup>39</sup>.

That Plautus' Roman audience was prepared to accept that neighbourly love, friendship and loyalty were potentially excellent things, which could be associated with family love, and might contribute to family stability, is demonstrable from some of his plays. The satisfactory running of their plots depends upon arrangements made between friends. Thus in *Cistellaria*, Selenium thanks Syra and Gymnasium for their support, given as if to a family member, before asking for their further help (1-7; 104-105). In *Casina*, Cleostrata and Myrrhina swear devotion to each other. Their pact, of course, sets them in opposition to their husbands, who are also supporting each other, but whose motivation is less pure – Myrrhina's husband, castigated as a bad neighbour and citizen, connives to facilitate his friend's adultery. The bad neighbour and the adulterer suffer ridicule and a telling defeat at the hands of the women: this presumably seemed quite correct to the audience (179-183a; 531-561). And in *Mercator* a similar plot is developed, with two sets of friends and neighbours. The older men's alliance, since its object is again to promote an adulterous relationship, ends disastrously, with Lysimachus regretting the help he has given; whilst young Eutyclus is of

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<sup>38</sup> Bradley, analysing Cicero's letters, suggests that they demonstrate that Cicero regarded some wider relationships in the same light as his nuclear ones: in letters to his brother, Quintus, he refers to their children as though they are common property to both brothers. Bradley, 1991 (1), 183; 185; quoting, for example, *Q.fr.* 5.2.2; 2.12.2. Bradley, incidentally, also refers to *Att.* 1.18, a letter used by Dixon (1992, 29) to demonstrate Cicero's sense of the nuclear family as a haven. Bradley suggests a different interpretation: the letter complains about his *friend*, Atticus', absence, revealing that Cicero's marital relationship failed to satisfy his need for comfort and companionship - he needed friends, too.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Franko, 1995b, 162, note 7 & Burton, 2004, 213; 222-3, & *passim*. Franko states that there were two important Roman meanings of *fides*: it could be a legal 'guarantee' without moral overtones, or reciprocal trust. He suggests that by Plautus' era the word had a clear moral component and was closely connected with the system of *clientela*. Burton notes that, while friendship in Rome was an arena for competition, an opportunity to display magnanimity and to generate status and incur obligation, it could also be highly emotional. Cf. 222-3 for notes on how Plautus directs attention to the theme of friendship and *fides* in *Captivi*; and 229 for Toxilus' appeal to friendship and *fides* in *Per.*, 35; 48.

great service to his friend, Charinus, finding him his girl and ensuring that his relationship with his father improves<sup>40</sup>.

But there are occasions in Plautus' works when the playwright appears to critique the Roman social system of friendship and patronage. A system that involved a moral duty, had an emotional side, and which also brought considerable benefits to certain people, was, like pure sentimentality, bound to be open to exploitation and corruption. Good citizens could find their good faith imposed upon; the friendship duty could become a burden. This point is perhaps made in *Captivi*, a play which is concerned in any case with conflicts in loyalty, but which also gives a considerable part to a parasite – a Greek character type, who in Latin authors possibly came to symbolise the unhealthy aspects of the Roman patronage system<sup>41</sup>. Significantly, it is the parasite, Ergasilus, in *Captivi* who has earned himself the nickname *Scortum* (69) and who, upon his entrance after the prologue, instantly lowers the tone of the play. The name is apt, for like the stereotype *meretrix*, a typical parasite is an 'outsider' who selfishly exploits people who might otherwise enjoy the sentimental family ideal. Ergasilus capably fills the role. Without a proper home of his own, he pretends to a sentimental attachment to Hegio's, but it is all a greedy, self-centred front<sup>42</sup>. Consequently, he is not really to be trusted. The climax of his career in the sentimental theme of the play comes when he announces the homecoming of Philopolemus. Hegio has difficulty believing him – his *fides* is in doubt<sup>43</sup>. And even when it transpires that he is telling the truth, his part in the joy of the homecoming is dubious. He exploits the sentimental moment for his own ends; ruled by his appetite, he endangers the house (literally and metaphorically!) searching for the food to celebrate

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<sup>40</sup> 793-799; 474-498; 969-996. Note 611-666 Eutyclus is put under sentimental pressure to help Charinus. This is perhaps all an ironic parody of sentiment – sentiment that Steele, for instance, would have presented seriously (see how he emphasises the friendship between Bevil and Myrtle in *TCL*). But the audience still has to believe that friendship could motivate Eutyclus to act as he does in order for the plot to make any sense. Cf. Anderson, 1996, 34ff. After arguing that the theme of friendship was well-known and longstanding in ancient literature (he cites Achilles and Patroclus; Orestes and Pylades), Anderson suggests that Plautus toned down its sentimentality in his works.

<sup>41</sup> Damon, 1997, 2 & *passim*; Owens, 2000, 394-5.

<sup>42</sup> E.g.s. of outsider Ergasilus' pretended sentimentality: 148-150; 129-132 (when he shows passing pity for Hegio, only to forget it quickly at the thought of benefit for himself).

<sup>43</sup> 877- 894. Cf. Franko, 1995b, 166.

the return of another of his victims<sup>44</sup>. Importantly, however, he is allowed to remain in the house – there is no punitive ending for Ergasilus. Perhaps Plautus used him to comment ironically on ongoing corruption in Roman society<sup>45</sup> – on those ‘clients’ who pandered to the system and the elite, but who might pose a threat to true sentimentality and *fides*.

Interestingly, however, Plautus did not always employ comic parasite figures in the same way. Gelasimus, the parasite in *Stichus*, provides an intriguing variation. Though he does embody hunger, and does hope to benefit from the happy homecoming of his patrons; and though his disappointment when his hopes are thwarted doubtless did provoke *some* conventional mirth in Plautus’ audience, he is not *merely* a greedy outsider (155ff, 370-401). He speaks several significant, metatheatrical monologues, seeking to engage the spectators’ sympathy, and must therefore have developed a certain bond with them. Owens suggests, in fact, that *Stichus* had a specific political background; it evoked a period in the Punic Wars when the common Roman was suffering from deprivation brought about by the conflict. Starving Gelasimus’ contact with the spectators was thus of prime importance: he was one with them in their troubles<sup>46</sup>. He is not simply the villain in the piece; instead he appears as a plausible victim of exploitation, too. It seems he used to have a place in citizen Antipho’s extended family (574). They have been used to exploiting him; Panegyris still gives him orders – and he is very eager to serve. There is, then, potential for a sense of pathos when his ‘fidelity’ to the family is rejected – when it fails to earn him the meanest place in the family (even the slaves mock him). He is excluded and despised and concludes that there is no more goodwill and human kindness in the world (150-1; 327; 347-356; 397; 636).

How much pity (as well as mirth) Gelasimus’ exclusion actually aroused in the Roman audience is perhaps disputable. Spectators may have considered that the parasite earned his punishment by

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<sup>44</sup> 780, 843-5, 909-921.

<sup>45</sup> Note that as Ergasilus makes his overdone announcement about Philopolemus, Hegio compares him to a Roman aedile, 823. Cf. Fraenkel, 2007, 90-91.

<sup>46</sup> Owens, 2000, 397 & *passim*.



former acts of exploitation<sup>47</sup>. But the fact that the overt ‘Roman’ virtue of his patrons proves to be superficial and that the work ends with their household slaves revelling in a very un-Roman orgy, perhaps suggests that the audience was not intended to sympathise hugely with the family’s punitive attitude towards the parasite either<sup>48</sup>. Plautus’ hyper-hellenization and system of multi-cultural layering probably played an essential role at this point. At one level, Plautus’ original spectators were, perhaps, directed to laugh at the ‘Greek’ revels and the fashion in which they overturned Roman standards. But at another, they were also encouraged to identify with Gelasimus – though he, too, was *supposedly* ‘Greek’. As usual, Plautus overdoes and undermines his Greek settings. He does not allow his audience to distance themselves from the play’s action. Consequently the spectators must have recognized that they could not simply dismiss the play’s characters as untrustworthy Greeks, who inevitably failed to honour Roman social standards. Instead they possibly viewed them as wry images of bad Romans (clients *or* patrons), who failed in their duty to their fellow citizens.

*Stichus* is not the only play in which Plautus uses a parasite whilst making a point about general corruption in contemporary society. The theme is explored again in *Curculio* – a play which also demonstrates the playwright’s ability to manipulate the conventions of his own genre in order to communicate a certain message. Metatheatre plays a typically important part in the work. In a curious mid-play interruption, a *choragus* appears and addresses the audience, describing the stage setting so that it sounds very like the Roman forum (462-484<sup>49</sup>). Any superficial ‘foreign’ atmosphere is thus undermined: this play has direct relevance to the Roman spectators. As the *choragus* talks the audience through the scene, he draws attention to spots on the stage (i.e. in the

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<sup>47</sup> NB: 574-576; 628. Gelasimus seems to have contributed to the previous misfortune of the families. Cf. Damon, 1997, 71-4 & Owens, 2000, 398. Damon does not believe Plautus intended Gelasimus to arouse the Romans’ pity, but Owens argues that the fact that Gelasimus is excluded from a party (that is organised along very Roman lines), in favour of a group of ambassadors (490-1), acts as a telling topical allusion. The spectators would have sympathised with Gelasimus, having recently suffered themselves from arrangements made between the ruling elite and Greek ambassadors, which were not favourable to the welfare of the average Roman.

<sup>48</sup> 446, 670, cf. 2.6 & 3.6. above on the superficial virtue of Antipho and his family.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 127; 131-139.

forum!), which are generally haunted by various low characters, including usurers and *meretrices*. These people are, in most comic plots, representative outsiders to the sentimental ideal – exploiters, who live by preying on anyone in the community who is foolish enough to tolerate and rely on them. The Roman audience might expect such personalities to earn retribution in a play (and they might wish that their real life prototypes would earn it, too). But *Curculio*, whilst sometimes satisfying the audience's expectations by following a standard line, contains a number of inversions and surprises.

To begin with, the usual role of a *servus callidus* is not taken by a slave in this play, but by the eponymous parasite<sup>50</sup>. Importantly, Curculio retains certain parasitical characteristics, returning home, very hungry and ready to exploit his patron (305-325. Note how Plautus ironically parodies the sentimental homecoming motif). But then he quickly slips into the slave's role, directing a typical farcical deception plot, which starts with the outwitting of a *miles*, and aims to free a girl from a pimp, whilst simultaneously fooling a banker. Curculio's victims are, of course, more examples of stereotypical 'faithless' exploiters. The *miles* lives by a grasping profession, boasts falsely (exploiting credulity) and is linked with the pimp when described as a trader in kidnapped maidens (e.g. 437- 452; 573, 620-621). The pimp, interestingly, is in bad health; perhaps his condition reflects his corrupt lifestyle (and the corruption of any other exploiter in the plot: 216ff; see, in particular, 234 for corruption). And the banker is occupied with greedy self-aggrandising ideas, wishing to keep himself well-fed and to use his monetary gains to his own advantage (371-383). That they should all fall prey to Curculio is to be expected. They earn conventional 'comic' punishment in a conventional way – and Curculio unleashes a diatribe against exploitive trades that seems to highlight this point (494-511<sup>51</sup>).

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<sup>50</sup> Note how this role-swap causes metatheatrical confusion: Curculio is mistaken for a slave by another of the characters (623).

<sup>51</sup> Note that this diatribe comes shortly after the *choragus*/property manager's speech, which lends it some force: its comments might be applied to real corruption in the Roman forum.

But Curculio's dual characterisation as a parasite and *servus callidus* has prepared the way for a 'twist' in the plot. A typical *servus callidus* usually plans his deceptions out of sheer devilry and a desire to please his young master. But a parasite serves his own ends: his purpose is to exploit, not serve. Consequently, the person who fools the *miles* and denounces the pimp and the banker in this play, arranging for their punishment, is in fact an exploiter himself. Indeed, he has already admitted trading on another person's appetite (as bankers and pimps do) for his own profit: he sat by whilst the *miles* got drunk and then stole a ring from him (349-363). It seems, therefore, that there is a circle of corruption in this play – and Curculio is at the centre of it<sup>52</sup>. And the ultimate irony is that his primary victims are *possibly* less treacherous than he. Both the pimp and the banker actually keep to their bargains (549-550, 566). This is all to Curculio's benefit; their 'honourable' actions assure the success of his plan. His diatribe against them is thus highly ironic. It exploits conventional distrust of pimps and bankers, directing attention away from the parasite's own actions, which are similar to and outdo theirs. As one finger points towards them, accusing them of corruption (and, of course, they *are* corrupt at heart: they keep their word at some points, but hope to wriggle out of it at others: 679-85; 709-711), four are directed back at Curculio – and *perhaps*, teasingly, at the Roman audience, in whose presence this play is being performed.

Meanwhile, a complementary theme has been running in the play. Attention is not simply focused on 'outsiders' in Roman society and comedy, like *milites*, pimps, bankers and parasites, but also upon the 'approved' family – the seat of sentimental values – and the part it plays in society. Curculio steals the ring from the *miles* to help his patron gain a girl. In the opening scene that patron had a conversation with a slave, in which he protested his love for the girl, and in which the slave, fearful that his master was contemplating an illicit sexual liaison (i.e. one that society would not approve, nor sentimental morals condone), warned the master that he risked losing his power to 'witness' (27-30). There is sexual innuendo and some superficial humour in this. But the use of

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<sup>52</sup> The pimp, when he first appears, is hailed as the fount of iniquity (234); however, his subsequent description of his ailments (236-8) is later matched by Curculio, as he describes how *he* feels, when 'starving' (i.e. ready to begin ravenous exploitation: 317-319). Curculio is thus equated with the source of iniquity.

metaphorical language also makes a 'serious' thematic point. The family is projected as a sacred institution: anyone who offends against it, by engaging in a self-gratifying (i.e. exploitive) affair, risks losing 'legal' credibility. He becomes an outsider, one whose *fides* is in doubt. This legal metaphor and theme recurs later in the plot. The *miles* turns up, bereft of his ring, but determined to gain justice for himself. When it is suggested that Curculio can act as a witness against him, the *miles* objects, thinking Curculio is a slave (621-623). The earlier reference to 'witnessing' (with its sexual innuendo) lends this 'mistake' added significance – proving that the *miles*' assessment is not very far from the mark. If Curculio were a slave, he would have no legal right either to propagate a socially approved family, nor to bear witness in society. He would be treated as a faithless outsider; he would be in the same position as a man who has offended against the family, society and its values. This is very appropriate, for though Curculio is not a slave, he *has* been playing a stereotyped slave's part – and is hardly a faithful witness. And as a parasite, he epitomises all the 'outsider' characters in the play, who live by exploiting, undermining and corrupting society, and endangering the family at its centre<sup>53</sup>.

With wry irony, Plautus includes a sentimental reunion in this play. The family is, seemingly, reaffirmed in the midst of all the corruption. A sister is reunited with her brother (the *miles*) and granted the right to marry her lover (Curculio's patron). Very significantly, she implies that her good fortune is a result of her loyal, upright behaviour, and the fact that she has honoured family *pietas* (639-41). She claims, in other words, that she has been rewarded for her *Roman* virtue. Unfortunately, however, her claims do not seem to carry as much weight as they ought. They don't ensure a full-blown sentimental ending to the play, for the girl remains associated with Curculio's circle of corruption. She belonged to the pimp; it was for her sake that the ring was stolen by

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<sup>53</sup> The language of legality and of bargains and binding arrangements between individuals actually recurs constantly through the play. For examples see: 4-6; 139; 162-164; 564-5; 679-85; 709-711. Cf. Moore, 1998, 126-139. In a work about 'corruption', the question of whether a person will keep faith, or exploit the trust placed in him, is of obvious thematic importance.

Curculio; it confirms her relationship with the *miles*<sup>54</sup>; and after her marriage has been arranged, Curculio muscles in, exploiting the incipient sentimental moment and demanding a dinner invitation and an allowance for life (659-661; 664). The circle continues to spin round – and the play does not close with a family-centred scene. It returns, instead, to the question of the pimp and the opportunity to get money out of him. And by now *he* is trying to back out of the bargains he has made (666ff). Exploitation continues in society, despite the girl's *pietas*...

Perhaps Plautus was making a point about Roman virtue: it was all very well for an individual to make loud promises of pious good faith. But for such faith to be of any use it needed to be sincere and to extend from the family (the microcosm of society), to the forum and throughout the wider community. Otherwise the field would lie wide open to the damaging onslaught of cheerful exploiters like Curculio.

But if Plautus did use *Curculio* to challenge his original audience about potential corruption in their community, in *Trinummus* he appears to have had a different social problem in mind. *Trinummus* has been described by some critics as one of Plautus' more ethical works; indeed, Segal found it excessively moralistic<sup>55</sup>. Like the comic's other plays, however, *Trinummus* contains many surprises – and evidence of wry generic manipulation. To begin with, the short prologue (1-22) is provokingly vague. It mentions Plautus as the directing translator of the work, and simply informs the audience that one of the stage houses is inhabited by a youth who has squandered his father's wealth. This might have prepared experienced spectators to expect a farcical deception plot along the lines of *Mostellaria*. They may have eagerly awaited the appearance of a feckless *adulescens*, still keen to get hold of money for his own uses. But the play disappoints expectation; one of its key jokes is that at no point does such a character materialize. Instead, a series of well-meaning people appear. The first onstage after the prologue is a *senex*, Megaronides, who affirms a man's duty to castigate his friends, before delivering a monologue against a general moral decline, which he says

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<sup>54</sup> Note that when the girl associates the ring with her parents, claiming that she was freeborn, Curculio comments wryly that so are many people that end up as slaves; all humanity is open to exploitation 601-7.

<sup>55</sup> Segal, 1987, 214ff; Anderson, 1979, 333.

is evidenced by the fact men are more intent to curry favour rather than to act in proper friendship. He intends to break the trend (23-38).

The work now seems to be slipping towards the sentimental mode: it has introduced a didactic theme, with a Roman flavour (cf. reference to *fides*, 27). But Plautus is still playing with expectations. Though many might have assumed that Megaronides' speech was aimed specifically at the youth mentioned in the prologue, it turns out that he is talking about another *senex*, Callicles, instead. The two meet and the play twists again, experiencing a short relapse into conventional farcical humour of a misogynistic nature, which disturbs the incipient sentimental tone – something which is perhaps acknowledged with a self-conscious remark about joking<sup>56</sup>. Only after that does Megaronides progress to remonstrate with his friend. And there then follows a brief exchange with significant metatheatrical potential. Callicles questions whether Megaronides is speaking to him. Megaronides responds that he has to be – there is no-one else present whom he could address (68-70). But, of course, the audience *is* there to hear him (did the actor scan the auditorium as he spoke about being 'alone' with his friend? That would have made the remark very amusing.) The distance between the stage and audience is narrowed: the spectators are aligned with Callicles as Megaronides' auditors; his criticisms *may* therefore apply to them...

This being so, Plautus' audience may have been hugely relieved (as well as amused and surprised) a few moments later when Callicles proves equal to the task of defending himself. Once the scene is over, Megaronides is left to speak another monologue, in which he acknowledges he was mistaken about Callicles (199-222). Ironically, however, he continues to level accusations at society in general (are the audience targeted again?) He now accuses it of being stupidly gossipy and officious. Interestingly, he does not exonerate himself (203) and this is wise (perhaps unwittingly), not simply because – as he says – he was deceived by gossip about Callicles, but also because he has not yet given up on officious behaviour himself.

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<sup>56</sup> 39-66, particularly 66; cf. Anderson, 1979, 334-335.

His conversation with Callicles (72-198) has just demonstrated this. Superficially it was very flattering to the pair of them; their friendship relationship seems to be an idyllic one of give and take. But there is an ironic undertone – a sense that no matter how hard one tries to reach approved standards of faithful friendship, some ridiculous human frailty will always create a pitfall. Megaronides asks Callicles if he has a wise friend. Callicles does not reply exactly; he says he has some acquaintances whose true feelings he cannot ascertain, but that he is sure of Megaronides' friendly intentions (i.e. not of his wisdom 89-94). The audience is thus prepared to expect good will from Megaronides, but not necessarily sagacity! Callicles also points out how difficult it is for a man to keep clear of the suspicions of his neighbours (77-87; 104-105), before going on to protest his *fides* to Charmides – the father of the youth mentioned in the prologue (142; 164; cf. 117 when Callicles is accused of breaking that faith). And at this point the difficulty humans have in keeping up a good appearance is clearly demonstrated. Despite his protestations of fidelity, Callicles breaks Charmides' trust, telling Megaronides a secret, in order to clear himself of suspicion of ill-doing<sup>57</sup>. Then he makes a pact with Megaronides, to continue to oversee Charmides' affairs and Charmides' son – who, importantly, has been described disparagingly (116; 131-132; 165). During all of this, Megaronides, eager to hear everything and to be involved (as, of course, the audience must be, too!) has hardly proved himself wisely innocent of busybody behaviour (145; 162; 189-198).

As the play progresses, the accuracy of Megaronides' speech about 'gossipy' society continues to be tested. There is a sense in which his statement appears to be justified; practically everyone who appears in the play is concerned with other people's business. However, the officious behaviour is perhaps not *quite* as 'bad' as Megaronides painted it: it is all ludicrously well-meant. The *senex* is replaced on stage by Lysiteles – not *the adulescens* (the audience's expectancy is being played with again), but a friend of his. He discourses on the dangers of 'love' and, unlike the typical comic youth, rejects it in favour of faith, honour and public favour (223-276). This break from

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<sup>57</sup> 140-145; 153-5; & note the metatheatre at 146-7 & 151-2, which emphasises the fact that the secret is being spread in the audience's presence! Also cf. irony at 192: after all has been told, Megaronides encourages Callicles to remain faithful.

convention is well-rubbed in as Lysiteles' father follows him on stage and complains, *à la* Megaronides, of lax moral standards. This, though very conventional in a comic *pater*, is hilariously officious and inappropriate, as Lysiteles is a paragon of obedience and duty and hardly merits the lecture (277-317).

Lysiteles goes on to propose a good turn that he can do for an impoverished friend. He will marry the man's sister without taking a dowry (note the sentimental potential in this idea: it eschews money in favour of benevolence). But this leads to a clash of wills with the friend, Lesbonicus (627ff; cf 442ff when Lesbonicus is first approached about the idea). It transpires that he, at last, *is* the youth spoken about in the prologue and by Megaronides and Callicles – but, contrary to expectation, he is not half as dissolute as has been suggested. He may have made mistakes in the past (though it seems that imprudent generosity and youth *may* have been to blame for that: 326-338; 425-30; 665-7), but he is a reformed character now, as concerned about honour and reputation as Lysiteles. Lesbonicus, too, thus overturns the grasping stereotype for an *adulescens* and – with much noble sentiment – refuses to profit by Lysiteles' offer (505-511; 639; 680-685; 697). There seems to be an impasse. And then Plautus provides us with another hilarious twist in conventions. Megaronides and Callicles, the two *senes*, who in the usual plot paradigm would be the victims of a cunning *servus callidus/adulescens* alliance, hatch a typical deception plot (763ff) – inclusive of a shady character in disguise – to hoodwink Lesbonicus, the boy who is supposed to be an untrustworthy rogue. The added irony is that their aim is altruistic – they want to provide the boy's sister with her proper dowry and yet to preserve the appearance of well-doing (729-747; 765). They act in good faith, not realising that the deception is unnecessary: they could have trusted Lesbonicus<sup>58</sup>. Misunderstanding, prejudice *and* an overwhelming desire to help has led to them adopting the role of deceitful rogues themselves (748-55; 810-812; 787). Once more they are 'guilty' (though unwittingly) of the officious crimes outlined in Megaronides' second monologue.

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Anderson, 1979, 344.



The deception plot comes to nothing in the end as Charmides, Lesbonicus' father, comes home and interrupts it (note how his sentimental homecoming is farcically disrupted in the process, 820ff). Explanations are made. Charmides' fears (1094-95) are allayed; he accepts that Callicles *has* been a faithful friend (1096; 1098; 1125-1129). And eventually he is reunited with his son; he gets a very proper home-welcome from him (1180). The sentimental mode seems to be triumphing at last – until Charmides suddenly speaks of marrying his son off as a punishment (1181-1186). This last minute misogynistic comment disturbs the sentimental romance again<sup>59</sup>.

What would Plautus' Roman spectators have made of all of this? Would they simply have been amused by his manipulation of his genre's conventions – at his adaptation of a Greek play that provides a see-sawing, expectation-busting experience, hovering between the sentimental and the farcical? Critics have argued that the source work for *Trinummus* was much more sentimental. It probably presented a story which tackled ethical questions, and which had a clear love theme – a conflict plot in which Lysiteles truly loves Lesbonicus' sister and struggles to achieve a marriage with her that will not impinge on important moral issues such as honour and friendship<sup>60</sup>. Plautus deliberately works to reduce the sentimental elements. The misogynistic ending of the work is only the last move in his plan. Any love the original Lysiteles may have shown has already been written out: Plautus' Lysiteles never shows great interest in the girl he offers to marry; he is more concerned about *appearing* to do good to a friend and gaining honour, than experiencing any sort of 'love' (266- 275; 344-8; 379-383; 698-704; Note the irony of 712<sup>61</sup>). The ethics of 'friendship' thus remains an important theme (introduced by Megaronides in the first scene and explored by the younger men later on), but it is parodied – made ridiculous by over-emphasis.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Anderson, 1979, 334-5.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, 1979, 334, 343 & *passim*; Anderson, 1996, 41-45; Muecke, 1985, 169; 173; cf. Fantham, 1977, 410ff, referring to Arist. *EN*. 9 (Fantham suggests that the original play may not have been written by a playwright keen to make a moral argument; Philemon may just have taken inspiration from Aristotle, since it provided him with interesting material.)

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Anderson, 1979, 336.

Moore theorises that in introducing more farce into the play Plautus was making a point to his Roman audience. Theatre should not primarily be about sententious moralising, but entertainment<sup>62</sup>. There may be some truth in this. Plautus' habit of disrupting traditional sentimental plot paradigms and motifs suggests that he was critical of his genre, that he could see ludicrous elements in neat sentimental plots. Unrealistic, didactic 'Greek' drama was ripe for burlesque, and the Roman audience possibly appreciated this point. However, so many of Plautus' plays do contain challenging messages, which prevent the Roman audience from distancing themselves from the action, that it is hard to believe that *Trinummus* does not do the same thing. Plautus is capable of both laughing at his genre – with its 'Greek' elements – and pointing a finger at his spectators at the same time. Metatheatre again plays a part in this. When Lysiteles and Lesbonicus are at the height of their argument about which of them has the moral prerogative to show friendship, he provides an onstage audience in the slave, Stasimus (622-626; 705-708<sup>63</sup>). Stasimus' presence encourages the real spectators to recognize a ridiculous, potentially contradictory, aspect of 'ethical' friendship – an aspect with which Plautus assumed his Roman spectators (for whom he specifically altered the play<sup>64</sup>) were familiar. Indeed, their social system, which placed moral obligations on patrons and clients, which lauded mutual *fides*, but which also hoped to derive public honour and 'benefit' from friendship, probably gave particular emphasis to the moral debate<sup>65</sup>.

Friendship is, idyllically, a 'sentimental' relationship between individuals – people like Callicles and Charmides, who share secrets, and Lysiteles and Lesbonicus, who want to benefit each other. But since it was also considered a 'moral' issue in Greek *and* Roman society, society (which determines cultural standards) constantly passed judgment on it. Lysiteles and Lesbonicus run into difficulties because they cannot conduct their affairs in private – they are only too aware that they

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<sup>62</sup> Moore, 1998, 81-90.

<sup>63</sup> Moore, 1998, 85-6.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Segal, 1987, 215-217, commenting on Plautus' directive voice in the prologue, 8-9; 18-21. Note, too, Callicles' reference to the Capitoline statue (84) in the midst of the initial discussion about faithful behaviour, friendship and public opinion: this debate is very Roman.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Megaronides' remarks 30-38; & Burton, 2004, 213 & *passim*.

will be judged for their actions. And they both want to be judged well. Stasimus acts as their initial judge. The metatheatrical nature of his actions points to two flaws in the ‘real-life’ friendship system parodied in the play. Firstly, any friendship that is conducted partly in order to win public praise, risks falling into artificiality (or being accused of falling into it!). A man may simply assume the role of ‘friend’, for his *own* benefit and for the benefit of an audience (Stasimus *and* the ‘real’ spectators who watch the ‘play’ with him – and are watching their fellow men in real life). This brings heartfelt sentiment into doubt<sup>66</sup>. Secondly, any judgments made by an audience about a friendship are likely to be biased. Stasimus draws conclusions about Lysiteles’ and Lesbonicus’ debate in accordance with his own concerns and prejudices – though he means no particular harm to either of the *adulescentes* (716-724; cf. 512-561).

This takes us back to the first scene between Megaronides and Callicles, in which ‘faithful’ Callicles wryly pointed out how difficult it is to keep clear of suspicion; and in which Megaronides complained firstly of people who try to curry favour and then of officious gossips – whilst the well-meaning pair busily exchange news themselves, making ‘false’ judgements about Lesbonicus. The biggest joke in *Trinummus* is that all the characters in the play *want* to behave well; they all want to *appear* to behave well; they all *do* behave well – in comparison with other comic characters. And yet they all have a tendency to think badly of other people (e.g. 30-38; 199-211; 283-286; 620; 630; 1051-2; 1055-6; 1112). In the process of interacting with and judging their fellow men (measuring their apparent behaviour by preconceived ideal standards), they get inadvertently embroiled in misunderstandings and deceptions (Megaronides and Callicles deceive themselves about Lesbonicus’ character and therefore plan to deceive him<sup>67</sup>!), laying themselves open to the charges of hypocrisy. Will the audience judge them ‘properly’?

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<sup>66</sup> NB the irony is that Stasimus has already been used to highlight the pitfalls in hoping for benefits from friendship: it can seem very mercenary, bathetic and ‘unsentimental’ 454-6; 468-487.

<sup>67</sup> NB irony of 757-762: just before the *senes* begin to plot their deception, Callicles hints that a good friend would obviate the need for it by loaning some money. Megaronides says such a friend could never be found; he’s not volunteering, for all his good-will. He would rather enter into a deception than give generously. His ‘friendship’ is flawed by self-interest, like everyone else’s.

*Trinummus*, in my opinion, does not mock the faithful friendship ideal *per se*; it does not suggest that the Roman audience should despise it as something ‘foreign’, unnecessary and unattainable<sup>68</sup>. But it does demonstrate the frustratingly elusive quality of the ideal. Though a man might believe in it, though he may wish to live by it and be seen to live by it, practical considerations, human frailty and various conflicts in interest may thwart his intentions. The ‘elusive’ quality of the friendship ideal reflects similar conundrums in the emotive ‘moralistic’ sentimentality of the family ideal; the sentimentality which decrees that a lover should have no interest in money – though he needs it to establish himself in marriage; the sentimentality that declares that parents should not exploit their children – though they often ‘need’ them; the sentimentality that hopes for loyalty from subjected slaves. Plautus, in presenting plays that consider family and society ideals, challenges his audience both to respect and admire the ideal (because the ‘bad’ behaviour of corrupt outsiders is destructive), but also to be realistic about it. He notes its contradictions and absurdities – provoking laughter as well as thought.

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Moore, 1998, 89. Moore notes that the most important moral example of the play – Callicles’ faithfulness to Charmides – remains intact in spite of all the irony and parody.

### Chapter 6: *Bacchides*: an antithesis to *Rudens*?

In the last few chapters I have looked at four issues that have significance for the sentimental ideal, suggesting that Plautus' spectators recognized its desire and respect for 1) affection in marriage; 2) *pietas* between parents and children; 3) a safe home; 4) a mutually helpful relationship between the family and slaves and 'outsiders'. I have taken examples from the majority of Plautus' plays, demonstrating how sentimental themes can be traced in works that have varying comic qualities, some tending, ostensibly at least, towards the 'sentimental', some to the farcical, some to the punitive. In this final chapter I want very briefly to consider all four issues again, following the method used in my chapter about *Rudens*, and concentrating on one play only: *Bacchides*.

At first sight *Bacchides* provides an excellent contrast to *Rudens* – if *Rudens* is one of Plautus' more 'sentimental' plays, *Bacchides* is probably one of the most farcical. I have reserved my comments upon it until now, so that I might examine it as one last example, noting how Plautus uses it to communicate a message of importance to his Roman audience. All four of my sentimental issues played an important role in *Rudens*; despite its farcical mode, it is my belief that all four are perceptible in *Bacchides*.

Named after two look-alike *meretrices*, both called Bacchis, *Bacchides* exploits with glee all the possibilities of both the mistaken identity story and the deliberate deception plot. Everything in it seems to be doubled, tripled or quadrupled. There are two wayward sons, two *senes*. The sons' entrapment by the *meretrices* is replicated when their fathers follow them into the Bacchises' house and the farcical elements of the plot are emphasised as they all end up beguiled by the pair of *meretrices*. A sentimental story – such as *Rudens* – typically concludes with a promise or renewal of marriage, and/or with a family reunion in a family house – when Odysseus comes home. This

meets the requirements of the ‘ideal’. But at the end of *Bacchides*, its Odysseus<sup>1</sup> (along with his father, friend and the father of his friend), is left in the den of the *meretrices*. There is no homecoming; no promise of marriage – only a preposterous reunion and a peculiarly anarchic ‘happy-ending’.

This all seems to be pure farce. But, of course, even plays that favour the farcical mode contain traces of sentimental idealism. More: they often engage with the sentimental concept, provoking laughter with references to it (though their ultimate aim is not *necessarily* derision). *Bacchides* provides us with a case in point; a knowledge of the various aspects of the family sentimental ideal is consequentially essential to its humour.

Note firstly that the play compares ‘true’ sentimental love and ‘mawkish’ infatuations. The language of the former is inappropriately aped as the stereotypical foolish *adulescentes* allow their ‘passion’ for the *meretrices* to guide their behaviour. With the misplaced selfless generosity of real love, they load the rapacious girls with gifts (92-100; 192-5; 206-215<sup>2</sup>).

*Pietas*, family love and morality are also wryly evoked. The parent and child pair in *Rudens*, though subjected to some parody, nonetheless remained true to *pietas*. But in *Bacchides*, laughter is provoked by Mnesilochus’ (the play’s principle *adulescens*) abandonment of proper filial love and respect, by his emotional manipulation of his father, Nicobulus, by Nicobulus’ vulnerability to this, and by the ultimate failure of both *senes* to set their sons a good example (392-3; 506-8; 731-2; 777-781; 850; 979-985; 1007-1044; 1190-1; 1207).

The sanctity of the family home is evoked, inverted and undermined, too, both as Chrysalus – the play’s *servus callidus* – plans an attack on Nicobulus, speaking of him like a city (i.e. home) or

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<sup>1</sup> For reference to Odysseus (Mnesilochus or Pistoclus? For our purposes it does not matter – they both suffer the same fate!) cf. fragment 15.

<sup>2</sup> Note the metatheatrical reference to *Epidicus*, used by Chrysalus to add bathos to Pistoclus’ description of Bacchis’ ‘sentimental’ affection, which, Chrysalus implies, is really only an artificial, comic ‘stage’ love.

a father to a city, and then as the Bacchises lure the sons and fathers from their proper places into their house (47-9; 79-85; 114-117; 368-374; 709-11; 925ff; 1153-1158; 1181)<sup>3</sup>.

Finally, and very significantly, the question of faithful friendship and honourable civic relationships is also central to the plot. In fact, it acts as a constant motivating force, which interacts with the other sentimental themes, and becomes an ironic point of dispute.

Interestingly, Owens suggests that the play's thematic concentration on faithfulness in community relationships had a deliberate and direct relevance for Plautus' *Roman* audience<sup>4</sup>. The playwright's use of hyper-hellenization is certainly important in this work. As usual, his spectators were offered a *palliate*, replete with Greek references (e.g. 235-236; 563; 925-978), in which supposedly Greek characters behave in an excessively foolish and – according to cultural prejudice – typically lax manner. But the emphasis on faithful friendship – something which the Romans valued – provides the play with a challenging, quirky counter-current.

This counter-current first becomes evident in the relationship between the two *adulescentes*, Mnesilochus and Pistoclus. Mnesilochus relies upon his friend, Pistoclus, requiring him to faithfully fulfil his instructions. Pistoclus eagerly complies, earning deep gratitude, especially because he acts at his own expense (197-9; 385ff; 435-6). Thus far Roman friendship values *appear* to have been upheld... The problem is, however, that Mnesilochus' instructions are fundamentally dubious. As a result, Pistoclus' services are brought into doubt. All he actually does is to encourage Mnesilochus in an enslaving 'Greek' affair (*not* a moral and sentimental love story), whilst also endangering himself. It is questionable whether he really acts like a good 'Roman' friend. This truth is emphasised as a different (and rather Roman<sup>5</sup>) picture of a reputable, industrious, self-controlled friend is painted, though misapplied, by Lydus (452-55; 457-9; 492-3).

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson, 1996, 26-7.

<sup>4</sup> 1994, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Lydus' description of the good *adulescens* with the values extolled in Propertius 2. 24; cf. 2.4., above.

Mnesilochus, meanwhile, also relies on the faithful service of *deceitful* Chrysalus – and Chrysalus does not disappoint him. Together they disregard the claims of *pietas* and, ironically, manipulate Nicobulus' high regard for 'Roman' faithfulness to deceive him and to avoid punishment. He is first blinded from the truth by a disturbing tale of a faithless friend, then sentimentally conned into forgiving Chrysalus, and after that is persuaded by Chrysalus that he must honour Mnesilochus' various obligations, in order to keep the boy out of trouble in the community (251ff; 778-81; 850ff; 1007-1044).

Chrysalus, of course, is the great engineer of the play. He makes contact with the audience in metatheatrical monologues and confiding asides (170-177; 229-234; 239-242; 349-367; 640-666; 761-769; 792-3; 795-8; 925-978; 987-8; 1053-1058; 1067-1075). He glories in comedy's conventions, playing with expectation and providing visual and verbal humour as he deliberately complicates the story, seemingly making things impossible for himself by provoking Nicobulus to bind him literally onstage (735-750; 799), whilst he metaphorically ties Nicobulus up in his plot. He is thus the stage representation of the playwright and it is apparent that, through him, Plautus enjoys exploring all the ridiculous potential of his metatheatrical and multi-cultured genre.

This is significant because, to a certain extent, this play (with its schematic doubling and deliberate multiple deceptions) surveys the mechanics of faithful friendship within the specific context of an ultra-conventional deception plot. Like all comic deceivers, Mnesilochus and Chrysalus rely on the faithful support of each other and their fellow conspirators – *and on the audience, who are admitted to their confidence*. A typical set of double values is created, both in the deceitful 'Greek' stage-conspirators, who still demand mutual faithful service, and in the Roman audience, who support and enjoy the deception – and yet who probably still acknowledge the value of faithfulness, doubtless regarding the faithless as deserving of condemnation and half-expecting them to receive it, even in this topsy-turvy saturnalian play<sup>6</sup>. Throughout the work, Plautus

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. the epilogue, which ironically satisfies this expectation (1207-10). Note how Mnesilochus' confused behaviour emphasises his double standards; he dithers between asserting his regard for honour and his



encourages spectators to laugh at this ridiculous, contradictory situation and at the comic conventions which have created it.

But, as usual with Plautus, there is a sting in the tale. As we saw above, the ‘Greek’ actions of Mnesilochus and Pistoclerus are condemned in the light of a set of *Roman* values (the values Lydus exalts). Nicobulus often behaves in a very foolish ‘Greek’ fashion, too. However, he is also controlled by a very Roman fixation with ‘faithfulness’<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, he is so fixated by it in abstract, that he cannot see when it is being abused in fact. Roman values are thus brought into question – and metatheatre widens the scope of the play’s message. The audience is party to all the deceptions. Chrysalus, when crowing over the success of his plans – which he professes out-do those of slaves in *Greek* plays – speaks to them directly, making a reference to a *Roman* triumph (649-50; 1072-3). This is not just a play about a remote set of fictional characters: it relates to Roman society, ideas and practices. And perhaps this gives us a clue to the topical message of *Bacchides* – a message that triumphs over the home-breaking anarchy of the play’s ending, making it ‘satisfactory’ after all.

In this play, whilst acknowledging that his genre delights in exploring ridiculous contradictions in words and actions, Plautus also challenges his audience to recognize the very real (and perhaps ridiculous) conflicts that must have occurred in their contemporary life, between admirable moral cultural values (which might *sometimes* have been blindly and stupidly honoured by persons like Nicobulus *and* Lydus<sup>8</sup>) and individuals’ actions and desires (*some* of which might have been as foolishly immoral and ‘unsentimental’ as any stage ‘Greek’s’). If Plautus’ spectators recognized these conflicts, perhaps admitting their own vulnerability to fall into both ‘Greek’ and ‘Roman’

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determination to abuse his father’s trust (385 ff); when he believes himself deceived, he is true to his father, but lets Chrysalus down. It becomes difficult to tell what really is a foul deed and who is a true friend (491; 500-520; 612-624; 654-666; 681-2). Cf. Clark, 1976, 95: ‘The confusion in the play seems to be as to who is the real enemy.’

<sup>7</sup> Owens, 1994, 393, 398, 403.

<sup>8</sup> Lydus, Pistoclerus’ tutor, attempts to exert sentimental pressure on the boy, but is governed by a spirit which is too puritanical; he is also self-righteous and too concerned with his own power (e.g. 132-3; 136-8; 148-154; 379-84; 419-437).

errors, then even as they laughed at Nicobulus' final 'defeat', they were suitably edified themselves. Despite the farce and anarchy, Plautus thus achieved an ultimately 'moral' end.

*Rudens* and *Bacchides* are very different plays, with very different plot paradigms. Nonetheless, they have many things in common. They both exploit the multitudinous conventions of comedy; they are self-aware, revelling in metatheatre, subjecting certain aspects of the genre's own sentimental mode – and society's sentiment – to farcical parody and making the most of sentiment's unfortunate tendency to slip from sincerity into mawkishness or hypocrisy. They both build on spectators' expectations of idealistic and moral sentimental behaviour, in lovers, parents and children, friends and slaves and in the home. And they both prevent the audience from simply laughing at the comic characters from a distance, but encourage identification with the action, making points of relevance to contemporary society, and ironically noting the 'tensions' in Roman cultural thinking, aspirations and behaviour. Finally, and very importantly, in all of these things, they both resemble the rest of the Plautine corpus. Our investigations have shown us that, whatever the plays' predominant comic mode, no matter how much farce appears in their lines, they all contain deep traces of the sentimental ideal.

## Conclusion

My study of Plautus' plays has considered and interpreted his texts in the light of comic convention. It has highlighted the sentimental themes in his works, demonstrating that these themes were familiar to the mid-republican Roman audience: they understood the 'sentimental ideal'; it was part of their culture. Importantly, in this matter, their culture does not seem to have varied much from the one of succeeding generations. The sentimental family ideal identified in evidence from the late Roman Republic onwards expected affection between spouses and parents and children; it concerned itself with morality and with the family home. My analysis suggests that the mid-republican Romans comprehended a very similar ideal.

Of course, this 'ideal' was not always realised. Family life in the Roman mid Republic had its pitfalls; indeed, it has been my contention that Plautus' purpose was often to comment wryly on the fallibility of his contemporaries and on the conflict between their real-life conditions and requirements (such as their need for money) and their ideals. The fact that his works sometimes reflect opinions, lifestyles and ideas that are far from sentimental should consequently not surprise us – and any attempts to use these 'unsentimental' moments to disprove the existence of an ideal in his era should be treated with caution.

Interestingly, the conflict between the ideal and reality itself suggests a certain amount of cultural continuity. In her description of the sentimental family concept of the late Republic onwards, Suzanne Dixon admits to 'tensions' between the ideal and the lived reality (1991, 99). Plautus' plays frequently seem to be concerned with such tensions: once more a link can be made between the experiences of his generation and the next.

Continuity has been a key issue in this study – continuity not only between the mid Republic and later Roman periods, but also between *all* those periods and our own. Naturally, differences do exist between the ancient culture and the modern; various objections can be made to the equation of

Roman and modern families. Disparities between the two cultures' domestic structures may, for instance, cause concern (Martin, 1996, 52). And we are bound to note that whereas the Roman elite arranged marriages for political and financial reasons, modern matches – particularly since the last century – have generally been matters of romance. Nonetheless, the comparison drawn by Dixon between the Roman ideal and our own has proved useful in my work. We have seen how the sentimental concepts discernible in Plautus' texts have also been propagated and understood in modern literature. In matters of family sentiment, a cross-cultural continuity is apparent.

The sentimental ideal's apparent ability to co-exist with a range of other, sometimes conflicting, social mores is important. I began this thesis by comparing two films, observing the moments at which cultural developments had affected their stories, whilst also identifying the continuity in their sentimental content. In concluding, I return to modern culture, once more contrasting it with conditions in Rome and noting the persistence of sentimentality, despite change and seemingly adverse conditions. What light does the on-going struggle between ideals and realities in modern society cast on Roman family life?

I note firstly that our modern, Western perspective may warp our general understanding of 'arranged marriages'. We are inclined to doubt their emotional quality, especially when political or socio-economic factors govern their formation. But, as Golden states:

'[F]ew cultures make so rigorous a dichotomy between practicality and sentiment as contemporary North Americans sometimes claim to.' (1990, 93)

It may be inadvisable to assume that marriages formed on modern Western lines are *always* more likely to prove ideal than Roman ones – particularly, of course, in the light of current divorce rates. Many changes have occurred in attitudes towards marriage and marriage dynamics in the past hundred years and recent statistics give a negative impression of the state of the institution: in America 50% of marriages are ending in divorce (Tiesel & Olson, 1992, 398; Goldstein &

Kennedy, 2001, 516). Seeking to explain the high incidence of failed marriages, Blankenhorn suggests that alterations in ideology have directly affected practice: couples no longer expect their marriages to last and society has ceased to impose any expectations upon them (1997, cf. Waite & Gallagher, 2001, 3).

To a certain extent, this is probably true. It is therefore interesting to note that images of close-knit nuclear family groups, with husband, wife and child, *still* exercise an important power in our society. Compare image 2 (1938) below with images 3 and 4 (2004). Note firstly the significant difference. The 1930s image (2) contains elements of genderization – mother is knitting, in accordance with the female homemaker’s role approved of in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, and father-breadwinner reads the paper. Such genderization is not seen in the other pictures; indeed, the text of image 4 insists that, thanks to government policy, idealistic happiness has been achieved even though (or perhaps *because*) the mother is more than a traditional homemaker.

However, in other respects, the images are very similar. All three resound with sentimental themes. They were produced by agents who suggest that they can provide the family with ‘happiness’: time to spend together, security and/or affluence. All show married couples in prototype nuclear families; they are depicted grouped closely together, and in 2 and 3 are obviously in the comfort of their home environments. The childish qualities of the beribboned girl in image 2 are emphasized as she holds her doll. In image 4 the child holds a pacifier and the text of image 3 underlines the importance of the ‘small child’, speaking of that quintessential sentimental moment, ‘baby’s first Christmas’.



Image 2 (Life Insurance promotion, 1938.)

**Zarina McCulloch and her family (below) from Hendon in North London are looking forward to a big family Christmas.** This will be baby Christopher's first Christmas, so they're hoping it will be extra special. Zarina and husband Andrew have been collecting Nectar points throughout the year which they are planning to redeem against gifts for their four children.



Image 3

**In your own words**  
**Britain is working**

I've just gone back to work after six months maternity leave. Now we've got two children Labour's Tax Credits have made a noticeable difference – because there are always little extras with a new baby. Life does feel better for families – if we can spend more time together, with some of the financial pressures taken off, it lets us enjoy life more.

**Lorraine and Douglas Burns, Glasgow**

Image 4

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century advertising and propaganda material seems to confirm that, notwithstanding cultural changes (and perhaps in spite of statistical ‘facts’), to a greater or lesser degree the nuclear family ideal continues to exercise influence over the modern public imagination.

This concentration on the nuclear unit may, of course, lead to concern about comparisons between the modern family and its ancient Roman predecessor. The Romans did not live in neat family units in three (or four)-bedroomed houses, but in extended households, with slaves. How could they have had a similar domestic ideal to ours? The answer perhaps lies in the human ability to adapt to facts and to accommodate ideals imaginatively. Examples of this can be found in modern society.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century is often cited as the period in which the modern sentimental family image matured; in which marriages were love matches; in which children were idolised; in which the family home became a ‘haven’; in which women (described as ‘angels’) embodied and promoted the domestic ideal (Dixon, 1992, 18; Lasch, 1979, 4-6; Peterson, 1984; Reynolds, 1994, 2). But academics have argued that 19<sup>th</sup>-century realities did not conform to the ideal. Peterson believes that the century’s ‘angel’ figure had no actual existence. Upper-class women were often educated; their energies were not merely concentrated on home-making. In the lower-middle class, the housewife was unable to provide a genteel haven, but struggled to ‘get by’ (Peterson, 1984, 708)<sup>1</sup>. Reynolds similarly discusses tensions between the ideal and the reality in relation to the era’s concept of childhood. During this period, contact between upper-class children and their parents was limited. Because of the presence of servants, families did not form the autonomous nuclear units which are commonly associated with the sentimental ideal (Reynolds, 1994, 2).

These points have significance. The fact that the Victorians promoted sentimental nuclear family images, despite social realities and their particular sort of ‘extended’ household, is surely of interest.

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson is very categorical in her denial of the angel figure. Personally, I suspect that some Victorian women, at some points in their lives, *were* able to act the role of ‘angel in the house’. Take Sybella, Lady Lyttelton, who was described by a relation as a *mère-de-famille* and who wrote herself of her acceptance, in accordance with her husband’s cultural ideal, of the position of ‘angel’ (Fletcher, 1997, 247-8).

In the 1960s, Ariès, the influential socio-historian, suggested that the modern family concept developed in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, in conjunction with a rearrangement of domestic space into public and private areas. He argued that from this period the family *excluded* servants, clients and friends (1965, 400). However, Ariès perhaps exaggerated the importance and extent of the exclusion. Domestic arrangements may have changed in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, but servants remained a part of family life well into the 20<sup>th</sup>-century.

Consider image 5, a portrait of the York family in the 1930s, and note that, although the image's text refers sentimentally to the nuclear group of 'us four', it also mentions a nanny, an 'extra' person, who had a long-term relationship with the family, caring first for the Duchess and then for her daughters.



Image 5



The British aristocracy has not been the only social group to include non-family members within their family circle in the recent past. In 1972 Ibsen and Klobus wrote an article examining the adoption of non-relatives into kin-like relationships. They referred to a survey of 1968, in which participants all claimed to have 'fictive kin': i.e. each had non-relative within their family circle, whom they addressed with a name appropriate to kin. Ibsen and Klobus suggest that these names were used either to express familiarity within a personal relationship, or to demonstrate a special kind of association, or because the fictive kin had the status of supplementary or replacement relations – they had become part of a quasi-family. The fictive names adopted were not usually 'nuclear': aunt and uncle were the common forms. Fictive kin often did not live in or near the family house. However, the majority of respondents indicated that they nevertheless had especially intimate relationships with the friends for whom they used fictive names (1972, 618).

Due to changes in social mores, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century children commonly use adults' first names, without any title. Consequently, fictive kin names are possibly dying out. However, this does not mean that supplementary or replacement relatives have ceased to play important roles in children's lives. In fact, the modern divorce culture may have made 'replacement relatives' more important than ever (Tiesel and Olson, 1992, 400). Bradley cautiously admits that modern 'blended' families may be analogous with extended Roman households after all (1991 (1), 170).

Importantly, the demise of the clear-cut, nuclear family in recent times has not resulted in the disappearance of the modern, family-centred, sentimental ideal. Despite tension with facts, the ideal persists – it even appears that it can accommodate non-nuclear families; it has perhaps *always* been able to do this. 19<sup>th</sup>-century fiction demonstrates the point. Its sentimental heroes are often depicted in situations that do not conform exactly to the family ideal; they win our sympathy because they are displaced from their own nuclear families and they achieve happiness when they are adopted, as 'extra' persons, into new ones: quasi-families, which are not necessarily nuclear in formation.

Wetherell's *The Wide, Wide, World* (1850) and Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856) provide examples of this. The displaced persons theme has endured, too, recurring in children's literature

throughout the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and into the 21<sup>st</sup>. J.K.Rowling's use of it in her Harry Potter books (1997-2007) is particularly well-known. During the series, orphaned Harry undergoes a series of 'adoptions' (the first is patently less successful than the others); each has emotional significance and each provides Harry with a new domestic sphere and additional social contacts.

Our modern culture's enduring willingness to identify with a traditional sentimental family ideal, whilst allowing non-kin members to partake in it – perhaps as part of a quasi-family – provides an essential point of comparison. Evidence suggests that whilst the modern nuclear family is an important prototype structure and 'ideal', it is also a flexible one. It can overlook uncomfortable realities, like unhappy marriages and divorce, and it can allow extra persons to participate in family life – in affection and other comforts of the ideal. This is important, for in the light of what we have seen in Plautus, it seems reasonable to assume that the Roman ideal functioned in a similar fashion. Citizen Roman families *were* nuclear in their core formation: citizen men married citizen women and produced citizen children. These marriages were not necessarily 'romantic'; they were not always 'happy'. The households they formed abounded with supplementary persons; they often consisted of blended families and they allowed for the 'intrusive' presence of friends, clients and slaves. This created the potential for 'tension'. Nonetheless the sentimental ideal persisted...

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

## Appendix 1: Comparison of *The Conscious Lovers* & *Andria*

### 1. Sentimental Comedy

This Appendix examines the interaction between sentimental idealism and comedy in the context of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sub-genre, Sentimental Comedy. This controversial sub-genre is of especial significance to my argument; its critics claimed that it did not adhere to the ancient rules of comedy, but its writers appealed to the Roman playwrights, asserting that they were following their example. I discuss the various arguments, and conclude by comparing two plays, Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) and its source, Terence's *Andria*.

Terence was a Roman mid-republican comic playwright. Dixon's suggestion that there is small evidence of sentimentality in comedies from that era consequently encompasses his works as well as Plautus'. Literary assessments of Terence's plays have not always supported Dixon's statement. Terence is frequently thought to have reproduced Greek New Comedy with more accuracy than Plautus, maintaining its 'tone', concentrating on characterisation rather than farce and thus presenting works that are more in keeping with the naturalistic or sentimental mode. Whether the putative sentiment of this mode was comparable with modern sentimentality – or with the sentimentality identified by Dixon *et al* in later Roman material – is a debatable point. Some critics have argued that sentimental 'romance' *does* colour the plays of Menander and, consequentially, of Terence, who adapted his works. Others have disputed that such romance can be found in ancient comedy, or argue that Terence's works contain more 'comic' humour<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Brown, 1993, 189, 195, 220-1; Bernbaum, 1915, 18; Green, 1968, 144; Copley, 1949, 23, 40; Novak 1979, 56; Wiles, 1989, 32-3. NB there are conflicting views about the comparative degrees of sentimentality in Menander and Terence. Duckworth suggests that Menander's works were not particularly comic - something which he believes is reflected in Terence. He states that Terence created idealistic characters who were 'almost too good to be real' (1994, 32; 168; 270). Rudd believes that Terence's lovers were (sometimes) 'utterly serious', motivated by more than lust (1981, 150-1; cf. Barsby, 1999, 14, 17-18) and Fantham stresses the Roman's interest in positively exploring father-son relationships (1971). Beare theorized that Terence may have deepened the sentimental tone in Menander's plays (1968, 109). Ludwig, conversely, believes Terence may have occasionally reduced Menander's sentimental elements (1968, 171-176). Importantly, whilst

Importantly, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century playwright, Steele, was one early modern critic who did believe that Terence's plays were sentimental. His arguments were advanced in an era when the traditional nature and purpose of comedy was a matter of some dispute. Since the time of the Restoration (1660), literary critics had generally agreed that comedy should edify, but they were divided about *how* it should do this: whether it should employ witty, punitive, sympathetic or satirical humour (Corman, 2000, 52-4). Fashions changed. Restoration comedy had tended towards an 'immoral' value system, prizing wit above personal integrity, but by Steele's period a greater emphasis was being placed on morality (*ibid*, 2000, 64-5). The tone of comedy altered; punitive humour became less common and playwrights were inclined to induce emotional sympathy for their characters and perhaps even move them to tears<sup>2</sup>. The modern sub-genre of sentimental comedy evolved.

Ellis lists certain elements that he believes characterize this dramatic form. He writes that it was typified by emotive references to various subjects (including women; parents; children; the lower orders; death; money; and the past or 'elsewhere'). It commonly employed melancholic conversation and overt moralizing and contained displays of reckless, self-sacrificing virtue and undeserved distress (1991, 10-12, 19-20; cf. Novak, 1979, 49). Naturally, there were occasional ambiguities in the tone of the plays. Individual works were sentimental in different ways – some even contained elements that were strictly unsentimental<sup>3</sup>. Nonetheless, in general, sentimental comedy was typified by emotive idealism.

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Terence is sometimes supposed to have *reduced* the sentiment of his Greek sources, Plautus, perhaps under the influence of native Italian drama, has actually been accused of *suppressing* it (Barsby, 1999, 6; Duckworth, 1994, 167-8; cf. Watling, 1964, 13: Watling is prepared to recognize sentimental elements in *Captivi* and *Trinummus*, but describes their tone as exceptional). Note, however, that Brown suggests that the plots of *some* Greek New Comedies may have been akin to Plautus': again, the paucity of surviving evidence leaves this question open to speculation (2001, 56).

<sup>2</sup> Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696) reputedly provoked tears in its first audience. It is commonly thought of as one of the first Sentimental Comedies (Bernbaum, 1915, 2-6; cf. Ellis, 1991, 30).

<sup>3</sup> Ellis notes the example of *Love's Last Shift*. This play teems with sentimental characteristics, showing a disregard for wealth, emphasizing undeserved distress and self-sacrificing virtue and employing melancholic conversation. But it also includes an uncomfortable number of sexually explicit references. However, since its overriding moral philosophy is quintessentially sentimental – it assumes the fundamental goodness of human nature – it arguably remains Sentimental Comedy (1991, 30; cf. Warren 2003).

Multiple arguments were advanced in favour of this idealistic sub-genre. Steele, one of its key proponents, believed that works constructed in accordance with its principles were superior morally, had a legitimate didactic purpose, gave beneficial pleasure, promoted a legitimate sense of self-worth<sup>4</sup>, provided approachable role models and, importantly, of course, had precedence in Roman drama. Referring to Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*, he wrote:

‘It is from the Beginning to the End a perfect Picture of human life, but I did not observe in the whole one Passage that could raise a Laugh. How well disposed must that People be, who could be entertained with Satisfaction by so sober and polite Mirth?’<sup>5</sup>

Not all of Steele's contemporaries agreed with his assessment of ancient comedy. Just as 20<sup>th</sup>-century critics have disputed the sentimentality of Menander and Terence, so Steele's colleagues disagreed about ancient comedy's moral content. Collier maintained that the ancient playwrights' works were distinguished by poor moral content (*A Short View*, 1.5, 4, 1698). Congreve appealed to Aristotle, to prove that common vice *ought* to be the subject of comedy (1698). Dryden declared that it was in keeping with ancient tradition for comic playwrights to concentrate on giving pleasure, rather than on providing didactic works (1671). Goldsmith referred directly to Terence, declaring that he might have approached sentimentality, but always stopped short of it (1773).

It appears, then, that critical opinion has long been divided about the level of sentimentality in ancient comedy. A comparison of Steele's overtly sentimental *The Conscious Lovers* with Terence's *Andria* may help to highlight some of the issues in the ongoing debate.

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<sup>4</sup> This accorded with Shaftesbury's sentimental theory of the ultimate goodness of humans; cf. Thesis Introduction 3.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spectator*, No. 502, 1712. See also: Preface and Epilogue to *The Lying Lover*, 1704; *The Tatler*, No. 172, 1709-11; *The Spectator*, No. 65, 1711; *The Spectator*, No. 258, 1711; Preface to *The Conscious Lovers*, 1722. Cf. Green, 1968, 141, 145; Parnell, 1963, 529.

2. The Conscious Lovers versus Andria

To facilitate my comparison of these plays, I conducted a survey, noting their use of elements that are typical of sentimental works and those which frequently appear in comic ones, and recording the information in two charts (A & B). The charts represent my initial findings, to which I will refer as I conduct a more detailed analysis below.

(Key: ✓ = strong evidence of this in the text; ? = evidence for and against; X = little or no evidence)

Chart A		
Sentimental Potential	<i>Andria</i>	<i>The Conscious Lovers</i>
<p>A. Sentimental affection identifiable in:</p> <p>1. a romance leading to marriage</p> <p>2. a romantic relationship which encompasses something <i>more</i> than sexual attraction</p> <p>3. a pre-established marital relationship</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ?</p> <p>There are no married couples, but Pamphilus speaks lovingly of the woman whom he has treated as a wife. (e.g. 270-75)</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ?</p>
<p>B. Appreciation of children identifiable in:</p> <p>1. sympathetic references to small children/ childishness</p>	<p>1. ?</p>	<p>1. ✓</p>

<p>2. parent/child relationships</p> <p>3. a positive attitude to the nuclear family in general (happy-ending includes family reunion); an extension of familial concern to 'extra' personalities.</p>	<p>2. ?</p> <p>3. ?</p>	<p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ✓</p>
<p>C. Sentimental idealism; positive emphasis on:</p> <p>1. friendship</p> <p>2. refined feelings</p> <p>3. pity</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ✓</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ✓</p>
<p>D. Idealism demonstrated by:</p> <p>1. 'happy' but unrealistic plot devices</p> <p>2. a dismissal of the importance of money, status &amp;/or cultural norms.</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p>
<p>E. 'Innocence' exemplified in:</p> <p>1. overt/didactic moralising</p> <p>2. presentations of undeserved distress</p> <p>3. presentations of self-sacrificing virtue</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ?</p>	<p>1. ✓</p> <p>2. ✓</p> <p>3. ✓</p>
<p>F. The home/haven</p>	<p>No great emphasis on the home as haven, but</p>	<p>Bevil rescues Indiana and provides</p>

	note that once the 'happy-ending' has been achieved, Simo signifies his acceptance of Glycerium by suggesting she be moved into his house (952-3).	her with a beautiful home – but there is some question about whether this is a haven or a trap. This is only resolved once Bevil's honourable intentions are made fully clear.
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Chart B		
Comic Aspects of Comedy	<i>Andria</i>	<i>The Conscious Lovers</i>
A. Plot formulas leading to:		
1. prosperity from adversity	1. ✓	1. ✓
2. boy getting girl in romance plot	2. ✓	2. ✓
3. happy ending with marriage	3. ✓	3. ✓
4. family reunion/reconciliation.	4. ✓	4. ✓
5. happy ending with domestic order restored.	5. ✓	5. ✓
B. Plot involving a block leading to:		
1. deliberate deception	1. ✓	1. ✓
2. disguise	2. X	2. ✓
C. Plot involving a block caused by:		



1. mistaken identity 2. misunderstanding	1. ✓ (Athenian citizen girl mistaken for a <i>meretrix</i> .) 2. ✓	1. ✓ 2. ✓
D. Comic character types: 1. thwarted/foolish lovers 2. <i>senex iratus</i> 3. <i>matrona</i> 4. <i>servus callidus</i> 5. agelast/figure of fun	1. ✓ 2. ✓ 3. X 4. ✓ 5. X  (No <i>matrona</i> , but some anti- wife statements e.g. 192.)	1. ✓ 2. ✓ 3. ✓ 4. ? 5. ✓
E. Comic domestic setting: 1. scenes stress ‘everyday’ domestic detail 2. ‘ordinary’ characters rather than kings etc.	1. ✓ 2. ✓	1. ✓ 2. ✓
F. Audience expectation manipulated in: 1. plot peripeteia 2. inversion 3. fulfilment of expectation	1. ✓ 2. ✓ 3. ✓	1. ✓ 2. ✓ 3. ✓
G. Word Play:		

1. vulgarity/innuendo	1. X	1. ?
2. verbal paraprosdokian, bathos, irony etc	2. ✓	2. ✓
H. Theatrical techniques:		
1. direct audience address; metatheatre.	1. ?	1. ?
2. use of monologues/asides/eavesdropping	2. ✓	2. ✓
3. audience gifted with superior knowledge	3. ✓	3. ✓
I. Types of comedy:		
1. political/topical satire	1. X	1. ✓
2. punitive comedy/schadenfreude	2. X	2. ✓
3. sympathetic, humorous comedy	3. ?	3. ✓
4. humourless 'comedy': touches the audience rather than making them laugh.	4. ?	4. ✓

*The Conscious Lovers (TCL)* was written in accordance with Steele's philosophies. The play's prologue instructs us to anticipate scenes of virtue, not ribaldry. We are therefore unsurprised when the play is emphatically 'moral'. This occurs when:

1. the hero, Bevil, makes it clear his love is *not* lust, but a 'pure delight' and 'guiltless joy' (2.1.)
2. a misunderstanding between Bevil and his friend, Myrtle, is resolved in a scene rife with emotional moralising (4.1.)
3. a desire for wealth is exposed as immoral – Bevil is not guilty of it (he discerns his love's merits despite her financial disadvantages 5.3.)

4. the play's 'happy ending' verbalises the idea that virtue had been rewarded (ironically with wealth as well as love – but that is common in sentimental fiction!<sup>6</sup>).

These things all create the predictable refined tone of sentimental drama – and Steele makes sure his audience appreciates it. He presents virtuous characters suitable for 'humourless' comedy, and carefully aligns the audience with them. Spectators are made fully cognisant of Bevil's plans, enjoying a knowledge superior to that of the play's blocking character (who offends against sentimental values by trying to arrange a marriage for mercenary reasons, 4.2.). 'Proper feeling' is emphasised when sentimental affection is displayed by an old retainer, who expresses the admiration the audience should feel (1.1.). The character of the young servant, Tom, is also modified, as is his relationship with his master. Unlike true *servi callidi*, he does not control Bevil; more noble than the average comic character (he is not even good at 'honest dissimulation'), Bevil has greater wit and authority (1.2.).

The plot in which these virtuous characters play necessarily abounds in themes with sentimental *potential*<sup>7</sup>. My initial survey suggests that *TCL* does not differ hugely from its source in this respect (cf. Chart A). On the sentimentality scale, *Andria* notches up almost as many points as *TCL*. However, there *is* a noticeable difference in the manner in which they present child-parent relationships. Ellis claims that the *telling* sentiment in *TCL* is an innovation, not found in *Andria* (1991, 118). Steele arguably intensifies his play's overall sentiment in two particular ways, relating to the child-parent theme.

Firstly, he manipulates the plot so that the key relationship between father and son becomes intensely emotional<sup>8</sup>. Bevil is financially independent from his father and has no need to consult his wishes. The conflict he faces in the plot – he must either 'part with more than life [i.e. his girl] or

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. notes on *Northanger Abbey* Thesis Introduction 3, above; Bernbaum, 1915, 20-1.

<sup>7</sup> NB The scenes in which the sentimental characters appear are not altogether without humour – Ellis writes that Steele was aware of comic elements even within the moving recognition scene (1991, 119).

<sup>8</sup> Ellis suggests that the play is *primarily* sentimental about parents (1991, 52).

lose the best of fathers' (1.2., 336) – is therefore purely sentimental. It is even precipitated by a scene in which sentimental fine-feeling leads Bevil to defend his father and simultaneously to betray his romantic relationship (1.2., 327). The parallel scene in *Andria* is far less emotionally complicated, the father being only indirectly involved.

Secondly, Steele increases the number of persons involved in two ways: he includes an extra 'lost' female in the plot and allows his women to appear onstage. Hume notes that an audience's relationship with a plot's characters influences their reactions to its story; if certain persons are not seen, then no matter how graphically their plight is described, they will receive less sympathy (1972, 93). Steele was apparently aware of this. He allows his suffering women to build up a relationship with the audience and grants them an onstage recognition scene. Terence, conversely, never introduced *his* (single) 'lost' female at all: Bernbaum suggests that he simply uses the recovery of a parent theme for comic effect (1915, 136).

That Steele's adaption of *Andria* increases the level of sentiment is obviously an interesting point. However, my survey of both plays highlights another intriguing fact: Steele *also* used a comparatively wide assortment of comic material in his plot (cf. Chart B). Surprising though it may seem, *TCL* is actually *funny*. It contains a large amount of unambiguous, comic material; indeed, comic scenes occupy almost half of the work (Bernbaum, 1915, 133). There are farce-like disguise scenes; there are moments of witty satire. There is even a scene in which sentiment is parodied (3.1.).

To produce these 'lighter' kinds of comedy, Steele complements his virtuous characters with a set of comic personalities who conform to definite types, creating expectancy within the audience. The parody of 3.1., for instance, depends upon the fact that sentimental phrases are spoken by servants, who the spectators recognize as having low social status. These characters have already been presented as comical inversions of the fashionable characters of Restoration comedy (1.1.) and now provide humour with their bathetic attempts at pathos. Steele also presents a comic, thwarted lover (Myrtle) and two foolish characters from punitive comedy, the *matrona* and the *agelast*: Mrs

Sealand and Cimberton. They become Myrtle's natural gulls in a disguise plot and even provide some slight vulgarity (e.g. Cimberton's all-too observant physical description of Lucinda, 3.1.).

Importantly, whilst introducing these comic elements, Steele seems to have innovated again. Terence did not provide a precedent for the vulgarity in *TCL*; there is no use of disguise, no *matrona*, no agelast in *Andria*. The play *may* have a more authentic saturnalian inversion plot, but even that runs out of steam when the *servus callidus* fails to carry out his plans. Thus whilst *TCL* draws on a rich history of drama and combines characters from a broad range of comedy, such variety is *not* seen in *Andria*. In some respects, therefore, *Andria appears* to be a far less complicated play.

But, of course, things are seldom what they seem. *Andria* is not free from ambiguity. Indeed, since comparatively little is known about the philosophy which governed that play's composition, its text is far more open to interpretation. Take, for instance, the scene at 625-682, in which Pamphilus (Bevil's predecessor who, like him, is in love with one girl but in danger of having to marry another) is accused of 'stealing' his friend's girl. I suggest that this might be performed in two ways:

1. as though it were sympathetic, humorous comedy
2. as though it were sentimental – almost humourless (cf. Steele's very emotive 4.1.).

To convey the former impression, actors might overact, stressing the foolishness of the friends' predicament and the fact that the *wrong* marriage has been arranged (670-4).

DAV : hac non successit, alia aggrediemur via;      DAV : We didn't succeed this way, but we'll  
nisi si id putas, quia primo processit parum,      try another one. Unless you think that, because  
non posse iam ad salutem convorti hoc malum.      it didn't work out at first, we can never find a

PAM : immo etiam. nam satis credo, si  
advigilaveris,  
ex unis geminas mihi conficies nuptias.

happy ending to the situation.

PAM: Of course not. I'm quite sure that if you  
keep your wits about you, you can arrange me  
two marriages, not just one.

To render the scene more sentimental, the friends' conflict need only be seriously emphasised –  
lines 642-50 *could* be spoken in utter sincerity, culminating with Pamphilus' declaration of misery  
(649-50).

PAM: Charine, et me et te imprudens, nisi quid  
di respiciunt, perdidit.

PAM: Charinus, I didn't mean to, but I've  
destroyed us both, unless the gods take pity on  
us.

CHA: itane 'imprudens'? tandem inventast  
causa: solvisti fidem.

CHA: Didn't mean to? You've finally found an  
excuse and broken your promise.

PAM: quid 'tandem'?

PAM: How do you mean 'finally'?

CHA: etiamnunc me ducere istis dictis  
postulas?

CHA: Do you still think you can lead me on  
with that sort of talk?

PAM: quid istuc est?

PAM: What's this all about?

CHA: postquam me amare dixi, complacitast  
tibi.

CHA: It was only after I said I loved her that  
you fell for her. What a fool I was to judge  
your character by my own!

heu me miserum, qui tuom animum ex animo  
spectavi meo!

PAM: You're mistaken.

PAM: falsus es.

CHA: non tibi sat esse hoc solidum visumst  
gaudium,  
nisi me lactasses amantem et falsa spe

CHA: Did you think your joy was not complete  
unless you'd enticed me to love her and led me  
on with false hope? You can have her.

produceres ?

habeas.

PAM: habeam? ah! nescis quantis in malis

vorser miser,

quantasque hic suis consiliis mihi conflavit

sollicitudines meus carnufex.

PAM: Have her? Ah! You don't realise the

torments of misery that I'm suffering and the

agonies that this despicable slave of mine has

contrived for me by his schemes.

Modern performances of *Andria* might, therefore, vary in accordance with directors' understanding of the play. Do they believe it is *fundamentally* sentimental or are they convinced that its sentimental elements are merely incidental – of negligible tonal importance?

Bernbaum is one critic who discerns little sentimentality in *Andria*. He considers Pamphilus' conflict to be without pathos for the audience, since they know there is small danger of him having to marry the wrong girl. Importantly, Bernbaum also feels that *Andria's* conclusion renders the play unsentimental. True sentimental comedy, he argues, is concerned with moral virtue; ultimately, its heroes triumph because of their goodness. Thus in Steele's last act, an approving Providence grants Bevil happiness in recognition of his 'constancy and merit' (5.3.). But Terence never discourses on virtue; there is no prologue promising a salutary play and no final eulogy pronounced on Pamphilus' behalf. Bernbaum consequently concludes that Pamphilus' final happiness is totally dependant upon unsentimental arbitrary<sup>9</sup> chance (1915, 20-1).

Other critics, however, interpret the play far more seriously: they think it *does* tackle issues of moral and sentimental importance; they argue that Pamphilus *does* show moral fibre. Barsby writes about Pamphilus' two declarations of love and loyalty (270-298; 695-7); in these Pamphilus not only touches on subjects of sentimental importance – death, idealisation of his love and mutual compatibility (his love is not just sexual, 694) – he also recognizes that he has multiple moral obligations to Glycerium. He speaks of honour, faith, gratitude and humanity (1999, 13-14).

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<sup>9</sup> I.e. it does not seek to reward virtue or position.

Goldberg also reads *Andria* seriously; he asserts that the final conflict between Pamphilus and his father is written in a manner likely to induce sympathy in fathers and sons in the audience (1981-2, 139). McGarrity argues similarly; he believes the play explores ideas of familial obligation, presenting a father and a son who have a similar, moral aim: they both wish to establish a new nuclear family with a responsible man at its head. McGarrity points out that money is not an issue in *Andria*; in line with sentimental ideology, neither Pamphilus' father nor Pamphilus' prospective father-in-law quarrel about dowries – the former is more concerned about his son's behaviour and the latter about his daughter's happiness<sup>10</sup>.

The overall arguments of Barsby, Goldberg and McGarrity are not unpersuasive. It appears to me that Bernbaum underestimates *Andria's* sentimental potential. Steele *may* have increased the sentiment in his version of the play, but that does not preclude the existence of *any* sentiment in his source, or his source's culture.

I would suggest, in fact, that supplementary cultural phenomena – phenomena not directly related to sentimental ideology – may explain some of the differences in tone between Steele and Terence (who, after all, produced their different works in eras separated by a huge gap in terms of time and culture). Fathers and sons in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England were not bound together by the same legal and social ties as the fathers and sons of Terence's day, nor were they restricted by law in their choice of bride. Steele's central plot *has* to be overtly sentimental, for it is only Bevil's *fine feelings* for his father which prevent the marriage to his *love*, Indiana. Without a double helping of sentiment, there would be no conflict.

Conversely, Terence's plot is perhaps generated by the warring demands of sentimentality and reality. Pamphilus faces a very real social conflict: he cannot marry a girl who is not an Athenian

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, McGarrity is so convinced that *Andria* should be read seriously, that he reads sentiment into an initial discussion (35-45) between the *senex* and his slave. He argues that this conversation highlights the play's virtue and responsibility themes (1978, 103-4; 110; 108). It is my impression, however, that the attitude of the slave in this scene is ambiguous; instead of acting as a purely sympathetic auditor to his master, he interjects with a humorous commentary (e.g. *paraprosdokian* at 105). Steele's adaptation of this conversation is significantly more sentimental. The servant, Humphrey, interposes the occasional dry remark, but also makes a genuine statement of love for his master (1.1).



citizen. He is also bound legally *and* morally to his father. He may have a sentimental wish, as McGarrity says, to act responsibly as a husband and a father, but he has created a problem for himself, by falling in love with a girl whom – as far as he knows – he cannot marry.

Interestingly, because they defy social realities, Pamphilus' declarations of loyalty to Glycerium and his promises to raise her baby become ridiculous – *as well as sentimental*. Terence may not have introduced as large a variety of comic elements into his play as Steele did, but he did use *some*. The Roman audience would have appreciated the humour of Davus' remarks when he says the lovers are scheming like lunatics (218).

An important point grows out of this. Terence actually seems to create a curious alliance between social realism and traditional comic ideas, pitting them together against sentimentality. Davus strives to achieve a 'realistic' solution to Pamphilus' problem: he does not believe in the unlikely chance that makes Glycerium a fit wife for Pamphilus (224-5). So, like the *servi callidi* in other comedies (e.g. *Bacchides* or *Pseudolus*), he attempts to arrange things so that Pamphilus can keep her as a mistress. The *senex*, Simo, also opposes Pamphilus' unrealistic, socially unacceptable sentimental attachment to Glycerium. So he plans to upset it with a comic deception of his son (this is, of course, a comic inversion: normally sons conduct deceptions). Note, however, that both Davus and Simo are defeated; their plots are frustrated. Traditional comedy has a good run for its money in this play, but ultimately it is the sentimental wishes of Pamphilus that triumph.

*Andria*'s conclusion may, of course, be ironical in tone. Perhaps Terence's audience was supposed to laugh when the 'impossible' sentimental ideal was achieved. However, just as readers of *Northanger Abbey* face Austen's question about her sentimental conclusion – do they like it or not?<sup>11</sup> – the Roman spectators of *Andria* must have asked themselves if its happy end was to their taste. If it was, they must have wanted Pamphilus to succeed; they must have sympathised with his unrealistic sentimental aims – perhaps even thought they were 'right'. Bernbaum may be correct to point out Pamphilus' dependency upon mere chance: the Roman does not enjoy the support of an

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Thesis Introduction 3, above.

approving Judeo-Christian Providence. However, we ought nonetheless to note that he *is* described as ‘the darling of the gods’, (973). Sentimental virtue may be rewarded in *Andria*’s conclusion, after all.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

Critics from both the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and the 20<sup>th</sup> have raised various objections to English sentimental drama. They have argued that it is contrived, illogical and ethically unsound, promoting a distorted image of virtue (Dennis, 1723; Novak 1979, 51-2; Parnell, 1963, *passim*). They have claimed that it fails to fulfil the nature and purpose of true comedy, sometimes being undistinguishable from tragedy (Goldsmith, 1772; Dennis, 1722; Green, 1968, 145). Most significantly for us, they have also declared that it departs from comic traditions established in antiquity. They have argued that ancient comedy was unsentimental.

We have seen, however, that this last point is disputable. Some critics – Brown, Rudd, Duckworth *et al* – are prepared to argue that classical comedy did include sentimental themes. Studying Terence’s *Andria*, Steele, Barsby, Goldberg and McGarity all discern elements which accord with sentimentality. Having compared Terence’s play with Steele’s *TCL*, I have reached this conclusion: *Andria* is not as overtly sentimental as the later play; however, it does contain the basic ingredients of comedy and also those of sentimentality. It perhaps even contrasts them against each other, drawing attention to everyday conflicts between sentimental idealism and potentially harsh reality. In this it acts very much like Plautus’ putatively more farce-like productions.

Appendix 2: Information From Plautus' Plays.

	Play involves some sort of exploration of a male-female relationship.	Plot sees a marriage restored/a marriage promised.	Play ends with a tableau of happy couple/focuses chief attention on a 'romance'.	Extra-marital affairs carry on at play's ending.	During play 'lost' family member reunited with parents/siblings (nuclear group.)	During play 'estranged' family members (parents/siblings) reunited.	A home-coming occurs in the play.	A <i>servus callidus</i> takes charge in the plot.
<i>Am.</i>	✓	✓	? Alcmene's relationships are the focus of attention, but quality of 'romance' is questionable and no final tableau of reunited couple.	X	X	X	✓	? Arguably Mercury takes on this role: as 'Sosia' defies his master, Amphit. But he also serves his father, Jupiter!
<i>As.</i>	✓	✓ (Unhappy) That of <i>senex</i> .	X (Rather an inversion of this)	✓ That of son, but his relationship seen to be severely limited.	X	X	✓ (Unhappy) that of <i>senex</i>	✓ Triumph not deception (this fails onstage) but humiliation of son.
<i>Aul</i>	✓	✓ So we presume!	X (End of play lost. NB Lyc. rapes girl, then marries because he <i>must</i> ; couple's feelings not discussed.)	X	X	✓ Euclio presumably re-establishes a proper relationship with his daughter.	✓ Euclio's 'false' homecoming, prior to gaining proper appreciation of his home.	X
<i>Bac.</i>	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓ With twist as <i>senex</i> accepts son's standards.	✓ With twist as <i>senex</i> enters Bacch.'s house.	✓

	Play involves some sort of exploration of a male-female relationship.	Plot sees a marriage restored/a marriage promised.	Play ends with a tableau of happy couple/focuses chief attention on a 'romance'.	Extra-marital affairs carry on at play's ending.	During play 'lost' family member reunited with parents/siblings (nuclear group.)	During play 'estranged' family members (parents/siblings) reunited.	A home-coming occurs in the play.	A <i>servus callidus</i> takes charge in the plot.
<i>Capt.</i>	X	X	X	X	✓ Tyn. takes mistaken id role of girl in usual New Comedy plot – but some bitterness in reunion scene.	✓ Though they are unaware of their relationship, Tyn. & Hegio enact common father versus son plot.	✓	? Tyn. is part son, part <i>s. c.</i> Philoc. also 'acts' in the role.
<i>Cas.</i>	✓	✓ Senex tries pseudo marriage but must return to wife	X Rather an inversion of this.	X	X	X	✓ That of <i>senex</i> .	✓ But unusually under direction of <i>matrona</i> .
<i>Cist</i>	✓	✓	X Mild innuendo in last scene rather reduces the sentiment, with L's comment that through his efforts D's family has been increased.	X	✓ But an adoptive mother must give up her 'child'.	? Son threatens to destroy link with father by disobeying, but play fragmentary so unclear how theme worked out.	✓	X

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<i>Curc</i>	✓	✓	X Last scene not to do with girl, but pimp. Final lines return to marriage, but it's a bit perfunctory!	X	✓ But this has a comic/ironic undercurrent: the siblings only just saved from incest!	X	✓ But this home-coming of a parasite.	? Instead of <i>servus callidus</i> get the parasite.
<i>Epid</i>	✓	X	X	✓ Son is to carry on with an affair, but not with girl of choice!	✓ 2 ironic reunions: 1st false, between parents & <i>pseudo</i> -child; 2nd true, but disappoints a brother!	? Emphasis is on slave v master and son's part in this largely forgotten.	✓ But effect unsentimental: son does not want to see father, so doesn't enter house; sister's happy return overshadowed by E's machinations.	✓
<i>Men</i>	✓	X Marriage dissolved!	X	X Affair also closed.	✓	X	✓ Sos. Men unexpectedly welcomed at Erotium's. Epi.Men tries to enter his Epi. home, but is rejected; both return to Syracuse.	X

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<i>Mer.</i>	✓	✓ That of neighbour	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X
<i>Mil.</i>	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓ (P seizes his girl and sets off home.)	✓
<i>Mos.</i>	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓ But attention switched to slave/master conflict and reunion with son not staged.	✓	✓
<i>Per.</i>	✓	X	X	✓ But tone is not 'happy': punitive element emphasised and girl is shown in new servitude to 'lover', Tox.	? Conspirators set up plot for a pseudo-reunion, emphasising destruction of Sat's family.	X	✓ Plot hatched for a pseudo home-coming; really creates an alienation.	✓

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<i>Poen</i>	✓	✓	X Emphasis of final scene on 'punishment' of pimp	X	✓	X	✓ Reunited family will be able to go home.	✓ (Though not as central a character as other s.c.)
<i>Ps</i>	✓	X	X	✓	X	? <i>Senex</i> is obliged to accept his son's position.	? Philo 'escapes' pimp's house and enters her lover's.	✓
<i>Rud</i>	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	X
<i>St</i>	✓	✓	X	✓ Slave ménage à trois.	✓	X	✓	X



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<i>Trin</i>	✓	✓	X Marriage either seen as a good deed or a punitive measure!	X	X	✓ But son and father are never really in much conflict in play, as son has already repented!	✓	X We see the <i>senes</i> attempting to take on the deception role.
<i>Truc</i>	✓	✓ But forced on Din. and he pays little attention to it.	X	✓ Yes, but the chief character Din. is not involved.	X Baby is stolen and its father sanctions its use by pseudo-mother.	X	✓ <i>Miles</i> comes 'home', but it a pseudo home. He & Din. later expelled.	X We see women organising their own tricks.

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