

Cursus Servorum:

Gendered Patterns in Owners' Valuations

of Enslaved Persons in Plautine Comedy

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Chapter One

Introduction:

Staging Slavery in Roman Comedy

Enslavement is an essential element of Roman Comedy, interwoven into the plots and the recurring characters of the genre. In Plautine comedy, its harsh realities are often played for laughs. Protagonists, such as Plautus' Pseudolus, use insults like *uerbero*, *furcifer*, and *fugitiue* (360, 361, 365), words associated with physical abuse of the enslaved, as jokes against their antagonists. One reality remains true throughout the genre: the enslaved wish to either gain their freedom or improve their status among the enslaved. In the words of the nameless *lorarius* from Plautus' *Captivi*, *omnes profecto liberi lubentius sumus quam seruimus* ("Surely, we all would prefer to be free rather than to serve," 119-120).¹ This sentiment is the driving force of almost every enslaved character within the genre.

Throughout Roman Comedy, both men and women take actions to secure their freedom or improve their status. The enslaved appeal to their enslavers through their actions and words, in order to persuade their owners to manumit them. Although enslaved men and women show the same desire for manumission, the paths to freedom are very different for men and women. Enslaved men can work towards freedom or a higher status through loyalty and ingenuity, but

¹ Translations throughout are my own.

women cannot. In Roman Comedy, enslavers will offer to promote their enslaved men who display exceptional loyalty. One example arises in Tyndarus' conversation with Hegio in *Captivi*.

si quis hoc gnato tuo domo
tuos seruos faxit, qualem haberes gratiam?
emitteresne necne eum seruom manu?
essetne apud te is seruos acceptissimus?
responde.

711-715

If some slave in your home did this
for your son, would you not be grateful?
Would you not set him free from slavery?
Would you not most greatly appreciate that enslaved man?
Answer me.

Tyndarus has helped his former owner escape slavery, and is now debating with his current owner Hegio about whether he should be punished for his actions. He believes that by helping his former owner escape, he has accomplished an extraordinary feat of loyalty to his former owners at this expense of his new owner. Therefore, he expects to be rewarded for his loyalty when his former owner returns to free him.

To improve their status, enslaved men can use their intelligence to align themselves with their *paterfamilias* or to trick members of the owner class. W.S. Anderson refers to this particular brand of ingenuity as “heroic badness,” in which normally bad things such as deceit, stealing from one’s owner, and fraud are praised as heroic actions in Roman Comedy (Anderson, 96). In Plautine comedy, enslaved men such as Pseudolus and Epidicus can improve their status and gain freedom through a combination of loyalty and ingenuity. Heroic *malitia* can both entertain the trickster and the audience, and allow him to gain his enslaver’s favor or even earn his freedom.

The enslaved women staged in Roman Comedy tend to be involved in commercial sex work, rather than in domestic labor in a family home. Unlike their male counterparts, enslaved

women seeking to improve their status or gain their freedom must rely on either their relationships to men or their ability to produce revenue. The owner classes do not appear to value female ingenuity: there are no women tricksters who gain freedom or improve their status in the extant Plautine corpus. However, quite a few enslaved women, especially those forced into the commercial sex industry, work to leverage their heritage and exoticness to attract men and then use those men to free themselves. For example, in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, Phoenicium urges her lover Calidorus to free her as a testament to his love for her.

harunc uoluptatum mi omnium atque itidem tibi
distractio, discidium, uastities uenit,
nisi quae mihi in te est aut tibi est in me salus.
haec quae ego sciui ut scires curauit omnia;
nunc ego te experiar quid ames, quid simules. uale.

Pseudolus 69-73

Of all these pleasures, for me and for you,
There will come an end, a separation, a ruin,
Unless there exists some help for me from you or for you in me.
I have made sure that you know all the things that I know;
Now I will test whether you love me or are pretending to. Goodbye.

According to Phoenicium, if he is truly in love, Calidorus will rescue her from a Babylonian soldier by freeing her from the pimp. If he fails, then he is only “pretending” to love her. Phoenicium actively exploits her relationship with her *adulescens* lover to ensure her own freedom.

The relationships of these women to men affect not only their paths to freedom, but also their status within slavery. The owner classes, especially pimps, exploit the sexual relationships of the women they enslave. In *Pseudolus*, the *canticum* of the pimp Ballio offers a perfect example of how the owner classes determine the status of enslaved women, based on the women's sexual relationships. He tasks the women in his household with collecting certain goods based on their individual clientele: he orders Hedyllium to collect grain from her lovers because they are grain merchants; Aeschrodora must bring racks of meat from her butcher boyfriends; Xytilis

must bring oil from her boyfriends; and Phoenicum is expected to bring money from her high-ranking lovers (187-229). Ballio assesses their value and tasks based on their lovers, and even threatens to lower their rank within his household if they cannot properly exploit their relationships. He specifically notes that Phoenicum has always been working towards freedom: *tu autem quae pro capite argentum mihi iam iamque semper numeras* (“For you who are always counting up silver to me for your freedom,” 225-226). According to Ballio, Phoenicum relies on the men she has relationships with in order to accomplish that goal. In every case, enslaved women must rely on sexual relationships to these men, to gain their own freedom or elevate their status in their household.²

The following chapters will explore distinct ways in which the owner classes assess enslaved men and women. Each chapter will focus on how enslavers rank enslaved persons and assign the labors that each is responsible for, and how the owner class determines who is promoted and who is punished. The difference between labor assigned to men and labor assigned to women will also be discussed. Enslaved men are normally portrayed as errand boys or as tackling physically tasking labors. On the other hand, enslaved women are assigned either domestic work or commercial sex work. The difference between domestic work and commercial sex work also affects how the owner class evaluate the status of their enslaved women.

² For example, Ballio threatens not only physical abuse but demotion from the easier lives of the more elite *meretrices* in his brothel, who service wealthy men, to a lower status of serving the common people (*poplo prostitutam vos*, 178). Such a threat is intended to motivate these enslaved women to extract lavish gifts from their well-off lovers.

Chapter Two

Assessing the Value of Enslaved Men:

The View of the Owner Class

As remarked in Chapter One, Roman Comedy stages enslaved men as having the opportunity to improve their status and gain freedom through acts of loyalty and ingenuity that benefit the owner class. However accurately this pattern represents social realities, Roman Comedy shows this opportunity as reserved for enslaved men, but not available to enslaved women. The owner classes in the genre, including citizens and noncitizens, make it clear that they value enslaved men for their ability to scheme for the benefit of owners. Hence, the enslaved men in Roman Comedy hope to improve their status by providing their loyalty or intelligence in the service of their enslavers. The more loyal and useful the enslaved man is to his enslaver, the higher his position within the household. Roman Comedy provides several different examples of higher-ranked enslaved men. For example, Olympio of *Casina* is a *vilicus*, an enslaved overseer, who manages his owner's land and property and can punish lower level enslaved men and women. Lower-ranked enslaved men, such as Epidicus, from Plautus' play of the same name, typically have more physically strenuous tasks like running errands and carrying messages or news. Enslaved men whom an owner deems harmful to the household or no longer useful, like *Captivi*'s

Tyndarus, might be threatened or punished with demotion to the lowest form of enslaved labor, namely the mills, mines, and quarries.

Higher-ranked enslaved men

A high-ranked enslaved man in Roman Comedy possesses some authority within his own household and thus performs relatively few physically tasking labors or errands that take him outside the household or property he manages. Although he is not free, he is trusted with household affairs, and can give orders to lower-ranked enslaved men and women. Men in these positions typically work closely with the *paterfamilias* and sometimes threaten or carry out punishments on lower ranked men. The owner classes give high-ranked positions to enslaved men they believe are more useful to them, whom they trust. These men show either extraordinary loyalty or ingenuity that is used for the benefit of their owner.

Olympio, in Plautus' *Casina*, is an example of the owner classes' ideal high-ranking enslaved man. He fulfills such expectations with unwavering loyalty to his *paterfamilias*, Lysidamus, who relies on Olympio's loyalty throughout the play to gain possession of Casina, an enslaved girl who belongs to his wife. He connives to give her to Olympio in marriage so that he himself may have sexual access to her, through Olympio. In opposition, Lysidamus' wife Cleostrata plots to marry Casina to Chalinus, another enslaved man in their household.³ Olympio is the only enslaved person within the play who works with Lysidamus: the rest of the household expresses loyalty to the *matrona* and the *adulescens*. He is also the only high-ranked enslaved

³ The prologue of the play tells us that Cleostrata cares for Casina and has raised the girl as if she were her own daughter (45) [an interesting dynamic worthy of future attention]. However, when Casina matures to the age in which she attracts the attention of men (48), specifically the *senex* and *adulescens* of the play, Cleostrata apparently must accept that she cannot protect the girl she raised as a daughter from sexual abuse by her male owners. [Yes — this all deserves an intersectional approach, which considers age/gender/status and their various permutations]

man who appears in this particular play, and he explains that he desires to remain loyal to Lysidamus above other citizen member of the household because the *paterfamilias* possesses the most power in the household. Olympio plans to please Lysidamus because he, more than any other person in the household, is able to set Olympio free.

quid tu me <tua>, era, libertate territas?
quin si tu nolis filiusque etiam tuos,
uobis inuitis atque amborum ingratiis
una libella liber possum fieri (313-16).

Why do you keep scaring me with freedom, mistress?
Even if you and your son did not want me to,
and both of you were unwilling and against it,
I could become free for one penny.

Olympio is aware that the *paterfamilias* values and will reward unwavering loyalty. Although his immediate motive in helping Lysidamus' plot is to gain sexual access to Casina for himself, alongside his enslaver, Olympio does not forget that he might ultimately also gain his freedom with his loyal service to the *paterfamilias*. His current position as a *vilicus* reflects his loyalty and usefulness to Lysidamus: as a *vilicus*, or overseer, Olympio manages Lysidamus' farmland. Therefore, he works outside the city, alongside Lysidamus, and has the ability to give orders and punish other lower-ranked enslaved men.⁴

After Olympio wins the right to marry Casina, both he and Lysidamus believe that they have succeeded with their plot. Olympio takes the opportunity—and reminds Lysidamus that it was through his efforts that Lysidamus is happy.

ut tibi ego inuentus sum opsequens! quod maxime
cupiebas, eius copiam feci tibi.
erit hodie tecum quod amas clam uxorem (449-451).

⁴ Olympio uses his position as the *vilicus* to threaten Chalinus with grueling labor and torture (120–125). Although his threats were never fulfilled, this does show that he has the power within the household to punish other enslaved men.

How willingly submissive I am to you! What you
wanted most, I have seized for you.
Today you will have with you what you desire most, with your wife unaware.

In this short remark, Olympio emphasizes his *obsequium* and his ability to obtain what Lysidamus desires, aiming to gain Lysidamus' praise and favor. Immediately, the *senex* increases his expectation of Olympio from not only obtaining Casina, but delivering her to him that night. Olympio shows some hesitation, but Lysidamus quickly raises the possible reward: freedom on the next day if Olympio can bring Casina to him in a few hours (*Casina*, 473-476). Olympio's plan of gaining his freedom through loyalty to Lysidamus is within his reach. Despite all his loyalty, he does not wish to remain enslaved, and he is eager to sneak in to Casina before the old man can get to her, a sign that his much-proclaimed loyalty is a practical tactic rather than a genuine bond. Although Olympio is ultimately unsuccessful, the offer shows that an enslaved man can expect to improve his status, and possibly gain his freedom, if he can fulfill the expectations of his owner.

Another high-ranked enslaved laborer in Roman Comedy is the *atriensis*, or doorkeeper, who typically manages the financial affairs of the household. Doorkeepers do not appear as characters in the surviving plays, but they are mentioned by other enslaved characters, who may even pretend to hold the same power as an *atriensis*. The audience can learn about the position of an *atriensis* from such moments. *Casina*'s Chalinus jokes that Lysidamus offered to appoint him as an *atriensis* for sexual favors in the past:

illuc est, illuc, quod hic hunc fecit **uilicum**:
et idem me pridem, quom ei aduorsum ueneram,
facere **atriensem** uoluerat sub ianua (460-62).

This is it, this is why he made that man here an **overseer**

and the same happened to me when I came back to him,
he wished to make me **doorkeeper** behind the doors.

While Chalinus is joking here about the illicit sexual behavior of the *senex*, he highlights an important detail: Lysidamus considers the *atriensis* a higher-ranked position that he can offer as a reward to enslaved men in exchange for a favor.

This is not the only time that the *atriensis* is portrayed as a desirable job for enslaved men. When Pseudolus pretends to be Ballio's enslaved man, he claims that he oversees food stock: *condus, promus sum, procurator peni* ("I am the provider, the distributor, overseer of supplies," *Pseudolus*, 608). Harpax, enslaved by the soldier who is Calidorus' rival, hears this remark and assumes that Pseudolus is an *atriensis*. Moreover, when Pseudolus claims that he is the one who gives the *atriensis* orders, Harpax then asks if Pseudolus is even enslaved (610). Harpax's assumptions proves that the *atriensis* manages the household provisions and has a high rank for an enslaved man, because he cannot think of an enslaved man who could give an *atriensis* orders.

Harpax makes another significant statement during this exchange. When Pseudolus responds that he is enslaved, Harpax says, *ita videre, et non videre dignus qui liber sies* ("You appear so, and you do not appear someone who is worthy to be free," 611). Harpax insinuates that Pseudolus does not deserve freedom, implying that he believes that a man can earn his freedom through his character and his usefulness to his enslaver. Harpax considers Pseudolus an untrustworthy man who is not as loyal to the pimp as he claims to be, and therefore takes him for a man who does not deserve his freedom. Despite being enslaved himself, Harpax judges Pseudolus on his loyalty to his household—the same standard that the enslaver classes hold.

High-ranked enslaved men, like Olympio and like Pseudolus was pretending to be, are expected to be trustworthy and loyal, and to work to the benefit of their owner.

Lower-ranked enslaved men

Beneath higher-ranked enslaved men, like the *vilicus* or the *atriensis*, are a variety of positions in which an enslaved man has no power to manage household affairs, but is allowed to leave the household unattended and to carry out tasks unsupervised. These men are subject to the orders of higher-ranked enslaved men⁵ and do not typically have the authority to order around others. They are not presented as particularly loyal to their enslavers.

The owner classes in Roman comedy value the ingenuity of an enslaved man as long as it benefits the household. Thus, an enslaved man who is not portrayed as remarkably loyal can still improve his rank and gain freedom through well-thought-out tricks that benefit his enslaver. This is the work of the Plautine *servus callidus*, the enslaved trickster. An example is Epidicus, the star of Plautus' play named after him. Epidicus works with Stratippocles, the *adulescens*, to buy the women that the young man falls in love with. He has already paid for one girlfriend by scamming the father before the beginning of the play, only for the young man to come back to town needing money to buy a new girlfriend. Epidicus plans to take this money from his owner, Periphanes, as well. Eventually, he finds that Stratippocles' new beloved is actually the young man's lost sister. When Periphanes is reunited with his lost daughter, he frees Epidicus for hav-

⁵ Olympio often threatens to increase Chalinus's physical labor using his position as a *vilicus* to order around lower-ranked enslaved men (120–125, 131–132, 437–436).

ing found her. Epidicus does not exemplify faithfulness and loyalty to his *paterfamilias*, Periphanes: instead, he often tricks the old man out of money on behalf of his son, Stratippocles. Unlike Lysidamus with Olympio, Periphanes does not rely on Epidicus for his loyalty: both Periphanes and Stratippocles value Epidicus for his ingenuity, and want him to help plan a trick or carry out a scheme.

Epidicus is aware that his owners value his ingenuity—or as Anderson calls it, his “heroic badness”—and uses his limited unsupervised time as a lower-ranked enslaved man to carry out schemes that could increase or secure his status. Even before his first staged meeting with Periphanes, Epidicus is seen thinking of ways to show loyalty and service, without actually doing anything of service. Upon meeting Periphanes and his friend Apocides, Epidicus pretends that he had been outside the household running errands and looking for his owner (183-200). This lie is believable only if Epidicus holds a lower-ranked position, in which he normally runs unsupervised errands outside the home instead of overseeing property or managing funds.

Since Epidicus is lower-ranked, valued for his intelligence and not for remarkable loyalty, his owners determine whether to promote or demote him based on his usefulness to them. For example, Stratippocles, the *adulescens*, often threatens to lower Epidicus’ rank for failing to accomplish a task. *Quem quidem ego hominem irrigatum plagis pistori dabo,/ nisi hodie prius comparassit mihi quadraginta minas* (“I will give this man, lashed with whips, to the miller, if he does not prepare me 40 minas today,” 121-122). Stratippocles is asking a lot from Epidicus by asking him to obtain a large amount of money in very little time by stealing from his own father, and he is willing to cause physical harm to Epidicus to pacify his feelings of disappointment if Epidicus does not succeed.

Epidicus is ultimately able to secure his freedom because of both his scheme and the information that he gathered as a lower-ranked errand boy. His schemes—originally meant to harm the household finances to help the *adulescens*—ended up safely reuniting a lost citizen girl to her citizen parents. Epidicus has special information as the only person able to recognize Periphanes' long-lost daughter because he had gone on errands to deliver her gifts when she was young (640). Periphanes frees Epidicus, even knowing that Epidicus had tricked him several times, because Epidicus' schemes were beneficial to the Periphanes household in the end.

The Mills, Mines, and Quarries

The mills, mines, and quarries represent the lowest form of enslaved labor. In Roman Comedy, the owner classes reserve this labor as the worst punishment for enslaved men.⁶ Anyone working in them experienced extremely limited mobility (Millar, 143), frequent beatings, and physically demanding work (Thompson, 188). According to Roman Comedy, the enslaved men working in mills, mines, and quarries were constantly monitored and frequently beaten (*Captivi*, 1000-1004). Enslaved men sent to work in these mines were expected to die a painful death because of their labor.⁷ In Plautine comedy, the owner classes reserve this punishment for perceived tricksters who use their ingenuity to betray the interests of their owners. For example, Simo threatens to send Pseudolus to the mills for plotting against him.

⁶ F.H. Thompson (2003, 157) cites two historical examples recorded by ancient writers of enslaved labor in the mines and quarries including Diodorus (5.36.3–4) as well as Strabo (see below).

⁷ Fergus Millar (1984: 137) notes that Strabo mentions the use of enslaved labors in mines in *Geographica*. Although this historical source dates over a century after Plautus and Terence, Strabo's description of grueling labor and early death align perfectly with the threats that members of the owner classes often employ in Roman Comedy. *εἰργάζοντο δὲ δημοσιῶναι, μεταλλευταῖς χρώμενοι τοῖς ἀπὸ κακουργίας ἀγοραζομένοις ἀνδραπόδοις· πρὸς γὰρ τῷ ἐπιπόνῳ τοῦ ἔργου καὶ θανάσιμον καὶ δύσοιστον εἶναι τὸν ἀέρα φασὶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς μετάλλοις διὰ τὴν βαρύτητα τῆς τῶν βόλων ὀδμῆς, ὥστε ὠκύμορα εἶναι τὰ σώματα.*

Pseud: eloquar. quia nolebam ex me morem progigni malum, erum ut suos seruos criminaret apud erum.

Simo: iuberis hunc praecipitem in pistrinum trahi.

Call: numquid peccatum est, Simo?

Simo: immo maxume.

Pseud: desiste, recte ego meam rem sapio, Callipho; peccata mea sunt. animum aduerte nunciamquapropter nati amoris te expertem habuerim: pistrinum in mundo scibam, si dixem, mihi (491-99).

Pseud: I will speak. Because I did not want there to be bad behavior from me, that his own enslaved man would accuse the owner to another owner.

Simo: You might order him to be thrown into the mill headfirst.

Call: Has some mistake been committed, Simo?

Simo: Of course!

Pseud: Stop, I know my affairs well, Callipho. I have made a mistake. Now pay attention to why I have not shared with you about the affair of your son: I knew the mills were ahead for me, if I told you.

Simo is threatening Pseudolus for being more loyal to Calidorus, Simo's son, than to himself, the *paterfamilias*. Pseudolus is working against the household's interest by withholding information from Simo and trying to steal twenty *minae* from him. In Roman Comedy, enslaved men who are seen as disloyal and disobedient could earn themselves a trip to the mills. Although Pseudolus' loyalty does not lie with Simo, he does use his schemes to benefit one of his enslavers and he does more damage to the pimp's household than to the owner's household. His ingenuity for the benefit of the *adulescens* makes up for his lack of loyalty to Simo.

An enslaved trickster like Epidicus or Pseudolus is not the only character to be threatened with the mill or quarry, however: Tyndarus of *Captivi* is actually sent to work in the quarry because he worked against the interests of Hegio, his new owner and also—unbeknownst to them both—his father. Hegio has lost his other son, Philopolemus, and has purchased the captive citizen youth Philocrates, along with his enslaved companion Tyndarus, to ransom in exchange for Philopolemus. Tyndarus and Philocrates trade roles, at Tyndarus' suggestion, so that Philocrates

can escape while Tyndarus is to be resold. When Hegio learns that he has been tricked into the high-value Philocrates go, he punishes Tyndarus by sending him to the quarries, effectively sentencing Tyndarus to brutal torture before eventual death.

Hegio sentences Tyndarus to the quarries before it is revealed that Tyndarus is his long-lost son, because he views Tyndarus as an enslaved man who should live up to his enslaver's expectation of loyalty. Hegio's treatment of Tyndarus reveals a logical flaw in the financial assessment system of the owner classes: enslavers like Hegio and Stratippocles are willing to damage or even kill an enslaved person over matters emotional rather than financial or functional. They can become so angry with the noncompliant or apparently unfaithful enslaved person that they forget their financial investment. Although this decision is rash and emotional, Hegio has the legal power, as an enslaver, to send Tyndarus to the quarries, and he justifies his rash decision for two reasons: Tyndarus has earned his punishment for being disloyal to Hegio, and it will act as an example to discourage other enslaved men from attempting to trick him.

This is not the only example of Hegio's preoccupation with disloyal enslaved men. He is constantly threatening to punish treacherous enslaved men. His first conversation on stage is between him and one of his *lorarii* about the very subject of loyalty.⁸

Lor: omnes profecto liberi lubentius sumus quam seruimus.

Heg: non uidere ita tu quidem.

Lor: si non est quod dem, mene uis dem ipse . . . in pedes?

Heg: si dederis, erit extemplo mihi quod dem tibi.

Lor: auis me ferae consimilem faciam, ut praedicas.

Heg: ita ut dicis: nam si faxis, te in caueam dabo (119-124).

Lor: Certainly we all are free more willingly than we are enslaved.

⁸ Amy Richlin describes *lorarii* as the physical display of the owner's power on stage (Richlin 2017: 454). They are not especially high-ranked, but they do carry out the will of the owner and therefore their loyalty is normally aligned with their enslavers. See Richlin (2017: 452–454) for a full list of all the *lorarii* present in Plautine Comedy, and how they carry out the will of their enslaver in each scene.

Heg: You do not seem to be so.

Lor: If there is nothing that I should give, do you want me to take to my feet?

Heg: If you take to your feet, I will immediately have something that I will give you.

Lor: I will make myself like a wild bird, as you said before.

Heg: Then as you said: for if you do this, I will give you into a cage.

Hegio is testing his *lorarius*' potential loyalty. When he states that the *lorarius* does not appear the type to run away, the enslaved man answers honestly that all men wish to have freedom and if given that chance he would fly away like a bird. Hegio immediately responds: *te in caueam dabo* (I will give you into a cage, 124). If the *lorarius* was caught attempting to escape, Hegio would immediately restrict his freedom, which effectively lowers his rank.

Hegio is also reunited with the enslaved man who kidnapped and sold his son into slavery. Once his son's identity is confirmed, Hegio quickly sentences Stalagmus to the quarries in Tyndarus' place: *eamus intro, ut arcessatur faber, ut istas compedis tibi adimam, huic dem* ("Let's go inside so that the blacksmith can be summoned and I can take these chains off you and give them to this guy," 1026-28). Hegio again decides that whatever value Stalagmus might bring to his household is less than the emotional benefits of sending him to the quarries. He punishes Stalagmus as revenge for his separating him from his son.⁹ In Roman Comedy, the mills, mines, and quarries are brutal punishments for enslaved men whom the owners deem either or useless or harmful to the household.

Roman comedy presents enslavement as a varied experience for enslaved men, and that experience is entirely dependent on the owner classes' evaluation of enslaved men. The owner

⁹ Hegio condemns both Tyndarus and Stalagmus to the quarries as a punishment for an escape from slavery. In Tyndarus' case, he aided the escape of another enslaved person, while Stalagmus escaped himself. Millar (1984: 130) cites a similar historical punishment for an enslaved fugitive, Cicero's letter to Quintus 2(1.2). *postea Plato quidam Sardinianus, Epicureus, qui Athenis solet esse multum et qui tum Athenis fuerat cum Licinus eo venisset [et], cum eum fugitivum esse postea ex Aesopi litteris cognosset, hominem comprehendit et in custodiam Ephesi tradidit; sed in publicamne an in pistrinum, non satis ex litteris eius intellegere potuimus*. This punishment aligns with the comic punishment for the same crime.

classes value loyalty and usefulness from enslaved men. They reward these positive qualities with more powerful positions within the system of slavery, while punishing disloyalty and harm to the household with horrendous labors like millwork, quarry work, and mining. The owner classes use the hope of freedom through good work and the threat of punishment for noncompliance to encourage their enslaved men to join their loyalty and ingenuity to benefiting their enslavers' households.

Enslaved men in Roman Comedy are very aware of their value to their enslavers. They know what is expected from them by their owners' praises and threats, and they know how to navigate those expectations to improve their own status. Enslaved men who choose to work loyally for their enslavers to gain freedom, as Olympio and Harpax do, believe that they can earn higher status or even their freedom. Olympio seeks to gain freedom through securing favors for, and pleasing, Lysidamus. Harpax believes that an enslaved man who is *dignus* can earn his freedom, so he dutifully attempts to run errands for the soldier who enslaves him (611). The tricksters Epidicus and Pseudolus are not as dutiful or loyal. They use elaborate schemes to gain their freedom or improve their status. In either case, the enslaved men and the enslavers are aware of the rules of slavery in Roman comedy. They know that know that loyalty or ingenuity can earn them the opportunity to improve their status.

Chapter Three

The Price of a Woman: *Genus, Patria, et Forma*

Unlike enslaved men, enslaved women cannot use their ingenuity or loyalty to work towards their freedom. Enslavers value them for their relationship to men, not for their morals or actions. A woman's status within various stages of enslavement depends on her ability to attract and exploit wealthy men with her exoticness, beauty, or erotic appeal. In Roman Comedy, enslaved women's value can be categorized in three ways: purchase price, potential for revenue, and domestic value. The purchase price of an enslaved woman is her value, as perceived or assessed when she is bought or sold. Potential for revenue is a factor only for women in commercial sex work. This category is heavily reliant on a woman's potential to bring money into a pimp's home as a hired girlfriend or sex worker. The final category, domestic value, is reserved for enslaved women not involved in commercial sex work. Roman Comedy provides many examples of the way the owner classes assess the value of enslaved women, from assertions that a

particular woman is especially valuable as a gift (e.g., the Ethiopian *ancilla* in *Truculentus*) to a household to owners determining what sort of work is appropriate for a particular woman (e.g., Syra and Pasicompsa in *Mercator*). An exploration of these values will expose the ways that the owner classes think about, and treat, the women they enslave.¹⁰

Purchase Price

Enslavers employ a range of factors to assess a woman's purchase value, such as attractiveness, ethnicity, status before enslavement, potential revenue in the future, and the non-financial worth of her domestic labor. These factors vary, depending on whether the woman is expected to be part of a commercial sex enterprise or to work as a domestic *ancilla*. An enslaved woman's value upon purchase is discussed in several plays, both during the sale or afterwards, when a purchaser presents the recently bought woman as a luxury item.¹¹ Her former civic and social status can improve her value in the eyes of the acquiring owner classes. For example, in *Truculentus* the soldier, Stratophanes, gifts his beloved, Phronesium, two Syrian women, boasting that they had been queens. (The improved value can raise the purchase price, as in the case of the disguised Virgo of *Persa*, discussed below.)

adduxi ancillas tibi eccas ex Syria duas,
is te dono. adduce huc tu istas. sed istae reginae domi
suae fuere ambae, uerum <earum> patriam ego excidi manu.
his te dono (530-533).

Look, I brought two *ancillas* from Syria for you,
I am giving you them. (*To his servants*) You—bring them over here. (*To Phronesium*)
And both of them were queens in their own homes. Indeed, I destroyed their home
countries with my hands. I am giving these women to you.

¹⁰ Ultimately, studying those patterns will produce a better understanding of the life of enslaved women within the genre, a topic too large to fit into this thesis.

¹¹ Leigh (2004, 10) notes the owner classes tendency to see enslaved women, specifically a lyre-player as a luxury good.

Stratophanes gives these women to Phronesium to buy her affection and attention. He considers the two women more valuable because they were formerly queens. He expects Phronesium to agree with him, and is disappointed and surprised when she does not.

Stratophanes is not the only person who values the former status of enslaved women. In Plautus' *Persa*, the pimp Dordalus considers buying a girl he believes to be a recently enslaved Persian. She is actually a citizen disguised in a plot to help Toxilus, the enslaved trickster, deceive the pimp and thereby gain the money that Toxilus will use to buy away his beloved Lemnisenis from Dordalus. Thus, Dordalus assesses her value as if she were truly an enslaved girl. He tries to determine her homeland, her heritage, and the status of her father (632-649). He persistently seeks information about the girl's father and her family's status in her former homeland.

Dor: quis fuit? dic nomen.

Virgo: quid illum miserum memorem qui fuit? nunc et illum Miserum et me Miseram aequom est nominarier.

Dor: quous modi is in populo habitust?

Virgo: nemo quisquam acceptior: serui liberique amabant (645-650).

Dor: Who was he? Tell me his name.

Virgo: Why should I recall who that miserable man was? Now it is right to call him Wretched Man and Wretched Girl.

Dor: How was he received in the public?

Virgo: No one was more accepted: The enslaved and the free loved him.

Like Stratophanes, the pimp considers the girl's former civic and social status an important factor in determining her purchase price. Dordalus believes that when he determines her ethnicity and her father's standing in her previous country, he will be able to determine if she is truly worth the 60 minae that she is being sold for, a price that exceeds the typical price of

enslaved *meretrices* in Roman Comedy.¹² Moreover, in an effort to trick the pimp, Toxilus even gives his encouragement: *quo genere aut qua in patria nata sit aut quibus parentibus,/ ne temere hanc te emisse dicas me impulsore aut illice,/ uolo te percontari.* (“I want you to carefully ask, from what race or what country she was born, or from what parents, so that you might not say that you bought this girl thoughtlessly, or that I incited you with an alluring thing,” 596-598). In an effort to trick Dordalus, Toxilus urges him to assess the girl’s value diligently. He presents a full assessment of the value of an enslaved woman as her *genus*, *patria*, and *parens*, or her race, ethnicity, and former social status. Toxilus also coaches the girl to present herself as the most economical option, an exotic formerly free woman from a good family.¹³ The *virgo*’s false origins eventually trick Dordalus into purchasing her at the absurdly inflated price of 60 *minae* (658-662). It is clear that, for the enslaver, both the acquisition and the purchase price of an enslaved girl are influenced by her *genus*, *patria*, and *parens*.

Plautus’ *Poenulus* also focuses on the importance of a woman’s relationship to men in determining her value. Adelphasium, despite being enslaved, considers her previous status as a freeborn citizen girl an advantage that she and her sister have over other enslaved women. She credits their former status as *ingenuae*, i.e., freeborn, propels the sisters’ value above that of other enslaved women.

non eo genere sumus prognatae, tam etsi sumus seruae, soror,
ut deceat nos facere quicquam quod homo quisquam irrideat.
multa sunt mulierum uitia, sed hoc e multis maxumumest,

¹² The standard exchange rate for an enslaved woman in Roman Comedy is twenty *minae*. See Sharrock 1996, citing F. Ritschl, *Opuscula Philologica II* (Leipzig, 1868), 308–09.

¹³ Stewart (2020, 364–66) see more on the commodification of enslaved women. Richlin (2020, 353) includes *Virgo* in a list of exotic imports of the enslaved. Richlin also emphasizes the economic importance of the *Virgo*’s false exotic appearance (2017, 297). Another notable exotic purchase (Richlin 2020, 353) is *Eunuchus*’s Ethiopian *ancilla*. This enslaved woman, along with a eunuch, is staged as a luxury good valued for her exoticness (*Eunuchus*, 163–68). Although I focus primarily on Plautine examples in my argument, the same pattern in the owner classes’ assessment of the enslaved appear to apply across all of Roman Comedy.

quom sibi nimis placent minusque addunt operam uti placeant uiris (1201-1204).

We were not born into such a family, despite being enslaved, sister,
that we ought to do something that a person would ridicule.
The vices of women are many, but this out of many others is the worst,
that they are pleased with themselves too much and put less effort into pleasing men.

Like the owner classes, Adelphasium believes that she and her sister share an innate higher value as formerly free citizen women, and thus will attract attention and earn the praise of onlookers at the festival, along with a preferable post-sale situation.¹⁴ While her sister Anterastilis relies on their beauty to stand out among the other women, Adelphasium holds to her opinion that their beauty, while present and beneficial, is not nearly as important as their status.

Ability to Attract Men

As Adelphasium makes clear, these sisters know that their ability to attract men determines their value. The play presents the Aphrodisia as a tradition for women in the commercial sex trade (free or enslaved), a venue for attracting the attention of future clients: *quia apud aedem Veneris hodie est mercatus meretricius: eo conueniunt mercatores, ibi ego me ostendi uolo* (“Because today there is a market of prostitutes at the temple of Venus: merchants will be there, and I wish to be seen there,” 339-340). The enslaved women participating in the festival are both sacrificing to Venus so that they will be blessed in their future relationships, and presenting themselves publicly in the hopes of attracting wealthy lovers. The two sisters react differently to the reality of the festival: Adelphasium begins evaluating herself, her sister, and the other women according to the value system of the enslavers. She places her worth in her former civic and

¹⁴ Richlin (2017: 257–258) argues that the appeal of an enslaved woman, who is described as *liberalis*, is the fact that she might be a respectable woman, or recently was a respectable woman.

social status, and is upset when her sister does not appear to place the same value in their lost status. Anterastilis values their beauty above all else, another assessment that aligns with the pimps in the owner classes. As the sisters discuss their views on themselves and others, the viewers can hear the enslaved women consider how they will be perceived by purchasers, and discuss the values of those classes.

In their first appearance, the girls discuss the processes they undergo to draw male attention. Adelphasium begins by cursing the labor women put into bathing themselves (*Poenulus*, 210-245). Anterastilis quickly replies that they must endure hours of preparation to attract a lover.

soror, cogita, amabo, item nos perhiberi
quam si salsa muriatica esse autumantur,
sine omni lepore et sine suauitate:
nisi multa aqua usque
et diu macerantur,
olent, salsa sunt, tangere ut non uelis.
item nos sumus (239-245).

Sister, please consider that we are presented
as if they are confirming that a salty fish is salty,
without any charm and without sweetness.
Unless they are soaked in a lot of water for a long time,
they smell, they are salty and you do not want to touch it.
We are like that.

She sees all the labor that goes into keeping both of them presentable as a necessary investment for their future. Again, Anterastilis believes that the sisters must put in work to improve their beauty to attract men, while Adelphasium is more assured of her value because she never forgets that they were born into a good family.

Furthermore, Adelphasium directly addresses the importance of a woman's relationship to men in a joke. She insults other enslaved women by emphasizing the low-status men that

certain women attract. With this joke Adelphasium is speaking specifically of an enslaved woman's potential for revenue.

an te ibi uis inter istas uorsarier
prosedas, pistorum amicas, reginas alicarias,
...
quas adeo hau quisquam umquam liber tetigit nec
duxit domum,
seruolorum sordidulorum scorta diobolaria? (265-270)

You do you not want to be among those
common prostitutes, the girlfriends of millers, the queens of the mills
...
whom no free man would touch
nor take home,
the two-buck hookers of enslaved men.

Adelphasium looks down on women who can attract only millers or enslaved men, and must perform sexual work in the brothels with low-class men. These women do not have relationships with high-status or wealthy men, and their sexual services for poor or enslaved men will not help to improve their status. She classifies these women as *scorta diobolaria*, "two-buck hookers," to degrade them. Adelphasium considers such women less valuable because their potential for revenue per sexual service is low. She assesses her own value as if she were a member of the owner classes, and other members of the owner class praise her evaluations. For example, when Adelphasium encourages her sister to value their heritage more than their beauty, Hanno and Agorastocles praise her statement, each taking credit for her ability to think like an owner. Hanno claims that Adelphasium shares his nature, *ingenium patris habet quod sapit*. ("She has her father's nature, therefore she is clever," 1998), while Agorastocles argues his love has made her clever. *iam diu edepol sapientiam tuam haec quidem abusa est. nunc hinc sapit, hinc sentit quicquid sapit, ex meo amore*. "For a while now this woman has used up your wisdom. Now she is

wise, now she understands whatever she is wise at from my love,” 1999-1200). In either case, both men acknowledge that Adelphasium’s comments about herself and other enslaved women align with the logic of enslavers.

Another exemplar of an enslaver who determines the value of enslaved women by their potential for revenue is Ballio of *Pseudolus*, the pimp who owns Phoenicium, Calidorus’ beloved. Preparing to host a birthday party for himself, he demands that all enslaved persons in his house perform to their highest ability in preparation for his party. In his *canticum*, Ballio offers a perfect example of how the owner classes value the sexual relationships of the women they enslave as a means of revenue. As discussed in Chapter Two, he tasks his *meretrices* with collecting particular goods based on their individual clientele (187-229). He threatens them with a drop in ranking, moving from girlfriends of high-ranking men to serving in the *pergula*, the shack for his lowest-cost *meretrices*—the equivalent of the mills for enslaved women—if they fail to produce the revenue that he expects (212-214). The pimp even notes earlier that they could earn their freedom through their relationships with these men (175-176). Viewers have already seen Phoenicium exploit her relationship with Calidorus, in her letter asking him to buy and free her from the pimp before she is sold to a Macedonian soldier. After explaining her situation (51-57), she reminds Calidorus of his erotic love for her and her importance to him as a girlfriend before requesting that he free her from her pimp (64-71). She ends the letter by warning Calidorus that she is testing his love for her: if he truly loves her, he will free her from the pimp. If he does not, then he is only “pretending” to love her (71-73). In her letter, Phoenicium shows that she believes that her relationship with Calidorus is real only if he helps to elevate her status. If she cannot rely on him to pay the pimp for her freedom, then her relationship with him was a waste.

A few characters recognize Phoenicium's tactics. For example, Ballio is also aware of the effort Phoenicium puts into exploiting her relationships to citizen men for her own benefit. However, in his opinion she has not effectively extorted those relationships to their fullest potential.

tu autem
quae pro capite argentum mihi iam iamque semper numeras,
ea pacisci modo scis, sed quod pacta es non scis soluere,
Phoenicium, tibi ego haec loquor, deliciae summatum uirum (225-228).

However, for you who are always counting up silver to me for your freedom, you only know how to bargain, but what you agree to, you do not know how to resolve. Phoenicium, I am speaking to you, the sweetie of the highest-ranked men.

He praises her for counting silver for her freedom, but argues that she has not been able to bring that money into his hands. Ballio knows that her lovers are from a high rank and that she has strong relationships with men who would want to buy her. Now he demands that she seal the deal by manipulating at least one of these men to finish paying for her freedom. Pseudolus himself warns Calidorus of Phoenicium's exploitation. *pro lignean salute uis argenteam remittere illi?* ("for a wooden greeting you wish to send a silver greeting back to her?" 47). Although enslaved women like Phoenicium cannot improve their status through a daring scheme, as Pseudolus can, women may be able to exploit the men around them to improve their environment.

Adelphasium treats Agorastacles in a similar manner in *Poenulus*. She rejects the young lover's advances because he has failed to live up to his promises to free her: *non aequos in me es, sed morare et male facis. / bene promittis multa ex multis: omnia in cassum cadunt.* ("You do not treat me fairly, but you hold me back and you treat me poorly. / You promise many good things from many occasions, but everything amounts to nothing," 359-360). She considers their unprofitable relationship a hindrance to her livelihood, but she still attempts to convince him to

free her. Phoenicium, like Adelphasium, knows how to exploit her relationships to the young lover to produce profit for Ballio and, thereby, freedom for herself.

Sexual Labor vs. Domestic Labor

Roman Comedy often stages women in the commercial sex industry, but not every enslaved woman on stage is captive in a brothel. *Mercator* presents an interesting example of the process and logic by which the owner classes determine which women are suited for commercial sex work and which are suited for domestic labor. Pasicompsa is a beautiful enslaved woman whom Charinus, the play's *adulescens*, purchased as his personal girlfriend while traveling on family business. In an effort to keep his selfish purchase from his father, he falsely tells the old man that she is a gift for his mother (400). Demipho's reaction to this lie is the assessment that best summarizes the owner classes' criteria for differentiating between *amica* and *ancilla*:

quia illa forma matrem familias
flagitium sit si sequatur; quando incedat per uias,
contemplent, conspiciant omnes, nutent, nictent, sibilent,
uellicent, uocent, molesti sint; occident ostium;
impleantur elegeorum meae fores carbonibus.
atque, ut nunc sunt maledicentes homines, uxori meae
mihique obiectent lenocinium facere (405-411).

Because if a beautiful woman follows the mothers of a household
it would be a disgrace. When she walked through the streets,
everyone would see her, everyone would look, they would nod and ogle and whistle
and pinch and they would be a bother. They would bang on the door.
My doors would be full with elegies written in charcoal,
and then men would speak poorly of my wife
and me and accuse us of running a brothel.

Demipho asserts that Pasicompsa is not suited for domestic labor, because her beauty would attract the attention of too many men. Her ability to attract men is an asset in the industry of commercial sex, but would hurt the reputation of a respectable citizen household. Therefore, she is

truly suited only to commercial sex work. Pasicompsa's potential for attracting men determines not only her status but also what sort of labor she performs.

This is a recurring theme: no one, herself included, considers Pasicompsa suited for domestic labor. At one point, she believes that she has been sold to the next-door neighbor, the *senex* Lysimachus (500-505). When she confronts him, she attempts to determine her status in her new environment. Pasicompsa distinguishes herself from a domestic *ancilla* early in their conversation.

Pas: namque edepol equidem, mi senex, non didici baiolare nec pecua ruri pascere nec pueros nutrire.

Lys: bona si esse uis, bene erit tibi.

Pas: tum pol ego perii misera.

Lys: qui?

Pas: quia illim unde huc aduecta sum, malis bene esse solitum est.

Lys: quasi dicas nullam mulierem bonam esse.

Pas: haud equidem dico nec mos meust ut praedicem quod ego omnis scire cre-dam.

Lys: oratio edepol pluris est huius quam quanti haec emptast (509-514).

Pas: Dear lord, sir, I did not learn to lift, or to pasture herds in the country-side, or to nurse young boys

Lys: If you are willing to be good, it will go well for you.

Pas: Then, lord, I will perish a miserable girl.

Lys: Why?

Pas: Because in the place from where I was raised, it normally went well for the bad girls.

Lys: As if you are saying that no woman is good.

Pas: I am hardly saying that, nor is it my habit to declare what I believe everyone knows.

Lys: Dear lord, her speech is worth so much more than it was bought for.

Unsure of her status within Lysimachus' home, she flirts with the old man in the hopes of establishing a preferable assignment. She asserts that she has not been bought to carry out physical labor and she flirts with him to win favor in what she believes is her new household (512). Lysimachus admits that her ability to charm him is worth more than she was bought for. Pasicompsa's flirtatious words are tools that she uses to improve her relationship to her enslaver and

therefore to improve her value and her condition. Thus she stops flirting as soon as she realizes that she was not bought for Lysimachus (528). Her immediate response, *dic igitur quaeso, quoisum?* (“Tell me then, please, whose am I?” 529) reveals that she saw her flirtatious words as a service to her new owner. Although she is aware that whoever bought her will continue to value her skills as an *amica*, she needs to know whose *amica* she is so that she can strengthen her relationship with that man and increase her value in his assessment.

Thus, on account of her beauty, all her current and previous owners consider Pasicompsa best suited for commercial sex work. They also explain why she is not suited to be a domestic worker. In his argument that she cannot be an *ancilla*, the *senex* Demipho outlines what the owner classes expect from a domestically enslaved woman when he assures Charinus that he will buy another girl as a replacement gift for Charinus’ mother.

recte. ego emero matri tuae
ancillam uiraginem aliquam non malam, **forma mala**,
ut matrem addecet familias, **aut Syram aut Aegyptiam**;
ea molet, coquet, conficiet pensum, pinsetur flagro,
nec propter eam quicquam eueniet nostris foribus flagiti.

413-417

Indeed. I will buy your mother some manly *ancilla*, not bad but with **bad looks**, that suits the mother of a family, **either Syrian or Egyptian**. She will grind, cook, spin wool, and be beaten with a whip, and no disgrace will come to our doors on account of her.

Demipho believes that an *ancilla* should not be particularly good looking, must be able to take on physically tasking chores such as grinding mill and cooking, and strong enough to take a beating. Enslavers still have a desired look for a domestically enslaved woman, but unlike women enslaved in the commercial sex industry, exceptional beauty does not add to the value of an

ancilla.¹⁵ In the words of Amy Richlin, “Indeed, most of the male characters onstage lust after the female characters played as beautiful, but it is notable that few household slave-women are played as beautiful” (Richlin, 2017). Pasicompsa’s exceptional beauty disqualifies her from being considered suitable for hard labor by the owner classes. Similarly, in domestic labor, *genus* is an important determining factor in how an enslaver will value his enslaved. Demipho believes that a particular section of exotic women, namely Syrians and Egyptians, are suited to domestic labor.¹⁶

We see this stereotype embodied by Syra, the elderly enslaved Syrian woman in Lysimachus’ household. A foreign domestic *ancilla* who accompanies Lysidamus’ wife, she appropriately—from the viewpoint of the enslavers—fulfills the position that Charinus claimed Pasicompsa would fulfill for his mother. In her conversation with Lysidamus, Pasicompsa claims that she is unable to carry loads, pasture livestock, and nurse children (509-510). However, Syra is presented as someone who can, who has done all these things, despite her advanced age. She is first introduced in Act 4 carrying a large, heavy load.

Dor: atque eccam incedit tandem. quin is ocius?

Syra: nequeo mecastor, tantum hoc onerist quod fero.

Dor: quid oneris?

Syra: annos octoginta et quattuor:

et eodem accedit seruitus, sudor, sitis:

simul haec quae porto deprimunt (671-67).

Dor: And look she is finally coming. Why won’t you go faster?

Syra: By god, I can’t. This weight that I carry is so big.

¹⁵ The jealousy of a wife is an established phenomenon in the Greco-Roman household, particularly for the wives of the owner. Not only is Dorippa, the wife of *Mercator*’s Lysimachus, upset by the idea that her husband might have brought a beautiful enslaved girl into the home, but other wives express similar sentiment. *Casina*’s Cleostrata takes Lysidamus’ interest in Casina as an insult against her. *uir me habet pessumis despiciatam modis* (“my husband despises me in the worst ways,” 189). This concept is well established in the ideology of the Greco-Roman world as well outside of Roman Comedy.

¹⁶ Starks (2010, 57–58) notes that the stereotype that Syrians are more suited to hard labor in slavery is prevalent in Roman society and not unique to Roman Comedy.

Dor: What weight?

Syra: Eighty-four years and slavery, and to that number come also sweat and thirst. Also the things that I am carrying are weighing me down.

Unlike the young and beautiful Pasicompsa, Syra is elderly and has no notable beauty. She must carry large loads around for her owner. She herself relates her burden to the hard work of domestic enslaved labor. Although Syra is not seen pasturing livestock, one can assume that she lives with Lysimachus' wife in the countryside: *nimum scis sapere ruri quae non manseris* ("you know that you are too wise when you did not remain in the countryside," 686). Syra was also identified as a previous wet nurse of the young man in her house.

Syra: quis est qui me uocat?

Eut: erus atque alumnus tuos sum.

Syra: salue, alumnule (808-809).

Syra: Who is the one calling me?

Eut: I am your owner and the one your nursling.

Syra: hello, little nursling.

Syra fulfills every duty that Pasicompsa denounces and perfectly fits the ethnic stereotype presented by Demipho.¹⁷ Her unremarkable *forma* fits Demipho's expectation for a domestic laborer. While Pasicompsa appears to stand in for an undeniable *amica*, Syra is the epitome of a proper *ancilla*.

In every case, the owner classes evaluate enslaved women, whether they are in the business of commercial sex or domestic labor, by a strict set of criteria that is upheld in every play. The owner classes assess the *genus*, *patria*, and *forma* of enslaved women to determine their value and the type of labor they will perform while enslaved, either sexual or domestic labor. The

¹⁷ See Starks (2010, 53) also notes the juxtaposition between Syra and Pasicompsa; Syra is the stereotypical "ugly" enslaved woman while Pasicompsa is the beautiful *amica* too delicate for harsh labor.

initial purchasing price of a woman enslaved into commercial sex work is determined by her *genus*, her *patria*, and her perceived potential for the brothel. The anticipated revenue that an enslaved *amica* can produce depends on the quality of men that she is able to attract, a consideration that elevates or lowers her potential value to her purchaser. An enslaved woman's beauty and ethnicity can also determine what purpose she will serve to her owner. Beautiful women from certain exotic ethnicities are deemed more suitable for sex work, while women with little to no notable beauty or from certain other ethnicities are either classified as lower-value sex workers or deemed more appropriate for domestic labor. Although the price of *ancillae* is not staged as often as the price of *amicae*, the owner classes do outline preferred qualities and expectations for *ancillae*.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Roman Comedy presents slavery as a complex system with many different ranks within any given household or business. The systems of evaluation employed by the owner class are clear and consistent throughout Plautus' works. The owner classes want to reap the most benefit from the men and women they enslave, and their idea of how an enslaved person benefits a household varies between the genders. Enslavers consider men useful tools to achieve practical goals, and they value enslaved men who can employ schemes and tricks to accomplish these goals. The former status and ethnicity of an enslaved man is not important to an owner as long as that man is loyal and capable of completing tasks. Meanwhile, enslavers value a woman's ability to bring revenue into a household. The owner classes use ethnicity, former civic and social status, and beauty to identify women they believe have a potential to produce revenue as a hired girl, and to assign women they deem unsuited to brothels into labor as domestic *ancillae*. Unlike enslaved men, domestically enslaved women are not given any notable opportunities to improve their status through schemes. The owner classes' assessment can be determined by their frequent

comments on the value of their enslaved staff, not only when the perceived value of an enslaved person during a transaction (*Persa*), but also when they are threatening physical punishment (*Epidicus*).

The enslaved men and women in Roman Comedy often openly comment on their value to their owners, and they discuss the ways that they are able to improve their circumstances while enslaved. Now that the evaluations of the owner class have been explored in this thesis, the response of the enslaved men and women may be better understood. *Casina*'s Olympio is an example of the importance of loyalty to the owner class. He is aware that his elevated status as a *vilicus* depends on his loyalty to his owner Lysidamus, and that Lysidamus wishes to use him to fulfill his own erotic desire for Casina. Olympio reacts to this expectation by attempting to meet Lysidamus' expectations in the hopes of being set free. Olympio is so confident in his ability to gain his freedom through this method that he is willing to disobey and ignore other owners within the household. With a clear knowledge of the expectations of the owner class, it is possible to explore the actions and reactions of enslaved characters like Olympio in future projects.

Understanding how enslavers value the enslaved can also help us understand how the enslaved value themselves. In a few cases, enslaved characters discuss their own value. For example, Adelphasium and Anterastilis discuss their value as enslaved women throughout *Poenulus*. When one knows what evaluations are based on the owner classes' criteria, one can understand which evaluations do not align those of with the owner classes. Future explorations might discuss Milphio's reaction to Adelphasium's calling women enslaved in brothels *seruolorum sordidulorum scorta diobolaria* ("two-buck hookers of filthy enslaved men," 270). Milphio's heated response displays his pride despite his status as an enslaved man. *In malam crucem! tun audes etiam seruos spernere, propudium?* ("Go to hell! How dare you look down on the enslaved men,

you villain?” 271). Despite Adelphasium’s alignment with the evaluations of the owner classes, Milphio maintains his pride. From this discussion of the owner classes’ objectification of enslaved men and women, we can begin to explore the subjectivity of enslaved persons in the future.

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