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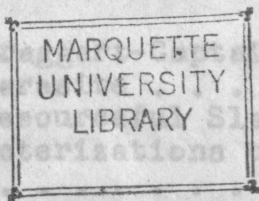
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THE TECHNIQUE OF THE HUMOR - PRODUCTION

IN THE PLAYS OF PLAUTUS

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 Requirements for the Degree
 of Bachelor of Arts.



Milwaukee, Wisconsin
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is an exposition of the methods used in the study of humor in the plays of

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L. Delius, W.L., in his "Plautus and Terence", says that some authorities do not consider the "Athena" to have been written by Plautus. p.88.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is an exposition of the methods used in the production of humor in the plays of that great Roman comic-dramatist, Titus Maccius Plautus. Humor is here understood to be that quality of the writer's imagination which tends to excite mirth. We intend to indicate just what constitutes the technique of Plautus' humor-production.

The comparative dearth of bibliography directly concerned with our problem necessitates that the source of our exposition be found almost solely in an investigation of Plautus' works. In those few instances where critics of Roman literature have aided us due recognition has been made.

Since a direct consultation of Plautus' plays was required for our work, the results of our investigation owe something to all of his plays that are now extant, with the exception of the "Stichus". This play, according to W. Lucas Collins' criticism,¹ contains little that is humorous, and, hence, would be of little value in our study. A reading will reveal that all but four of the twenty plays of Plautus which have survived are directly referred to in this thesis. We can reasonably expect, then, that our results will, in a rather complete way,

1. Collins, W.L., in his "Plautus and Terence", says that some authorities do not consider the "Stichus" to have been written by Plautus. p.88.

indicate the general as well as the specific qualities in Plautus' humor.

Rather than considering separately each play, we have preferred to indicate the various methods which we believe Plautus uses. Then we verify our indications by the use of examples from the plays themselves. This has seemed to us a mode of procedure best suited to an appreciation of Plautus' general technique of humor-production.

Now that adequate information has been given as to the purpose of the thesis, the material used, and the manner in which it is used, we may proceed to our study of the technique of Plautus in his production of humor.

From being a mere collection of humorous sayings and incidents. In a word, these complications are necessary in order to warrant the name, comic-drama, being affixed to the author's writings.

Obviously Plautus' genius for manipulating his characters towards a successfully dramatic end cannot be fully appreciated except through the reading of an entire play. Some information, however, will accrue from summing up the situations in a few plays. By indicating the problems in some of the comedies we can at least hope to show the general characteristics of the dramatist in his adjusting of a situation.

CHAPTER I

Plautus' Adjustment of a Situation
for Comic-dramatic Effect

A comedy to be a true comedy inevitably involves the solution of some problem. "In a strict sense, a comedy is some play wherein a peaceful, orderly, diverting complication of purposes is agreeably disentangled."¹ We will first investigate, then, some of the situations, problems, or complications which Plautus uses, and, at the same time, note how he adjusts and works his situations for dramatically comic effect. A study of these situations and of the author's treatment of them is of momentous importance, because their presence prevents Plautus' works from being a mere collection of humorous sayings and incidents. In a word, these complications are necessary in order to warrant the name, comic-drama, being affixed to the author's writings.

Obviously Plautus' genius for manipulating his characters towards a successfully dramatic end cannot be fully appreciated except through the reading of an entire play. Some information, however, will accrue from summing up the situations in a few plays. By indicating the problems in some of the comedies we can at least hope to show the general characteristics of the dramatist in his adjusting of a situation.

1. Price, W.T., p.195.

In Plautus' "Trinummus" we have several highly amusing situations handled with great skill by the author. In this play, laid in Athens, Charmides, a rich Athenian, about to go abroad, entrusts his son and daughter to his old friend Callicles. Lesbonicus, the extravagant son, after his father's departure, squanders all of his property with the exception of the family house. Callicles has previously been informed that a treasure of three thousand gold pieces lies buried under this house. This treasure is to serve as a dowry for Lesbonicus' sister. Lesbonicus, owing to his luxurious life, is constrained to sell the house, which Callicles at the last minute buys for himself. But now Callicles finds himself in a disconcerting position. Lesbonicus' sister being about to marry and requiring a dowry, how can Callicles, who has bought the house, give a dowry to the girl? The public will misconstrue his motives, people will believe that he bought the house to acquire the money buried there. After much worry Callicles resolves to hire a man who shall represent himself as coming with a dowry from Charmides, the absent father of the girl. At this point we have a very amusing situation. Charmides himself has just returned from his journey and has arrived at his son's lodgings.

The agent hired by Callicles comes to these lodgings, is confronted by Charmides, and blandly announces that he is the messenger of Lesbonicus' father, who of course is

Charmides himself. The agent has even forgotten the name of the father, and, when questioned on this point by Charmides, is staggered for the moment. Regaining his composure, he concocts a highly farcical account of his journeys, even going so far as to designate a certain place as Charmides' present stopping-place. This scene is one of the most entertaining in Plautus' plays, although it may be objected that Charmides' sustained trifling with and teasing of the hired agent is, in length, boringly disproportionate to the rest of the play. The result of the piece is that the sister is happily married, and Callicles, who at first had been distrusted, is again reconciled to his old friend Charmides. Although the ending is rather ineffective, Plautus treats the plot in a fashion that retains one's interest to a greater degree than do many of his other plays.

In the "Mostellaria" we have a humorous situation, undoubtedly received with eagerness by the Plautine audience, which evidently looked with disfavor upon anything serious on the stage. Thus Mercury in the prologue to the "Amphitryon" asks the audience:

"contraxistis frontem, quia tragoediam dixi
futuram hanc?" 1.

"Do you frown because I said this was to be
a tragedy?"

In the play, "Mostellaria", Philolaches, a young Athenian is leading the life of a reveler in the absence of his father, Theuropides, whose home is the scene of his son's carousals with other young bloods. The father unexpectedly returns to Athens, and, arriving in front of his home, is confronted by the wily slave, Tranio. At the same time Philolaches is constrained to remain in the house with his carousing companions, because one of them is helplessly intoxicated. In order to shield the errant son from the wrath of his father, Tranio induces the old gentleman to believe that the house is haunted. With such a situation Plautus is at his best. We have the cunning slave, Tranio, summoning every device to protect his young master, Philolaches; and the menial is also inwardly trembling because he knows that whatever happens he will be whipped. If he fails the son he will be flogged by that profligate; deceiving the father, who eventually will be undeceived, Tranio will also merit punishment. "There may not be very much wit in the scene but it is a fair specimen of the style in which Plautus seems to have excelled. It is full of bustle and spirit, and would act, as is the case with so many of his scenes, far better than it reads".¹ To return to the play, while Tranio is thus beguiling the old man as to the condition of the house, a creditor, who has supplied the son with

1. Collins, W. Lucas., p. 52.

money for his extravagances, comes upon the scene and commands Tranio to summon Philolaches to give payment. Tranio, artfully sending away this creditor, tells the father that Philolaches has borrowed the money to purchase the house next door. When, later, the old gentleman learns of Tranio's deception, that cunning slave, fearing Theuropides' wrath, takes refuge at one of the altars of the gods. After much bandying of words the father consents to forgive the slave, which act of kindness ends the play. Although the situation itself in this play is amusing, Plautus, by his ingenious dialogue and apt introduction of characters upon a scene, immeasurably enhances the mirth-provoking character or elements of the piece. Teuffel says of the play: "It is a play with a well-contrived plot and a variety of well-drawn characters".¹

Most of Plautus' plays present plots or problems to be solved which, in themselves, without the aid of lively dialogue, seem to afford entertainment of a light nature. We do not intend to present the plot of every Plautine play, for that would not increase the value of this paper to any great extent. However, we shall turn to one other play, beside the two we have already discussed. This play, the "Aulularia", clearly exemplifies Plautus' ability to produce a situation which, when satisfactorily treated, serves to amuse the reader. In this play we have Euclio,

1. Teuffel, W.S., p. 120.

a perfect miser, the type cherishing gold for the sake of gold, in possession of a treasure-chest which he has found within his house. An elderly gentleman, Megadorus, seeks the hand of Euclio's daughter. The miser immediately concludes that Megadorus intends to possess himself of the gold. The agitation of Euclio is further increased by the artifices of Strobilus, a resourceful slave, who succeeds in appropriating for himself the pot of gold. With such a situation Plautus deftly proceeds to enrich the humor of the piece by continually placing Euclio in a position involving the loss or retention of the treasure of gold. As Teuffel says, "the 'Aulularia' is one of the best plays of Plautus both in plot and in execution".¹ The conclusion of the play is lost.

Numerous other humorous situations are encountered in Plautus' comedies, but the few examples which we have given should be sufficient for the recognition of the dramatist's ability in this respect. There is, however, a certain type of situation which merits special study. We shall indicate that type in the next few paragraphs.

Mistaken Identity

A problem which Plautus presents for solution in many of his plays is what may be referred to as "mistaken identity". This situation is presented and developed to a highly farcical, although somewhat improbable, degree

1. Teuffel, W.S., p. 118.

in Plautus' "Menaechmi". In this play, twin brothers, each named Menaechmus, have been separated since infancy, by the kidnapping of one, who was then sold in a distant city, Epidamnus. The one who had remained at home at Syracuse, after years of searching for the stolen brother, finally arrives in Epidamnus. The Menaechmus of Syracuse, resembling his brother in every respect,¹ becomes ludicrously entangled in the affairs of the Epidamnian Menaechmus. The twin from Syracuse meets his brother only after being mistaken, by the wife, associates, and servants of the one he is seeking, as the Epidamnian Menaechmus. With such a situation the two brothers, who have not met each other as yet, are thrown into numerous embarrassing situations, all of which Plautus develops in an amusing manner. The play is coarse, however, in many parts. It is remembered mostly because Shakespeare seems to have drawn from it for his "Comedy of Errors".

The "Amphitryon" also presents a situation in which there is confusion as to the identity of characters. In this play, Amphitryon and his slave, Sosia, are about to return home from the wars. Meanwhile, the gods, Jupiter and Mercury, assuming the forms of Amphitryon and Sosia respectively, appear at the absent Amphitryon's home. Here the impostors are welcomed as husband and slave by the deluded wife, Alcmena. The real Sosia, who has

1. This illusion was effectively produced on the Roman stage by the use of masks.

preceded his master on the homeward journey, has arrived at the harbor. Coming towards his master's house, Sosia is confronted by Mercury, who is posing as the slave and has taken his form. This scene is admirably handled, and becomes highly amusing when treated by the skillful author. Mercury, a god, presenting many proofs, that he is the real Sosia, to the perplexed slave, befuddles the doubting mental to a most ludicrous degree. Thus the bewildered Sosia says:

"ubi ego perii? ubi immutatus sum? ubi ego formam perdididi?

an egomet me illic reliqui, si forte oblitus fui?

nam hic quidem imaginem meam, quae antehac fuerat possidet.

vivo fit quod numquam quisquam mortuo faciet mihi."¹.

"Where did I lose myself? Where was I transformed? Where did I drop my shape? I didn't leave myself behind at the harbour, did I, if I did happen to forget it? For, my word, this fellow has got hold of my complete image, mine that was. Here I am alive and folks carry my image— more than anyone will do at all when I'm dead."

After fitting entertainment by the household, the impostors leave, informing the gullible Alcmena that they must return to the army. A short time after their departure, the real Amphitryon, welcomed at the harbor by the real Sosia, arrives at his house. Amphitryon is astounded at the cool reception given him by his wife, Alcmena, who, in turn, is surprised to see her husband returning so soon, (for, it must be remembered, Jupiter, who had posed as the husband, has just departed). Plautus presents this scene

1. Amphitryon, Verse 455-460.

with his usual skill. Alcmena, intending to aid Amphitryon's memory by explaining that he had been home a short time ago, only succeeds in fanning the flame of her husband's rage. After many complications result from the imposture of Jupiter and Mercury, all things are amicably settled by the intervention of Jupiter. The god explains to Amphitryon and Alcmena that he and Mercury had been having good sport at the hands of humans.

From the instances indicated in the above paragraphs it must be evident that Plautus, by his clever handling of situations, increases the humor of his plays. In extricating a character from some difficulty, and in his use of "mistaken identity"¹. the author, by arranging the sequence of his actions for the best comical effect, proves to be an artist.

On the contrary, the variety of his dialogue is remarkable, and cannot fail to be noticed in most of his comedies. Perhaps the sprightly repartees found in the plays is the most humorously effective type of Plautus' dialogue. His characters are always fortified with a smart response. Thus in the "Trinummus" *Trinummus*, attempting to dissuade Philto from purchasing a perfect piece of land, says:

Philto: "I have found a piece of land which is perfect."²

Philto: "I have found a piece of land which is perfect."²

1. Plautus uses "mistaken identity" in the "Amphitryon", "Captivi", "Menaechmi", "Casina", "Curculio", "Cistellaria", "Epidicus", "Rudens", and "Poenulus".

2. Trinummus, *Trinummus*.

CHAPTER II

Dialogue

"The most important part of a play, for it is the greater part, is carried on in dialogue."¹ If there is anything in Plautus which contributes to the humor of a situation, to the farcical atmosphere of each play, it is the author's clever and often excellent dialogue. It is true that at times the Plautine dialogue seems to be too long-drawn-out, and its length is not in proportion to the importance of the topic under discussion. But we must bear in mind the fact that these plays were written for the stage, and not for reading purposes.

Repartee

Plautus does not adhere to a certain type of dialogue. On the contrary, the variety of his dialogue is remarkable, and cannot fail to be noticed in most of his comedies. Perhaps the sprightly repartee found in the plays is the most humorously effective type of Plautine dialogue. His characters are always fortified with a smart response. Thus in the "Trinummus" Stasimus, attempting to dissuade Philto from purchasing a certain piece of land, says:

"Audi cetera.
Postid, frumenti quom alibi messis maxumast,
Tribus tantis illi minus redit quam obseueris."²

"Listen again. In the very best seasons, you get from it three times less than what you've sown."

1. Price, W.T., p. 121.
2. Trinummus, Verse 528-30.

To that Philto quickly retorts:

"Em istic oportet opseri mores malos,
Si in opserando possint interfieri."¹

"An excellent spot to sow bad habits in!
For there you're sure they won't spring
up again."

The witty replies of Epidicus, in the play of that name, and of Thesprio attest to Plautus' ability in respect to smart retorts. Thus Epidicus says to Thesprio:

"corpulentior videre atque habitior."²

"You seem quite plump and portly."

Thesprio retorts:

"huic gratia"³.

"Thanks to this."⁴

Epidicus replies that Thesprio should have parted with his left hand a long time ago. To this Thesprio responds:

"Minus iam furtificus sum quam antehac."⁵

"I'm not such a thief as I used to be."

When he is asked what has caused the change, he states that he has advanced in his "profession":

"Rapio propalam."⁶

"I am a highway robber."

In the same play, when Epidicus waxes judicial, and declares that he is qualified to hold the praetorship, Thesprio asks Epidicus whether he is enjoying good health. Epidicus replies:

1. Trinummus, V.531-32.

2. Epidicus, V.9.

3. Ibid., Verse 10.

4. He means his left hand, which was the pilfering hand.

5. Epidicus, Verse, 12.

6. Ibid., Verse 13.

Epidicus' praetorship. Epidicus asks him what that may be.

Thesprio replies:

"Scies:
lictiores duo, duo ulmei fasces virgarum."

"I'll tell you: two lictors and two bundles of rods, elms." 1.

The Roman praetor, it may be recalled, was accompanied by several lictors. Thesprio, of course, wishes to inform Epidicus that the latter should be whipped.

Insinuation

Many of the retorts in the dialogue of the plays involve some insinuation or accusation. In the "Rudens" Labrax, bemoaning the fact that he is in debt, is chided by Charmides:

"Quid, stulte, ploras? tibi quidem edepol
copiast
Dum lingua vivet, qui rem soluas omnibus." 2.

"Why cry, you fool? Really, by my troth,
so long as your tongue shall exist you have
abundance with which to make payment with
everybody."

By those words Charmides insinuates that Labrax' readiness to commit perjury will save him the trouble of finding money to pay with, as he can always swear that he has paid (a debt) already." 3.

Another insinuation is found in the "Epidicus" when Thesprio asks Epidicus whether he is enjoying good health. Epidicus responds:

-
1. Used for whips.
 2. Rudens, Verse 557-58.
 3. Riley, Henry Thomas, Vol. II, p. 88, note 1.

"Varie."¹

"Oh, checkered."

Thesprio retorts:

"Qui varie valent,
capreaginum hominum non placet mihi neque
pantherinum genus."²

"Folks of checkered health— your goatish
or your panther-like³ variety — I can't
abide."

It is true that upon the written page these bandyings of quips and sarcastic remarks are not eminently conducive to laughter. But drama is written to be acted, not read; and little imagination is needed to perceive how humorously effective these retorts would become in the mouths of good performers.

Evidence of Pantomime

In treating of the dialogue in Plautus it will not be untoward to call attention here to the fact that pantomime must have been a potent factor in producing humorous effects in the plays. In the "Mostellaria" the part of Tranio, which we have before described herein (namely, his effort to convince the father that the house, in which his son is carousing, is haunted), must have afforded ample opportunity for the extensive use of gestures and other pantomimic expressions. Again, in the "Rudens" Labrax, the slave-dealer, having been accused of a transgression of the law, and being in the custody of two servants bearing cudgels, makes several

1. Epidicus, Verse 16.

2. Ibid. Verse, 17-18.

3. He means that Epidicus' back is checkered with blows.

attempts to escape from his captors. Here again the dialogue was undoubtedly interspersed with and aided by humorously eloquent pantomime.

Some of Plautus' comedies would tax the patience of an audience if the plots were the sole source of interest and entertainment. In those instances, where the plot in itself does not fascinate the attention of a reader or auditor, Plautus' dialogue is so masterfully constructed as to attract the average person. We must admit that the lengthy discourses in some of the dialogues at times seem to impede the celerity of action. This impression, however, would be less likely to occur to us if we actually could witness the performance of a play. We repeat, a drama to be fully appreciated must be seen upon the stage.

In the following fashion he soliloquizes:

"Carnibus rebus ego amorem credo et nitentibus
nitidibus autem ire,
nec potis quicquam commemorari quod plus
salsis plusque leporis hodie
habeat; cocos equidem nimis demiror, tot
qui mutantur condimentis,
sed eo condimento uno non utitur, amittit
quod praestat,
nam ubi amor condimentum inerit, cui vis
placiturae sacra eredo;
neque salum neque suave esse potest quic-
quam, ubi amor non admiscetur;
fai quod meruisset, id mel faceret, hominem
ex tristi lepidum et leporem,
hanc ego de me coniecturam domi facio magis
ex auditis;
qui quom amo Casinam, magis niteo, munditiis
munditiam antideo,
xyrocolas omnes sollicito, ubicumque est
lepidum usquequaque, unguor,
ut illi placeam; et placeo, ut videor."¹

1. Casina, Verse 117-225.

CHAPTER III

Monologue or Soliloquy

Having examined the dialogue in Plautus' plays, we shall now give our attention to the monologue, an extensive use of which is a prominent characteristic of the author's works. Selecting almost any one of his plays we encounter some passage in which a single character, occupying the stage, renders a speech of this type.

One method by which Plautus increases the humor of the lines in a monologue is by contrasting the topic of the speech with the character of the person reciting. Thus, in the "Casina", Lysidamus, an old gentleman, presumably of a not handsome appearance, lavishly extols the power of love. In the following fashion he soliloquizes:

"Omnibus rebus ego amorem credo et nitoribus
 nitidis antevenire,
 nec potis quicquam commemorari quod plus
 salis plusque leporis hodie
 habeat; cocos equidem nimis demiror, tot
 qui utuntur condimentis,
 eos eo condimento uno non utier, omnibus
 quod praestat.
 nam ubi amor condimentum inerit, cuivis
 placituram escam credo;
 neque salsum neque suave esse potest quic-
 quam, ubi amor non admiscetur:
 fel quod amarumst, id mel faciet, hominem
 ex tristi lepidum et lenem.
 hanc ego de me coniecturam domi facio magis
 ex auditis;
 qui quom amo Casinam, magis niteo, munditiis
 munditiam antideo.
 myropolas omnes sollicito, ubicumque est
 lepidum unguentum, unguor,
 ut illi placeam; et placeo, ut videar."1.

1. Casina, Verse 217-226.

"Ah, yes, yes, there's nothing in the world like love, no bloom like its bloom; not a thing can you mention that has more flavor and more savour. Upon my soul, it's most surprising that cooks, with all their use of spices, don't use this one spice that excels them all. Why, when you spice a dish with love it'll tickle every palate, I do believe. Not a thing can be either salt or sweet without a dash of love: it will turn gall, bitter though it be, to honey — an old curmudgeon to a pleasing and polished gentleman. It is more from my own case than from hearsay I draw this conclusion. Now that I'm in love with Casina, how I have bloomed out! I'm more natty than nattiness itself. I keep all the perfumers on the jump; wherever there's a nice scent to be had, I get scented, so as to please her. And it seems to me I do please her."

In the "Menaechmi", Peniculus, a parasite, opens the play with a witty discourse upon the merits of food. Thus he rants:

"Iuventus nomen fecit Peniculo mihi,
ideo quia mensam, quando edo, detergeo.
homines captivos qui catenis vinciunt
et qui fugitivis servis indunt compedes,
nimis stulte faciunt mea quidem sententia.
Nam homini misero si ad malum accedit malum,
maior lubido est fugere et facere nequiter.
nam se ex catenis eximunt aliquo modo.
tum compediti anum lima praeterunt
aut lapide excutiunt clavom, nugae sunt eae.
quem tu adservare recte, ne aufugiat, voles,
esca atque portione vinciri decet.
apud mensam plenam homini rostrum deliges;
dum tu illi quod edit et quod potet praebeas,
suo arbitrata adfatim cottidie,
numquam edepol fugiet, tam etsi capital fecerit;
facile adservabis, dum eo vinclo vincies.
ita istaec nimis lenta vincla sunt escaria:
quam magis extendas, tanto adstringunt artius."¹

1. Menaechmi, Verse 77-95.

"The young fellows have given me the name of Brush, the reason being that when I eat I sweep the table clean. Men that bind prisoners of war with chains and fasten shackles on runaway slaves are awful fools, at least in my opinion. Why, if the poor devil has this extra trouble on his shoulders, too, he's all the keener for escape and mischief. Why, they get out of their chains somehow. As for those in shackles they file away the ring, or knock the rivet off with a stone. Nonsensical measures! The man you really want to keep from running off ought to be bound with food and drink. A loaded table — tie his snout to that! Just you deal him out meat and drink to suit his pleasure and his appetite each day, and he'll never run — Gosh, no! — no matter if he's done a deed for hanging. You'll easily keep him so long as you bind him with these bonds. They're such extraordinarily tenacious bonds, these belly-bands: the more you stretch 'em, the closer they cling."

In the "Aulularia", Congrio, the cook, having been basted by Euclio, who suspects the menial of having stolen the pot of gold, rushes onto the stage, and informs the audience of his thrashing:

"Attatae! cives, populares, incolae, accolae,
advenae omnes,
date viam qua fugere liceat, facite totae
plateae pateant
neque ego umquam nisi hodie ad Bacchas veni
in Bacchanal coquinatum,
ita me miserum et meos discipulos fustibus
male contuderunt.
totus doleo atque oppido perii, ita me
iste habuit senex gymnasium;¹

"Hi—i—i! Citizens, natives, inhabitants,
neighbours, foreigners, every one— give
me room to run! Open up! Clear the street!
This is the first time I ever came to
cook for Bacchantes at a Bacchante den.
Oh dear, what an awful clubbing I and my
disciples did get! I'm one big ache! I'm
dead and gone! The way that old codger
took me for a gymnasium!"

1. Aulularia, Verse 406-410.

In the "Trinummus", the soliloquy of Stasismus, the the slave, is highly comic. Having learned that his master, Lysiteles, is about to join a military expedition, Stasismus discourses upon his intention to remain a loyal servant; but at the same time he displays his aversion for war:

"Quid ego nunc agam
Nisi uti scarcinam constringam et clipeum
ad dorsum accomodem,
Fulmentas iubeam suppingi soccis? non
sisti potest.
Video caculam militarem me futurum haud
longius.
Ut aliquem ad regem in saginam erus
sese coniecit meus,
Credo ad summos bellatores acrem—
fugitorem fore,
Et capturum spolia ibi— illum qui ero
aduorsus venerit.
Egomet autem quom extemplo arcum et
pharetram et sagittas sumpsero,
Cassidem in caput,— dormibo placide
in tabernaculo."¹

"What is there for me to do now but 'pack my sack', place a shield on my back, and give orders to have heels attached to my slippers? It can't be helped. I see that I shall soon be a soldier's servant. As soon as my master has enlisted in the services of some king for his sustenance, I believe that he will approach the highest crown— of swift retreat. Spoils shall be taken— where some foe attacks my master. For my part, however, when I take up the bow, quiver, and arrows, with a helmet on my head I— shall sleep peacefully in my tent."

In the "Mostellaria", Tranio, fearing that his knavery will be discovered by the deluded Theuropides, is "whistling",

1. Trinummus, Verse 718-26.

1. Mostellaria, Verse 1041-42.

2. Ibid., Verse 1051-54.

verbally, to retain his courage:

"Qui homo timidus erit in rebus dubiis
nauci non erit;
atque equidem quid id esse dicam
verbum nauci, nescio."¹.

"A man that's timid in a crisis isn't
worth a stiver— but bless me if I can
explain what a stiver is!"

A little later he says:

"Quantum potest
facio idem quod plurimi alii, quibus res
timida aut turbidast:
pergunt turbare usque, ut ne quid possit
conquiescere.
nam scio equidem nullo pacto iam esse posse
haec clam senem."².

"I'm losing no time in doing what other
folks do when affairs look alarming and
muddled— they go on muddling 'em still
more, so that they can't be settled at
all. For I'm well enough aware that this
can't possibly be kept from the old man
now."

In the play, "Epidicus," the wily slave who is momenta-
rily halted in his machinations against his master, takes
stock of himself in this way:

" ----solus nunc es. quo in loco haec res
sit vides,
Epidice: nisi quid tibi in tete auxili
est, absumptus es.
tantae in te impendent ruinae; nisi suf-
fulcis firmiter,
non potes subsistere, itaque in te in-
ruent montes mali.
neque ego nunc
quo modo
me expeditum ex impedito faciam, consilium
placet.
ego miser
perpuli
meis dolis senem ut censeret suam sese
emere filiam;

1. Mostellaria, Verse 1041-42.

2. Ibid., Verse 1051-54.

is suo
 filio
 fidicinam emit, quam ipse amat, quam
 abiens mandavit mihi.
 si sibi nunc
 alteram
 ab legione adduxit animi causa, corium
 perdidit.
 nam ubi senex
 senserit
 sibi data esse verba, virgis dorsum
 despoliet meum.
 at enim tu
 praecave.
 at enim— bat enim, nihil est istuc.
 plane hoc corruptumst caput.
 nequam homo es,
 Epidice.
 qui lubidost male loqui?
 quia tu tete deseris.
 quid faciam?
 men rogas?
 tu quidem antehac aliis solebas dare
 consilia mutua.
 aliquid aliqua reperitundumst.¹

"Here you are alone, my lad. You see the situation Epidicus: unless you have some strength within you, your hour has come. Above your head is a great big tottering mass; unless you prop it up firmly, you'll not be able to keep your feet, with such mountains of misery toppling down on you. Not a decent idea have I now how to untangle myself from the tangle. I have cajoled the old man— worse luck!— into believing he was buying his own daughter; what he did buy was a music girl for his own son, a girl my master loved and consigned to me when he left. If he has brought back from the army now another wench that has won his heart, I have lost my hide. For let the old man find out he was fooled, and he will strip my dorsal regions with a stick. Oh well, be on your guard, my lad. 'Oh well'— oh hell! It's no use! This head of mine is absolutely addled. You good-for-nothing, Epidicus! Why should I enjoy abusing myself? (Answering in another tone) Because you leave yourself in the lurch. What shall I do? Do you ask me? Why you're the man that before this used to lend counsel to other folks. Some scheme must be found somewhere."

Plautus has nearly everyone of his stock-characters, at some time, render a monologue. We have already quoted several soliloquies of the groveling parasite and of the scheming slave. Another type character, the miserly Euclio, affords a highly amusing scene in Plautus' "Aulularia". Euclio, bewailing the robbery of his gold, raves on in these words:

"Perii interii occidi, quo curram? quo non curram? tene, tene. quem? quis? nescio, nil video, caecus eo atque equidem quo eam aut ubi sim aut qui sim nequee cum animo certum investigare. obsecro vos ego, mi auxilio, oro obtestor, sitis et hominem demonstratis, quis eam abstulerit. quid est? quid ridetis? novi omnes, scio fures esse hic complures, qui vestitu et creta occultant sese atque sedent quasi sint frugi. quid ais tu? tibi credere certum est, nam esse bonum ex vultu cognosco. hem, nemo habet horum? occidisti. dic igitur, quis habet? nescis? heu me miserum, misere perii, male perditus, pessime ornatus eo: tantum gemiti et mali maestitiaeque hic dies mi optulit, famem et pauperiem. perditissimus ego sum omnium in terra; nam quid mi opust vita, qui tantum auri perdididi, quod concustodivi sedulo? egomet me defraudavi animumque meum geniumque meum; nunc eo alii laetificantur meo malo et damno. pati nequeo."¹

"I'm ruined, I'm killed, I'm murdered! Where shall I run? Where shan't I run? Stop thief! What thief? Who? I don't know! I can't see! I'm all in the dark! Yes, yes, and where I'm going, or where I am, or who I am— oh, I can't tell, I can't think! (to audience) Help, help for heaven's sake, I beg you,

1. Aulularia, Verse 713-26.

I implore you! Show the man that took it. Eh, what's that? What are you grinning for? I know you, the whole lot of you! I know there are thieves here, plenty of 'em, that cover themselves up in dapper clothes and sit still as if they were honest men. (to a spectator) You, sir, what do you say? I'll trust you, I will, I will. Yes, You're a worthy gentleman; I can tell it from your face. Ha! none of them has it? Oh, you've killed me! Tell me, who has got it, then? You don't know? Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! I'm a ruined man! I'm lost, lost! Oh, what a plight! Oh, such a cruel, disastrous, dismal day-- it's made a starveling of me, a pauper! I'm the forlornest wretch on earth! Ah, what is there in life for me when I've lost all that gold I guarded, oh, so carefully! I've denied myself, denied my own self comforts and pleasures; yes, and now others are making merry over my misery and loss! Oh, it's unendurable!"

Plautus' monologues in most cases are replete with a lively humor, although at times they seem to be too protracted. In those few instances where the author inclines toward a prolonged soliloquy, the bustle and liveliness, with which the scene could be invested by a capable actor, would well compensate for the length of the discourse.

The "Aside"

Although in this chapter we are treating of the monologue, it will not be amiss to call attention to Plautus' tendency to employ frequently what may be termed the "aside". We refer to those remarks, made by an actor, which are not to be overheard by other actors on the stage at the same time.

1. Casina, Verse 235.
2. Curculio, Verse 451.
3. Aulularia, Verse 644.
4. Ibid., Verse 649.

Plautus inserts the "aside" in such a way that the audience is able to understand more easily a character's nature and motives, as well as being very much amused by the remarks which are made. Thus, in the "Casina", Cleostrata, the termagant wife of Lysidamus, while berating her husband, says that he will be the death of her yet. Lysidamus, in an "aside", declares:

"Vera dicas velim."¹.

"Would you were telling the truth."

Curculio, in the play of the same name, while defrauding Lyco, a banker, tells us in an "aside":

"Meus hic est, hamum vorat."².

"I've got him! He's swallowing the hook!"

In the "Aulularia", Euclio accuses Strobilus of stealing his treasure of gold. Strobilus replies:

"Di me perdant, si ego tui quicquam abstuli."³.

"May I be damned, if I carried off a thing of yours." Then in an "aside" he says:

"Nive adeo abstulisse vellem."⁴.

"Likewise if I didn't want to."

It must be admitted that, in the original text of the plays, no indication is given that various remarks are to be considered "asides". But from the content of a passage it is quite plain that translators of Plautus' plays have not acted unwisely in designating certain lines as "asides".

1. Casina, Verse 235.

2. Curculio, Verse 431.

3. Aulularia, Verse 644.

4. Ibid., Verse 644.

CHAPTER IV

Versatility and Vigor

One cannot fail to be aware of the versatility of Plautus as a writer of comedies. He has a large number of methods to produce his humor, and, using them, his plays are noteworthy for the broad scope of their wit. This varied style tends to make the general atmosphere of the author's plays conducive to mirth and amusement on the part of the reader or spectator. At the same time, this ability to create the highly comical through a variety of methods precludes the boring and tedious from many of the author's scenes.

Happy Jokes

The presence of many happy jokes in the comedies of Plautus is well worthy of our attention. In the "Mostellaria", Theuropides, returning from a journey, says:

"Habeo, Neptune, gratiam magnam tibi,
 quom med amisisti abs te vix vivem domum.
 verum si posthac me pedem latum modo
 scies imposisse in undam, hau causast,
 ilico
 quod nunc voluisti facere quin facias mihi.
 apage, apage te a me nunciam post hunc diem:
 quod crediturus tibi fui, omne credidi."¹

"I am deeply grateful to you, Neptune, for letting me get away home with a bit of life left in me. But if you ever hear of my going one foot's-breadth on the billows after this I give you leave to go straight ahead and do what you wished to do with me this time. Avaunt! Avaunt, now and forevermore! I've trusted you with all I mean to trust you."

1. Mostellaria, Verse 431-37.

His slave, Tranio, who had remained at home, and who fears that the excesses of Theuropides' son will be disclosed to the father, says to himself:

"Edepol, Neptune, peccavisti largiter,
qui occasionem hanc amisisti tam bonam."¹

"Gad, Neptune, you made a big mistake in
letting go such a fine chance!"

Theuropides then says:

"Triennio post Aegypto advenio domum;
credo expectatus veniam familiaribus."²

Tranio, however, disagrees with Theuropides; for he says to himself:

"Nimio edepol ille petuit expectatio
venire, qui te nuntiaret mortuom."³

"An arrival we could welcome much more,
by gad, would be that of a man with news
of your death!"

In the "Rudens", Ampelisca, replying to a statement of Tranio, the artful slave, says:

"Vera praedicas."⁴

"You say the truth."

Tranio, for once, confesses his knavery:

"Non est meum."⁵

"That's not my way."

In the same play Gripus, another scheming slave, is bemoaning the fact that he did not retain possession of the wallet:

"Quid meliust quam ut hinc intro abeam et
me suspendam clanculum,
Saltem tantisper dum abscedat haec a me
aegrimonia?"⁶

1. Mostellaria, Verse 438-39.

2. Ibid., Verse 440-41. "Here I am, home from Egypt after three years. And a welcome arrival I'll be to my household."

3. Ibid., Verse 442-43.

4. Rudens, Verse 341.; 5. Ibid., Verse 342.

6. Ibid., Verse 1189-90.

"What is there better for me than to be off hence in-doors and secretly hang myself — at least for a little time, until this vexation passes away from me?"

In the "Amphitryo", the impostor, Mercury, threatens the slave, Sosia:

"At scin quo modo?
 Et faciam ego hodie te superbum,
 nisi hinc abis."¹.

"But knowest thou what? I'll soon be making an exalted man of thee an' thou decampest not."

Sosia does not understand:

"Quonam modo?"².

"Exalted! How is that?"

Mercury says:

"Anferere, non abibis, si ego fustem sumpsero."³.

"You shall be carried off on people's shoulders — no walking — once I take my club to you."

In the "Poenulus", Agorastocles asks his slave, Milphio, to be his mouthpiece in making love to his sweetheart. Milphio, however, speaks in a most amorous fashion, and directs the girl's attention to himself rather than to his master. Thoroughly aroused, Agorastocles bids the slave to speak in this manner:

"Sic enim diceres, sceleste: hujus
 voluptas, te opsecro,
 Hujus mel, hujus cor, hujus labellum,
 hujus lingua, hujus sauium,
 Hujus delicia, hujus salus amoena,
 hujus festivitas,

1. Amphitryo, Verse 355-56.

2. Ibid., Verse 356.

3. Ibid., Verse 357.

Hujus colustra, hujus dulciculus
caseus, mastigia."1.

"Why this you should have said, you
scoundrel: 'his' delight, I do entreat
of you, 'his' honey, 'his' heart, 'his'
little lip, 'his' tongue, 'his' sweet
kiss, 'his' biestings, 'his' sweet cream-
cheese, you whip—scoundrel."

Milphio again addresses the girl:

"Opsecre hercle te, uoluptas hujus atque
odium meum,
Hujus amica mammeata, mea inimica et
malevola,
Oculus hujus, lippitudo mea, mel hujus
fel meum,
Ut tu huic irata ne sis, aut, si id fieri
non potest,
Capias restim ac te suspendas cum ero
et nostra familia.
Nam mihi jam video propter te victitandum
sorbilo,
Itaque jam quasi ostreatum tergum
ulceribus gestito
Propter amorem vostrum."2.

"By my troth, I do entreat you, his
delight and my own aversion, his full-
bosomed mistress, my enemy and evil-
wisher; his eye, my eyesore; his honey,
my gall— don't you be angry with him;
or, if that cannot be, do take a rope
and hang yourself, with your master and
your household: for I see that henceforth,
on your account, I shall have to live
upon sighing; and as it is, I've already
got my back about as hard with weals, as
an oyster-shell, by reason of your amours."

Vigorous Invective

The spirited raillery and the opprobrium which the
characters in Plautus heap upon each other will next
command our attention. The implications contained in

1. Poenulus, Verse 387-90.

2. Ibid., Verse 392-99.

these tirades, and the variety of derogatory epithets bear witness to the fact that the versatility of Plautus' methods of humor-production is quite praiseworthy.

In the "Persa", Toxilus accosts Dordalus, a slave-dealer, from whom the former wishes to purchase the freedom of his beloved. Toxilus derides the trafficker in these words:

"Oh, lutum lenonium,
commixtum caeno sterculinum publicum,
impure, inhoneste, iniure, inlex, labes
popli,

pecuniae accipiter avide atque invade,
procax, rapax, trahax — trecentis versibus
tuas impuritas traloqui nemo potest —
accipin argentum? accipe sis argentum,

impudens,
tene sis argentum, etiam tu argentum tenes?
possum te facere ut argentum accipias,
lutum?

non mihi censebas copiam argenti fore,
qui nisi iurato mihi nil ausu's credere?"¹

"Ah, there, you putrified pimp, you mixture of mire and public dung-pit, you indecent, infamous lump of illegality, you blot on the community, you hungry, hateful, money-hawk, you nasty, greedy, grabby miscreant — no one can phrasify your filthiness in three hundred lines! — will you accept your money? Come, kindly accept your money, brassface, kindly take your money! Here take the money, will you? Can I make you accept your money, muckheap? Didn't suppose I'd be supplied with money, did you, when you wouldn't trust me except under oath?"

After this, Dordalus asks for time to take a breath for a reply; then he launches forth into a similar tirade.

In the "Menaechmi", Peniculus, the parasite, has been promised a meal by Menaechmus of Epidamnus. The

1. Persa, Verse 405-416.

sycophant, however, is not presented with the desired repast by his patron, the twin of Epidamnus. Mistaking Menaechmus of Syracuse for his patron, the parasite addresses the innocent twin with these words:

"Quid ais, homo levior quam pluma, pessime et nequissime, flagitium hominis, subdole ac minimi preti."¹

"See here, you rascal lighter than a feather, you base, villainous scoundrel, you outrage of a man, you tricky good-for-nothing!"

Figures of Speech

Just as the coarseness and the excessive number of the invectives found in Plautus may incur the censure of the scholar of ancient literature, so also may the exaggerated similes and other figures of speech in the comedies be criticized. However, far-fetched as some of the figures may seem, they were undoubtedly a constant source of amusement to the Roman audience.

The wily slave, Epidicus, in the play of that name, prepares to dupe his master, Periphanes, and another old gentleman, Apocides. Epidicus says:

"jam ego me convortam in hirudinem atque eorum exsugebo sanguinem, senati qui columen cluent."²

"Now to turn myself into a leech and suck the blood out of these so-called pillars of the senate."

1. Menaechmi, Verse 487-89.
2. Epidicus, Verse 186-87.

In the same play, after having defrauded his master, Epidicus declares:

"nullum esse opinor ego agrum in agro
Attico
aeque feracem quam hic est noster
Periphanes;
quin ex occluso atque obsignato armario
decutio argenti tentum quantum mihi
lubet.
quod pol ego metuo si senex resciverit,
ne ulmos parasitos faciat, quae usque
attondeant."¹.

"I don't believe there is a single field in all Attica as fertile as this Periphanes of ours; why, though his chest is shut up and sealed, yet I shake the money out of it to any amount I like. Gad, if the man discovers it, I fear he'll make the elm switches cling to me like parasites and lick me to the bone."

In the "Rudens", we have a ludicrous figure of speech. Charmides, having rescued himself from a watery grave, speaks with chattering teeth:

"Equidem me ad velitationem exerceo:
Nam omnia corusca prae tremore fabulor."².

"For my part, I'm exercising myself for a skirmish fight, for, from my shivering, I utter all my words in piecemeal flashes."

In the same play, Trachalio, protecting two slave-girls from the slave-dealer, Labrax, thus addresses his enemy:

"Extemplo hercle ego te follem pugilatorium
faciam et pendentem incursabo pugnis
periurissime."³.

1. Epidicus, Verse 306-311.

2. Rudens, Verse 525-26.

3. Ibid., Verse 721-22.

Labrax, "Forthwith, upon my faith, I'll make
a hand-ball of you, and while you're
in the air I'll belabour you with
my fists, you most perjured villain."

In the "Casina", Olymphio, who has hired several
cooks headed by a chef, Citrio, addresses the latter:

"Vide, fur, ut sentis sub signis
ducas."¹

"See here, thief, march your briars
(pointing to assistants) well under
your banners."

Citrio does not understand:

"Qui vero hi sunt sentis?"²

"Briars, indeed? How so?"

Olymphio explains:

"Quia quod tetigere, ilico rapiunt, si
eas ereptum, ilico scindunt;
ita quoquo adveniunt, ubiubi sunt,
duplici damno dominos mutant."³

"Because the moment they touch a thing
they cling to it; the moment you go to
pull it away, there you are— torn to
tatters. Whatever place they go to,
wherever they are, they do double
damage to the head of the house."

Puns

Plautus profusely scatters puns or plays on words
throughout his plays. This tendency to give a double
sense to many words was, in all probability, easily
appreciated by the Roman playgoer, who knew the various
meanings of a Latin word. Thus, in the "Rudens", Trachalio
addresses Neptune, who has ruined the former's enemy,

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1. Casina, Verse 719.
 2. Ibid., Verse 720.
 3. Ibid., Verse 721-22.

Labrax, by a disaster at sea. Trachalio says:

"Oh, Neptune lepide, salve:
Nec te aleator nullus est sapientior.
profecto
Nimis lepide iecisti bolum: periurum
perdidisti."1. & 2.

"Oh clever Neptune, hail to thee! Surely,
no dicer is more skillful than thyself.
Decidedly a right pleasant throw hast
thou made; thou didst break a—villain."2.

In the "Cistellaria", Gymnasium, a courtesan, tells
her mother that her friend, Selenium, is a bit in love.

Selenium asks:

"Eho an amare occipere amarum est, obsecro?"3

"Ah, tell me, that 'bit' of love does not
begin by being bitter, does it?"

Curculio, in the play of the same name, asks that he
be welcomed home in a pleasant manner:

"Obsecro hercle, facite ventum ut gaudeam."4.

"For the love of heaven, give me a happy
home-coming!"

His friends, however, understand "ventum" as meaning
"air", rather than "arrival". Accordingly, they begin to
fan him, much to his annoyance.

Verbal Abuse of Wives

Many passages in Plautus' comedies indicate that the
Roman audience (which was largely composed of men, rather
than women) enjoyed to hear an actor revile or verbally
abuse a wife. We have a good example of this censure of
spouses in the "Trinummus". Callicles and Megaronides

1. Rudens, Verse 358-60.

2. "jacere bolum" signifies "to cast a net", and "to cast a
throw of dice"; "perdere" signifies "to cause to perish"
and "to break" in the gamester's sense. See Riley, H.T. p.80.

3. Cistellaria, Verse 68.

have just greeted each other. They then converse in the following words:

- Me. "Quid agit tua uxor? ut valet?
 Ca. Plus quam ego volo.
 Me. Bene herclest illam tibi valere et vivere.
 Ca. Credo hercle te gaudere, siquid mihi malist.
 Me. Omnibus amicis quod mihi cupio esse idem.
 Ca. Eho tu, tua uxor quid agit?
 Me. Immortalis est: vivit victuraquest.
 Ca. Bene hercle nuntias, deosque oro ut vitae tuae superstes suppetat.
 Me. Dumquidem hercle tecum nupta sit, sane velim.
 Ca. Vin commutemus? tuam ego ducam et tu meam? Faxo haud tantillum dederis verborum mihi.
 Me. Namque enim tu, credo, me imprudentem obrepseris.
 Ca. Ne tu hercle faxo haud nescias quam rem egeris.
 Me. Habeas ut nanctu's: nota mala res optumast."¹
- Me. "Your wife, how fares she?
 Ca. Better than I wish.
 Me. Troth, I am glad to hear she's pure and hearty.
 Ca. You're glad to hear what sorrows me.
 Me. I wish the same to all my friends as to myself.
 Ca. But hark ye, how is your good dame?
 Me. Immortal: lives and is like to live.
 Ca. A happy hearing! Pray heav'n that she may last to outlive you.
 Me. If she were yours, faith, I should wish the same.
 Ca. Say, shall we make a swop? I take your wife, you mine? I warrant you, you would not get the better in the bargain.
 Me. Nor would you surprise me unawares.
 Ca. Nay, but in troth, you would not even know what you're about.
 Me. Keep what you've got. The evil that we know is best."²

1. Trinummus, Verse 51-63.

2. The English version is taken from Moulton, Rich.G., p.381.

In the "Casina", Lysidamus feels that his wife, Cleostrata, curtails his freedom of acting:

"sed uxor me excruciat,
quia vivit.
tristem astare aspicio. blande haec
mihi mala res appellanda est."¹.

"But my wife does torment me by — living!
I see her, standing there with a sour
look. Well, I must greet this bad
bargain of mine with some smooth talk."

In the very first lines of the "Asinaria", Libanus, the slave, gets off a quip at the expense of wives when he says to his master:

"perque illam, quam tu metuis, uxorem
tuam,
si quid meo erga hodie falsum dixeris,
ut tibi superstes uxor aetatem siet
atque illa viva vivos ut pestem oppetas."².

"And by the one you dread, your wife,
sir — if you tell me any lie to-day,
may she outlast you by years and years,
yes, sir, and you die a living death
with her alive."

In the "Menaechmi", the henpecked twin of Epidamnus reproves his wife:

"Nam quotiens foras ire volo, me retines,
revocas, rogitas,
quo ego eam, quam rem agam, quid negoti
geram,
quid petam, quid feram, quid foris
egerim."³.

"Why, whenever I want to go out, you
catch hold of me, call me back, cross-
question me as to where I'm going, what
I'm doing, what business I have in hand,
what I'm after, what I've got, what I
did when I was out."

-
1. Casina, Verse 227-28.
 2. Asinaria, Verse 19-22.
 3. Menaechmi, Verse 114-16.

It is quite evident that almost any sarcastic jest in respect to a wife elicited the laughter of the Roman audience. Truly, then, as Moulton says, we must recognize the "abuse of wives as a stock topic of Roman wit",¹ and, of Plautine wit.

Coinage of Words

In several plays of Plautus the humor is increased by the use of certain words which are of the author's creation. Plautus often places these whimsically coined words in the mouth of the "Boastful Captain". Thus, in the "Miles Gloriosus", Pyrgopolinices asks his sycophant:

"Quemne ego servavi in campis Curculionis,
ubi Bumbomachides Clutomistaridysarchides
erat imperator summus. Neptuni nepos?"²

"Who was the wight I succoured at Weevil
Field, where the commander in chief was
Battlebroomski Mightimercenarimuddlekin,
the grandson of Neptune?"

In the "Persa" the contriving slave, Sagaristio, having been asked his name, humorously responds:

"Ausculata ergo, ut scias:
Vaniloquidorus Virginesvendonides
Nugie piloquides Argentumexterebronides
Quodsemelarrripides Numquameripides.
em tibi."³

"Listen then, and I'll tell you: Gabblealot adori
Girlsellerinsky Slushjabberotikin Cashsqueezer-
outski Whatyouoncehavegrabbedstein Neverletem-
getberg. There you are!"

Not only are many words in Plautus' plays coined, so that they have some humorous significance, but most of

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1. Moulton, Richard G., p. 381.
 2. Miles Gloriosus, Verse 13-15.
 3. Persa, Verse 701-04.

the names of the various characters also have an etymological import or meaning. Humorously or sarcastically describing the nature of a character, these names, applied to the "dramatis personae", tend to aid in the production of a humorous atmosphere, which the comic-playwright strives to effect.

The name, Curculio, given to the cringing sycophant in the play of the same name, is translated into English as a "Weevil", a parasitic worm. In the "Persa" the parasite's name is Saturio, which may be rendered into English as "Gourmand", or "Glutton". Artotrogus, the parasite's name in the "Miles Gloriosus", is a Greek compound which means "Bread-devourer". In the same play the braggart-captain has a name "which is a swagger in itself".¹ He is called Pyrgopolinices, which, from the Greek, may be rendered as "Bulwark of Victory". Peniculus, the parasite in the "Menaechmi", tells us why he has been given that name:

"Iuventus nomen fecit Peniculo mihi,
ideo quia mensam, quando edo, detergeo."²

"The young fellows have given me the name of Brush, the reason being that when I eat I sweep the table clean."

The cook in the same play has the name, Cylindrus, which means "Roller", in this case, a "Roller of Dough". In the "Aulularia" the crafty slave is called Strobilus, which, in Greek, means a "Whirlwind"; and Strobilus certainly acts as a whirlwind towards Euclio, the miser, for the latter's fortune

1. Collins, W. Lucas, p. 45.
2. Menaechmi, Verse 77-78.

of gold is continually being blown away from the hands of its owner by the wily slave. In the "Mercator" the slave is known as Acanthio, which in Greek means a "Thorn"; and this worthy is always a thorn in the side of his young master's father, Demipho.

Nearly all of Plautus' principal characters bear names which symbolize the nature of their respective actions in the plays. To present all of the Plautine names which have some etymological significance would be of little value in our paper. We have indicated a few of these names, which adequately illustrate this particular method by which Plautus increases the comedy in his plays. Whether Plautus was guided in this respect by Aristotle, may be questioned, although one writer says, "Aristotle seems to imply that the names of the persons should suggest characterization".¹ At any rate, it is quite clear that this use of names which are etymologically significant is a salient feature of Plautine comedy.

which has served as model for later dramatists, is the "Miles Gloriosus" or the "Boastful Captain". This blustering, swaggering type of soldier of fortune seems to have delighted the Roman audience. Thus, in the "Curculio" the parasite, being asked why the Captain has not yet arrived at home, replies:

"Ego dico tibi:
 quia adius quartus venimus in Carthage
 ex India; ibi unum statum vult dare
 aureum

1. Goldmark, Ruth Ingersoll, p. 8.

CHAPTER V

Characterization

"When distinguishing between tragedy and comedy, Aristotle said comedy aims at representing men as worse, tragedy as better than they are. Hence characterization in true comedy sets off the foibles and imperfections of men."¹ A mere cursory reading of Plautus' plays would reveal the fact that, in the respect of characterization, the author has rather rigidly adhered to the advice of Aristotle. This tendency of Plautus to characterize certain types seems at times to result in excessive caricature. The fact remains, however, that this presentation of certain types of men is a most potent factor in the production of Plautine humor.

The Braggart-Captain

One of the Plautine characterizations, and it is one which has served as model for later dramatists, is the "Miles Gloriosus" or the "Boastful Captain". This blustering, swaggering type of soldier of fortune seems to have delighted the Roman audience. Thus, in the "Curculio," the parasite, being asked why the Captain has not yet arrived at home, replies:

"Ego dicam tibi:
quia nudiusquartus venimus in Cariam
ex India; ibi nunc statuam volt dare
auream
solidam faciundam ex auro Philippo,
quae siet
septempedalis, factis monumentum suis."²

1. Goldmark, Ruth Ingersoll, p.8.
2. Curculio, Verse 437-41.

"I will tell you why—because four days ago we came from India to Caria, and now he wishes to have a solid gold statue of himself made there, good gold of Philip, seven feet high, as a memorial of his exploits."

To Lyco's query, as to what cause there is for this memorial, the parasite responds:

"Dicam. quia enim Persas, Paphlagones, Sinopes, Arabes, Cares, Cretanos, Syros, Rhodiam atque Lyciam, Perediam et Peribesiam, Centaureomachiam et Classiam Unomammiam, Libyamque oram omnem, omnem Conterebromniam, dimidiam partem nationum usque omnium subegit solus intra viginti dies."¹

"I'll tell you. Why, because the Persians, Paphlagonians, Sinopians, Arabs, Carians, Cretans, Syrians, Rhodes and Lycia, Gobbleonia and Guzzleania, Centaurbattaglia and Onenipplearmia, the whole coast of Libya and the whole of Grapejusqueezia, in fact, a good half of all the nations on earth, have been subdued by him single-handed inside of twenty days."

Later in the same play, Therapontigonus, having arrived at home, thus accosts his banker in a bellowing, swaggering manner:

"Non ego nunc mediocri incedo iratus iracundia, sed eapse illa qua excidionem facere condidici oppides.
nunc nisi tu mihi propere properas dare iam triginta minas.
quas ego apud te deposivi, vitam propere ponere."²

"Tis now in no common rage I ragefully stride on, but in that selfsame rage in which I have learned so well to root up cities. Now unless thou dost hastily make haste to give me the hundred and twenty pounds I left with thee, make hast to leave this life."

-
1. Curculio, Verse 442-48 .
 2. Curculio, Verse 533-36.

Unable to retrieve his investment, he soliloquizes:

"Quid ego nunc faciam? quid referat me
fecisse regibus
ut mi oboedirent, si hic me hodie
umbraticus deriserit?" 1.

"What shall I do now? What boots it to
have made monarchs my menials, if this
cloistered caitiff is to flout me thus?"

In the "Poenulus", Anthemonides, the braggart-captain
recounts his exploits:

"Ita ut ocepi dare,
de illac pugna pentetronica,
Quom sexaginta milia hominum uno die
Volaticorum manibus occidi meis." 2.

"So, as I began to tell you, about that
Pentethronic battle, in which, with my
own hands, in one day, I slew sixty
thousand flying men."

Stratophanes, the captain in the "Truculentus", does not conform to the usual type encountered in Plautus, for that warrior disparages all narration of heroic deeds. Stratophanes says that he is accustomed to display his prowess in action rather than in words. This particular captain is, however, an exception to Plautus' usual "milites". The other captains, if not patently informing us of their triumphs, at least have a certain swaggering spirit emanating from their lines.

It is true that, in the reading of the comedies, the recurrence of such a type in several plays taxes the patience of the reader. But, who is to say what humorous effects might not be produced by a dramatization of such characters? At any rate this type of character was undoubtedly welcomed by the Roman

1. Curculio, Verse 555-56.
2. Poenulus, Verse 470-473.

play-goer of Plautus' time. The Plautine audience delighted in the exaggerated, in the grotesque, and in all buffoonery.

The Parasite

Another type, which Plautus uses for characterizing a certain class of men in his age, is the parasite, one who gains a subsistence by catering to or playing the sycophant to some affluent patron. These parasites took considerable pride in their activities. Thus in the "Persa" the parasite, Saturio, says:

"Veterem atque antiquom quaestum
maiorum meum
servo atque obtineo et magna cum
cura colo.
nam numquam quisquam meorum
maiorum fuit,
quin parasitando paverint ventres
suos:
pater, avos, proavos, abavos, atavos,
tritavos,
quasi mures semper edere alienum
cibum,
neque edacitate eos quisquam
poterat vincere."¹

"The ancient and venerable vocation of my ancestors I continue, follow, and cultivate with constant care. For never one of my ancestors was there who didn't provide for his belly as a professional parasite. My father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, great-great-great-grandfather, and his father, too, always ate other folks' food, just like mice, and not a soul could beat 'em at edacity."

In the "Captivi," Ergasilus is depressed because he has not been able to provide himself with a meal:

1. Persa, Verse 53-59.

1. Captivi, Verses 461-43.

2. Miles Gloriosus, Verses 33-35.

"Miser homo est, qui ipse sibi quod edit
quaerit et id aegre invenit,
sed ille est miserior, qui et aegre
quaerit et nihil invenit;
ille miserrimust, qui cum esse cupit, tum
quod edit non habet."¹.

"It's sad when a man has to spend his time
looking for his food and has hard work
finding it. It's sadder, though, when he
has hard work looking for it and doesn't
find it. But it's saddest of all when a
man is pining to eat, and no food in range."

In the "Miles Gloriosus" Artotrogus, the parasite,
tells us why he must listen to the innumerable lies of the
boastful Pyrgopolinices, who is his patron:

"venter creat omnis haec aerumnas: auribus
peraurienda sunt, ne dentes dentiant,
et adsentandumst quidquid hic mentibitur."².

"It's my belly brings all these afflictions
on me -- I must hear him through with my ears,
or my teeth will have nothing to teeth on.
I've got to agree to any lie he tells."

The Resourceful Slave.

The wily slave as characterized by Plautus afforded,
perhaps, more amusement to the Roman audience than any other
type or characterization. The artifices, deception and
mimicry of these mischievous servants produce some comical
situations in nearly all of the plays of Plautus. Chrysalus,
the rascally menial in the "Bacchides", thus explains the
requirements of the clever slave:

"nequius nil est quam egens consili servos,
nisi habet multipotens pectus:
ubicumque usus siet, pectore expromat suo.
nulluo frugi esse potest homo,

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1. Captivi, Verse 461-63.
 2. Miles Gloriosus, Verse 33-35.

nisi qui et bene et male facere tenet.
 improbis cum improbus sit, harpaget furibus,
 furetur quod queat,
 vorsipellem frugi convenit esse hominem,
 pectus quoi sapit: bonus sit bonis, malus
 sit malis; utcumque res sit, ita animum
 habeat."1.

"There's nothing more worthless than a servant without brains: he's got to have a precious powerful intellect: whenever a scheme is needed, let him produce it from his own intellect. Not a soul can be worth anything, unless he knows how to be good and bad both. He must be a rascal among rascals, rob robbers, steal what he can. A chap that's worth anything, a chap with a fine intellect, has to be able to change his skin. He must be good with the good and bad with the bad; whatever the situation calls for, that he's got to be."

Strobilus, the slave in the "Aulularia" is continually causing mischief by deceiving the miserly Euclio. Stasismus, in the "Trinummus", uses every means, good or bad, to save the fortune of his young master. In the "Mostellaria" Tranio flatters himself because he has gulled several people:

"Alexandrum magnum atque Agathoclem aiunt
 maximas
 duo res gessisse; quid mihi fiet tertio,
 qui solus facio facinora immortalia?"2.

"They say the great Alexander and Agathocles were a pair that did mighty big things. How about myself, for a third, with the immortal deeds I'm doing, single-handed?"

These rogues by their mischief and knavery, by their familiarity with their masters deport themselves in such a way as to greatly increase the humor of Plautus' works. Although they seem to be types rather than individuals, it is well to emphasize their importance in Plautine comedy.

1. Bacchides, Verse 651-660.
 2. Mostellaria, Verse 775-77

Characterizations of Minor Importance

Another type, which is often found in the comedies of Plautus, is that of the extravagant, dissolute young man. These worthless youths with the aid of their cunning slaves are continually vexing and disturbing the composure of their fathers. We have already indicated the excesses of Lesbonicus, in the "Trinummus". The profligate Philolaches in the "Mostellaria" is also an example of this type. In the "Asinaria", Argyrrippus defrauds his father in order to secure the freedom of his sweetheart. This type, however, is productive of little humor, except, indirectly, by offering to the cunning slave an opportunity for concocting devastating schemes.

Other types of small importance are characterizations of elderly gentlemen who are as depraved as their sons, and the miser-type, best represented in Plautus by Euclio, the miser in the "Aulularia".

After looking at these various types, one might declare that they are too malicious and too base to elicit laughter. But, if in reading the plays one places oneself, so far as possible, in the position of a Roman play-goer, the baseness of the characters is placed in a less prominent position by the general humor of the comedies. So admirably does the author produce Comedy that the worthlessness of his characters is often minimized by the preponderance of humor.

True comedy, we repeat, should present the deficiencies and weaknesses of mankind. Then, "the interplay of foibles should so be infused with the spirit of mirth that the spectator may be led to hearty laughter not to loathing of roguery".¹ That Plautus has enveloped his work with "the spirit of mirth" must be quite evident from the indications presented in this thesis alone.

One instance of this spirit is the dramatist's disregard for topographical accuracy and for historical facts. In the "Amphitruon" he gives a harbor to Teseus. Again, in respect to the nationality of his characters, "let the scene of the drama lie where it will, we are in the streets of Rome all the while."² Thus Plautus has his characters speak about "living like the Greeks," totally unaware or careless of the fact that his characters are themselves supposed to be Romans.

Another indication of his disregard for accuracy, in this case, other than the setting of his drama is the language of Plautine characters with the audience. In the "Curculio", the stage-manager comes upon the scene, and announces upon the discovery of Curculio, the parasite. At the same time he informs the audience in what parts of the city certain disagreeable characters may be found.

"Curculio... parvulus est...
 Locus...

1. Goldmark, Ruth Ingersoll, p.8.

CHAPTER VI

Independence and Abandonment

The spirit which pervades the comedies of Plautus is one of independence and abandonment. The rules of drama are not strictly adhered to by Plautus. But, since he is writing comedy, the humorous value of his plays is rather increased than diminished by this freedom and independence.

One instance of this characteristic is the dramatist's disregard for topographical accuracy and for historical facts. In the "Amphitryon" he gives a harbor to Thebes. Again, in respect to the nationality of his characters, "let the scene of the drama lie where it will, we are in the streets of Rome all the while."¹ Thus Plautus has his characters remark about "living like the Greeks," totally unaware or careless of the fact that his characters are themselves supposed to be Greeks.

Another indication of his abandonment and, in this case, utter disregard for creating an illusion is the intimacy of Plautine characters with the audience. In the "Curculio", the stage-manager comes upon the scene, and comments upon the knavery of Curculio, the parasite. At the same time he informs the audience in what parts of the city certain disreputable characters may be found:

"Confidentes garrulique et malevoli supera
lacum,

1. Collins, W. Lucas, p. 35.

qui alteri de nihilo audacter dicunt
 contumeliam
 et qui ipsi sat habent quod in se
 possit vere dici.
 sub veteribus, ibi sunt qui dant
 quique accipiunt faenore.
 pone aedem Castoris, ibi sunt subito
 quibus credas male.
 in Tusco vico, ibi sunt homines qui
 ipsi sese venditant,
 vel qui ipsi vorant vel qui aliis ubi
 versentur praebeant."¹.

"Above the lake are those brazen,
 garrulous, spiteful fellows who boldly
 decry other people without reason and
 are open to plenty of truthful criticism
 themselves. Below the Old Shops are
 those who lend and borrow upon usury.
 Behind the temple of Castor are those
 whom you would do ill to trust too
 quickly. In the Tuscan Quarter are
 those worthies who sell themselves—
 either those who turn themselves or
 give others a chance to turn."

What next may be considered a mark of Plautus' abandonment is the coarseness in many of his plays. Many of the lines in his comedies evince a lack of good taste on the part of the dramatist. However, this coarseness seems to be something external rather than internal, it seems to be a "bark and not a bite". Paul Nixon says, "There is little in his plays which makes men - to say nothing of good men - worse. A bluff Shakespearian coarseness of thought and expression there often is, together with a number of atrocious characters and scenes and situations. But compared with the worst of a Congreve or a Wycherly, compared with the worst of our own contemporary

1. Curculio, Verse 477-83.

1. Nixon, op. cit., Plautus, Vol. 1, Introduction p. viii, ix.
 2. Fries, W. T., p. 100.

plays and musical comedies, the worst of Plautus, now because of its being too revolting, now because of its being too laughable, is innocuous. His moral land is one of black and white, mostly black, without many of those really dangerous half-lights and shadows in which too many of our present day playwrights virtuously invite us to skulk and peer and speculate."¹

We must also be aware of the fact that Plautus is writing Comedy, which "is not subject to the severe judgment that is applied to the serious forms of the drama. Where the object of a play is mere amusement, the spectator does not make its morals a personal matter, because, as a rule, the fable is not supposed to teach anything."²

In criticizing a lack of good taste in the plays the audience of Plautus must also be taken into account. The Plautine audience appears to have been of such a nature that the playwright seems to have deemed it necessary for provoking laughter, that certain features approximating the vulgar be introduced.

Lastly, the independence and lack of restraint on the part of Plautus were indicated. This spirit, we saw, though often degenerating into coarseness, lends a carefree atmosphere to all of Plautus' plays.

No single feature of the dramatist's technique is the sole cause for the comic effects. All of the various methods, of course, contribute to the value of Plautine comedy.

1. Nixon, Paul, Plautus, Vol. I, Introduction p.viii, ix.
2. Price, W. T., p.29.

SUMMARY

We have shown, in this thesis, what methods Plautus uses to produce humor in his comedies. We have indicated that these methods were of a wide variety. First, we have seen that Plautus effects his comedy by an admirable handling and adjustment of the situations in the plays. Then the dialogue was seen to be a factor in contributing to the value of the comedies. The monologue, in the plays, was next considered as productive of comic effects. Then the broad humor, including jokes, lively invectives, ludicrous figures of speech, puns, and tirades directed against wives, was the next topic of discussion. In treating of the broad humor in general we also indicated Plautus' effort to increase his comedy's value by giving to the names of his characters a humorous or sarcastic significance. The dramatist's characterization of certain types of men was also emphasized for its importance in producing comic effects. These types, the "braggart"-captain, the parasite, the artful slave, represented the incarnation of mirth for the Roman playgoer. Lastly, the independence and lack of restraint on the part of Plautus were indicated. This spirit, we saw, though often degenerating into coarseness, lends a carefree atmosphere to all of Plautus' plays.

No single feature of the dramatist's technique is the sole cause for the comic effects. All of the various methods, of course, contribute to the value of Plautine comedy.

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It has not been our intention to determine whether Plautine comedy lacks anything which dramatic principles require to be present in true comedy. Our purpose was to indicate the methods used to effect Plautine comedy. The results of this paper, we can reasonably expect, are such that show what constitutes the technique of the production of humor in Plautus, one of the few great dramatists of ancient Rome, and on whose tomb his contemporaries saw fit to inscribe the following epitaph:

"Postquam est mortem aptus Plautus,
Comodia luget,
scena est deserta dein Risus Ludus,
Jocusque,
et Numeri innumeri, simul omnes
collacrimarunt."1.

"Plautus is dead and on the empty stage
Sad comedy doth lie
Weeping the brightest star of all our age,
While artless Melody
And Jest and Merriment forlorn
Their poet mourn."2.

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In this chapter Roman Comedy, with Plautus and Terence as models, is treated for its dramatic value. Then, the plot, the plot form, and the dramatic motives are briefly and laisily discussed. There is also a summary of the technique of the production of humor in Plautus.

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1. Wright, F. A., and Rogers, H. Lionel. p., 13.
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