

A Handbook of
CLASSICAL
DRAMA

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Stanford, California

GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE :: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

London

1. *AMPHITRYON*

Though constructed with something of the careless nonchalance of Old Comedy, the *Amphitryon* is so filled with delightful irony and irrepressible low comedy and tells such an immortal story that it is one of the most interesting plays of Plautus.

About three hundred verses, it is usually assumed, are missing from the text after line 1034.

Legend.—The legend concerning the twin birth of Heracles and Iphicles, like that of the triple birth of Helen, Castor, and Pollux, finds its eventual origin in the old popular superstition which attributed multiple births to supernatural causes. Thus the strong twin, Heracles, was thought to be the son of a divinity and only the weaker Iphicles the true son of the mortal Amphitryon.

The most striking features of the legend of Heracles' birth were the disguise of Jupiter, the long night which was necessary for the conception of this mighty child, the divine manifestations at his birth, and the miracles wrought by him in infancy. Obviously there should be at least seven months between the long night and the birth, and some months more between the birth and the miracles.⁹ But if Aristophanes in the *Acharnians* could have Amphytheus go to Sparta, arrange truces there, and return to Athens all within the space of fifty lines, his contemporaries, if they so chose, could doubtless combine the long night—transformed, as in Plautus' play, perhaps from the night of generation to a night of incidental dalliance—the birth, and the miracles all into one comedy.¹⁰

Source.—No subject material has held the boards so long and successfully as the story of Alcmena and Amphitryon. Only the story of Oedipus and possibly that of Medea and a few others were more frequently dramatized by the Greek poets. Aeschylus wrote an *Alcmene*. So did Euripides and each of at least three minor poets of the fifth and fourth centuries. Other plays entitled *Amphitryon*, which may have dealt with entirely different phases of the story, were written by Sophocles, an Alexandrine poet, and the Roman Accius.

This subject would seem naturally to lend itself readily to parody; and the comic writers, as usual, doubtless centered their attention on the version of Euripides. A reference at the opening of Plautus' *Rope* (86) amusingly recalls the realistic stage effects which were employed at the climax of Euripides' play. Two contemporaries of Aristophanes essayed the subject—one, Archippus, calling his play the *Amphitryon*; the other, Plato "Comicus," calling his the *Long Night* (*Nux Makra*). Philemon also wrote a *Night*, and Rhinthon, a Greek of southern Italy

writing burlesque, was the author of an *Amphitryon*. Almost nothing is known of these plays.

It is usually assumed that the immediate original of the Latin play was a comedy of the Middle or New period.¹¹ This may be correct. But the *Amphitryon*, though in some ways typical of New Comedy, exhibits more technical characteristics of early comedy than any other play of Plautus. One can hardly doubt that such writers as Archippus and Plato "Comicus," perhaps Rhinthon also, have left their marks upon the play. Informality is its most striking feature. The scene at one time seems to be laid before the house of Amphitryon, at another somewhere near the harbor. Such variation was not unnatural on the long Roman stage, however, and less striking examples are found in other plays.¹² The very fact that Thebes is placed near the sea is a bold distortion, like the coast of Bohemia in Shakespeare. The utter contempt for the dramatic illusion, also, is reminiscent of Old Comedy. So are the various effects of low comedy: the beating of Sosia and Mercury's pouring ashes and slops down on Amphitryon. Time is boldly telescoped. There is something too of the inimitable spirit and verve of Old Comedy.

Influence.—There are vast numbers of modern adaptations of Plautus' *Amphitryon*. One of the most famous of these is Molière's *Amphitryon* (1668), which has been translated into many languages and frequently reproduced. Especially noteworthy in his version is the introduction of Sosia's wife. Sosia's "girl friend" is given only a brief reference in the play of Plautus (659).¹³ Well known also are the version of Rotrou (*Les Sosies*, 1638), which had considerable influence on Molière, that of John Dryden (1690), and that of von Kleist (1807). In the *Comedy of Errors* Shakespeare adopted certain motives from the *Amphitryon*.¹⁴

Most interesting of all, however, is the brilliant contemporary production of Jean Giraudoux, *Amphitryon* 38. This is an astonishingly original reworking of material so often dramatized before, and it has very little in common with the play of Plautus. Indeed the story has been made into delightfully high comedy. In a bedroom scene filled with subtle irony Jupiter praises the night just past in the most effusive terms, but for his every adjective Alcmène insists upon recalling a night (with Amphitryon, of course) that was much superior.¹⁵ Thus the comedy is mainly at the expense not of Amphitryon but of the god himself! Alcmène also pays her generous share, for she mistakes the real Amphitryon for the god and, thinking that she is playing a clever deception upon him, sends him in to the bed of Jupiter's former play-fellow, Leda. The comedy closes with a gift of forgetfulness—a faint

reminiscence perhaps of Molière's ending. An English adaptation of this play was produced in America with great success.

Discussion.—Except for the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, the *Amphitryon* is the only example of mythological travesty that has been preserved. This genre, though occasionally written at Athens during the fifth century, came into great popularity during the first half of the fourth century and to some extent prepared the way for the development of intimate social comedy.

The basic plot of the *Amphitryon*, a wife's adultery and the duping of a husband, was one which convention usually forbade comedy. The cruel irony of the situation, difficult for any husband to enjoy wholly without misgivings, is well exploited, however, even in the *Iliad* (3. 369–454), where Menelaus still toils on the field of battle while Paris, rescued from him by Aphrodite, has taken Helen to bed. The situation is softened in the comedy of Plautus because a well-known myth is being parodied and because Alcmena is morally innocent. Here the duping of the husband is played up into a comedy of errors and, to make confusion worse confounded, Mercury is introduced in the disguise of Sosia.

The opening of the *Amphitryon* is remarkably recitational and farcical. Here is the best example of the proverbially long-winded god of the prologue. Almost a hundred lines of clever foolery have gone by before Mercury finally begins with the argument of the play. Another fifty lines are used for explaining the situation. Since this is a comedy of errors, the poet is careful here and throughout the play to instruct the audience with painful explicitness before every new development. Incidentally Mercury reminds us that some Roman actors, being slaves, might be whipped for a poor performance, and he makes interesting revelations concerning *claqueurs* in the ancient theater.

The entrance of Sosia does not begin the action but leads to another prologue! Now we hear in detail the story of Amphitryon's campaign, and the mortal is no more concise—and no less clever—than the immortal has been. Practically nothing in this long monody, occasionally punctuated by a remark of Mercury, has any structural significance except the reference to the gold cup of Pterela (260). No normal dramatic conversation develops until almost three hundred fifty verses have been spoken in these two prologues. Still, this opening, though static, is far from dull.

After the amusing low comedy between Sosia and Mercury, the slave departs, and the god speaks another prologue! We are now told the complications that are about to take place, and even precisely how everything will be made right in the end.

The two scenes between Jupiter and Alcmena are among the best of

the play and prove that, after all, ancient dramatists could write scenes of sentimental dalliance. The exchanges here, of course, are pervaded by a delicate irony.¹⁸ Alcmena can well say, "Gracious me! I am discovering how much regard you have for your wife (508)." And Mercury can be quite sure that he is telling the truth when he says to Alcmena: ". . . I don't believe there's a mortal man alive loves his own wife (*glancing slyly at Jupiter*) so madly as the mad way he dotes on you."¹⁷ Incidentally in this scene Jupiter gives Alcmena the gold cup which, as we have heard before (260, 419–21), Amphitryon has received as his special reward, and which is to play such an important role in the subsequent action.

The comedy of errors now continues with the introduction of Amphitryon; and the structural function of the earlier mystification of the slave, it now appears, is to furnish the first step in the gradual mystification and maddening of the master. The second step quickly follows with the strangely cold reception which Amphitryon receives from Alcmena. Her production of the gold cup adds a third. Meanwhile the irony continues, but it is not always as delicate as it is in the very proper oath of Alcmena (831–34): "By the realm of our Ruler above and by Juno, mother and wife, whom I should most reverence and fear, I swear that no mortal man save you alone has touched my body with his to take my shame away."

When Amphitryon, convinced of his wife's infidelity, has rushed off to find her kinsman, Jupiter returns for another session of dalliance and to set the stage for the supreme humiliation of Amphitryon. He also foretells the coming action and solution, repeating in part what Mercury has said previously. Later Mercury reappears as the "running slave," and carefully explains how he will mock Amphitryon.

Failure to locate the kinsman of Alcmena aggravates Amphitryon's ill humor, and when he returns to find the house closed to him his frustration knows no bounds. But this is only the beginning of his grief. He must be taunted unmercifully by the divine lackey and finally have ashes dumped upon him and slops poured over him—a scene which doubtless brought down the house, be it Greek or Roman. All this time Jupiter is taking his pleasure of Alcmena inside. Finally Jupiter himself comes forth and tows the conquering hero Amphitryon about the stage by the nape of his neck. There is not a scene even in Aristophanes that carries low comedy quite so far as this.

When Amphitryon finally regains his feet, now stark mad, he resolves to rush into the house and slay everyone whom he meets. But at this crucial moment come thunder and lightning, and he is struck down before his house. There can be no vacant stage here, and doubt-

less Bromia quickly enters, though her subsequent account reveals that a great deal of time is supposed to have elapsed. Amphitryon, recognizing the unmistakable signs of divinity, is thoroughly placated. He considers it an honor to have had his wife adulterated by Jupiter. Nevertheless, the play must end in true tragic fashion with an appearance of Jupiter as the god from the machine. The last line of all, reminiscent of the humor of Mercury in the prologue, is perhaps the best of the play (Nixon's translation): "Now, spectators, for the sake of Jove almighty, give us some loud applause."

2. COMEDY OF ASSES (ASINARIA)

The *Comedy of Asses* is one of the least interesting of Plautus' plays. Its characters are typical and lack individuality. Its plot, a simple intrigue to secure money for a desperate lover before a rival anticipates him, does not furnish enough dramatic action, and so most of the play is taken up with merely incidental talk and buffoonery. The structure, simple though it be, is awkwardly managed; but it is somewhat improved by the assumption of Havet that the young man who appears with Cleareta near the opening of the play is the rival Diabolus rather than Argyrippus.¹⁸ If Diabolus is introduced here, his entrance near the end of the play is less abrupt and his function less like that of a *deus ex machina*. In the simplicity of the meters used, the *Comedy of Asses* resembles the *Braggart Warrior* and is therefore usually considered one of Plautus' earliest plays.

The *Comedy of Asses* is not, however, wholly without its virtues. The contract which Diabolus has drawn up is a very amusing document.¹⁹ The final scene, furthermore, is excellent drama as well as excellent amusement. The shrewish wife, with her "Get up, lover, and go home," doubtless saved the play in actual production.

3. *POT OF GOLD (AULULARIA)

The *Pot of Gold* is a delightful comedy of character with an abundance of dramatic action. Unfortunately the final scene has been lost, but fragments and the arguments of the play indicate the main features of the solution.

It is thought that Menander was the author of the original—a very attractive but unproved assumption. The miser was a favorite type with Menander, as may be seen in his *Arbitration*, where also a cook is used for a scene of low comedy.

Significant names.—The name Staphyla ("bunch of grapes") sug-

gests that this character, like so many of the old women of comedy, is addicted to winebibbing, and certain of her lines confirm this (354–55). The cooks, too, are picturesquely named Congrio (*gongros*, "eel") and Anthrax ("a coal"). From the point of view of American slang, however, the most aptly named character is that of the young man who has violated Euclio's daughter—Lyconides ("wolfing").

Influence.—The *Pot of Gold* has been a very influential play.²⁰ Ben Jonson's *The Case Is Altered* is an adaptation of this and of the *Captives*. But by far the most famous adaptation is Molière's *L'Avare* (1668), which itself inspired various imitations, including comedies entitled *The Miser* by Shadwell (1672) and by Fielding (1732).

A comparison of the play of Molière with that of Plautus is a profitable study; but only a few points can here be noted. Molière, like Plautus, employs significant names. Among these Harpagon ("grappling hook," "snatcher") is a Greek-Latin formation and was doubtless suggested by the cognate verb which occurs in the *Pot of Gold* (201), or by the name Harpax in the *Pseudolus* (esp. 654). Molière has enriched the plot by adding a son and his love affair, in which Harpagon himself is involved. Several passages closely follow Plautus. Harpagon rages at the loss of his gold much as Euclio does and even descends to making similar remarks directly to the audience (IV, vii). The scene where Valère confesses to Harpagon also follows Plautus very closely in its elaborate irony. The Menandrian humanity of Euclio, however, has been wholly lost in the grossly exaggerated Harpagon.

Discussion.—The main plot of the *Pot of Gold* is an unusual one. A miser, Euclio, through excess of caution, is made to lose his recently discovered treasure. By the good offices of a young man who has violated his daughter, however, he recovers the treasure. Meanwhile he has learned a lesson; and so he apparently gives the money to his daughter as a dowry and is happy to be relieved of the task of guarding it. Thus this comedy, like the *Brothers* of Terence, has a serious theme. The minor plot concerning the daughter and her violation is trite, but skill is shown in combining it very closely with the main plot. Indeed it is employed almost wholly to bring out the character of Euclio and facilitate the main action.

The play opens with an omniscient prologue by the patron divinity of the household. Noteworthy here is the explanation that the proposal of the old man, Megadorus, is merely a device of the divinity for uniting the girl to the father of her child. Surely a modern playwright would have preferred to dispense with the prologue altogether and to reserve Megadorus' proposal for an exciting complication. But the ancient dramatist has some justification for rejecting this method. He is

anxious in no way to detract from the emphasis on Euclio's character. Even in the prologue, the primary concern is to show that the miserliness of Euclio has been inherited for generations. Indeed the proposal of Megadorus itself is primarily designed to bring out the point, essential to the plot, that the present Euclio will not even give a dowry to his daughter though she must inevitably lose social status if she marries a wealthy man without one. So the very liberal character of Megadorus is designed by contrast to display the niggardliness of Euclio.

The scenes between Euclio and Staphyla, also, serve to illustrate the character of the miser. Incidentally, preparation for his subsequent distrust of the very bland Megadorus is contained in his complaint that all his fellow citizens, seeming to know that he has found a treasure, now greet him more cordially.

Eunomia and Megadorus are introduced with an elaborate duet in which it is brought out that an old brother is being forced to do his duty to society by an old sister who has already done hers. Since Eunomia must have a role later in the play, the dramatist has done well to introduce her here, and she is very nicely drawn. Her slightly archaic Latin perhaps suggests that she belongs to that class of staid matrons whom attention to the home has caused to lose contact with the latest developments of a changing world—a type of old-fashioned womanhood well known and admired by Cicero.²¹

The cooks furnish low comic relief in this very serious play but are also necessary in the machinery of the plot. Significantly emphatic are the repeated references to the notorious thievery of cooks, especially the slave's monologue devoted exclusively to this subject immediately before the re-entrance of Euclio (363–70). The distinctly lower atmosphere of these menials is subtly suggested also by a few indecent jests.

So Euclio is brought to the fatal mistake of removing his hoarded gold and burying it elsewhere. Megadorus' genial threat to make him drunk merely adds to his uneasiness, though he has been pleased with Megadorus' disgust of rich wives and their extravagance.²²

The action which leads the slave of Lyconides to steal Euclio's treasure is well motivated; but the technique of eavesdropping is awkward in the extreme, for misers, however old or fond of talking to themselves, are careful not to talk of their treasures aloud. To present their thoughts in soliloquies may be permissible, but to have another discover the secret by overhearing such a soliloquy violates all probability.

The best scene of the play, perhaps, is that in which Lyconides confesses one sin but Euclio thinks that he is confessing another. The ambiguity here is more easily maintained in Latin or French than in

English. Highly amusing, too, is the later effort of Lyconides' slave to withdraw his confession of having stolen the treasure.

Doubtless little of importance has been lost at the end except Euclio's final speech of reformation.

4. TWO BACCHIDES (BACCHIDES)

(Date unknown, but later than the *Stichus* [200 B.C.] or the *Epidicus*.²³)

The *Two Bacchides*, somewhat like the *Self-Tormentor* of Terence, opens as a splendid Menandrian comedy of character but soon hastens off into the usual stereotyped play of intrigue. Noteworthy is the rapid shift in the fortunes of the various individuals.²⁴ Mnesilochus now has an abundance of money, now none, and soon an abundance again. The fortunes of his father change even more rapidly and, of course, end at a humiliatingly low level.

An undetermined number of verses have been lost from the opening, but the play is essentially intact.

Source.—The source of Plautus' play is revealed by verses 816–17, which translate one of Menander's most famous lines, "Whom the gods love dies young." Menander's play was called the *Double Deceiver* (*Dis Exapaton*). From the title it is obvious that Menander's play also centered about the intrigue to secure money. Some modern scholars, however, have insisted that Plautus has added one deception—the second letter. Chrysalus does cite three deceptions (953–78). That later Nicobulus (1090) and one of the sisters (1128) count only two has been taken to indicate that Plautus here reverts to the original text of Menander. But it is ridiculous for modern scholars to assume that Plautus could become confused on such a simple score. The inconsistency is only apparent. Indeed, Bacchis clearly says that Nicobulus has been "trimmed" twice; and this certainly, as presumably the earlier phrase of Nicobulus and the Greek title, can only refer to actual financial losses. In short, there is no evidence that Plautus has changed the plot, though we can feel certain that he has greatly elaborated the simple meters of the original.

Influence.—More important than the few adaptations in modern times has been the influence of certain of the play's many types of characters, especially the strait-laced pedagogue and the deceiving servant. Chrysalus' wild tale of the sloop (279–305) eventually, perhaps, turns up in Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1671; II, xi)²⁵ after appearing in various intermediary plays, including Cyrano de Bergerac's *Le Pédant Joué* (possibly 1654).

Discussion.—The *Two Bacchides* exhibits an embryonic double plot, for it contains two young men and their difficulties in love. The best of the play is doubtless found in the opening scenes between the naïvely innocent Pistoclerus and the more than competent Bacchis. Both are delightfully characterized, and Bacchis shows great skill in ensnaring him as she and her sister are later to ensnare the fathers of both young men. Very amusing is the reaction of Pistoclerus' pedagogue, Lydus, who cannot realize that his ward is no longer a child and whose moral code, in comparison with that of his masters, is ridiculously high.

From the first, Pistoclerus has been acting as the agent of Mnesilochus, and with the return of this second young man, the need of money to save his love from the soldier becomes the chief concern of the action. Pistoclerus practically disappears after he has caused the minor complication of Mnesilochus' returning all the money brought from Ephesus to his father. Part of this money must now be recovered through the usual type of intrigue engineered by the usual clever slave. The victim is forewarned repeatedly, as in the *Pseudolus*, and yet repeatedly deceived. As in the *Pseudolus*, also, return of part of the money is promised to the victim at the end of the play. The intrigue itself and especially the elaborate comparison which Chrysalus draws between himself and Ulysses are clever and amusing, though of course the whole depends upon the mechanically pat entrance of the soldier. As a comic character, however, Chrysalus falls far below the level of the colorful *Pseudolus*.

In general the portrayal of characters is masterly. But contrast of characters, except for the indirect contrast between the strait-laced Lydus and the unscrupulous Chrysalus, is not here employed as effectively as in the *Brothers* of Terence and in other Menandrian plays. This shortcoming is all the more striking because the cast includes two young men, two old men, and two courtesans.

The final scene wherein the sister courtesans take in the old men has often been criticized on moral grounds. Though amusing, it is undeniably crude. Satire is often so. There is not the slightest ground, however, for thinking that either crudity or satire is not Menandrian. The Greeks saw life whole and honestly recorded what they saw.

5. *CAPTIVES

The *Captives* is a quiet comedy of delightful humor and somewhat melodramatic pathos. Lessing considered it the finest comedy ever produced because, in his opinion, it best fulfills the purpose of comedy and because it is richly endowed with other good qualities.²⁶ The opinion

of Lessing, however, was attacked in his own day, and the merit of the *Captives* is still a matter of debate and violent disagreement. This arises in part from differences of opinion concerning the purpose of comedy and from attempts to compare incomparables. Various types of comedy naturally have various appeals, and the *Captives* is admittedly lacking in the robust gaiety and occasional frank indecencies of the *Pseudolus* as it is lacking also in the verve and activity and romance of the *Rope*. It is nevertheless a very successful play.

Nothing is known concerning the Greek original.

Influence.—Among comedies indebted to the *Captives* may be mentioned the following: Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (about 1502, adapted into English by George Gascoigne [1566]), Ben Jonson's *The Case Is Altered* (about 1598, combining the *Captives* and the *Pot of Gold*), and Rotrou's *Les Captifs* (1638).²⁷

Significant names.—The significance of the name Ergasilus ("working for a living," but here, as elsewhere, with the connotation of "courtesan") is explained by the parasite himself in his opening lines. The name Hegio ("leading citizen") obviously suggests a gentleman. The names Philocrates ("lover of mastery"), Aristophontes ("best-slayer"), and Philopolemus ("lover of war") all suggest mighty warriors, and there is more than a shade of irony in the fact that all these men have been captured in war. Stalagmus ("drop") is a derisive name applied to a slave of diminutive stature. The name Tyndarus is apparently taken from the legendary Tyndareos, father of Helen, and is obviously a slave's name.

Structure.—The *Captives*, like most of the plays of Plautus, was probably presented without intermission or interlude; but the traditional "acts," which date from the Renaissance, here divide the play into well-defined chapters of action. It is not unlikely, therefore, that these divisions are the same as those of the original Greek play, which probably had five sections marked off by four choral interludes.

The first section (126 lines) is designed to put the audience into a pleasant mood, characterize Hegio, and repeat the essential facts of the exposition (for the play is a unit practically independent of the prologue). The second section (266 lines) again explains the confusion of identity and successfully launches the intrigue by which Hegio is made to send away the gentleman, Philocrates, rather than the servant, Tyndarus. The third section (307 lines) presents Hegio's discovery of the ruse and the downfall of Tyndarus. The fourth (154 lines) announces the return of Hegio's captive son and is mainly concerned with the foolery of the parasite Ergasilus. The fifth (107 lines) contains the actual arrival of Philocrates, Philopolemus, and the wicked slave

Stalagmus.²⁸ Most important of all, Tyndarus is here recognized as the long-lost son of Hegio.

Discussion.—An intrigue by which two enslaved captives cheat their purchaser furnishes subject matter refreshingly different from that of most later Greek comedies. But the *Captives* still has many conventional features. The parasite is the usual stereotyped character, and to eliminate him would be to sacrifice the most amusing character of the play. Stock incidents, too, are found in the confusion of identities and in the use of intrigue and recognition. The appearance of Stalagmus, also, is too happy a coincidence for serious drama. No proper explanation is given for his return, although some preparation for this and for the recognition is made by Hegio's account of his earlier loss of a son (760). Nor is it true, as the speaker of the prologue alleges, that the play contains no indecent lines, although moral purity has contributed more than its share to the popularity of this play in modern times. In order to be fair to the poet, however, we must admit that even the conventional features are handled with unusual skill and freshness. The indecent jests are few and are employed almost exclusively to emphasize Ergasilus' irrepressible exuberance when he is bringing the good news to Hegio (867, 888). The confusion of identities is here entirely credible—although this has been disputed—and bears no resemblance to the implausibly maintained confusion in the *Twin Menaechmi*. The actors may well commend this play, therefore, for its effort to break away from the stereotyped characters and the stock incidents of New Comedy.

Unique in New Comedy is the appearance of two actors along with the speaker of the prologue in order that the audience may understand the true identity of Philocrates and Tyndarus beyond all doubt. The prologue also reveals that Tyndarus is the son of Hegio, although Tyndarus and Philocrates do not know this during the subsequent scenes. This inconsistency should hardly be considered a fault, for it is here assumed that the play has not yet begun.

Although most of the information given in the prologue is as usual repeated in the following scenes, a prologue was absolutely essential in this play, for without the knowledge that Tyndarus is Hegio's son the audience would fail to appreciate much of the dramatic irony which pervades the whole action and constitutes perhaps the chief virtue of the play.

Dramatic irony and suspense tend to be mutually exclusive, since the one often depends upon the superior knowledge of the audience and the other upon its ignorance; yet the *Captives* combines both to a remarkable extent and with unusual subtlety. The suspense concerns the return

of Philocrates, of course, and it is built up primarily by means of the irony of Philocrates' lines and the earnest anxiety of Tyndarus in their scene of farewell.

The dramatic irony of the play begins when Hegio first addresses his two captives. Philocrates plays the role of the confidential slave with consummate skill especially in his assured self-reliance and in his impudent boldness, whereas Tyndarus assumes the modest restraint of a gentleman. Many of these speeches obviously have one meaning for Hegio but another, truer, meaning for the captives and the audience. This humorous irony is very materially aided in Latin by the usual omission of articles and pronouns. Thus when Tyndarus, posing as the gentleman, speaks of sending the "slave" Philocrates "*ad patrem*," the reference is amusingly ambiguous.

The dramatic irony reaches its greatest height, however, in the scene of farewell. When the supposed master recites at great length the virtues of the slave, he is really praising himself; and when the supposed slave recites the virtues of the master, he, too, is really praising himself. But the poor naïve Hegio is so taken in by the deception that he is greatly impressed with what he thinks to be the sincere mutual praise of master and slave (418–21). The effect here is primarily comic; but there is real pathos in the true Tyndarus' fear of being abandoned, a fear which Hegio cannot understand but which the audience fully appreciates. The high point of this aspect of the dramatic irony comes when the "slave" who is being sent home gives an oath to Hegio and to his former "master" that he will never be false to Philocrates. Such an oath reassures Hegio, but it can only disquiet the true Tyndarus.

The most serious and pathetic irony in these scenes, however, is contained in those speeches in which the truth can be appreciated only by the audience. The true Tyndarus in his first conversation with Hegio, for instance, says that he was formerly just as much a free man as Hegio's own son and that his father misses him just as much as Hegio misses his own son. Whereas Tyndarus here intends to lie and Hegio thinks that Tyndarus is Philocrates and is telling the truth, the audience know that Tyndarus is really saying what is true because he is the son of Hegio.

Another scene of pathetic irony is that in which Hegio undertakes to punish Tyndarus, really his own son. When Tyndarus boldly insists that his action has been commendable and proper, Hegio himself is forced to admit that he would have been very grateful indeed if a slave had performed such an action for a son of his. This is precisely what Tyndarus has done, for by securing the release of Philocrates he has

really made possible the return of his own brother, the captured son of Hegio.

Indirectly, of course, Tyndarus has also made his own recognition possible. Yet Hegio thinks that this action of Tyndarus has made him lose his second and last son. Although this scene is not without its touches of humor, the tone is on the whole very serious, and the solemn simplicity of the iambic meter here, as Lindsay points out,²⁹ is reminiscent of tragedy and offers a very strong contrast with the bustling comedy of the preceding scene.

Hegio is not the stupid old man characteristic of comedy, although his figure has its amusing aspects; nor is he the stereotyped kindly old gentleman. He is thoroughly an individual. Before his entrance he is described briefly by Ergasilus as a man of the old school whose present business of trading in captives is most alien to his character. Thus we are prepared for Hegio's being taken in by the clever ruse of the captives. Undeniably amusing is his meticulous but naïve and wholly ineffectual caution in handling the captives. This caution is brought out both in his directions to the Guard and in his first conversation with the "slave" Philocrates. Amusing also is the manner in which Tyndarus and Philocrates talk to each other in their scene of farewell with an irony which wholly deceives the old man.

Sudden changes in the emotional tone of the play are emphasized by the figure of Ergasilus. Besides enlivening this unusually serious play with the usual low comedy, Ergasilus serves as an emotional foil for Hegio. At the beginning of the play both Hegio and Ergasilus are worried and not too optimistic. But as the play progresses and arrangements are made for sending the "slave" to Elis, Hegio becomes elated at the prospect of securing the return of his captured son. Just at this point, Ergasilus appears and, in strong contrast to Hegio's elation, pours forth his woeful tale of hopeless failure to discover a patron in the forum or even to raise a laugh. He would gladly dig the eyes out of this day that has made him so hateful to everyone. Immediately after this depressing monologue and the exit of Ergasilus, Hegio reappears in a state of elation greater than before, relating how he has been congratulated by everyone for successfully arranging the return of his son. The irony of his situation again presents the old man in a somewhat humorous light.

After the deception of the captives has been discovered, Hegio himself falls into a dreadfully depressed state and presents a figure of almost tragic pathos. But Ergasilus now appears in a state of ecstatic elation over the good news which he has for Hegio. The day which before was so hateful to him he now recognizes as his greatest benefactor. Ergasi-

lus has time for only a few lines, however, before Hegio reappears. In a brief song, very different in tone from his earlier song of self-congratulation, Hegio now bitterly complains of his disappointment and chagrin, anticipating the scorn of everyone when they learn of the way in which he has been taken in. Here the irony of Hegio's depressed state fuses the pathos and the humor of his figure to make him the most appealing character of the play. A final brief song by Hegio, in the same meter, opens the last section of the play and expresses Hegio's solemn gratitude for the return of his captive son.

Tyndarus and Philocrates, like Hegio, are entirely admirable characters, and their virtues are fittingly rewarded as we should expect in a comedy. Still, they do not become saccharine in their goodness. Tyndarus is more than willing, for instance, to see Stalagmus punished. Sentimentality, which might have run rampant in the final scene,³⁰ has been avoided by maintaining the usual classic restraint and honesty.

6. *CASINA*

(Perhaps 185 B.C.³¹)

Like much of Aristophanes, this spirited musical farce is grossly indecent and irresistibly amusing. Its popularity is well attested in the prologue, part of which, at least, was written for a reproduction some time after Plautus' death. The text in the broad scenes near the end of the play is only partially preserved. The play as a whole is the most lyric of Plautus' comedies, and many a delightfully extravagant line of the original falls very flat in translation.

The *Casina* has had some unimportant modern adaptations, but the resemblance of its plot to the *Mariage de Figaro* of Beaumarchais is thought to be fortuitous.³²

The original Greek version of this play, like that of the *Rope*, was written by Diphilus, who called his comedy the *Lot-Drawers* (*Kleroumenoi*). Modern scholars often assume that Plautus has revamped the whole play and introduced much of its grossness. Diphilus, however, was distinguished among the poets of New Comedy for his frankness,³³ and it is not easy to imagine how this material could be handled very differently from the way in which Plautus has handled it.³⁴ It is obvious from Diphilus' title that his play too centered about a contest, and it is likely that this contest was the rivalry of two slaves, reflecting, as in Plautus, the rivalry of father and son. Certainly if the father was involved, the subject was a scandalous one and fitted only for broad farce.

If Plautus is responsible for the suppression of the nauseatingly

frequent motive of recognition, he is to be heartily congratulated; but there is no trustworthy evidence on this point. Certainly the play is skillfully constructed, and the tone is consistent throughout. Quite in keeping with this tone is the burlesque of tragedy when Pardalisca first comes rushing upon the stage in pretended mortal terror (621).⁸⁵ Similar is Palaestra's song of more genuine terror in the *Rope* (664). But to discuss at length a play which makes its simple point—uproarious laughter—so obviously and so adequately would be mere pedantry.

7. CASKET (CISTELLARIA)

(Not later than 202 B.C.⁸⁶)

The text of this comedy is so badly mutilated that no very accurate opinion of its virtues can be obtained. (The complete play ran to some twelve hundred lines.) The Greek original was Menander's *Women at Luncheon* (*Synaristosai*).⁸⁷ A mosaic at Pompeii is thought by some to illustrate the scene which gave the Greek play its name—the name sometimes cited also as that of Plautus' version.⁸⁸

This play is said to have influenced Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*.⁸⁹

The stereotyped plot is that of a young man, Alcesimarchus, in love with the virtuous but lowly Selenium while his father is trying to force him to marry another girl. He is saved, of course, by the recognition of Selenium. Thus the basic situation is similar to that in Terence's *Woman of Andros*. The process of recognition in the *Casket*, however, is unusually elaborate, though based on the trite and highly improbable coincidence of a man's unknowingly marrying the girl whom he has earlier violated.

The opening scene is an excellent one of dramatic exposition, including a revealing contrast between the virtuous Selenium and the hardened Gymnasium. But after this scene the expository material is clumsily elaborated by a monologue of the Procureess and an omniscient prologue. The information of the prologue, furthermore, appears superfluous. At least the play as it now stands does not exploit dramatic irony to an extent which would justify this foretelling. The interior position of the prologue, employed in plays of Aristophanes such as the *Knights*, was a favorite one with Menander. It is used also in Plautus' *Braggart Warrior*. It has the advantage of allowing the play to open with a dramatic scene, and it serves to break the monotony of introducing two different sets of characters when these two sets cannot be fused into a single scene until late in the play.

Alcesimarchus is the most violent lover of New Comedy. Perhaps

he would be the most romantic and the most interesting one, if several of the scenes in which he played an important role had not been mutilated or lost. Incidentally noteworthy is the parody of tragic conversation line by line (*stichomythia*) in which his slave abuses him for neglect of his sweetheart (241–48). Alcesimarchus' efforts to soothe the ruffled Selenium, if we may judge from the fragments, constituted a delightful scene of love-making. One of the very few hysterical episodes of New Comedy occurs near the end of the play when Alcesimarchus appears about to commit suicide, and then abducts Selenium instead. The scenes of actual solution, however, are extraordinarily ineffective.

8. *CURCULIO*

The *Curculio* is one of the least interesting plays of Plautus. Its scene is laid, not at Athens, but at Epidaurus, a city famous for its curative cult of Asclepius and, incidentally, the site of the best-preserved ancient Greek theater.

The play's trite plot is that of a young lover, Phaedromus, who is in need of money in order to save his sweetheart. A parasite, Curculio, sent to procure the necessary funds, returns without them but with the stolen ring of a soldier who has contracted to buy this very girl. Slave dealer and banker are deceived into delivering the girl into the hands of the disguised Curculio. Serious complications at the appearance of the soldier are avoided by the girl's recognizing him as her brother.

In the usual manner this recognition is foreshadowed from the beginning of the play by the insistence upon the girl's chastity and virtue. The deception closely resembles that of the *Pseudolus*, but it is much simpler. Indeed, dramatic action is sadly lacking. Despite obvious padding of the scenes with mere foolery, this play, along with the *Epidicus*, is the shortest of Plautus' comedies. Its metrical structure, too, is unusually simple. Noteworthy in the one lyric passage, however, is the lover's sentimental address to the closed door of his sweetheart (esp. 147–54)—a parody of a frequent motive in ancient sentimental verse.⁴⁰ Indeed the whole opening of the play is very picturesque and amusing, and the enticement of the porteress is imitated in Massinger's *A Very Woman, or the Prince of Tarent*.⁴¹

In the middle of the play, a curious address by the property manager has been introduced to cover what would otherwise be a very awkward vacant stage (462–86). The various places in Rome where men and women of different classes congregate are described at length. This passage furnishes one of the most interesting literary records of early Rome.⁴²

9. *EPIDICUS*

(Date unknown, but earlier than the *Two Bacchides*.⁴³)

The *Epidicus* is another play of intrigue and recognition. Though not as gay and spirited as the *Pseudolus*, it is interesting from several points of view. The intrigue is extraordinarily complicated, although the action as a whole, lacking any elaboration of the love affair or of the involved past of Periphanes, is too slight. This play and the *Curculio* are the shortest ancient comedies.

The crafty slave Epidicus, who dominates the action from the beginning to the end, has played an important role in the formation of modern counterparts such as Scapin, Scaramouche, and Figaro.⁴⁴

The plot begins as the usual one of a young man in love and desperately needing money to secure his sweetheart. The situation here, however, is somewhat complicated; for Epidicus has previously secured a slave girl, Acropolistis, of whom the young Stratippocles has until recently been enamored. This girl is already within the house at the opening of the play, and the father is convinced that she is his natural daughter. But now Stratippocles returns from the wars with his newer sweetheart, who is hardly his own until he pays the banker her purchase price. The stress placed upon the virtue of this second girl foreshadows her recognition, but we may well be astounded when by this recognition the girl turns out to be Stratippocles' half-sister. Nowhere in New Comedy, perhaps, is there a more startling surprise. This has been made possible by the absence of an omniscient prologue and—even more strikingly—by the failure to elaborate the story of Periphanes' illegitimate daughter, references to whom are enigmatically brief, though the matter is subtly maintained before the minds of the audience by Periphanes' references to his past indiscretions (382–92, 431–32).

Many scholars think that Plautus is responsible for the omission of a prologue.⁴⁵ If so, it would seem that he is deliberately striving for suspense and surprise and is thus anticipating the regular practice of Terence. Similar to Terentian technique also is the excellent scene of dramatic exposition and the employment of a protatic character to facilitate it. But the original existence of a prologue is at least doubtful. Though it is customary to inform the audience in plays where recognition occurs, the *Epidicus* gives no opportunity for effective dramatic irony on this score. It should be noted also that the whole emphasis of the piece is upon the machinations of Epidicus and not upon the love of Stratippocles. Indeed it is obvious that this infatuation is only a few days old. Its frustration in the end, therefore, is a matter of little con-

sequence, especially since his former sweetheart, as Epidicus himself points out (653), has already been secured for him.

The play has been criticized, also, for the nature of its ending, which leaves various incidental matters unsettled. But perhaps the playwright is superior to his critics here again; for Epidicus must remain the center of attention, and his affairs certainly are beautifully concluded in the amusing final scene. He is saved by a highly improbable coincidence—Stratippocles' buying his own sister—but this, of course, is typical of New Comedy.

The comic ironies are noteworthy. Epidicus feigns great modesty before the old men, and they praise the cleverness of his scheme. With less truth but with equal comic effectiveness Epidicus praises the shrewdness of Apocides. Epidicus convinces the old men that he has bought the flute player, who is actually only hired; he also convinces them that the girl herself has been deceived into thinking she is only hired. Thus, when the ruse is discovered, the girl proves to be hired as she has claimed to be from the start.⁴⁶ This phase of the humor reaches its high point when Apocides says that he too pretended that the girl was only hired and assumed an expression of dullness and stupidity. Then he proceeds to illustrate this expression for Periphanes and the audience; in production, we can be sure, his actor did not make the slightest change in his expression to illustrate dullness and stupidity on the face of Apocides (420).

10. *TWIN MENAECHMI (MENAECHMI)*

This skillfully constructed farce is very spirited and amusing. It has fared unusually well at the hands of English translators,⁴⁷ furthermore, and it is said to be the Latin comedy most frequently reproduced in American schools and colleges.

Nothing is known of the Greek original, although Athenaeus (658 F), an ancient scholar who had read more than eight hundred plays of Middle Comedy alone (336 D) and whose interest was centered in cooks and foods, says that slave cooks can be found only in the plays of Poseidippus. *Cylindrus* in this play, of course, is a household slave. Except for the elaboration of monologues into cantica, the Latin version presumably follows the Greek original.

Significant names.—Especially noteworthy among the names used in the play is that of the parasite, whose Latin name, *Peniculus*, means "Sponge," perhaps the most apt name for a parasite that occurs in Plautus.⁴⁸ *Erotium*, "Lovey," is an effective but not uncommon name for a courtesan, and her cook is well named *Cylindrus*, "Roller."

Influence.—Along with the *Amphitryon*, the *Pot of Gold*, and the *Braggart Warrior*, the *Twin Menaechmi* has been one of the most influential plays of Plautus.⁴⁹ Various adaptations have appeared, including those of Trissino (1547, *I Simillimi*), Rotrou (1636), Regnard (1705), and Goldoni (*I Due Gemelli Veneziani*). But Shakespeare's adaptation (1594 or earlier), of course, is by far the most famous.

The *Comedy of Errors* takes certain motives from the *Amphitryon*, especially the twin slaves and the exclusion of Antipholus from his own house while his twin is inside; but it is primarily an elaboration of the *Twin Menaechmi*. Here we may observe Shakespeare at work and may analyze that fusion of the classical and romantic traditions which characterized Elizabethan drama. From the romantic come its abundance of incident and its utter disregard of plausibility, its plethora of youthful emotional appeal, its insistence upon a romantic love affair, its melodramatic suspense, its vacillation between the comic and the tragic—both sentimentalized—and its grand finale where almost everyone shares in the general happiness. From the classic tradition come its elaborate plot, its observation of the essential unities, and its fundamentally realistic dramatic outlook.

Discussion.—Basically the plot of the *Twin Menaechmi* is one of recognition. A great deal of complication, however, is built up about the somewhat involved personal relations of the Epidamnian Menaechmus. The similarity of the appearance of the twins naturally leads to a comedy of errors. This was a favorite motive, and no less than eight Greek comedies are known to have been given the title or subtitle "Twins." Indeed this motive plays an important role in several other comedies of Plautus himself, including the *Amphitryon*, the *Two Bacchides*, and the *Braggart Warrior*.

In a comedy of errors, the ancient playwright thinks it essential to explain the real situation very carefully beforehand to the audience, and the *Twin Menaechmi* opens with a long omniscient prologue.⁵⁰ This is followed by another long monologue when Sponge enters. Two such speeches make for a slow opening. But with the amusing song of the Epidamnian Menaechmus the play assumes that rapid pace which is necessary for successful farce.

The scene between this sporty gentleman and Erotium finishes in the details of the setting and with the theft of the wife's mantle initiates the dramatic action. As gentleman, parasite, and courtesan withdraw, the Syracusan Menaechmus, accompanied by his slave Messenio, steps into the situation which has been nicely elaborated for them.

The weary Messenio warns his master that here in Epidamnus the world finds its greatest voluptuaries and drinkers; it is full of sycophants

and flattering parasites; the courtesans are the most seductive on earth, and the city is so named because almost no one stops here without his purse's suffering damnation. The amusing reaction of his master is to demand the purse in order to avoid at least one risk in Epidamnus! The cook Cylindrus immediately appears and seems to prove the accuracy of Messenio's description beyond all question. Indeed, Messenio is taken in by his own cleverness, as we should expect in a comedy of errors; and, instead of realizing at once that his master is being mistaken for his lost twin brother, Messenio feels certain that they are being attacked by the pirate courtesans of this Barbary coast. His worst fears seem quite justified when the seductive Erotium appears. Thus the dramatist creates a very amusing situation while he is furnishing some plausibility for the long continuation of the comedy of errors.

There now follows a series of scenes wherein one person after another mistakes the Syracusan for the Epidamnian.⁵¹ After Cylindrus and Erotium comes Sponge, and then a servant of Erotium. In these episodes the twins are shown to resemble each other as closely in their dishonesty as in their appearance. The Syracusan is also mistaken by the wife of the Epidamnian Menaechmus and finally by the father-in-law as well. All the complications which these errors involve are skillfully manipulated. Especially noteworthy is the way in which the parasite, usually an unessential figure, is worked into the mechanism of the plot to become the link between the double lives which the Epidamnian Menaechmus is living.

The best of the episodes of error, however, is that with the physician. Of all the galaxy of comic characters none perhaps surpasses the medical quack in age. He is listed in accounts of early Greek improvisations.⁵² Though this passage is the only one in Roman comedy where he has survived, he must have been a stock figure. His most striking characteristics in any age are here well brought out—his technical jargon, his endless number of impertinent questions, his extravagant claims, and of course his utterly incorrect diagnosis. Characteristic too of quack or expert in all ages is his prescription of the most expensive treatment possible.

Only near the end of the play does Messenio meet the Epidamnian Menaechmus and mistake him for his master. This error quickly leads to the climax, where no one except the slave, apparently, has enough sense to bring about the solution. If the gentlemen had been given more, the play could not have continued so long!

Very different is the ending of Plautus from that of Shakespeare. Far from arranging a reconciliation between the Epidamnian Menaechmus and his wife—to say nothing of Sponge—the cold cynicism of the

author remains to the last lines, where along with the other chattel to be offered at auction is included the wife—if anyone is so foolish as to wish to buy her.

11. *MERCHANT (MERCATOR)*

The *Merchant* is a delightful comedy-farce. Though almost wholly lacking in significant portrayal of character, its plot is distinctive, its simple structure neat, its action vigorous and rapid. Since the metrical structure is very simple, the play is usually considered one of the earliest of Plautus' comedies.

The original Greek comedy bore the same title (*Emporos*), and like the *Three Bob Day* (*Trinummus*) was written by Philemon.

The *Merchant* has not played an important role in influencing modern drama. But the motive of rivalry between father and son, found also in the *Casina* and the *Comedy of Asses* (not to mention the *Two Bacchides*), is introduced in Molière's *L'Avare*.

The plot is that of a young man, Charinus, who through fear of confessing his love affair almost loses his sweetheart to his own father. The situation is nicely complicated by the introduction of the family next door, whose father, Lysimachus, undertakes to conceal the girl during the absence of his wife and whose son, Eutychus, is most anxious to recover the girl for Charinus. The wife, of course, must turn up at the most inopportune moment and take the girl to be her husband's mistress.

The play opens somewhat clumsily with Charinus' long prologue, which in part is within the dramatic illusion and in part without. Incidentally he recites a quaint idyl of his father's laborious youth in days gone by. With the entrance of the slave and the news of Demipho's infatuation, the action is under way.

Demipho himself first enters with a long monologue recounting his dream.⁵³ This parody of a frequent tragic motive is amusing in itself and in its immediate application of the monkey to friend Lysimachus. Lysimachus' first lines about the old buck, also, are amusingly obvious in their application to Demipho. As frequently in tragedy, the dream also forecasts the future developments of the play.

Perhaps the best scene, however, is that in which father and son lock horns over the disposal of the girl. They can both readily agree not to give her to "mother." Here Demipho recites a delightful description of the annoying attentions that strange men would inevitably pay to such an attractive slave girl (405-9). Even more amusing is the way in which father and son bid against each other to obtain the girl for a

"client." Their various lies, like those of Trachalio and Gripus in the *Rope*, shift with amazing rapidity and inconsistency. Finally, the old merchant, so careful of his son's professional honor when honor seconds his own interests and otherwise so contemptuous of it, shows that his long experience in business has not been wholly futile and easily wins the day over his less-practiced son.

Several of the later scenes too are excellent. The girl Pasicompsa ("elegant in every respect") is enticingly depicted. Lysimachus makes a most ridiculous figure when he becomes involved with wife and caterer, where the comedy, though obvious and even inevitable, is still very effective. Incidentally the wife's old slave delivers an interesting protest against the double standard (817-29).

Excitement runs high at the climax between the despairing Charinus and the overjoyed Eutychus. Charinus opens the scene with an extravagant farewell to home and fatherland that has a distinctly tragic ring. His mad dashing about as Eutychus tries to stop him is followed by his hallucinatory journey into exile. This would doubtless seem puerile were it not another parody of tragedy—this time of a great messenger's speech in Euripides' *Heracles* (943-71), where the mad Heracles is described as imagining that he was driving from Thebes to Mycenae.⁵⁴

The final scene, as in the *Casina* and the *Comedy of Asses*, is reserved for the thorough humiliation of the old man who has been so rash as dare to fall in love and become the rival of his son.

12. *BRAGGART WARRIOR (MILES GLORIOSUS)*

(About 205 B.C.)

The *Braggart Warrior*, usually assumed to be one of the earliest extant plays of Plautus, is interesting for several reasons. Of all ancient comedies it presents the most complete portrait of the immortal braggart soldier, and it has therefore been very influential. The two plots of the play, also, are immortal. Its characters are vividly drawn, and the final scenes are uproariously funny. But the whole play is very crude farce, and the deception of Sceledrus in the opening sections has little to do with the later entrapment of the soldier.

Significant names.—Pyrgopolinices is an elaborate Greek compound meaning "victor of fortresses and cities." The name Artotrogus signifies "bread-chewer," Acroteutium "tip-top," Philocomasium "fond of drinking bouts," Sceledrus "dirt," and Palaestrio "wrestler," or "trickster."⁵⁵

Source.—The title of the Greek play is given in the internal prologue, the *Braggart (Alazon)*; but nothing is known of the Greek

author. Most scholars assume that two plays have here been combined by Plautus; and this may well be so, but any Greek dramatist who would stoop to the crudity of such farce might also fail to appreciate the niceties of plot construction.

The literary motive of the secret passageway is very old. In an age when lack of transportation and the need of protection necessitated extreme conservation of space within cities, common walls between houses were the rule, and secret passageways must not have been such very rare exceptions.

The second plot also is a very ancient one. A man, usually husband or lover, is persuaded to send away a girl with another man and even to give them gifts or the means of escape. The deception is threatened by various complications in its final stages; but all comes out well, and pursuit or revenge is prevented by some device. This plot is used by Euripides in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* and especially in the *Helen*. The scene of departure in the *Helen* is notably similar to that in the *Braggart Warrior*; comic irony plays a major role in both. Palaestrio's grief in this comedy, furthermore, shows more than a tinge of Oriental deception, resembling the grief of an Egyptian prince taking leave of Caesar during his Alexandrine campaign.⁵⁶

The motive of the secret passageway is found combined with this second plot of deception not only in Plautus. In a fascinating Albanian tale, a priest is duped into marrying his own pretty wife to a merchant next door. At the ensuing wedding banquet, the priest is made drunk, his beard is shaved off, and he is disguised as a robber and left by the side of the road. When he awakes in the morning he actually joins a band of robbers. But here, although the secret passageway is used precisely as in Plautus, the person deceived by it is the main character, and the two plots are closely and effectively joined.⁵⁷

Influence.—The professional soldier of fortune was a very common figure on the streets of Athens during the period of New Comedy, and nowhere was he more popular than on the comic stage. This is evidenced by many plays of New Comedy, including Menander's *Shearing of Glycera* (*Perikeiromene*), Terence's *Eunuch*, and various other plays of Plautus, especially the *Two Bacchides*, the *Carthaginian*, and the *Truculentus*. This type is exploited in innumerable modern plays and finally results in such masterpieces as Falstaff. Indeed, Pyrgopolinices' boast that his children live for a thousand years (1079), as has been pointed out, is a gross understatement.

Many comedies have been directly influenced by the *Braggart Warrior*. Among the most notable may be mentioned Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (before 1553; indebted also to the *Eunuch* of

Terence), Dolce's *Il Capitano* (published 1560), Baif's *Le Brave* (1567), Mareschal's *Le Capitain Fanfaron* (published 1640), and Holberg's *Jacob von Tyboe*.⁵⁸

Discussion.—The *Braggart Warrior* is very clumsily constructed, for only a feeble effort has been made to connect its two actions. The soldier, the main character of the second action, is well characterized and his propensity for the fairer sex is given significant emphasis at the opening of the play. Thus the minor plot, which follows immediately, is suspended within the major. Several incidental references are made to the twin sister, an important element of the first action, during the latter part of the play. Sceledrus, too, is there mentioned and may reappear at the very end. Both actions, furthermore, are engineered by Palaestrio, and both are crude and farcical. But the first makes no real contribution to the second. The long episode with the genial old Periplectomenus has little to do with either. Incidentally annoying are the innumerable asides used to elaborate obvious jests. At times Palaestrio's handling of the soldier, however, shows real cleverness.

13. HAUNTED HOUSE (MOSTELLARIA)

Like the *Three Bob Day* (*Trinummus*), the *Haunted House* begins with a series of excellent scenes presenting situation and characters but soon hastens off into the most obvious farce. Here, however, the farce is as good as farce can be.

The Greek original seems to have been entitled the *Ghost* (*Phasma*). Records of three such comedies have been preserved, and it is usually assumed that the original of this play was the one written by Philemon. This assumption, even though no sound evidence for it exists, is attractive because of the play's structural similarity to the *Three Bob Day*, which was certainly written by Philemon. The tendency of high comedy to degenerate into farce, however, is observable in other plays such as the *Two Bacchides*.

The *Haunted House* has been very influential.⁵⁹ Among adaptations may be mentioned Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller* (printed 1633), Regnard's *Le Retour Imprévu* (1700) and its adaptation by Fielding, *The Intriguing Chambermaid* (1733), and Holberg's *Huus-Spøgelse* or *Abracadabra*. The names Tranio and Grumio, furthermore, are used for servants in *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which perhaps certain motives also are taken from Plautus.⁶⁰

The *Haunted House* has very little plot. A young Athenian gentleman, Philolaches, has been living a gay life in the absence of his father. Upon the father's unexpected return, Philolaches is surprised in a very

embarrassing daytime carousal. The clever slave Tranio, therefore, undertakes to prevent the father from entering the house until the members of the party have sobered and dispersed. Constantly threatened with exposure, Tranio constantly becomes involved in more and more elaborate deceptions.⁶¹ Finally, after his ruses are all discovered, he is rescued by the boon companion of Philolaches, who smoothes things over with the ease of a *deus ex machina*.⁶² All the activity of Tranio, of course, has really been much ado about nothing, for at best he could hope to deceive the old man for only a few hours. The initial pretext, however, is not implausible at first glance, and the rapidity of the action allows us no time for cogitation.

Although the whole play is amusing, the opening scenes are by far the best. Their primary function, of course, is to create the atmosphere of gay living. Various characters also are brilliantly presented here. But both creation of atmosphere and portrayal of character are carried. Obviously the dramatist intends these scenes to be enjoyed for their intrinsic charm.

far beyond the length justified by their importance in the main action.

In all New Comedy, no better scene of exposition is found than that of Grumio and Tranio. Not only is the situation most vividly presented but an effective warning of a day of reckoning is sounded, and the brazen Tranio is thoroughly individualized by contrast with the honest Grumio. The one fault of the scene is that Grumio, who is characterized even more interestingly than Tranio, does not reappear in the play.

The scenes presenting Philolaches and his companions also are delightful. The humor of Philolaches' remarks as he watches his love Philematium ("Little Kiss") complete her toilet and the masterly portrait of this delightfully naïve girl more than justify the theatrical awkwardness of the staging. The carousal too is skillfully presented. The drunken man, of course, is almost infallible low comedy; but Callidamates, with all the seriousness and moral callousness of inebriation, plays the role so entertainingly that we forget the triteness of the motive. Indeed this whole group of characters is so interesting that we, somewhat like Philolaches, may well regret the return of father Theopropides; for he is merely the stereotyped old man of comedy, conservative to—and beyond—the point of stupidity, so cautious where there is no need of caution and elsewhere so rash. He forms the perfect dupe for the wily Tranio, and these two monopolize the stage for the remainder of the play.

14. *PERSIAN* (*PERSA*)

(After 196 B.C.⁶³)

The *Persian* is a thin but amusing little farce of "high life below stairs." It is unique, however, in certain respects. The original Greek play is thought by some scholars to have been written before the conquests of Alexander (line 506, very doubtful evidence) and therefore to have belonged to Middle Comedy. A free girl who is a virgin takes an active role in the play; and the whole seems more closely to approach comic opera than any other play of Plautus.

The simple plot concerns the intrigue of a slave, Toxilus, who in the absence of his master is living the life of a king (31), which of course includes being in love with a strumpet and keeping a parasite. Toxilus, like any young gentleman, wishes to free his sweetheart. With the aid of a friend and of the parasite's daughter he succeeds in doing so and in thoroughly humiliating the slave dealer. Perhaps it is unfortunate that this material has not been more effectively employed as a burlesque of the life of Athenian gilded youth.

The comic opera elements are many, of which lyricism is the first and most important. External formalism also is noteworthy. The first lines between Toxilus and Sagaristio constitute the only certain case of metrical responsion in Plautus. Balanced speeches are the rule throughout this first scene and frequently occur elsewhere in the play, especially in the scene of pert repartee between Sophoclidisca and Paegnium. The very admission of such a scene is suggestive of comic opera, for it is obviously inserted merely for its quaint buffoonery. Below the ordinary level of New Comedy, furthermore, is much of the stage action, especially the "planting" of the girl and Sagaristio to come in just at the right moment, and later the similar "planting" of Saturio. The extravagant implausibility of the intrigue, the use of disguises, and the way in which the intrigue is made a mere joke in the final scene—these, too, are proper to comic opera or burlesque. The saucy Paegnium ("play-thing"), though far from the harmless innocent of the modern stage, belongs to this same sphere. Perhaps the daughter of the parasite might here be included. The reversal of nature by which daughter lectures father on honesty and reputation is ridiculously incongruous with the girl's lowly position in life, as with her unenviable role in the intrigue—incongruous, indeed, with the whole atmosphere of this comedy of low life. Last of all may be mentioned the exotic costumes and the carefully identified dances in the very gay final scene.⁶⁴ While some of these features may well be due to Plautine originality, they would not be unnatu-

ral developments of the lyricism and extravagance of Old Comedy. Certainly the Persian's four-line name (702-5) and the drunken revel (*komos*) of the final scene are reminiscent of Aristophanes.

15. CARTHAGINIAN (*POENULUS*)

The *Carthaginian* is miserably constructed and is a poor play in every respect. It has often been assumed that the faults of the play are due to contamination (the fusion of two Greek originals), but here as elsewhere no dependable evidence exists. The prologue states that the title of the Greek original was the same (*Karchedonios*), a title which is recorded for Menander and also for Alexis, a leading poet of Middle Comedy. Incidentally this interminable prologue gives an unsurpassed description of a Roman audience.

Noteworthy are the use of Semitic in certain passages—the only examples of the Carthaginian language preserved—and the occurrence of various alternate versions in the text.⁶⁵ Obviously the play was adapted in reproduction. Written by Plautus during or soon after a very bitter war between Rome and Carthage, the play reveals no prejudice except a brief reference to "Punic faith" (113).

Somewhat like the *Braggart Warrior*, the *Carthaginian* has two successive plots that are only superficially connected. A young gentleman Agorastocles is in love with Adelphasium, a virtuous girl who, like her sister, is in the possession of a slave dealer. To secure her, Agorastocles and his slave plan an elaborate intrigue, based, as in the *Persian*, upon a certain law. This intrigue is successful; but it is made unnecessary by the recognition of the girls and of Agorastocles himself as Carthaginian citizens of good birth. Apparently the dramatist was determined to have this multiple recognition, based on a tortuous and implausible series of events; but he could not make a whole play of it, and so he filled in the first section with a typical sequence of intrigue. Even so, the scenes with Hanno leading to the recognition are somewhat tedious. Like the *Pseudolus* and the *Persian*, the *Carthaginian* ends with the utter ruin of the slave dealer.

16. *PSEUDOLUS*

(191 B.C.)

The *Pseudolus* is a very amusing light comedy and one of the best plays of intrigue. Its plot is the usual one of a young man in love and desperately in need of money to save his sweetheart from the clutches of another. Stereotyped motives, too, are employed, such as the abuse

of the slave dealer, the braggadocio of the cooks, and the theme of the conscientious slave (*Harpax*). Reminiscent of other comedies is also the amusing way in which the victims are forewarned and yet taken in. But from the first scene to the last, the action of the *Pseudolus* is rapid and intense, and the wit has an extraordinary keenness and exuberance. *Pseudolus* himself is one of the most delightful characters of New Comedy, especially in his happy nonchalance and his assured self-confidence.⁶⁶

Among modern adaptations of the play may be mentioned Holberg's *Diderich Menschen-Shræk*.

The first and last scenes are perhaps the best of the play. Phoenixium's love letter is as unforgettable as are the jokes which *Pseudolus* makes over it—jokes best appreciated by one who has tried to decipher a lover's scrawl at Pompeii or an ancient letter on papyrus. Ballio's marshaling of his household, also, is a good if somewhat crude scene. Later, the comic irony of Ballio's mistaking the real *Harpax* for the minion of *Pseudolus* is most amusing. But the final uproarious scenes with the drunken *Pseudolus* must have surpassed all the rest—an appropriately low ending for this frankly low comedy.

Nothing is known of the Greek original of the *Pseudolus*, but it is often assumed that Plautus has here indulged in contamination. Inconsistencies concerning the twenty minae are pointed out. But the undeniably bewildering financial confusion of the play seems only another aspect of its humor. Again, in the opinion of many critics Callipho should reappear after he expresses his delight in watching the sport of *Pseudolus* and promises to devote the rest of the day to this (551-60). It does seem unfortunate that the dramatist has not combined the roles of Callipho and Charinus. But expressions of interest in the action such as Callipho makes are deliberately designed to stimulate the interest of the audience, and they cannot be taken as sound evidence of contamination.⁶⁷ Besides, the *Pseudolus* moves too rapidly to allow the spectator time for reflection on minor inconsistencies.⁶⁸

17. **ROPE* (*RUDENS*)

The *Rope* more nearly approaches the spirit of romantic comedy than any other ancient play. It contains more important characters and more dramatic action than almost any other, and it is among the longest (1,423 lines). It is noteworthy not only for its romantic atmosphere but also for its unsurpassed vivacity, its irrepressible and sometimes sardonic humor, its dramatic irony, and its melodramatic pulsation of emotions.

Source and influence.—The god of the prologue intimates that the author of the Greek original was Diphilus, but the name of that play is not given. It has been argued that Plautus made many important alterations in the play, but these arguments seem unconvincing.⁶⁹

Among adaptations, which have not been numerous, may be mentioned Thomas Heywood's *The Captives* (1624).

Discussion.—The *Rope* is primarily a play of discovery in which, somewhat as in Menander's *Arbitration*, a father unwittingly adjudicates the fate of his own lost daughter. Various exciting complications are furnished by the daughter's shipwreck, the quarrel between her lover and the slave dealer who is attempting to recover her, and the contest of the two slaves over the trunk. That honesty is the best policy is the obvious moral to be drawn from the action.

The locale of this comedy is as picturesque and striking as it is unusual: the desolate seashore near the North African city of Cyrene, an ancient Brighton or Deauville.⁷⁰

Since the play is to contain concealed identities and a recognition, the author has considered an omniscient prologue essential in order that the irony of the action may be fully appreciated. Perhaps such a prologue is also the simplest method of revealing the complicated exposition of the play—the soundest justification for the Euripidean prologue, which seems to have been used regularly by Diphilus.⁷¹ Not much of the coming action, however, is here foreshadowed in the prologue.

Very unusual is the scene in which Sceparnio pretends to look off and sight the shipwrecked men and the two girls in a lifeboat. Action that could not be presented "on stage" frequently occurs in tragedy, where it is usually described in a messenger's speech. In comedy, such action is rare, and the method of describing it here employed, though informal, is very effective.

As soon as the stage is cleared—the exit of Daemones is dramatically necessary but surely somewhat forced and implausible—Palaestra, like a tragic heroine, appears singing her monody of complaint against Heaven and her cruel fate. The pathos of this is more significant for the audience, since they know that she is actually standing very close to the house of her long-lost parents. After Ampelisca has entered with a few plaintive lines we have a charming duet with the tragic cretic meter beautifully adapted to the scene (esp. lines 235–37). Indeed, this whole episode is one of the most charming in Plautus. As poetry, however, it is hardly superior to the "chorus" of fishermen who appear soon afterward. Here we have a passage of real beauty such as is common in Aristophanes but rare in New Comedy and apparently unknown in Menander. This chorus is usually considered a vestige

of the old comic chorus, and their introduction here is certainly very felicitous. With their reed poles and, doubtless, fishermen's hats, they add a delightful bit of local color—obviously an artistic addition rather than an interruption like the ordinary interlude chorus. Their quaint humor forms a winsomely comic relief for the tragic tone of the two girls in distress.

Lovers' dalliance on stage is rare in ancient comedy, but slaves are allowed more liberty of action in certain situations than ladies and gentlemen, and we find an amusing if somewhat risqué example of love-making in the scene between the slaves, Ampelisca and Sceparnio.⁷² We may assume that Ampelisca starts this flirtation by ogling Sceparnio and caressing her words in a manner most likely to win over a stranger from whom she wishes to ask a favor. Sceparnio, however, is won over even more effectively than she wished, and it is all the girl can do to keep the situation in hand. With the aid of feminine tact and deceit, however, she succeeds in gaining her request by mere promises. While Sceparnio is gone to fetch the water, she is put to flight by the approach of the slave dealer. When Sceparnio returns with his high hopes of an easy conquest, he presents a figure whose ridiculousness can hardly be appreciated without actually seeing him as he carries the jug and searches eagerly about the stage for the vanished girl. His fear now of being caught as a thief and, finally, his utter disgust at having done some real work for nothing form a very amusing contrast with his high spirits at the opening of the scene.

Various scenes of low comedy occur throughout the play which set off and relieve the more serious episodes. Amusing is the scene wherein the slave dealer Labrax and his friend Charmides first emerge from their shipwreck. They come on stage with their garments drenched, shivering and, as the meter apparently indicates, chattering from cold. They curse their fortune and each other. They run the gamut of low comedy from miserable puns to vomiting.

The influence of melodramatic tragedy is evident in many scenes of the *Rope*, but most of all in the scene where the girls flee from the temple of Venus to the altar. Palaestra's monody here is remarkably similar to a fragmentary monody from a tragedy of Plautus' contemporary, Ennius, wherein a woman, Andromache, is seeking refuge.⁷³ Both songs are in part written in cretic meter, characterized by elaborate alliteration and assonance, the use of synonyms and various artificialities of high style. The grouping about the altar, furthermore, is remarkably similar to that of a scene from an unknown tragedy represented on a Greek vase.⁷⁴ The whole scene here, then, may be a parody of a definite tragedy.⁷⁵

The amusing Sceparnio does not appear in the second half of the play; but a counterpart for him is found in the fisherman, Gripus, the slave of Daemones, who is not mentioned in the prologue and of whom we hear nothing until Daemones comes on stage to deliver a short monologue and then returns into the house (892-905). Obviously this somewhat awkward speech is designed solely to introduce Gripus, who enters immediately after Daemones makes his exit. The emotions of Gripus, like those of Sceparnio, shift very rapidly: he enters in the greatest elation over his discovery of the wicker trunk, and in an amusing monody he daydreams aloud on becoming a millionaire, a tycoon in the world of trade, and on founding a city to commemorate his fame. The humorous irony of these lines may easily be overlooked in reading the play; but it could not be lost in the theater, for we may be sure that during his monody, as he walks slowly toward the center of the stage, his spying adversary, Trachalio, is already on stage behind him.

One of the most delightful scenes of the play is the ensuing one between Gripus and Trachalio with their mock juristic arguments. It is easy to understand why Plautus chose to name the play after this scene and the tug of war of the two slaves over the trunk. Especially delightful is the naïve way in which the slaves, when their casuistry runs short, resort to barefaced lies and elaborate threats of violence which reveal that each is actually very much afraid of the other.

The scene in which both slaves appeal to Daemones is a continuation of this argument, in which Gripus is at least more consistent than Trachalio, who at one time renounces all personal claims (1077) and at another demands half of the booty (1123). The zeal of Gripus increases as the apparent justice of his case fades away, and he does not fail to anticipate every possible device of his opponents.

Comedies usually come to a close very shortly after the solution of the plot, but the *Rope* continues for some time after the main complication has been solved with Palaestra's restoration to her parents. Still, there are minor threads of the plot that must be neatly finished off. The play does not, therefore, appear to be unduly extended, especially since the final scenes are so gay and amusing; throughout this comedy, gaiety and amusement are more important than the progression of the plot.

The romantic pulsation of emotions, already noted in the earlier parts of the play, continues to the very end and is nicely emphasized by appropriate metrical variation. Trachalio and Daemones are in high spirits, Trachalio and Plesidippus in even higher spirits—especially Plesidippus, who is ecstatic over the good fortune of Palaestra and their coming marriage. These scenes, of course, are in the gay trochaic meter

which was probably accompanied by music. But between these scenes with Trachalio, wherein the author runs riot in word play in a manner more characteristic of Aristophanes or Rabelais than of New Comedy, the ill-humored Gripus in prosaic iambics continues his haggling argument with his master over the ownership of the trunk. This ill-humor is even more amusing, of course, than the gaiety of the other characters.

The ironic humor, also, with an occasional thrust of real satire, is maintained to the last line, where the audience, if they will applaud loudly, are invited to a drinking party—all, that is, under sixteen years of age.⁷⁸ Sixteen was the usual age for the assumption of a man's dress and status at Rome, and from this passage it has been concluded that minors were not allowed in the Roman theater.

18. *STICHUS*

(Plebeian Games, 200 B.C.)

The *Stichus* is a thin little piece but a very merry one, especially in the final scenes, which, like those of the *Persian*, depict the gaiety and enviable freedom of slaves. Plautine contamination or originality is often blamed for the formlessness of the play, but it is hard to discover the germ of a conventional dramatic plot in any phase of the material.

According to the record of the first production,⁷⁷ the Greek original was the *Brothers* of Menander.⁷⁸

The *Stichus* has less plot than any other Roman comedy. Its center of interest shifts from one set of characters to another and then to still another. There is some slight connection between these, to be sure, and the author is careful, before he has finished with one set, to introduce the next. The play opens with what appears to be a dramatic situation: the two sisters, wives as faithful as Penelope, are being urged by their father, Antipho, to renounce their long-absent husbands. But the wives and even the father himself assure us that he will not compel them, thus destroying any dramatic tension almost before it has been created. Gelasimus and his problem of food are now introduced on a very weak pretext. With the announcement of the return of the husbands and their great wealth, the problem of the wives is settled; and after Panegyris has heard this news and dealt Gelasimus his first disappointment, these wives do not reappear even to welcome home their dearly beloved husbands. Panegyris' husband, Epignomus, now comes on with Stichus and announces his reconciliation with father Antipho. Hereupon Stichus' problem of an appropriate celebration is introduced, only to give way immediately to the problem of Gelasimus. This parasite, after an

unsuccessful clash with Epignomus, retires again disappointed. Antipho appears with the second husband and gives an illustration of restored family harmony. Antipho, too, has a personal problem, which the somewhat casual gift of a slave girl by one of his sons-in-law promises to solve. Incidentally noteworthy is the characterization of the old man here and in his earlier scene by the use of language resembling riddles—a unique motive. Gelasimus reappears and is finally rejected. His complete disappointment adds a tartness much needed in this almost too pleasant comedy and perhaps intimates that the brothers have grown wiser and will not again dissipate their fortunes for the likes of Gelasimus. Last of all, Stichus, Sagarinus, and their mutual sweetheart take over the final scenes for a typical revel ending (*komos*)—and a very gay revel it is, where even the musician is induced to become drunk.⁷⁹

19. THREE BOB DAY (*TRINUMMUS*)

(A festival in honor of Cybele; not before 194 B.C.⁸⁰)

Lessing considered this play second only to the *Captives* among Plautus' comedies, but such a high rating seems hardly justified.⁸¹ There are certainly some excellent scenes of high comedy, especially in the first part of the play; but the climax falls off disappointingly into obvious farce.

The Greek original, as we are plainly told, was the *Treasure of Philemon* (*Thesaurus*). Probably some monologues of the original have been elaborated into monodies, but otherwise perhaps few if any changes have been made.⁸²

No female role is found in the *Three Bob Day*. This feature, so entirely natural in a play like the *Captives*, is here somewhat unfortunate from the modern point of view, in that this unusual plot seems ideally suited for intimate romantic comedy. Such development, however, was left for a Frenchman, Néricault Destouches, whose adaptation, *Le Trésor Caché*, brought to life the two girls that are to be married to the young men at the end of Plautus' play.⁸³ Another adaptation, Lessing's *Der Schatz* (1750), is well known.

Discussion.—Precisely to define the plot of the *Three Bob Day* is difficult, and this very fact marks the play out as extraordinary in New Comedy, where the plots are usually all too stereotyped. The main problem, however, concerns the honor of Lesbonicus, a young man who in the absence of his father has so dissipated his property that he finds himself greatly embarrassed over the prospect of his sister's being forced to marry without a dowry. The modern reader may easily under-

estimate the seriousness of this situation. According to the Athenian moral code, this young man's first duty in life was to look to the honor and decent marriage of his sister. For her to marry without a dowry and thus to sacrifice all social prestige naturally meant utter disgrace for him. A minor problem of the play is centered about the honor of Callicles, an old friend whom the father of Lesbonicus has charged with something of the family interests during his absence. Both these problems are excellent dramatic material.

After a quaint prelude which well strikes the moral tone of the play and also serves as a literary prologue, the play opens with a very delightful scene between Callicles and a friend, Megaronides, who has come to castigate him for his apparent breach of faith. Both are nicely characterized as old men by their jests on wives and marriage, their use of proverbs, and their complaints of the moral degeneration of the times. Their main function, of course, is to give the exposition; and this they succeed in doing in a most natural fashion. Megaronides is not, as we might expect, a protatic character but has been skillfully worked into the subsequent action. One fault, however, may be found with this scene: no immediate dramatic action or complication is suggested. The mention of Lesbonicus' sister has been too brief, and nothing has been said that might suggest her marrying in the near future.

When this episode is ended, Lysiteles, a young man of whom we have heard nothing, appears with a charming monody, the length of which, if nothing else, indicates the importance of the speaker.⁸⁴ His problem is a serious one: to be or not to be—in love. Seeing only too clearly that love is a waster of property and a corrupter of good morals, this strange young man decides that he will not be. He wishes, as we later discover, to marry instead!

When Lysiteles has reached this very virtuous decision, his father, Philto, opportunely comes on, and the ensuing scene is even more delightful high comedy than that between Callicles and Megaronides. Philto lectures his son in a moral fashion that qualifies him to rank as an ancestor of Polonius. But Lysiteles is somewhat cleverer than Laertes. He actually encourages his father; indeed he anticipates Philto in reaching the extreme limit of virtue and suggests a definite virtuous action—marrying a girl without a dowry. Any translation of virtuous words into action would doubtless have been disconcerting enough for Philto; and this particular action carries virtue far beyond the limits which he had envisaged even in his most abstract cogitations. But the receptiveness and docility of Lysiteles have been so great that the father is now embarrassed to refuse. Never in New Comedy is a father

thrown for a neater and less-expected fall than this. The whole scene is a masterpiece.

Philot agrees to his son's marrying the sister of Lesbonicus without a dowry. This initiates the dramatic action at last, and it also sets the stage for the entrance of Lesbonicus, whose efforts to trace down the rapid flight of his funds are very amusing. Philto, as if he had not learned his lesson, continues with philosophizing, and his subsequent interview with Lesbonicus nicely points up the dilemma of this young man. Indeed, Lesbonicus becomes so desperate that he actually longs for the return of his father! Stasimus, his impudent slave, furnishes the low comedy of the scene. This reduces the level of the play's humor somewhat, although, in his not very successful efforts to deceive Philto, Stasimus is made the butt rather than the author of the humor.

Lesbonicus has been unable to settle the problem of the dowry with Philto, and so goes off to find Lysiteles. Meanwhile Calicles reappears and makes known his intention of somehow providing for the dowry. Lesbonicus knows nothing of this, however, and he is still desperate when he returns with Lysiteles and they debate the matter at great length. This scene might be called the climax of the play, for here the complication reaches its point of highest tension.

The play now degenerates rapidly. Megaronides' plan to provide the dowry from the secret treasure of Charmides is too much the usual comic intrigue. With the timely arrival of Charmides, furthermore, the working out of this plan becomes obvious farce. The stage technique, also, especially the continual use of asides, is somewhat awkward.

The farce in these later sections of the play can hardly be said to strike an inharmonious note, for the tone of the play has been charmingly light throughout. But it seems unfortunate that the serious moral dilemma of the young men is not exploited in a more satisfactory manner. The solution adopted, of course, is purely external. Another fault of the play is its failure at an early point to focus upon a single character and to maintain him as the center of interest. Unfortunate also is the continual harping on the moral degeneration of the times.⁸⁵ This theme, a commonplace in New Comedy, is put to real service where Philto is concerned, and possibly the play as a whole would have been more effective if it had been reserved for him alone.

20. *TRUCULENTUS

The *Truculentus* is a remarkable but not an amusing play. Like the novel *Sapho* of Alphonse Daudet, it is written for the enlightenment of a young man on youth's eternal problem. Vice would flourish less,

says Diniarchus in his "prologue" (57-63), if the experience of one generation could be passed on to the next. The play, then, is very serious. We might be tempted to call its outcome tragic. Certainly few tragedies are so depressing. But Aristotle (*Poetics* 1452 b) says that the spectacle of the evil prospering is the most untragic of all. Phronesium is certainly evil, and she certainly prospers. An amazing detachment is maintained by the dramatist throughout, and he coldly refuses to display the slightest sympathy with his characters. Indeed, this play is one of the most remarkable pieces of stark realism in classical drama. Its ending is similar to that of the *Two Bacchides* and the *Eunuchus*; but those plays seem very light and gay compared to this.

The *Truculentus* has been somewhat neglected by modern scholars because the text tradition is deplorably bad—the worst of all the plays of Plautus, though there are no lengthy lacunae.

The author of the Greek original is unknown.

Discussion.—The play has almost no plot. It is merely the spectacle of a very real Circe turning men into swine. Four men are chosen for purposes of illustration. They are all typical, and properly so, for the author wishes to include all mankind; but they are treated in a far from typical manner. The various episodes dealing with these four are adeptly interwoven, though there is no artificial complexity about the play. The young Athenian gentleman, Diniarchus, is the first to be taken up and the only one whose case history is given in some detail. He has long since been a lover of courtesan and of courtesan's maid alike and, now bankrupt, he still is their lover. After he has been introduced and retires into Phronesium's house, the truculent slave comes on. He is the most picturesque character of the play. From his first line he is most aptly characterized as a bumpkin. His metaphors are rustic, and he swears by the hoe. Such referential swearing, though common in Aristophanes, is not frequent in Roman comedy. He is also characterized by his quaint perversity in the use of language, something like Antipho's use of riddles in the *Stichus*. Though this slave shows some signs of human frailty to the courtesan's maid, we naturally expect him to remain truculent throughout the play; and when he leaves the stage with the declaration that he will inform his old master of the young master's goings on, we anticipate the appearance of the old man. Such action would recall that of Lydus in the *Two Bacchides*.

Diniarchus now returns to the stage, and after the splendid fanfare of the early scenes, Phronesium makes her entrance and works her magic spell upon him. Much of this scene is concerned incidentally with the story of the soldier and the supposititious child, thus anticipating the appearance of the next victim and preparing for the discovery of

the child's true identity. When Diniarchus has gone off to scrape up gifts, the stage is carefully set and the preparations perhaps include a seductive negligee. As the soldier enters he informs the audience by direct address not to expect the usual foolery of the braggart soldier from him; and indeed this soldier does not strut in the ordinary comic fashion, though a few mild jokes are admitted. The theme of Diniarchus is now fused with that of the soldier upon the entrance of the young gentleman's slaves bearing his gifts to Phronesium under the very eyes of the soldier. Nothing could better portray the soldier's enslavement; and after this scene has passed, we put little faith in his wrathful decision to remain aloof for a few days in order to bring Phronesium to her knees. At this point Strabax, the rustic young master of the truculent slave, comes on with money which he has purloined from his father for the woman whom he loves more than his mother (662). He is taken in with little ado, and immediately his slave reappears, no longer truculent and not with his old master, as we expected, but actually with his savings and a determination to take a fling at the type of life which is so attractive to his betters. Thus free and servile, weak and strong, all are here enslaved.

Diniarchus returns in the greatest elation over Phronesium's reception of his gifts and her invitation to rejoin her. The unexpected appearance of Strabax with far more money, however, has already changed Phronesium's situation and given her an actor for the role of the soldier's rival. So the maid keeps Diniarchus outside the house and regales him with a description of Strabax' enjoying the provisions which Diniarchus himself has lately furnished. Diniarchus is bitterly disillusioned. His futile protests before the house are interrupted by the episode with Callicles. No hint of Diniarchus' violation of Callicles' daughter has been given previously. But the dramatist here, as in the sudden change of the truculent slave, is not striving for surprise; he merely wishes to repress the minor phases of the play and maintain an effective unity.⁸⁶ This incident with Callicles is designed merely to illustrate the utter ruin of Diniarchus. After he learns that his lack of restraint has cost him so dearly, he is still unable to master his passions and to demand the child—discovered to be that of Callicles' daughter and himself—from Phronesium, who now comes on mildly intoxicated but still having far more self-mastery than her lovers, drunk or sober. With a view to securing her favors after his marriage, Diniarchus weakly allows her temporarily to retain the child in order to swindle the soldier. After this moral nihilism, the baseness of the soldier and Strabax in their final agreement to share Phronesium seems almost an anticlimax.