

THE *MATRONA* IN PLAUTUS

by

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(Under the direction of Dr. Mario Erasmo)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the characterizations of the *matronae* who appear in Plautus' plays and to challenge the assumption that Plautus' *matronae* are stock characters. The argument presented is that Plautus varied the characterization of his *matronae* to fit plot exigencies — thereby undermining the stereotypical description of them presented by other characters. Each *matrona* has specific dramaturgical functions and has been endowed by Plautus with characteristics that cause her to differ in some respect from the others. This assertion is defended through an examination of the characterizations of the following *matronae*: Cleustrata in the *Casina*, Artemona in the *Asinaria*, Dorippa in the *Mercator*, Matrona in the *Menaechmi*, Alcumena in the *Amphitruo*, Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria*, and Panegyris and her sister in the *Stichus*.

INDEX WORDS: Plautus, *matrona*, *uxor dotata*, *Casina*, *Asinaria*, *Mercator*, *Menaechmi*, *Amphitruo*, *Cistellaria*, *Stichus*.

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DEDICATION

To the glory of God.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the characterization of *matronae* in Plautus' plays. Through male characters within the plays, Plautus presents a stereotype of the *uxor dotata* — who is consistently described as a shrew by her husband. *Uxores dotatae* are also described harshly by bachelors and their depiction seems to indicate that there is a stock *matrona* character. My assertion is that Plautus' *matronae* are not merely types who fit the stereotypical descriptions of other characters. Plautus has given his *matronae* variety and specific dramaturgical functions. Their characterizations are dependent on the plots in which they appear and the characters with whom they are forced to interact (whose characterizations must likewise be considered a function of plot).

Since my focus is on *matronae* and the stereotype of the *uxor dotata*, it is important to consider what the realities were concerning marriage — and the wealth associated with women — in Plautus' time. I do not pretend to give an exhaustive study here of prevalent social conditions. Nor do I propose that Plautus' plays faithfully reflect actual social practices. Nonetheless, a brief investigation into the historical background will help us understand how the audience might have reacted to the situations displayed before them in the plays.

Roman Society

Plautus was writing during the conquests of the second Punic war — conquests that brought new wealth to Rome. During this period of wealth and peace, the *Lex Oppia* was repealed. This law, limiting the displays of wealth by women, had been passed by Gaius Oppius in 215 BC, while Hannibal was a threat to Rome.¹ According to Livy,

¹ Livy 34.1.3 [Evan T. Sage, trans., *Livy in Fourteen Volumes*, vol. 9 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961)].

under this law women could only possess a small amount of gold, could not wear purple, and could not be conveyed by carriage within one mile of the city, unless they were participating in a religious festival.² Within his account, Livy has invented speeches for both Cato, who opposed the repeal of the law, and Valerius, a tribune who supported its repeal. Cato considers the public gathering of the women, to request the law's repeal, disgraceful — and he insinuates in his speech that the women may have been prompted to do this by the tribunes.³ Although Valerius supports the women's actions, he concurs with Cato's opinion that men should control their wives.⁴

Livy's account is confusing because he seems to imply that the men did have control over their wives, yet he also asserts that the women could not be kept at home and that they personally prevented a veto of the repeal.⁵ It is impossible to determine whether the women protested of their own accord or whether they were encouraged or allowed to protest by their husbands. Both men and women may have had an interest in repealing the law. The display of wealth by women would also have been a display of the wealth of their men.⁶ The increase in wealth associated with women (evidenced in public displays and larger dowries) would have come with some increase in influence, belonging to them or to their men.

There were two types of marriage in Plautus' time — marriage *cum manu* conferred control of the wife, including her dowry or any possessions she might have, to her husband; marriage *sine manu* left the wife under the control of her *paterfamilias*. In either type of marriage, the level of control that the wife might have over her dowry and how it was used is unknown — and actual practices could very well have differed from

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. 34.2.6.

⁴ Cato advises controlling wives at 34.2.1; Valerius at 34.7.11-12.

⁵ Ibid. 34.1.5; 34.8.1-2.

⁶ Phyllis Culham, "The *Lex Oppia*," *Latomus* 41 (1982): 792.

legal prescriptions.⁷ Moore and Rei both argue that the husband's lack of control over the dowry in a marriage *sine manu* may have given increased leverage to the wife.⁸ Whether the dowry gave the wife influence over her husband or gave influence only to her male relatives is unknown. The dowered wife would have been either an active or passive participant in a financial interchange of which she was the means of conveying both money and connection.⁹

It is also not clear whether women at this time could initiate divorce, or if they needed a male relative to enact the divorce for them.¹⁰ Evidence for marriage and divorce in Plautus' time is scant — in fact, much of the information on these social institutions is derived from Plautus' plays. It may be impossible to extrapolate from the plays with any certainty what the legal realities may have been — and it is impossible to know what those realities were without considering the evidence found in comedy. What is clear is that the increase in wealth after the second Punic war would have meant an increase in the size of dowries, affecting both marriages and divorces. Plautus' audience would have understood this reality — and would have recognized perfectly the *uxor dotata* on stage.

Greek Predecessors

Roman comedy in general was adapted from Greek New Comedy. As such, its plots and story lines had their origins in Greek drama.¹¹ All of Plautus' plays are assumed to have Greek originals and Plautus names many of the original plays and

⁷ Alan Watson, *Roman Private Law around 200 BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 17-26. If there was no agreement prior to the marriage, the wife could sue for the return of a dowry conferred in a *sine manu* marriage through an *actio rei uxoriae*.

⁸ Timothy J. Moore, *The Theater of Plautus: Playing to the Audience* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 160; Annalisa Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, ed. Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel (New York: Routledge, 1998), 96. Rei argues that the woman was economically empowered by her dowry.

⁹ See Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 155; Rei, 93-94.

¹⁰ See Myles McDonnell, "Divorce Initiated by Women in Rome," *American Journal of Ancient History* 8 (1983): 54ff. McDonnell argues from Plautus that women needed parental assistance to divorce.

¹¹ E. J. Kenney, ed., *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 2, *Latin Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 79.

authors.¹² There are few extant plays from either Greek Old Comedy or New Comedy. Eleven of Aristophanes' plays survive, representing what is considered the end of Old Comedy and the beginning of Middle Comedy; only one of Menander's plays survives complete, with large fragments of six others, representing New Comedy.¹³ All other writers of comedy survive only in titles or fragments.

Aristophanes wrote three plays that centered around women: *Ecclesiazusae*, *Lysistrata*, and *Thesmophoriazusae* — but none of these plays has any trace of a comic wife stereotype. In other plays, like the *Acharnians*, the wife is forgotten and not part of the action of the play at all.¹⁴ A passage in the *Clouds*, however, gives evidence that in Old Comedy a rich or extravagant wife was not always a joy to her husband:

As you drift off to sleep, you forget,
that my debts will be your entire inheritance.
I wish I could find the matchmaker
who set me up with your mother and make her suffer.
I was a happy country boy, who didn't curl or comb his hair,
covered with honest dirt and sweat, rather than by expensive scents.
I made my own honey and cheese and olives,
rather than buying luxury foods and running into debt.
Instead of lying awake, worrying all night about getting sued,
I'd curl up and sleep under the stars with my ewes.
Then I married her, a niece of Megacles, son of Megacles,
a city girl, noble, sophisticated, and unbelievably extravagant.
She even smelled rich, as if she'd just returned
from Aphrodite's rituals, scented with incense,
perfumes, lotions, French kisses, and saffron silk.
And I was sleeping with her, a farmer, stinking
of rotgut wine and figs and goats and sour milk.
Like a good farmer's wife, she'd make her clothes,

¹² Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1195. Plautus is known to have adapted plays from Menander, Diphilus, Philemon, and Demophilus.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 164, 367-371, 956.

¹⁴ See Erich Segal, *The Death of Comedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 54, 55, 61.

but with gold thread and saffron-dyed cloth.
I lost money with every inch she wove.¹⁵

This passage is very similar to speeches in Plautus against dowered wives.¹⁶

Menander's surviving play and fragments give very little evidence of a married female stereotype. In fact, very few married women appear on stage in Menander — Segal describes the women of Menander's plays as either virgins or prostitutes.¹⁷

There is some slight evidence that the treatment of married women in Greek New Comedy may have been similar to what we find in Plautus. Gellius quotes some fragments of Menander's *Plokion* in a comparison with Caecilius.¹⁸ One fragment of the *Plokion* contains a husband's complaint about his rich, unattractive, domineering wife:

So now my lovely heiress can go to sleep on both cheeks. She has done a doughty deed which will make a big noise everywhere; she has cast out of the house the girl she wanted to, one who provoked her, so that the whole neighborhood may gaze on the face of, why — Crobyle, and that she, my illustrious wife, may be a tyrant over me. As for the looks which she got herself, well, she's an ass amongst apes, as the saying is. I'd rather say nothing about the night which was the prime cause of many troubles. Oh! Damn it! That I should have chosen to marry Crobyle with a dowry of sixteen talents and a nose a yard long! And besides, is her snortiness by any means to be put up with? No! By Zeus in heaven and by Athena, not at all! And the little serving girl must be led away before you can say a word.¹⁹

Italian Influences

The first Roman play was written by Livius Andronicus in 240 BC.²⁰ The beginnings of Roman Drama, however, are largely unknown. Even the ancient sources

¹⁵ This translation is from David R. Slavitt and Palmer Bovie, eds., *Aristophanes*, vol. 3, *The Suits, Clouds, Birds* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 99-100.

¹⁶ See the speeches of Megadorus and Periplectomenes, translated below (pp. 12-17).

¹⁷ Segal, *Death of Comedy*, 154.

¹⁸ See the section on Caecilius Statius in this chapter (pp. 10-11).

¹⁹ This translation is found in E. H. Warmington, trans., *Remains of Old Latin*, vol. 1, *Ennius and Caecilius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 519.

²⁰ Livy 7.2 [B. O. Foster, trans., *Livy in Fourteen Volumes*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 362]; Valerius Maximus 2.4.4 [D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Valerius Maximus: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 152, 154].

that remain knew little about its earliest developments.²¹ It is apparent that there were some early forms of drama that consisted mainly of rude jesting and comical banter. These Fescinnine verses probably originated at wedding festivals and harvest time celebrations — they were also used as invective and were abusive, obscene, and probably improvised.²² Linked with these were perhaps some other forms of drama, like the *satura*, but nothing of them survives.²³ These native traditions, though largely unknowable, did become part of more enduring forms of drama, the mime and Atellane farce.

Mime

The mime was included in the Roman holiday calendar as part of the *Floralia*. The celebration of the *Floralia* began around 239-238 BC and the mime may have started then, but the festival did not become annual until 173 BC.²⁴ Mime was originally “sub-literary” and improvisational in form, unscripted and plotless.²⁵ The mime did not become literary until the first century BC when Decimus Laberius and Publilius Syrus wrote the first literary mimes.²⁶ Coming, as they did, after the heyday of Roman Comedy, and more than one hundred years after Plautus, these literary mimes are hardly valid as evidence of early, pre-literary mime. They were in all likelihood influenced by the *palliata*, Roman comedy in Greek dress, and may have borrowed from Roman comedy.²⁷ There are some fragments of mime from the mid-first century BC written by Publilius Syrus which address wives and womanly behavior in the form of *sententiae*. For

²¹ Kenney, 78.

²² Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 8; see also W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 3d ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1964), 25; Kenney, 78; Hornblower and Spawforth, 371.

²³ Beare, *Roman Stage*, 19-23; Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 8.

²⁴ Richard C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and Its Audience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 129; Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 13-14.

²⁵ Beare, *Roman Stage*, 152; Richard C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 9.

²⁶ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 14; Kenney, 293.

²⁷ R. Elaine Fantham, “Mime: The Missing Link in Roman Literary History,” *Classical World* 82 (1989): 159.

example:²⁸

casta ad virum matrona parendo imperat (Frag. 108)

the matron chaste to her husband rules by obeying

mulier cum sola cogitat male cogitat (Frag. 376)

when a woman thinks alone, she thinks badly

obsequio nuptae cito fit odium paelicis (Frag. 492)

with the compliance of a bride, hatred for mistresses comes quickly

However, it is impossible to say whether the sayings were indicative of early mime or indicative of mime influenced by Plautus and the other writers of *palliata*.

The main themes of mime were urban scenes from everyday life that were obscene, included women actors, and often centered around sex. Plots may have involved cheating, tricks, and adultery and included song and dance. No masks were worn by the actors and this may have been one reason that the mime did not include stock characters.²⁹

Fabula Atellana

Another precursor to Roman Comedy was the *fabula Atellana*, or Atellane Farce. This form of drama, like the mime, did not become literary until the first century BC with the writings of Pomponius and Novius.³⁰ The Atellane farce probably existed for some time before this, but there are no literary records or any indication that the farces were written before this time.³¹ Some of the same motifs are found in the Atellane fragments as are found in the *palliata*³² and it is probable that the literary Atellane farces were influenced by comedy as much as the earlier *fabula Atellana* may have influenced the *fabula palliata*.³³

²⁸ Quotations are from J. Wight Duff and Arnold M. Duff, trans., *Minor Latin Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935). Translations are my own. Other fragments addressing wives and women are: 6, 217, 365, 381, and 384.

²⁹ Beacham, *Roman Theatre*, 129-130; Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments*, 9; Beare, *Roman Stage*, 150; Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 14, 15; Fantham, "Mime," 153-155; Kenney, 293.

³⁰ Kenney, 293; Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 10.

³¹ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 12.

³² Hornblower and Spawforth, 200.

³³ Ibid., 371; Beare, *Roman Stage*, 142.

Duckworth proposed that Plautus may have acted in the Atellane farces before becoming a writer of the *palliata*.³⁴ Gratwick asserts that Plautus' characters are simply farce types from the *Atellana* in Greek dress.³⁵ Plautus' type of humor and the characters that he used may indeed have been influenced by the schemes and characters of the *fabula Atellana*.³⁶ The Atellane focus on character roles may have influenced Plautus in his focus on the roles of some characters.³⁷

The *fabula Atellana* consisted mainly of plots with stereotyped characters. The themes were rustic and unscripted, relying on improvisation and stock plot lines.³⁸ The plots were more than likely obscene and dealt with trickery and deceit.³⁹ There were four main stock personae⁴⁰ and masks⁴¹ were worn by the actors to indicate which stock character they were portraying. Some fragments do survive from Pomponius and Novius, including two "*dotata*" titles from Pomponius and two fragments mentioning dowries from Novius.⁴² Again, since these fragments were written one hundred years after Plautus, it is not clear whether Atellane farce influenced Plautus' characterization or if the literary farce was influenced by the *palliata* tradition.

³⁴ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 50. Duckworth makes this proposal based on the similarity between the stock character name *Maccus*, "Clown," in Atellane farce and Plautus' uncommon *nomen*, *Maccius*.

³⁵ Adrian S. Gratwick, ed., *Plautus: Menaechmi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.

³⁶ Hornblower and Spawforth, 1195.

³⁷ See, for example, Duckworth's discussion of the character of Lysidamus [George E. Duckworth, "The Unnamed Characters in the Plays of Plautus," *Classical Philology* 33 (1938): 281]. It is thought that Plautus' characters are derived simply from the characters of Atellane farce, but that Plautus broke from the Atellane tradition by giving his characters individual names [Kenney, 104].

³⁸ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments*, 10; Beare, *Roman Stage*, 137.

³⁹ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 11.

⁴⁰ Hornblower and Spawforth, 200. The stock characters were: "Bucco ('the fool'), Dossennus ('the glutton'), Maccus ('the clown'), . . . Pappus ('the old gaffer')."

⁴¹ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments*, 10; Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 11.

⁴² Paolo Frassinetti, *Fabularum Atellanarum Fragmenta* (Torino: G. B. Paravia & Co., 1955). The fragments in question can be found on the following pages: 11, 51, 68, 69.

Other Writers of the Palliata

Several writers of *comoedia palliata* wrote before or at the same time as Plautus, though their works are fragmentary at best. What survives of most of them are very few titles and fragments, though Volcacius Sedigitus did make a list of names of the main authors.⁴³ These authors, along with Plautus, apparently were working in a “well-established, conventional comic style.”⁴⁴ Following are brief descriptions of three of the most important writers of the *palliata* and what evidence, if any, their fragments contain of a *matrona* stereotype.

Livius Andronicus

Livius Andronicus is credited with writing the first Roman play with a plot in 240 BC. He spoke Greek and was probably greatly influenced by Greek forms of drama.⁴⁵ Of his works, only 12 titles and 50 fragments remain.⁴⁶ Of those fragments, only 6 are from comedies, none longer than 7 words long.⁴⁷ None of these extant fragments refer to *matronae*.⁴⁸ Though influenced by Greek drama, Livius, as Plautus, may have incorporated some of the stylistic features of native Italian drama into his plays.

Naeivius

Naeivius, a contemporary of Plautus, also seems to have employed features of native Italian drama in his adaptations.⁴⁹ As an older contemporary, he may have

⁴³ John Wright, *Dancing in Chains: The Stylistic Unity of the Comoedia Palliata* (American Academy in Rome, 1974). A discussion of the authors on Volcacius Sedigitus' list and the fragments of them that remain can be found on pages 63-81.

⁴⁴ Wright, 59.

⁴⁵ W. Thomas MacCary and M. M. Willcock, eds., *Plautus: Casina* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 10.

⁴⁶ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 39.

⁴⁷ Wright, 16.

⁴⁸ The fragments of Livius Andronicus can be found in E. H. Warmington, trans., *Remains of Old Latin*, vol. 2, *Livius Andronicus, Naeivius, Pacuvius and Accius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁴⁹ Kenney, 93.

influenced Plautus. More fragments of Naevius remain (30 titles and 150 fragments)⁵⁰ and he seems to have developed several stock characters in his works.⁵¹ However, the stock type of the *matrona* or *uxor dotata* is not found among the extant fragments and it is unclear if that stock type appeared in Naevius' comedies.

Caecilius Statius

Caecilius Statius was the leading comic writer after Plautus.⁵² Although he was a younger contemporary of Plautus and thus did not have direct influence over Plautus' writing, he is interesting for the fragments that remain of his *Plocium*. He freely adapted his Greek models,⁵³ as Plautus did, and there is some evidence that he employed a stereotype of *matronae* similar to the one depicted in Plautus. The two relevant fragments contain a married man's complaints about his dowered wife. Gellius sets these fragments in a comparison of Menander's brilliance and Caecilius' lack of skill.⁵⁴

In the first passage the husband longs for his wife to be dead: "*ego eius mortem inhio*" (*Ploc.* 141), "I long for her death."⁵⁵ This sentiment is common to the husbands in Plautus who describe their wives as shrews. The second passage is a conversation between the husband (A) and a friend (B) concerning his wife's temperament and bad breath:

(B): *Sed tua morosane uxor quaeso est?* (A): *Va!*
Rogas?
(B): *Quin tandem?* (A): *Taedet mentionis quae mihi*
ubi domum adveni, adsedi, extemplo savium
dat ieiuna anima. (*Ploc.* 151-154)
(B): But, I ask, is your wife crabby? (A): Oh!

⁵⁰ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 41. For Naevius' fragments, see Warmington, *Remains*, vol. 2.

⁵¹ Wright, 53.

⁵² Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 46.

⁵³ Hornblower and Spawforth, 270.

⁵⁴ Warmington, *Remains*, vol. 1, 516-523.

⁵⁵ This quote and the one following are from Warmington, *Remains*, vol. 1. The translations are my own.

You ask?

(B): Why not, then? (A): The mention of her irks me, she who when I have come home, sat down, immediately gives me a kiss with fasting breath.⁵⁶

This passage is similar to Plautus' *Asin.* 893-895 and is reflective of the husband's description of his shrewish wife as unattractive.

Although Caecilius presents descriptions of wives similar to those we see in Plautus, it is clear that the fragmentary evidence does not give us much by way of a generally accepted *matrona* stereotype before Plautus. Therefore, we must derive the bulk of our understanding of the stereotype from Plautus himself. Since his surviving works are mostly complete, they offer the best opportunity for evaluation.

The Matrona Stereotype in Plautus

Many dismiss the *matronae* of Plautus as mere stock types. They describe them as angry,⁵⁷ unattractive and defeminized,⁵⁸ stubborn and vain⁵⁹ — all because of their dowries.⁶⁰ Segal describes Plautus' *matronae* as “nothing but a parade of untamed shrews” — “the antithesis of Creusa and Cornelia.”⁶¹ Duckworth does not classify all of the wives in Plautus as shrews, but many — noting that these shrews are the dowered

⁵⁶ This would be breath made foul by not eating.

⁵⁷ Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 23.

⁵⁸ Rei, 96.

⁵⁹ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 283.

⁶⁰ Other authors who mention the dowry system in relation to the description of *matronae* are: David Konstan, *Roman Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 44; Kathleen McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 70; and Moore, 159.

⁶¹ Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 25, 22.

wives.⁶² The *uxor dotata* has become the stock type.⁶³ This does not include all of the wives in Plautus — there are those that act as a contrast to the dowered wife.⁶⁴

I believe that Moore has hit upon something necessary to our consideration of Plautus' *matronae* when he notes that those *matronae* portrayed favorably in the plays are under their husband's control.⁶⁵ There is, essentially, a division in the characterization of *matronae* based on money and who controls it. The stereotype is twofold. There are those *matronae* who are not under their husband's control — the *uxores dotatae*; and those *matronae* who are under their husband's control — the *uxores indotatae*, those not depicted as dowered. The primary qualification for characterization as a shrew is the dowry. Those wives not depicted as shrews are never described as dowered and those wives described as dowered are always depicted as shrews.

The speeches of Megadorus in the *Aulularia* give an idea of some of the troubles that supposedly come with a dowered wife. In his opinion, there is a contrast between a wife who brings a dowry and one who does not in the obedience she shows to her husband. The dowered wife is seen to impoverish and control her husband, in contrast to the poor wife who obeys and submits to her husband:

*istas magnas factiones, animos, dotes dapsilis,
clamores, imperia, eburata vehicla, pallas, purpuram
nil moror, quae in servitutem sumptibus redigunt viros. (Aul. 167-169)*⁶⁶
I care nothing for those great companies of theirs, their dispositions,

⁶² Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 255-256.

⁶³ See also the discussion in Hunter [R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 91-92] on the *uxor dotata* as a stock character.

⁶⁴ Duckworth [Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 256-257] notes that there are wives portrayed sympathetically in Plautus. Even Segal [Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 22] is forced to admit that not all wives fall under his harsh generalization. The wives they consider sympathetic will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁶⁵ Moore, 159.

⁶⁶ This and all following quotations come from W. M. Lindsay, ed., *T Macci Plauti: Comoediae*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and vol. 2 (1959), unless otherwise noted. The translations are my own.

costly dowries, shouts, commands, ivory vehicles, dresses, purple, things which reduce their husbands to slavery by their expenses.

*nam meo quidem animo si idem faciant ceteri
opulentiores, pauperiorum filias
ut indotatas ducant uxores domum,
et multo fiat civitas concordior,
et invidia nos minore utamur quam utimur,
et illae malam rem metuant quam metuunt magis,
et nos minore sumptu simus quam sumus.
in maxumam illuc populi partem est optimum;
in pauciores avidos altercatio est,
quorum animis avidis atque insatietatibus
neque lex neque sutor capere est qui possit modum.
namque hoc qui dicat 'quo illae nubent divites
dotatae, si istuc ius pauperibus ponitur?'
quo lubeant nubant, dum dos ne fiat comes.
hoc si ita fiat, mores meliores sibi
parent, pro dote quos ferant, quam nunc ferunt (Aul. 478-495)
for indeed, in my opinion, if other rather rich men would
do the same, so that they marry daughters
of the rather poor, undowered wives,
both the state would become more harmonious by much,
and we would experience less jealousy than we do,
and they (the wives) would fear trouble more than they do,
and we would be at less expense than we are.
for the most part of the people, that is the best;
the dispute is among the fewer greedy ones,
for whose greedy minds and insatiable desires
there is neither law nor shoemaker who can take their measure.
for surely someone would say this 'whom will those rich
dowered ones marry, if that law is placed for the poor?'
let them marry whom they please, as long as their dowry
does not become their companion.
if this is done in that way, better behavior in itself would be evident,
which they would bring in place of the dowry that they bring now
*nunc quoquo venias plus plaustorum in aedibus
videas quam ruri, quando ad villam veneris.**

sed hoc etiam pulchrum est praequam ubi sumptus petunt.
stat fullo, phyrigio, aurufex, lanarius;
caupones, patagiarii, indusiarii,
flammarii, violarii, carinarii;
aut manulearii, aut murobatharii,
propolae linteones, calceolarii;
sedentarii sutores diabathrarii,
solearii astant, astant molocinarii;
petunt fullones, sarcinatores petunt;
stropharii astant, astant semul zonarii.
iam hosce apsolutos censeas: cedunt, petunt
treceni, quom stant thylacistae in atriis
textores limbularii, arcularii.
ducuntur, datur aes. iam apsolutos censeas,
quom incedunt infectores corcotarii,
aut aliqua mala crux semper est quae aliquid petat.

.....
ubi nugigerulis res soluta est omnibus,
ibi ad postremum cedit miles, aes petit.
itur, putatur ratio cum argentario;
miles inpransus astat, aes censet dari.
ubi disputata est ratio cum argentario,
etiam ipse ultro debet argentario:
spes prorogatur militi in alium diem.
haec sunt atque aliae multae in magnis dotibus
incommoditates sumptusque intolerabiles.
nam quae indotata est, ea in potestate est viri;
dotatae mactant et malo et damno viros. (Aul. 505-522, 525-535)⁶⁷

now wherever you may come, you see more wagons at houses
 than in the country when you've come to a farmhouse.
 but this is even handsome in comparison to when they seek expenses.
 the fuller stands by,⁶⁸ the embroiderer, the goldsmith, the woolworker;
 innkeepers, fringe makers, cloth makers,
 makers of veils, dyers of violet, dyers of yellow;

⁶⁷ This passage mentions the extravagances restricted by the *Lex Oppia*: carriages, gold, and multi-colored garments (See discussion above, pp. 1-2).

⁶⁸ The various individuals listed stand around the house expecting payment.

either sleeve makers, or makers of perfumed baths,⁶⁹
 linen-weaver retailers, boot makers;
 sedentary shoemaker cobblers,
 sandal makers stand by, grinders stand by;
 fullers demand, patchers demand;
 bra makers stand by, girdle makers stand by at the same time.
 now you may think that these here are paid off: they yield,
 three hundred tassel makers, jewel box makers demand (payment),
 when as prison wardens they stand in your halls.
 they are led in, money is given. now you think they're paid off,
 when in come dyers of saffron,
 or there is always some bad tormentor who is looking for something.

 when the matter is settled with all the ladies apparel sellers,
 there finally the soldier walks along, he's looking for money.
 there's a going, the account is considered with the banker;
 the soldier stands by without lunch, he thinks the money will be given.
 when the account is disputed with the banker,
 the master also owes the banker to boot:
 hope for the soldier is put off for another day.
 these and many others are the inconveniences
 in large dowries and unbearable expenses.
 for she who is undowered is in the power of her husband;
 the dowered destroy their husbands both with hardship and loss.

One of the more important descriptions of shrewish wives, related to the importance of the dowry, is that they are so concerned about money and are often accused of driving their husbands to poverty. The *Miles Gloriosus* has a passage similar to Megadorus' outpouring, in which Periplectomenes, an older man, gives his reasons for remaining a bachelor:⁷⁰

nam mihi, deum virtute dicam, propter divitias meas
licuit uxorem dotatam genere summo ducere;
sed nolo mi oblatratricem in aedis intro mittere.

⁶⁹ *Murobatharii* is a nonce word. Nixon translates it as "dealers in . . . balsam scented foot-gear" [Paul Nixon, trans., *Plautus*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997)].

⁷⁰ There is yet another similar speech in the *Epidicus* (lines 222-235); it is referring, however, not to a wife, but to a girl loved by the young hero of the play — showing that at least this aspect of the stereotype could extend to other women as well.

.....
*nam bona uxor suave ductust, si sit usquam gentium
 ubi ea possit inveniri; verum egone eam ducam domum
 quae mihi numquam hoc dicat 'eme, mi vir, lanam, und'
 tibi pallium
 malacum et calidum conficiatur tunicaeque hibernae bonae,
 ne algeas hac hieme' (hoc numquam verbum ex uxore
 audias),
 verum priu' quam galli cantent quae me e somno suscitet,
 dicat 'da, mi vir, calendis meam qui matrem moenerem,
 da qui faciam condimenta, da quod dem quinquatrubus
 praecantrici, coniectrici, hariolae atque haruspicae;
 flagitiumst si nihil mittetur quae supercilio spicit;
 tum plicatricem clementer non potest quin moenerem;
 iam pridem, quia nihil apstulerit, suscenset ceriaria;
 tum opstetrix expostulavit mecum, parum missum sibi;
 quid? nutrici non missuru's quicquam quae vernas alit?'
 haec atque huius similia alia damna multa mulierum
 me uxore prohibent, mihi quae huius similis sermones
 sera[n]t. (Miles 679-681, 685-700)*

for, on account of my wealth, thanks to the gods I will speak,
 it would be permitted for me to marry a dowered wife from the highest
 class;

but I don't want to send inside into my house a nagging woman.

.....
 for a good wife having been married is agreeable, if there is anywhere
 in the world where one can be found; but will I marry one
 who will never say this to me 'buy wool, my husband, from which
 a soft and warm
 cloak for you could be made and good winter tunics,
 lest you be cold this winter' (you'd never hear this saying from a wife)
 but before the roosters crow she would wake me up from sleep,
 she'd say 'give, my husband, that I might honor my mother with
 something on the first of the month,
 give that I might grant spices to her, give something I could offer at
 the festival of Minerva
 to the enchantress, the dream interpreter, the fortuneteller, and the
 soothsayer;

it's a shame if nothing is sent to the one who foresees from the eyebrow;
 then it is not possible but that I kindly reward the clothes folder;
 long since, because she has obtained nothing, the wax maker is enraged;
 then the midwife has lodged a complaint with me, that too little has been
 sent to her;
 what? will you not send something to the nurse who nurses your home-
 born slaves?'
 these and many other similar losses keep me away from a wife
 from these women, who would compose speeches like this for me.

There are many other characteristics of shrews in Plautus. Not all characteristics are presented in each *matrona* who is described as a shrew, but a general pattern can be seen. Shrews are described as angry, nagging, and fearsome. In the *Casina*, Lysidamus refers to quarrels with his wife Cleustrata as a daily affair: *relinque aliquantum orationis, cras quod mecum litiges* (*Cas.* 251), "leave some of your speech, because you'll fight with me tomorrow." Demaenetus in the *Asinaria* describes his wife's disposition in this way: *fateor eam esse inportunam atque incommodam* (*Asin.* 62), "I confess that she is ruthless and disagreeable." Daemones in the *Rudens*, whose wife never appears in the play, is afraid of what his wife might do if she catches him with two slave girls: *metuo propter vos ne uxor mea me extrudat aedibus* (*Rud.* 1046), "I'm afraid lest my wife throw me out on account of you." Lysimachus in the *Mercator* expresses a similar fear when he harbors a slave girl for his neighbor: *metuo ego uxorem, cras si rure redierit / ne illam hic offendat* (*Merc.* 585-586), "I'm afraid of my wife, if she should return from the country tomorrow/ lest she bump into her here."

In addition to a fearful disposition, shrewish wives are also described as suspicious. Daemones' wife in the *Rudens* keeps a close eye on her husband:

*sed uxor scelestas me omnibus servat modis,
 ne quid significem quippiam mulierculis.* (*Rud.* 895-896)
 but my wicked wife watches over me in every way,
 so that I can't make any kind of sign to the 'little women.'

Menaechmus in the *Menaechmi* scolds his wife directly for her suspicious questioning:

*nam quotiens foras ire volo, me retines, revocas, rogitas,
quo ego eam, quam rem agam, quid negoti geram,
quid petam, quid feram, quid foris egerim. (Men. 114-116)*

for whenever I want to go out, you hold me back, call me back, question,
where am I going, what am I doing, what business am I attending to,
what am I looking for, what am I carrying, what have I done outside.

Dorippa in the *Mercator* comes out and states her suspicions directly and acts on them:

*Quoniam a viro ad me rus advenit nuntius
rus non iturum, feci ego ingenium meum,
reveni, ut illum persequar qui me fugit. (Merc. 667-669)*

Since a message came to me in the country from my husband
that he would not go into the country, I made up my mind,
I returned, so that I might follow that one who flees me.

Cleustrata in the *Casina* also makes it clear that she is suspicious when she questions her husband:

*CL: unde is, nihili? ubi fuisti? ubi lustratu's? ubi bibisti?
mades, mi castor: vide palliolum ut rugat! (Cas. 245-246)*

CL: where are you going, good for nothing? where have you
been? what brothel have you frequented? where have
you been drinking?

you're drunk, by Castor: look at your cloak how it's wrinkled!

Husbands also complain that their shrewish wives exhibit an authority in their households that diminishes the authority of their husbands. Lysidamus in the *Casina* confesses that his wife has power — to which he must submit: *patiundum est, siquidem me vivo mea uxor imperium exhibet (Cas. 409)*, “It must be suffered, if in fact my wife displays her power while I’m living.” Demaenetus in the *Asinaria* also bemoans his wife’s authority: *argentum accepi, dote imperium vendidi. (Asin. 88)*, “I received the silver, I sold my authority for a dowry.”⁷¹

⁷¹ See the brief discussion on dowry concerns above (pp. 2-3). If a marriage was *sine manu* (as it likely would have been if the dowry was large), control of the the wife would have ultimately rested with her family. The husband had use of the dowry, but it would usually have to be returned in the event of a divorce. So, technically speaking, Demaenetus did “sell his authority” — he could use the dowry, but his wife was not his to control.

Husbands also describe shrewish wives as unattractive. Demaenetus in the *Asinaria* makes rude comments about his wife's breath to the prostitute Philaenium:⁷²

DE: *edepol animam suaviorem aliquanto quam uxoris meae.*

PH: *dic amabo, an foetet anima uxoris tuae?* DE: *nauteam bibere malim, si necessum sit, quam illam oscularier.* (*Asin.* 893-895)

DE: by Pollux (your) breath is rather more agreeable than my wife's.

PH: please tell me, does your wife's breath stink? DE: I would prefer to drink bilge water, if it were necessary, than kiss her.

Olympio in the *Casina*, commiserating with his master concerning the latter's wife, refers to Cleustrata as a dog: *dies atque noctes cum cane aetatem exigis* (*Cas.* 320), "you live out your life, days and nights, with a dog." Simo, an old man in the *Mostellaria*, would rather leave home for a while than go to bed with his wife:

quom magis cogito cum meo animo:

si qui' dotatam uxorem atque anum habet,

neminem sollicitat sopor: [in] omnibus

ire dormitum odio est, velut nunc mihi

exsequi certa res est ut abeam

potius hinc ad forum quam domi cubem. (*Most.* 702-707)

now that I think about it more in my mind:

if one has a dowered wife, and an old one,

sleep tempts no one: in every way

it is hateful to go to bed, just as now for me

it is a certain thing to say that I'm going out

to the forum from here rather than lie down at home.

Husbands often wish for the quick demise of their shrewish wives. In the *Casina*, Lysidamus wishes for his wife's death several times:⁷³

sed uxor me excruciat, quia vivit. (*Cas.* 227)

but my wife torments me, since she lives.

⁷² Compare to the passage from Caecilius quoted earlier (p. 11).

⁷³ In addition to the two passages quoted here, see *Cas.* 354-356, quoted below (p. 27).

ego edepol illam mediam dirruptam velim. (Cas. 326)

by Pollux I wish she'd burst in the middle.

Demaenetus in the *Asinaria* also wishes for the passing of his wife in a conversation with his son Argyrrius: ARG: *quid quom adest?* DE: *periisse cupio* (*Asin.* 901), "ARG: what about when she is here? DE: I wish her dead." Even the bachelor Megadorus in a conversation with his sister in the *Aulularia* wishes for his wife's death — if he had a wife:

sed his legibu' si quam dare vis, ducam:

quae cras veniat, perendie, soror, foras feratur (*Aul.* 155-156)

but with these conditions I will marry, if there's anyone you wish to give:
she who comes tomorrow, on the day after tomorrow, sister,
may she be carried out (for burial)

These are the characteristics of the stereotype that scholars seem to have in mind when they refer to the *matronae* of Plautus as stock characters. It is the picture of the *uxor dotata* that prevails. Other wives in Plautus, for example Alcumena in the *Amphitruo* and the wives in the *Stichus*, are referred to in passing as "different."⁷⁴ The stereotype is based on the wives who are described as shrews by their husbands. Yet the characterization of the other wives in Plautus is also important. They form the point of comparison for the shrewish wives — if they play the part of good and obedient wives, they in some way justify the stereotyping of the shrews. In a way, they become a separate stereotype — loving, dutiful wives who are not shrewish. Each stereotype is a counterpart to the other. Husbands attribute certain characteristics to wives they describe as shrews; other wives are not shrews because these characteristics are not attributed to them. If the wives described as shrews do not fit other characters' descriptions, but have varying characterizations dependent on dramaturgical considerations — then this also must be true of wives who are not described as shrews. The characterizations of all of Plautus' *matronae* must be dependent on the necessities of plot if the stereotypical descriptions of them by other characters is to be proven invalid.

⁷⁴ See for example Segal's concession [Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 22] which I have already mentioned.

It is important to remember that the description of these wives as shrews comes mainly from their husbands. It is the purpose of this thesis to determine if Plautus' characterization of the *matronae* through their actions and words supports their husbands' characterization. In the two chapters that follow I will evaluate the characterizations of the major *matronae* in Plautus' plays. In Chapter Two, I will evaluate the characterization and dramaturgical functions of those *matronae* described as shrews by other characters (usually male characters) within the plays: Cleustrata in the *Casina*, Artemona in the *Asinaria*, Dorippa in the *Mercator*, and Matrona in the *Menaechmi*. In Chapter Three, I will evaluate those *matronae* not described within their plays as shrews: Alcumena in the *Amphitruo*, Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria*, and Panegyris and her sister in the *Stichus*.⁷⁵ In each chapter, I begin with the *matrona* whose characterization is the most important for my argument. My argument, again, is that the characterizations of the *matronae* approach individuality and the dramaturgical functions that each fulfills subvert the stereotype so presented.

⁷⁵ I do leave out two *matronae*: Myrrhina in the *Casina* and Eunomia in the *Aulularia*. I do mention Myrrhina in connection with Cleustrata in my evaluation of the latter. Myrrhina's character is secondary, a helper to her neighbor, and as such her characterization in many ways echoes the fuller characterization seen in Cleustrata. Eunomia is also secondary and, while she is undoubtedly a *matrona*, she is portrayed only as a mother and sister, not as a wife, and so is not relevant to the present discussion.

CHAPTER 2

MATRONAE IN LOVE TRIANGLE/ SENEX AMATOR PLAYS

Many of Plautus' plays include a stereotypical description of the *matrona* as a shrew, an *uxor dotata* who controls the house and her husband, even those plays in which no *matrona* appears as a main character and as the butt of a husband's jokes.¹ But it is nowhere more prominent than in those plays that center around a *senex amator* or adulterous husband. This stock situation of comedy — a wife standing in the way of her husband's extramarital amorous pursuits — calls for a stock depiction of that wife as a shrew, at least in the eyes of her husband. It is my purpose to show that even these *matronae* who are supposed to embody this stereotype vary considerably and so argue against that very stereotype they are supposed to represent. Plautus presents each *matrona* in the following discussion not as a simple stereotype, but to perform specific dramaturgical functions within the play.

Casina

The *Casina* has, in the character of Lysidamus, possibly the most reprobate *senex amator* in all of Plautus' plays.² In fact, Duckworth argues that this character has no given name in the text because he is the epitome of the lecherous *senex*.³ It is interesting, then, that this play also has, in the character of Cleustrata, possibly the least shrewish *matrona* of those in this stock situation.

Cleustrata is initially presented as the comic shrew that the audience might expect. Her entrance shows that she is in charge of the house and its provisions. She orders the

¹ See for example Megadorus' soliloquy quoted in Chapter One (pp. 12-15).

² W. E. Forehand, "Plautus' *Casina*: An Explication," *Arethusa* 6 (1973): 240-241.

³ Duckworth, "Unnamed Characters," 280. The name Lysidamus appears in scene headings, but not in the text. Duckworth argues: "It seems inconceivable that Plautus should have assigned a name to such a prominent character and yet never mention the name in the text."

closing and sealing of the storage rooms and maintains possession of the seal for herself: *Opsignate cellas, referte anulum ad me* (Cas. 144), “Seal the storerooms, bring back the ring to me.” Her subsequent speech shows that she has another motive besides good housekeeping in guarding the possession of the storeroom key. She is in opposition to her husband’s needs and desires — she will not prepare his lunch and she will punish him by all means within her reach:

neque paro neque hodie coquetur (Cas. 150)

I will neither prepare it nor will it be cooked

ego illum fame, ego illum siti,

maledictis, malefactis amatorem ulciscar (Cas. 155-156)

I will punish him with hunger, I will punish him

with thirst, I will punish the lover with insults, with injuries

Cleustrata here is “very much the stock comic shrew,”⁴ and her use of household power is characteristic of the *uxor dotata* stereotype. This entrance plays to what the audience might expect — “that she will present the role of the archetypal comic shrewish wife.”⁵ The comic shrew was the antagonist, the force against the pleasure and frivolity embodied in her husband, the *senex amator*. Introducing Cleustrata in this way leads the audience to accept her as the antagonist, the force of opposition.⁶

The audience’s initial impression of Cleustrata as a figure of opposition proves correct. She is in direct and constant opposition to her husband throughout the play. When she finds out that he wants her to call Myrrhina over so that the house next door can be empty for his debauchery, her reaction is immediate: *nunc adeo nequaquam arcessam* (Cas. 534), “now I will truly by no means summon (her).” Her participation in the lot scene and the surrogate fighting of the two slaves⁷ is a vivid portrayal of the

⁴ Moore, 168.

⁵ Beacham, *Roman Theatre*, 93.

⁶ William S. Anderson, *Barbarian Play: Plautus’ Roman Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 57.

⁷ See lines 353-409.

“antagonism” between her and her husband.⁸ She is determined to put an end to his schemes. But her speech and actions are not the “impulsive” actions of a shrew. Although her measure of control of the house suggests that she is an *uxor dotata*, and some scholars state that she is a dowered wife,⁹ none of the usual references¹⁰ to wealth or dowered status occur anywhere in the play. In fact, an immediate clue to her true status comes in the ensuing conversation with her neighbor Myrrhina. Myrrhina’s reference to a husband’s control over property and the threat of divorce seem to indicate that Cleustrata’s marriage is *cum manu* — in other words, all the power is her husband’s:¹¹

hoc viri censeo esse omne quidquid tuum est. (Cas. 202)

I think this: that whatever is yours is your husband’s.

semper tu huic verbo vitato apud tuo viro . . .

i foras, mulier. (Cas. 210, 212)

you should always avoid this saying from your husband . . .

go out, woman.

Myrrhina’s entrance seems to reinforce Cleustrata’s continuing characterization as a shrew. Myrrhina’s concerns and worries center around hearth and home, in marked contrast to Cleustrata’s concerns. Myrrhina’s reason (given to her slaves) for her visit to Cleustrata is one that shows her concern for her work and surely would have been pleasing to her husband: *nam ubi domi sola sum, sopor manus caluitur. (Cas. 168-169)*, “for when I am alone at home, sleep empties my hands (of my work¹²).” This is in sharp contrast to Cleustrata’s reason for visiting Myrrhina — to complain to her friend and to find some sympathy for her plight.¹³

⁸ Anderson, 55.

⁹ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 255-256; Elisabeth Shuhmann, “Der Typ der *uxor dotata* im den Komodien des Plautus,” *Philologus* 121 (1977): 48-49.

¹⁰ See for example *Asin.* 87

¹¹ Rei, 98, 102; See also Moore, 170.

¹² It is clear from the next line that Myrrhina is referring to work: *iussin colum ferri mihi? (Cas. 170)*, “didn’t I order that my distaff be brought to me?”

¹³ Moore, 168.

Cleustrata complains to Myrrhina about her bad marriage:

ita solent omnes quae sunt male nuptae (Cas. 174)
thus are all accustomed (to be) who are badly married
vir me habet pessumis despiciatam modis,
nec mihi ius meum optinendi optio est. (Cas. 189-190)
my husband holds me in contempt in the worst ways,
nor is there a chance for me to obtain my right.

Myrrhina's response to her friend is anything but sympathetic. She advises her to let her husband do whatever he wants, as long as she has everything that she needs at home (Cas. 203-207).¹⁴ According to Leadbeater, Myrrhina is here establishing what would be the "proper perspective"¹⁵ for a wife in a marriage *cum manu*.

Myrrhina provides the contrast we need to see that Cleustrata is to be considered a shrew. Cleustrata is standing against her husband and his wishes and is not the dutiful and submissive wife that she should be. Myrrhina's warnings of divorce and advice to stay on the path of duty fall on deaf ears. Cleustrata does not seem the least worried about the threat of divorce. Rather, she is single-minded in her pursuit of rebellion against what is to her such an obvious wrong. She is determined to defy her husband — and this establishes, at least in the minds of the audience members, that she is the comic shrew. In fact, she is presented here as more defiant than might be expected, since she shows no fear of divorce. Forehand describes her reaction here as "exceptional" and "unique."¹⁶ Rosenmeyer agrees, noting that the audience might have expected Cleustrata to "at least be intimidated by the threat."¹⁷

¹⁴ Compare to the speech of the *senex* to his daughter in *Men.* 799-802. I have translated this speech below (pp. 53-54).

¹⁵ L. W. Leadbeater, "Amphitryon, Casina, and the Disappearance of Jupiter," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* ed. Carl Deroux (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1986), 145. Slater explains Myrrhina's attitude as a "spirit of comedy and fun" in contrast to Cleustrata's dour outlook [N. W. Slater, *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 75]. Cody, on the other hand, explains Myrrhina's attitude as a "warning" to Cleustrata "to be a dutiful, tolerant wife." [J. M. Cody, "The *senex amator* in Plautus' *Casina*," *Hermes* 104 (1976): 471]. See also Forehand, "Plautus' *Casina*," 238. Though I prefer Cody's view, the contrast is the same either way.

¹⁶ Forehand, "Plautus' *Casina*," 239.

¹⁷ Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, "Enacting the Law: Plautus' Use of the Divorce Formula on Stage," *Phoenix* (1995): 207.

Lysidamus' description of Cleustrata throughout the play also contributes to her characterization. His rantings about his wife are completely in accord with the shrew stereotype: he wishes for her death, complains about her nagging, and whines about being beaten. Their exchanges with one another are the "most canonical forms of byplay between a dowered wife and an aged lover."¹⁸ Cleustrata accuses Lysidamus, insults him and scolds him — and he responds with fear and blandishments. In their first interchange their relationship is apparent:

CL: *eho tu nihili, cana culex, vix teneor quin quae decent*
te dicam,
senectan aetate unguentatus per vias, ignave, incedis?
 LY: *pol ego amico dedi quoidam operam, dum emit un-*
guenta. CL: ut cito commentust!
ecquid te pudet? LY: omnia quae tu vis. (Cas. 239-242)
 CL: hey you good for nothing, old gnat, I'm scarcely kept from
 telling you what's proper;
 are you walking through the streets at your old age perfumed, you fool?
 LY: by Pollux, I gave some help to a certain friend, while he
 bought some perfumes. CL: how quickly that's
 invented!
 does anything at all shame you? LY: everything that you want.

Lysidamus complains that his wife nags him: *ea lingulaca est nobis, nam numquam tacet (Cas. 498)*, "she's our chatterbox, for she never shuts up." He complains that she fights with him: *relinque aliquantum orationis, cras quod mecum litiges (Cas. 251)*, "leave some of your speech, because you'll fight with me tomorrow." He complains that she opposes him:

Hercules dique istam perdant,
. quasi ob industriam
mi advorsatur. (Cas. 275-277)
 May Hercules and the gods destroy her
 she's opposing me
 as if on purpose.

In one instance, he complains that she's the head of the house: *patiundum est, siquidem*

¹⁸ McCarthy, 94.

me vivo mea uxor imperium exhibet (Cas. 409), “It must be suffered, if in fact my wife displays her power while I’m living.” He even implies that she might beat him:

*intro ad uxorem meam
sufferamque ei meum tergum ob iniuriam.* (Cas. 949-950)
I’m going in to my wife
and I’ll offer my back to her for injury.
nam salus nulla est scapulis, si domum redeo. (Cas. 955-956)
for there is no safety for my shoulders, if I return home.

The most stereotypical rantings for a *senex amator* about his shrewish wife are Lysidamus’ repeated wishes for his wife’s death:

sed uxor me excruciat, quia vivit. (Cas. 227)
but my wife torments me, since she lives.
ego edepol illam mediam dirruptam velim. (Cas. 326)
by Pollux I wish she’d burst in the middle.
CHALINUS: *ille edepol videre ardentem te extra portam
mortuam.*
CL: *credo, ecaster, velle.* CH: *at pol ego hau credo, sed
certo scio.*
LY: : *hariolum hunc
habeo domi.* (Cas. 354-356)
CHALINUS: by Pollux, he (wishes) to see you dead, burning
outside the gate.
CL: by Castor, I believe he does. CH: but by Pollux I hardly
believe it, but I know it for sure.
LY: : I have a fortune-
teller at home.

Assisting Lysidamus in his wife-bashing is his trusty slave Olympio. He heartily joins in his master’s opinion of his wife:

LY: *quid istuc est? quicum litigas, Olympio?*
OL: *cum eadem qua tu semper.* LY: *cum uxori mea?*
OL: *quam tu mi uxorem? quasi venator tu quidem es:
dies atque noctes cum cane aetatem exigis.* (Cas. 317-320)
LY: what is that? who are you squabbling with, Olympio?
OL: with the same one that you always do. LY: with my wife?

OL: whom do you (call) “wife” to me? indeed it’s as if you’re a
hunter: you live out your life, days and nights, with a dog.

Olympio deftly makes use of “the language appropriate to the comic stereotype of the *uxor dotata*,” thereby contributing to the audience’s impression that Cleustrata ought to be regarded as a typical comic shrew.¹⁹

The impression we have of Cleustrata’s power, however, is tempered by several reminders of her usual position as a wife. Although she does accuse and nag, she is forced to give up in exasperation:

CL: unde is, nihili? ubi fuisti? ubi lustratu’s? ubi bibisti?

*mades, mi castor: vide palliolum ut rugat! LY: di me et
te infelicit,*

si ego in os meum hodie vini guttam indidi.

CL: immo age ut lubet bibe, es, disperde rem. (Cas. 245-248)

CL: where are you going, good for nothing? where have you
been? what brothel have you frequented? where have
you been drinking?

you’re drunk, by Castor: look at your cloak how it’s wrinkled!

LY: may the gods make me unhappy — and you —
if I’ve put a drop of wine in my mouth today.

CL: rather go and drink (and) be as you please, ruin your estate.

She obeys Lysidamus when he orders her. When he is victorious after the drawing of lots, she “is compelled to obey her husband and go off to prepare for the wedding.”²⁰ She does not cease her opposition to her husband’s plans, but she waits to find a better way to oppose him than to directly refuse to do his bidding: *LY: intro abi, uxor, atque adorna nuptias. CL: faciam ut iubes. (Cas. 419)*, “LY: go away inside, wife, and get ready for the wedding. CL: I will do as you order.”

Cleustrata ultimately is in control of the course of events, but she is never the direct agent. Pardilasca sets the stage and terrifies Lysidamus (*Cas. 621-719*) and Chalinus gives him the beating that he deserves (*Cas. 937-968*). In “typical avenging wife plots . . . wives use their dowries to oppose their husbands, but Cleostrata does not have

¹⁹ McCarthy, 95.

²⁰ Anderson, 56.

this option and is therefore obliged to team up with her servants.”²¹ She resembles the *servus callidus*, or clever slave, more than an *uxor dotata*. Her deception is that of the subordinate — she is rebelling against her master.²² Cleustrata takes “positive steps”²³ to stop Lysidamus. This capability for positive action sets her apart. She turns herself from a “blocking character”²⁴ into a clever slave²⁵ who gains sympathy from her justified rebellion. The audience should also be inclined to sympathize with Cleustrata’s cause because her cause is the cause of her son — and young love in Roman comedy is always supposed to triumph over old.²⁶

Cleustrata’s development throughout the play does not validate her initial characterization. Her power has a purpose and limitations. If Cleustrata is not an *uxor dotata* (and there is no evidence to suggest that she is dowered) and she is taking the place here of the clever slave, then her power must be temporary, not continuous. The clever slave in comedy orders his masters and controls the plot, but returns to his position of slave at the end of the play.²⁷ She assumes her control of events to restore the normal order and it is not very likely, in spite of what her husband may assert, that the power she has is usually hers.

Cleustrata must be seen in relation to her husband, whose authority she supposedly usurps. As *pater familias*, Lysidamus ought to have complete power over his family and slaves. But Lysidamus is playing the part of the *senex amator* — the old man in love, who neglects his household in pursuit of enjoyments usually reserved for the young. In giving up his proper place in society and attempting to become a “*iuvenis*

²¹ Rei, 101.

²² See McCarthy, 80, 83.

²³ Forehand, “Plautus’ *Casina*,” 243.

²⁴ See both McCarthy, 90 and Slater, *Plautus*, 75-76.

²⁵ See Forehand, “Plautus’ *Casina*,” 247.

²⁶ Slater, *Plautus*, 75.

²⁷ See for example Tranio in the *Mostellaria*.

amator,” he also gives up the power that goes with his position.²⁸ Not only is he playing the young lover’s role, but he is also attempting to have sex with a girl personally raised and educated by his wife (*Cas.* 194). O’Byrhim and Beacham characterize Lysidamus’ pursuit of his wife’s young charge as “what amounts to incest.”²⁹ Whether the Roman audience would have understood this as incest is questionable. Undoubtedly Cleustrata sees the pursuit as inappropriate and offensive. Lysidamus is refusing to assume his proper role in the family and this forces his wife to oppose him.

Lysidamus’ bad qualities accentuate Cleustrata’s good ones and help to reverse the audience’s opinion of her. Duckworth considers Lysidamus a “stock” *senex* “without individuality.”³⁰ But, Lysidamus is worse than the usual *senex amator* — he “is not a light-hearted old man whose fancy has turned to love.”³¹ Forehand, I think, properly summarizes the uniqueness of Lysidamus’ character:

He is an exceptional *senex* not because of his lechery and foolishness, which he shares with other representatives of the type, but because he exhibits these traits without the characteristics which tend to soften our disapproval of the objectionable deeds of other old men.³²

There are two factors that limit Lysidamus’ ability to gain sympathy. First, Lysidamus, when compared to his own slaves is shown to have less decency and less to recommend him.³³ At the end of the “play” that Cleustrata has concocted, Olympio feels his shame at what has happened:

*Neque ego fugiam neque ubi lateam neque hoc
dedecu’ quo modo celem
scio,*

²⁸ Shawn O’Byrhim, “The Originality of Plautus’ *Casina*,” *American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989): 97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 95; See also Beacham, *Roman Theatre*, 94.

³⁰ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 246.

³¹ Slater, *Plautus*, 83.

³² Forehand, “Plautus’ *Casina*,” 240-241.

³³ *Ibid.*, 249.

ita nunc pudeo . . . (Cas. 875-877)

I don't know either where I should flee or where I should hide
or how I should conceal this shame,
now I'm so ashamed . . .

Olympio is forced to give an account of what happened to Cleustrata and Myrrhina when he emerges (lines 897-935, some of which is fragmentary). He gives a complete confession of what has happened and admits his shame frequently: *pudet dicere* (Cas. 897), "I'm ashamed to say;" *pudet hercle* (Cas. 899), "I'm ashamed, by Hercules;" *flagitium est* (Cas. 901), "It's a disgrace;" *at pudet* (Cas. 911), "but I'm ashamed." When Pardilasca asks if they were tricked well enough, he acknowledges that they deserved it: *PA: quid nunc? satin lepide adita est vobis manu? OL: merito* (Cas. 935), "PA: what now? was the work undertaken neatly enough for you? OL: rightly so."

When Lysidamus comes on stage, he also mentions the shame that he feels:

*Maxumo ego ardeo flagitio
nec quid agam meis rebu' scio,
nec meam ut uxorem aspiciam
contra oculis, ita disperii;
omnia palam sunt probra,
omnibus modis occidi miser. (Cas. 937-942)*

I am burning with the greatest shame
and I don't know what I should do with my affairs,
nor how I should look my wife
in the eyes, I'm so finished;
all my indecencies are out in the open,
I'm finished in every way, miserable.

In spite of this promising show of repentance, Lysidamus immediately begins searching for someone to bear his punishment for him:

*sed ecquis est qui homo munus velit fungier
pro me? (Cas. 951-952)*

but is there any man at all who would be willing, as a
kindness, that I could send (for punishment) in my place?

Not finding any takers, he decides to flee instead: *hac dabo protinam et fugiam* (Cas. 959), "I will immediately send (myself) in this way and flee." Lysidamus reacts like a

comic slave would,³⁴ concerned about the consequences of his actions; in contrast, Olympio confessed completely and maintained his feeling of shame.

Lysidamus also does not have that clarion call to sympathy that most comic *senes* in his position have: “a carping wife.”³⁵ In comparison with her, he seems “very much the villain” — and she, in comparison with him, becomes “one of the most morally attractive women in all of Plautus.”³⁶ Cleustrata is attractive not merely in comparison with Lysidamus, but because of her own departure from the expected. She is not the typical shrew. She opposes her husband from a position of “apparent obedience” and by pretending to be a good wife.³⁷ This is unusual for someone we might expect to be an *uxor dotata*, as her initial characterization suggested. She has no dowry or property of her own that might form the basis of her actions. She is not trying to protect her possessions, but her household.³⁸ She does not always nag or complain, either. In her dealings with Alcesimus and Lysidamus, she does not accuse or complain to either man.³⁹ By lying to each she contrives to trick both:

*CL: ubi tua uxor? AL: intus illa te, si se arcessas, manet;
nam tuo' vir me oravit ut eam isto ad te adiutum mitterem.
vin vocem? CL: sine eam: te nolo, si occupata est. (Cas. 542-544)*
CL: where is your wife? AL: she's inside, waiting for you, if
you should call her.
for your husband asked me to send her to you to help you in
that matter.
do you want me to call her? CL: let her be: I don't want her if
she's busy.

³⁴ See, for example, Tranio in the *Mostellaria*, who successfully avoids a beating (lines 1144ff.) or Pseudolus in the *Pseudolus*, who seeks to make sure his master is not angry with him (line 1329-1330).

³⁵ Forehand, “Plautus’ *Casina*,” 246.

³⁶ James Tatum, trans., *Plautus: The Darker Comedies: Bacchides, Casina, and Truculentus* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 88; See also Leadbeater, 136.

³⁷ McCarthy, 83, 104.

³⁸ Anderson, 57, 104-105.

³⁹ Slater, *Plautus*, 84.

*LY: iamne hanc traduxti huc ad nos vicinam tuam
 quae te adiutaret? CL: arcessivi, ut iusseras.
 verum hic sodalis tuos, amicus optumus,
 nescioquid se sufflavit uxori suae:
 negavit posse, quoniam arcesso, mittere. (Cas. 579-583)*
 LY: now have you brought over this neighbor of yours to our
 house to help you? CL: I sent for her as you ordered.
 but in fact this buddy of yours, this best friend,
 had some kind of blow up at his wife:
 he said that he couldn't send her, now that I asked.

After he has fallen prey to Cleustrata's trickery, Lysidamus is reduced to begging. In his plea for forgiveness, he is acting the part of the *servus*, ". . . forc[ing] Cleustrata into the function of master, and comic convention decrees her pardon in this circumstance."⁴⁰ Cleustrata's last command to Lysidamus is: *redi modo huc intro: monebo, si qui meministi minus* (Cas. 998), "just come back inside here: I'll warn you, if you remember any less." Her forgiveness is quick — in fact, she goes so far as to say that she is not even angry with him: *LY: non irata's? CL: non sum irata* (Cas. 1007), "LY: you're not angry? CL: I'm not angry." In forgiving Lysidamus, Cleustrata effectively overturns the role reversal that had dominated the play. She has his symbols of authority (which were taken away by Chalinus) restored to him:⁴¹ *age tu, redde huic scipionem et pallium* (Cas. 1009), "come on, you, return his staff and cloak to him."

One of the major indications that Cleustrata is the hero of the play is her domination of what Moore calls the "hierarchy of rapport."⁴² Plautus' plays are full of asides to the audience — addresses to make the audience sympathize with the character's cause. The one who wins the audience rules the play.⁴³ If a character is not overheard by another when he or she makes an aside to the audience, or if he or she hears the asides of

⁴⁰ McCarthy, 109.

⁴¹ O'Bryhim, 101.

⁴² Moore, 170.

⁴³ Ibid., 30, 47.

another, that character “make[s] a powerful connection with the spectators”⁴⁴ and “encourage[s] the audience to see the actions of others through their eyes.”⁴⁵

Though it is unusual for a *matrona* to gain such rapport,⁴⁶ Cleustrata does so convincingly. Cleustrata tells us right from the start that she already knows what her husband’s designs are.⁴⁷ Lysidamus’ first monologue, when he tries to gain the audience’s sympathy for his cause, is overheard at least in part by Cleustrata, who had remained on stage (*Cas.* 217-228). His repeated slips of the tongue in the lot scene are all in Cleustrata’s presence (*Cas.* 364-370) — he can hide nothing from her.⁴⁸

The whole course of the play leads the audience not to laugh at Cleustrata (as her husband may wish), but to laugh with her at the scheme she designs against Lysidamus. Cleustrata “turns the comic stereotype of wives upside down.”⁴⁹ The audience, along with Myrrhina, ends up allied with Cleustrata in the end.⁵⁰ Even Lysidamus, grateful for the forgiveness of his wife, is inclined to view her in a better light: *lepidiorem uxorem nemo quisquam quam ego habeo hanc habet* (*Cas.* 1008), “no one, not anyone, has a more charming wife than this one that I have.”

Since Cleustrata’s purpose was to restore the natural order of events, she cannot retain the position of power that she assumed for the course of the play. She gains the victory through plotting and role reversals,⁵¹ but in the end she is “content” with her position as *matrona*.⁵² This return to the normal course of events is the stated order of

⁴⁴ Ibid., 33-34.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 159.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; Also, McCarthy, 89: “In no other play does the blocking character realize that he or she is being tricked at the very beginning of the play.”

⁴⁸ Moore, 173.

⁴⁹ Anderson, 161.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 180.

⁵¹ Slater, *Plautus*, 161-162.

⁵² Ibid., 175-176.

comedy. Temporary role reversals are supposed to be just that — temporary.⁵³ Lysidamus is reinstated as the head of the household⁵⁴ and Cleustrata assumes her rightful position. This upholding of the social arrangement, this victory for “domestic virtue,” is necessary.⁵⁵ Indeed, “Plautine comedy ultimately validates existing social arrangements.”⁵⁶ Once success has been achieved, the social order returns at the end of the play to what it always was.⁵⁷

Cleustrata, far from overturning the social order, has become the “ideal *matrona*” — by restoring her husband’s authority.⁵⁸ She is not the domineering shrew that she at first seemed to be. She undermines the assumptions of male characters about their wives⁵⁹ and undermines the idea that all *matronae*, especially those who oppose their husbands, are the same. Cleustrata cannot be dismissed as merely a stock type, even though she may possess some of the markers of the stereotypical comic shrew. She is a variation on the stock type for the purpose of achieving a specific dramaturgical goal: the restoration of the social and familial order.

Asinaria

Artemona in the *Asinaria* does not appear until the very last scene of the play and so does not have the influence over the course of the play that Cleustrata does in the *Casina*. Nonetheless, she does have some similarities to Cleustrata in her initial

⁵³ See W. Thomas MacCary, “Patterns of Myth, Ritual, and Comedy in Plautus’ *Casina*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15 (1974): 888-889.

⁵⁴ Rei, 100.

⁵⁵ Beacham, *Roman Theatre*, 115. See also Beacham, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Wedding,” in *Plautus: The Comedies*, vol. 1, ed. David R. Slavitt and Palmer Bovie (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 253.

⁵⁶ Rei, 104; See also Slater, *Plautus*, 76.

⁵⁷ According to McCarthy [McCarthy, 79], this is necessary for the success of the play.

⁵⁸ Rei, 104.

⁵⁹ Moore, 166. Both Slater [Slater, *Plautus*, 76] and Cody [Cody, 453] also agree that there is a change in the stereotype seen in Cleustrata.

characterization and her ultimate “victory.” Her husband casts her as a shrew in the beginning of the play and she restores some order through her appearance in the end.

The first that we hear of Artemona are the usual complaints of *senes amatores* against *uxores dotatae*. Demaenetus’ slave Libanus knows that his master both fears his wife and wishes her dead:

*ita ted optestor per senectutem tuam
perque illam quam tu metuis uxorem tuam,
si quid med erga hodie falsum dixeris,
ut tibi superstes uxor aetatem siet
atque illa viva vivos ut pestem oppetas. (Asin. 18-22)*
so I entreat you by your old age
and by that one you fear, your wife,
if you tell me any lie today,
may your wife outlive you by a lifetime
and alive may you meet death with her living.

*DE: nam quo usque? LI: usque ad mor-
tem volo.*

DE: cave sis malam rem. LI: uxoris dico, non tuam.

DE: dono te ob istuc dictum ut expers sis metu. (Asin. 42-44)

*DE: now how far? LI: all the way to death,
I wish.*

*DE: you keep clear of trouble. LI: I say your wife’s, not
yours.*

*DE: I grant you on account of that statement to be free from
fear.*

Demaenetus himself describes her character as harsh:

verum meam uxorem, Libane, nescis quali’ sit?

LI: tu primus sentis, nos tamen in pretio sumus.

DE: fateor eam esse inportunam atque incommodam. (Asin. 60-62)

but, Libanus, you don’t know my wife, how she is?

LI: you experience it first-class, yet we are “prized.”⁶⁰

DE: I confess that she is ruthless and disagreeable.

⁶⁰ i.e. Demaenetus is treated to large doses of his wife’s ill nature, but the slaves are also given their fair share of her abuse.

Demaenetus' major concern is his wife's money. She is an *uxor dotata* and much emphasis is placed upon her dowry. She takes on his authority as a father because of it:

*quamquam illum mater arte contenteque habet,
patres ut consuererunt : . . . (Asin. 78-79)*
although his mother holds him tightly and with restriction,
as fathers have been accustomed to do: . . .
argentum accepi, dote imperium vendidi. (Asin. 88)
I received the silver, I sold my authority for a dowry.

Because of this dowry, even her slave Saurea has more authority than her husband, according to Libanus:

*dotalem servom Sauream <huc> uxor tua
adduxit, quoi plus in manu sit quam tibi. (Asin. 85-86)*⁶¹
your wife brought with her <here> the slave Saurea,
part of her dowry, who is more in power than you are.

Since Artemona is supposedly playing the part of the *paterfamilias*, she is the one who must be defrauded if her son is to acquire money for his love affair.⁶² She is the “blocking character”⁶³ who must be deceived for the son's plan to be realized. But she does not appear on the stage until the final moments of the play. The fact that she is off-stage argues that she is a proper *matrona*, who would not be seen in public.⁶⁴

Unlike Cleustrata in the *Casina*, Artemona initially does not know about the plans of her son or husband. The parasite of her son's rival informs her of the situation. She comes on stage almost as a *deus ex machina* to bring the play to its proper conclusion. She comes on stage at the last minute to save the comedy from becoming

⁶¹ This allusion to *manus* (“*in manu*”) indicates that their marriage was probably *sine manu* — the wife would have then been under the control of her relatives, not her husband and her dowry would have been the main reason for this (so that it would revert to her family in the event of a divorce). See the discussion in Chapter One (pp. 2-3).

⁶² David Konstan, “Plot and Theme in Plautus' *Asinaria*,” *Classical Journal* 73 (1978): 215. This article is repeated in Konstan, *Roman Comedy*.

⁶³ McCarthy, 68.

⁶⁴ Compare this to the plays of Menander, where the wife is never seen on stage.

“tragic.”⁶⁵ It turns out that Demaenetus has demanded something for giving his son the money stolen from his wife: that he get to spend a night with his son’s girl first.

Artemona gains some sympathy from the fact that she was indeed tricked. Not only is her husband unfaithful and providing a poor example for their son, but his previous character is proved to be a sham. She thought that he was a good man and that he loved her. She is shocked by what she hears from the parasite:⁶⁶

*ART: at scelestā ego praeter alios meum virum frugi rata,
siccum, frugi, continentem, amantem uxoris maxime.*

*PA: at nunc dehinc scito illum ante omnis minimi mortalem
preti,
madidum, nihili, incontinentem atque osorem uxoris suae.*

*ART: pol nī istaec vera essent, numquam faceret ea quae
nunc facit. (Asin. 856-861)*

ART: but wicked me, I thought my husband worthy,
surpassing others,
sober, worthy, self-controlled, especially a lover of his wife.

PA: but now, from now on, know that he is a man of the least
worth before all,
drunk, worthless, without self-control, and a hater of his wife.

ART: by Pollux, unless those things were true, he would never
do the things that he does now.

Artemona does not burst onto the scene immediately to end her husband’s debauchery. She stands by, watching and listening to make sure that what she has been told is true. She hears Demaenetus promise to steal from her and overhears him insult her personally to Philaenium, the prostitute:

*DE: egon ut non domo
uxori meae
surrupiam in deliciis pallam quam habet atque ad te deferam,
non edepol conduci possum vita uxoris annua. (Asin. 884-886)*

DE: by Pollux, I couldn’t be
hired not to

⁶⁵ Slater, *Plautus*, 65.

⁶⁶ See K. C. Ryder, “The *senex amator* in Plautus,” *Greece & Rome* 21 (1984): 182.

pilfer from my wife the dress that she has as a favorite and confer it to you, with my wife's life lasting (only) a year.

DE: *edepol animam suaviorem aliquanto quam uxoris meae.*

PH: *dic amabo, an foetet anima uxoris tuae?* DE: *nauteam bibere malim, si necessum sit, quam illam oscularier.* (Asin. 893-895)

DE: by Pollux (your) breath is rather more agreeable than my wife's.

PH: please tell me, does your wife's breath stink? DE: I would prefer to drink bilge water, if it were necessary, than kiss her.

Now Artemona is seeing her husband in a different light. She now understands that it is he who has been stealing from her:⁶⁷

ille ecaster suppilabat me, quod ancillas meas suspiciabar atque insontis miseras cruciabam. (Asin. 888-889)

by Castor, he's been filching from me, what I suspected my slave women of and tortured the harmless miserable things.

And she threatens to use her money to make him pay for this insult to her breath:

ain tandem? edepol ne tu istuc cum malo magno tuo dixisti in me. sine, venias modo domum, faxo ut scias quid periculi sit dotatae uxori vitium dicere. (Asin. 896-898)

really? by Pollux you've said that against me at your own great evil. if only you come home, I'll make it so that you know what danger there is in insulting a dowered wife.

There are several interesting things to note here. First, Artemona is an *uxor dotata* and she knows that she has some power because of that — and she is willing to use that power as a way to repay her husband for his ill behavior. Second, she initially thought that her husband was much better than he is and she is still willing to take him back home. Demaenetus has not only behaved in an adulterous way — which men are able to overlook, but not wives; he's also stolen from his wife — which neither men nor women

⁶⁷ Ibid.

can forgive.⁶⁸ So, in many ways, Artemona is a typical dowered wife, but her depiction is made more favorable by Demaenetus' deception and stealing.

Furthermore, even when she does enter and threaten Demaenetus, she is a far cry from the "dragon" that Ryder describes.⁶⁹ She enters the scene only when she has received the worst insult from her husband — his assertion to his own son that he does not love her and wishes for her death:

ARG: *quid*
ais, pater?
ecquid matrem amas? DE: egone illam? nunc amo, quia
non adest.
ARG: *quid quom adest? DE: periisse cupio. (Asin. 899-901)*
ARG: what
do you say, father?
do you love my mother at all? DE: I love her? I do now,
because she's not here.
ARG: what about when she is here? DE: I wish her dead.

When she does enter, in the course of ordering him home, she feels the need to question him about his comment on her breath. She seems rather hurt by it: *quid tandem? anima foetetne uxoris tuae? (Asin. 928)*, "what now? your wife's breath stinks?" And she also wants to question him about his thievery: *iam surrupuisti pallam quam scorto dares? (Asin. 929)*, "now you've stolen a dress that you're giving to the prostitute?" Both questions, while revealing to Demaenetus that she had been overhearing him, also have the effect of softening our view of her character.

This scene also implies that there are limits to Artemona's power. She does have resources and she does get her husband to obey her, but his obedience is reluctant and makes one wonder if she has all the power ascribed to her. She has to tell him no less than five times to go home before he obeys and he even asks if he can be allowed to stay for dinner — impudence indeed:

⁶⁸ See the *senex*'s reply to his daughter in *Menaechmi* 799-806, where it is understandable that her husband is carousing, but not that he is stealing from her. I quote this speech below (pp. 53-54).

⁶⁹ Ryder, 182. Ryder sees Artemona as domineering and unforgiving.

ART: surge, amator, i domum.
 DE: nullus sum. ART: immo es, ne nega, omnium <hominum> pol nequissimus.
 at etiam cubat cuculus. surge, amator, i domum.
 DE: vae mihi! ART: vera hariolare. surge, amator, i domum.
 DE: apscede ergo paullulum istuc. ART: surge, amator,
 i domum.
 DE: iam opsecro, uxor, — ART: nunc uxorem me esse memi-
 isti tuam?
 modo, quom dicta in me ingerebas, odium, non uxor, eram.

 DE: non licet manere (cena coquitur) dum cenem modo?
 ART: ecaster cenabis hodie, ut dignu's, magnum malum.

 ART: i domum. (Asin. 921-927, 935-936, 940)
 ART: get up, lover, go home.
 DE: I'm nothing. ART: on the contrary, don't deny it, you are,
 by Pollux, the most worthless of all <men.>
 but even a cuckoo reclines at table. get up, lover, go home.
 DE: woe is me! ART: you foretell future truth. get up, lover, go home.
 DE: then go away a little there. ART: get up, lover,
 go home.
 DE: now I implore, wife, — ART: now you remember that I am
 your wife?
 just now, when you were pouring out words against me, I was
 an object of hatred, not your wife.

 DE: is it not o.k. to stay (dinner's cooking) just until I eat?
 ART: by Castor you will eat today, as you deserve, great evil.

 ART: go home.

This exchange shows that maybe Artemona is not as in control as Demaenetus had complained. She has ordered him and threatened, but, in spite of his shows of concern (“nullus sum,” etc.), he does not show much deference to her orders. He remains at his seat and still has hopes of staying for the meal.

Demaenetus had complained that Artemona was a domineering shrew, but her characterization does not justify this description. Artemona comes off very well in comparison to her deceitful husband. He has abandoned the usual role of father and its underlying moral traditions.⁷⁰ He has abandoned his obligations to his wife and household.⁷¹ More importantly, his actions have set the course of the play in a direction that is never allowed in comedy: the old lover triumphing over the young lover.

Artemona has to bring back her husband not only because of his obligations to the household, but also for dramatic purposes — she needs to save the course of the comedy. Demaenetus' deceptions need to be exposed and Artemona needs to bring him back to resume his proper place in the household⁷² (a place, incidentally, that she thought he already held). Dramaturgically, her actions are necessary to ensure that young love triumphs over old. When she takes Demaenetus back to his proper place, that leaves Argyrrius with Philaenium and leaves the audience with a happy ending. Both comedic conventions concerning young love and traditional moral values concerning old love have been upheld.

The fact that Artemona is a dowered wife causes much of the trouble because it pushes her husband out of his role and causes him to seek another. There may indeed be some commentary here on the “corrosive effect of money on the natural order of the household.”⁷³ Connected to this is commentary on the way that a Roman house should be ordered — traditionally.⁷⁴ Yet, although Artemona's money is the impetus for the upheaval, her actions attempt to restore traditional roles. This will not be easily accomplished because of her dowry and the fact that her husband hates her. There is a combination in her of both the upheaval of the household (in her possession of both

⁷⁰ Slater, *Plautus*, 57; Konstan, “Plautus' *Asinaria*,” 215, 219.

⁷¹ Anderson, 80.

⁷² Konstan, “Plautus' *Asinaria*,” 217.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

money and power) and restoration of the household (in her actions to bring her husband home). This combination is both contradictory and unique. Ryder, in describing the character of the *senex amator*, has hit upon something that should be considered in relation to Plautus' other characters: there is a "range of variation which can be applied to a seemingly stock character in a stock situation."⁷⁵ Artemona is not a flat, "stock" shrew — there is a variation in her that shows Plautus' ability to give some personality to his characters.

Artemona is obviously not the same character as Cleustrata. They are both initially presented as stock comic shrews by their *senex amator* husbands, but for each of them this characterization is not quite precise. They undoubtedly possess some of the attributes of shrewish wives, but their characters are individualized to achieve the specific dramaturgical functions of the restoration of the household order and the championing of young love over old. Cleustrata achieves this through trickery and the reinstatement of her husband in his proper place; Artemona through commands and removing her husband from the scene of debauchery.

Mercator

Unlike Cleustrata and Artemona, Dorippa is not actually wronged in the course of the *Mercator*. Her husband, Lysimachus, plays the part of the good husband and is busy about the things that men his age should be. Nonetheless, in helping his friend Demipho in his illicit affair (of which, incidentally, he disapproves), Lysimachus inadvertently brings upon himself the wrath of his own wife.

The first we hear of Dorippa is an indirect reference in the recounted dream of Demipho. In this dream (lines 225-271), Demipho has purchased a she-goat that he wants to protect from the she-goat he has at home. He gives this new she-goat to a monkey and the monkey is angry with him when the she-goat eats his wife's entire dowry. The course of the play reveals the significance of the dream — the monkey is his friend Lysimachus, to whom he entrusts Pasicompsa, and the monkey's wife is Dorippa.

⁷⁵ Ryder, 187.

It is interesting to note that the first reference we have to Dorippa, here in Demipho's dream, is to her dowry. This is a clear indication that she will prove to be an *uxor dotata*. And Lysimachus' (the monkey's) complaint to Demipho in the dream indicates fear of a possible divorce:

*dicit capram, quam dederam servandam sibi,
suai uxoris dotem ambedisse oppido.
mihi illud videri mirum ut una illaec capra
uxoris simiai dotem ambederit. (Merc. 238-241)*
he says that the she-goat, which I had given to him for safe keeping,
completely ate up his wife's dowry.
it seemed marvelous to me that that one she-goat
consumed the dowry of a monkey's wife.

The absolute consumption of the dowry would indicate that Lysimachus' wife had left him and taken her dowry with her. This removal of the entire dowry indicates a removal of the wife — divorce.⁷⁶

Demipho's own wife, to whom he also makes reference in the dream, does not appear in the action of the play. Demipho does seem to fear his wife. He is afraid of what she might do if she finds out that he's in love:

*LY: Profecto ego illunc hircum castrari volo,
ruri qui vobeis exhibet negotium.
DE: nec omen illuc mihi nec auspicium placet.
quasi hircum metuo ne uxor me castret mea (Merc. 272-275)*
LY: I really want that he-goat to be castrated,
who's making trouble for you in the country.
DE: neither that omen nor sign pleases me.
I'm afraid lest my wife castrate me like the he-goat

He also avoids going home to his wife, thus leaving her out of the action entirely. Moore interprets the absence of Demipho's wife as a sign that "the concerns of wives do not

⁷⁶ P. J. Enk, *Plauti Mercator* (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1979), 11: "Timet enim Lysimachus, ne uxor secum divortium faciat *totamque* dotem reposcat."

require resolution.”⁷⁷ However, both Demipho’s wife and Dorippa share some of the same qualities; and Dorippa, as it were, provides the stand-in for the wronged wife.

It is clear from the start that Dorippa is suspicious of her husband. She returns from the country because Lysimachus said that he could not join her there — and she is worried about him running away from her:

*Quoniam a viro ad me rus advenit nuntius
rus non iturum, feci ego ingenium meum,
reveni, ut illum persequar qui me fugit. (Merc. 667-669)*

Since a message came to me in the country from my husband
that he would not go into the country, I made up my mind,
I returned, so that I might follow that one who flees me.

This suspicion of her husband makes her easily convinced that he has done something wrong when Syra, her maid, announces that a strange woman is in the house:

*SY: nescioquaest mulier intus hic in aedibus.
DO: quid, mulier? SY: mulier meretrix. DO: veron serio?
SY:
illam esse amicam tui viri bellissimi.
DO: credo mecastor. (Merc. 684-689)
SY: some woman is here inside in the house.
DO: what, a woman? SY: a prostitute woman. DO: in
truth, seriously?
SY:
she’s the girlfriend of your oh-so-fine husband.
DO: by Castor, I believe it.*

This strange woman is Pasicompsa, whom Lysimachus is keeping at his house for Demipho. When Lysimachus returns and finds that his wife is home, he does not know what to say to her to explain the situation. He wants to exonerate himself while trying to protect Demipho, but he cannot seem to do both. Dorippa, suspicious to begin with and now seeing that the circumstances seem to call for suspicion, is incredulous:

*quoia illa mulier intust? LY: vidistine eam?
DO: vidi. LY: quoia ea sit rogitas? DO: resciscam tamen.
LY: vin dicam quoiast? illa — illa edepol — vae mihi!*

⁷⁷ Moore, 165.

nescio quid dicam. DO: haeres. LY: hau vidi magis.
DO: quin dicis? LY: quin si liceat — DO: dictum oportuit.
LY: non possum, ita instas; urges quasi pro noxio.
DO: scio, innoxii's. (Merc. 720-726)
 who is that woman inside? LY: you saw her?
 DO: I did. LY: who is she, you ask? DO: I will find out just
 the same.
 LY: you want that I should tell you who she is? she — by
 Pollux she — woe to me!
 I don't know what I'll say. DO: you're stuck. LY: I've hardly
 seen (anyone) more (stuck).
 DO: why not say it? LY: in fact, if it's allowed — DO: it was
 right that it be said.
 LY: I can't, you threatening thus; you're insisting as if for a crime.
 DO: I know, you're innocent.

Although the presence of the girl and her husband's inability to explain it to her
 satisfaction seem to justify her suspicions, her quickness to accuse is a bit harsh in light
 of her husband's proven character. When Lysimachus comes on stage, he is concerned
 about business — and his wife:

uxori facito ut nunties negotium
mihi esse in urbe, ne me exspectet; nam mihi
tris hodie litis iudicandas dicito. (Merc. 279-281)
 you'll make sure that you report to my wife that there is
 business for me in the city, so that she doesn't expect me;
 for you shall tell her that there are three lawsuits that must
 be judged today by me.

His character is also commended by his son, who does not believe Syra when she tells
 him his father has a mistress: *pol hau censebam istarum esse operarum patrem. (Merc.*
 815), "by Pollux I hardly thought that my father was of those doings."

Dorippa's concern for her dowry seems to drive her suspicions. Shortly after she
 has determined that Pasicompsa must be in her house for her husband, she is miserable —
 and her misery seems heightened because of her dowry:

Miserior mulier me nec fiet nec fuit,
tali viro quae nupserim. heu miserae mihi!

*em quoi te et tua quae tu habeas commendes viro,
em quoi decem talenta dotis detuli,
haec ut viderem, ut ferrem has contumelias! (Merc. 700-704)*

There neither will be nor has been a more miserable woman
than me,
who has married such a man. alas, miserable me!
to what man do you devote yourself and what you have,
to what (man) have I brought ten talents of a dowry,
to see these things, to bear these insults!

Dorippa is an *uxor dotata*. She is upset about her husband's "mistress" because it may endanger her maintenance or her dowry. She no longer trusts the man to whom she and her dowry have been committed — and she regrets the committal.

It seems from Lysimachus' fear of his wife that she has a tendency to be angry and that she is difficult to placate. Lysimachus himself states her fierceness: *uxor acerrumast*. (Merc. 796), "my wife is most fierce." Out of fear of his wife, he had promised Demipho that Pasicompsa could only stay while his wife was away:

*nullum hercle praeter hunc diem illa apud me erit.
metuo ego uxorem, cras si rure redierit
ne illam hic offendat. (Merc. 585-587)*
by Hercules she will stay with me not at all past this day.
I'm afraid of my wife, if she should return from the country
tomorrow lest she bump into her here.

And her anger is the reason that he does not behave like Demipho:

*DE: Quasi tu numquam quicquam adsimile huius facti
feceris.
LY: edepol numquam; cavi ne quid facerem. vix vivo
miser.
nam mea uxor propter illam tota in fermento iacet. (Merc. 957-959)*
DE: As if you've never done anything like this thing.
LY: by Pollux never; I've guarded against it lest I do
anything. I'm barely living, miserable.
for my wife is staying all in a ferment on account of her.

In fact, Lysimachus even has a hard time believing that his wife's anger has subsided after she has been informed of her husband's innocence. His son Eutychus has to assure him

several times that she is no longer angry before he will consent to enter the house:

*LY: Eutyche, hanc volo priu' rem agi quam meum intro
refero pedem.*

*EU: quid istuc est? LY: suam quisque homo rem meminit
responde mihi:*

certon scis non suscensere mihi tuam matrem? EU: scio.

*LY: vide. EU: mea fide. LY: satis habeo. id quaeso hercle,
etiam vide.*

*EU: non mihi credis? LY: immo credo, sed tamen metuo
miser. (Merc. 1010-1014)*

*LY: Eutychus, I want this thing to be done before I bring
back my foot inside.*

*EU: what is that? LY: each man remembers his own
situation, tell me:*

do you know for sure that your mother is not enraged at me?

EU: I know it.

*LY: see to it. EU: by my faith. LY: I have enough. I ask this
by Hercules, also see to it.*

*EU: do you not believe me? LY: on the contrary, I believe,
but nonetheless I'm miserable afraid.*

All this points to the conclusion that Dorippa is an *uxor dotata* and a shrew who fits the stereotype quite well. Her actions are understandable when she finds a strange woman at the house. She is no doubt encouraged in her rage by the promptings of Syra. Nonetheless, considering her husband's previous behavior, she seems to be overreacting and her suspicious nature does not commend her character. She is in control of the household and her husband. Her actions, unlike those of Cleustrata and Artemona, do not have the effect of reversing the course of disorder in the household. In fact, her household is not even in disarray. The impetus for return to moral and acceptable outcomes in the play is Eutychus, who lectures Demipho and the audience about young and old love (lines 983-986, 1015-1026).

Dorippa's actions bring on much of the comedy and confusion of the play.⁷⁸ This seems to be her dramaturgical function. She causes no lasting change or even a change in the direction of the play. We can expect that their household will go on in much the same fashion. Lysimachus can go home now, but there will likely be little change in his fearful existence. Dorippa is definitely a shrew — suspicious, dowered, and easily angered.

There is a strange addition to this play, however, that is worth mentioning. Although Dorippa's characterization is harsh and untempered by extenuating factors, we are reminded that women's lives were not necessarily free from a fear of their own — even if they had a dowry. Syra gives a speech about three quarters of the way through the play⁷⁹ that highlights the double standard for men and women in Roman marriages and borders on “feminism.”⁸⁰ The women's complaint here is that men should be treated the same as women when they commit adultery. It seems that even if the husband in this play did not behave badly, the problem — at least from the woman's perspective — is that he could have.

Menaechmi

The *matrona* in the *Menaechmi* is quite different from the *matronae* discussed so far. In spite of her dowry, unlike the dowered wives Dorippa and Artemona, she does not have any real control over her husband. Unlike Cleustrata or Dorippa, she does not produce fear in him. And unlike all three wives mentioned thus far, she has no victory at the end of the play. She does not gain anyone's sympathy, not even her own father's. To top it all off — she does not even have a name beyond “*matrona*.” This, incidentally, may be an indication that she is supposed to represent the *uxor dotata* type and be more of a caricature than a character.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The comedy and confusion are helped along greatly by the comments of the cook, who mistakes Lysimachus for Demipho and Dorippa for the girlfriend. See lines 741-481.

⁷⁹ See lines 817-829.

⁸⁰ Moore, 165.

⁸¹ See the previous discussion of this idea (p. 22) on the naming of Lysidamus.

Matrona is described in the play as an *uxor dotata*. The background information given in the prologue summarizes her with this one description: . . . *eique uxorem dotatam dedit* (*Men.* 61), “and to him he [Menaechmus’ adoptive father/kidnapper] gave a dowered wife.” Her father also describes her this way in a criticism on dowered wives in general (made all the more amusing by the fact that he gave her the dowry to begin with): *ita istaec solent . . . dote fretae, feroces* (*Men.* 766-767), “so they’re accustomed (to be) . . . depending on their dowries, arrogant.” The one character of importance that does not describe her as *dotata* is her husband — a marked departure from other comedies with *uxores dotatae*.

Her husband does, however, attribute to her other characteristics of shrewish wives. She is always nagging him and questioning him about his activities. When he enters, he is in the process of giving his wife a lecture on how she should behave towards him, highlighting her shrewish inquisitiveness:

*Ni mala, ni stulta sies, ni indomita inposque animi,
quod viro esse odio videas, tute tibi odio habeas.
praeterhac si mihi tale post hunc diem
faxis, faxo foris vidua visas patrem.
nam quotiens foras ire volo, me retines, revocas, rogitas,
quo ego eam, quam rem agam, quid negoti geram,
quid petam, quid feram, quid foris egerim.
portitorem domum duxi, ita omnem mihi
rem necesse eloqui est, quidquid egi atque ago.* (*Men.* 110-118)

Unless you were bad, unless you were stupid, unless you were untamed and out of your mind,
what you see is hateful to your husband, you would also consider hateful to yourself.

in addition, if you act towards me like this after today,
I’m making you go out and go to your father a spinster.

for whenever I want to go out, you hold me back, call me back, question,
where am I going, what am I doing, what business am I attending to,
what am I looking for, what am I carrying, what have I done outside.

I married a customs officer, so I have to speak out
everything, whatever I’ve done or do.

Not only does this speech give us Menaechmus' view of his wife as a shrew, it also reveals several other things about their relationship. The very fact that he is lecturing his wife and reprimanding her means that, for all her efforts, she really has no control over him. He complains that she controls his actions, but then he threatens her and will tell her nothing — thus demonstrating both to her and the audience that she does not achieve her goal of controlling him.

Another interesting detail is the threat of divorce. As we saw in the *Mercator*,⁸² a rich wife may threaten her husband with divorce because of her money, since the money would usually revert to her family. If Menaechmus was really concerned about his wife's dowry or if he thought that it gave her any power or leverage, he would not be able to threaten her. In fact, he asserts that he provides her with things, not the other way around.⁸³ Right after this tirade, he continues with a list of things that he has provided for her and how she should behave as a result:

*quando ego tibi ancillas, penum,
lanam, aurum, vestem, purpuram bene praebeo nec quic-
quam eges,
malo cavebis si sapis, virum opservare desines. (Men. 120-122)*
since I supply you well with slave-women, food,
wool, gold, clothing, purple so that you don't lack anything,
you'll watch out for trouble if you have sense, you'll stop
watching your husband.

In spite of her dowry, Matrona is not a “powerful comic wife.”⁸⁴ I disagree with McCarthy here, who argues that in this play Matrona has the power in the household.⁸⁵ McCarthy is trying to justify Menaechmus' victory at the end of the play as that of a comic rebel. She argues that Menaechmus must be seen as “‘normally’ downtrodden” if

⁸² In connection to Demipho's dream concerning the monkey and his wife.

⁸³ See the discussion in Chapter One (pp. 2-3). Husbands were expected to maintain their wives at the status to which they had been accustomed [See Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law & Society* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 68-69]. Menaechmus may be referring to this — with which he seems fed up.

⁸⁴ Rei, 102.

⁸⁵ See discussion at McCarthy, 35-43.

he is to rebel, but should have a right to authority if he is to succeed. I believe that McCarthy's argument on this point is unfounded. Menaechmus' entrance, in spite of being a complaint against Matrona's attempts at power, actually asserts his. His language towards her does not actually imply "that she is the one 'normally' in power."⁸⁶ It shows that she attempts to use her dowry to this end, but that she is unsuccessful. Matrona's attempts at controlling Menaechmus have the effect of causing his rebellion, an observation made just a few lines before by Peniculus in his entrance:⁸⁷

*homines captivos qui catenis vinciunt
et qui fugitivis servis induunt compedis,
nimi' stulte faciunt mea quidem sententia.
nam homini misero si ad malum accedit malum,
maior lubido est fugere et facere nequiter. (Men. 79-83)*
men who bind captives with chains
and who put shackles on fugitive slaves,
indeed do this too stupidly in my opinion.
for to a miserable man, if you add evil to evil,
his desire is greater to flee and do wickedly.

Not only does Matrona not have power, her attempts at power work against her in causing her husband to strain against his "chains." This becomes even more clear at the end of the play when, contrary to the norm, the *matrona* does not succeed.

There are some allusions in the play to caution on Menaechmus' part about his wife. The allusions do not really amount to fear — he never says that he fears her. But they signal that she may have some influence over her wayward husband — although his subsequent actions indicate otherwise. Menaechmus and Peniculus, his parasite, share a few comments at the beginning of the play:

MEN: etiam nunc concede audacter ab leonino cavo. (Men. 159)
MEN: and now come away boldly from the lioness' cave.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁷ Donald Haberman, "Menaechmi: A Serious Comedy," *Ramus* 10 (1981): 132. Haberman goes on to argue that only those who are dutiful, like Menaechmus in the forum, Sosicles in looking for his brother, and Messenio in performing his duties, are set free. Matrona here is not dutiful and therefore not successful. See his argument at 134-136.

PE: ne te uxor sequatur respectas identidem. (Men. 161)

PE: you look back again and again lest your wife follow you.

*MEN: nimio ego hanc periculo
surrupui hodie. (Men. 199-200)*

MEN: with much danger I stole
this [his wife's dress] today.

These comments, however, do not amount to much in themselves and, countered by the threats Menaechmus has just made to his wife, they lose all their strength. Menaechmus is kept out of the house by his wife later in the play until he can return her dress. Yet, when he meets his brother and they decide to depart, he enters the house without difficulty. So, his wife's threats have no bite and her demands do not have to be met.

When Matrona summons her father to assist her, in spite of his thoughts about women with dowries which we have already mentioned, he seems ready to offer some support to his daughter: *verum est modu' tamen, quoad pati uxorem oportet (Men. 769)*, "but there is, however, a limit to what is right for a wife to endure." His conversation with Matrona shows just what that limit is — anything but thievery is acceptable. When his daughter accuses Menaechmus of having a mistress and drinking, this brings no reproach from her father. In fact, he responds to her with the same argument Menaechmus gave — until he finds out about the stolen property:

*SE: si ille quid deliquerit,
multo tanta illum accusabo quam te accusavi amplius.
quando te auratam et vestitam bene habet, ancillas, penum
recte praehibet, melius sanam est, mulier, mentem sumere.*

*MA: at ille suppilat mihi aurum et pallas ex arcis domo,
me despoliat, mea ornamenta clam ad meretrices degerit.*

SE: male facit, si istuc facit . . . (Men. 799-805)

SE: if he commits some offense,
I will accuse him so much more than I have accused you.
since he has you well dressed and golden, rightly provides
slave-women, food, it is more rational, woman, to embrace his
will.

MA: but he filches gold from me and dresses from the chests
from home,

he robs me, he carries off my jewels to prostitutes.

SE: he does badly, if he does that . . .

If the husband provides his wife with the things that she needs, any behavior is acceptable. Once he does something that detracts from that provision, he is overstepping his bounds. This line of thought was the same that Menaechmus gave at his entrance — if he provides for his wife, she should not trouble him. Therefore the stolen dress has significance because it represents the husband's failure in his provision and the proof that he is in the wrong.

Matrona's own emphasis on the stolen dress further demonstrates this point. Although she does complain about Menaechmus' adultery and drinking, her main concern also seems to be his thievery. When she finds out from Peniculus what Menaechmus has been doing, her first complaint is about the stolen property:

*Egone hic me patiar frustra in matrimonio,
ubi vir compilet clanculum quidquid domist
atque ea ad amicam deferat? (Men. 559-561)*

Should I suffer uselessly here, with me in this marriage,
where the husband secretly carries off whatever
is at home and (gives) the things to his mistress?

Her first accusation to her husband is about his thefts: *ne illam ecaster faenerato apstulisti (Men. 604)*, “indeed by Castor you’ve stolen that (dress) at interest.” When Menaechmus has finally agreed that he “borrowed” the dress,⁸⁸ she demands that he return it. Whether this dress was part of Matrona's dowry or given to her by her husband, it represents her power and influence. If it remains someone else's property, that loss is a loss in her position — it is either a loss of her worth as represented by her dowry, or it is a loss of her worth as reflected in her husband's provision for her. If she can compel her husband to return the dress, she regains whatever she has lost materially — which is what matters. From her perspective, it is all-important that the dress be returned. Matrona does not compel her husband to return home and stop galavanting after prostitutes, as other *uxores* do. She kicks him out of the house until he returns with

⁸⁸ This takes some time and I would hardly say that this is an indication of her power over Menaechmus as McCarthy does [McCarthy, 56].

the dress:

*MEN: ego faxo referetur. MA: ex re tua, ut opinor, feceris;
nam domum numquam introibis nisi feres pallam simul. (Men. 661-662)*

MEN: I'll see that it's returned. MA: it is to your advantage,
as I suppose, that you do;
for you will never enter this house unless you bring the dress
with you at the same time.

For all her concern about the dress, however, it is never returned to her. In fact, as we mentioned earlier, she does not even succeed in keeping Menaechmus from the house. He returns with his brother and prepares for an auction of his property, with his brother's slave Messenio as the auctioneer. Among the property to be auctioned off, presumably, is the dress — and, comically, his wife: *venibit — uxor quoque etiam, si quis emptor venerit (Men. 1160)*, “it will be sold — even his wife too, if any buyer comes.”

In conclusion, Matrona completely loses — even to the point of being up for sale, removed from her husband's life for good. There are several ideas that could explain this outcome. One is the simple consideration that she drove him to it. But, other wives (for example Dorippa) treat their husbands similarly and end up succeeding. Another consideration is that her husband is not truly shirking his duties. He does take up a mistress, but he performs his duties in the forum faithfully. He is not a duty-shirking *senex amator* who must be punished — he is neither old nor in the throes of love. A third possibility is that there is no young lover to succeed in his stead.⁸⁹ If he had a son who was in love with Erotium, according to the conventions of comedy Menaechmus would have to fail.

A final consideration has to do with Menaechmus' abduction and his discovery by his brother. Matrona cannot succeed in restoring her husband to his place in the home because his place is not in her home. He has another place to which he belongs and so she and all that she represents must (and can) be abandoned. Her attempt to do what Cleustrata and Artemona do in returning their husbands to their homes and their proper

⁸⁹ I leave out his twin, who actually enjoys Erotium's company. He is, obviously, the same age and, as a twin, can be considered a stand-in for Menaechmus.

roles is doomed to failure. This makes Matrona the least successful comic shrew. She does not hold power through the course of the play as Cleustrata in the *Casina* does. She does not control her husband's actions in the end as Artemona in the *Asinaria* does. She does not even inspire fear, as Dorippa in the *Mercator* does. And unlike all three of the other wives we have mentioned, she loses spectacularly in the end. It seems that Matrona's dramaturgical function is entirely dissimilar to the other three wives whose shrewish characteristics she shares. Their purposes were to bring about the restoration or maintenance of the household. Her function, in contrast, is to exhibit in her character all that Menaechmus scorns and ultimately chooses to abandon. So, for all four *matronae* that we have now considered, Plautus uses the comic shrew stereotype in their characters, all the while discounting that stereotype by the differences in their depiction and dramaturgical function.

We have now considered the characterization of those *matronae* that are described by their husbands, most of whom are *senes amatores*, as shrews. The dramaturgical functions of these wives vary from play to play and the measure of individuality that Plautus has introduced into their characterizations speaks against the stereotype imposed on the *matronae* by their husbands. Wives that are not described as shrews by their husbands are also found in Plautus and we must consider their characterization as well in order to come to a complete picture of Plautus' treatment of *uxores*.

CHAPTER 3

MATRONAE IN OTHER PLAYS

Matronae seem to fare better from their husband's point of view in plays that do not involve a *senex amator* or a husband's extramarital pursuits. Some describe this group of *matronae* as the young wives in Plautus¹ — being younger, they would supposedly be portrayed differently from the older, shrewish wives. Moore, as I have already mentioned, would characterize this group as sympathetic because they are under their husband's control.² This group of *matronae* provides the counterpart to the wives we have already considered. Whereas Cleustrata, Artemona, Dorripa, and Matrona were all described as shrews by their husbands, the *matronae* in these plays are not described by their husbands as shrews — in fact, they are not described by their husbands much at all. It is my purpose to show that these wives, although supposedly portrayed sympathetically (since they are not described harshly), also vary in their characterization. They are not simply types of the ideal, obedient wife who does not bring a dowry.³ These wives, like those in the previous chapter, also have specific dramaturgical functions within their plays and their characterizations differ.

Amphitruo

Modern scholars have variously assessed the characterization of Alcumena in the *Amphitruo*. There seems to be a split between those who view Alcumena seriously and those who view her comically. Many have considered Alcumena to be “presented

¹ See, for example, Victor Castellani, “Plautus versus *Komoidia*: popular farce at Rome,” in *Themes in Drama*, vol. 10, *Farce*, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63; C. D. N. Costa, “The *Amphitryo* Theme,” in *Roman Drama*, ed. T. A. Dorey and Donald R. Dudley (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965), 91. I disagree with this division, because Matrona in the *Menaechmi* is clearly described as a shrew, but neither she nor her husband is ever described as old.

² Moore, 159.

³ See the long soliloquies by Megadorus and Periplectomenes quoted in Chapter One (pp. 12-17).

powerfully as a tragic heroine,”⁴ a strange opinion to have of a character in one of Plautus’ plays. Those who consider Alcumena so seriously describe her with comically long lists of positive virtues. Lindberger describes her as good, faithful, unique, mature, dignified, frank, loving, kind, truthful, calm, and firm.⁵ Costa describes her as noble, dignified, sympathetic, strong, and pious.⁶ Segal calls her dutiful, loving, and obedient.⁷ Duckworth sees her as chaste, noble, and patriotic.⁸ Cutt describes her as dignified, honest, composed, strong, praiseworthy, and affectionate — a “paragon” of womanly virtue.⁹ Duckworth claims that she is closer to real life than any of Plautus’ other *matronae*.¹⁰ Lindberger and Romano both state that she “is clearly not meant to be a comic figure.”¹¹ And Costa and Lindberger both praise her as the ideal Roman *matrona*.¹²

The admirers of Plautus’ characterization of Alcumena seem to depend upon Plautus’ description of this play as a “tragi-comedy”¹³ to explain the serious depiction of Alcumena. Lindberger, for example, sees a definite split between the character of Alcumena and the rest of the play. He claims that Alcumena is treated by Plautus “with great tact,” and that she is “never put in situations where she may seem ridiculous.”¹⁴ Yet, he also asserts that “crude and drastic effects were required to keep audience interest

⁴ Kenney, 109-110.

⁵ Orjan Lindberger, *The Transformations of Amphitryon* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), 8, 15, 17.

⁶ Costa, 91-92.

⁷ Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 22.

⁸ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 257.

⁹ Thomas Cutt, ed., *Plautus: Amphitruo* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 50.

¹⁰ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 257.

¹¹ Lindberger, 8; A. C. Romano, “The *Amphitryon* Theme Again,” *Latomus* 33 (1974): 875.

¹² Costa, 91; Lindberger, 15.

¹³ See *Amph.* 59, 63; See Romano, 875.

¹⁴ Lindberger, 14.

alive,” and he praises the ability of Plautus “to introduce the delicate and grave character of Alcumena into a piece filled with burlesque pranks.”¹⁵ Forehand ends his praise of Alcumena with a comparable contradictory assessment: “(w)ithin the humorous setting a virtuous woman is unjustly abused.”¹⁶ He notes that she is mistreated, but finds no comedy in it.

There are those who do find comedy in Alcumena’s treatment, however. Perelli sees parody in Alcumena’s “tragic” monologue (lines 633-653). He asserts that the very seriousness of her utterances denotes a parody of the tragic monologue, not true tragedy — her philosophical monologue is ridiculously exaggerated, since her departing husband is only leaving for a short time.¹⁷ Perelli and others also see sexual connotations in Alcumena’s words that would preclude tragic seriousness.¹⁸

Before we turn to the description of Alcumena by others in the play and Plautus’ characterization of her in her own words and actions, it is necessary to mention one other point made by those who view Alcumena comically: she is pregnant and visibly shown to be so on stage. Phillips has pointed out that this visual effect would have been very funny and undoubtedly would have cast a comic light on whatever Alcumena might have to say in her monologue.¹⁹ Alcumena would have been portrayed on stage by a male actor wearing padding to show that she was about to deliver twins.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid., 12, 15.

¹⁶ W. E. Forehand, “Irony in Plautus’ *Amphitruo*,” *American Journal of Philology* 92 (1971): 651.

¹⁷ Luciano Perelli, “L’Alcmena Plautina: Personaggio Serio o Parodico?” *Civiltà Classica e Cristiana* 4 (1983): 384-386.

¹⁸ Ibid., 387-388; David M. Christenson, ed., *Plautus: Amphitruo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40-42; Jane E. Phillips, “Alcumena in the *Amphitruo* of Plautus: A Pregnant Lady Joke,” *Classical Journal* 80 (1985): 125-126; Erich Segal, “Perche *Amphitruo*,” *Dioniso* 46 (1975): 253, 254-255; Ekkehard Stark, “*Alcumena* und *Bis Compressa*,” in *Studien zu Plautus’ Amphitruo*, ed. Thomas Baier (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1999), 171-175.

¹⁹ Phillips, 122-123.

²⁰ Ibid.; Christenson [Christenson, 38] and Moore [Moore, 120] agree on this point.

The real proof of Alcumena's character is found in the play itself. First, as with the other *matronae* that we have considered, we must start with an investigation into how others in the play characterize Alcumena. The main characters in the play treat Alcumena with a mixture of respect and cruelty. When her husband Amphitruo comes on to the scene, he is returning home from a long battle and his first words concerning his wife are statements of their mutual love:

edepol me uxori exoptatum credo adventurum
domum,
quae me amat, quam contra amo . . . (Amph. 654-655)
 by Pollux I believe that my wife has greatly desired for me
 to come home,
 who loves me, whom I love in return . . .

He goes on moments later to remark on Alcumena's excellence of character:

Amphitruo uxorem salutat laetus speratam suam,
quam omnium Thebis vir unam esse optumam diiudicat,
quamque adeo cives Thebani vero rumiferant probam. (Amph. 676-678)
 happy Amphitruo greets his hoped for wife,
 whom her husband decides is the best one of all Thebes,
 and whom the Theban citizens so truly carry reports that she is virtuous.

Oddly enough, in spite of his great love and admiration, these are the last nice things that he says about his wife for the rest of the play. Upon returning home, he does not receive the greeting that he anticipated, because Alcumena thinks that he just left — Jupiter had just been there in his guise. When she tries to tell him that he was just there, he thinks that she has lost her mind: *haec quidem deliramenta loquitur (Amph. 696)*, “indeed she's speaking delusions.” And in the course of their conversation he goes on to question her sanity again: *delirat uxor (Amph. 727)*, “my wife is crazy.” He questions her about her character, which he had so recently praised: *num tibi aut stultitia accessit aut superat superbia? (Amph. 709)*, “now has either silliness come upon you or has pride overtaken you?” He accuses her of not being proper in her response to his homecoming:

quia salutare advenientem me solebas antidhac,
appellare itidem ut pudicae suos viros quae sunt solent.

eo more expertem te factam adveniens offendi domi. (Amph. 711-713)
because you were accustomed before now to greet me arriving,
to call again and again as those who are chaste are accustomed to call their
husbands.

I go home in the customary manner; arriving, I've found that you have
done without [the customary greeting]

Once he gets the story from her of what happened the previous night, he immediately
assumes that she is guilty of adultery:

perii miser,
quia pudicitiae huius vitium me hinc apse est additum (Amph. 810-811)

I'm dead miserable,
because an offense to her chastity has been given with me being away
He then repudiates her: *vir ego tuo 'sim? ne me appella, falsa, falso nomine (Amph. 813),*
“am I your husband? don't call me by a false name, false one.” When Alcumena denies
that she was with anyone but him the night before, he denies that she has any decency:

tun mecum fueris? quid illac inpuente audacius?
saltem, tute si pudoris egeas, sumas mutuom. (Amph. 818-819)
you were with me? what shameless thing is bolder than that?
anyhow, if you're lacking in decency, you should borrow some.

He endeavors to prove that she is lying about the previous night and threatens to divorce
her if he can prove that he was not with her:

quid si adduco tuom cognatum huc a navi Naucratem,
qui mecum una vectust una navi, atque is si denegat
facta quae tu facta dicis, quid tibi aequom est fieri?
numquid caussam dicis quin te hoc multem matrimonio? (Amph. 849-852)
what if I bring along here your relative Naucrates from the ship,
who was carried with me together on one ship, and if he denies
the deeds that you say were done, what is fair to be done for you?
can you say any reason why I shouldn't punish you from this marriage?

Near the end of the play, just before Jupiter appears to keep him from causing trouble, he
threatens to kill his wife and anyone who stands in his way:

certumst, intro rumpam in aedis: ubi quemque hominem
aspexero,

*si ancillam seu servom sive uxorem sive adulterum
seu patrem sive avom videbo, optruncabo in aedibus.* (*Amph.* 1048-1050)
it is certain, I will burst inside into the house: when I catch sight of
any human,
if I see a slave-woman or a slave or my wife or a lover
or a father or a grandfather, I will kill them in the house.

It must be said for Amphitruo that he was tricked by Jupiter and he has a legitimate claim to confusion and a right to think that something is wrong. Yet he does seem to doubt his wife rather easily — although his treatment of her may be proper to her supposed adultery, it does not seem consistent with his protestation of love for her. His response to her is overly harsh if she really had been previously trustworthy and chaste. I agree with Forehand that his accusations and judgments do seem rather “hasty.”²¹

Amphitruo is not the only character in the play to treat Alcumena harshly. Amphitruo’s slave Sosia makes several comments at Alcumena’s expense. He also implies that she is crazy, calling her a Bacchante in a frenzy:

quid vis fieri?
non tu scis? Bacchae bacchanti si velis advorsarier,
ex insana insaniorem facies, feriet saepius;
si opsequare, una resolvas plaga. (*Amph.* 702-705)
what do you want to happen?
don’t you know? if you want to resist a raging Bacchante,
you’ll render her from insane to more insane, she’ll strike more often;
if you give in, you dispel it with one blow.

He adds to this assertion of Alcumena’s craziness and rage a further comment on the probability that she will respond in anger if Amphitruo pushes her: *inritabis crabrones* (*Amph.* 707), “you’ll stir up a hornet’s nest.” Whether this is an indication that Alcumena has previously been known to go into fits of rage is indeterminable — but the remarks are anything but flattering. Sosia makes several other jokes at Alcumena’s expense, including some references to her pregnant state. When he first sees Alcumena upon their return, he has this interchange with his master:

²¹ Forehand, “Plautus’ *Amphitruo*,” 650.

SO: *Amphitruo, redire ad navem meliust nos.* AM: *qua gratia?*
 SO: *quia domi daturus nemo est prandium advenientibus.*
 AM: *qui tibi nunc istuc in mentemst?* SO: *quia enim sero advenimus.*
 AM: *qui?* SO: *quia Alcumenam ante aedis stare saturam intellego.* (Amph. 664-667)
 SO: Amphitruo, it's better that we return to the ship. AM: for what reason?
 SO: because at home no one is going to give lunch to those arriving.
 AM: how now is that into your mind? SO: because indeed we have arrived too late.
 AM: how? SO: because I perceive Alcumena standing before the house, well-fed.

Sosia makes two other joking comments about Alcumena's condition during Amphitruo's interrogation of his wife. The first is another jab at her sanity:

SO: *Amphitruo, speravi ego istam tibi parituram filium; verum non est puero gravida.* AM: *quid igitur?* SO: *insania.* (Amph. 718-719)
 SO: Amphitruo, I hoped that she would give birth to a son for you; but she's not pregnant with a boy. AM: what then? SO: insanity.

Directly after this comment, when Alcumena has scolded him, he makes another joke at her expense:

enim vero praegnati oportet et malum et malum dari ut quod obrodat sit, animo si male esse occeperit. (Amph. 723-724)
 certainly, in fact, it is right for a pregnant [woman] to be given both evil and an apple
 so that there'd be something to gnaw at, if she begins to be badly possessed of her feelings.

It is interesting to note that Amphitruo makes no protest about his wife being treated so disrespectfully by his slave. Both he and Sosia impugn Alcumena's sanity and she has become the object of cruel and comic joking.²² Jupiter and Mercury also

²² Phillips, 122; See also Castellani, 63.

contribute to this denigration of Alcumena's character. Jupiter has deceived Alcumena by pretending to be her husband and thus causing her unknowingly to commit adultery.²³ While he is thus taking advantage of her, she becomes the object of unseemly insinuations in Mercury's commentary. He refers to her as Jupiter's "*uxore usuraria*" (*Amph.* 498), which Christenson translates as "wife on loan"²⁴ — making Alcumena the object of something like a financial transaction.²⁵ Mercury adds to this an aside (to a comment made by Sosia on the unusual length of the night) that makes Alcumena comparable to a prostitute:²⁶

SO: ubi sunt isti scortatores qui soli inviti cubant?
haec nox scita est exercendo scorto conducto male.
ME: meu' pater nunc pro huius verbis recte et sapienter facit,
qui complexus cum Alcumena cubat amans, animo op-
sequens. (Amph. 287-290)

SO: where are those johns who lie alone unwilling?
 this night is suitable for using a prostitute hired at a high price.
 ME: now according to his words, my father is doing rightly and wisely,
 who, having embraced, is lying with Alcumena, loving, following his
 passions.

Plautus has made Alcumena the butt of many jokes by the other characters in the play — making it seem unlikely that he intended her to be viewed as a tragic heroine. And while Amphitruo's confusion is relieved on stage by the explanations of Jupiter, Alcumena is off stage when explanations are made. So Plautus causes the audience to see Alcumena only when she is in a state of confusion and under attack — her "psychological release" after being let in on the trick is seemingly unimportant.²⁷ The other characters,

²³ Incidentally, this is the only "successfully consummated adultery in the *palliata*" [Christenson, 37] and this makes Jupiter comparable to the *senes amatores* of other plays [see Leadbeater, 139] and makes Juno a kind of *uxor dotata* [see Romano, 878].

²⁴ Christenson, 39; See also Segal, "Perche Amphitruo," 253.

²⁵ Christenson, 39: "The gods cavalierly and crudely describe Jupiter's sexual dalliance in the language of finance . . ."

²⁶ Forehand, "Plautus' *Amphitruo*," 640; See also Christenson, 40.

²⁷ Phillips, 122.

and Plautus himself it seems, treat Alcumena as something less than a beacon of virtue and object of respect. For a complete picture of Alcumena's characterization, we must evaluate her own words and actions.

Alcumena makes her entrance as Jupiter, in the form of Amphitruo, prepares to leave. He has made the night last much longer than usual so that he could spend it in her company before her husband returns. After this long night with her, he tells her that he must depart for a short time and she is sad to see him go:

prius abis quam lectus ubi cubuisti concaluit locus.
heri venisti media nocte, nunc abis. hoccin placet? (Amph. 513-514)
you're going away before the bed, the place where you were lying, has
gotten warm.
you came yesterday in the middle of the night, now you're leaving. is
this pleasing?

Undoubtedly this sadness at his departure shows her deep love and affection for her husband, as some have noted.²⁸ This statement also reveals an element of sexual insatiability in Alcumena.²⁹ Perelli remarks that the excessive length of the night makes this insatiability seem even more crude.³⁰

Alcumena's monologue, given shortly after Jupiter leaves, continues her lamentation of her husband's sudden departure. The first part of her monologue is given over to remarks on the brief nature of life's pleasures — a direct reference to the brevity of her husband's visit:

Satin parva res est voluptatum in vita atque in aetate
agunda
praequam quod molestum est? ita quoiq' comparatum est
in aetate hominum;
ita dis est placitum, voluptatem ut maeror comes conse-
quatur:
quin incommodi plus malique ilico adsit, boni si optigit quid.

²⁸ Forehand, "Plautus' *Amphitruo*," 649; Lindberger, 17.

²⁹ Christenson, 40; Perelli, 387.

³⁰ Perelli, 387.

*nam ego id nunc experior domo atque ipsa de me scio, quoi
 voluptas
 parumper datast, dum viri [mei] mi potestas videndi fuit
 noctem unam modo; atque is repente abiit a me hinc ante
 lucem.
 sola hic mi nunc videor, quia ille hinc abest quem ego amo
 praeter omnis.
 plus aegri ex habitu viri, quam ex adventu voluptati' cepi. (Amph. 633-641)*
 Really, is there a brief occurrence of pleasures in life and in spending
 one's life,
 in comparison to what is troublesome? for each it has thus been
 prepared in the life of men;
 thus it is pleasing to the gods, that grief follows pleasure as a
 companion:
 in fact immediately there is present more of trouble and evil, if
 something good has happened.
 for I am experiencing it now at home and I myself know it concerning
 myself, to whom pleasure
 has been given just for a moment, since the power of seeing my husband
 was just for
 one night for me: and he has gone away suddenly from me, from here,
 before dawn.
 here now, to me, I seem alone, because he, whom I love before all
 is away from here.
 I have [felt] more sick from the departure of my husband, than I
 experienced pleasure from his arrival.

Some have used this monologue as evidence for the tragic stature of Alcumena's character. Lindberger remarks on the solemn tone of the monologue and the qualities of a good wife that are emphasized in its content.³¹ Costa praises the ability of Alcumena "to utter truisms which do not seem . . . to be sententious."³² Perelli sees parody in this very seriousness, this typically tragic philosophizing — since the subject of her lamentation is fairly trivial.³³

³¹ Lindberger, 8.

³² Costa, 92.

³³ Perelli, 388-389.

I agree with Perelli that the theme of Alcumena's monologue does seem a bit exaggerated. After all, her husband has left for only a short time. I think that an expectation of something comical in Alcumena's speech is also perfectly reasonable, considering that this is a play by Plautus. "Nobility and dignity are not usually thought to be the qualities that Plautus used to keep up the interest of his audience."³⁴ The repetition of the word *voluptas*, "pleasure," must be noted. In this short half of a speech, Alcumena has managed to use this word four times, in contrast to the words she uses for grief and pain, which are all different. The repetition of this word brings it to the forefront — *voluptas* is the focus of this part of the monologue. Alcumena laments that she was able to enjoy *voluptas* for only one night — making the focus here sexual pleasure, certainly not a tragic theme.³⁵

This sexual theme of Alcumena's monologue is made more humorous by her visible pregnancy, as has already been mentioned.³⁶ Her visual state also points out one aspect of the *molestum*, "trouble," that comes after pleasure.³⁷ Alcumena's monologue is essentially about sex and its pleasures and consequences. This points again to the theme of Alcumena's sexual insatiability and takes away something from Alcumena's portrayal as the model *matrona*.³⁸ She is undoubtedly a good wife, devoted to her husband — but she also appears to enjoy the pleasures of married life.³⁹ This straightforward monologue on pleasures, coupled with the visual statement of her pregnancy, probably would have been amusing rather than tragic.⁴⁰

³⁴ Phillips, 122; See also Costa's contradictory assertion that Plautus did hold the attention of his audience by portraying such a strong and dignified character [Costa, 94].

³⁵ Christenson, 41; See also Segal [Segal, "Perche Amphitruo," 253] and Phillips [Phillips, 125] on the repetition of *voluptas*.

³⁶ Phillips, 123: "The nobility and dignity of the Roman matron . . . will not be enhanced by a belly big enough to prop a supper tray on."

³⁷ Ibid., 125.

³⁸ Christenson, 40.

³⁹ See Segal, "Perche Amphitruo," 254.

⁴⁰ Phillips, 125.

The second part of Alcumena's monologue is a praise of *virtus*, a statement of her husband's bravery, and an acknowledgment that parting with him is bearable because of the service that it renders to the people:

*sed hoc me beat
saltem, quom perduellis vicit et domum laudis compos
revenit:
id solacio est.
apsit, dum modo laude parta
domum recipiat se; feram et perferam usque
abitum eiuis animo forti atque offirmato, id modo si mercedis
datur mi, ut meus victor vir belli clueat.
satis me esse ducam.
virtus praemium est optimum;
virtus omnibus rebus anteit profecto:
libertas, salus, vita, res et parentes, patria et prognati
tutantur, servantur:
virtus omnia in sese habet, omnia adsunt
bona quem penest virtus. (Amph. 641a-653)*

but this makes me happy
at least, since he has conquered enemies and has returned home
in possession of praise:

there is that for comfort.

he may be away, if only he comes home again
with acquired praise; I will bear it and I will endure even his
departure with a brave and determined mind, if only this recompense
is given to me, that my husband may be known as war's victor.

I will consider that enough for me.

valor is the best reward;

valor surpasses all things, really:

freedom, health, life, state and parents, fatherland and children

they are protected, they are saved:

valor has everything in itself, all good things are

present (if) valor is in one's possession

Phillips sees sexual connotations in this part of Alcumena's speech, noting a coarse meaning for *virtus* because of the pregnant condition of Alcumena.⁴¹ Costa sees here a

⁴¹ Phillips, 125.

“very Roman praise of *virtus*” which is made softer by the obvious love of Alcumena for her husband.⁴² Perelli notes a shift in this part of the monologue from a girl in love to a mechanical reciter of Roman patriotic values — remarking that the spouting of these praises from a woman’s mouth makes for parody.⁴³ There is some merit in each of these three views. Even if there is no sexual connotation in *virtus*, the shift from pleasures to patriotism is in itself amusing. In this half of the monologue the word repeated four times is *virtus*, making it the focus here and bringing it into comparison or apposition with *voluptas*. Alcumena has been described as *pia*,⁴⁴ and the denial of self and pleasure for the good of the state is the height of *pietas*. No doubt a Roman audience would have been amused by Alcumena’s lamentation of her loss of sexual pleasure for the good of the state.

After Alcumena’s monologue, she catches sight of Amphytrion. Though she does say that she is glad to see him, she does not seem overjoyed at his quick return and even suspects that he may be trying to test her:

*nam quid ill’ revortitur
qui dudum properare se[se] aibat? an ille me temptat sciens
atque id se volt experiri, suum abitum ut desiderem?
ecce Castor me haud invita se domum recipit suam. (Amph. 660-663)*

now why is he returning
who just now was saying that he was going quickly? or is he aware of
something, testing me
and does he want to find out for himself, how I miss him having left?
by Castor it’s hardly unwelcome to me him bringing himself back home.

One almost gets the impression from the beginning of this speech that she is a bit sad that she could spend no more time on her dramatic lamentations at his departure, since he has now returned. She goes on to remark that it is her duty to meet him: *magis nunc <me> meum officium facere, si huic eam adversum, arbitror. (Amph. 675)*, “now I suppose that

⁴² Costa, 93.

⁴³ Perelli, 390-391.

⁴⁴ Costa, 92.

I do my duty more, if I should go to meet him.” There is, no doubt, something praiseworthy in Alcumena’s devotion to duty,⁴⁵ but it hardly seems the response of a woman in rapture at the speedy return of her husband. Amphytrou is returning home for what he believes is the first time, and Alcumena believes is the second time. She proceeds to question him directly on why he is returning so soon (lines 689-691) and their mutual confusion causes Amphytrou to question, doubt, and accuse his wife. In response to both his and Sosia’s questions and accusations, she asserts and reasserts her assaulted sanity:

equidem sana sum . . . (Amph. 720)

indeed I am sane . . .

equidem ecastor sana et salva sum. (Amph. 730)

indeed, by Castor, I am sane and well.

And she, in turn, accuses them of lying when they accuse her: *AM: quid nunc, mulier? audin illum? AL: ego vero, ac falsum dicere (Amph. 755)*, “AM: what now, woman? do you hear him? AL: surely I do, and [I hear him] speak a lie.” She brings out the bowl given to her by Jupiter as proof that Amphytrou had been there. He questions her more closely and she goes into a step by step recounting of the previous night for him:

ain heri nos advenisse huc? AL: aio, adveniensusque ilico

me salutavisti, et ego te, et osculum tetuli tibi.

AM: iam illud non placet principium de osculo. perge

exsequi.

AL: lavisti. AM: quid postquam lavi? AL: accubuisti.

SO: eugae optume!

nunc exquire. AM: ne interpella. perge porro dicere.

AL: cena adposita est; cenavisti mecum, ego accubui simul.

AM: in eodem lecto? AL: in eodem. SO: ei, non placet

convivium.

AM: sine modo argumenta dicat. quid postquam cenavimus?

AL: te dormire aibas; mensa ablata est, cubitum hinc

abiimus.

AM: ubi te cubuisti? AL: in eodem lecto tecum una in

cubiculo. (Amph. 799-808)

you say that we arrived here yesterday? AL: yes, and arriving

⁴⁵ See Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 22.

the technically correct nature of her utterances here⁴⁸ is more than ironic, as Forehand states⁴⁹ — it is hilarious. She most surely should fear Juno, since Jupiter has been sleeping with her — and, technically speaking, no “mortal” has touched her but her husband. This is humor at Alcumena’s expense — she does not realize that what she is saying is only technically correct, but the audience does. So, she becomes the butt of the joke that she unwittingly makes. It does not seem that Plautus is treating her so gently.

Amphitruo goes on to accuse her of swearing boldly (line 836) and she claims that she should be bold:

*quae non deliquit, decet
audacem esse, confidenter pro se et proterve loqui. (Amph. 836-837)*
she who has not committed an offense, ought
to be bold, to confidently and brazenly speak for herself.

McDonnell sees in this a sign of sexual role reversal — Alcumena is claiming the masculine traits of *audacia* and *confidentia*.⁵⁰ According to McDonnell, this is aggressive language with negative connotations, typical to *uxores dotatae* and *meretrices*, not model *matronae*.⁵¹ He goes on to assert that this claim to the traits of a free male makes Alcumena “noble”⁵² — a remark that seems to contradict the negative implications that he just gave her claim. He states further that Alcumena must immediately resume her claims to feminine virtues if she is to remain a sympathetic character and not be mistaken for a shrew.⁵³ While this argument is interesting, we should note that McDonnell is setting up this idea of a role reversal to help his argument that women in Plautus’ time could not initiate divorce. I doubt that Alcumena, for all her claims to these “masculine” traits,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 640; Christenson, 32.

⁴⁹ Forehand, “Plautus’ *Amphitruo*,” 640.

⁵⁰ McDonnell, 63.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 64.

⁵³ Ibid.

would have — at the point of giving birth to twins — been thought of as masculine by any in the audience.

Claiming these traits, however, does seem to conflict with her subsequent claims to the feminine virtues of an ideal *matrona*.⁵⁴

*non ego illam mi dotem duco esse quae dos dicitur
sed pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupedinem,
deum metum, parentum amorem et cognatum concordiam,
tibi morigera atque ut munifica sim bonis, prosim probis. (Amph. 839-842)*
I do not account that as my dowry which is called a dowry,
but chastity and modesty and sedated desire,
fear of the gods, love of parents and its equal — harmony,
so that I might be submissive to you and generous with good things,
so that I might be good for what is virtuous.

There is a touch of irony here, since the audience might not be inclined, from what they have heard up to this point, to think that Alcumena really does have her desires in check.⁵⁵ Also, without her knowledge, Alcumena's chastity and modesty have been compromised⁵⁶ — another fact that the audience would recognize and perhaps find amusing. Adding to the humor that may be found here is Sosia's immediate comment on what Alcumena has claimed: *ne ista edepol, si haec vera loquitur, examussum est optuma* (*Amph.* 843), "by Pollux, if this one's speaking the truth, surely she's the best." I agree with Christenson that this remark from Sosia "seems to undermine any possible *gravitas* here"⁵⁷ — another joke at Alcumena's expense.

When Amphitruo and Sosia leave, Alcumena decides that she has had enough:

*non edepol faciam, neque me perpetiar probri
falso insimulatam, quin ego illum aut deseram
aut sati' faciat mi ille atque adiuret insuper
nolle esse dicta quae in me insontem protulit. (Amph. 887-890)*

⁵⁴ See Segal, "Perche Amphitruo," 256.

⁵⁵ Christenson, 42.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 43.

by Pollux I won't do it, nor will I keep myself here, accused
with this false reproach, indeed I will either leave him
or he will make it up to me and swear besides
that he didn't want those things said that he brought forth
against innocent me.

Jupiter has now returned to the scene in an attempt to straighten out the confusion and trouble that his dalliance have caused. In conversation with Jupiter, dressed as Amphytrion, Alcmena pronounces her "divorce formula."⁵⁸

*nunc, quando factis me inpudicis abstini,
ab inpudicis dictis avorti volo.
valeas, tibi habeas res tuas, reddas meas. (Amph. 926-928)*
now, since I have refrained from unchaste deeds,
I want to turn away from unchaste words.
goodbye, may you have your things, may you return mine.

McDonnell sees here another sexual role reversal and masculine behavior in Alcmena's utterance of the divorce formula (line 928).⁵⁹ Rosenmeyer, trying to prove a different point concerning divorce in Plautus' day, sees in Alcmena's pronouncement a feminizing of the divorce formula because of Alcmena's use of the jussive (a request) rather than the imperative (a command).⁶⁰ Whether you look at Alcmena's behavior as being masculine or feminine here, the divorce does not hold — you cannot divorce someone who is not your spouse, after all.⁶¹ Alcmena returns to the house an obedient wife. To Jupiter/Amphytrion's order to prepare for sacrifice, Alcmena responds: *ego istuc curabo (Amph. 949)*, "I will take care of that."

Other than Amphytrion's assertion that his wife is excellent (lines 678-680), there are few other comments from other characters on Alcmena's irreproachable nature. Jupiter remarks on her innocence (line 869) and Bromia, the slave, testifies to Amphytrion that his wife is exemplary: *at ego faciam . . . piam et pudicam esse tuam uxorem ut scias*

⁵⁸ McDonnell, 65; Rosenmeyer, 209.

⁵⁹ McDonnell, 65.

⁶⁰ Rosenmeyer, 214-215.

⁶¹ Ibid., 215.

(*Amph.* 1085-1086), “but I will make it . . . so that you know that your wife is loyal and chaste.” The main singer of her praises within the play is Alcumena herself. Surely she is a good wife, and perhaps under-appreciated, but there is something comical in the fact that she is the one who must repeat her own virtues again and again. It is unlikely that Plautus wanted his audience to see in her a tragic heroine.⁶² Plautus “is not abandoning comedy in the character of Alcumena so that he can offer us a serious portrait of the ideal Roman wife and mother.”⁶³

Alcumena is a complex character, but she is nonetheless funny — the unknowing butt of numerous jokes. By the nature of her position, she has several dramaturgical functions. She brings a novel amusement by her very presence on stage, since she appears there largely pregnant — the only pregnant character to appear on stage in the extant plays of Greek or Roman comedy.⁶⁴ She is essential to the comedy and confusion of the play because she is the most integral part of the depicted love triangle. Finally, as revealed by Jupiter to Amphitruo at the play’s conclusion (lines 1135-1136), she is necessary as the mother of Jupiter’s son.

Cistellaria

The character of Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria* is not nearly as complex as the character of Alcumena. This comedy is a rather straightforward recognition comedy and, for that reason, is attributed to Plautus’ early phase — before he became more boisterous.⁶⁵ Both Duckworth and Beare call this play a sentimental comedy⁶⁶ — and the character of Phanostrata likewise seems to be sentimental. The deity Auxilium describes her background in the delayed prologue. She was raped years ago, during the festival of Dionysus, by a man visiting from Lemnos, who left her pregnant (lines 156-163) and

⁶² See Christenson, 43.

⁶³ Phillips, 126.

⁶⁴ Christenson, 38.

⁶⁵ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 148; Beare, *Roman Stage*, 62.

dishonored.⁶⁷ She was forced to abandon the child with the help of a slave, since she did not know who the baby's father was (lines 164-166). The man who raped her has now returned and married her (lines 177-179) and so restored her to her rightful place in society.⁶⁸ A search is made for the missing child (lines 182-188) who can now be restored to her place in society as well.

The prologue tells us that the husband, Demipho, has ordered the search for his daughter (line 182), but Phanostrata is the one shown actively engaged in the search for their child. Demipho only appears at the very end of the play (line 774) when he has found out that his daughter has been discovered. In her active search for her lost child, Phanostrata seems concerned about any news or progress in the investigation. Lampadio, the slave who helped her abandon the girl, has been looking for the woman who retrieved the baby. When he returns to his mistress with an update, Phanostrata eagerly questions him:

*PH: quid id est? LA: hinc ex hisce aedibus paullo prius
vidi exeuntem mulierem — PH: illam quae meam
gnatam sustulerat? (Cist. 546-548)*

PH: what is it? LA: from here, from this house, a little while ago
I saw a woman going out — PH: the one that took up
my daughter?

*PH: age perge, quaeso. animus audire expetit
ut gesta res sit. (Cist. 554-555)*

PH: go on, continue, please. my mind is demanding to hear
how the thing was done.

When he tells her what he has found out from the woman who took her daughter, she scolds him for not doing more:

quoi illam dedisset exquisisse oportuit. (Cist. 574)
it was right to have found out to whom she had given her.

at non missam oportuit. (Cist. 584)
but it wasn't right to let her go.

⁶⁷ See Konstan, *Roman Comedy*, 112.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

She is concerned when Lampadio tells her that her child had been taken in by a prostitute: *an, amabo, meretrix illa est quae illam sustulit?* (Cist. 564), “or, please — she is a prostitute, the one who picked her up?” In spite of any questions or concerns that she might have, however, Phanostrata trusts Lampadio to take care of the situation, since he would recognize the woman who took her daughter:

*PH: quid nunc vis facere me? LA: intro abi atque animo
bono es.*

*vir tuo' si veniet, iube domi opperirier,
ne in quaestione mihi sit, si quid eum velim.
ego ad anum recurro rusum. PH: Lampadio, opsecro,
cura. LA: perfectum ego hoc dabo negotium.
PH: deos teque spero. (Cist. 591-596)*

PH: what do you want me to do now? LA: go inside and
cheer up.

if your husband comes, have him wait,
so there won't be an investigation for me, if I want him for anything.
I am running back to the old woman. PH: Lampadio, I beg you,
take care of this. LA: I'll make this business perfect.
PH: I hope in the gods and you.

Surely this shows Phanostrata's deep concern that her daughter be found. It also shows that her slave is being allowed to act like he is the master, probably because of his importance in finding her daughter. He gives orders to her and her husband and she does not seem to notice or care that this is inappropriate to his position. All that matters is what he can do to help her search.

Melaenis, the prostitute who has been treating Phanostrata's daughter as her own, overhears their conversation and decides to give up Selenium to her rightful parents. In this process of returning the girl, Melaenis' slave Halisca brings out and accidentally leaves the small box (*cistella*) — found with Selenium when she was abandoned — in front of Phanostrata's house. Phanostrata recognizes the box and its contents as belonging to her daughter, though Lampadio mocks her certainty:

PH: di, opsecro vostram fidem —
LA: quid deos opsecras? PH: servate nos. LA: quid est?
PH: crepundia
haec sunt, quibu'cum tu extulisti nostram filiolum ad necem.
LA: sanane es? PH: haec sunt profecto. LA: pergin?
PH: haec sunt. LA: si mihi
alia mulier istoc pacto dicat, dicam esse ebriam.
PH: non ecastor falsa memoro. (Cist. 664-668)
PH: gods, I beg your protection —
LA: why are you begging the gods? PH: save us. LA: what is it?
PH: these are the
toys, with which you carried out my little daughter to death.
LA: are you sane? PH: these are really the ones. LA: go on . . . ?
PH: these are the ones. LA: if
another woman were speaking in that way to me, I'd say she was drunk.
PH: by Castor, I'm not telling lies.

It is interesting to note that Phanostrata seems to be ignoring the snide remarks of her slave yet again — probably because she is in rapture at discovering her daughter's toys. It is also interesting that Lampadio, who placed the toys with the child when he abandoned her, does not recognize them. Phanostrata's memory of them is necessary for the recognition of the toys and the subsequent recognition of her daughter.

When the slave Halisca comes to look for the little box, Phanostrata and Lampadio question her. Phanostrata is kind to Halisca, twice asking Lampadio to stop interrupting the poor girl (lines 734, 751). She feels sorry for her when Halisca fears the trouble she will be in for losing the box: *at me huius miseret (Cist. 769)*, "but I feel sorry for her." She calms the girl's worries about the missing box and asks for her help:

PH: commodo loquela tua tibi nunc prodes. confitemur
cistellam habere. HA: at vos Salus servassit! ubi ea nunc
est?
PH: salvam eccam. sed ego rem meam magnam confabulari
tecum volo: sociam te mihi adopto ad meam salutem. (Cist. 741-744)
PH: conveniently for you you're coming out with your speech now.
we confess having the little box. HA: but Safety has preserved you!
where is it now?

PH: here it is, safe. but I want to discuss a great concern of mine
with you: I adopt you as a companion for me for my welfare.

When Halisca gives her the information she needs about her daughter, she rejoices: *quod quaeritabam, filiam inveni meam*. (Cist. 759), “that which I have been seeking, I have found — my daughter.”

Phanostrata’s situation inspires compassion. Her life had been destroyed when she was raped and left by her rapist without prospects for legitimate marriage. She does not mention her husband in any way during the course of the play, and nothing is said about the negative effects that his actions toward her may have had. She seems to be content in her role as his wife — his return and marriage to her legitimized her situation. Once she finds her daughter she will have regained all that she had lost.

Phanostrata has two major dramaturgical functions in the *Cistellaria*. She is the one who keeps in touch with the investigation of her daughter’s whereabouts — controlling the search through Lampadio. This search takes precedence in the play over the lovers — Selenium, her daughter, and Alcesimarchus — and they are removed from view while the focus shifts to Phanostrata and her mission. Also, Phanostrata is the one who recognizes her daughter’s toys. Lampadio has been in search of the woman who took the girl, but it turns out to be the wrong woman; Melaenis has decided to return the girl, but has not managed to get her back to the house. It is necessary for Selenium’s recognition that Phanostrata be able to identify the toys — through her identification, Selenium will be able to regain her position and the two lovers will be able to marry. So Phanostrata, who had been restored to her position by her marriage, now restores her daughter.

Stichus

The two *matronae* in the *Stichus* are sisters who only appear in the first half of the play. The older sister is named Panegyris; the younger sister probably had no name,⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Duckworth, “Unnamed Characters,” 274-275. The sister’s name does not appear in the play, but is in the scene headings of some manuscripts. Duckworth argues that “Pamphila” is probably spurious because of its similarity to her husband’s name, Pamphilippus.

though her name is sometimes given as Pamphila. The two sisters are different in their characterization and I will consider them separately.

The character of “Soror” is transparent and easily defined. Arnott argues that she gains prominence over her sister because of her uncompromising views on duty: she reveals her character through her vocabulary and her obsessive use of moral terminology.⁷⁰ Owens asserts that she is meant to represent the Roman ideal of the *matrona* because of her concern about domestic obligations.⁷¹ Roussin describes her as the sister more devoted to her husband.⁷² Soror’s character is one-sided. Her only concern is with duty. She is not merely concerned about doing her own duty, but she is obsessed with the whole idea of duty. She worries about whether or not she will be able to do her duty and she is worried about whether or not other people are doing their duty.

Soror shows a personal obsession with her own duty in her entrance. In response to her sister’s concerns about their husbands’ absence, she does not express sorrow or love or loneliness — only duty:

*nostrum officium
nos facere aequomst
neque id magi’ facimus
quam nos monet pietas. (Stich. 7-8)*
it is right that
we do our duty
and that we do not do that more
than *pietas* advises us.

In this short statement, she repeats three words related to duty: *officium*, *aequum*, and *pietas*.⁷³ When she mentions to her sister that their father has in mind to take them home and give them to other husbands, she is horrified by the idea and thinks that their father is

⁷⁰ Geoffrey W. Arnott, “Targets, Techniques, and Tradition in Plautus’ *Stichus*,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 19 (1972): 57.

⁷¹ William M. Owens, “Plautus’ *Stichus* and the Political Crisis of 200 B.C.,” *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000): 392-393.

⁷² Andre Roussin, *Essai sur le Comique de Plaute* (Monaco: Les Editions de L’Imprimerie Nationale de Monaco, 1956), 144-145.

⁷³ See Arnott, “Targets, Techniques, and Tradition,” 57.

terrible for thinking or suggesting it:

*sed hoc, soror, crucior,
patrem tuum meumque adeo, unice qui unus
civibus ex omnibus probus perhibetur,
eum nunc inprobi viri officio uti,
viris qui tantas absentibus nostris
facit iniurias inmerito
nosque ad eis abducere volt.
haec res vitae me, soror, saturant (Stich. 11-18)*

but I am tortured, sister, by this,
that your father, and even mine, who is regarded
as the one and only decent man from all the citizens,
he is now playing the part of a shameful man,
he who is causing such injustices to our absent
husbands, undeservedly,
and wants to take us away from them.
these things, sister, are making me fed up with life

She is reluctant to claim her own father because he has suggested that she leave her husband and so abandon her duty to him. She is grief-stricken to the point of melodrama. She exaggerates her father's supposed stature — “the one and only decent man” — to make this deed all the more dreadful. The phrase, *unice . . . unus*, also elicits thoughts of the Roman ideal of the *univira*, which Soror is clearly advocating.⁷⁴

When her sister expresses her own willingness to give in to their father's demands because their husbands have been gone so long and do not write or return, Soror scolds her and forbids her to speak about it:

*PAM:*⁷⁵ *an id doles, soror, quia illi suum officium
non colunt, quom tu tuum facis? PAN: ita pol.*
*PAM: tace sis, cave sis audiam ego istuc
posthac ex te. (Stich. 34-38)*
PAM: or are you grieved therefore, sister, since they

⁷⁴ See discussion in Arnott, “Targets, Techniques, and Traditions,” 59 and Owens, 393. This ideal for the Roman *matrona* stipulates that she marry only once and remain unmarried if her husband were to die or divorce her.

⁷⁵ The Oxford text gives the character the name Pamphila.

do not honor their duty, when you do yours? PAN: yes,
by Pollux.

PAM: you be quiet, and don't let me hear that
from you in the future.

She goes on to lecture her sister about the proper way to think and warns her to do her
duty:

*quia pol meo animo omnis sapientis
suom officium aequom est colere et facere.
quam ob rem ego te hoc, soror, tam etsi es maior,
moneo ut tuom memineris officium:
etsi illi improbi sint atque aliter
nos faciant quam aequomst, tam pol,
ne quid magi' sit, omnibus obnix opibus
nostrum officium meminisse decet. (Stich. 39-46)*
since, by Pollux, in my opinion, it is right that all
sensible people honor and do their duty.
for which reason I warn you about this, sister, even if
you are older, that you remember your duty:
even if they may be shameful and treat us
otherwise than what is right, even so by Pollux,
lest there be anything more (shameful), in all of our deeds
it is proper to obstinately remember our duty.

Even after her sister quickly acquiesces, Soror goes on to remind her one more time: *at
memineris facito (Stich. 47)*, “but see to it that you remember.” Soror is not exhibiting
here the ideals of a Roman matron — she is showing an absolute obsession. Her sister
might be inclined to say almost anything to end her tirade on duty.

In the conversation that follows with their father, she maintains her focus. In an
effort to persuade him, the sisters fawn over him when he comes in (lines 88-95). When
he tells them to stop, Soror takes this as an opportunity to remark on their duty to him
and to their absent husbands:

*numquam enim nimi' curare possunt suom parentem
filiae.
quem aequiust nos potiore habere quam te? postidea,
pater,*

viros nostros, quibus tu voluisti esse nos matres familias. (Stich. 96-98)
for daughters are never able to care too much for their

father.

whom is it fitting that we consider more important than you?

after that, father,

our husbands, to whom you wanted us to be *matres familias*.

Her mention here of *mater familias* suggests her proper role in the household and the sanctity of that role. When her father remarks that they are good wives to their absent husbands, Soror mentions another feminine virtue that they are upholding in their attention to duty: *pudicitia*, *pater* (Stich. 100), “it is chastity, father.” Their father asks what they think are the best qualities in a wife, under the pretext that he is searching for a new wife since their mother died. Soror gives two characteristics, both of which show a fixation on what is fitting:

ut, per urbem

quom ambulent,

omnibus os opturent, ne quis merito male dicat sibi. (Stich. 113-114)

that, when they (good wives)

walk through the city,

they shut everyone up, lest anyone deservedly speak badly of them.

ut cottidie

pridie caveat ne faciat quod pigeat postridie. (Stich. 121-122)

that she daily

watches out lest she do the day before what will cause pain the day after.

It is also interesting to note that Soror seems troubled that her father would seek a new wife. She says concerning her mother:

facile invenies et peiorem et peius moratam, pater,

quam illa fuit: meliorem neque tu reperies neque sol videt. (Stich. 109-110)

you will easily find one both worse and more badly mannered, father,

than she was: you will neither find, nor does the sun see, a better.

It seems that her ideas of only marrying once carry over to her father as well.

When he finally brings up his recommendation that they leave their husbands and return to his house, Soror lectures her father on what he should and should not do:

*nam aut olim, nisi tibi placebant, non datas oportuit
aut nunc non aequomst abduci, pater, illisce apsentibus.* (Stich. 130-131)
for, either it was not fitting for us to have been given at the time,
unless they were pleasing to you,
or now it is not right (for us) to be taken away, father, while they're gone.

When her father makes the weak argument that their husbands are poor, Soror responds with the eloquent: *non tu me argento dedisti, opinor, nuptum, sed viro.* (Stich. 136), "you didn't give me in marriage to money, I suppose, but to a man." Their father is won over by these arguments. He has no reply to such "unassailable virtue."⁷⁶

Soror is comical in her repetition of the same words and ideas. Plautus has given her one main characteristic that has swallowed all other considerations — everything is consumed by her allegiance to duty. Dramaturgically, her obsession brings many opportunities for comedy. Arnott has remarked that subsequent repetitions of these "duty" words provide humor because their usage in a different context will likely be inappropriate and therefore funny when compared to their previous usage by Soror.⁷⁷ Also, by her repetition of the same words and ideas, her character becomes a caricature. She is an object of mockery as a result of her obsession. However, her fixation is necessary dramaturgically because she keeps her sister from giving in to their father's wishes and then keeps her father from taking them home. Since she is able to persuade both her sister and her father, the daughters' marriages remain intact — which turns out to be convenient when their husbands return shortly thereafter, having become wealthy from their travels.

Panegyris is very different from her sister. She also awaits the return of their husbands, but she does not have her sister's strong sense of duty. She is the older sister and the one who speaks first, but she has the weaker, more flexible constitution.⁷⁸ Panegyris is given to complaint and seems amenable to a change in their situation. She is

⁷⁶ Owens, 394.

⁷⁷ Arnott, "Targets, Techniques, and Traditions," 59.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 57.

easily swayed by her sister, however, and is compelled to accept Soror's views on the matter.

In her first line, Panegyris mentions Penelope — an indication that she, at least, sees their situation in a tragic light:

*Credo ego miseram
fuisse Penelopam,
soror, suo ex animo,
quae tam diu vidua
viro suo caruit (Stich. 1-3)*
I believe that Penelope
was miserable,
sister, from the bottom of her heart,
she who was without her husband
for such a long time, a widow

She connects Penelope's situation with their own as they wait for their husbands:

*nam nos eius animum
de nostris factis noscimus, quarum viri hinc ap sunt,
quorumque nos negotiis apsentum, ita ut aequom est,
sollicitae noctes et dies, soror, sumu' semper. (Stich. 3a-6)*
for we know her spirit
from our deeds, whose husbands are away from here,
and being absent, whose business, thus, as it is right,
we are worried about day and night, sister, always.

She complains here about having to manage the household and her husband's affairs while he is gone, having constant worry. Her speech gives the impression that she would rather not be doing what is right — she is weary of it.

When her sister launches into her speech of distress concerning their father's intention to take them away, Panegyris seeks to comfort her in her grief:

*ne lacruma, soror, neu tuo id animo
fac quod tibi tuos pater facere minatur:
spes est eum melius factuturm.
novi ego illum: ioculo istuc dicit (Stich. 20-23)*
don't cry, sister, don't do in your mind

that which your father threatens to do to you:
there is hope that he will do better.
I know him: he says that as a little joke

Shortly after she comforts her sister, however, she shows her own willingness to give in to their father's request:

*tamen si faciat, minime irasci
debet neque id inmerito eveniet.
nam viri nostri domo ut abierunt
hic tertius annus — (Stich. 27-30)*
however, if he should do it, it is not at all
fitting to be angry nor will it happen undeservedly.
for this is the third year while our husbands
have gone away from home —

Her statement that this removal from their husbands is deserved directly contradicts her sister's claim that their husbands do not deserve the "injustice" of having their wives taken away (line 16). Panegyris seems to have a grip on reality that her sister lacks — it is unlikely that their husbands are going to return. When Soror asks if Panegyris is upset because she has to do her duty while their husbands neglect their own, she replies in the affirmative: *ita pol* (Stich. 36), "yes, by Pollux" — at which point her sister scolds her. Panegyris quickly gives in to her sister's strong feelings on the matter: *placet: taceo*. (Stich. 47), "ok: I'm shutting up."

Panegyris nonetheless goes on to explain her feelings:

*nolo ego, soror, me credi esse inmemorem viri,
neque ille eos honores mihi quos habuit perdidit;
nam pol mihi grata acceptaque huius benignitas.
et me quidem haec condicio nunc non paenitet
neque est quae studeam has nuptias mutarier;
verum postremo in patri' potestate est situm:
faciendum id nobis quod parentes imperant. (Stich. 48-54)*
I don't want to be thought unmindful of my husband, sister,
nor has he lost those charms which he had for me;
for, by Pollux, his kindness to me is pleasing and welcome.
and indeed I do not now regret this marriage

nor is there (any reason) why I should be eager to change this marriage;
but, at last, it is dependent on our father's power:
that which parents order for us must be done.

This speech is bracketed in the text because it is not found in all manuscripts, but I think that it fits quite well with Panegyris' character. She wants to assure her sister that she feels the same as her sister, but also to mention again her willingness to give in to their father's wishes. She no longer tries to argue that it makes sense to give in because their husbands deserve it, but approaches the subject in a way that her sister can understand. She couches the suggestion in the language of obligation and obedience.

Panegyris gives further evidence that she is non-confrontational, preferring capitulation or persuasion, when she presents her opinion on the best way to deal with their father:

pati

*nos oportet quod ille faciat, quodius potestas plus potest.
exorando, haud advorsando sumendam operam censeo:
gratiam per si petimus, spero ab eo impetrassere;
advorsari sine dedecore et scelere summo hau possumus,
neque equidem id factura neque tu ut facias consilium
dabo,
verum ut exoremus. novi ego nostros: exorabilest. (Stich. 68-74)*

it is fitting

that we endure what he would do, whose power has more influence.
I think our work must be undertaken by entreating, not by opposing:
if we seek it through charm, I hope that it will be obtained from him;
we are not able to oppose him without disgrace and the worst wickedness,
I am not about to do it nor do I counsel that you should do it,
but that we entreat. I know our people: he is sympathetic.

In this speech, Panegyris reveals her way of seeing things. Her sister acts solely on duty, but Panegyris prefers manipulation. She knows that the best way to address her sister is through an appeal to what is proper. To avoid argument, she agrees with her sister's plan to change their father's mind. She repeats again her willingness to give in to their father's wishes — enclosing her position in a sense of duty, so that her sister cannot protest.

This is also the third time she has repeated the idea of giving in to their father's wishes. It seems as if Panegyris would rather go home and try her luck with a new husband.

The two characteristics of a good wife that she provides, at her father's request, are also indicative of her character:

quoi male faciundi est potestas, quae ne id faciat

temperat. (Stich. 117)

she for whom there is the power of acting badly, who exercises
restraint, lest she do it.

quae tamen, quom res secundae sunt, se poterit gno-

scere,

et illa quae aequo animo patietur sibi esse peius quam fuit. (Stich. 124-125)

who yet, when things are favorable, will be able to know

herself,

and she who will suffer with a calm spirit that which is worse for her
than it was.

Both of these statements are about the necessity of doing what one must do when one could do otherwise, bearing up under temptation or bad circumstance. Panegyris alludes to her own suffering and her reluctant submission to do what she ought.

However reluctant she may be, she is true to her promise to her sister that she will regard her duty and she provides her own arguments for not remarrying. When their father suggests giving them to other husbands, she protests that it will not work:

stultitiast, pater, venatum ducere invitas canes.

hostis est uxor invita quae ad virum nuptum datur. (Stich. 139-140)

it is foolish, father, to lead unwilling dogs to the hunt.

an unwilling wife who is given to a man in marriage is an enemy.

When her father asks if they are being disobedient, she denies it: *persequimur, nam quo dedisti nuptum abire nolumus. (Stich. 142)*, "we are following (your command), for we do not want to leave the one to whom you gave us in marriage."

Panegyris has become an ally in her sister's quest to maintain devotion to their husbands. Her initial portrayal provides a slight contrast to her sister's obsession to duty — to show Soror's character more clearly. Once her sister persuades her, she assists in

winning over their father, helping to prevent the dissolution of their marriages. Their concern about being compelled to leave their husbands proves to be groundless, however, because their husbands soon return home.⁷⁹ Panegyris appears later to receive the news that their husbands have returned (lines 334-396) — obtaining the good news that she and her sister have been hoping would come.

Just as the *matronae* described as stereotypical shrews by their husbands varied in their characterization, so these wives who are not so portrayed have differing characterizations. All are sympathetic, but they are not portrayed in the same way. Although Alcumena in the *Amphitruo* loves her husband, she loves her honor more — and almost leaves him because it has been impugned. Although Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria* relied on her marriage to regain her status, she is the one who took the initiative in restoring her daughter. Although the sisters in the *Stichus* wait patiently — or not so patiently — for their husbands' return, they compel their father to give in to their wishes. This group of *matronae* are not simply ideal, obedient wives — each takes some initiative and acts independently, contrary to the notion that they are “comfortably and emphatically under the control of their husbands.”⁸⁰ Plautus has varied their characterizations to give them something approaching personality — they are dramaturgically necessary within the plays, not simple monuments to their husbands' authority.

⁷⁹ Owens, 394.

⁸⁰ Moore, 159.

CONCLUSION

I have separated Plautus' *matronae* into two groups — those described by other characters as shrews and those not so described. It is my position that this difference in description by the other characters is a function of plot — those *matronae* in love triangle plays are described as shrews, those in other plays are not. Other labels or divisions of Plautus' *matronae* face difficulties because they are based on stereotypical classifications: age, control, or dowry.

It will not work to argue, for example, that some *matronae* are portrayed more favorably than others because they are young. Costa has described a “small group of young wives to which Alcmena belongs.”¹ But this group of young wives must also include Matrona from the *Menaechmi* — and, although she is young, her characterization is completely unlike the other young wives. Furthermore, Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria* is not young, but she is not described unfavorably — as are all of the other older wives in Plautus. It is possible to divide the *matronae* by age, but Matrona and Phanostrata are completely different from the other characters in their age groups.

Moore's statement that wives portrayed sympathetically are under the control of their husbands² is helpful — especially with regard to dowry and the control of wealth. Yet this classification, like the one based on age, also has faults. Cleustrata in the *Casina* — who is by no means portrayed sympathetically by her husband — has no dowry to give her leverage, is in a marriage *cum manu*, and restores her husband's authority. Alcmena in the *Amphitruo*, whom Moore presents as an example of a wife under her husband's control, threatens her husband with divorce and only submits to him when her honorable character is properly respected. Classifying the *matronae* on the level of their

¹ Costa, 91.

² Moore, 159.

husband's control, would group Cleustrata — who is described as a shrew, but is willing to submit to her husband's authority — with the sisters in the *Stichus*. Panegyris and her sister, who are not comparable to Cleustrata in any other way, also choose to remain under their husbands' authority — although they are given the option of leaving.

Moore has remarked that the “wives who receive the most severe lampooning in Plautus are those who have brought their husbands large dowries.”³ While this statement has some merit, it is not entirely true. Plautus' *matronae* may be classified based on whether or not they are dowered — with the *uxor dotata* as the stereotypical shrew. Yet, Cleustrata in the *Casina* is the constant object of her husband's insults and she is undowered; and Alcumena in the *Amphitruo*, who claims to have no dowry but her respectable character,⁴ is the butt of jokes, the object of cruel comments, and is made to play the fool before the audience. The “lampooning” of *matronae* is not restricted to the dowered.

Dividing Plautus' *matronae* into two groups based on any of these stereotypical assumptions is destined to fail. There is a difference in the portrayal of Plautus' *matronae* — with some *matronae* described by other characters as shrews and some not. But this difference is a function of plot requirements. The stereotypical description of the *matronae* as shrews, which is offered by the other characters, is not validated. Plautus has presented the stereotype through these other characters, but he undermines it through the characterizations of the *matronae*.

This is not to say that Plautus was concerned with undermining the stereotype in each of the aspects that I have presented. It is unlikely that he made Matrona in the *Menaechmi* young and Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria* older for the purpose of creating problems with the stereotype. What his characterization of the *matronae* shows is that he was not making his characters conform to a type — he was not following a blueprint of design for his *matronae*. The purpose behind the presentation of the stereotype

³ Moore, 159; Duckworth also connects shrewish portrayal with dowered status [Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 255-256].

⁴ See *Amph.* 839-842.

through the other characters is comedy. Moore and Duckworth have both noted that the characters harping on the faults of these *matronae* are fallible and laughable.⁵ The husbands who describe their wives as shrews are usually adulterous; there is humor in Megadorus' lengthy list of the problems with dowered wives — and in the approval this speech elicits from the miser Euclio (*Aul.* 475-535). The shrew stereotype is only present when it contributes to the comedy of the play.

Likewise, each *matrona* is created to fit plot exigencies — her character has either a necessary or comic dramaturgical function to perform within the play. Juniper, after discussing the fact that Plautus' characters are generally stock types, comes to an interesting conclusion. He argues that Plautus used character portrayal only if it suited his purposes — some characters approach individuality if they are functionally important within the play.⁶ My assessment is that Plautus, whether or not he individualized his *matronae*, varied their characterization based on their function. Plautus has created for each play the *matrona* whose character would best contribute to the comedy or the resolution of the plot. Not all of the *matronae* are equally prominent or important, but the characterization of each varies because it is dependent on the dramaturgical functions she is meant to perform within the play.

⁵ Duckworth, *Roman Comedy*, 255-256; Moore, 161.

⁶ Walter H. Juniper, "Character Portrayal in Plautus," *Classical Journal* 31 (1935-1936): 287-288.

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