

PORTRAYALS OF THE *VIRGO* IN PLAUTINE COMEDY

PORTRAYALS OF THE *VIRGO* IN PLAUTINE COMEDY

By CASSANDRA TRAN, B.A.

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2016) Hamilton, Ontario (Classics)

TITLE: Portrayals of the *Virgo* in Plautine Comedy AUTHOR: Cassandra Tran, B.A.

(McMaster University) SUPERVISOR: Professor K. Mattison NUMBER OF PAGES:

vii, 117

Lay Abstract

This thesis analyzes the portrayals of three subtypes of the *virgo* or maiden stock character in the comedies of Plautus, a Roman playwright who flourished in the late third to early second centuries BCE. More specifically, this thesis presents a detailed character study of Phaedria as the silent maiden in *Aulularia*, Palaestra as the prostitute-maiden (*meretrix-virgo*) in *Rudens*, and Alcmena the maiden in transition in *Amphitruo*. The aim is to investigate how Plautus manages and enriches his characterization of these maidens, as well as their significance in the broader themes of the plays. Through the textual analyses of characters' speeches and dialogues, this research highlights the centrality of the *virgo* in the tensions and resolutions driving the plot, and her connection to the underlying themes of morality and communal bonds in Plautus' plays.

Abstract

This thesis presents a literary study of three subtypes of the maiden stock character in Plautine Comedy: the silent *virgo*, the *meretrix-virgo*, and the *virgo* in transition. The comic maiden is remarkable in Roman Comedy, in that she is the female protagonist of most if not all of the plays in which she is a character, although she sometimes never appears onstage. The aim of this thesis is to investigate how the playwright manages and enriches his portrayals of the *virgo* despite her limitations, and to analyze her significance in the broader themes of her plays. This has been done by detailed character analyses of three of Plautus' plays, each of which features a *virgo* who represents one of the three subtypes of the comic maiden (i.e. Phaedria from Plautus' *Aulularia*, Palaestra from Plautus' *Rudens*, and Alcmena from Plautus' *Amphitruo* respectively). Through the examination of the characters' speeches and conversations, including those presented by the maiden herself when she appears onstage, it is evident that the *virgo* is a central figure in tensions and conclusions driving the plot. Because of her contradictory circumstances (i.e. her premarital pregnancy, slave status, or change in stock role), this integral function is contingent on her piety and innocence, which must be maintained throughout the play. Finally, the propitious resolution of the plot comes about in the restoration of the maiden's status and the promise of marriage between her and the male lover. Because of this, she is also deeply connected to the underlying themes of morality and communal bonds governing the play. This research highlights the valuable and central role of a character in Plautine comedy, whose on-stage presence is often limited or even non-existent.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Kathryn Mattison for her guidance through the learning process of this thesis. Her direction and meticulous comments have helped me produce a work of which I am proud. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Michele George, who introduced me to Roman Comedy, and Dr. Claude Eilers for their careful reading and support.

Furthermore, I am indebted to my selfless parents and family for their loving support throughout my years of study. I would finally like to thank the lovely James, whose often very loud encouragements and unfailing enthusiasm helped me through all of the stages of my thesis research and writing. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
I. Ancient Theatre and Roman Comedy.....	4
II. Plautus and Plautine Comedy.....	8
III. Defining the <i>Virgo</i> in Roman Comedy	12
IV. Chapter Breakdown	14
V. Closing Remarks	18
Chapter 1. Silence is Golden: The Silent Maiden in Plautus' <i>Aulularia</i>.....	20
I. A Brief Summary.....	22
II. Phaedria's Point of View?	24
III. The Pious Maiden and Modest Wife.....	30
IV. The Injured Daughter and Lover.....	36
V. The Pot of Gold and Pot-Bellied Girl	41
VI. Conclusion	43
Chapter 2. “<i>Salve, mi pater insperate</i>”: The <i>Meretrix-Virgo</i> in Plautus' <i>Rudens</i>.....	46
I. A Brief Summary.....	47
II. Transition through Terminology of the Maiden	50
III. Palaestra and Ampelisca: Ally or <i>Ancilla</i> ?.....	54
IV. A Recognition Scene for Palaestra	66
V. Setting and Significance.....	71
VI. Conclusion	75
Chapter 3: A Maiden in Mind: The <i>Virgo</i> in Transition in Plautus' <i>Amphitruo</i>	77
I. A Brief Summary.....	79
II. Role Designations in the Amatory Narrative	82
a) <i>Battle of the Clever Slaves</i>	82
b) <i>Battle of the Lovers</i>	85
III. Alcmena's Characterization.....	90
IV. Alcmena's Physicality	94
V. The Mythical Element.....	101
VI. Conclusion	104
Concluding Remarks	105
Bibliography	109

The author declares that the content of this research has been completed by Cassandra Tran, with recognition of the contributions of the supervisory committee comprising of Dr. Kathryn Mattison, Dr. Michele George, and Dr. Claude Eilers during the research and writing process.

Introduction

In recent years there has been an ongoing wave of scholarship on women in Roman Comedy, much of which has focused on the stock *matrona* (wife) and *meretrix* (prostitute).¹ Because of the outdoor settings of these plays and the social convention that young girls of nubile age belong indoors, another category of women in Roman Comedy, the *virgo* or maiden, seldom appears onstage. Even in comedy where boundaries are challenged, for example through the struggle for power in slave-master relationships and the mockery of the gods, the maiden is thought to provide little comic value. Because of these restrictions and limitations, scholars tend to dismiss her in favour of the more colourful female characters of comedy, and as a result studies of the *virgo* stock figure are either brief or non-existent. Despite her appearance in eleven of the twenty-one plays by Plautus and all six of the plays by Terence, her role is for the most part passive. According to Raia, of the eleven maidens featured in Plautine comedy, four are invisible,² and Duckworth states that out of the seventy-five women who have speaking parts in the Plautine-Terentian corpus, the *virgo* is given the fewest amount of lines. For this reason, he deems her as the least important female character in Roman Comedy alongside the *ancilla* (maid).³

¹ Some notable examples are Anne Feltovich's dissertation entitled *Women's Social Bonds in Greek and Roman Comedy* (2003), Dorota Dutsch's *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: On Echoes and Voices* (2008), and the collaborative book *Women in Republican Roman Drama* edited by Dutsch, Konstan, and James (2015).

² Raia states this in her paper presented at the 4th Conference on Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies (1983) entitled "Women's Roles in Plautine Comedy". The four Plautine plays that have off-stage or invisible maidens are *Casina*, *Trinummus*, *Truculentus*, and *Aulularia*, the last of which will be discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

³ Duckworth 1994, 253.

Ironically, the *virgo*'s presence is more often than not the driving force of the main plot. The dramatic stage reflects the social reality that marriageable girls were kept away from the public sphere and at a distance from male company. As a result, many Roman comic narratives are motivated by the tensions of a young man's desire for a girl, despite only catching a glimpse of her. Additionally, the propitious conclusion, which is a standard convention of comedy, arises from a recognition scene in which the *virgo* plays a significant role. Her fate is deeply interwoven into everyone else's interests to the point where the gods feel the need to intervene in order to enact a harmonious ending for all.⁴ She functions as the central figure that motivates the action of the play and connects all of its characters. What is more, she is the pillar around which these characters can develop morally and comically. For this reason, the characterization of the *virgo* in Roman Comedy is a topic worth discussing in greater detail.

In my thesis, I investigate the characterization of the maiden in Roman Comedy, specifically how the playwright Plautus manipulates the typical portrayal of the stock *virgo* in his plays. I will construct these portrayals through individual character studies of three subtypes of the comic maiden, represented by Phaedria, Palaestra, and Alcmena from Plautus' *Aulularia*, *Rudens*, and *Amphitruo* respectively. Furthermore, I will explore the overarching themes of morality and the family unit, specifically in regards to how the duty-bound characteristics of the maiden girl affect and unify households.

⁴ This is especially evident in Plautus' *Aulularia* and *Rudens*, in which a god appears only in the prologue, in order to explain the background story and his motivations for manipulating the action of the play towards a happy conclusion.

My thesis presents a literary study of the stock *virgo* and is organized into three chapters that individually focus on a play featuring a specific type of maiden girl. Plautus' extant repertoire provides ample material for this character study, and for this reason I have chosen three unique and illuminating plays from the Plautine corpus: *Aulularia*, *Rudens*, and *Amphitruo*. Characters often expose their traits through their speeches, especially when they come in the form of entrance monologues. These opening speeches are particularly prominent, because they allow the character to introduce herself to the audience and to present her own worldviews. Palaestra and Alcmena deliver excellent examples of the entrance monologue in *Rudens* and *Amphitruo* respectively; their individual speeches not only reveal their morally good characteristics, but also establish their role as the play's maiden figure. This characterization is further highlighted when the *virgo* appears as a duo, for example Palaestra and her fellow slave Ampelisca in *Rudens*, in which case she is portrayed in contrast to her companion. Additionally, when the *virgo* character remains offstage throughout the play, as will be discussed in *Aulularia*, her portrayal is highly dependent on the judgment of the other characters. Through the combination of these distinctive impressions of her through speeches and conversations, it is possible to construct a substantial characterization of a silent figure. However, misunderstandings are commonplace in Roman Comedy and are oftentimes a source of humour. In such cases where a character misinterprets their surroundings, their descriptions of a fellow character are far from accurate. For example, in *Amphitruo* a husband accuses his wife of adultery when in fact she is innocent and is devoted to him.

These misunderstandings however are made clear by the playwright, in that they are usually depicted as part of the main tension of the plot.

In this chapter, I will set up a framework within which an informed discussion of the maiden in Plautine comedy can be conducted. First, the ways in which the Roman playwrights were influenced by and developed from the Greek comic tradition will be addressed before a discussion of Plautus and his comic style. Additionally, it is important to construct a clear definition of the term *virgo* in the context of Roman Comedy, so that a proper analysis of the characters in the subsequent chapters can be had. Following this, I will briefly outline the arguments pertaining to the three plays that will be discussed in this thesis, as well as briefly introduce some key concepts unique to each. It should also be noted that while each chapter is dedicated to the characterization of a particular *virgo* in her respective play, I will also draw more broadly from the Plautine corpus to corroborate certain aspects of my argument.

I. Ancient Theatre and Roman Comedy

The progression from Greek Old Comedy to New Comedy (from which Roman Comedy borrows) is important to note, as it represents a shift in focus from overt social and political commentary to stock characters and plot constructions.⁵ Old Comedy is an Athenian dramatic genre that was productive during the last quarter of the fifth century

⁵ It should also be noted that the genre of ancient comedy has evolved more organically than what the distinct labels may apply. Metrical variety and the role of the chorus gradually declined in the period between the last two plays by Aristophanes (i.e. *Ecclesiazusae* and *Ploutos*) and the works of New Comedy playwrights such as Menander. This transitional period is commonly labelled as Greek Middle Comedy, and spans approximately 404 to 336 BCE. For more on Middle Comedy, see Duckworth 1994, 22-24.

BCE and the first decade of the fourth.⁶ It is represented by the eleven extant plays by Aristophanes, as they are the only ones that have survived from the genre.⁷ Old Comedy is characterized by overt references to contemporary issues and the parody of real-life people and events, which are either made by the playwright in his own voice or behind the persona of the chorus.⁸ The setting and plotlines of the plays themselves are extravagant and so belong in the public sphere. By contrast, Greek New Comedy is known principally through the surviving plays of Menander and the Latin adaptations of his contemporaries, particularly Diphilus, Philemon, and Apollodorus.⁹ This Hellenistic genre flourished in the late fourth to mid third centuries BCE; according to McLeish it spans from 336 to 250 BCE, while Hunter proposes a duration between 323 to the end of the following century.¹⁰ Whereas Old Comedy deals with broader networks of characters, New Comedy concerns the private lives of a small range of middle- or upper-middle-class characters, and avoids references to living figures.¹¹ The topics are more intimate than that of its predecessor, and as a result the plays incorporate only one or two households. Because of this, New Comedy relies more or less on stereotypical plots and stock characters, which the playwrights creatively reworked to their audiences' amusement.

Roman Comedy, which survives to us through the extant plays of Plautus and Terence, represents the Latin adaptations of Greek New Comedies, and so has adopted

⁶ Konstan 1995, 3. Duckworth more specifically dates Old Comedy from 486 to 404 BCE (Duckworth 1994, 20).

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Leigh 2005, 4.

¹⁰ McLeish 1976, 17 and Hunter 1985, 1.

¹¹ Hunter 1985, 10.

their domestic themes and stock elements. The genre spans between 240 BCE, which marks the first Roman performance by Livius Andronicus of an adapted Greek New comic play,¹² and 160 BCE, the year at which the last surviving Roman comic play was produced, namely Terence's *Adelphoe*.¹³ These comedies were performed for large-scale entertainment not only at religious festivals, but also at public gatherings such as triumphs, funerals, and dedications.¹⁴ Entry was free, as the public events were funded by praetors and aediles in the hopes of gaining power and garnering support from the people, and the other events were privately subsidized.¹⁵ Despite this, Roman Comedy marked a time when drama in Rome was largely undeveloped: there were no permanent theatres in the third to second centuries, and so acting troupes resorted to performing in temporary wooden stages accompanied by wooden stools, which were built specially for the occasion.¹⁶ Considering these circumstances, the adaptation of Greek New comic plays for Roman audiences seems like the most rational option for the mid-Republican playwrights. The temporary nature of Roman theatres meant that simple backdrops depicting one or two scenes were required. Locations such as towns or the countryside could be easily depicted, in contrast to the frequently-shifting and fantastical settings that are commonplace in Aristophanic comedies. Furthermore, the simple costumes of New

¹² Livius Andronicus' extant work in comedy is represented by six fragments consisting of one line each, as well as one title. For more on his dramatic career, see Cicero, *Brutus* 18.72-74 and Livy 27.37.7.

¹³ Beare 1964, 1; Hunter 1985, 1; Duckworth 1994, 3; and Sharrock 2009, 1.

¹⁴ Hunter 1985, 1; Leigh 2005, 2; and Sharrock 2009, 1.

¹⁵ McLeish 1976, 22; Hunter 1985, 1; Duckworth 1994, 74; and Parker 1996, 606f.. Duckworth (1994, 76-78) and Csapo and Slater (1994, 208) provide a list of Roman festivals at which Plautine and Terentian comedies were performed, which includes the *ludi Romani*, *ludi Plebeii*, *ludi Apollinares*, *ludi Megalenses*, *ludi Floralia*, and *ludi Ceriales*.

¹⁶ Beare 1964, 176 and Duckworth 1994, 79. The first permanent stone theatre (i.e. the Theatre of Pompey) was erected in 55 BCE, although attempts were made in Rome before then. See Duckworth 1994, 79-80.

Comedy, particularly a tunic, cloak, and tights, were far more reusable than some of the more specific outfits required of Old Comedy. Lastly, the Roman state would not have tolerated the political satire that was prevalent in the fifth- to fourth-century dramatic genre. The themes and topics of Greek New Comedy on the other hand were of universal interest, as they contended with the everyday tensions of private relationships.

Roman Comedy specifically belongs to the genre of *comoedia palliata*, which translates to “comedy in Greek dress”.¹⁷ This means that not only did Latin playwrights adapt from the Greek New comic tradition, they also maintained their original settings, costumes, and characters. Despite this, the genre is widely accepted as distinctly Roman, because it was recreated in the Latin language for a Roman audience with Roman tastes. Furthermore, scholars observe the influence of older Italian theatrical traditions in Roman Comedies, such as Sicilian drama, Atellan farce, and the Fescennine verses,¹⁸ as well as the inclusion of numerous references to Roman institutions and legal practice.¹⁹ Former changes from New Comedy to Roman Comedy include Latin puns and literary devices, and the shift from a maximum of three speaking actors to as many as five speaking actors on stage at any given time.²⁰ Beare also notes the rise of the musical element and metric diversity between the two genres, and as a result an overall increase in the number of monodies.²¹

¹⁷ Duckworth 1994, 18 and Rosivach 1998, 1.

¹⁸ McLeish 1976, 12 and Hunter 1985, 20-21.

¹⁹ For example, Plautus references the *lex Oppia* in a bachelor's speech in *Aulularia*.

²⁰ For example, the recognition scene of Palaestra in *Rudens* contains five speaking characters: Palaestra, Ampelisca, Daemones, Gripus, and Trachalio.

²¹ Beare 1964, 168.

With that being said, by no means do I argue that the comic stage presents an accurate representation of real life in Republican-era Rome, which is why the “Greekness” of Roman Comedy is also a prominent and necessary aspect of the genre. The world of Plautine and Terentian plays are essentially Greek: most of the cities in which the plays are set are in Greece, the costumes are Greek in style, the characters are given Greek names, and in the case of *Amphitruo* they are even drawn from Greek myth. Therefore, the removal of the action from the Roman stage to an exotic setting creates a safe and enjoyable space in which the audience can watch the performance. The Roman comic stage presents an imaginary world that is a simplified and distorted version of real life, and in this world societal norms can be challenged and people of all statuses are mocked. Thus, part of the amusement for the Roman spectator was in watching the foolish behaviour of remarkable characters and the unfolding of perplexing plots, with the comfort in knowing that they belonged to another society. At the same time, by using material drawn from contemporary Rome, the playwright allows the audience to identify and relate to certain aspects of these plays, thereby making the experience all the more gratifying.

II. Plautus and Plautine Comedy

The vast majority of the extant plays from the Roman comic tradition are written by Plautus, although very little is known about this playwright. He is recognized in late antiquity under the name Titus Maccius (or Maccus) Plautus, which scholars have speculated might be a theatrical joke name, as it translates to “Phallus, son of Clown, the

Mime-Actor".²² The playwright was Umbrian by birth, specifically from Sarsina,²³ and was born circa 254 BCE.²⁴ Cicero records that Plautus died during the consulship of P. Claudius and L. Porcius in 184 BCE, a death date which scholars have accepted, although Cicero wrote almost a century after the fact.²⁵ Slater and Beare write that Plautus was a theatre professional before he turned to writing *comoedia palliatae*,²⁶ and Slater agrees with Duckworth that not only was Plautus an actor of Atellan farce or mime, as his name suggests, but he may have also acted in his own plays.²⁷ This aspect of his biography, whether accurate or not, can be read in Aulus Gellius 3.3.14.

Information regarding Plautus' career as a playwright is also scarce. Aulus Gellius attributes to Plautus twenty-one plays, and claims that this list, commonly referred to by scholars as the *Fabulae Varronianae*, was universally approved.²⁸ Furthermore, the dates of production are definitely known for only two of his plays (i.e. *Stichus* in 200 BCE and *Pseudolus* in 191 BCE), and so it is difficult to discern exactly what year he first began to produce comedies. Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to pinpoint the dates for the remaining works either through historical references in the text or by assigning the corpus onto a spectrum, where the complexity in language and style corresponds to the time at which the play was produced.²⁹ *Aulularia*, *Rudens*, and *Amphitruo* are all sorted into the

²² Hunter 1985, 5 and Duckworth 1994, 50.

²³ Beare 1964, 45 and Duckworth 1994, 50.

²⁴ Beare (1964, 45) and McLeish (1976, 30) propose a birth date of 254 BCE, and Csapo and Slater (1994, 404) write that Plautus was active in comedy beginning in 230 BCE.

²⁵ Cicero, *Brutus*, 60.

²⁶ Beare 1964, 45 and Slater 2000, 6.

²⁷ Slater 2000, 6n14 in reference to Duckworth 1994, 50.

²⁸ Aulus Gellius 3.3.3; Beare 1964, 46 and Duckworth 1994, 52.

²⁹ Duckworth 1994, 54-55.

Middle period of Plautus' time of writing, specifically between the years 201 and 191 BCE; these plays then are examples of an established Plautine style.³⁰

Plautus' comic style contains more slapstick than that of his New Comedy predecessors and Roman Comedy contemporary, Terence: he extended scenes for comic effect, included rapid-fire dialogue, and employed comic devices such as the running-slave routine or *servus currens*. Furthermore, he introduced digressions in his action through lengthy monologues: Palaestra from *Rudens* and Alcmena from *Amphitruo* are given illuminating and meaningful speeches, both of which will be discussed in their respective chapters. Despite his copious use of repetition, imaginative use of metaphor, and clever employment of puns, Plautine Comedy also possesses elements of gravity and seriousness, which are most evident in his characterization of the maiden. Plautus' qualities starkly contrast the style and language of Terence, for which reason the study of the latter's plays is beyond the scope of this project. Publius Terentius Afer, commonly known as Terence, flourished a couple decades after Plautus' death, around 165 to 160 BCE,³¹ and his career experienced a success similar to that of Plautus. His humour is more restrained and formal than the boisterousness and haste that is indicative of Plautine comedy. Furthermore, while Plautus' dialogue is rapid and vigorous, and his language highly colloquial, that of Terence embodies a more straightforward diction.³²

³⁰ This is the case, assuming that Plautus evolves as a playwright throughout his career. For more, see McLeish 1976, 78 and Duckworth 1994, 55.

³¹ Hunter 1985, 7 and Csapo & Slater 1994, 404.

³² It is partly because of his restrained comic style that scholars have often dismissed Terence as the inferior playwright. In response to this, Parker (1996, 608) writes an informative article debunking the popular opinion that Plautus was "the people's choice" and Terence was "a lonely aesthete flinging his pearls before swine".

In divergence from his Old Comedy predecessors, Plautus avoids direct discussions of current events and people, but the ideas that he puts in the mouths of his characters did reflect the ideologies of his audience at the time. The themes and motifs presented in his comedies highlight the institution of marriage, family, and the bonds of community; thus an understanding of the social and political climate in which Plautus lived could be illuminating to this particular study. The playwright flourished during a time when the Roman Republic was at its early stages of Mediterranean conquest and was expanding in power and influence. During his lifetime, Rome was engaged in the First Punic War (264-241 BCE), the acquisition of Sardinia (238 CE), the First and Second Illyrian Wars (229 and 219 BCE respectively), the Second Punic War (218-201 BCE), the First and Second Macedonian Wars (215-205 and 200-196 BCE respectively), and the war against Antiochus III (192-89 BCE).³³ Rome's victory in the First Punic War in particular marks the beginning of her rise from regional power to dominator of the Mediterranean world. According to Duckworth, the production of the first *comoedia palliata* in 240 BCE, so close after this victory, suggests that it occurred in part due to the Romans' realization that they were culturally deficient in comparison to other nations.³⁴ By the Second Punic War, Rome multiplied the number of festivals involving dramatic performances, most likely as a means of entertaining the populace and up-keeping morale.³⁵ Furthermore, the series of campaigns against Hannibal and the continual warfare during this time removed husbands from their homes for lengthy periods of time, which in turn left their wives with

³³ Parker 1989, 237.

³⁴ Duckworth 1994, 3.

³⁵ Konstan 1983, 23.

the independence to manage their households. Meanwhile, the positive correlation between the success of Rome in war and the wealth of her citizens meant that inheritances and dowries augmented as well. As a result, wives became increasingly aware of their husbands' dependence on their dowries, and responded by demanding various luxuries.³⁶ Coupled by the popular emergence of marriages *sine manu*, which allowed a wife to remain under the legal authority of her father thus protecting her wealth if the couple separated, married women became overpowering.³⁷ In reaction to this phenomenon, alongside the Roman defeat in Cannae, the *lex Oppia* was passed in 215 BCE in order to limit women's display of luxury goods.³⁸ Wives responded by successfully lobbying for its repeal in 195 BCE, around which time *Aulularia* was first performed. References to this law are made in the play through a bachelor's lament about dowered wives (Plaut. *Aul.* 475-535), and elsewhere in *Miles Gloriosus* 679ff., *Menaechmi* 675-76, and *Asinaria* 87.

III. Defining the *Virgo* in Roman Comedy

This thesis is aimed at determining how Plautus characterizes or modifies the *virgo* figures in his plays, and an understanding of what exactly the term connotes in the context of Roman Comedy is essential for this purpose. Adapted from Watson's article entitled "Puella and Virgo" (1983), there are three essential qualifications for a *virgo* in Roman Comedy: she is a young, unmarried girl; she is respectable in that she is chaste and pious; and she is marriageable, in that she is citizen born.

³⁶ Moore 1998, 160 and Christenson 2014, 23.

³⁷ Hallett 1985, 59n33 and Christenson 2014, 23.

³⁸ Livy 34.1-8.3.

First, a maiden's youth is indicative of her beauty, innocence, and potential for marriage. Although there is no clear restriction, the *virgo* figures of Roman Comedy are at the appropriate age at which a girl in antiquity can marry, which is according to Hallett in her early teens.³⁹ Furthermore, older unmarried women appear in Plautus' plays, such as Eunomia in *Aulularia* and possibly Ptolemaicia in *Rudens*, but they are not identified as stock maidens;⁴⁰ in other words, there is no such thing as a forty-year-old *virgo* in Roman Comedy. It should also be noted that in this genre, the maiden's respectability is more so a moral qualification than a physical one: regarding her chastity, there are circumstances where a girl has been raped, but her innocence from the act ensures that she is still chaste. The term "*virgo*" should therefore not be confused with the English counterpart "virgin", because the latter possesses strong connotations of physical virginity whereas the former refers to a maiden's propriety. Lastly, a *virgo*'s marriageability is extremely important in ensuring her a propitious ending. At the beginning of the play, the stock maiden is presented as unmarriageable because of her servile status or pregnancy. Her restoration comes in the form of a recognition scene, in which she is either revealed as citizen born or her rapist comes forward with the intention of marrying her. Before this even occurs, the maiden's youth and, more importantly, her piety are highlighted throughout the play. This piety or *pietas* can be presented through the respect for one's elders, the loyalty of a wife to her husband, or one's devotion to the gods.⁴¹

³⁹ Hallett 1985, 59.

⁴⁰ In *Aulularia*, Eunomia is acknowledged as the sister of an old bachelor named Megadorus, while in *Rudens*, Ptolemaicia is classified as a priestess of Venus. It should be noted though that Ptolemaicia's age is unclear.

⁴¹ Segal 1987, 21.

The term “*virgo*” in the context of Roman Comedy does not have one clear definition, as it is applicable to different types of girls. However, the above characteristics provide a measuring stick with which one may investigate Plautus’ portrayal of different kinds of *virgo* figures within his corpus. Some characters perfectly fulfil the requirements laid out in this section, such as the pregnant but unmarried Phaedria from *Aulularia* and the shipwrecked slave-girl Palaestra from *Rudens*. On the other hand, extraordinary figures, such as Alcmena in the play *Amphitruo*, are already married, yet their other characteristics are convincingly maiden-like. My thesis focuses on these three characters and their significance as the *virgo* figures of their respective plays.

IV. Chapter Breakdown

Chapter one examines the purest form of the stock *virgo* in Roman Comedy, in that she not just maintains her silence throughout most the play, but never appears onstage at all. Her invisibility is illuminating of the society from which she is inspired, and her opinions are irrelevant to the action of the play. Phaedria from Plautus’ *Aulularia* presents an excellent example of the silent maiden stock character, because she neither appears onstage nor speaks with the exception of a labour cry before she gives birth. This play focusses on the typical love narrative where a young man falls in love with an apparently unmarriageable girl, who turns out at the end to be marriageable after all. Usually this ending is contingent on the restoration of the heroine’s citizen status; however, *Aulularia* is unique in presenting the young man’s lover as both free and from a decent family.⁴²

⁴² Packman 1998, 26.

Her un-marriageability therein lies in a pregnancy that was conceived when a man, unbeknownst to her, raped her at a nocturnal religious festival.

Premarital rape is common in Roman Comedy as a conventional device for the playwright to lay the foundation of the plot and to ensure that the *adulescens* marries the *virgo* by the end of the play. Substantial discussions of rape in Roman Comedy are found in works by Duckworth, Feltovich, and especially Rosivach, who devotes an entire book to the subject.⁴³ With the exception of Terence's *Eunuchus*, the crime takes place before the action begins, and it is typically introduced in the prologue as the problem that governs the play. The trauma experienced by the maiden is treated temporarily and lightly, to the point where Plautus substitutes the general verb "*vitire*", meaning "to spoil" or "to damage", with the more euphemistic "*vi comprimere*", which translates as "to embrace with force".⁴⁴ Furthermore, a play involving a victim of rape usually ends with the union of the two parties. The focus is thus not on the horrific event and the possibility of marrying one's assailant, but the social benefits incurred by the maiden as a result of said marriage. The institution of marriage serves as a cultural symbol of harmony and resolution of troubles, and as a result, it negates the crime committed against the maiden.⁴⁵ It should be noted that although Plautus employs love and rape narratives in his plays, he deals with love far less seriously than Terence; this is apparent in the presence of a second subplot in *Aulularia*, which revolves around Phaedria's father Euclio's

⁴³ Duckworth 1994, 291-95; Feltovich 2003, 11-20; and Rosivach 1998, entitled *When a Young Man Falls in Love*.

⁴⁴ Plaut. *Aul.* 29-30.

⁴⁵ Stott 2005, 72-73. In *Controversiae*, Seneca the Elder states that the injured party from a premarital rape can either demand death upon the accused or marriage. Note however that Seneca refers to the victim as not the maiden, but her father.

obsession with his stolen pot of gold. Tensions culminate in a hilarious confrontation between Euclio and Phaedria's lover Lysidammas, when the young man's confession of the rape is mistaken for the theft of the gold. The interchangeability between the two offenses thus captures the identity of the maiden as an object and prize equal to a pot of gold. Overall, this analysis of the silent and invisible maiden in *Aulularia* is intended to set the precedent from which her onstage *virgo* counterparts are portrayed in Plautine comedy.

Chapter two provides a character study of a maiden who is able to appear onstage by virtue of her slave-status. More specifically, Palaestra from Plautus' *Rudens* is under the authority of the pimp Labrax and is intended to be sold as a prostitute in Sicily, for which reason she embodies the *meretrix-virgo* figure in Roman Comedy. Such an identity gives Palaestra the freedom of speech that is usually allotted to courtesans on the comic stage. Although the audience and some of the characters are made aware of her ambiguous status, she is not officially acknowledged as a citizen until her recognition scene.

The recognition scene, which is used in most if not all of Plautus' comedies in one form or another, serves as a mechanical device to resolve the tensions in the play and to bring about the happy ending. In comedies such as *Aulularia*, this device is used to effect the marriageability of the maiden, particularly by revealing her rapist. Conversely, the goal in *Rudens* is in re-establishing the *virgo*'s claim to citizenship, which is why this play is a prominent example of a recognition or identity play. This type of narrative usually revolves around a maiden whose citizen status is unknown or disregarded by those who have raised her (i.e. a pimp). She is either a foundling or was stolen from her

parents as a young child, and thus is raised and treated like a slave. The solution is brought about in a pivotal scene, where by use of some form of childhood tokens, the girl is recognized as the long-lost daughter of a citizen family and is reintegrated into the household. In order for this to occur, chance and coincidence are important factors in identity plots; for example, a shipwreck steers Palaestra to the shores of Cyrene, where her birth mother and birth father conveniently reside.

The typical ending of the love plot in Roman Comedy is the legal union of the romantic hero and heroine, but when plays begin with a couple that is already married, the relationship is portrayed as a negative experience for both. Stock wives tend to be hot-tempered, extravagant, and suspicious of their husbands' faithlessness. Chapter three examines a truly unique figure, who is a wife but is not shrewd. Alcmena from Plautus' tragicomedy *Amphitruo* embodies the antithesis of the comic stock wife. Not only does she demonstrate conjugal loyalty towards her husband, but she is also pious, devoted, and dependent upon him. However, the play revolves around her alleged adultery with another man, who turns out to be Jupiter disguised as Amphitruo. Because she is already married, Alcmena does not technically fulfil the requirements of a comic *virgo*; however, because of her new status as *matrona*, she still possesses her maiden-like qualities and can thus be interpreted as a *virgo* in transition. This characterization is further substantiated through the mythical tradition that Alcmena and Amphitruo are in their first year of marriage.⁴⁶ Therefore, in this chapter, I argue that Alcmena is in a transitional phase of playing a new wife who has to unlearn her maidenly virtues.

⁴⁶ Hesiod, *Shield of Hercules* 1-19.

Furthermore, *Amphitruo* is the only extant play in the Plautine corpus that is based on Greek myth; more specifically it depicts the events leading up to the birth of Hercules and his twin brother Iphicles. The mythological element thus allows gods to not only appear as characters, but also engage in guile deception and trickery, which results in the confusion of the men whom they impersonate. It also allots Alcmena more freedom than most women in Roman Comedy, such as being named freely by the characters of the play, and showing up onstage fully gestated. Because of the peculiarity of the pregnant belly onstage, this chapter will also look deeper into the imaginative construction of the performance, specifically how Alcmena's pregnancy affects her characterization.

V. Closing Remarks

The goal of my thesis is to investigate how Plautus can depict different kinds of maidens without compromising their integral characteristics, particularly their respectability and innocence. Although my chapters follow the progression from the silent maiden characterization to her on-stage variants, each analysis of the *virgo* stands on its own and is dependent on the parameters of her respective play. This is a primarily literary study, which acknowledges that these maidens are not accurate representations of citizen daughters in mid-Republican Rome, but are fictional characters. Roman Comedy was written by male playwrights and performed by male actors; however, that does not mean that Plautus (and Terence) were unaware of women's subculture. Plautine comedy is the product of its society and an artifact of Rome's popular culture, and therefore it can be valuable in indirectly reflecting something about the stock *virgo*'s real-life counterpart.

This viewpoint loosely invokes Segal's theory in *Roman Laughter* about the holiday effect that Roman comic plays provide for their spectators. According to him, because Roman life was governed by conservative and strict societal rules, "Plautus, reflecting as he does the festive spirit, banishes Roman melancholy, turning everyday attitudes and everyday values completely upside down. To a society with a fantastic compulsion for hierarchies, order, and obedience, he presents a saturnalian chaos."⁴⁷ While my thesis does not primarily examine the cathartic effects of Roman Comedy, it does address the question of whether or not the Roman audience, during a time of expansion and Roman pride, looked to domestic themes as comforting as well as entertaining. The social climate in mid-Republican Rome is replete with tensions in class and status, and literary texts in the form of Roman comic scripts will betray signs of such strains. Even though Roman comic playwrights served to entertain and amuse their audiences, they produced humour by responding to and playing with accepted attitudes, conventions, and social roles in the imaginary worlds that they created onstage.

⁴⁷ Segal 1987, 13.

Chapter 1. Silence is Golden: The Silent Maiden in Plautus' *Aulularia*

Plautus' *Aulularia* offers an effective starting point for the study of the maiden in Roman Comedy. The action of the play carefully follows two distinct but interwoven storylines: one of an obsessively parsimonious man over his pot of gold, and the other of a young man who rapes and eventually marries that miser's daughter. Owing to the dual nature of the play, the scholarship surrounding Plautus' *Aulularia* presents richly diverse interpretations. Some scholars view the play as primarily a character piece for the colourful miser Euclio,⁴⁸ while others focus instead on the young man's amatory narrative and how rape is used as a plot device.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a vast amount of scholarship, which was especially motivated by the 1958 discovery of a large fragment of Menander's *Dyskolos*, concentrates on the minute details distinguishing the Roman adaptation from its unknown but speculatively Menandrian source.⁵⁰ These interpretations, while valuable to our understanding of *Aulularia*, tend to overlook the role and importance of the *virgo* Phaedria, whose function is passive but central to the action. Although she embodies the stereotypical silent and invisible maiden in Roman Comedy, her existence drives the characters' actions and connects the two subplots. In accordance to Roman familial customs, Phaedria is considered the property of her father Euclio, a trait which Plautus highlights when he equates her to the miser's prized pot of gold. On the other hand, as the love interest of the *adulescens* Lyconides, she motivates his decisions and is a source of

⁴⁸ For example, see Segal 1987, 54-55, 76-79; Duckworth 1994, 143; and Sharrock 2009, 194-201.

⁴⁹ For example, Rosivach's book entitled *When a Young Man Falls in Love* (1998), which deals with rape in Roman Comedy.

⁵⁰ For example, see Kuiper 1940; Hunter 1985; and Arnott 1989.

tension in his relationships with the other characters in the play. Without ever appearing onstage, this *virgo* is deeply interwoven into the plot, and the fulfillment of everyone else's roles in society is contingent on her happy ending.

In this chapter, I investigate Phaedria's role as the stock silent *virgo* in *Aulularia* by examining her significance in the outcome of the two subplots. More specifically, I argue that her connection to the *aula* or pot of gold that Euclio deliberately keeps out of circulation and her status as a pregnant but unmarried maiden symbolize her estrangement from her society. Furthermore, it is only when the major conflicts of the subplots are resolved and the play comes to a close that Phaedria is able to reintegrate into the community through a marriage with a proper dowry.⁵¹ A glaring challenge to the construction of this particular portrayal is that Phaedria's traits are mainly discerned not from her own presence onstage, but from the lines of other characters, all of whom possess their own opinions and personalities. However, this method is potentially more revealing to the reader or audience of the play in that it offers multiple perspectives on Phaedria that are not limited to class or position. This chapter is thus organized into an analysis of Phaedria's minimal speaking lines (lines 691-92), followed by the different viewpoints concerning the *virgo* delivered by her maid Staphyla, the prologue speaker, an interested bachelor named Megadorus, her father Euclio, and her lover Lyconides. The point of this examination is not to outline the full female experience of the silent maiden in Roman Republican society, but her examination could shed light on how the

⁵¹ This argument is inspired by Konstan and Christenson's respective analyses that *Aulularia* follows the civic reintegration of the miser Euclio, coupled with Rosivach's discussion of how the rape plot serves as a device to help shift the *adulescens* (in this case Lyconides) into adulthood, thus into a mature and functional citizen. For more, see Konstan 1977, 1983, and 1995; Rosivach 1998; and Christenson 2014.

limitations associated with such a character were employed by Plautus to enrich the action and lines of the other characters. In addition, we can begin to determine how her portrayal in the comic sphere reflected the popular social and familial expectations of the stock *virgo* on the comic stage and what the audience could have found enjoyable about maiden-centred plays.

I. A Brief Summary

Like most of Plautus' plays, the date at which *Aulularia* was first performed is unknown and is thus subject to speculation. Based on possible references to the *Lex Oppia* established in 215 BCE and repealed in 195 BCE, scholars have dated the play to the time period between 201 and 190 BCE. While Duckworth and McLeish assign the play to the Plautine "Middle Period",⁵² De Melo hypothesizes a date of around 190 BCE.⁵³ The story of the play is as follows:

Euclio, a stingy miser, who has become obsessively paranoid over a pot of gold that he found, conceals it even from his daughter Phaedria. Without his knowledge, she herself is undergoing a personal crisis, as a young rich man named Lyconides raped her at the nocturnal festival for Ceres, and now she is close to giving birth. Euclio's daughter is ignorant of the identity of her assailant, but Lyconides is fully aware of whom he has violated, and for several months Phaedria and her maid Staphyla have been concealing her pregnancy from Euclio. Meanwhile, an old bachelor by the name of Megadorus is urged by his sister Eunomia to take a wife. Eunomia suggests to him a middle-aged bride

⁵² McLeish 1976, 78 and Duckworth 1994, 55.

⁵³ De Melo 2011, 151.

with a large dowry, whom he refuses; instead, Megadorus selects Phaedria as his ideal wife, and proceeds to ask Euclio for her hand (lines 178-267). The miser, who is suspicious that the bachelor was made privy to his treasure and so is scheming to steal it, agrees to the marriage on the condition that it comes without a dowry. Megadorus heartily agrees and immediately sends cooks into Euclio's home in order to prepare for the wedding banquet. Euclio, who has become more paranoid by their presence, decides to hide his gold elsewhere, firstly in the temple of Good Faith ("*in Fidei fanum*", line 583), then outside the city wall in the remote grove of Silvanus ("*Silvani lucus*", line 674). Lyconides' slave Strobilus discovers Euclio's secret, and on his second attempt, succeeds in stealing the pot of gold to the miser's utmost despair.

Meanwhile, upon hearing the news of his uncle Megadorus' wedding to Phaedria, Lyconides decides to take responsibility for his mistake, and confesses to his mother Eunomia about the incident (lines 682-700). Eunomia presumably persuades Megadorus to give up his wedding plans, which in turn allows Lyconides to admit the truth to Euclio and rectify the assault by requesting Phaedria's hand in marriage. There ensues a hilarious conversation of cross-purposes, where the frantic Euclio believes that the crime that Lyconides has committed is the theft of the pot rather than the violation of his daughter (lines 730-807). It is at this climactic point of the play that the two storylines collide, thereby merging Phaedria's fate with the *aula*. Once the misunderstanding is cleared, Euclio and Lyconides part ways and the miser is as distraught as ever. Lyconides then encounters his slave who gleefully reveals to him the stolen treasure and demands manumission in return for it. The remainder of the play after line 831 is lost; however, the

resolution of the plot can be surmised through the two *argumenta*, which inform us that Lyconides eventually recovers Euclio's gold from his slave, and Euclio accepts Lyconides' marriage proposal. Furthermore, a fragment possibly belonging to the conclusion (EUC. "*nec noctu nec diu quietus umquam eram; nunc dormiam*": "By neither night nor day was I ever at rest; now I shall sleep.") suggests that Euclio bequeaths his treasure to Lyconides in the form of Phaedria's dowry. As a result, Phaedria is reintegrated into society as she is able to marry with a dowry, and her chastity is restored because she is also able to marry the man who assaulted her.

II. Phaedria's Point of View?

Phaedria's centrality in the play is disproportionate to her physical presence. Despite her never actually appearing onstage, the actions of all of the characters are motivated by her existence. Furthermore, her name is included in the list of characters (*personae*) under the role of "*virgo*", as well as the subheading for Act IV, scene vii in De Melo's publication of the play, albeit in parentheses. Phaedria's name never appears within the script itself; instead, she is referred to as either "*virgo*" or Euclio's "*filia*" ("daughter") by the other characters in the play.⁵⁴ Rosivach uses this observation, as well as the inconsistency in her name among translators,⁵⁵ to argue that Phaedria was originally

⁵⁴ Phaedria appears as *filia* 26 times throughout the play in lines 23, 74, 172, 204, 218, 219, 228, 255, 258, 269, 271, 275, 289, 295, 372, 384, 476, 479, 540, 603, 613, 683, 729, 781, 794, 797. Under *virgo*, she appears almost five times in lines 191, 173, <619>, 689, 815. Mentions in the *argumenta* are excluded from these lists.

⁵⁵ It should be noted that there is a discrepancy in the endings of this *virgo*'s name, which is dependent on the copy of the play. For example, while Watling's (1965) translation lists the maiden's name as Phaedria, De Melo (2011) calls her Phaedrium and Kuiper (1940) refers to her as Phaedra. For no other reason than personal preference, Watling's version of the name is used in this thesis.

written in *Aulularia* as an unnamed and thus unimportant character.⁵⁶ He elaborates that her designation as “Phaedria” in the list *personae* and subheading for Act IV, scene v must have been a mistake, since in New Comedy the name is usually attributed to a male character.⁵⁷ However, with the exception of the main character Euclio, whose name is stated 19 times in the script, the other characters are rarely referred to by name:

Megadorus is so-called four times in lines 353, 462, 473, and 778; Eunomia is named once in line 780, and Lyconides once in line 779. The two last instances, in addition to line 778, occur only because Lyconides feels the need to formally introduce himself to Euclio as Megadorus’ nephew and Eunomia’s son. In doing so, he proves that he is a citizen from a good family, and thus is a fitting husband for Phaedria, whom he has violated.⁵⁸ It is therefore not a practice to consistently address or refer to a character by name in this play. Furthermore, Phaedria is still first and foremost a silent maiden, and social customs and lack of indoor scenes make it difficult for young girls to have an active role onstage. Silent maidens are the quintessence of socially-approved female virtues, and are characterized by their natural beauty, chastity, and silence. Note too that the designations “*virgo*” and “*filia*” highlight and confirm her chastity and innocence, despite being pregnant and eventually giving birth by the end of the play. Following this convention, it is only natural and indicative of her virtues that Phaedria is not referred to by name onstage.

⁵⁶ Rosivach 1998, 16.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 157n10.

⁵⁸ Plautus also employs this method of identification for Sosicles in *Menaechmi* 1131 and Agorastocles in *Poenulus* 1065.

Phaedria is given only two lines in *Aulularia*, and they could be classified as the “well-known vignette of the *virgo* in labour and crying for help”.⁵⁹ From offstage she cries:

PHAE. *perii, mea nutrix. opsecro te, uterum dolet. | Iuno Lucina, tuam fidem!*
 PHAE. I am dying, my nurse. I entreat you, my womb is in pain. | Juno Lucina, your good faith [help me]!

Plaut. *Aul.* 691-92⁶⁰

The cry itself does not necessarily function to elicit sympathy, as it is neither funny nor distressingly pitiful. Even though Phaedria's lament is full of pain, it was most likely emphatically shouted from offstage by a male actor in falsetto. Furthermore, this line functions as a common stage convention of Roman Comedy, utilized to announce the birth of a child. Kuiper interprets Phaedria's cry as solely evidence for convincing Eunomia that Lycondes' confession of violating Phaedria is true,⁶¹ while Anderson argues that it is a dramatic device used in order to create a sense of urgency for the young man to approach Euclio.⁶² Veritably, Lyconides reacts in lines 692-93 by exclaiming to his mother, “*em, mater mea, | tibi rem potioverbo: clamit, parturit.*” (“There is the proof for you mother, better than words: she is screaming, she is in labour.”). Eunomia in turn responds by urging her son to come inside with her, so that they could quickly persuade Megadorus to rescind his marriage offer. However, I argue that the sole two lines that Plautus permitted for the *virgo* were carefully chosen to highlight her connection to other seemingly unrelated elements in the play.

⁵⁹ Dutsch 2008, 112.

⁶⁰ Unless otherwise specified, all translations in this thesis are my own.

⁶¹ Kuiper 1940, 4-5.

⁶² Anderson 1993, 67.

The second part of Phaedria's exclamation at line 692 is a prayer to Juno Lucina, the aspect of the goddess associated with childbirth. No other plea such as this is made in Plautine comedy, but a similar one does appear in Terence's *Andria* 473 by Glycerium, again from offstage: "*Iuno Lucina, fer opem, serva me, obsecro*". Lucina may refer to *lux*, thereby denoting Juno as the goddess or bringer of light,⁶³ but it is also arguably an epithet that instead refers to the *lucus* or grove in which the temple precinct of Juno Lucina was built in 375 BCE.⁶⁴ Ovid describes the grove, which he locates below the Esquiline Hill, in *Fasti* 2.435-454, and further claims that Juno took the name Lucina from either that grove or because she is the source of light ("*lucis habes*"). If Ovid's first suggestion is true, then the address to Juno Lucina was deliberately made by Plautus to reminisce one of the spots in which Euclio hid his pot of gold. Shortly before Phaedria's prayer, Euclio decides to move his treasure to the grove of Silvanus (line 674). Furthermore, Phaedria's request for Juno's good faith (*fides*), which does not appear in other labour vignettes of Plautine and Terentian comedy, could also be a nod to the Temple of Good Faith, the second hiding place of the *aula*. The maiden's prayer then could serve to highlight the connection between Phaedria and the pot of gold that has been gradually building throughout the play. Especially to those in the audience who were familiar with the story, these associations, although subtle, may have even evoked gleeful anticipation for the culminating confrontation about the pot of gold and the pot-bellied girl between Lyconides and Euclio at lines 730-807.

⁶³ Varro, *Lingua Latina* 5.69.

⁶⁴ Palmer 1970, 127. Varro also mentions the grove of Juno Lucina in *Lingua Latina* 5.49.

Furthermore, the pain and helplessness of Phaedria that were revealed in lines 691-92 may arguably have already been communicated earlier in the play through the mouthpiece that is her maid, Staphyla. Throughout Roman comedy, slaves and nurses have a tendency to mimic the emotions of their charges, and this is especially necessary in plays where the woman-in-question's isolation is a major plot point upon which the story hinges.⁶⁵ If for some exceptional reason, as will be discussed in chapter two, a *virgo* appears onstage, it is acceptable that after she is recognized, she only speaks with her fellow citizens, more specifically her father. However, one of the main problems of *Aulularia* is the concealment of her pregnancy to the rest of her household, and so communication is forbidden between the maiden and her father. Staphyla is the *nutrix* of the motherless Phaedria and, as the only other person in Euclio's household who knows about her pregnancy, is her main confidante. Phaedria's isolation has presumably become more profound in light of her prenatal condition and she has no doubt become more dependent than usual on her female slave, for whom it is socially acceptable to be present outside, ergo onstage. Therefore, it can be argued that Staphyla's task is to speak on behalf of Phaedria and possibly provide a glimpse of the maiden's inner life and thoughts, albeit briefly.

The maid appears with Euclio in the first scene of the play and is violently berated by her master, an interaction which is common in Plautine comedy. In lines 67-78 she laments about the current state of affairs for herself and her mistress. From the beginning of her speech in line 67, Staphyla states that Euclio has curiously been distracted as of

⁶⁵ For more, see Feltovich 2003, 32 and Dutsch 2008, 118-22.

late, the cause of which the audience, but not Staphyla, is delightfully aware. More specifically, she proclaims at lines 74-78:

STAPH. *neque iam quo pacto celem erilis filiae
probrum, propinqua partitudo cui appetit,* 75
*queo comminisci; neque quiquam meliust mihi,
ut opinor, quam ex me ut unam faciam litteram
longam, laqueo collum quando obstrinxero.*

STAPH. Now I am not able to think of how I can conceal the disgrace of my master's daughter, from which her parturition approaches near; the best thing for me, I suppose, is to bind a noose around my neck, so that I may make one long letter (i.e. stretch myself).

Plaut. *Aul.* 74-78

Despite the single-minded avarice which led Euclio to not notice his daughter's premarital rape and its outcome, the maid reveals in line 74 that she herself has been deliberately concealing Phaedria's pregnancy from her master for the past nine months. She concludes with the canonical contemplation of suicide that is characteristic of women in comedy and tragedy, in order to drive home the direness of her predicament.⁶⁶ The distress felt by the maid as a result of Euclio's abuse is highlighted by her profuse use of repetition and consonance, which produces the overall effect of harsh-sounding outbursts. Alliteration occurs at line 75 through the repetition of "p-p-p" ("*probrum, propinqua partitudo*") and "l-l" at line 78 ("*longam, laqueo*"). Furthermore, a homeoteleuton in the form of "-am" that occurs at line 77 ("*quam, ex me ut unam faciam litteram*") and the consonance of "q" and "c" sounds at line 76 ("*queo comminisci; neque quiquam*") exaggerate the maid's trauma.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The topic of women and suicide will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this thesis. For more, see Dutch 2012, 195-98.

⁶⁷ For a literary discussion of Staphyla's monologue, see Kuiper 1940, 55-59. Kuiper also argues that the maid's use of repetition echoes Euclio's obsessive eagerness to forcefully push out his point throughout the play.

Staphyla's lament suggests that she has internalized her mistress' crisis to the point where she has made it her own. The shame she feels is not necessarily one of guilt for deceiving her master, but one that reflects the disgrace that her maiden mistress is experiencing, as the young Phaedria is completely helpless. Staphyla truly entwines herself with her mistress' problems, and in so doing, she communicates and embodies the maiden's plight. It is also interesting to note that while the maid feels her mistress' distress, Phaedria in no way reciprocates this extreme empathy. In accordance with Mahalia Way's article, "Violence and the Performance of Class in Plautus' *Casina*" (2000), when physical damage is incurred by a slave, the injury does not extend to the master in the same way as when the situation is reversed. With that being said, the injury of the slave can be seen as a symbolic affront against said master. This is especially evident in Plautus' *Casina*, specifically during Cleustrata and Lysidamus' altercation through the use of their slaves. In the case of *Aulularia*, if Staphyla is the mouthpiece of the invisible and silent Phaedria, then the abuse that she experiences from Euclio highlights his neglect of his daughter, one that was first established in his ignorance of her pregnancy.

III. The Pious Maiden and Modest Wife

The remainder of the characters in the *Aulularia* present different, albeit second-hand, portrayals of Phaedria; nevertheless, their perspectives are valuable in determining how Plautus used the silent maiden stock character in order to push the plot forward. The *prologus* Lar Familiaris and eligible bachelor Megadorus contribute in bolstering Phaedria's image of the virtuous and chaste girl by contrasting her to her stingy

progenitors and lavish wives, respectively. Such an image is important to establish, because in order for her to move towards a social reintegration, Phaedria's main responsibility as a pregnant unmarried girl is to remain blameless.

The Lar Familiaris appears only in the prologue to inform the audience of what has happened up to the present point of the play and what action will ensue (lines 1-39). More importantly, the household god reveals that every action he triggers is aimed towards restoring Phaedria's integrity by having her marry Lyconides, whose assault subverted her role in the community. He claims that he revealed the treasure to Euclio (line 26), and plans to induce Megadorus' interest in marrying Phaedria (line 31) so that this ending may come about.⁶⁸ His role in the play is to help the maiden and possibly to prime the audience, so that every mention of her throughout the play can be noted.⁶⁹ However, the Lar's apparent generosity does not stem from charity, rather his prerogative as an ancient god is to aid those who honour him. He states the piety of Phaedria starting in line 23: "*ea mihi cottidie / aut ture aut vino aut aliqui semper supplicat, / dat mihi coronas.*" ("She [Phaedria] always prays to me daily with incense or wine or anything else, and she gives me garlands."). By contrast, Euclio, his father, and his grandfather (i.e. three generations of misers) all neglected to perform their sacrificial duties to the Lar.

⁶⁸ Plaut. *Aul.* 26-27: "*feci thesaurum ut hic reperiret Euclio, / quo illam facilius nuptum, si vellet, daret.*" ("I brought about the treasure so that Euclio would find it, from which, if he wished to, he could give that girl in marriage more easily."); and Plaut. *Aul.* 31-33: "*eam ego hodie faciam ut hic senex de proxumo / sibi uxorem poscat. id ea faciam gratia / quo ille eam facilius ducat qui compresserat.*" ("I will make it so that this old man from next door asks for her as a wife today. I will do this so that that man who raped her may marry her more easily.").

⁶⁹ Note that Eunomia, as her name implies, carries a similar function to the Lar Familiaris in that she facilitates the plot, but to a lesser extent. According to Beare, Eunomia shows generosity and a sense of social responsibility which contrasts the more selfish characters in the play (Beare 1964, 58). For a discussion of Eunomia's instrumental role at critical moments of the play, see Christenson 2014, 35-40. For a debate over the importance of Eunomia's function in the play, see Kuiper 1940, 47-53.

This is a prominent distinction, because during Plautus' lifetime fear of the gods was still a strong motivator to the point of invoking superstitious panic.⁷⁰ The judgment of the gods was something that the Romans of the mid-Republic did not take lightly, and so the Lar Familiaris' willingness to help the maiden confirms that she is morally good.

Furthermore, the expository nature of *Aulularia*'s prologue, alongside that of *Rudens*, is exceptional in Plautine comedy. Plautus even mocks the convention in *Mercator* 3-6, *Trinummus* 16-17, and *Vidularia* 10-11.⁷¹ Therefore his employment of not only the expository prologue, but also a god as the prologue speaker, is indicative of the importance of divine judgment in these particular plays. In the case of *Aulularia*, it is "because of her honour" (line 25, "*eius honoris gratia*"), in other words Phaedria's piety and devotion, that invites the Lar to bring about the action of the play. Right from the beginning, it is clear to the audience that Phaedria is pious in that she always fulfills her religious duties. Her only deviant trait comes from her premarital rape and pregnancy, which the Lar excuses by claiming her innocence: "*is scit adulescens quae sit quam compresserit, / illa illum nescit...*" (lines 29-30, "This young man knows who she is, whom he raped; that girl does not know who he is..."). Plautus' choice of the household god also foreshadows Phaedria's fate throughout the play, as Lares also played an important role in Roman marriage customs. On the day of her wedding, the Roman bride would first present her father's domestic gods with offerings, and then to the Lares of her groom. In so doing, she symbolizes her conversion to her husband's household.⁷² The

⁷⁰ Segal 1987, 30 referring to Polybius 6.56.7.

⁷¹ Parker 1996, 602.

⁷² Christenson 2014, 16n13.

appearance of the Lar Familiaris only in the prologue and nowhere else in the play implies this very symbolic transfer and thus stresses that the action will in fact end in a marriage for Phaedria. As the restoration of the characters come to fruition, he is no longer associated with Phaedria or the plot itself.

Megadorus presents a more social aspect of the play's maiden by characterizing her as the antithesis of old and dowered wives. In lines 161-164, he adamantly rejects his sister's suggestion of finding him a middle-aged bride, because if by chance they can reproduce, their offspring would probably grow up as orphans. Contrastingly, maidens are young, they live longer, and because of this they can conceive more easily than older women. Furthermore, in the bachelor's monologue at lines 475-535, which is sprinkled with approving asides from the eavesdropping Euclio, Megadorus marvellously expresses the disadvantages of marrying a dowered bride. He boasts that his friends praise Euclio's daughter for being "*sans dot*" (line 476), and he exclaims that marriage to a poor bride leads to a better state, both socially and economically:

MEG. *nam meo quidem animo si idem faciant ceteri
opulentiores, pauperiorum filias
ut indotatas ducant uxores domum, 480
et multo fiat civitas concordior,
et invidia nos minore utamur quam utimur
et illae malam rem metuant quam metuont magis,
et nos minore sumptu simus quam sumus.*

MEG. For indeed in my opinion if other men who are wealthy, took home the girls of poor men as dowerless wives, the city would become by far more harmonious, and we would suffer jealousy less than we do now, and those women would fear misfortune more than they do now, and we would spend less than we do now.

Plaut. *Aul.* 478-84

Megadorus' monologue is intended to be taken as absurd and ridiculous. This light-hearted tangent speaks from a place of frugality more so than attempts to single out

Phaedia for any other trait than her prudence. The repetition in the form of the anaphoric “*et*”, the juxtaposition of paired subjunctives for comparisons, and the excessive stutters of “*m*” sounds all in lines 481-84 emphasize the bachelor’s attempt to get his point across. This overexerting effort to sway the audience is highly similar to that of the miser, who would have been standing a few feet from him onstage, all the while eavesdropping and commending his speech.

Nevertheless, it is made clear that Megadorus’ ideal woman is embodied by Phaedia, who by virtue of being dowerless, possesses a better and nobler character (line 492, “*mores meliores*”).⁷³ The remainder of Megadorus’ speech elaborately describes the luxurious spending habits of richly dowered wives and how they can be detrimental to their husbands’ finances. His argument is that dowries have become too large, thusly giving wives too much authority over their husbands, and that they disrupt the social structure by draining the household’s finances to the point of not being able to contribute to the community. Megadorus concludes his sentiment by invoking the striking image of the hungry soldier who demands pay from the head of household, only to be turned away because the husband has no money left (lines 525-528). This image would have been unsettling for the Plautine audience, who were living during a time of controversy and anxiety surrounding the institution of marriage.⁷⁴ Furthermore, his concerns about the welfare of the community brings to light the dysfunction that permeates the play, which is

⁷³ Megadorus makes a similar statement earlier in the play at line 239: in response to Euclio claiming that he has no dowry, the bachelor replies, “*dum modo morata recte veniat, dotata est satis*.” (“As long as she comes with the right sort of character, she has dowry enough.”). Likewise, Alcmena in Plautus’ *Amphitruo* 839-844 measures her dowry in respect to her *virtus*.

⁷⁴ See introduction for more on the *lex Oppia* and its social effects.

Euclio's refusal to spend his gold and Lyconides' assault of Phaedria. By contrasting Phaedria to extravagant wives, Megadorus is highlighting one of the two striking traits that make her unmarriageable, which is her lack of dowry.⁷⁵ Ironically, he states that it is in fact her *sans dot* label that characterizes her as the ideal woman, when in reality, this trait is an example of her subversion from proper Roman societal structure. The dowry symbolizes the sharing of commerce and circulation of wealth between households; it is a sign of communal sanction, and without it marriage is not a bond but an appropriation.⁷⁶ Phaedria's marriage to Megadorus cannot possibly result in a harmonious conclusion, because it denies social reintegration for her, as well as for Lyconides and Euclio.

The characterizations of Phaedria made by the Lar Familiaris and Megadorus can be seen as the positive half of two antitheses: piety versus impiety, and modesty versus luxury. In appearing very early in the play and diminishing in function shortly after their speeches, these two characters establish from the very beginning Phaedria's virtues. It should be noted though that because of her silence, Phaedria's portrayal does not extend beyond these traits. Her personality, or lack thereof, essentially embodies the virtuous maiden; however, this is precisely the image that needs to be highlighted in order for a reintegration through marriage with a dowry to occur. The tributes made by the Lar Familiaris and Megadorus thus ensure the audience that although she is unmarriageable for now, she is deserving of the propitious ending that awaits her later on in the play.

⁷⁵ The first of these traits is her premarital rape and pregnancy.

⁷⁶ Konstan 1977, 316 and Konstan 1983, 40.

IV. The Injured Daughter and Lover

One of the major tensions of the play is the lack of investment made by Euclio towards his daughter, because in accordance with the conventions of Greco-Roman society, Phaedria should be held in high regard by her father and their relationship should be positive. In her discussion of the phenomenon of “filiafocality” or “daughter-focus”, Hallett argues that the role of the father’s daughter was sentimentalized to the extent that she became a social metaphor for culturally-valued feminine behaviour.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Plutarch makes the generalization that “[m]others appear to have a greater love for their sons because of a feeling that their sons are able to help them, and fathers for their daughters because of a feeling that the daughters have need of their help.”⁷⁸ The appropriate relationship then between a father and his daughter is when the former protects the latter, a convention which is mutually beneficial to both parties. The maiden’s social role is to establish ties between households through her marriage to a fellow citizen, and her father is responsible for negotiating it. Marriage was regarded as a union of two families, which solidified social networks and strengthened bonds within the community. However, these connections were dependent on the reputation of the bride. Her chastity and piety are extremely important in preserving her honour, and so they are prime indicators of her social worth. If this honour was compromised at all, her father, as

⁷⁷ Hallett 1985, 32, 64.

⁷⁸ Plut. *Conjug.* 143b: “τοὺς υἱοὺς δοκοῦσι μᾶλλον ἀγαπᾶν αἱ μητέρες ὥς δυναμένους αὐταῖς βοηθεῖν, οἱ δὲ πατέρες τὰς θυγατέρας ὥς δεομένας αὐτῶν βοηθοῦντων...” Translation by Frank Cole Babbitt. Specific examples of fathers demonstrating fondness for their daughters appear in Cicero’s *Against Verres* 2 delivered in 70 BCE, Valerius Maximus 4.4.10, Cicero’s *De Divinatione* 1.46.103, and Plutarch’s *Aemilius Paullus* 103-104. Even though these examples appear much later than Plautus, they reflect the same sentiments that were present in the Hellenistic and mid-Republican period. This is especially evident in the issues of rape and marriage in Roman Comedy.

the head of the household, would be affected to some degree. This means that the act of rape was considered an infraction against the father just as much, if not more, than the daughter, because it denied the girl the possibility of marriage unless it was with her rapist.

In the *Aulularia*, the topics of marriage and rape are related, and are further highlighted by Phaedria's lack of relationship with her father. Not only does Euclio ignore his daughter because of his obsession with the pot of gold, but Phaedria also facilitates this alienation by employing Staphyla to help her keep the pregnancy a secret. Furthermore, Phaedria is collateral damage from Euclio's separation from society. In hoarding his wealth, the miser denies his daughter the ability to marry properly, that is, marry with a bride dowry: "*at nihil est dotis quod dem.*" (line 238, "But there is no dowry which I could give."). Even if she were without child, in violating the marriage customs pertaining to dowries, Phaedria loses her function of establishing and strengthening social networks through marriage, and thus becomes isolated from the community.

In addition, Euclio's refusal to participate and interact with his fellow citizens further reinforces Phaedria's alienation. During his opening dialogue with Staphyla, he demands that the maid extinguish the hearth if a neighbour were to visit and request fire (line 91), and to further deny them water, kitchen supplies, and utensils. In lines 105-112, Euclio reveals his reluctance to leave his treasure so that he may go to town to accept a distribution of money. He resolves to go lest his fellow men become suspicious that a poor man such as himself opted not to receive the money. Also, in lines 113-117 he continues to express his paranoia by exclaiming that everyone secretly knows that he is in

possession of the pot of gold, thus implying that he would rather avoid them on the street. The lengths Euclio goes to conceal his wealth results in him rupturing the ties that constitute him as a member of the community, and Phaedria by extension is also removed outside of the civic space. Furthermore, the rape of Phaedria and the theft of the pot of gold should be seen as two connected occurrences. The miser finalizes his isolation when he physically removes the pot of gold from inside the city to the grove of Silvanus (line 674). Beyond the city boundaries, the laws of the community pertaining to matrimony and trade are suspended. As a result, violations of these institutions can occur; more specifically rape displaces lawful connubial exchange, while theft substitutes the reciprocal exchange of goods. The robbery of Euclio's gold occurs after its removal outside the city walls, and the theft of Phaedria's virginity is a result of Euclio's disrespectful attitude regarding the domestic and civic norms.⁷⁹

What is more, Euclio exhausts all of his energy into caring for and concealing his pot of gold, attention which should have been directed at his daughter. The inversion of these priorities symbolically transforms the *aula* into Phaedria, and vice versa. The maiden daughter should be held in high esteem and feel protected by her father; on the contrary, she is given absolutely no thought and care. The general impression that results from Euclio and Phaedria's relationship is one of anxiety and excitement for how the actions of the play will eventually lead to the latter's happy ending.

In her association with the young lover of the play Lyconides, Phaedria plays both the rape victim of the *adulescens* and the mother of his unborn child. She is literally damaged

⁷⁹ For a detailed discussion of Euclio's separation from the civic space, see Konstan 1977, 1983, and 1995.

goods, as the closest Latin term for rape, “*vitio*”, translates to a spoiling or defiling of a person or object. In accordance with Plautus’ light-hearted treatment of the comic love plot, the moral issue concerning rape is not addressed in a serious manner. The only berating Lyconides receives is from Euclio in their climactic dialogue, and even then, Euclio misinterprets the assault as Lyconides stealing another possession of his and so speaks mostly in terms of injury to himself.⁸⁰ Once he discovers the truth about his daughter, his first reaction is a self-regarding “*ei mihi*” (line 796, “Woe to me!”). Furthermore, whereas Megadorus refers to Phaedria from an economic standpoint, Lyconides speaks about the maiden in terms of fault and blame. The young man does not so much confess his undying passion and love for Phaedria in his speeches, as he attempts to defend his innocence. The causes of his crime are *amor*, *vinum*, *deus*, and *adulescentia*, never Lyconides himself. At line 737, he blames a divine instigator (“*deus mihi impulsor fuit*”); at line 745, the causes are wine and love (“*vini, amoris*”); and at line 795, the impulses of youth (“*impulse adulescentiae*”). It should also be noted that although it was not explicitly mentioned in the play, *nox* (night) is another common cause of rape in Roman Comedy, as is implied in the nature of the festival that Phaedria attended when she was raped. Presumably, these excuses were used by the playwright to pardon the young man of his crime, in that he was driven to commit the assault by forces that were

⁸⁰ Line 740: “*quor it ausu’s facere ut id quod non tuom esset tangeres?*” (“Why did you dare do it, to touch what isn’t yours?”); Line 744: “*quid tibi ergo meam me invito tactio est?*” (“Then why did you touch what was mine without my agreement?”). Only once does Euclio mention the consequences of Lyconides’ actions against Phaedria: *quid ego <de te d>emerui, adulescens, mali,| quam ob rem ita faceres meque meosque perditum ires liberos?* (lines 735-56, “What of harm have I deserved concerning you, young man, so why do you do this to me and why do you go about ruining me and my offspring?”).

beyond his control. His final repentance to Euclio deems him deserving of the marriage to Phaedria at the end of the play.

It is also interesting to note that even though a religious festival provides a convenient occasion for the pious maiden to leave her home and be spotted by the young man, Phaedria was raped during the nighttime festival held in honour of Ceres in particular (line 36). Spaeth writes that the Roman goddess Ceres, from the Greek Demeter, “identified with the ideal Roman woman and the virtues of chastity and motherhood promoted for women of the upper class...”.⁸¹ She further explains that in the original Greek festival, the Thesmophoria, Demeter symbolizes the “mature and fertile mother”, while Persephone symbolizes the “young and sexually-inexperienced girl”. The separation then reconciliation of the mother and daughter in myth thus represents the continuum from one female role to the other,⁸² and this concept was shared in the Roman festival for Ceres. Furthermore, in his discussion on the cult of Ceres at Catena in Sicily, Cicero writes that the “[e]ntrance into this shrine is not [permitted] for men; the rites were accustomed to be performed by women and maidens.”⁸³ The association of the cult with upper-class women, alongside its emphasis on chastity, undermines whatever poor representation Euclio generates for his daughter. Despite the miser’s stinginess and undignified behaviour, Phaedria’s involvement in the festival for Ceres implicitly highlights her as the ideal and proper maiden. Therefore, the injury to Phaedria by

⁸¹ Spaeth 1996, 103.

⁸² Ibid., 108.

⁸³ Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.4.99: *aditus enim in id sacrarium non est viris; sacra per mulieres ac virgines confici solent.*; see also Cicero, *de Legibus* 2.21 for the nocturnal sacrifices to Ceres as being one of the only acceptable forms of initiation for girls.

Lyconides is twofold: not only does he sexually violate her, he did so during a ritual initiation of the girl into adulthood, particularly marriage and motherhood, and thus disrupts her transition.⁸⁴ Ironically, the marriage between the assailant and the assailed that eventually takes place at the end of the play serves as the resolution to this discord. In negating the crime against Phaedria, this connubial union (with a dowry!) allows her to reintegrate into the community and begin her new role as *matrona*.

V. The Pot of Gold and Pot-Bellied Girl

Phaedria's marriage and thus reintegration cannot take place until the truth surrounding her sexual assault and the existence of the pot of gold are revealed, and so the two main subplots of the play collide in the climactic conversation between Euclio and Lyconides. In lines 731-807, the truth that is necessary for the plot's resolution is uncovered, and the parallel between the theft of virginity and theft of treasure is highlighted. With the intention of righting the wrong he has committed to Phaedria, Lyconides approaches a desolate Euclio to confess to his crime. However, the theft of the latter's gold is still fresh in his mind, and so the miser misinterprets Lyconides' apology as one for his missing treasure. What proceeds from this misunderstanding is a hilarious conversation in which the two parties talk at cross-purposes: Lyconides avowals in abstract language that he has impregnated Phaedria, which Euclio takes to be an avowal that the assailant has stolen his pot of gold. The audience is at a delightful and superior

⁸⁴ Christenson (2014, 22n37) makes an interesting claim that when Ceres is mentioned in a joke by Staphyla in lines 354-56, Plautus is referring to another festival, the *Sacrum Anniversarium*. The central myth behind this festival concerns the separation of mother and daughter because of the marriage Pluto and Proserpina, another example of a rape-and-reintegration story. Although this is speculation, in light of the setting of Phaedria's rape, it is indeed plausible.

spot in watching the blind confusions of both parties, whose outbursts and replies are comically linked by echoes and dualities. For example:

EUC. *tu illam scibas non tuam esse: non attactam oportuit.*
 LYC. *ergo quia sum tangere ausus, hau causificor quin eam* 755
ego habeam potissimum

EUC. You knew that she/it was not yours: you shouldn't have touched her/it
 LYC. Well now that I did dare to touch her/it, I have no objection keeping her/it especially for myself.

Plaut. *Aul.* 754-56

The employment of “*illa*” as the direct object creates a double entendre that could refer to both the *aula* and the *virgo*. The use of the feminine demonstrative pronoun groups the girl and the pot together to the point where they essentially become the same thing. In equating robbery and rape as offences against Euclio, Phaedria is fundamentally reduced to one of her father's material possessions, and the pot in return transforms into his daughter. Additionally, it is remarkable that two men have mistaken one “*illa*” with the other.

This unusual occurrence is especially illuminating of the limitations of the silent maiden in Roman Comedy, because even in a space where there is license to challenge societal norms, the only humour that Phaedria can contribute is in embodying a virtually inanimate character that can be confused for a mere object. Plautus displays his creative and meticulous wording in this culminating moment, and after the laughter dies from this lengthy scene may a twofold reintegration for Phaedria occur. On the one hand, Lyconides is allegedly given permission to marry the maiden, and in so doing brings about her transformation from an unmarried pregnant maiden to a proper *matrona*. On the other hand, Phaedria's happy ending is also heavily based on the outcome of the pot of

gold. Once found, the *argumenta* and a fragment of the play inform us that Euclio presents Lyconides with the gold in the form of a dowry as a reward for his returning it to him.⁸⁵ It is with this bride dowry that Phaedria is able to fulfill her social function of solidifying families and the community through marriage.

VI. Conclusion

The type of maiden that emerges from Plautus' *Aulularia* is one who is modest, pious, and blameless; as the victim of premarital rape, she is at the beginning of the play unmarried, and it is not until a recognition occurs in the form of a confession and confrontation between her father and lover that her status is restored. Phaedria perfectly encapsulates the definition of a *virgo* in Roman Comedy, and she is able to maintain that role by remaining indoors and out of sight. The concealment of Phaedria's pregnancy plays an important function not just in building tension throughout the play, but also in allowing her to avoid further culpability and disgrace through being sighted in her pregnant state. This notion is especially interesting when considering the *adulescens* and his responsibility in the rape plot. While the maiden, who is the victim of the assault, must remain absolutely irreproachable in order to achieve a happy ending, the young boy who commits the crime is easily pardoned without any doubt towards his morality and virtues. This disproportion of fault and blame is however highly revealing of the strict conventions and expectations surrounding the comic *virgo* on the Plautine stage.

⁸⁵ Plaut, *Aul.* Fragment IV: "*nec noctu nec diu quietus umquam eram; nunc dormiam.*" ("Neither at night nor during the day was I ever calm; now I'll be able to sleep.").

Because of such restrictions, the silent *virgo* is not highly developed or multifaceted, as her traits are unchanging and thus unsurprising. Because she cannot be seen, this type of comic maiden more so embodies a concept than a character. Through a mostly secondary portrayal of Phaedria (i.e. in the speeches of other characters), it is clear that she symbolizes the archetype of the *virgo* in Roman Comedy, and does not evolve beyond that. However, as the quintessence of virtue, she is deemed most vital to the play. The domestic nature of Greek New and Roman Comedy draws out the themes of family and community, and so the maiden, who is integral in forming bonds between households through marriage, plays a central role in the development of these plotlines. Without her, the Lar Familiaris would have no reason to resurrect the pot of gold, and Lyconides would not have felt motivated to reconcile with Euclio's family. Furthermore, as a topic of discussion, Phaedria functions not only as a means to characterize the other characters, but also as an instrument for humour. The climactic misunderstanding between Euclio and Lyconides is comedic and timeless, yet it does not compromise the maiden's piety and innocence. Plautus does not make a farce out of her character, but juxtaposes her moderate and realistic portrayal with the more ridiculous elements of the play. In her discussion of the farcical and naturalistic modes of comedy, McCarthy argues that the moral perspective associated with the latter mode "affirms the real contemporary social code by exalting those who exhibit the virtues of nobility, generosity, and piety".⁸⁶ As a respectable daughter, a blameless lover, and a religious devotee, the maiden's traits are

⁸⁶ McCarthy 2000, 13.

presented in stark contrast to a bachelor's farcical speech on bad wives, the absurd behaviour of a paranoid miser, and the impulsive actions of a horny youth.

The construction of the *virgo*'s standard characteristics is important in the analysis of the maiden in Roman Comedy, because Plautus uses them as the foundation on which he builds and portrays more interesting *virgo* figures in his corpus. In chapter two, I analyze a far more complex character, who appears onstage and speaks to other characters in the play, but nevertheless fulfills all of the requirements of the comic *virgo*. The study of *Rudens*' Palaestra not only presents a deeper look at a different type of maiden in Roman Comedy, but it also is revealing of Plautus' creativity and resourcefulness in his portrayal of her.

Chapter 2. “Salve, mi pater insperate”: The *Meretrix-Virgo* in Plautus’ *Rudens*

As I discussed in chapter one, social convention and the lack of interior scenes on the comic stage made it difficult for the character of a well-born maiden to appear onstage and speak for herself, which is why the silent-*virgo* stereotype was prominent in Roman Comedy. A popular variation to this *virgo* figure exists almost exclusively in Plautus,⁸⁷ whose plays also present the citizen girl under the guise of a *meretrix*. Her complex and contradictory identity stems from her being stolen as an infant from her citizen parents and raised to become a prostitute. While the *meretrix-virgo* possesses the virtues required of a freeborn and marriageable girl, her non-citizen status permits her to be outside of the home and thus communicate on her own behalf. Although this character is citizen born, her ambiguous identity allows her to be approachable, responsive, and to an extent sexually available.⁸⁸ By the end of the play, she is reunited with her family by means of a recognition scene, and her status as freeborn daughter is restored. True to this stock subtype, Palaestra in Plautus’ *Rudens* is virtuous, chaste, and beautiful. Furthermore, whereas the silent maiden requires a messenger to deliver a speech on her behalf (for example, Phaedria and her nurse Staphyla from Plautus’ *Aulularia*), Palaestra’s

⁸⁷ While Terence’s *Eunuchus* contains Pamphila, a slave girl who is later revealed to be Athenian-born, she never appears onstage. The following *meretrix-virgo* characters are all Plautine: Selenium in *Cistellaria*, Planesium in *Curculio*, Adelphasium and Anterastilis in *Poenulus*, and Palaestra in *Rudens*.

⁸⁸ For example in Plautus’ *Cistellaria*, the *meretrix-virgo* Selenium works under the tutelage of an experienced prostitute Melaenis. Although Selenium takes a lover, she shows unflinching devotion towards him and him alone, and at the end of the play, the two are betrothed. In *Rudens*, there is no explicit indication that Palaestra and the play’s *adulescens* Plesidippus had a relationship prior to the action of the play. Palaestra is referred to as Plesidippus’ “*amica*” at lines 351 and 839, which connotes a romantic attachment. However, their interaction does not appear to surpass Plesidippus simply sighting her during her walk home from music school (line 43). As a result, the term merely indicates that they are the hero and heroine of the love plot, and that marriage between them will occur once she is recognized as citizen born.

contradictory status allows her to appear onstage to exchange words and create relationships with other characters in the play. Similar to Phaedria from *Aulularia*, she is the central figure, in that she connects characters who are otherwise strangers and her presence drives their decisions and actions.

In this chapter, I will analyze Palaestra as the *meretrix-virgo* subtype of the stock maiden in Roman Comedy through her lines, her female relationship with a fellow slave-girl Ampelisca, and the significance of her recognition scene. Although this play possesses all of the requirements of an amatory narrative,⁸⁹ the *Rudens* is best defined as a recognition play. The heroine Palaestra directs all of her emotional energy not on finding her lover Plesidippus but toward regaining her identity as a freeborn citizen, and once that is achieved she no longer participates in the action. Additionally, I will argue how the *meretrix-virgo*'s recognition represents not only a reintegration into the civic sphere but a symbolic rebirth, which complements the unique maritime setting of the play.

I. A Brief Summary

Plautus' *Rudens* is an adaptation of a New Comedy by Diphilos;⁹⁰ however, the name of the Greek original is unknown to us.⁹¹ The date at which the play was first staged is also a mystery, but scholars have made speculations ranging from 211 and 189 BCE: based on vague historical event references, De Melo ventures a guess of sometime

⁸⁹ The *adulescens* Plesidippus falls in love with the beautiful *virgo* Palaestra, only to find that she is unmarriageable. Together with his clever slave Trachalio, Plesidippus attempts to free his beloved from the evil pimp Labrax. Through a miraculous recognition scene, it turns out that the *virgo* was free all along, and the play ends with the marriage between the two lovers.

⁹⁰ Plautus, *Rudens* 32-33.

⁹¹ Anderson 1993, 51 and De Melo 2012, 394

between 211 and 202 BCE, but admits that it is difficult to know for certain.⁹² Similarly, Leigh speculates a date of 209 BCE due to a possible reminiscence to the trial of M. Posthumius Pyrgensis in 212 BCE.⁹³ Chalmers suggests the year 189 BCE, owing to a possible historical reference at lines 932ff, but admits that this is mere conjecture and may be impossible to prove.⁹⁴ What is known for certain is that *Rudens* is one of Plautus' longer plays, spanning 1424 lines with very little corruption in the text. The summary of the plot is as follows:

The play is set on the coast of Cyrene; the structures onstage are Daemones' farmhouse and a temple dedicated to Venus. The prologue is spoken by the god Arcturus, the brightest star in the constellation Boötes,⁹⁵ who delivers a moral speech about justice; he asserts that those who are pious will receive rewards, while the impious will be punished for their deeds (lines 9-30). Afterwards, the god describes the events leading up to the present action (lines 31-66): the heroine of the play Palaestra was stolen from her family as a baby, and was brought up by a pimp named Labrax. On her way to music school one day, she is spotted by a boy Plesidippus, who falls in love with her and attempts to purchase her from the pimp so that he may set her free. However, before the transaction is completed, the pimp decides to take Palaestra and her fellow-slave Ampelisca with him to Sicily in the hopes that he will make more of a profit from them there. Meanwhile, an old Athenian man named Daemones lives in exile with his wife on the coast of Cyrene, because he was too generous with his money and is now poor.

⁹² De Melo 2012, 397.

⁹³ Leigh 2010, 166f.

⁹⁴ Chalmers 1965, 44; McLeish 1976, 78; and Duckworth 1994, 55.

⁹⁵ De Melo 2012, 390.

Daemones had a little daughter (line 39, “*filiola*”) who was taken from him, and who by the end of the play will turn out to be none other than Palaestra. In the hopes of saving the young girl and at the same time wreak destruction upon the wicked pimp, Arcturus announces that he has generated a violent storm that has wrecked Labrax’ ship (line 73). Thankfully Palaestra and Ampelisca were able to escape from a light boat (line 75, “*scapha*”) that was attached to that ship.

The bulk of the play follows Palaestra and Ampelisca’s attempts of finding refuge from the pimp, who also survives the storm. They are received in the temple of Venus by the priestess Ptolemaia, and are assisted by Plesidippus’ slave Trachalio, who entreats Daemones to help stop Labrax from dragging the girls out of their sanctuary, and whose master eventually takes the pimp to court. At this point, the action shifts to the discovery of Palaestra’s chest by Daemones’ slave Gripus. Upon seeing him drag the chest across the beach, Trachalio challenges the fellow slave for possession of it, and they eventually resolve to approach a third party in order to settle the dispute. Trachalio suggests that Daemones from next door arbitrate, and Gripus gleefully agrees, believing that his master will side with him. To Gripus’ dismay Daemones is a fair arbiter, because whereas Gripus’ argument comes from a place of greed, Trachalio claims that the chest contains the childhood tokens of a young slave girl that could set her free. Daemones agrees to allow the young girl to prove that she is a freeborn citizen, and Palaestra promptly recites the contents of the chest, while also identifying the names of her mother and father. As a result, Daemones and Palaestra joyously reunite as the former has found his long-lost daughter. In the following scenes, the old man promises that he will give his daughter in

marriage to Plesidippus, and that Trachalio and Ampelisca will be manumitted and betrothed. The play closes festively with an exceptional gesture of reconciliation, as Deamonos invites both the villainous Labrax and the disgruntled slave Gripus to dine with him.

II. Transition through Terminology of the Maiden

Subtle cues within the text prepare the audience for Palaestra's recognition in Act IV, scene iv. Although Arcturus informs the spectators how the story will end, it is crucial that the heroine's chastity, innocence, and good moral character is stressed throughout the play. Otherwise, she would no longer befit the required characteristics of the comic maiden, and thus be reduced to her prostitute persona. I argue that one of the ways the playwright ensures the audience of the maiden's unflinching characteristics is through the labels that are used to identify her throughout the play. How Palaestra is addressed and referred to by other characters, as well as the difference in terminology used before and after her recognition, is significant in her successful reintegration into society and symbolic rebirth as an Athenian daughter.

The term "*virgo*" is used in reference to Palaestra only before her recognition and exclusively by those who know that she is freeborn.⁹⁶ Trachalio uses "*virgo*" at line 1105 as a means of persuading Gripus that the chest belongs to Palaestra because it contains her childhood trinkets. Arcturus, who uses the term the most frequently, is both a god and the prologue speaker; he knows the outcome of the play, and so freely refers to Palaestra

⁹⁶ "*Virgo*" is used by Arcturus at lines 39, 41, 51, 67, and 81, and by Trachalio at line 1105. He also accuses Labrax of being a "*feles virginalis*", a "virgin thief", at line 748 so it is unclear whether the slave is referring to just Palaestra or both girls.

as “*virgo*”. Based on its limited use by the characters, Plautus is employing the term as a way to substantiate Palaestra’s respectability and status. Furthermore, the fact that most of the term’s usage is by the divine prologue speaker suggests that Plautus is establishing from early on by a reliable source that Palaestra is the play’s freeborn citizen girl, who will eventually be restored.

Similarly, “*puella*”, which is sometimes used interchangeably with “*virgo*”, typically operates as a means of highlighting a girl’s youth and innocence.⁹⁷ It is employed in reference to Palaestra by Arcturus at lines 45 and 59 simply as an alternative to “*virgo*”. “*Puella*” can also be used when the status of the girl in question is unknown.

Summarizing Watson, Hallett writes that when the term is used in reference to girls of nubile age, it can connote that she is a slave (*ancilla*) or a citizen-born girl masquerading as a prostitute.⁹⁸ This ambiguity perfectly complements Palaestra and Ampeliscia’s identities, and so Labrax and Ptolemy refer to both girls as such, the pimp at line 567 and the priestess at lines 264 and 282. Furthermore, Daemones addresses Palaestra as “*puella*” right before she identifies her childhood tokens.

Because of the complex and changing identity of the *meretrix-virgo* in Roman Comedy, the easiest term to describe or address Palaestra is “*mulier*”, a general term for a woman. This label neither specifies marriage status nor discriminates between servile and free, and because of this, “*mulier*” is naturally used in reference to Palaestra around thirteen times in the play out of a total occurrence of twenty-one. Palaestra is a “*mulier*”

⁹⁷ Adams 1983, 345.

⁹⁸ Hallett 2013, 201.

to Ampelisca at line 233; Plesidippus at line 861; Trachalio at lines 1079 and 1090; and Daemones at line 1151. The term is used to refer to both girls by Trachalio at lines 326, 641, and 663; Labrax at line 568; Daemones at lines 646, 1045, and 1209; and Plesidippus at line 846. After Palaestra is officially recognized by Daemones (line 1173), she is no longer called “*mulier*”, except at line 1209 when he groups his daughter with the other female in his household, his wife Daedalis. In this case, the generic sense of the word is also employed. The diminutive “*muliercula*” is used as well in reference to both Palaestra and Ampelisca (lines 52, 128, 162, 320, 553, and 559), most likely to stress their youth and vulnerability.

Neither Palaestra nor Ampelisca are directly referred to as *meretrices* in the play, despite the intent of the pimp to advertise them as such. Both Arcturus and Labrax note that it is in Sicily where one can sell *meretrices* at a high price, a rumour that prompts the pimp to sail there with the two girls.⁹⁹ The term “*meretrix*”, from the verb “*merere*” (“to earn”), can be applied to all levels of prostitution, from a high-end courtesan to a common street prostitute,¹⁰⁰ or simply a woman who is associated with a *leno* regardless of her sexual experience. Furthermore, “*meretrix*” is more neutral in tone than the harsher synonym “*scortum*” (“whore”), which is also never used to describe Palaestra or Ampelisca.¹⁰¹ Arcturus does however refer to the girls as “*meretriculae*” in the prologue at line 63.¹⁰² The employment of the diminutive further undercuts the prostitute persona,

⁹⁹ Plautus, *Rudens* 56, 541: “*ibi esse quaestum maximum meretricibus.*”

¹⁰⁰ Rosivach 1998, 11.

¹⁰¹ Adams 1983, 325.

¹⁰² Plautus, *Rudens* 62-63: “*ipse hinc ilico | conscendit navem, avehit meretriculas.*”

and is suggestive of the prologue speaker's affections towards the two: Palaestra and Ampelisca are youthful, innocent, and harmless despite this aspect of their identity.¹⁰³

Interestingly, Daemones calls the girls "*clientas*" (line 893, "female clients" or "dependents",) and "*paelices*" (line 1047, "mistresses"), the latter of which contradicts the chaste and innocent portrayal of Palaestra throughout the play. In the first instance, Daemones has just taken them under his protection from Labrax, and in the second instance, he is not calling them mistresses, but is explaining that if he were to bring them home with him, he would risk his wife jealously assuming that they are so. Therefore, these labels do not compromise Palaestra's irreproachable characterization, rather they highlight Daemones' moral goodness, as well as reminisces a father's protection of his daughter. Furthermore, these two instances occur before Palaestra is recognized; after she is reunited with her father, she is almost exclusively referred to as his daughter.

"*Filia*" is used almost singularly by Daemones to refer to his newly found daughter nine times after her recognition and always with the affectionate pronoun "*mea*".¹⁰⁴ The term is used an excessive amount not only to accentuate his excitement of regaining his child, but to also stress Palaestra's new identity at the end of the play. Now that she is acknowledged as citizen born, her title changes from the ambiguous "*puella*" or "*mulier*"

¹⁰³ Although the Lewis and Short dictionary lists "*meretricula*" as the diminutive of "*meretrix*", the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* suggests that the term is often used with derogatory force. In my opinion, this particular connotation is dependent on the context in which it is used. For example, in the statements "*scortari est saepius meretriculam ducere*" (Varro, *Lingua Latina* 7.84) and "*te coniunx aliena capit, meretricula Davum*" (Horace, *Sermones* 2.7.46), "*meretricula*" is used as a negative term. However, diminutives are particularly common in *Rudens*, and are exclusively employed in reference to the two girls. Additionally, in the context of Arcturus' judgment of Palaestra as morally good and thus deserving of a happy ending, an argument for its derogatory use would be invalid.

¹⁰⁴ Plautus, *Rudens* 1165, 1173, 1192, 1196, 1203, 1211, 1213, 1364, and 1364. Trachalio refers to Palaestra as "*tua filia*" when speaking with Daemones at line 1219.

towards an unquestionable “*filia*”. The only time that Daemones employs the term before Palaestra’s recognition is at line 742 when he is reminiscing about his long lost daughter and commenting on how Palaestra looks like her. The diminutive “*filiola*” is also used when evoking the memory of Daemones’ loss, and in this context it serves to stress how physically little Palaestra was when she was stolen from her family.¹⁰⁵

The emphasis on innocence and youth that is demonstrated by these identifiers reveals Plautus’ careful efforts in portraying Palaestra favourably despite her ambiguous status. Even when she is presented as *meretrix*-like (i.e. through the terms “*meretricula*” and “*paelex*”), her chastity is never cast into doubt; instead the context in which these terms are used evokes feelings of sympathy and pity for the young girl’s duress and helplessness. Furthermore, when her freeborn status is restored, the occasion is made all the more joyous through the overindulgent use of “*mea filia*” by her father. After having been informed in the prologue of Palaestra’s citizen status, the audience is primed by the other characters’ positive identifiers for her to expect a happy and deserving outcome for the good and blameless maiden.

III. Palaestra and Ampelisca: Ally or *Ancilla*?

Rudens is an especially interesting play because it provides a glimpse into the relationship of two young girls, but exactly what kind of relationship that is, is difficult to pinpoint. At the beginning of the play, Palaestra and Ampelisca appear as an equal duo, a pair of castaways in search of refuge, who are not only fellow slaves but dear friends.

¹⁰⁵ Plautus, *Rudens* 39 and 106, by Arcturus and Daemones respectively.

However, when Palaestra's true status is revealed at the end of the play, does their correspondence shift from shipwreck companions to one between a citizen girl and her trustworthy maid? It is important to examine how Palaestra's complex identity as the play's *meretrix-virgo* affects her closest relationship, and how her imminent recognition influences the way she and Ampelisca are portrayed.

Roman Comedies should have easily-identifiable relationships because of their significant reliance on stock roles. Stereotypical characters are a significant source of humour and for the most part are well-defined; because of this, the exchange and association between them should be predictable. However, Palaestra and Ampelisca's relationship is ambiguous and prone to fluctuation, which presumably stems in part from the vagueness surrounding Ampelisca's true identity: what stock role does she embody, and is she freeborn or not? On the one hand, it is made evident throughout the play that Palaestra was stolen from her citizen family and was raised to be a *meretrix* by a pimp. Conversely, Ampelisca's claim to freeborn status is not as clear despite appearing similarly young, pretty, and of marriageable age.¹⁰⁶ Trachalio admits that while he is informed of Palaestra's true identity, he does not know where Ampelisca is from, but he does make a point to present her in a favourable light: "*nam huic alterae quae patria sit profecto nescio, / nisi scio probiorem hanc esse, quam te, impuratissime.*" (lines 750f., "For I do not in fact know what fatherland this other one [Ampelisca] has, except that this girl is more decent than you, you most filthy creature [Labrax]."). Arcturus describes

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 320 ("*mulierculas duas... satis venustas*"), 565 ("*scitula*"), and 894 ("*ambas forma scitula atque aetatula*").

Ampelisca as an “*ancillula*” (“little maid”) in the prologue, although the addition of “*altera*” (“other”) could suggest that he is referring to both girls as such.¹⁰⁷ A similar vagueness in designation occurs in Trachalio’s accusation against Labrax for being a “*feles virginalis*” (line 748, “virgin thief”), as he does not specify whether he is referring to just Palaestra or both girls. Ampelisca also calls Palaestra her “*conservam*” or “fellow slave” at line 224, and both girls comment on their mutual relationship multiple times during their reunion scene on the beach.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is not possible to know for certain from the text whence Ampelisca came; however, the ambiguity surrounding her past allows the girls’ relationship to develop in correspondence to Palaestra’s shifting identity, which makes them a unique duo in the Roman comic corpus.

With this being said, when Trachalio raises the question of freedom in his argument in favour of Palaestra’s possession of the chest, he applies it to not only the maiden girl but also her companion. At lines 647-649, he informs Daemones: “*Si das operam, eloquar. / Veneris signum sunt amplexae. nunc <homo audacissimus> / eas deripere volt. eas ambas esse oportet <liberas>.*” (“If you pay attention, I’ll speak. They’re clinging to the statue of Venus. Now the most audacious man wants to drag them off. Both of them ought to be free.”). Right before he reveals to Labrax that Palaestra is citizen born, he poses the following question at lines 735-36: “*Fateor, ego trifurcifer sum, tu es homo adprie probus: / numqui minus hasce esse oportet liberas?*” (“I’ll admit, I am a gallows

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 74.

¹⁰⁸ At line 239, spoken by Ampelisca: “*Socia sum, nec minor pars meast quam tua.*” (“I am your partner, my share is not smaller than yours.”), and at line 240, spoken by Palaestra: “*Mihi es aemula.*” (“You are my rival.”). In addition, Palaestra talks about Ampelisca like that of a beloved friend, exclaiming that she would be devastated if she died from the shipwreck (lines 200-204).

bird, and you are a very good man: should they be any less free?”), to which Labrax replies, “*Quid, liberas?*” (“What, ‘free’?”). Lastly, Trachalio asserts at line 1103 that, “*hasce ambas, ut dudum dixi, ita esse oportet liberas...*” (“Both these girls as I’ve said a while ago ought to be free...”). It is possible that Trachalio is stressing that both girls ought to be “free” from Labrax because they are suppliants; however, that is unlikely because the more appropriate statement would be to say that they ought to be “safe” from the pimp’s impious actions, not “free”. A more convincing interpretation is that Plautus, through the good-hearted slave Trachalio, is foreshadowing the happy ending of both girls. When he refers to their right to be *liberas* (“free women”), the playwright is assuring the audience that Palaestra deserves to be restored as freeborn, and Ampelisca deserves to be freed. Once the recognition and manumission occurs, Palaestra and Ampelisca are then in a position for marriage to be arranged with Plesidippus and Trachalio respectively.

Even though both girls share the same physical attributes and are rewarded with comparable endings by virtue of their weddings, the manner in which they present themselves in speech distinguishes one from the other. It is evident through Palaestra and Ampelisca’s monologues, spoken in succession at the beginning of the play, that the former is the story’s heroine and is therefore portrayed idealistically, while the latter, who has no real claim to citizenship, serves as her amusing counterpart. At lines 185-219, Palaestra comes onstage, dripping wet, to perform the first *canticum* of the play.¹⁰⁹ She

¹⁰⁹ The significance of the opening *canticum* is highlighted by the metrical change from spoken *senarii* to an excited entrance song (Hunter 1985, 50).

launches into a chain of rhetorical questions that demonstrate her piety and good Roman values:

PAL. *hancine ego ad rem natam <esse me> miseram memorabo?
hancine ego partem capio ob pietatem praecipuam?
nam hoc mi haud laborist, laborem hunc potiri,
si erga parentem aut deos me impiavi;
sed id si parate curavi ut caverem,
tum hoc mi indecore, inique, inmodeste
datis, di; nam quid habebunt sibi signi impii hosthac,
si ad hunc modum est innoxiiis honor apud vos?*

PAL. Has it been pleasing for this god that I, having been adorned with this dress, full of fear, have been thrown overboard into unknown regions? Will I say that I, miserable me, have been born for this? Will I get a share for my excellent piety? For acquiring this suffering is not at all a suffering to me, if I have sinned against my parents or the gods; but if I have cautiously taken care so that I am cautious against this, then, gods, you are giving this to me indecorously, unfairly, and immodestly; for what sign will the wicked have for themselves thereafter, if there is honour to the innocent in this way by you?

Plaut. *Rud.* 187-96

The piety that Palaestra declares she possesses is presented in the form of her filial devotion to her mother and father, an aspect of the maiden which is emphasized by Plautus throughout this play.¹¹⁰ Palaestra's *pietas* is vital to her eventual recognition, as it justifies the positive outcome of restoration and marriage for her at the end of the narrative. However, her happy ending has not yet occurred, and so in this scene, the *virgo* is suffering after having survived the divinely-activated storm. The use of rhetorical questions and the anaphoric "*hancine*" at lines 187-88 accentuate her distress, while the content itself touches on the judgment of good and bad, a topic that was raised by Arcturus in the prologue. Furthermore, Palaestra's monologue is existential and almost accusatory in tone. She calls into question the decisions of the gods over good and bad

¹¹⁰ For more references, see lines 197-197a, 216-216a, 1176.

people, not knowing that Arcturus has triggered the storm in order to initiate her reward.

At line 198, she rationalizes that Labrax' bad behaviour is the culprit of the storm, which is reminiscent of the notion that by virtue of being the pimp's slave Palaestra is subject to his punishments.¹¹¹ Konstan also notes a common motif in antiquity that a man's companions could be punished for his sins, especially when they are at sea together.¹¹² As unfair as this seems to Palaestra at the moment, it does solidify for the audience which character is bad and which is good through the presentation and comparison of these two moral extremes.

The remainder of Palaestra's monologue points to her isolation and the barrenness of the shore;¹¹³ at this point of the play, the tone is anxious and dark, and it is prompted by the destructive nature of the sea. Palaestra closes her speech with the following remark:

PAL. *libera prognata fui maxume, nequiquam fui.
nunc qui minus servio, quam si serva forem nata?
neque quicquam umquam illis profuit qui me sibi eduxerunt.*

PAL. Most of all I was born free, but in vain. Now am I less of a slave than if I have been born servile? Now have I ever been of any use to those who raised me.

Plaut. *Rud.* 217-19

In the midst of her helplessness, the maiden reminds her spectators who she truly is: she is not a slave, but someone who is "*libera... prognata*" ("having been born free").

Furthermore, the last line of her monologue substantiates this claim, as it serves as a reminder of her chastity. Palaestra is not good at being a slave, a music girl (line 43), or a

¹¹¹ Plautus, *Rudens* 198: "*sed erile scelus sollicitat, eius me impietas male habet.*" ("But the crime of my master disturbs me, his impiety holds badly for me."). See Way 2000 and chapter one of this thesis.

¹¹² Konstan 1983, 89: for examples, see Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes* 82-83; Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes* 602-08; and Horace, *Odes* 3.2.26-30.

¹¹³ More specifically Plautus, *Rudens* 204-215.

prostitute, simply because she is a freeborn citizen girl, and as a result of that, the audience sympathizes with her plight. The grave and decorous behaviour that Palaestra demonstrates in her opening monologue marks her as the epitome of the well-born girl, and it is the reason why Hanson refers to her as one of the most convincing “virtuous prostitutes” in the Roman comic corpus.¹¹⁴

Ampelisca's monologue at lines 220-229 holds a subordinate position to that of Palaestra, because it is not only shorter in length but it is also the second entrance monologue of the play. Even though she also opens her speech with a rhetorical question at line 220, instead of raising the issues of ethics and morality, the slave-girl considers suicide as a far better alternative to her current situation: “*Quid mihi meliust, quid magis in remst, quam a corpore vitam ut secludam?*” (“What is there better for me, what is there more to my advantage, than to shut off life from my body?”). Although suicidal thoughts are a natural feminine response to distress in Roman Comedy,¹¹⁵ this trope is humorous in that the stock ending of such plays is typically happy and promising. The comic script protects its characters from death, so as much as the audience may also pity Ampelisca's plight, that sympathy is undercut by the knowledge that she will not commit suicide, because everything will eventually turn out propitiously for her.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, whereas Palaestra's worries are about divine justice, those of Ampelisca are far simpler. While

¹¹⁴ Hanson 1959, 93.

¹¹⁵ Dutsch 2012, 195.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 198. It should be noted that when Labrax attacks the suppliant girls at Venus' temple, both girls consider suicide (lines 860-868), followed by a prayer to Venus (lines 694-698), and a declaration of their purification (lines 699-701). These lines more so belong on the tragic stage than the comic one, and the scene is highly emotional due to the wickedness of Labrax' action. That is not to say however that ironic humour is not present.

Palaestra's remarks about her isolation are presented with contemplations about her next steps,¹¹⁷ Ampelisca's desolation highlights her inability to help herself and her utter dependence on her companion:

AMP. *omnia iam circumcursavi atque omnibus latebris perreptavi
quaerere conservam, voce oculis auribus ut pervestigarem.
neque eam usquam invenio neque quo eam neque qua quaeram consultumst
neque quem rogitem responsorem quemquam interea convenio,
neque magis solae terrae solae sunt quam haec loca atque hae regions;
neque si vivit, eam viva umquam quin inveniam desistam.*

AMP. I've already run around everything and I've crawled through every hiding place, so that I may fully explore with my voice, with my eyes, and with my ears to search for my fellow-slave. I cannot find her anywhere nor do I know where I should go or by which plan to look for her, meanwhile I cannot find anyone whom I could ask to answer, and deserted lands are not more deserted than this place and these regions, and if she's alive, I will never desist until I find her.

Plaut. *Rud.* 223-228

The anaphora in the conjunction “*neque*” further emphasizes Ampelisca's distress and uselessness, and creates a sense of franticness that is reminiscent of the “running slave” trope. It is clear that the tone has changed between the two monologues; therefore, even at this early point of the play, Plautus distinguishes Palaestra as the more likeable character, while he reduces Ampelisca to a figure worth mocking, a comic slave. Furthermore, the playwright succeeds in creating this distinction between the two girls primarily through their different responses to the same situation.

Palaestra and Ampelisca's reunion at lines 229-258 further stresses this hierarchical portrayal while at the same time presenting a celebration of female friendship. After the girls successfully find each other in what is presumably a broken and

¹¹⁷ For example, at line 213: “*hac an illac eam, incerta sum consili*” (“I am uncertain of the decision of whether I should go here or there”).

rocky beach,¹¹⁸ they rejoice blissfully as they greet one another with embraces.¹¹⁹ It should be noted that their discourse at the beginning of the scene is characterized by adoration and symmetry; Palaestra and Ampelisca mutually desire to see one another and they are overjoyed by each other's safety. The reunion scene highlights the equality present in their relationship, in that they consider one another as dear friends.¹²⁰ After the tearful reunion though, Palaestra becomes the leader of the duo by formulating a plan for further refuge:

PAL. *nunc abire hinc decet nos.* AMP. *Quo, amabo, ibimus?*
 PAL. *Litus hoc persequamur.* AMP. *Sequor quo lubet.* 250
 PAL. *sicine hic cum uvida veste grassabimur?*

PAL. *Hoc quo est, id necessarium est perpeti.*
sed quid hoc, obsecro, est? AMP. *Quid?* PAL. *Viden, amabo,*
fanum [videsne] hoc? AMP. *Ubi est?* PAL. *Ad dexteram.*
 AMP. *Video decorum dis locum viderier.* 255

...
 PAL. *<quisquis> est deus, veneror ut nos ex hac aerumna eximat,* 257
miseras inopis aerumnosas ut aliquo auxilio adiuvet.

PAL. Now we should go away from here. AMP. Please, where shall we go?
 PAL. Let's follow this shore. AMP. I'm following where you wish.
 Will we march on thusly with soaked clothes?
 PAL. Whatever this is, it is necessary to endure to the full.
 But what is this, I pray? AMP. What? PAL. I pray, do you see
 this temple? AMP. Where is it? PAL. To the right.
 AMP. I see that the place seems worthy of the gods.

...
 PAL. Whichever god it is, I entreat so that they may relieve us from this toil,
 So that they may supply us, miserable, destitute, wretched, with some help.

Plaut. *Rud.* 249-58

¹¹⁸ Plautus, *Rudens* 229-243. Sharrock (2009, 212) remarks on the comic convention of characters not being able to see each other despite their closeness onstage. Furthermore, this particular terrain is imagined by Johnston (1933, 58), due to the difficulty the girls seem to have in spotting one another.

¹¹⁹ Plautus, *Rudens* 224-248. Hunter (1985, 50) argues that the girls' contact is marked by a change in rhythm from their respective monologues to a song duet in metrically- and verbally-matched phrases.

¹²⁰ This friendship strikingly contrasts the downright abusive and ungrateful reunion between Labrax and Charmides in Act II, scene vi, which in turn highlights Palaestra's characterization as the morally good extreme to the pimp's evil and impure character.

After Palaestra suggests that they follow the shore toward a temple, Ampelisca voluntarily follows her lead, but not without first fretting over the wet state of their clothes. Palaestra emerges as the superior castaway, intent on finding relief from their predicament, while Ampelisca is styled as the weaker of the two. The latter is devoid of solutions and must be told where to go; she is instructed not to think about her appearance, must be comforted, and remains silent when Palaestra speaks with Ptolemodora in the next scene. Despite the discrepancy, this scene presents the playwright's imagination of a correspondence between two young girlfriends, one that is similar to that between the *meretrix-virgo* Selenium and her fellow young prostitute Gymnasium in Plautus' *Cistellaria*. At lines 1-7 of *Cistellaria*, Selenium presents a touching tribute to her lifelong friend Gymnasium and Gymnasium's mother Syra, whom she praises for having sacrificed everything for her: "*ita omnibus relictis rebus mihi frequentem operam dedistis*" (line 6, "you dropped everything to give me such constant attention"). As the scene progresses, Gymnasium, in keeping with this portrayal, proceeds to comfort Selenium in her duress.¹²¹ Comparably, Palaestra and Ampelisca's emotive reunion displays their ardent investments in each other's wellbeing; therefore, a common factor between these two pairs of young girls is the obligation to help one another when they are in need. Palaestra and Ampelisca presumably met after they were purchased as slaves by Labrax, and so their bond was formed through their need to cope under the authority of the evil pimp, and later in the play to escape from him. Furthermore, the

¹²¹ For a summary of Selenium and Gymnasium's friendship, see Feltovich 2003, 129-31.

commiseration felt between the two girls in their shipwrecked state provides each with the essential emotional support during this time of crisis.

Despite the closeness of their relationship, Palaestra is still characterized as the play's *meretrix-virgo*, and so the contrast between the pair becomes more evident as the action progresses. At Act II, scene iv, Ampelisca ventures next door to Daemones' farmhouse to fetch water for the priestess of Venus. Upon answering the door, Sceparnio commences his shameless flirtation that eventually provokes a reciprocated response by Ampelisca at lines 426 and 436. Although this exchange is acceptable because of their slave statuses, Ampelisca is treated like and then succumbs to talking like a *meretrix*, thereby distinguishing Palaestra as chaste and Ampelisca as not. Furthermore, Sceparnio's behaviour would have been intolerable if he directed his cajole at a free woman, even if her true identity had not yet been revealed at this point of the play.¹²² Had this flirtation scene occurred between Sceparnio and Palaestra, the latter would no longer possess the requirements of the comic maiden, especially her moral propriety. Additionally, slaves are often sent on errands in Roman Comedy, during which they interact with other characters both male and female, servile and citizen class.¹²³ Therefore Ampelisca's act of going out and fetching water stresses her inferior position to Palaestra, and marks her as more servile.

The development of Palaestra and Ampelisca's relationship reaches a climactic point at Palaestra's recognition. Ampelisca is virtually mute in the entire scene, with the

¹²² Rosivach 1998, 50. Dutsch and Konstan also write that unmarried citizen girls should never be represented as subjects of erotic desire (Dutsch & Konstan 2011, 60).

¹²³ Feltovich 2003, 43.

exception of two lines; nevertheless she remains onstage until both girls go into Daemones' farmhouse, in which they stay for the rest of the play. Their final lines are spoken at 1183:

PAL. *Sequere me, Ampelisca.* AMP. *Cum te di amant, voluptati est mihi.*

PAL. Follow me, Ampelisca. AMP. It is pleasing to me when the gods love you.

Plaut. *Rud.* 1183

While back at line 250, Ampelisca was a willing follower of Palaestra's suggestion to follow the shore, now in their parting lines she is ordered by her freeborn counterpart to follow her inside, and she dutifully obliges. The recognition scene officially marks one girl as the slave and the other as the master, which is acceptable because Ampelisca has consistently been presented in a humorous and at times obscene light. The contrast between Palaestra and Ampelisca's portrayals primes the audience for the moment when the former is restored to her citizen status.

De Melo states that Ampelisca has no real function in the play, and that she is "a mere doublet of Palaestra".¹²⁴ Although Ampelisca does little to directly influence the plotline, she nevertheless serves to ensure that Palaestra is successfully restored to her freeborn status, by protecting and enhancing the *virgo*'s positive maiden-like characteristics. Palaestra is in a delicate position of being a citizen who is disguised as a slave girl, and in order for her restoration to come about, she must do things that are unbefitting of the comic silent maiden, such as speak on behalf of herself, react to her surroundings, and play an active role in her own recognition. The instability that is associated with a *meretrix-virgo* means that the remainder of her maidenly traits must be steadfast and

¹²⁴ De Melo 2012, 394.

undisputable. The changing nature of Palaestra's relationship with Ampelisca, as well as the reducing of the latter into a figure of humour and servility, protect the maiden's chastity, piety, and innocence.

On a deeper level, Ampelisca also symbolizes the outcome that Palaestra could have had, which is that of a *meretrix*; this is an especially scary possibility when Trachalio vaguely remarks that both girls should be free. The ambiguity surrounding Ampelisca's true identity means that she could have been a freeborn just like Palaestra, only she is without the means of being able to restore herself (i.e. through childhood tokens). Furthermore, without Ampelisca present to make errands, react distastefully in situations unfit for well-born maidens, and be ordered around, Palaestra's claim to a citizen status would not be as convincing. Lastly, it is interesting to note that the play ends festively with Daemones freeing both Trachalio and Ampelisca, and making arrangements for their wedding. As a result, Ampelisca becomes a freedwoman, as Trachalio claims she ought to be, and is given her own version of a happy ending. Her new status as Trachalio's wife means that she no longer needs to serve as Palaestra's slave, and because of that she can revert back to being her friend.

IV. A Recognition Scene for Palaestra

The trunk containing Palaestra's childhood tokens, as well as the recognition scene itself, are significant in the discussion of her characterization, because they are the key to her freeborn status. Their presence is what ultimately distinguishes Palaestra from Ampelisca, in that without them, she would have no means for an official recognition and thus would remain servile. The trunk is first seen in Act IV, scene ii when Gripus enters

the stage, dragging the shored object with a rope, and marvelling over his bout of good fortune. In the next scene, Trachalio approaches him and recognizes the trunk as the one that was lost in the storm. There ensues a lengthy and comical dialogue involving Gripus' assertion of the "finders, keepers" mentality and Trachalio's attempt to reason with the fellow slave, all the while both are tugging at the two ends of the rope. Although this scene fulfills the farcical humour that is expected in Plautine plays,¹²⁵ this rope from which the play acquires its name, and more importantly the trunk that is entangled in it, are crucial to the development of the plot. The recovery of the chest activates the discovery of Palaestra's identity, her reunion with her freeborn family, and a legitimate marriage with a proper dowry to her lover Plesidippus. The symbolic connection between the maiden girl and a key item is reminiscent of Plautus' *Aulularia*, in which the *virgo*'s identity is contingent on a pot of gold. Similarly, the trunk holds not only Palaestra's tokens but also enough gold to ensure her a smooth reintegration into society by means of providing a dowry. Furthermore in *Aulularia*, the deep association between the maiden girl and the *aula* culminate in the also highly farcical misunderstanding between her father Euclio and her lover Lysidamus. In *Rudens*, the lengthy dispute is not between Palaestra's father and lover, but between their slaves, Gripus and Trachalio. This is a noteworthy detail, because despite Gripus' argument that the trunk belongs to him by virtue of "catching" it, as a slave he is not entitled to own anything.¹²⁶ Whatever comes

¹²⁵ "Out of a fairly serious, moral play he [Plautus] picks the one farcical scene, builds it up, and names the whole play after it." (McLeish 1976, 36).

¹²⁶ For a detailed analysis of possession between master and slave, see Way 2000. It is interesting to note that Daemones himself uses this rule at lines 1384-86 when he convinces the pimp that the reward that Labrax promised to Gripus for securing him the trunk now automatically belongs to Daemones and therefore must be paid to him: "*Quod servo <meo> / promisisti, meum esse oportet, ne tu, leno, postules /*

into the possession of a slave automatically belongs to his master, thus if Gripus had won the trunk, he would have been forced to present it to Daemones, under whose household the girls are protected. On the other hand, if Trachalio had won the trunk, he would have revealed its contents to Plesidippus, and so following this logic, Palaestra's identity would have been revealed regardless of the winner of the tug-of-war. Incidentally, neither Gripus nor Trachalio secure possession of the object, because Daemones determines that it rightfully belongs to its pre-shipwreck owner, Labrax. That is why the recognition scene that results from Daemones' arbitration is crucial to Palaestra's outcome; if she is never prompted to speak out concerning her trinkets, the trunk and symbolically her identity would simply return under the control of the pimp.

Palaestra's role in her own recognition is crucial to the restoration of her status, and the irony that she must speak in order to regain her silent maiden status is addressed at this climactic point of the play.¹²⁷ The scene opens with Daemones exiting his farmhouse, presumably accompanied by the two girls. He expresses his regret at lines 1045-48:

“Serio edepol, quamquam vobis <volo> quae voltis, mulieres, / metuo, propter vos ne uxor mea extrudat aedibus, / quae me paelices adduxe dicet ante oculos suos.”

(“Seriously by Pollux, even though <I want> for you what you want, women, I fear lest my wife throws me out of my house because of you, she'll say that I've brought in mistresses before her very eyes.”). Palaestra and Ampelisca share one line in response, which is the typical formula for characters in distress: *“Miserae periimus.”* (line 1048,

te hic fide lenonia uti: non potes.” (“To my slave what you promised ought to belong to me, so pimp, don't expect to use the pimp's faith: you cannot.”).

¹²⁷ It is also noteworthy that the playwright allots five on-stage speaking roles in this scene, rather than the usual three in Greek New Comedy.

“Miserable us, we’re done for.”), after which they are silent for the majority of the scene.

For the most part, Trachalio speaks on behalf of the two girls, especially Palaestra, for whom he advocates as the owner of the trunk’s trinkets. After the girls’ single line of lament, the arbitration that is led by Daemones between Gripus and Trachalio proceeds without any further word about or addressed to Palaestra and Ampelisca. It is however presumed that they remain onstage for the entirety of the scene, because at line 1113 Gripus acknowledges their presence:

GRI. *quid, istae mutae sunt, quae pro se fabulari non queant?*

TRA. *Eo tacent, quia tacitast <melior> mulier semper quam loquens.*

GRI. What, are they dumb, they who are unable to speak for themselves?

TRA. They’re silent because a woman is always better silent than speaking.

Plaut. *Rud.* 1113-14

The silencing of women is a common joke in Roman Comedy. The prologue of Plautus’ *Poenulus* contains a famous shushing of stereotypically loud members of the audience including children, nurses, and matrons.¹²⁸ Gripus’ question can in this way be seen as a metatheatrical joke aimed at the spectators, in order to remind them that one of the main characteristics of women, specifically girls, in Roman Comedy is that they are preferably silent. Furthermore, Rosivach suggests that Gripus and Trachalio are complimenting Palaestra, a theory which he corroborates with the fact that Trachalio has been sympathetic to Palaestra’s plight from the very beginning. To the Romans in the mid-Republican period, silence truly was a feminine virtue, especially for the comedy’s

¹²⁸ Plautus, *Poenulus* 28-35. For specific discussions about silence in *Rudens*, see Prescott 1937, 205-08 and Rosivach 2000.

designated maiden girl. Therefore, Trachalio's response is not meant to be a crude remark directed at Palaestra, because his entire argument for the trunk caters to her interests.¹²⁹

I argue that through these simple lines, Trachalio and Gripus remind the audience of Palaestra's goodness, because she would have recognized the trunk upon seeing it. Instead, she maintains her silence until she is ordered to speak by Daemones at lines 1129-30.¹³⁰ The reason why Palaestra remains onstage is so that she can identify the contents of the trunk, thereby setting herself free. The list of childhood tokens, as well as the naming of her mother and father, begin at line 1130 and end at line 1175 when she greets Daemones as her long-lost father: "*Salve, mi pater insperate*". It should also be noted that Palaestra demonstrates her decorum by only responding to Daemones, a respectable freeborn citizen, rather than Trachalio and Gripus, in this crucial and decisive scene.¹³¹ After she is restored to freeborn maiden status, it is no longer acceptable for her to speak to anyone outside of her immediate household. After her formal greeting to Daemones at line 1175, Palaestra has one parting line in her new role, after which she exits the stage for the remainder of the play, and it is an order to Ampelisca (line 1183, "*Sequere me, Ampelisca.*"). This line establishes Palaestra's new status as the master of her former comrade, and therefore confirms to the audience that the transformation from *meretrix-virgo* to *virgo* has occurred.

¹²⁹ Rosvach 2000, 26.

¹³⁰ Plautus, *Rudens* 1129-30: DAEM. *Audi nunciam, Palaestra atque Ampelisca, hoc quod loquor. / estne hic vidulus ubi cistellam tuam inesse aiebas?* PAL. *Is est.* (DAEM. Now listen, Palaestra and Ampelisca, to what I say. Is this the trunk in which you said your little box is? PAL. It is.).

¹³¹ Rosivach 2000, 26.

Plautus is careful to ensure that even though Palaestra appears onstage in her recognition scene, she is a passive character and only speaks when necessary. This helplessness is all too true of the silent maiden, for although Palaestra is directly involved in her own recognition, the other characters' actions ultimately lead to this scene. Arcturus riles up the sea to cause the shipwreck, Daemones saves both girls from the pursuit of Labrax, and Trachalio argues on Palaestra's behalf for possession of the trunk until she must identify the trinkets herself. In the following scene (Act IV, scene v), Daemones begins preparations to arrange a wedding between Palaestra and Plesidippus. Typical of her stock type, Palaestra is not given any input on the wedding matters, nor does she appear onstage to show that she cares. The remainder of the play contains humorous and quick-paced banter, such as the dialogue between Daemones and Trachalio, in which they repeat the phrase "*licet*" (lines 1205-26), and the equally anaphoric conversation between Plesidippus and Trachalio through the word "*censeo*" (lines 1265-81). Therefore, in the aftermath of her recognition, even though Daemones' conversations centre on Palaestra, his daughter remains offstage, invisible, and silent, as is appropriate of her renewed status.

V. Setting and Significance

In concurrence with Leach, I argue that there is a vital interweaving between setting and story in the play, especially in its connection with underlying themes and key characters.¹³² Plautus' *Rudens* is unique in that it is located at the shores of a remote and

¹³² Leach 1974, 915.

isolated land, where all of the characters except Ptolemaia, the priestess of Venus, are far from home.¹³³ Daemones and his household inhabit Cyrene because of his exile from Athens, Labrax and his property arrive by shipwreck, and Plesidippus follows the pimp closely in order to claim his beloved. The staging itself incorporates the beach, as is apparent in Palaestra and Ampelisca's post-shipwreck reunion scene; off stage right is the town of Cyrene, moving toward stage left the audience sees Daemones' farmhouse and the temple of Venus, and off stage left is presumably the sea.¹³⁴ This natural body, which is wild, mysterious, and tempestuous, is set in stark contrast to dry land (i.e. the city-centre), which represents the rule of culture and civic polity. Therefore, the shore on which the play is set marks the boundary between these polar domains in the same way that Palaestra straddles the line between a *meretrix* and a *virgo*. This equally unstable entity is the perfect setting for the depiction of this subtype of the silent maiden, because it is unknown, uncultivated, and far removed from civilization and structure.

At the beginning of the play, the sea is turbulent, threatening, and isolating, which characterizes the tone of Daemones' exile and Palaestra's helpless desolation. At the same time, it also carries the potential for resources and bounty. As is demonstrated by the fishermen's lament at lines 290-305, this potential has not yet been fulfilled, and the audience knows that it will not until Palaestra's status is restored and a happy ending

¹³³ The other Roman comedies that are set outside of Athens are: Plautus' *Amphitruo* (Thebes), *Captivi* (Aetolia), *Cistellaria* (Sicyon), *Curculio* (Epidaurus), *Menaechmi* (Epidamnus), *Miles Gloriosus* (Ephesus), and *Poenulus* (Calydon).

¹³⁴ For information about the stage setting of Plautus' *Rudens*, see Johnston 1933, 28; Beare 1964, 181; and De Melo 2012, 405.

ensues.¹³⁵ The barrenness of the coast before the recognition scene is represented in the characters' fixation on hunger and thirst. At lines 140-46, Daemones, Sceparnio, and Plesidippus engage in a discussion revolving around Sceparnio's hunger and the masters' awaited lunch. At lines 181-83, Daemones gives Sceparnio an ultimatum to have his lunch with the party for whom he wishes to serve: the unfamiliar shipwrecked girls that they spot from a distance or his own master. In the fishermen's lament, the group prays to Venus so that they may receive a bounty from the sea to sell or eat. Throughout the play, there is also a pattern of comments about the lack of food, or else bad drinking or eating as a euphemism for drowning (lines 361-63, 508, 530). Furthermore, at lines 902-03, Daemones is convinced that due to the terrible weather, Gripus will catch nothing from his fishing excursion: "*in digitis hodie percoquam quod ceperit, / ita fluctuare video vehementer mare.*" ("I'll cook what he catches today on my fingers, I see the sea surge so violently."). However, in the next scene Gripus comes onstage dragging Palaestra's trunk, which marks the turning point of the play, as the slave refers to his catch as a "*piscatu novo... uberi*".¹³⁶ This "new rich fish" prompts interference by Trachalio, which leads to the recognition scene, after which the pattern shifts from hunger to feasting. In his celebration, Daemones orders dinner to be cooked for a banquet (line 1264), and in the last line of the play, he invites Labrax and Gripus to dine with him (line 1423).

Furthermore, the sea's potential for loss and gain can also be represented in the form of the shipwreck and discovery of the trunk respectively, both of which are deeply

¹³⁵ Note the possible foreshadowing of bounty and prosperity at the end of the play, when considering the glorious history and reputation of the actual city of Cyrene in antiquity. For more, see Pindar, *Pythian* 4.1-13, 5.23-25, 9.1-8 (Leach 1974, 916n3).

¹³⁶ Plaut. *Rud.* 911.

connected to Palaestra. After all, the storm is effected by the pimp's decision to ship the girl to Sicily, while the trunk is the key to her recognition. The shipwreck itself can be analogous to Palaestra's symbolic rebirth as the comic maiden, which is reminiscent in her prayer to Venus at lines 699-700: "*elautae ambae sumus opera Neptuni noctu, / ne invisas habeas neve idcirco nobis vitio vortas...*" ("We both have been washed at night, by Neptune's effort, so that you may not be indignant nor find fault with us on that account..."). Her comment suggests that she was purified by the sea when she and Ampelisca washed ashore, practically lifeless. The "*scapha*" or "little boat" in which they rode possesses connotations of birth and rearing, and its Greek equivalent "σκάφη", while primarily translating as a tub or basin, can also refer to a baby's cradle.¹³⁷ Therefore, when Palaestra escapes from Labrax's ship onto the lifeboat, she elicits the image of an infant in its cradle. As she washes ashore, she sheds her identity as a slave under Labrax's possession, so that she may be restored to her original role. Just as she was taken away from her family at a young age by sea, by the same force of nature she is cast away onto the shores of an exotic land, where she is ultimately recognized and identified as the inhabitant's citizen daughter.

Furthermore, it is in the post-recognition scenes that the audience witnesses how Palaestra's restoration directly effects that of Daemones and the other characters throughout the play. When the audience first sees him, the old man is wearied, poor, and

¹³⁷ This particular translation is used in Aristotle's *Poetics* 1454b22-25 in association with identifying children exposed at birth.

lives in isolation. His release from this miserable and exiled life is best described in lines 1144-47 by Palaestra and Gripus:

PAL. *Istaec est. o mei parentes, hic vos conclusos gero,
huc opesque spesque vestrum cognoscendum condidi.*

GRI. *Tum tibi hercle deos iratos esse oportet, quisquis es,
quae parentis tam in angustum tuos locum compegeris.*

PAL. It's the one. Oh my parents, I'm carrying you here, shut in, here I have placed the means and hopes of recognizing you.

GRI. Then by Hercules the gods ought to be angry with you, whoever you are who in such a narrow place shut up your parents.

Plaut. *Rud.* 1144-47

This joyous occasion is two-fold; Palaestra has kept the means of her recognition in the trunk her entire life, and in so doing has simultaneously symbolically shut her parents inside of it. When the contents are finally identified in the recognition scene, it is not only Palaestra who is freed, but Daemones as well. She, by virtue of her trunk, is ultimately the key to Daemones' and the other characters' propitious endings in the play. Like the sea, she possesses the potential for prosperity and fortune. When she is discovered as Daemones' long-lost daughter, talks of a feast are had, a legitimate marriage with a proper dowry is discussed with Plesidippus, Ampelisca and Trachalio are freed and betrothed, and Daemones receives the hope of a reintegration into civilization.

VI. Conclusion

The ambiguity of *Rudens'* characters and setting prepares the Plautine spectator for a controversial portrayal of a freeborn Roman girl. Owing to the restrictions set upon comic maidens in Roman Comedy, the playwright has created in Palaestra a character whose ambiguous identity allows her to be outside, but whose traits indicate that she belongs indoors where she is invisible and silent. While it may seem that Plautus is

challenging the boundaries of the silent maiden, it is also evident that he is extremely meticulous in the way he portrays Palaestra. Even when her relationships and status shift with the progression of the action, her personality remains unyielding. The lack of development assures the audience that even though the girl is active onstage, the situation is extraordinary and is only temporary. Anderson describes Palaestra as an “innocent, honest, trusting young girl, naively involved in her own past and her long search for her parents, almost unaware of what happens around her”,¹³⁸ and these characteristics truly do not change over the course of the play. Plautus is careful to never let Palaestra behave like or be referred to as a *meretrix*, and utilizes Ampelisca as a shield or substitute to fill this type of role in the play. In doing so, he assures that Palaestra is always portrayed as a morally good person, whose piety is not only crucial to her own happy ending, but to those of the other characters. After she is recognized and restored, she no longer appears, because by virtue of her new status, it is no longer necessary. Furthermore, the maritime setting of the play creates a sense of fantasy and exoticness, which further removes its characters from the usual domestic background of many Roman Comedies. In such a surreal environment, someone like Palaestra can possess two identities simultaneously and be able to be accepted as a stock maiden, even though she technically is not for a large portion of the play. It is ultimately because the stage of *Rudens* is so far removed from order and civilization that the *meretrix-virgo* can experience a restoration and even symbolic rebirth, and be celebrated for it.

¹³⁸ Anderson 1993, 51.

Chapter 3: A Maiden in Mind: The *Virgo* in Transition in Plautus' *Amphitruo*

In the typical love story of Roman Comedy, a young man desires to obtain his beloved and, with the help of his tricky slave, overcomes obstacles in the form of a blocking character (i.e. a father, a pimp, or a rival) to achieve his goal. The heroine of the story, and the object of the young man's desire, is usually unmarriageable in some way: for example in *Aulularia*, Phaedria becomes pregnant after she is raped at a nighttime festival, whereas in *Rudens*, the *virgo* Palaestra is perceived to be a slave by the other characters in the play. However, throughout the narrative the heroine demonstrates her respectability and piety, thereby garnering favourability among her fellow characters as well as the audience. In the end, a recognition scene reveals that she is marriageable after all, and the happy ending of the play takes the form of a union between the *adulescens* and *virgo*.

The expectation thereon is that the newly-married couple will continue to live happily in domestic bliss; however, when a play begins not with an *adulescens* and a *virgo*, but with a *senex* (old man) and a *matrona* (wife), the latter is characterized as irate and proud while the former is reduced to a ridiculous figure. The paradox surrounding marriage in Roman Comedy is that while it is the objective of the amatory plot, established marriages are typically portrayed as a negative experience for both the husband and the wife.¹³⁹ Only a few extant plays by Plautus and Terence resist this comic marital relationship, and

¹³⁹ Braund 2005, 40. An excellent example of a hot-tempered wife and a faithless husband in Roman Comedy is Sostrata and Lysidamus from Plautus' *Casina*.

among them is Plautus' *Amphitruo*,¹⁴⁰ a tragicomedy that stars a new wife who is pregnant by both her husband and her divine lover. The main tensions of the plot derive not from a shrewd wife's suspicions of her spouse's foolish infidelity, but the confusion created by Jupiter and Mercury in their convincing masquerades as Alcmena's husband Amphitruo and his slave Sosia.

In this chapter, I argue that Alcmena, who neither fulfills the requirements of a *virgo* by virtue of her marital status, nor has achieved the status of the stock jealous and resentful *matrona*, is portrayed as a female character in transition. In as much as she is technically a married woman, her personal attributes reveal that she still maintains the ideals and virtues that are characteristic of a comic maiden. Moreover, like Palaestra from *Rudens*, Alcmena's status allows her not only to appear onstage, but also to express these values more freely than the silent and invisible *virgo* of Roman Comedy. In particular, I will analyze Alcmena's role as the maiden in transition by placing her within the parameters of the typical Roman comic amatory narrative. In order to do so, it is important to first determine how the roles of the characters within this play are consistent with this type of plotline. This analysis is complicated by the theme of duality that dominates the play; from the commencement of the action, the audience is led to expect duos, whether they are Amphitruo and Jupiter, Mercury and Sosia, or even Iphicles and

¹⁴⁰ The other two plays are Plautus' *Menaechmi* and Terence's *Hecyra*. Terence's *Hecyra* is especially noteworthy, because its heroine Philumena fulfills every characteristic of the silent maiden in Roman Comedy, with the one exception that she is already married. Like Phaedria in *Aulularia*, she was raped by an unknown man before the present action of the play, and as a result distances herself from her husband in the hopes of concealing the premarital pregnancy. Through a recognition scene, it is discovered that her unknown assailant and her husband are the same man, thus the couple is reunited and her baby is legitimized. While all this occurs, Philumena never appears on stage.

Hercules. The problem therein lies in the possibility of two male lovers who could at the same time play the role of each other's blocking characters (i.e. Amphitruo and Jupiter), two possible clever slaves to act as these lovers' sidekicks (i.e. Mercury and Sosia, respectively), but only one heroine. As the mother of the twins and the lover of both Amphitruo and Jupiter, the only prominent character who is not part of an identical duo is Alcmena, and because of this she is the central figure of the play. What is more, although she exhibits the virtues that are typical of a comic *virgo*, Alcmena's serious personal attributes are possibly undermined by the fact that the playwright has her appear onstage fully pregnant. The paradoxical portrayal is further enriched by her origins in the Greek mythical tradition, specifically as Hercules' mother, an aspect of the play that I will also address in this chapter. In reconciling these contradictions, I present a character study of a truly unique and complex *virgo* figure in Roman Comedy.

I. A Brief Summary

The *Amphitruo* is unique within the Roman comedic corpus because it covers the mythological story of the events leading up to Hercules' birth. Its original date and performance location are unknown; however, while there are no speculations regarding where the play was first presented, De Melo does suggest a date of around 186 BCE, due to a possible nod to the *senatus consultum de bacchanalibus* in line 703.¹⁴¹ The summary of the plot is as follows:

¹⁴¹ De Melo 2011, 6, in reference to the phrase spoken by Sosia: "*Bacchae bacchanti si velis advorsarier*".

Amphitruo, the commander of the Theban army, has been away on campaign against the Teleboians for ten months, while his wife Alcmena remains in Thebes patiently awaiting his homecoming. Alcmena is ten months pregnant with Amphitruo's child (line 481, 670), but unbeknownst to them, she was also impregnated by Jupiter seven months prior to the action of the play (line 482).¹⁴² On the eve of Amphitruo's return, Jupiter comes to Alcmena disguised as her husband, and spends a prolonged night with her. The next day, Amphitruo's slave Sosia is sent home to announce his master's arrival to Alcmena, but upon reaching the house, he is stopped by Mercury in full disguise. In one of the longest scenes of the play, Mercury convinces Sosia that he has gone insane, and the bewildered slave runs back to the harbour to his master (lines 153-462). After Sosia leaves, Alcmena and Jupiter finally come out of the house to bid each other a heartfelt farewell marked by the gift of a *patera* or drinking bowl. As Jupiter and Mercury exit, and the real Amphitruo and Sosia approach, Alcmena reflects on her loneliness and faithfulness in a long monologue about virtue (lines 633-653).

When Amphitruo and Sosia arrive home, they are disappointed by Alcmena's lukewarm welcome, as she claims that she has just seen them. The confusion escalates when the wife produces the drinking bowl, which the real Amphitruo won in battle and intended to give to her. As a result, the husband and slave ridicule Alcmena and accuse

¹⁴² The timing of the two conceptions thus allows both sons to be born around the same time. However, it raises the question of whether Jupiter, disguised as Amphitruo, made an impromptu visit to Alcmena three months into the commander's campaign, or impregnated her supernaturally without her knowledge. Plautus was most likely unconcerned with these types of details, as long as the events of the myth aligned with the conventions of the Roman comic genre; that is, that Jupiter's appearance on the eve of Alcmena's labour obstructed the loving reunion of husband and wife, and that the climactic birth of Hercules and Iphicles initiated a recognition scene for Amphitruo and thus a happy ending for the married couple.

her of adultery. Because of Amphitruo's growing rage and Alcmena's persistence that she is innocent, the couple resolves to settle the matter by consulting the wife's relative Naucrates. After agreeing to this, Alcmena and Amphitruo part ways, but not before divorce has been threatened. However, in the hopes of engaging in a final tryst with Alcmena, Jupiter returns as Amphitruo and successfully coaxes the pregnant wife into forgiving him. After the imposter-husband and Alcmena enter the house, the real Amphitruo arrives from his failed attempt of summoning Naucrates, and finds that his door is locked.

At this point, there is a significant lacuna in the text, but based on some surviving fragments and the *argumenta*, it is revealed that Mercury, disguised as Sosia, appears from an upper-storey window to humiliate and throw water on Amphitruo. Blepharo, the commander's ship pilot, is then asked to distinguish the real Amphitruo from the divine counterfeit, which he is unable to do. The text recommences with the pilot's departure and a sudden labour cry by Alcmena from indoors. Jupiter re-enters the house to attend to her, and Amphitruo's anger reaches a climactic point as he is again locked out of his own home. In his slew of threats to kill anyone and everyone who obstructs his entry, the enraged husband is struck unconscious by lightning. As he awakens, Bromia, Alcmena's old maid, comes on-stage to deliver a messenger speech about what has happened in the house: Alcmena has given a painless birth to twins, one of which is revealed to be the divinely-conceived Hercules. Jupiter comes onstage *ex machina* to reveal the truth of his deception and to verify Alcmena's fidelity. The god promises Amphitruo that all of his trouble comes with a prize: eternal glory by virtue of being Hercules' mortal father.

II. Role Designations in the Amatory Narrative

One of the essential qualifications for a *virgo* in Roman Comedy is that the character in question is a young, unmarried girl. Firstly, Alcmena's youth is implied in the fact that she is undergoing her first pregnancy. Furthermore in the *Shield of Heracles* 1-19, pseudo-Hesiod writes that the reason why Amphiurios embarks on his campaign is so that he could avenge the deaths of Alcmena's brothers; only then can they consummate their marriage. During the span of the expedition however, Zeus visits the commander's new wife and impregnates her. These events, which roughly correspond to the plot of Plautus' play, corroborate the timeline that Alcmena and Amphiurios are in their first year of marriage, and in turn are indicative of the wife's young age. Regarding the latter part of the criterion, I argue that despite her wife status, Alcmena becomes unmarriageable by virtue of having two lovers. *Amphiurios* reads as a typical Roman comic love narrative, in that it follows a young man's efforts to thwart a blocking character so that he may gain possession of a young girl. Because of her unusual circumstance, Alcmena embodies the *virgo* character in the love plot, and an argument can be made in support of both Jupiter and Amphiurios for the role of the play's hero, the *adulescens*.

a) Battle of the Clever Slaves

For the bulk of the play Jupiter is successful in his tryst with Alcmena, and his affair with her represents the source of tension between the mortal husband and wife. It is obvious then that the play should end with the reunion of Amphiurios and Alcmena; however, Plautus constructs a persuasive portrayal of Jupiter as the story's lover, one that is made all the more convincing through the playwright's characterization of the god's

associate Mercury. Every *adulescens* should have some form of a *servus callidus*; in *Aulularia*, Lyconides is accompanied by the sneaky Strobilus, while in *Rudens*, Plesidippus and Palaestra's marriage is brought about in part by the persistence of Trachalio. Moreover, just as Sosia is the clever sidekick of Amphitruo, Jupiter's son Mercury performs the slave role for his divine father. This play thusly depicts the competition between the mortal and divine duos for the positions of lover and clever slave, and from the beginning of the action, Mercury establishes himself as the designated *servus callidus* over Sosia.

The opening scene after the prologue not only reveals the divine "slave" as the winner of the *servus callidus* contest, but it also primes the audience to expect Jupiter's amatory success throughout the play. Sosia comes onstage and begins his entrance monologue by asking, "*Qui me alter est audacior homo aut qui confidentior, / iuventutis mores qui sciam, qui hoc noctis solus ambulem?*" ("What other man is more daring or more confident than me, I who knows the ways of young people, and who walks alone at this time of night?").¹⁴³ After this self-endorsement, he attempts to elicit sympathy from the audience by describing the plights of being a slave to a rich master. Following this, he demonstrates his cleverness by recounting an extemporaneous story of Amphitruo's victory against King Pterelas, despite having fled when the battle broke out.¹⁴⁴ Sosia's battle report demonstrates his ability to improvise; however, the account is undermined

¹⁴³ Plaut. *Amph.* 153-54.

¹⁴⁴ In line 199, Sosia announces: "*nam cum pugnabant maxime, ego tum fugiebam maxime*" ("for just as they were fighting, at that very moment I was fleeing"). Furthermore in lines 253-54, he notes that he only knows that the battle was fought continuously from morning to evening because he was unable to eat breakfast that day.

by Mercury's numerous asides to the audience at lines 176, 185, 248, 263-70, 277-78, 284-86, and 289-90. One comment that particularly highlights Sosia's exclusion from the joke occurs at lines 276-78: the slave comments on the stillness of the night sky, which prompts his divine counterpart to remind the spectators that it was done on purpose by his father Jupiter.¹⁴⁵ Sosia does not even notice that Mercury is onstage with him until line 292, at which point he begins to attempt his own asides.¹⁴⁶ However, unlike Mercury's witty comments, which displays his knowledge over Sosia's ignorance, the mortal slave's statements to the audience are filled with fear of the unknown man and what his fists could do to him. Any sympathy that the audience might have felt for Sosia in his opening speech is thus quickly turned to laughter by the presence of Mercury. In addition, even though Sosia receives a lengthy monologue at the very beginning of the play, his information comes too late, as Mercury already updated the audience about these events back in the prologue. For the rest of the scene, Mercury successfully convinces the slave that he is in fact Sosia; meanwhile, the real Sosia slowly loses his identity as a clever slave. He tries to regain the *servus callidus* status by announcing to the audience at line 424 that he will attempt to play his own stock role and deceive Mercury. This endeavour fails, and Mercury asserts the power of authority over Sosia and outwits him. The slave is eventually put to flight, and Mercury frames his victory with a speech at lines 463-98 to further confirm his position.

¹⁴⁵ SOS. *ita statim stant signa, neque nox quoquam concedit die.* MERC. *Perge, Nox, ut occepisti, gere patri morem meo: | optumo optume optumam operam das, datam pulchre locas.* (SOS. So the signs stand still, nor does the night concede to the day anywhere. MERC. Go on, Night, as you've begun, bear the custom of my father: you are doing the finest job for the finest god in the finest fashion, you arrange the effort splendidly.).

¹⁴⁶ See lines 293, 295, 304, 308, 309, 310, 312, 314, 317, 319, etc.

What is more, Mercury not only asserts himself as the *servus callidus* of the play, but goes beyond this identity to prove that he is the best Roman comic slave. In lines 984-90, he performs the *servus currens* or “running slave” stock scene, in which the character scampers onstage and delivers a messenger speech, all the while frantically running around. Mercury even adjusts his meter from unaccompanied *iambic senarii* to accompanied *iambic octanarii*, a common attribute of all running slave routines.¹⁴⁷ In lines 991-96, he also boasts his obedience in playing the parasite for his master; by highlighting his and Jupiter's like-mindedness, he associates himself with the good slave of Roman Comedy. This affirmation occurs after Sosia fails to accomplish the exact same portrayal; at lines 957-62, he solemnly describes the responsibilities of a good slave, only to be rejected by Jupiter at line 963. In Roman Comedy, the success of the young lover relies on the antics of his servile sidekick. By forming such a strong connection with the audience from the onset of the play, Sosia's divine duplicate takes control of the situation and ensures that his father can spend a night of indulgence with Alcmena. Mercury sets himself up as the epitome of the clever slave, and by extension, he secures the role of *adulescens* for his father Jupiter.

b) Battle of the Lovers

Jupiter further fulfills the role of the play's *adulescens* in his compatibility with the structure of the rape plot. When a maiden is raped in Roman Comedy, the assault usually occurs outside of her home, at a nighttime festival, and by a young man. One or both of

¹⁴⁷ Moore 1998, 122.

the parties involved does not know the identity of the other until a recognition scene reveals the truth and reconciles the couple, from which point there is a happy ending likely in the form of their marriage. Even though Alcmena willingly engages in sexual intercourse with Jupiter, and so is not technically raped, there is a level of deception involved in their affair. In the prologue, Mercury explains that “he [Jupiter] began to love Alcmena without the knowledge of her husband, and took for himself enjoyment of her body, and he made her pregnant by his embrace (*compressu suo*)”.¹⁴⁸ I mention in the introduction that the standard euphemism implying rape in Roman Comedy is “*vi compressus*”, which translates literally as “to embrace by force”. Alcmena believes that she is having consensual intercourse with her beloved husband Amphitruo, but in reality she has spent the night with Jupiter in disguise. Because of this, she does not technically know who her lover is, and Jupiter’s identity is not revealed until the end of the play. The circumstance in which she finds herself is instigated by the god’s deceit, and so Alcmena is not so much raped in the sense that she is embraced by force, but that she is embraced by deception.

In addition, as I listed in chapter two, the common causes of rape in the love narrative are *nox* (night), *amor* (love or lust), *vinum* (wine), *deus* (the will of the gods), and *adulescentia* (the immaturity of youth). In the case of the love affair between Jupiter and Alcmena, I argue that the reasons behind the former’s actions fulfill most of these prerequisites. Of the list, *deus* is the most ironic cause, because the will of Jupiter himself

¹⁴⁸ Lines 107-09: “*is amare occepit Alcumenam clam virum / usuramque eius corporis cepit sibi, / et gravidam fecit is eam compressu suo.*”

is certainly a dominating factor in the god's sexual escapade with Alcmena. Jupiter himself addresses this irony when he seeks forgiveness from his lover after her fight with the real Amphytruo: "*id ego si fallo, tum te, summe Iuppiter, / quaeso, Amphytruoni ut semper iratus sies.*"¹⁴⁹ The humour in this statement derives from the fact that Jupiter is deceiving Alcmena, but because he himself is "*summe Iuppiter*", he will not suffer from his own actions. Secondly, even though their encounter does not occur at a nocturnal festival, it does happen during an extended night. The excuse of *nox* is also parodied because, instead of being overcome by the night, Jupiter lengthens it so that his time with Alcmena may last even longer.¹⁵⁰ Finally, as Mercury cheekily presumes at line 104,¹⁵¹ the Roman audience would have been familiar with Jupiter's reputation, in that he is often stirred by *amor*. Throughout the play, Jupiter is characterized as a lover ("*amator*" at line 106) or a lovesick man ("*amans*" at lines 126, 290, and 993). Furthermore, when the act of loving ("*amat*", lines 473, 655, and 995) or love itself ("*amor*", lines 541, 841, 894) are mentioned, Jupiter is almost always the accompanying figure.¹⁵² An argument can thusly be made for Alcmena's chastity, as the conception of her baby with Jupiter is not consensual purely because she is unaware that she has been engaging in an extramarital affair. Therefore, in accordance with the conventions of the rape plot, Jupiter convincingly embodies the role of the *adulescens*.

This characterization is further underscored by Amphytruo's resemblance to the typical old-man blocking character of the comic amatory plot, a characterization which

¹⁴⁹ Lines 933-934: "If I deceive you, I beg by Supreme Jupiter that you may always be mad at Amphytruo."

¹⁵⁰ For references to the lengthened night, see lines 113, 277-278, and 544-550.

¹⁵¹ MERC. *vos novisse... iam ut sit pater meus...* ("You already know what my father is like...").

¹⁵² The exceptions are at lines 655 and 841, where Alcmena is the subject and speaker, respectively.

becomes more convincing as the play progresses. The gradual deterioration of Amphitruo throughout the action is best described by Christenson, who writes that, “In the course of the play, Amphitryon is made to believe that he has lost his wife’s affection and his control over her sexuality (and so, possibly, the paternity of their child); he loses control of his household and slave, flouts *pietas*, and is excluded altogether from his own home throughout the play; and, finally, he experiences a death-like state from which he emerges with real doubts about his identity as the *paterfamilias*.”¹⁵³

Amphitruo and Sosia’s return to Thebes quickly shifts from a heartfelt homecoming to a confusing conversation with his wife that results in his angry accusation of her infidelity. The fast-paced dialogue escalates to the point where the threat of divorce is made and Alcmena is insulted in terms of her chastity and weight.¹⁵⁴ Despite these cruel circumstances, Beare notes that Alcmena maintains “her dignity, her calm consciousness of innocence and her affection for her husband”.¹⁵⁵ In this scene, Plautus produces a striking juxtaposition; by portraying Alcmena as the quintessence of virtue and strength, the playwright reduces Amphitruo to the role of rash and unsympathetic *senex* that rivals *Aulularia*’s Euclio. What is more, Amphitruo’s asides are repeatedly eavesdropped by his slaves Sosia and Bromia,¹⁵⁶ which demonstrates his loss of control over what is or is not heard onstage. He is later made the butt of a joke when Mercury, disguised as Sosia, appears on the upper storey of the commander’s home and pours water on his head.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Christenson 2008, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Amphitruo threatens a divorce at line 852, and both Sosia and Amphitruo insult Alcmena at lines 718-19, 723-24, 727-28, 738-40, and 782-83.

¹⁵⁵ Beare 1964, 57.

¹⁵⁶ By Sosia in lines 574, 576, 605-06; and by Bromia in line 1083.

¹⁵⁷ See Plaut. *Amph.* 1021-1034.

Furthermore, while Jupiter steadily builds rapport with the audience by guiding them through the action, Amphitruo is completely excluded from the gods' machinations until the final scenes of the play.¹⁵⁸ Finally, as Amphitruo lays unconscious in front of his house after having been struck by lightning, his old maid Bromia bustles out on-stage, and upon spotting him, misidentifies her master for an old man: "*sed quid hoc? quis hic est senex, qui ante aedis nostras sic iacet?*"¹⁵⁹

By virtue of his unsympathetic behaviour, Amphitruo inadvertently facilitates Jupiter's role as the *adulescens* to Alcmena's *virgo*; however, in as much as the god presents a convincing portrayal of the comic lover, Amphitruo and Alcmena are the rightful protagonist couple in this play. This is especially evident in the fact that the union between Jupiter and Alcmena cannot resolve the tensions of the plot. In the comic amatory narrative, one of the main impediments faced by the young man is the unmarriageability of his object of desire, and the restoration of the female protagonist by means of a recognition scene results in the happy union between the lovers. The fundamental problem with Jupiter as the *adulescens* is that there is no possibility for a restoration at the end of the play, because his object of desire is married to someone else. On the other hand, the intervention of the god into Amphitruo's household creates an opposition for the returning commander. Therefore, Jupiter and Mercury's departure at the end of the action promises a restoration of the home by means of a reconciliation between Amphitruo and Alcmena. The commander's designation as the *adulescens* is

¹⁵⁸ For examples, see Plaut. *Amph.* 873-81, 891-96, 952-53, 974-75, and 1039.

¹⁵⁹ Line 1072: "But what is this? Who is this old man, who lies thusly in front of our house?"

further corroborated when Mercury and Jupiter refer to Alcmena as an “*uxor usura*” or “*uxor usuraria*” (“borrowed wife”),¹⁶⁰ thereby indicating that the affair is only temporary. Jupiter thusly best embodies the comic faithless husband who has forgotten his years and for a short period indulges in his youthful desires;¹⁶¹ he is the true *senex* of the play, in as much as his wife Juno’s reputation befits that of the comic jealous *matrona*.¹⁶² In his sexual ventures, Jupiter makes the audience his accomplices: by satisfying his pleasure, he also satisfies that of the audience for humour. He sows chaos and provides laughter by inciting Amphytruo’s degradation, then rectifies his actions in the closing scene. Therefore, because of the interference of the divine *senex*, Alcmena becomes unmarriageable in the sense that her alleged infidelity makes her unavailable to her husband Amphytruo. However, when Jupiter appears *ex machina* in a pseudo-recognition scene, Alcmena’s respectability is restored and the husband and wife are able to reconcile not with the promise of a wedding, but through a symbolic re-marriage of spouses.

III. Alcmena’s Characterization

Despite her status as a *matrona*, the virtues that Alcmena displays throughout the play mark her as the antithesis of stock wives in Roman Comedy. Through her piety, specifically her devotion to her husband Amphytruo, she demonstrates that she is a wife in technicality but a comic maiden in mind. This characterization is established in

¹⁶⁰ Lines 107-08 (“*Alcumenam... | usuramque*”); line 498 (“*cum Alcumena uxore usuraria*”); lines 980-81 (“*cum hac usuraria | uxore*”).

¹⁶¹ An example of this type of comic husband is Lysidamus from Plautus’ *Casina*.

¹⁶² Reminisces to Juno are found in lines 510 and 832, despite her never appearing as a character in the play. These references thusly serve as reminders to the audience that Jupiter cannot be *adulescens* of the play, but instead fulfills the position of *senex*, who eventually returns to his old wife.

Alcmena's first and lengthiest monologue of the play at lines 633-53, in which she presents herself as the quintessence of virtue. Located at the opening of Act II, scene ii, Alcmena speaks directly to the audience, thereby commanding their undivided attention and sympathy. She invites her listeners to judge her as a noble and devoted wife when she recounts the joys and pains of Amphytruo's homecoming then departure,¹⁶³ and she displays her strength when she finds solace in the fact that when her husband returns, he does so a victorious hero.¹⁶⁴ Her patience and devotion are enhanced by the military achievements of her husband, because as his wife, the virtue that Amphytruo demonstrates on campaign extends to her, and she cherishes this over all other aspects of life.

ALC. *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.*

ALC. Virtue is the best prize
Virtue surely surpasses everything:
Freedom, safety, life, property, parents, the fatherland, and descendants
Are protected, are preserved.
Virtue holds everything in itself, all good things accrue
To the man who possesses virtue.

Plaut. *Amph.* 648-53

¹⁶³ Lines 640-41: "*sola hic mihi nunc videor, quia ille hinc abest quem ego amo praetor omnis. / plus aegri ex abitu viri, quam ex adventu voluptatis cepi.*" ("Now I feel alone, because that man leaves here, whom I love more than all my family and friends. I received more grievance from the departure of my husband than joy from his arrival.").

¹⁶⁴ Lines 643-47: "*id solacio est. / absit, dum modo laude parta / domum recipiat se; feram et perferam usque / abitum eius animo forti atque offirmato, id modo si mercedis / datur mi, ut meus victor vir belli clueat. Satis mi esse ducam.*" ("It is comforting. Let him leave, as long as he returns home a glorious winner. I'll bear it and endure his departure to the end, and I'll persevere with a strong heart, as if it is given to me as a reward, so that my husband is named victor in war. I'll consider this enough for me.").

A hint of humour exists in these sentiments, as Alcmena is unaware that she is not pining over her husband who has just left, but actually Jupiter in disguise. Nevertheless, she defines herself as fearful of the gods; as loving and respectful to her family, her kin, and her husband; and as one who can control her internal suffering. This opinion is repeated in lines 840-42, when Alcmena attempts to defend herself to Amphytrion and Sosia:

ALC. *pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupidinem,
deum metum, parentum amorem et cognatum concordiam,
tibi morigera atque ut munifica sim bonis, prosim probis.*

ALC. Chastity, modesty, and subdued desires, fear of the gods, love of my parents, so that I am obliging to you, generous to good people, and virtuously helpful.

Plaut. *Amph.* 840-42

In these lines, she redefines her dowry (i.e. the value that she brings into the marriage) as a list of her virtues. The moralizing tone of Alcmena's defense is not only reminiscent of Megadorus' speech about dowered wives in *Aulularia*,¹⁶⁵ but it also rivals Palaestra's discipline during troubling times and her unwavering devotion towards her family and household in *Rudens*.¹⁶⁶

What is more, these speeches made by Alcmena evoke her virtuous reputation in the mythical tradition as stated by pseudo-Hesiod. In *Shield of Heracles* 1-19, he describes Alcmena as surpassing all mortal women in beauty, height, and wisdom, while also stressing her modesty and the honour she displays towards her husband. Alcmena is known for her piety, and so her speeches about virtue would have confirmed a mythical tradition that the Roman audience most likely found familiar. This particular version by

¹⁶⁵ i.e. Plaut. *Aul.* 475-535.

¹⁶⁶ i.e. Plaut. *Rud.* 187-96 and 249-58.

pseudo-Hesiod was also apparently prevalent, as it appears centuries later in even greater detail by Apollodorus in the first to second centuries CE.

With this being said, Alcmena's ideal feminine characteristics parallel Amphitruo's masculine virtue exhibited through his military success and his display of *pietas* by fulfilling his public duty on the battlefield.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, despite his indecorous behaviour during their marital dispute, Alcmena defends herself admirably against her husband's unjust charges, and continuously matches his remarks. Even when Amphitruo attempts to reprimand his wife for speaking boldly, she responds with equal assertion:

AMPH. *Mulier es, audacter iuras.* ALC. *Quae non deliquit, decet audacem esse, confidenter pro se et proterve loqui.*
 AMPH. *Satis audacter.* ALC. *Ut pudicam decet.*

AMPH. You are a woman, you swear rashly.

ALC. It is appropriate to be bold for a woman who has not done wrong, and to speak confidently and violently on her own behalf.

AMPH. You've already spoken with sufficient boldness.

ALC. As it befits a virtuous woman.

Plaut. *Amph.* 836-38

Alcmena is so steadfast in her innocence that when Amphitruo also brings up the possibility of a divorce at line 852, she responds in kind at lines 928-29.¹⁶⁸ Dutsch and Konstan summarize the admirable resilience that she demonstrates in this heated scene: "The wife's anger appears to be a mirror image of her husband's anger: she is angry that he thinks that he has reason to be angry with her. In the end, she does manage (with considerable help from her divine lover) to control her wrath".¹⁶⁹ Alcmena's self-control

¹⁶⁷ Plautus does not explain why Amphitruo is at war against King Pterelas, but he does establish the king as one worth defeating. In pseudo-Hesiod's *Shield of Heracles*, Amphitruo goes to war in order to avenge the death of his wife's brothers, and in so doing he displays his familial piety.

¹⁶⁸ Line 852: "*numquid causam dicis, quid tibi aequom est fieri?*"

Lines 928-29: "*valeas, tibi habeas res tuas, reddas meas. / iuben mi ire comites?*"

¹⁶⁹ Dutsch & Konstan 2011, 73.

is not typical of that of irate *matronae* in Plautine comedy, as she does not attempt to overpower her husband, but match him in the insistence of her fidelity. The dutiful and pious sentiments expressed by Alcmena, coupled with her centrality in the play as the object of desire, therefore point her towards the position of the maiden in Roman Comedy. On the other hand, her status as *matrona*, as well as the defiance that she demonstrates in her dispute with Amphytruo, indicates her transitional quality, as she has not yet fully evolved into her new comic role.

IV. Alcmena's Physicality

A glaring feature of Alcmena in this play is her pregnancy, an aspect which many maidens of the amatory narrative, including Phaedria in *Aulularia*, acquire on account of their assault. Although Alcmena knows who the father of her first baby is, she is unaware that she has also been impregnated by Jupiter. Her parturiency is especially notable owing to the fact that she is the only extant character in Roman Comedy who appears onstage at full term.¹⁷⁰ By introducing the physical comedy of her belly in juxtaposition to her admirable and dignified language, Plautus produces a complex and ambiguous figure. The dichotomy that is created by her solemn personal qualities and her humorous physicality, as well as how her belly was imagined onstage, is thusly worth discussing in greater detail.

¹⁷⁰ The only other time that a pregnant or pregnant-like belly appears on the Roman comic stage is in Plautus' *Curculio*. In line 221, the *leno* Cappadox laments over his declining health, and among his symptoms he declares that his stomach feels like it is carrying twins: "*geminos in ventre habere videor filios*." ("I seem to be holding twin sons in my stomach."). In similar fashion to Alcmena, an element of grotesque distortion is attached to Cappadox' protuberance.

Alcmena's pregnancy is mentioned multiple times throughout the play, the most striking of statements being those where Sosia insults her by virtue of how big she has become.¹⁷¹ In the prologue, Mercury introduces Alcmena as doubly expectant (lines 103, 109, 111), and although she has not yet stepped onstage, the audience is prepped to anticipate this image when she does emerge a few scenes later. When this finally occurs, attention is immediately drawn to her physical appearance. In the beginning of Act I, scene iii, Jupiter bids Alcmena farewell and begs her to repose: "*Bene vale, Alcumena, cura rem communem, quod facis; / atque inperce quaeso: menses iam tibi esse actos vides.*" ("Goodbye Alcmena, keep looking after the communal matter as you are, and I beg that you be easy on yourself: you can see that the months are completed for you").¹⁷² Amphitruo and Sosia are similarly fixated on Alcmena's physical appearance when they return home in Act II, scene ii. After ten long months, Amphitruo makes the appropriate comment: "And I rejoice since I've seen you pregnant and since you are perfectly plump".¹⁷³ Sosia on the other hand exclaims about her pregnancy in less tactful terms:

SOS. *Amphitruo, redire ad navem meliust nos.* AMPH. *Qua gratia?*
 SOS. *Quia domi daturus nemo est prandium advenientibus.*
 AMPH. *Qui tibi nunc istuc in mentemst?* SOS. *Quia enim sero advenimus.*
 AMPH. *Qui?* SO. *Quia Alcumenam ante aedis stare saturam intellego.*

SOS. Amphitruo, we should return to the ship. AMPH. Why?
 SOS. Because no one at home will give us lunch upon our arrival.
 AMPH. Now how did this occur in your mind? SOS. Because we've come too late.
 AMPH. How so? SOS. Because I realize that Alcmena is standing in front of the house, stuffed!

Plaut. *Amph.* 664-67

¹⁷¹ Some memorable examples can be found in Act II, scene ii and in lines 664-67, 703-04, 718-19, and 723-24.

¹⁷² Plaut. *Amph.* 499-500.

¹⁷³ Line 681: "*Et quom [te] gravidam et quom te pulchre plenam aspicio, gaudeo.*"

According to Sosia, Alcmena has literally filled herself to the point of there being no sustenance leftover for the master and slave. Sosia's jab about her size invokes strong connotations of pleasure and insatiability, specifically her ravenous hunger. Given that Alcmena never once broaches the topic of food, the humour in Sosia's lines derives from nothing other than the image of a very padded actor dressed like a Roman woman standing before him, belly looming. The slave invokes a beast-like image of a super-human female body, or as Dutsch eloquently remarks, "the fantastical physiology of Alcmena's python-like digestion".¹⁷⁴

As a means of further emphasizing the size of her stomach, Christenson suggests that the actors onstage also stroked Alcmena's swollen belly as they spoke their lines.¹⁷⁵ While there are few indications in the text describing the movements the actors made, and presumably these actions differed every time the play was performed, the image of a pregnant *matrona* onstage would have been emphasized for comic humour.¹⁷⁶ Thus, there were most likely moments during all of Alcmena's scenes when she or another character, presumably Amphitruo or Jupiter, strokes her belly. In addition to gestures, I propose that there is also a relationship between Alcmena's pregnant stomach and on-stage props, specifically the *patera* (φιάλη in Greek) or golden bowl that Amphitruo wins in battle and

¹⁷⁴ Dutsch 2015, 20.

¹⁷⁵ Christenson 2001, 245f., in specific reference to lines 499-500.

¹⁷⁶ Marshall 2006, 67. Marshall notes the importance of actors' movements alongside their words, costumes, and props. He also states that in as much as the texts survive, we miss the experience of the Roman contemporary audience in our lack of "all traces of vocal inflection, mask, gesture, body movement, posture, costume properties, stage design, the effects of natural light, music, the use of noise and silence, etc.)." (2006, 82). Therefore, what we imagine in the action of the play can only be surmised through a textual reading of it. For a pedagogical article on practicing movements in Roman Comedy, see Lippman 2015.

that Jupiter presents to Alcmena in their opening scene together. Before he departs, the god declares, “Now Alcmena, I present this bowl to you, which has been given as a gift to me there [on campaign] on account of my virtue; King Pterelas drank from it, he whom I killed by my own hand”.¹⁷⁷ The bowl resurfaces a few scenes later in Alcmena’s attempt to prove her innocence to Amphitruo. When demanded to open the casket containing the *patera*, the reluctant and equally confused Sosia exasperatedly exclaims:

SOS. *tu peperisti Amphitruonem, ego alium peperī Sosiam;
nunc si patera pateram peperit, omnes congeminavimus.*

SOS. You’ve brought forth another Amphitruo, I brought forth another Sosia; now if the bowl brought forth another bowl, we’ve all twinned together!

Plaut. *Amph.* 785-86

In an article published in 2013, Polt argues that the *patera* has a deeper meaning within the context of the play, in that it symbolizes Amphitruo’s fatherhood. The strong connotation of parentage and childbirth in the verb “*pario*” (meaning “to bring forth” or “to beget”) at lines 785-86 is both a nod to Alcmena, the pregnant central figure amidst all the twinning, and Amphitruo’s right to fatherhood.¹⁷⁸ The alliteration of “*patera pateram peperit*” in line 786 further highlights the connection, as the three words spoken aloud sound like “*pater-pater*” and some form of production.¹⁷⁹ The play revolves around Alcmena’s double impregnation and the production of the fraternal twins Iphicles and

¹⁷⁷ Plaut. *Amph.* 534-36: “*nunc tibi hanc pateram, quae dono mi illi ob virtutem data est, | Pterela rex qui potitavit, quem ego mea occidi manu, | Alcmena, tibi condono.*” Polt (2013, 232-36) notes the significance of Plautus’ choice of the *patera*, a decorative drinking bowl often used for sacrifices and libations, instead of any other prize of war. An obvious reason for this is noted by Merriam and Sellers (1891, 342), who associate *paterae* with victories, and describe these bowls as typically decorated with *quadrigae* and deities, including Victory and Hercules. Plautus provides no detailed description of the golden bowl, but he makes a point to illustrate the iconography on the seal of the casket in which the *patera* is kept: Sol rising in his four-horse chariot (line 422, 450). Based on this iconography, the bowl appears to be an appropriate war prize for Amphitruo.

¹⁷⁸ Polt 2013, 242.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Hercules, and their births at the end will reveal that the number of fathers has doubled as well. Through this wordplay, Amphitruo's paternity, and by extension his manhood, is being questioned. As Alcmena's husband, his manly virtue stems from his exclusive right to have sex with his wife and beget children with her. Polt further argues that if the *patera* symbolizes the commander's paternity, then the little chest in which it is contained symbolizes Alcmena's womb.¹⁸⁰ Amphitruo's right of fatherhood therefore ought to be safe in the sealed casket, but it is made clear throughout the play that it has been divinely compromised.

Although Polt makes a compelling argument about the bowl's symbolic connection to Amphitruo's plight, a consideration of its significance in Alcmena's characterization, particularly in regards to her physical appearance, is also worth noting. This is especially evident, because the only time the text indicates that the bowl has been brought onstage is when Jupiter is presenting it to Alcmena. The *patera* is a shallow libation bowl that is not often attached to handles or feet, and has a bulbous indentation called an *omphalos* (literally a "belly button") in the middle. By virtue of its construction, this object closely resembles the shape of a stomach. Assuming that an actual *patera* was used as a prop, when Jupiter presents it to Alcmena in lines 534-36, the resemblance between the bowl and her body would have been noticed by the audience. There is further potential for humour if, when Alcmena takes the bowl from her lover, she turns it sideways to admire it, and in the process aligns its "belly" with her own. Quoting Ketterer, Marshall writes that "any time an object must be moved, handed from one person to another, or acted on

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 244.

in any way, the action required will dictate the way the stage picture looks, and the movement attracts audience attention”.¹⁸¹ Polt also notes the common technique in Roman Comedy of exaggerating the size of props in order to make them visible to the entire audience.¹⁸² If this method was employed by Plautus, not only would the bowl, which otherwise would have spanned approximately 15 cm in diameter, be able to cover Alcmena's stomach, but its comically large size could also contribute to the concept of insatiability that is linked to the *matrona*'s physical body.

Although Alcmena's pregnancy is presented in a bizarre fashion, the physical humour derived from it produces a striking dichotomic effect with her maiden-like qualities. However, her on-stage pregnant persona, coupled with the fact that she is carrying the babies of two separate fathers, presents one of the main tensions of the play. Therefore, in accordance with the conventions of Roman Comedy, Alcmena's parturition and the reveal of the twins mark a recognition for the characters and indicates the possibility of restoration for the protagonists. When Alcmena's labour begins in line 1139, she is already inside the house and is never seen again for the remainder of the play. The logical reason for her disappearance is that she has just given birth and is naturally on bedrest. However, I argue that she is also following the typical recognition scene formula for maidens in Roman Comedy: after the truth is revealed, the maiden no longer appears onstage.

¹⁸¹ Marshall 2006, 67 in reference to Ketterer 1986, 198.

¹⁸² Polt 2013, 235.

Accordingly, Alcmena is replaced by her old maid, Bromia, who makes her sole appearance in the play to deliver the typical messenger speech on behalf of her ward. In the opening of Act V, scene i, Bromia rushes out in a damsel-in-distress routine to inform the audience of Alcmena's supernatural delivery. Her cries of "*me miseram*" (line 1056), "*vae miserae mihi*" (line 1057), and "*nec me miserior femina est*" (line 1060) reflect her utter distress regarding the events that have occurred inside. She further exclaims that "there is no woman more miserable than me nor does any woman seem more so. Such things happened to my mistress today".¹⁸³ The cause of her suffering highlights the feminine bond that is shared between the slave and her mistress; Bromia entwines herself in Alcmena's pains, and in so doing she entertains the false opinion of her own importance, while also not being able to tell herself apart from her mistress.¹⁸⁴ As she recalls the birth of the twins, the recognition for Alcmena and Amphytruo slowly occurs; in the next scene, Jupiter appears to Amphytruo in order to confirm Bromia's story. Once the truth about the divine interference is revealed, there can be a reconciliation between husband and wife, and as a result, the restoration of the natural order of the household. Furthermore, the one maiden-like quality that was always questioned, Alcmena's chastity, is again preserved. It is made clear to Amphytruo by Jupiter in lines 1131-1143 that she was always ignorant of her divine lover, and that there would not have been any way for her to distinguish her disguised husband with her real one.

¹⁸³ Lines 1060-61: "*nec me miserior femina est neque ulla videatur magis. / ita erae meae hodie contigit.*"

¹⁸⁴ Dutsch 2008, 119.

V. The Mythical Element

The highlighting of Alcmena's pregnant belly fits into Stott's description of the comic body as exaggeratedly physical, distorted, profane, disproportionate, ill-disciplined, insatiate, and perverse.¹⁸⁵ The characters play up the grotesque and physicality of it through colorful wordplay and comparisons, and their comments are further corroborated by the use of the belly as a prop alongside other props such as the *patera*. The combination of physical humour and virtuous speech produces a dual-faceted and complex character, one that is unique in Roman Comedy. Romantic partners of freeborn status are hardly ever the butt of the joke in this genre, nor are mothers, especially that of a mythical hero. It is remarkable then that Plautus chose to portray a married woman who is so hugely pregnant and at the centre of controversy over her fidelity.

The mythical origin of Plautus' *Amphitruo* helps to explain these complexities, as it firstly distances the play from its Roman performance context. In a similar vein to *Rudens*, the action of *Amphitruo* is not just set outside of Rome, but is located in an entirely different world. The use of legendary stories and characters thusly acts as a distancing tool for the Roman audience, who are comforted by the fact that what they are witnessing onstage is not realistic, because it is rooted in myth. The playwright is given further creative licence because his audience would have been familiar with the story of Alcmena and Amphitruo prior to watching the comedic action unfold onstage.¹⁸⁶ The

¹⁸⁵ Stott 2004, 79.

¹⁸⁶ Shero in 1956 published an article cataloguing every known ancient drama in which Alcmena and Amphitruo are character; however most of the plays preceding Plautus' comedy have not survived.

mythical element of the play provides a background story, from which Plautus can enrich his plot and enhance his already fantastical characters for the sake of humour.

With that being said, Alcmena holds a significant and revered role in myth as Hercules' mother, and so her insatiable, beast-like physicality in this play can be expounded in her connection with her famous son. Liapis describes Hercules' image in antiquity as "notoriously kaleidoscopic", because he is portrayed as the exemplum of morality and at the same time can possess a massive appetite.¹⁸⁷ Even though he is known as the great benefactor of humanity, this aspect of the hero is mixed with his tendency of transgressing the limits of human moderation, especially in drama. Liapis' characterization of Hercules at the end of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is that of ambiguity: "He [Hercules] has devoted his life to ridding Greece of monsters and to making a habitable place out for her [Deianeira] (1010-13), but he has often shown a dangerous proximity to animality".¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, Papadimitropoulos argues for an antithetical representation of the hero in Euripides' *Heracles*, when Hercules the saviour turns quickly into Hercules *furens*.¹⁸⁹ In addition to tragedy, Hercules' insatiability can also be observed in his portrayal in comedy, particularly in his depiction as a grotesque hero with a massive appetite in Aristophanes' *Birds*.¹⁹⁰ His short appearance as one of Zeus' three delegates is framed by his hunger. During the meeting, Hercules is immediately fixated on the birds that Pisthetaerus is dressing for a banquet. After Pisthetaerus finishes preparing the meats,

¹⁸⁷ Liapis 2006, 48.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁸⁹ Papadimitropoulos 2008, 132.

¹⁹⁰ Note that this characterization is also observed in Euripides' *Alcestis*; although Heracles rescues Alcestis from the dead, he gets drunk and upsets a household in mourning before doing so.

Hercules attempts to dismiss him so that he can roast them himself, to which the host responds that the delegate speaks with much gluttony.¹⁹¹ The existential dichotomy with which this hero is characterized echoes his mother's dual identity as the embodiment of *gravitas* mixed with insatiability and madness.¹⁹² Plautus therefore is not merely making a salute to the mythical tradition, but is using it as a template to create humour. By utilizing the rich portrayal of the Hercules figure in myth, the playwright is able to construct an equally intricate character in Alcmena.

Even though Plautus exaggerates the physical characterization of Alcmena, her chastity and piety are still undeniable, partly because she is also represented as the embodiment of virtue and grace in the mythical tradition. Her *virgo*-like portrayal is further highlighted in her sexual connection with Jupiter, a known lover of virgins. After a highly respectable tribute of Alcmena's reputable character, pseudo-Hesiod describes the events leading up to Hercules' birth. In particular, the author states that Jupiter visited Alcmena while Amphi-truo was on campaign, and the commander and his wife did not consummate their marriage until he returned to Thebes.¹⁹³ Following this logic, the Plautine audience would have been familiar with a version of the story where Alcmena was physically a virgin before she was impregnated by Jupiter. Furthermore, the fact that Alcmena and Amphi-truo's marriage was not consummated stresses the new wife's

¹⁹¹ Aristoph. *Birds* 1691: “ὅπῃς τὰ κρέα; πολλήν γε τενθείαν λέγεις.” (“*You*, roast the meats? *You* speak with much gluttony.”)

¹⁹² Multiple times throughout the dispute between Alcmena and Amphi-truo, Sosia suggests that the former is insane or possessed by madness (lines 703-05, 718-19, 723-24, 727, 753, and 775-76).

¹⁹³ Pseudo-Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles* 1-19.

transitional quality. Alcmena's portrayal in myth thus aids in the understanding of the complex and highly irregular character that Plautus presents on the Roman comic stage.

VI. Conclusion

Alcmena is a truly unique and extraordinary character in the Roman comic corpus, in that she cannot be easily classified under one type of stock figure. Her reputation as a virtuous and respectable woman, in combination with her potential suitability in the structure of the comic rape plot, suggests that Alcmena possesses the characteristics of a *virgo* in Roman Comedy. However, her technical role as a married woman, as well as the defiance that she displays in her dispute with her husband, indicates that she is also beginning to exemplify the characteristics of a comic *matrona*. By virtue of having one foot in each door, it can thusly be argued that Alcmena is portrayed as a transitional character, who falls in between the maiden and the matron characterization. What is more, her unusual physical appearance suggests that Plautus is also playing with the rigidity of Roman comic stock characters by taking his story outside of the regular conventions of the genre and into the mythical world. Due to this mythical element, the Plautine audience would have not only accepted this provocative and complex characterization, but would have also found it enjoyable to watch. Seeing as the action takes place in Thebes and consists of famous Greek characters, it can be surmised that the removal of the play from Rome to Greece would have been assuring to the spectators/ Furthermore, the existence of Alcmena in not just another land, but the mythical past would have eased the expectations of the contemporary audience, thus allowing for such a unique female character to appear on the Roman stage.

Concluding Remarks

The chapters of this thesis present character studies of three different maidens, whose circumstances vary in accordance with their plot types, but whose functions in their respective narratives are the same. As the central figure on which other characters base their decisions, the fate of the maiden girl affects the propitious conclusion of the entire play. In Plautus' *Aulularia*, the audience finds the silent maiden in her purest form; her characteristics are passivity, invisibility, innocence, and above all piety. Through the acknowledgement of Lyconides as Phaedria's rapist and lover, in conjunction with the discovery and circulation of Euclio's pot of gold, the play ends with plans for a legitimate marriage between the two lovers and the social reintegration of the miser by means of providing a dowry for his daughter. Similarly in *Rudens*, the identification of the trunk containing Palaestra's childhood tokens and other treasures results in her reunion into Daemones' family and the restoration of her freeborn status. Furthermore, the recognition of this *meretrix-virgo* ultimately allows her to marry her lover Plesidippus as not only a citizen daughter, but as one whose family can now provide a dowry. Throughout the action of the play, Plautus juxtaposes Palaestra with her companion Ampelisca in order to highlight the maiden as the epitome of chastity and piety. With a shift into the mythical world, *Amphitruo* presents the extraordinary example of the maiden in transition as a wife; in this play, we revisit the pregnant *virgo* of the love narrative, except now she appears onstage, pious in personality but funny in physicality. The truth of Jupiter's machinations is revealed after Alcmena has given birth to the twins, and the final

exchange between Jupiter and Amphitruo closes the play, albeit hastily, with the husband's forgiveness of his wife's alleged adultery.

Partially due to the nature of Greek New Comedy, there is an underlying theme of family and community that connects the three plays, and it arises most notably in their endings on both a microcosmic and macrocosmic level. Not only is there a restoration of characters and a re-establishing of family dynamics within the household, there is also the promise of a strengthening of communal bonds through marriage. On the domestic level, the proper father-daughter relationship is restored, a broken family is reunited by the discovery of a long-lost daughter, and there is a reconciliation between a wife and her husband. In the macrocosm of community and society, there occurs a strengthening of bonds between two households, the possibility for the reintegration of an exiled family, and the birth of two sons, one of which becomes an integral character of myth and storytelling. The comic maiden is the focal point of this twofold theme; the fortuitous ending of the play is contingent on her successful restoration into her proper role in the household and community.

This important function of the *virgo* in turn hinges on her extreme moral goodness. In reference to Aristotle's observations on the nature of stories, Konstan marks the closure of comic plays as the abolishment of the tension or disequilibrium that was initiated at the beginning of the action; such a resolution is subsequently "generated by the system of values itself".¹⁹⁴ In the three plays discussed, there exists an overlapping theme of morality, specifically the judgment of good and bad. This sense of justice is most clearly

¹⁹⁴ Konstan 1983, 16.

observed in the expository prologues of *Aulularia* and *Rudens*, in which a god determines who is deserving of his divine intervention by either the uncovering of treasure or the incitement of a storm. At the end of each play, the bad characters suffer some sort of punishment, while the good win; among the latter category is the maiden, who is at times even assertive of her virtues, for example Alcmena. As demonstrated in *Aulularia*, *Rudens*, and *Amphitruo*, Plautus stresses the maiden's piety specifically in the form of her honour and faithfulness towards her family and household. Furthermore, the Plautine *virgo* juxtaposes some of her fellow characters who embody the subversion of Roman morality, thusly acting as a pillar of goodness in the midst of the disturbances and tensions caused by the folly of others. It can thusly be said that by virtue of her virtues, a stock figure who ultimately belongs indoors is at the same time an essential element of the public realm or community.

Again, popular entertainment is an artifact of its contemporary society, and thusly can tell us about the types of plays that satisfied the emotional needs of their audiences. On the comic stage, Roman spectators witnessed typical characters in slightly exaggerated yet ordinary situations reacting in realistic ways. The endings were meant to confirm rather than confront the status quo, as Plautus, unlike his Greek Old comic predecessors, wrote plays that were not politically charged. However, the community-centric undertones that emerged from the comic maiden's portrayal were relevant to his audience, and even though the constraints of the comic stage made her inaccessible in some ways, she is relatable in the virtues that she possesses. Through the safe and imaginary space of the theatre set far away from Rome itself, Plautus challenges the

boundaries of the comic *virgo*, while also highlighting her as the encomia of Roman virtues. The *meretrix-virgo* in *Rudens* remains obsessively duty-bound to her birth parents and their discovery, and the new wife in *Amphitruo* is resilient in her devotion to her husband. Even Phaedria's dedication to her household gods despite Euclio's negligence and her own pregnancy in *Aulularia* is admirable. It is this steadfastness in her piety that makes the *virgo* in Roman Comedy so forgiving, especially when her status or chastity is questioned. As the reflection of Roman virtues, the maiden is the key individual in securing and strengthening the bonds between households and communities. Her restoration through either her citizenship or marriage consigns the other characters into their proper roles as father or husband, master or slave, and thereby re-establishes civic order in the topsy-turvy world that is characteristic of the comic stage. Through his meticulous wording, countless jokes, and effective use of various plot devices, Plautus has created an unassuming comic figure that is not only likeable, but is the vital tissue connecting the frame by which his plots and characters are constructed. Likewise, I hope that my study of the *virgo* has provided an enriching perspective of a perceivably dull character in Roman Comedy.

Bibliography

- Adams, J. N. 1983. "Words for 'Prostitute' in Latin". *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Neue Folge* 126: 321-58.
- 1984. "Female Speech in Latin Comedy". *Antichthon* 18: 43-77.
- Anderson, William S. 1993. *Barbarian Play: Plautus' Roman Comedy*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Arnott, William. 1964. "Plautus, *Amphitruo* 838". *Dioniso* 38: 5-7.
- 1989. "A Study in Relationships: Alexis' 'Lebes,' Menander's 'Dyskolos,' Plautus' 'Aulularia'". *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica, New Series* 33(3): 27-38.
- Beare, William. 1964. *The Roman Stage: A Short History of Latin Drama in the Time of the Republic*. London, UK: Methuen.
- Bleisch, Pamela. 1997. "Plautine Travesties of Gender and Genre: Tranvestism and Tragicomedy in *Amphitruo*". *Didaskalia* 4(1).
- <http://www.didaskalia.net/issues/vol4no1/bleisch.html>.
- Bond, R.P. 1999. "Plautus' 'Amphitruo' as Tragi-Comedy". *Greece & Rome* 46(2): 203-220.
- Bondurant, Alexander. 1925. "The *Amphitruo* of Plautus, Moliere's *Amphitryon*, and the *Amphitryon* of Dryden". *The Sewanee Review* 33(4): 455-468.
- Braund, S. M. 2005. "Marriage, Adultery, and Divorce in Roman Comic Drama". In

- Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: From Plautus to Chaucer*, edited by Smith, W. S., 39-70. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Chalmers, Walter. 1965. *Plautus and his Audience: Roman Drama*, edited by Dorey, T. A., & Donald Dudley. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Christenson, D. 2001. "Grotesque Realism in Plautus' *Amphitruo*". *The Classical Journal* 96: 243-260.
- 2014. "A Roman Treasure: Religion, Marriage, Metatheatre, and Concord in *Aulularia*". In *Plautine Trends: Studies in Plautine Comedy and its Reception*, edited by Perysinakis, Ioannis, & Evangelos Karakasis, 13-42. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter.
- Csapo, E., & Niall Slater. 1994. *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Dixon, Suzanne. 1992. *The Roman Family*. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Duckworth, George E. 1994. *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Dutsch, Dorota. 2008. *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: On Echoes and Voices*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- 2012. "Genre, Gender, and Suicide Threats in Roman Comedy". *Classical World* 105(2): 187-98.
- 2015. "Feats of Flesh: The Female Body on the Plautine Stage". In

- Women in Roman Republican Drama*, edited by Dutsch, D., Sharon James, & David Konstan, 17-36. Wisconsin, US: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Dutsch, Dorota, & David Konstan. 2011. "Women's Emotions in New Comedy". *Emotion, Genre, and Gender in Classical Antiquity*, 57-88. London, UK: Bristol Classical Press.
- Dutsch, Dorota, Sharon James, & David Konstan. 2015. "Introduction". In *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, edited by Dutsch, D., Sharon James, & David Konstan, 3-13. Wisconsin, US: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fantham, Elaine. 2015. "Women in Control". In *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, edited by Dutsch, D., Sharon James, & David Konstan, 91-107. Wisconsin, US: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Feltovich, Anne. 2003. "Women's Social Bonds in Greek and Roman Comedy" PhD diss., University of Cincinnati.
- Fontaine, Michael. 2010. *Funny Words in Plautine Comedy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Forehand, Walter. 1971. "Irony in Plautus' *Amphitruo*". *The American Journal of Philology* 92(4): 633-651.
- Fraenkel, E. 1942. "The Stars in the Prologue of the *Rudens*". *The Classical Quarterly* 36(1/2) 10-14.
- 2007. *Plautine Elements in Plautus*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gunderson, Erik. 2015. *Laughing Awry: Plautus and Tragicomedy*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Hallett, Judith. 1985. *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

----- 2013. "Intersections of Gender and Genre: Sexualizing the *Puella* in Roman comedy, lyric and elegy". *Journal on Gender Studies in Antiquity* (3): 195-208.

Hanson, John. 1959. "Plautus as a Source Book for Roman Religion". *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 90: 48-101.

Hightet, Gilbert. 1942. "The Shipwrecked Slaver". *The American Journal of Philology* 63(4): 462-66.

Hunter, Richard. 1985. *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

James, Sharon. 2012. "Domestic Female Slaves in Roman Comedy". In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, edited by James, Sharon L., & Dillon, Sheila, 235-37. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Johnston, Mary. 1933. "Exits and Entrances in Roman Comedy (Plautus and Terence)". PhD diss., Columbia University.

Ketterer, Robert. 1986. "Stage Properties in Plautine Comedy". *Semiotica* 58: 193-216.

Klein, Sophie. 2015. "When Actions Speak Louder than Words: Mute Characters in Roman Comedy". *The Classical Journal*, 111(1): 53-66.

Konstan, David. 1977. "The Social Themes in Plautus' *Aulularia*". *Arethusa* 10(2): 307-20.

----- 1983. *Roman Comedy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- 1994. *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 1995. *Greek Comedy and Ideology*. New York, NY: Oxford University
Press.
- Kuiper, W. E. J. 1940. *The Greek Aulularia: A Study of the Original of Plautus' Masterpiece*. Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill.
- Leach, Eleanor. 1974. "Plautus' Rudens: Venus Born from a Shell". *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15(5): 915-31.
- Lefkowitz, Mary, & Maureen Fant. 2005. *Women's Life in Greece & Rome*. 3rd Ed.
London, UK: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
- Leigh, Matthew. 2005. *Comedy and the Rise of Rome*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University
Press.
- 2010. "Forms of Exile in the Rudens of Plautus". *The Classical Quarterly* 60(1): 110-17.
- Liapis, Vayos. 2006. "Intertextuality as Irony: Heracles in Epic and in Sophocles".
Greece & Rome 53(1): 48-59.
- Lippman, Michael. 2015. "Embodying the Mask: Exploring Ancient Roman Comedy Through Masks and Movement". *The Classical Journal* 111(1): 25-36.
- Manuwild, Gesine. 2011. *Roman Republican Theatre*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
University Press.
- Marshall, C. W. 2006. *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy*. Cambridge,
UK: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, Kathleen. 2000. *Slave Masters and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

McLeish, Kenneth. 1976. *Inside the Ancient World: Roman Comedy*. Houndmills

Basingstoke Hampshire: MacMillan Education Ltd.

Merriam, A.C., and Eugenie Sellers. 1891. "Evolution of the Greek Theatre". *The*

Classical Review 5(7): 341-43.

Moodie, Erin. 2015. "License to Thrill: Humor and Linguistic Accuracy in Translations

of Roman Comedy". *The Classical Journal* 111(1): 11-24.

Moore, Timothy (1998). *The Theatre of Plautus: Playing to the Audience*. Austin, TX:

Texas University Press.

Owens, William. 2001. "Plautus' Satire of Roman Ideals in Rudens, Amphitruo, and

Mostellaria". In *Essays in Honor of Gordon Williams: Twenty-Five Years at Yale*,

edited by Tylawsky, Elizabeth, & Charles Weiss, 213-227. New Haven: Henry R.

Schwab Publishers.

Packman, Z. M. 1998. "The Plot of the "Typical" Roman Comedy: Ancient Scope and

Modern Focus". *Akroterion*, 43: 23-31.

----- 1999. "Feminine Role Designations in the Comedies of Plautus". *The*

American Journal of Philology, 120(2): 245-258.

Palmer, Robert. 1970. *The Archaic Community of the Romans*. Cambridge, UK:

Cambridge University Press.

Papadimitropoulos, Loukas. 2008. "Heracles as Tragic Hero". *The Classical World*

101(2): 131-138.

Parker, Holt. 1989. "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The Servus Callidus and the Jokes about Torture". *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119: 233-46.

----- 1996. "Plautus vs. Terence: Audience and Popularity Re-Examined". *The American Journal of Philology*, 117(4): 585-617.

Philipps, Jane. 1984/1985. "Alcumena in the 'Amphitruo' of Plautus: A Pregnant Lady Joke". *The Classical Journal* 80(2): 121-26.

Plautus. 1965. *The Pot of Gold and Other Plays*, translated by Watling, E. F. UK: Penguin Classics.

----- 2000. *Amphitruo*, edited Christenson, David. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

----- 2008. *Plautus: Casina, Amphitryon, Captivi, Pseudolus*, translated by Christenson, David. Indianapolis, Indiana: Focus Publishing.

----- 2011. *Plautus I: Amphitryon, the Comedy of Asses, the Pot of Gold*, edited and translated by De Melo, Wolfgang. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

----- 2012. *Plautus IV: The Little Carthaginian, Pseudolus, the Rope*, edited and translated by De Melo, Wolfgang. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.

Polt, Christopher. 2013. "The Humour and Thematic Centrality of the *Patera* in Plautus' *Amphitruo*". *Greece & Rome*: 232-45.

Prescott, Henry. 1913. "The *Amphitruo* of Plautus". *Classical Philology* 18(1): 14-22.

----- 1937. "Silent Roles in Roman Comedy". *Classical Philology* 32(3): 193-209.

- Raia, Ann. 1983. Women's Roles in Plautine Comedy. Proceedings from: *The Fourth Conference on Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*. North Windham, Maine.
<http://www.vroma.org/~araia/plautinewomen.html>.
- Rei, Annalisa. 1998. "Villains, wives, and slaves in the comedies of Plautus". In *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, edited by Joshel, Sandra & Sheila Murnaghan, 92-108. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Richlin, Amy. 2015. "Slave-Woman Drag". In *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, edited by Dutsch, D., Sharon James, & David Konstan, 37-67. Wisconsin, US: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Rosivach, Vincent. 1986. "Love and Leisure in Roman Comedy and the Amatory Poets". *L'Antiquité Classique* 55: 175-89.
- 1998. *When a Young Man Falls in Love: The Sexual Exploitation of Women in New Comedy*. London, UK: Routledge.
- 2000. "Plautus, "Rudens" 1114, and the Power of Discourse". *The Classical World* 93(3): 261-65.
- Saller, Richard P. 1994. *Patriarchy, property and death in the Roman family*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Scafuro, Adele. 1997. *The Forensic Stage: Settling Disputes in Graeco-Roman New Comedy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Segal, Erich. 1987. *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*. 2nd Ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Sharrock, Alison. 2009. *Reading Roman Comedy: Poetics and Playfulness in Plautus and*

Terence. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Shero, L. R. 1956. "Alcmena and Amphytrion in Ancient and Modern Drama".

Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 87: 192-238.

Silk, M.S. 1985. "Heracles and Greek Tragedy". *Greece & Rome* 32(1): 1-22.

Slater, Niall. 2000. *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Sommerstein, Alan H. 2009. *Talking about Laughter and other studies in Greek Comedy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Spaeth, Barbette. 1996. *The Roman Goddess Ceres*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Stewart, Zeph. 2000. "Plautus' "Amphytruo": Three Problems". *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100: 293-99.

Stott, Andrew. 2004. *Comedy: The New Critical Idiom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Watson, Patricia. 1983. "Puella and Virgo". *Glotta* 61: 119-43.

Way, Mahalia. 2000. "Violence and the Performance of Class in Plautus' Casina". *Helios* 27(1): 187-206.