

**SACRIFICE AND RITUAL IMAGERY  
IN  
MENANDER, PLAUTUS, AND TERENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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SACRIFICE AND RITUAL IMAGERY  
IN MENANDER, PLAUTUS, AND TERENCE  
(Under the direction of Sharon L. James)

This thesis offers a systematic analysis of sacrifice and ritual in New Comedy. Sacrifice normally signifies a healthy community, often celebrating a family reunification. Menander, Plautus, and Terence treat sacrifice remarkably, each in a different way. In Menander, sacrifice seals the formation of healthy citizen marriages; in Plautus, it operates to negotiate theatrical power between characters. When characters use sacrificial imagery, they are essentially asserting authority over other characters or agency over the play. Both playwrights mark habitual sacrificers, particularly citizen females, as morally upright. Terence, by contrast, stunningly withholds sacrifice altogether, to underscore the emotional dysfunction among the citizen classes in his plays.

Chapter 1 sets sacrifice in its historical and theatrical context. Chapter 2 considers how sacrifice might have been presented onstage; chapter 3 examines its theatrical functions. Chapter 4 focuses on gender and status issues, and chapter 5 moves out from sacrifice to ritual and religion overall.

τῷ φίλῳ καί μοι ἐγγυηκότι

*optimis parentibus*

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction: sacrifice, comedy, and society

Religious ritual and sacrifice were everyday concerns for Greeks and Romans of all levels of society. Modern scholarship on Graeco-Roman sacrifice has been hindered by the very ubiquity of sacrifice in classical civilization: since it was an everyday reality, most authors simply do not discuss it, or at least not in full enough detail for scholarly purposes. When Graeco-Roman literature does discuss sacrifice, it often depicts sacrifice in stock scenes (as with the repeated set pieces in Homer, where offerings are generally an extravagant display by the elite) and in highly stylized and multivalent episodes (such as in Aeschylus' tales of the deaths of Iphigenia, Agamemnon, and Aegisthus), where sacrifice is used metaphorically or even problematized (as in Horace *Odes* 3.13).

New Comedy, however, can help make the role of sacrifice more visible. This genre is concerned not with mythical heroes or legendary kings and generals, but with the everyday lives<sup>1</sup> of average, somewhat well-to-do citizens and their households—children, slaves, non-citizen hirelings—and so the genre depicts (often with exaggeration) the daily activities of this class. Sacrifice, too, is present in New Comedy: it is conducted, it is planned and dis-

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<sup>1</sup> As Jonathan Smith notes, “ritual activities are an exaggeration of everyday activities” (1987: 194), and so a substantive connection between ritual activity and New Comedy can already be seen to be in operation. Smith also writes that “[r]itual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are” (1982: 63; italics preserved), an assertion that again fits with comedy, although perhaps more so with utopic Aristophanic comedy than with realistic Menandrian and farcical Plautine theater.



cussed, and (perhaps most remarkably) it is mocked. Sacrifice and ritual imagery form a body of theatrical material in the plays of Menander, Plautus, and Terence that should not be ignored, and yet this material has not yet been the subject of systematic analysis.<sup>2</sup> I will therefore undertake a comprehensive study of the presence and theatrical use of sacrifice and ritual imagery in the plays of Menander, Plautus, and Terence, in order to reveal how the playwrights' manipulation of sacrifice affects the dramatic force and literary significance of their work, and to uncover information about the experience and importance of sacrifice to the playwrights' contemporary audiences.

Several necessary preliminaries will be considered in this chapter. First, Greek and Roman sacrifice and ritual must be given basic definition, and this definition should include a reconstruction of standard Greek and Roman sacrificial procedure. Distinction must be made between Greek and Roman practices, and between Greek and Roman comedy. To contextualize my consideration of the audiences' experience of theatrical sacrifice, I will explicate my argument that New Comedy can provide insight into the lived realities of everyday Greeks and Romans, and explore the meaning of sacrifice in general to the audience. Finally, I will include a brief discussion of methodology.

### **Greek and Roman sacrifice**

Sacrifice, especially animal sacrifice, was the cornerstone of Greek and Roman religious ritual. Festivals staged by the entire community, private offerings for blessing or purification, and pacts sealed between individuals or families (whether oaths or marriage agree-

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<sup>2</sup> For a systematic, if rather catalogue-like, analysis of religion in Attic Middle Comedy, see Werner (1962), who evinces an analytic goal similar to mine: "we expect to find many indications in comedy, both in incidental mention and in intentional attack, of the contemporary religious situation" (1962: 5).

ments) shared the common ritual feature of animal sacrifice. Other forms of sacrifice—of cakes, incense, or libations of wine—were also fundamental to Graeco-Roman orthopraxy, but a bull, lamb, pig, or other animal was the archetypal offering. Killing an animal as large as a bull is no easy task, and thus both the Greek and Roman economies included hired professionals who conducted the kill on behalf of the individual performing the sacrifice; the standard term for referring to the professional slaughterer is the *sacrificer*, while the person who hires the sacrificer to help—the person who initiates the sacrifice and officiates over it—is called the *sacrificant*.<sup>3</sup> Both Greek and Roman procedures for animal sacrifice included procession, slaughtering the animal at the altar, cooking parts of the victim to offer to the gods, and distributing cooked portions among human participants for a sacrificial feast, but there are important differences between Greek and Roman sacrificial practices.

Sacrifice in Greek literature begins with the first book of the *Iliad*, where Odysseus manages a propitiatory sacrifice to Apollo on behalf of Agamemnon for his transgression in kidnapping Chryseis, daughter of the god's priest.<sup>4</sup> Sacrifice is a type scene frequently repeated in Homeric epic, and after Homer it is both playfully mocked (in Aristophanes) and artfully manipulated (especially in the *Oresteia* and in Euripides' *Iphigenia* tragedies). Sacrifice in Greek literature is an important marker of the health of civic bonds and structures, but also of the status of personal relationships between gods and mortals—as well as among mortals themselves.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The distinction was first introduced in Hubert and Mauss (1899) as between *sacrifiant* (“sacrifier” or, as I will write, “sacrificant”) and *sacrificateur* (“sacrificer”).

<sup>4</sup> The sacrifice begins at *Iliad* 1.447.

<sup>5</sup> Pre-Homeric visual depictions of sacrifice are extant, as are sacrificial implements and accoutrements.

Though sacrifices in Greek literature are often dedicated to a specific god or goddess, they can instead be intended for the entire Greek pantheon, or instead directed generally to unspecified divine power: as Michael Jameson points out, “[f]or many rites the naming of the gods involved was relatively unimportant or even omitted” (1988: 962). Often, the focal point was not the divine recipient of the offering but simply the successful conduct of the sacrifice and its acceptance by the gods, whether the sacrifice was undertaken to celebrate marriage or to initiate battle under good auspices. Such a focus on whether sacrifice is divinely accepted or fails to be suggests that “[d]ivination was probably part of every sacrifice, if only to observe whether the sacrifice was acceptable.”<sup>6</sup>

Essential to any sacrifice in Greek New Comedy is the *μάγειρος*, the skilled hireling (the sacrificer) who procured, transported, slaughtered, butchered, and cooked a sacrificial animal.<sup>7</sup> It is probable that most, if not all, meat in ancient Greece was the product of a sacrifice—a tenable proposition primarily because the Greek urban diet was low in meat.<sup>8</sup> Any mention of meat in New Comedy thus suggests both sacrifice and the involvement of a *μάγειρος*.<sup>9</sup> (Epic, tragic, and sometimes even Aristophanic depictions of sacrifice generally combine the role of sacrificant and sacrificer for the heroic protagonist, but New Comedy falls closer to the historical, classical procedures for sacrifice by dividing the ritual functions between sacrificant and *μάγειρος*.) As Ruth Scodel remarks, the *μάγειρος* in Greek New

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<sup>6</sup> Jameson (1988) 962; see also 971.

<sup>7</sup> According to Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 2.2.4), the hireling was called *ἄρταμος* (“butcher”) if he was limited to performing the sacrifice and did not cook the sacrificial feast. See Dalby (2003) 102.

<sup>8</sup> Lowe (1985a) 73–74. Cf. Davidson (1998) 15: “Even the meat sold in the market, it seems, had been cut from animals that had been killed ritually.” Scheid (2008) also defends the proposition that all meat (except fish) was the product of sacrifice.

<sup>9</sup> Although certain sacrifices, such as that of a rooster to Asclepius, may in fact not have required the services of a *μάγειρος*.

Comedy “is a fixed type: he is an *alazon*, someone who claims more for himself than he is entitled by his actual social role or personal qualities.”<sup>10</sup> Although the Attic *μάγειρος* was indeed not a high-class citizen, neither was he a slave: the title of *μάγειρος* was reserved for paid professionals, not domestic slaves.<sup>11</sup> It is unclear whether Athenian *μάγειροι* could be citizens, metics, or both.

Sacrifice and formal ritual action were just as much a part of daily life in Roman society as in classical Greece. The Roman state managed the practice of a centralized state religion, with public sacrifices and festivals occupying large and important segments of the calendar year. Domestic ritual, too, was of prime importance to the Roman family and especially to the head of household: the family’s Penates, the household’s Lares, and the domestic Genius were numinous divinities whose protection of the family was often as important as the good will of the Olympian pantheon.<sup>12</sup> This importance of domestic cult intersects with comedy’s domestic setting, a topic I will examine in chapter 5.

John North emphasizes the everyday importance of ritual to Romans of the time of Plautus and Terence: “In early Rome, ritual action preceded and accompanied all everyday public and private events” (1988: 982). Such action could be as grand as animal sacrifice or as simple as the invocation of a deity. Indeed, North argues, “[c]onstant reference to the

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<sup>10</sup> Scodel (1993) 161. See also Dohm (1964) and Berthiaume (1982), and my discussion in chapter 3.

<sup>11</sup> Berthiaume (1982) 75. Dohm (1964) 67–68 points to ancient sources identifying only one slave *μάγειρος*, in Posidippus. In the temples of Delphi, the *μάγειρος* was a well-paid and prestigious permanent employee prior to the first century BCE; in the Republican era, the temples owned public slaves as *μάγειροι* (Berthiaume 1982: 33). In classical Sparta, the position of *μάγειρος* was reserved exclusively for citizen Spartiates, sometimes for members of elite families only (1982: 25). Rather than the title *μάγειρος*, terms such as *ὄψοποιός*—or, I suggest, *τραπέζοποιός*, a stock character type mentioned at *Aspis* 232—were used for domestic slaves involved in food preparation (1982: 76). See below for consideration of the term *ὄψον*.

<sup>12</sup> See especially Orr (1978) 1567 on the Lares: “The Lares were worshipped in the home on holidays and perhaps were given some daily attention, according to the piety of their masters....The domestic Lares promoted health and welfare in the home.”

gods and goddesses by means of vows, prayers, consultations, and sacrifices should be seen as an integral part of the life of Rome” (1988: 982). In contrast to Greek sacrifice, wherein the names of deities may be unimportant to the ritual,<sup>13</sup> the specific names of the divinities invoked are very important to the formalist orthopraxy of Roman religion. This specificity is evident in Cato the Elder’s formula for prayer to an unknown nature spirit at *De Agri Cultura* 139: rather than simply proceed directly to the content of the prayer’s request, Cato first includes a conditional clause that delineates between gods and goddesses (*si deus, si dea es*), and thus could provide for the possibility that the deity might be male or female. This specificity—and the general importance to Romans of calling upon higher powers—is evident throughout the corpus of Roman Comedy, and will be considered in chapter 5.

Greek New Comedy’s *μάγειρος* is translated into Latin as *coquus*, and the stock type of the *μάγειρος* becomes the foundation for Plautus’ fantastical *coqui*, hence the common English translation of *μάγειρος* as “cook.”<sup>14</sup> The disposition of sacrifice and the meat trade in Roman society, however, was not so monolithic as in ancient Greece. There were three potentially overlapping terms for the hirelings involved in the process of a sacrifice: the *popa* (who stunned the beast with a mallet), the *cultrarius* (who killed the beast with a *culter*, a sacrificial knife), and the *uictimarius* (who probably wielded an axe and used it to remove the beast’s head after death).<sup>15</sup> No *popa*, *cultrarius*, or *uictimarius* is ever named in Plautus or

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<sup>13</sup> The extent of this notion’s validity may, in fact, be very limited; see Norden (1913) and, more recently, Liapis (2003) for discussion of the “Agnostos Theos.”

<sup>14</sup> While “cook” is an acceptable translation of *coquus*, the English term does not sufficiently capture the full range of duties performed by the *μάγειρος*. I will therefore use the Greek term in my discussion.

<sup>15</sup> Frayn (1996), 112. The reconstruction of sacrifice as a three-hireling job with strict division of labor is arguably dubious, and may represent a synthetic compilation of multiple sources. Frayn subsequently attempts to distinguish between sacrificial butchery and industrial butchery, and yet she describes industrial butchery in this way: “It is probable that the method of stunning the animal first with a mallet, then cutting its throat, would also

Terence; the closest either playwright comes to mentioning one is at *Pseudolus* 158–159, where the megalomaniacal pimp Ballio orders a slave of his with an axe (*securis*) to be in charge of all the chopping necessary for his birthday feast. Cooks likewise could be slaves or non-citizen hirelings, and had no ritual or religious capacity.

There appears to have been a full apparatus of meat-vendors beyond the sacrificing triad: *coqui* were the generally non-sacrificing replacements for the *μάγειρος*, and *lanii* were, according to J. C. B. Lowe, “purely secular butchers and meat-sellers with none of the other functions of *mageiroi*.... There is no evidence that *lanii* ever sacrificed.”<sup>16</sup> *Lanii* were viewed as corrupt, comparable to pimps.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Plautus mentions beef only twice,<sup>18</sup> he was fond of having his characters list all kinds of pork, “comprising the great majority of all his references to meat.”<sup>19</sup> Besides the *lanius* and the *coquus*, there was the *fartor*, the sausage-maker,

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be used in the abbatoir [*sic*].” The distinction is further weakened by the fact that she has trouble locating any archaeological remains for an abattoir (1996: 109) and does not demonstrate complete understanding of her Latin sources (for instance, at 110 she misreads *Pseudolus* 331, *mi etiam currendumst*, to mean that the speaker “will send for” butchers).

<sup>16</sup> Lowe (1985a) 78–79. Eduard Fraenkel also rejected the notion that *lanii* were the Plautine analogue to *μάγειροι* (2007 [1922]: 400–401). Lowe continues: “[A] substantial amount of meat was eaten in Rome that did not come from sacrificed animals.” See *contra* Isenberg (1975), who demonstrates that the issue of what meat was sacrificial and what (if any) was not sacrificial comes down to 1 Corinthians 10:25 and 28, a textual crux in Pliny’s letter to Trajan on the Christians (*Epistles* 10.96.10), and contradictory readings in the manuscript tradition of the *Vita Aesopi*. Isenberg’s conclusion still to some extent holds true today: “As the case stands, however, the problem of the sale of sacrificial meats still awaits its proper solution” (273). Again, see most recently Scheid (2008) for the availability of sacrificial meat exclusively. See also Prescendi (2007) 50, a related suggestion that butchered meat did exist and was essentially different from sacrificial meat, but that even butchered meat could be carved with a “minimal” sacrificial offering: “Retenons simplement qu’il existe, à Rome, des abattages qui diffèrent des sacrifices publics, sans qu’on ait la possibilité de savoir s’il s’agit d’abattages complètement profanes ou d’une sorte de sacrifice qu’on pourrait définir comme << minimal >>.” The concept of industrialized “minimal” sacrifice for the butcher’s trade could perhaps be compared to the modern production of kosher meat, though the analogy is not perfect.

<sup>17</sup> Gowers (1993) 77. Also cf. *Captiui*, 818–820, where the parasite Ergasilus complains about *lanii*. Moore (1998) points out that the *lanii*, as well as the *haruspices* who inspected the internal organs of sacrificial victims, were Roman rather than Greek elements of Roman comedy (136 and 221 n. 44).

<sup>18</sup> *Aulularia* 374 and *Curculio* 367.

<sup>19</sup> Lowe (1985a) 77, and see pp. 77–78 n. 38 for a catalogue of all of Plautus’ mentions of pork products. As Lora Holland has demonstrated, pork products mentioned in Roman comedy (e.g., at *Menaechmi* 210–211) do

glimpsed only at Plautus *Truculentus* 104 and Terence *Eunuchus* 257; Hans Dohm has demonstrated that the *fartor* was excluded from any sacrificial associations starting with the early Attic comedy of Aristophanes (1964: 31–35).

In her book on food in Roman poetry, Emily Gowers undertakes an extensive discussion of food in Plautus' comedies (1993: 50–108) without any mention whatsoever of either beef or sacrifice. This is a remarkable omission, both because a study of Plautine food humor can focus exclusively on the myriad non-meat food items (particularly fish) in Plautine food jokes and because it exemplifies the tendency of scholars writing on Plautus to overlook the role of sacrifice in his plays.<sup>20</sup> Gowers' analysis is excellent overall but, on some level, it fundamentally excludes feast scenes in which any sacrificial meat is served—a gap filled by my analysis here.

Whereas analysis of sacrifice in Menandrian New Comedy can be relatively straightforward because of the one-man business of sacrificial meat in Athenian society, the picture is more muddled in Roman comedy. Unlike the *μάγειρος*, the *coquus*<sup>21</sup> is not unequivocally associated with sacrificial capacity, and meat consumption is not always a sign of sacrifice. A consideration of some of the terms associated with meat and with sacrifice in comedy itself (both Greek and Roman) is therefore necessary, and will be included in the descriptions of Graeco-Roman sacrificial rituals that follow. These descriptions are necessarily abstractions, idealized depictions of a stock sacrificial procedure. They are essentially synchronic and

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in fact “occur as sacrificial portions in the Greek sacred law texts” (2007: 2)—but I believe that their inclusion in passages such as this one would not necessarily connote for the Roman audience a sacrificial situation. So also *Captivi* 910–917, where a parasite discusses pork carcasses.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the distinction between the sacrificial meal and “party food”—fish, game, baked goods, and sausage—at Redfield (2008) 4: “I would, in fact, distinguish the sacrificial meal from what we might call ‘party food’; this is the kind of stuff Dicaeopolis enjoys at the end of the *Acharnians*: rabbit and little birds and eels and squid and sausages, along with bread and cakes.”

<sup>21</sup> On whom see more extensive discussion in chapter 3, below.

mostly fail to account for changes based on period or region—hence they are imperfect models, stereotypes not very different from the broadly stereotyped stock characters of Menander, Plautus, and Terence. These descriptions will, nevertheless, serve as a sort of control for my analysis—they form a basis for understanding sacrificial ritual as it is presented theatrically in the works of New Comedy.

### The archetypal Greek sacrifice

The standard Greek sacrifice, *θυσία*, is best exemplified in certain scenes in Homer with repeated descriptive features.<sup>22</sup> These scenes, of course, depict super-elite, mythical figures, and they are pre-classical as well, so certain elements of them will be obsolete in classical Greek sacrifice—and certain elements of classical Greek sacrifice are not yet present in the Homeric descriptions.<sup>23</sup> The following exposition of the sacrificial ritual, then, will proceed with slight corrections to the epic sacrificial scene.

First, an unblemished bull is decorated for the ceremony, either by the gilding of its horns (Homer) or the adornment of it with garlands (*στέμματα*, classical). All participants wear garlands.<sup>24</sup> A procession (*πομπή*) to the altar follows, and once the animal is at the altar (where a fire is already burning), it must (in the post-Homeric period) give some sign of

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<sup>22</sup> *Iliad* 1.447, 2.410, 3.268; *Odyssey* 3.5, 3.430, 14.419. Aristophanes, too, can serve as a source for the typical Greek sacrifice, especially at *Birds* 938 and the end of *Peace* (on which see van Straten 1988: 51–55). For this whole section, see Rudhardt (1992)—the definitive work on the topic—and especially, for my purposes, Kirk (1981) 64; I take some terminology from van Straten (1988) 51. For a run-through of a stock Greek sacrifice that is more detailed than the one I provide here, see also Jameson (1988) 969–973.

<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, oath sacrifices (such as Agamemnon’s at *Iliad* 3.246) involve procedures somewhat different from regular animal sacrifices, as does Eumaeus’ sacrifice of a boar to Hermes and the nymphs at *Odyssey* 14.419, a sacrifice that Geoffrey Kirk calls “slightly eccentric and rustic” (1981: 63).

<sup>24</sup> Arnott (1996) 461 n. B.



consent to the sacrifice—most likely, its handler induces it to nod or bow its head. Wine is mixed, and hair is cut from the victim’s head and tossed onto the fire.

The participants in the sacrifice then wash their hands in special water for the ritual (χέρνιψ), and the sacrificant begins the ritual proper (ἄρχεσθαι<sup>25</sup>); the inception of the ritual is the throwing of barley (οὐλοχύται<sup>26</sup>)—or “first-fruits” (ἀπαρχαί)—while offering a prayer to the deity or deities receiving the sacrifice and pouring a libation of wine.<sup>27</sup> Then the victim is slaughtered: the sacrificer stuns the animal, women (if present) raise the ritual cry (ὀλολυγή<sup>28</sup>), and the sacrificer cuts the animal’s throat with either a sacrificial knife (μάχαιρα<sup>29</sup>) or a sacrificial axe (πέλεκυς). In the classical period, some blood was collected into a container (ἄμνιον<sup>30</sup>) and perhaps sprinkled or splashed onto the altar. The sacrificer then skins the dead animal.

After the animal has been skinned, the offering is made: the thigh-bones are cut out and covered with a double layer of fat (the verb used for this in Homer is “hide,” ἐκάλυψαν), and then raw meat is added on (Homeric verb: ὠμοθέτησαν). The thigh-bones wrapped in

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<sup>25</sup> In Homer, the individual who undertakes the action of this verb is the true leader of the sacrifice (the sacrificant), cf. Jameson (1988) 969. Variants with roughly equivalent sense are ἀπάρχεσθαι, ἐπάρχεσθαι, and κατάρχεσθαι. See Rudhardt (1992) 219–220 and 261, and Jameson (1988) 970: the set of verbs combines notions of a ritual beginning (*katarchesthai*) with...an offering of first fruits (*aparchesthai*).”

<sup>26</sup> Variants: ὀλαί (van Straten 1988: 51), οὐλαί (Kirk 1981: 65), and προχύται (*Electra* 803, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1112).

<sup>27</sup> On the two libations, σπονδή and χοή, see Casabona (1966) 269–298 and Rudhardt (1992) 240–248.

<sup>28</sup> Rudhardt (1992) 180 calls the ὀλολυγή a reassuring, emotional expression of contact with the divine.

<sup>29</sup> Or σφαγίς, *Electra* 811.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kirk (1981) 66.

fat and meat are burned, and the fragrant smoke (*κνίση*) rises to the sky—and, presumably, to the offering’s recipients.

The final portion of the Greek sacrificial ritual is the preparation of the feast and the feast itself. The preparation proceeds as follows: wine is poured; the animal’s innards (*σπλάγχνα*) are cooked,<sup>31</sup> divided among the leading participants, and eaten; and the remainder of the animal is cooked, divided into portions (including a portion for the divine recipient of the sacrifice), and consumed.<sup>32</sup> Important classical-period additions to the Greek sacrificial ritual as described here include a flute-player, special clothes for participants, the burning of incense, and, of course, the role of the sacrificer (the *μάγειρος*).<sup>33</sup>

### **The archetypal Roman sacrifice<sup>34</sup>**

Roman sacrificial ritual (*res diuina*<sup>35</sup>) was not extremely different from Greek, though there are several important divergences. As with the post-archaic Greek ritual, the victim

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<sup>31</sup> If the above quoted statement by Jameson (1988) 962 is correct in suggesting that every Greek sacrifice included divination to confirm the success of the ritual, it would likely have consisted of an examination of the *σπλάγχνα* before cooking them.

<sup>32</sup> In certain sacrifices (*όλόκαυστοι*) the whole animal was burned for the god, not just the fat-wrapped thigh-bones. Yet, as Kirk (1981: 78) points out, even the standard sacrifice described here enacts a full (symbolic) dedication of the victim to the deity, since the burnt portions include parts of the entire body (hair, bone, fat, and flesh). Sfyroeras (1992: 7) links the *κῶμος*, ritual revelry, with the sacrificial feast.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Kirk (1981) 65–66; according to van Straten (1988) 53, a flute-player was optional for sacrifices.

<sup>34</sup> For a recent, extensive, and rigorous examination and analysis of Roman animal sacrifice, see Prescendi (2007) 31–51 and 71–135, whose opus includes far more detail and exploration than is necessary here.

<sup>35</sup> The Roman term *ritus* does not mean “ritual” *per se*. See Scheid (1995) 18: “the *ritus* was a special posture and prescription which gave all public celebrations a special, recognizable tonality” and created a religious experience characteristic of a single community or type of worship.

(*uictuma* or *hostia*) is first decorated with ribbons (*uittae* or *dorsuale*<sup>36</sup>) or garlands (*coronae* or *serta*) and led in a sacrificial procession (*pompa*) to the altar. (The procession was much more important in the Roman ritual than in the Greek ritual.<sup>37</sup>) As with the Greek ritual after the Homeric period, once at the altar, the animal must be induced to signal its supposed consent.<sup>38</sup> Thereafter, one of the participants sprinkles the animal with *mola salsa*, a sacred mixture of grain and salt prepared exclusively by the Vestal Virgins at Rome; the sprinkling of the animal with *mola salsa* is termed the *immolatio*. As with the Greek ritual, the casting of grain is followed by a libation (still part of the *immolatio*<sup>39</sup>), a prayer (the *precatio*, which includes sprinkling incense onto the fire<sup>40</sup>), and then the slaughter.

The Roman style of sacrificial animal slaughter has been described above: the *popa*, the *cultrarius*, and *uictimarius* work together to stun, kill (with a sacrificial knife, *culter*), and cut apart the victim (with a sacrificial axe, *securis*)—after the victim’s decorative *uittae* have been removed.<sup>41</sup> A marked contrast with the Greek ritual is in the treatment of the innards (*exta*, *intestina*, or *uiscera*). Whereas the Greeks inspect, cook, apportion, and consume the *σπλάγχνα*, the Romans do not: rather, the *exta* are cut out (*uisceratio*<sup>42</sup>), perhaps examined for portents, apportioned among the divinities receiving the sacrifice, and placed on the altar

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<sup>36</sup> Ryberg (1955) 197.

<sup>37</sup> On the high frequency of Roman sacrificial art depicting the procession, see Ryberg (1955) ch. 13: of the extant reliefs depicting scenes of sacrifice, more are processional scenes than any other type.

<sup>38</sup> On which see Prescendi (2007) 99–100.

<sup>39</sup> North (1988) 984.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ryberg (1955) 197.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Kajava (1998).

or altars as the offering (*daps*<sup>43</sup>). The remaining portions of the animal are then cooked, shared, and eaten.

A pipe-player (*tibicen*) was necessary for almost any animal sacrifice. Sacrifices to native Roman divinities were conducted with a special clothing configuration: one's cloak would be drawn over the head to cover it, a disposition termed *capite uelato*. Sacrifices to some Greek gods, such as Hercules, were performed *Graeco ritu*, "by means of the Greek ritual,"<sup>44</sup> and were not conducted *capite uelato*. Cakes (*liba*, *strues*, or *fertum*<sup>45</sup>) could be offered as part of a sacrifice (or as a standalone sacrifice) as well, and so could the standard pair of wine and incense, *tus ac uinum* (cf. Cato *De Agri Cultura* 134).

A quintessentially Roman characteristic of religious orthopraxy is the *instauratio*, or re-enactment of a failed ritual. If the first animal sacrificed is accepted, the sacrificant has achieved a *litatio*. If the condition of the *exta* indicates that the sacrifice was not accepted, however, another animal must be sacrificed (an *instauratio* is conducted). The achievement of a successful sacrifice on a second or subsequent attempt is termed *perlitatio*.<sup>46</sup> The practice of *instauratio* was not limited simply to re-initiating a sacrifice. Indeed, entire festival days could be declared failures, and the day's events would have to be repeated. Such repetition would include any theatrical performance that was part of the festival, and hence repeat performances of Roman comedies could be enabled by the implementation of *instauratio*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Cato *De Agri Cultura* 132.

<sup>44</sup> On the *Graecus ritus*, see especially Scheid (1995).

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Cato *De Agri Cultura* 134.

<sup>46</sup> On the terms *litatio* and *perlitatio*, see North (1988) 985.

<sup>47</sup> For a fuller discussion of the implication of *instauratio* for the performance of Roman comedy, see Marshall (2006) 18–19 and 80.

### Selected additional Roman sacrificial ritual practices

There is a great deal of information about additional forms of Roman sacrificial rituals, especially as part of the domestic religion.<sup>48</sup> Inez Ryberg asserts that “Roman religion made each individual *paterfamilias* the priest of his own genius in household cult” (1955: 204); as such, these heads of household would be responsible for conducting their own sacrifices, whether by slaughtering the animals themselves, hiring sacrificers to perform the slaughter on their behalf, or using their slaves for the task.<sup>49</sup> These sacrifices were abundant and varied, and they included rituals for a blessed harvest (the *porca praecedanea*, Cato *De Agri Cultura* 134), named deities as well as unnamed numinous spirits of the land, and the *suouetaurilia* (a simultaneous sacrifice of a pig, a sheep, and a head of cattle for the purposes of successful harvests and boundary delineation<sup>50</sup>). Of particular interest in chapter 3 will be two specific kinds of pig sacrifice: first, the *porca succidanea*, a kind of substitute sacrifice,<sup>51</sup> and second, the *piacularis* or *porcus piaculus*,<sup>52</sup> a purificatory sacrifice that can absolve religious pollution or, as I will also discuss in chapter 3 in the case of *Menaechmi*, insanity.

The economy of ritual action in Rome was not limited to the sacrificial professions of *popa*, *uictimarius*, *cultrarius*, *tibicen*, and *lanius*. In fact, Roman orthopraxy extended well beyond the slaughtering of animals for offering to the gods. *Haruspices* could be hired to

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<sup>48</sup> See Turcan (2000) ch. 2 on daily rituals, domestic ceremonies, and cults of the earth and countryside.

<sup>49</sup> Slaves had some form of sacrificial agency in Roman domestic cult, as evidenced by Cato *De Agri Cultura* 83: *eam rem diuinam uel seruus uel liber licebit faciat*, “it is permitted for either a slave or a free person to perform this sacrifice.”

<sup>50</sup> For the *suouetaurilia* as a favorite subject of Roman artists, see Ryberg (1955) 190.

<sup>51</sup> Aulus Gellius 4.6.7 commenting on *Epidicus* 139–140—on which see my discussion in chapter 2. Gellius mentions that one use of the *porca succidanea* is to replace the first sacrificial victim if *litatio* is not achieved: *si primis hostiis litatum non erat, aliae post easdem ductae hostiae caedebantur*.

<sup>52</sup> Cato *De Agri Cultura* 139.

examine *exta* or other potentially portentous materials in order to detect and interpret omens. Similarly, *auspices* (or *auispices*, “bird-watchers”) read the sky, birds, or prodigious occurrences for omens (*auspicia*), though their role was generally more germane to the state than to private or domestic concerns. Another ritual profession important to Plautine comedy is that of the *hariolus*, the soothsayer (stereotyped in comedy as a swindler). As is the case with sacrifice in New Comedy, although some scholarship has been published on these secondary ritual functions in Plautus (Hanson 1959b, Slater 2000b, Traill 2004), a comprehensive analysis has not yet been undertaken.

### **Sacrificial and non-sacrificial terminology in Roman comedy**

Several terms appear in the works of Plautus (and, to a lesser degree, Terence) that could seem to be sacrificial or ritual words. While some indeed are, many of these terms are associated not with sacrifice, but with non-meat (and therefore non-sacrificial) foods—or else scholars on Plautus have incorrectly associated them with food altogether.<sup>53</sup> The evaluation of selected terms that follows is intended both to clarify specific questions in the interpretation of sacrifice in Roman Comedy and to illustrate some of the obstacles to straightforward attempts at such interpretation.

The foremost of these Latin terms to be considered is *carnufex* (or *carnifex*). It breaks down etymologically into “meatworker,” but it almost always in Latin literature means “executioner” or “torturer” and, metaphorically as an insult, “villain” or “fucker.” Emily Gowers, writing on food in Plautus, remarks that “the cook...is of course literally a *carnufex*” (1993: 106), with reference to *Pseudolus* 707. The term *carnufex* (or its deriva-

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<sup>53</sup> See especially my discussion of the term *ornamenta* at *Pseudolus* 343, below.

tives, such as *carnificina*) occurs as an insult eight times in Plautus<sup>54</sup> and, interestingly for the student of proportions, six times in Terence.<sup>55</sup> Of the other eight times it occurs in Plautus, five mention the *carnufex* in the context of slave torture,<sup>56</sup> one calls Amor *primum apud homines carnificinam commentum* (*Cistellaria* 203), one is fragmentary (*Cistellaria* 384), and the last is somewhere between torture term and insult, as one young man tells the other to go ahead and torture him (*excrucia*) and then calls him a *carnufex*.<sup>57</sup> Despite its etymology, however, it is clear that *carnufex* is in Roman comedy devoid of connection to sacrifice.

A standard element in pre-feast scenes in both Plautus and Terence is the need to go purchase food. The standard verb for this is *obsonare*,<sup>58</sup> from Greek *ὀψωνέω*.<sup>59</sup> The ultimate source of this word is *ὄψον*, a word for delicacies, most often fish in particular.<sup>60</sup> *Obsonare*, then, etymologically implies a non-meat meal (even though its range of connotations is expanded in usage)—and, furthermore, it implies no sacrifice.

Of great interest to certain scholars is a phrase found at *Pseudolus* 343: when the young lover Calidorus asks the pimp Ballio how (*quo modo*) he could have sold Calidorus' girlfriend Phoenicium, Ballio responds, interpreting the instrumental ablative of *quo modo* quite literally: *sine ornamentis, cum intestinis omnibus*, “with all her guts.” Joan Frayn takes this to mean that “a large part of the [meat] trade was in whole carcasses [*sic*] *cum intestinis*

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<sup>54</sup> *Amphitruo* 376 and 518; *Asinaria* 697 and 892; *Mostellaria* 1114; *Persa* 747; *Pseudolus* 707 and 950.

<sup>55</sup> *Andria* 183, 651, and 852; *Heauton Timorumenos* 813; *Eunuchus* 670; *Adelphoe* 777.

<sup>56</sup> *Bacchides* 686–687; *Captiui* 132, 596–597, and 1019; and *Mostellaria* 55–57.

<sup>57</sup> *Mercator* 624. Similar “meaty” terms of insult include *lanicarius* and *lanificarius*.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., *Adelphoe* 286, 964.

<sup>59</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *obsono*.

<sup>60</sup> Lowe (1985a) 73.

*omnibus*,” and that the phrase “really belongs to the butchery trade.”<sup>61</sup> Here it is crucially important to put the term *intestinis* in the Plautine context, or contexts, of the word *ornamenta*. A butcher-shop reading of *cum intestinis omnibus* is viable only if *ornamenta* can refer to the garlands or gilding put on the head or horns of a sacrificial beast. This meaning of *ornamenta*, however, is preserved nowhere in Roman comedy. *Ornamenta* can refer to a comic actor’s costume (*Amphitruo* 85), to the preparation for a wedding (*Aulularia* 157), to the preparation of sacrificial tools (*Amphitruo* 946–948 ~ 1126–1127), or even to the self-decoration in preparation for a sacrifice (*Rudens* 128–130)—not to mention the jewelry with which a courtesan such as Phoenicium is often sold in Greek and Roman comedy.<sup>62</sup>

It seems more likely (and perhaps funnier) that the vicious Ballio is using gut-wrenching imagery<sup>63</sup> to heighten Calidorus’ discomfort at the idea of another man having control over his girlfriend’s unadorned (and hence probably naked) body—or even that Ballio included a surcharge for including Phoenicium’s intestines as part of the sale.<sup>64</sup> A strong point of comparison is when Gelasimus the parasite offers himself for sale:

nunc si ridiculum hominem quaerat quispiam,  
uenalis ego sum cum ornamentis omnibus.  
(*Stichus* 171–172)

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<sup>61</sup> Frayn (1996) 110, followed by Kajava (1998) and criticized by Scheid (2006).

<sup>62</sup> Cameron Paterson points out to me (*per litteras*) that in *Rudens*, Plautus uses the adjective *ornatus* to draw attention to his characters’ clothing, which in turns indicates these characters’ situation and inner condition: so, for example, the women’s drenched garments points to their distraught state, while the fishermen’s tattered clothes underscores the extreme difficulty of the life they lead.

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that, previously in the play, Ballio has equated pimps with butchers (*lenonum aemulos | lanios*, 196–197), threatened to treat his slave prostitute Aeschrodora as a piece of meat (*ego te dstringam ad carnarium*, 200), and (perhaps) threatened Xystilis, another slave prostitute, with the “hide-tanning” that may have gone on in Ballio’s side building (*pergula*, 210).

<sup>64</sup> Such a surcharge would be consistent with the pervasive greed of the *leno* stock character. Compare *Persa* 683–687, where the pimp Dordalus underpays by two *nummi*, to cover the cost of the bag in which his payment is stored.



Now if anybody's lookin' for a funnyman,  
I'm for sale—with all my get-up.<sup>65</sup>

Gelasimus is not here likening himself to a hunk of meat, or a barnyard animal for that matter. The question of *cum intestinis omnibus*, then, since it lacks external corroboration and is made suspect by internal comparanda, cannot be satisfactorily attributed to the talk of the butcher's trade.

Also difficult is the distinction between *intestina*, *exta*, and *uiscera*. All seem to be used by Plautus at one point or another to describe sacrificial meat; they also all seem to be used by Plautus at one point or another to describe sausage or other, possibly non-sacrificial, animal comestibles (e.g., *Curculio* 240–243). Plautus does not use them interchangeably within a single context. Only the term *exta* clearly indicates sacrificial meat—but it is still always edible meat, not some portion reserved for the gods.<sup>66</sup> None of the three terms appears in Terence.

The last term worthy of note is *uasa*, referring to the materials needed for sacrifice. The grumpy old man Daemones of *Rudens* gives a list when complaining that people visiting the nearby shrine of Venus always ask him to lend some of the necessary gear:

semper petunt  
aquam hinc aut ignem aut uascula aut cultrum aut ueru  
aut aulam extarem, aut aliquid—quid uerbis opust?  
Veneri paraui uasa et puteum, non mihi.  
(133–136)

They're always asking for  
water from here, or fire or dishlets or a blade or a spit  
or a gut-cooker or something—what's the use of talking about it?  
I bought utensils and a well for Venus, not myself.

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<sup>65</sup> Quotations from Plautus are from Lindsay (1910); all translations are my own.

<sup>66</sup> Lowe (1985a) 80.

In the *Aulularia*, the grumpy old man Euclio makes a similar complaint, that neighbors are always asking for *uasa* (91 and 95–96): his list includes *ignis* and *culter*, but it also includes *securis*, *pistillum*, and *mortarium*—it seems that utensils for sacrificial offerings and utensils for cooking can be commingled in Plautus’ use of *uasa*. On two other occasions (*Amphitruo* 946 and 1126, *Captiui* 860), the word *uasa*, modified by the adjective *pura*, unambiguously refers to vessels for sacrificial offerings, though their contents (wine for libations, or perhaps incense, myrrh, or unguents) are not mentioned.<sup>67</sup>

### **Greek New Comedy and Roman *comoedia palliata***

In Menandrian comedy, the Greek features of sacrifice and other rituals are obvious when they appear, since they are of course the only features of Menandrian sacrifice and ritual. In Roman comedy, however, the distinction between Greek and Roman is not always clear. Though uniquely Roman terminology<sup>68</sup> and practice<sup>69</sup> can occasionally be found in Plautus, the hybrid nature of Roman New Comedy (see discussion immediately below) suggests that Greek and Roman ritual are to some degree intermixed from the outset. Furthermore, Plautus generally does not treat sacrificial ritual in detail, but paints scenes of sacrifice

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<sup>67</sup> Jean Marie Nisard, commenting on the occurrence of *uasa pura* at *Amphitruo* 956 (as he cites it), suggests that the modifier *pura* is added simply to reflect the ritual requirement that all sacrificial implements be unpoluted (1855: 542); subsequent commentators on *Amphitruo* (e.g., Baier 1999, Christenson 2000) do not discuss the term. Cato *De Agri Cultura* 83 demonstrates that *uasa* are used for storing offerings, but are not offerings themselves.

<sup>68</sup> For instance, the use of technical terms for categories of Roman sacrifice at *Epidicus* 139–140 (*piacularis* and *succidaneus*, “expiatory sacrifice” and “substitute sacrifice,” respectively). See more at the end of chapter 3.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., the suggested contents of a sacrifice proposed for Alcumena by Sosia at *Amphitruo* 738 (*mola salsa aut tus*, the former being an exclusively Roman offering, produced by Vestal Virgins no less). Although *mola salsa* is exclusively Roman, Charles Gulick incorrectly attempts to classify the passage as mere translation by Plautus of Greek ritual from his New Comedic model (1896: 236) and furthermore mistakenly calls *harioli* and *haruspices* identical; see *contra* Slater (2000b), Traill (2004), and my discussion in chapter 5. Another analysis of ritual in Plautus, Oliphant (1912), is also unhelpful, as is Murray (1943) on ritual in Greek New Comedy.

with broad brushstrokes, so that it is impossible for us to distinguish consistently between Greek and Roman elements—and, since the plays do not hinge upon knowledge or awareness of such distinctions, they are on balance unimportant both to the audience and to the progression of his plays. Thus, while distinction between Greek and Roman ritual is an imperative preliminary to this study, the formalized sacrificial procedures previously presented will not figure prominently in the following pages. Just as it has been necessary to present the differences between Greek and Roman sacrificial practice, so also it is necessary to discuss the differences between Menandrian New Comedy and Roman comedy, in order to avoid (as much as possible) confusing the characteristics of the two dramatic genres.

Menander was an Athenian writing Greek comedy in a Greek comedic<sup>70</sup>—and tragic<sup>71</sup>—tradition. Although there is a continuity of geography and genre from Aristophanic Old Comedy through Attic Middle Comedy to Menandrian New Comedy, and although “belief in traditional religion shows little indication of decline” in the Hellenistic period,<sup>72</sup> there are important differences between the comedy of Menander and that of his predecessors. Foremost among these is the fact that the conquests of Alexander and the rise of the Hellenistic period saw the intellectual center of Greek literary production shift away from Athens (and eventually to Alexandria), so that Menander was, in effect, writing his plays not in the core but on the periphery of the new Greek world.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Menander’s work forms

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<sup>70</sup> For a thorough analysis of sacrifice in Aristophanes, see Sfyroeras (1992) *passim* and especially 3: “[T]he representations of sacrifice in Aristophanic comedy display a variety commensurate with their frequency.”

<sup>71</sup> See Murray (1943) and Scodel (1993) for elements of Menandrian New Comedy derived from Euripides. For a countervailing argument against overwhelming Euripidean influence, see Duckworth (1952) 33–38.

<sup>72</sup> Hutchinson (1988) 3.

<sup>73</sup> On Alexandria as the literary hub of the Hellenistic world, see, for instance, Hutchinson (1988) 5–8 and Fowler (1989) 187–188; see also Lape (2004a) ch. 1. Cf. also Werner (1962: 2) on the political shift away from

part of the body of Hellenistic literature<sup>74</sup> because it exhibits aspects of the Hellenistic aesthetic: naturalistic description, realism, lifelike detail, and a basis in reality,<sup>75</sup> features that are far from the fantastical and grotesquely exaggerated scenarios presented by Old Comedy playwrights such as Aristophanes.<sup>76</sup> For Menander, this basis in reality is evident simply in the non-elite, quotidian setting of all his plays, and in the focus of his plots on citizen marriage and the production of legitimate citizen children.<sup>77</sup> Menander was in the position of writing within an Attic dramatic tradition after the classical period of Athenian drama had ended—and, as a result, there is a complex relationship between his plays, his predecessors, and Greek religious practice and principles.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, because Menander focuses not on Aristophanic fantasy but on plausible situations in everyday life, we are justified in studying his use of sacrifice, since it is arguably closer to reality than the sacrifice presented in Old Comedy or even in tragedy (an argument that I will make at the end of this introduction).

The evidence of Menander is solidly Greek, but a continuing question in scholarship on Plautus and Terence has concerned just how Roman their plays are.<sup>79</sup> Both Plautus and Terence wrote Latin adaptations or re-imaginings of Greek comedy, and they produced them

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Athens during the period of Middle Comedy: “Athens was now only a tritagonist in a drama that was dominated successively by Sparta, Thebes, and Macedon.”

<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, scholars of Hellenistic poetry have tended to be dismissive of Menander as an important part of Hellenistic literature—as evidenced by Hutchinson (1988) 10 and n. 13, and by the lack of discussion of Menander in Fowler (1989) and Zanker (2004), even as they themselves lament that classicists in general have tended to dismiss Hellenistic literature—e.g., Hutchinson (1988) 1 and Fowler (1989) 3.

<sup>75</sup> These terms are taken from Fowler (1989) 7, 9, 11, and 20, respectively.

<sup>76</sup> Also unlike Aristophanes, as Niall Slater points out, Menander “seems to chastise the individual rather than the society” (1993: 122), though see *contra* Lape (2004a) *passim*.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Hutchinson (1988) 5: “Post-classical [i.e., Hellenistic] literature...can infringe more radically than before the crucial division between high and low,” namely between epic content and everyday subjects.

<sup>78</sup> See, for instance, Scodel (1993).

<sup>79</sup> On which see, recently, James (2006).

at Rome, the center of the fledgling Roman empire, while the Greek setting (e.g., Epidamnus in *Menaechmi*), Greek names (plus hyper-Greek names like Polymachaeroplages in *Pseudolus*), and Greek stage layout and costumes<sup>80</sup> are, for the most part, preserved in the Roman *fabulae palliatae*. Many elements of Roman life, however, intrude—not the least of which is the Latin language itself. The names of the gods, likewise, are Latin (oaths by Jupiter, rather than Zeus, are much more common, for instance).

Furthermore, the character who delivers Plautus' prologues is often Roman (as evidenced by lines like "here in our country, in Apulia"<sup>81</sup>), and the plays often make mention of Roman social institutions such as the Forum,<sup>82</sup> the Senate,<sup>83</sup> praetors,<sup>84</sup> and legions.<sup>85</sup> Slater, discussing Plautine improvisatory techniques, has remarked that Plautus "needed to offer Roman audiences something familiar as well as something new" (1993: 114); his statement rings true also for the Roman intrusions just mentioned—and for characteristically Roman opinions and diatribes put into Greek characters' mouths, as with the title character of *Curculio* or the parasite Saturio in *Persa*.<sup>86</sup> A catalogue of Roman features in the "Greek" comedy

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<sup>80</sup> See Marshall (2006) 54: "However exotic or contrived the offstage settings, and whatever name the play happens to give to the town, the setting of the *fabulae palliatae* is, essentially, always the same street." See also Marshall (2006) 62–66, and especially 65 n. 176, on the preservation of certain aspects of Greek costuming in the Roman theater, with extensive citations of relevant scholarship.

<sup>81</sup> *Hic in nostra terra in <terra> Apulia, Casina* 72.

<sup>82</sup> The Forum is an essential topographical feature of Roman comedies—on which see Marshall (2006) 40–44, a discussion of the proximity of the Forum to the production sites for Plautine plays—and hence the word *forum* appears everywhere in the corpus. Examples: *Mercator* 797, *Eunuchus* 763.

<sup>83</sup> E.g., *Casina* 536 (Cleostrata sarcastically calls her husband *senati columen*), *Epidicus* 159.

<sup>84</sup> E.g., *Curculio* 376, *Persa* 487.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., *Amphitruo* 100, *Truculentus* 508.

<sup>86</sup> For the doubly metatheatrical joke of Curculio's execration of "becloaked Greeks" (*Graeci palliati*, 288), see Marshall (2006) 59 and also 76–77. See Marshall (2006) 190 for the application of "Saturio's scathing critique of the morals of contemporary Roman women" to the "here-and-now" (*nunc...hic*, 385–387) of Plautus' audience.

of Plautus and Terence could be drawn out at length,<sup>87</sup> but what is important to note is the admixture of Greek and Roman elements in these plays—and the concomitant implication that matters of sacrifice and ritual, too, will appear in Roman comedy as a hybrid of Greek and Roman religious concepts.

Though both are Roman adapters of Greek New Comedy, Plautus and Terence both tend towards different theatrical goals. Plautus often engages in wild, sometimes fantastical, farce, and he displays consistent fascination with clever slave characters (*serui callidi*),<sup>88</sup> but little interest in the conventional marriage plots of New Comedy. Terence, on the contrary, enacts detailed dramatic treatments of particularly troubling versions of the stock marriage plot. He uses his plays to examine the situation of families torn apart by strife between father and son (as in *Heauton Timoroumenos*)<sup>89</sup> or rape (*Hecyra*, *Eunuchus*),<sup>90</sup> and he is widely recognized as being more interested in psychological portraits and motivations than is Plautus.<sup>91</sup> It can be expected that the two playwrights' divergent dramatic objectives will result in strikingly different use and treatment of sacrifice and other religious ritual in their plays—and, as I seek to demonstrate in chapters 3 and 5 below, this expectation is, in fact, correct.

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<sup>87</sup> Of course the definitive work on Roman (or Plautine) elements in Plautus is Fraenkel (2007 [1922]).

<sup>88</sup> As evidenced even by the title roles played by *serui callidi* such as Epidicus, Pseudolus, Stichus (a somewhat reduced role), and the parasite *seruus callidus* stand-in Curculio.

<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Duckworth (1952) 286–287 and Lape (2004b).

<sup>90</sup> On which see Packman (1997), James (1998), and Penwill (2004).

<sup>91</sup> It is worth noting that literary interest in the depiction of suffering, particularly emotional suffering, is part of the Hellenistic aesthetic: see Zanker (2004) 152–164, especially 153 and 158 for emotional suffering. Likewise, in the art and literature of the Hellenistic period, an interest develops in portraying courtesans sympathetically (on which see Zanker 2004: 155–158), an interest that Plautus and Terence both exhibit (Plautus with Phronesium in *Truculentus* and the two mother-daughter courtesan pairs in *Cistellaria*, Terence with Thais of *Eunuchus* and above all Bacchis in *Hecyra*).

## New Comedy and lived reality

A few additional words are in order concerning my argument for comedy as a way of uncovering aspects of everyday life. Unlike the heroes, rulers, and elites of epic, history, and tragedy, and unlike the cerebral interlocutors of philosophy, New Comedy depicts exaggerated versions of how average citizens—that is, citizens who were neither extremely wealthy nor destitute—lived, and how they interacted with their neighbors, family, and slaves. By examining the personae of New Comedy and their characterization, we can arrive at reasonable conclusions about certain areas of everyday life and social realities for the kinds of Greeks and Romans depicted in the genre.

Consider, for instance, Plautus' assignment of the divine prologue of *Aulularia* to the *senex* Euclio's Lar Familiaris. This play is arguably one of the closest to its Greek original in all of Plautus,<sup>92</sup> but one important change that Plautus makes is in the character of the prologue. Greek New Comedy displays a variety of divine prologues, including both personified abstractions (e.g., Tyche) and anthropomorphic gods (like Pan in *Dyskolos*). These prologues are not arbitrary, but hold significance for the themes of the plays they introduce—both Greek and Roman.<sup>93</sup> What, then, is the significance of Plautus' shift from an abstract or rustic divinity of his Greek original to the Lar of the *Aulularia*?

First, Plautus has selected an exclusively Roman god, one with no direct Greek analogue. His choice thus represents a conscious injection of the Roman religious world into the “Greece” of his theatrical fiction. This inclusion (or *contaminatio*, to appropriate Terence's term for fusing Greek elements in his Roman comedies) of a recognizably Roman element in

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. Kuiper (1940) and Minar (1947). I will return to this point briefly in chapter 3.

<sup>93</sup> Kantzios (2008) elaborates upon the significance of Pan the prologue (the “new” Pan) in *Dyskolos* as thoroughly Hellenistic and primarily focused on the good-natured establishment of citizen marriage, in contrast to the severe, conservative rusticism of the “old” Pan represented by Knemon.

*Aulularia* makes the play's themes more directly applicable or relevant to the audience and also can draw the audience's interest more fully into the action—by including something familiar (excuse the pun), Plautus makes it more accessible.

Secondly, the Lar Familiaris is not a global, national, or even rustic god, but a personal, private, domestic god. The Lar, more than Pan or Tyche, Arcturus or Mercury, underscores the familial concerns of the play—finances, daughters and, most importantly, marrying the daughters off without harming the finances—and at the same time draws the audience's attention to the status and management of the protagonist Euclio's household. The prologue of *Aulularia*, the Lar, shapes the play by his nature and by his words into what George Duckworth (1952: 143) called “the best example of a comedy of character to be found in Plautus”: by nature because the Lar as domestic divinity points to the head of household, Euclio, and by words because much of the prologue consists of an evaluation of the piety displayed towards the Lar by Euclio, his forebears, and his daughter.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, the Lar as prologue tells us a few things about the religious realities of Plautus' audience. The Lar Familiaris of a Roman household was not simply a numinous deity, or an idol inhabited by animistic divine power, but rather a god proper—an anthropomorphic, supernatural, all-knowing (or much-knowing) divine force. Furthermore, what the Lar says in the prologue gives some indication of his importance in the home. Euclio's grandfather entrusted his wealth to the Lar (*thensaurum auri...in medio foco | defodit, uenerans me ut id seruarem sibi*, “he buried his hoard of gold in the middle of my hearth/altar, and entreated me to guard it for him,” 7–8), a sign that Romans considered the Lar a source of protection (*seruarem*) for family well-being. Similarly, the Lar was seen not only as a defen-

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<sup>94</sup> The Lar begins by identifying himself and then describes Euclio's respectable family history (3–17), characterizes Euclio himself as a greedy *senex* (18–19), and praises Euclio's devout daughter (23–25).



sive presence, but also an active force for the benefit of the family, as is clear in the Lar's intent to give Euclio the titular pot of gold for the purposes of arranging a marriage for his pious daughter. These observations may not be groundbreaking or momentous, but they are reasonable and evidentially secure points that illuminate some facets of everyday Roman religion.

### **The meaning of sacrifice to the audience**

The poor citizen girls of both Plautus' *Aulularia* and Menander's *Dyskolos* are characterized as devout and, consequently, as graced with divine help to arrange a proper marriage (in Plautus, from the Lar Familiaris; in Menander, from Pan and the nymphs). The implicit message in each play's prologue is clear. Pious action towards the gods—whether it comes in the form of constant reverence (as in *Dyskolos*) or frequent sacrificial offerings of incense, wine, and garlands (*Aulularia* 24–25: *aut ture aut uino aut aliqui semper supplicat, | dat mihi coronas*)—will bring divine favor and grace. This message would resonate with the plays' Greek and Roman audiences<sup>95</sup> and could mirror the way many of them thought about their own religious experience.

When comedies represent divinities like this and, moreover, when they reproduce sacrificial ritual in the theater, they are not merely reflecting aspects of the audience's lives.

They are, I argue, of religious importance to the audience. Viewing a festival sacrifice was a

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<sup>95</sup> It is not clear exactly who comprised these audiences. Because New Comedy commonly focuses on the everyday lives of non-elite characters—that is, citizen families who are neither mythical nor super-wealthy royalty—I believe that the audiences would not have been exclusively elite (i.e., senatorial). Sander Goldberg (1998: 13–16) posits that the works of Plautus and Terence received repeat performances with small audiences (2,000 or fewer per showing) in front of the Temple of the Magna Mater on the Palatine; while I am not thoroughly persuaded by Goldberg's argument—and I point again to Marshall (2006) 18–19 and 80 on the issue of repeat performances via *instauratio*—I maintain that multiple restagings of a play to intimate audiences would allow for viewers from all levels of society, not only the elites.

central means of religious participation for the average Athenian or Roman citizen, and therefore the staging of a sacrifice, whether simulated or actual, whether animal or non-animal, could provide a kind of participatory religious experience to its viewers.<sup>96</sup> While some festival-goers might have taken an exclusively worldly interest in the holiday—a respite from work, a free meal, and a show—others would perceive the occasion as a religious event, a perception suggested by the fact that the statues of the gods, believed to be inhabited during the festival by the deities themselves, were brought outdoors from the temple to watch the plays and games that took place during the festival.<sup>97</sup>

Such a religious experience was a shared one. The presentation of sacrifice in New Comedy could make the audience feel more connected to the characters on the stage, as the fictional sacrificants extended their religious activity to onlookers in the real world. The audience could watch actors—in stylized masks and often improbable costumes, transforming male actors into female characters in some cases—nevertheless perform ritual procedures familiar from domestic and public sacrifices, procedures that could themselves make the characters more true-to-life, and more familiar, for the spectators. If a nominally Greek persona sacrifices to inherently Roman Lares Familiares (as does Daemones at *Rudens* 1206), he may seem to the audience to be a compatriot, a member of the Roman ritual community—

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<sup>96</sup> Indeed, as Henry Jocelyn pointed out, “[m]ost Romans looked on at rather than took part in religious ceremonial” (1996: 92)—so the connection between ritual practice and theatrical production here is arguably strong.

<sup>97</sup> For evidence on the gods as spectators, both iconographic and textual, see Hanson (1959a) 14–16.

There is, of course, scarce evidence for what the common person felt about religious festivals, cf. Jocelyn (1996) 104: “Genuine religiousness as distinct from conformity with public religious conventions is a very difficult thing to measure even in contemporary societies.” The religious impact of attending a festival likely varied with the personal beliefs of each attendee. Attendees would, however, be aware of the religious character of the festival, given the presence of the statues of the deities, the sacrificial procession, and (in some cases) the staging of plays in front of the temple of the god or goddess in whose honor the festival was held (on which see Goldberg 1998: 4–8). We can look also to the evidence of Theocritus *Idyll* 15, the Adoniazousai, where the eponymous women attending the Adoneia express both mundane interest and a sort of religious awe (in, for example, the craftwork on display at lines 80–83 and the representation of Adonis at 84–86, respectively).

and thus his religious experience and what happens to him in the play may become a matter of shared concern to the theater-going community.<sup>98</sup>

Plautus' Roman audiences would have been at least aware of, if not familiar with, non-Roman religious practices. Extensive epigraphic evidence (from a period later than Plautus and Terence) demonstrates that Greek immigrants to Rome, whether free persons or slaves, continued to worship their native deities—and so also continued to practice their native rituals.<sup>99</sup> Though Rome during the height of the *comoedia palliata* was not nearly as cosmopolitan as imperial Rome, some degree of this preservation of native practices would have existed, and hence the Romans who watched these plays could also have witnessed, or simply heard of, Greek ritual practiced in their own cities.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, during the time Plautus and Terence wrote, Hellenic culture and religious practice was never far from Rome, given the proximity of Greek settlements in Magna Graecia and the Bay of Naples. Some of the Roman audience, then, would have perhaps seen Greek ritual in these settlements, or even have visited Greece itself, and hence could have observed Greek religious activity. Henry Jocelyn posited that Plautus manipulates audience knowledge of religious ritual and terminology to enhance the “Greekness” or the ex-

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<sup>98</sup> I also see here the potential for added humor in Plautus' occasional lists of preposterous deities, as at *Bacchides* 115–116: *Amor, Voluptas, Venus, Venustas, Gaudium, | Iocus, Ludus, Sermo, Suavisaiatio*. If, as I argue, ritual activity in a play can make the theatrical experience more realistic for the audience, then perhaps, by extension, the inclusion of such ridiculous abstractions as “Suavisaiatio” within the plays' religious realm constitutes a gentle mockery of other abstracts genuinely honored by the Romans as divinities. I return to Suavisaiatio in chapter 5.

<sup>99</sup> For thorough studies on the subject, see la Piana (1927) and Noy (2000).

<sup>100</sup> The ritual conducted *Graeco ritu* was in fact Roman, though it incorporated what Romans seem to have perceived as certain emblematic differences of Greek ritual, including sacrificing with the head bare. The concept of such a rite additionally indicates the blurred distinctions between Roman and foreign ritual. On these points, see Scheid (1995) 19–25, and also 18: “National religion was not radically different from foreign religions.... Everywhere people made sacrifices, prayers, and vows, celebrated sacred games, and built sanctuaries. The same terminology was used for the description of all these celebrations...”

oticism of a play.<sup>101</sup> I will consider the implications of Jocelyn's argument in chapter 5; I point to it here as another indicator both of the amalgamation of Greek and Roman rituals evident in the *Graecus ritus* and of the possibility that the Roman comic playwrights capitalized on their audiences' awareness or familiarity with non-Roman religious practices.<sup>102</sup>

The idea I am proposing of a shared religious experience in performance of sacrifice onstage also connects to the importance of commensality in Graeco-Roman religion. Every sacrifice was also a feast, or at least a ritual meal, a fact that has important consequences for religion and community in classical society.<sup>103</sup> Domestic sacrifice was a time for the family to come together in a shared religious experience, and public sacrifice was a time for the entire community to gather as well. This act of congregation is, I argue, parallel to the act of coming together to see a play.<sup>104</sup> New Comedy, both Greek and Roman, was performed primarily as part of religious festivals (on which see my discussion below), and so a theatrical audience was gathered as part of a festal day, probably including public games and most cer-

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<sup>101</sup> Jocelyn (2001), who thus would have disagreed (as I do) with the overly reductive statement at Werner (1962) 9: "We should assume that whatever religious ideas a Roman playwright presented to an ordinary Roman audience...either were familiar to them or were intended by him to affect them...they were either accepted from the Greek source as already fitting Rome as well, or altered from the source in order to fit Rome." See also Werner's discussion of Middle Comic use of religious terminology for laughs (130–131).

<sup>102</sup> A sharp contrast with the purely Hellenocentric bearing of Attic Middle Comedy: "Foreign cults are barely noticed, and for the most part are scorned" (Werner 1962: 143). As Denis Feeney has written, Romans distinguished between native and Greek myth, by "maintain[ing] an awareness of which myths were Greek, despite their long familiarity with and assimilation of Greek myth. Their distinctions may well not be the same ones a modern observer might make, but that is not the point: the activity of making distinctions is what counts, not their 'accuracy'" (1998: 64). Thus the distinction between Roman and Greek myth and, I argue, ritual in Roman comedy would send different and important signals to the audience.

<sup>103</sup> On Greek commensality, see Honea (1993) and Evans (2004). On Roman commensality, see Kajava (1998) and Scheid (2006) 250–274. Compare a perhaps too-sweeping statement by Werner: "one further reason for sacrifice, destined to prolong the practice far beyond the death of the other motives...is sometimes evident in Middle Comedy: people simply enjoyed the food and fellowship of a banquet" (1962: 95). Holland suggests that "Greek festival practices...begin to influence Roman cuisine through the influx of Greek slaves, especially cooks, in the Hellenistic period" (2007: 4)—and this influence is reflected in the Plautine pork product passages, e.g., *Menaechmi* 210–211.

<sup>104</sup> The two acts are also, of course, conjoined, since both could take place at a religious festival.

tainly including a civic sacrifice and subsequent communal feast. Sacrifice and ritual feasting within a comedy therefore reflect the sacrifice and ritual feasting of the festival itself. Hence the importance of feasting scenes<sup>105</sup> to many comedies (Greek and Roman, New and Old), and hence also, I argue, the humor of misanthropes who complain about sacrificers and feast participants, most notably Knemon of *Dyskolos* and Euclio of *Aulularia*: they reject not only the comedic community, not only a core part of Graeco-Roman ritual orthopraxy, but also the very basis for their theatrical existence, the commensal, feast-centered religious festival.

## Methodology

As I have stated above, scholarship on New Comedy, particularly Roman Comedy, has tended to overlook the role of sacrifice and ritual in the genre. This oversight is not, however, limited to comedy: Denis Feeney, calling for more interpretation of sacrificial ritual in Roman poetry, has further described study of the function of sacrifice in Roman poetry as a “pressing and rewarding issue,” and has argued that “poetic engagement with ritual” is one source of “important cultural work.”<sup>106</sup> As I approach my analysis of one subset of (Graeco)

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<sup>105</sup> And invitations to feasting scenes, best represented by the conclusion of *Persa*. Toxilus, the lead character and *seruus callidus* (but also *adulescens inamoratus*), invites the pimp Dordalus to join in his festival banquet, a sign of good will and desire for reconciliation (792). Dordalus, by twice refusing to partake of the offered wine (793 and 803), excludes himself from the comedic community—and, I suggest, from the festival environment in which the play itself is being performed.

<sup>106</sup> Feeney (2004) 1. Full quotation: “The interpretation of sacrificial ritual in Roman poetry is a more pressing and rewarding issue than it might have seemed even twenty years ago, when many would have regarded both Roman ritual and Roman literature as equally formalist and arid. We may now be more prepared to entertain the possibility that Roman poetry and Roman ritual are both capable of doing important cultural work, and to

Roman poetry, I must pause to consider a few questions of methodology. First, the matter of source criticism, *Quellenforschung* or *Quellenkritik*, by scholars on Roman comedy; second, the applicability of models of sacrifice predominant in the broader theoretical work on Graeco-Roman sacrifice; and finally, the approach to studying sacrifice in poetry as a whole and in ancient comedy specifically.

A substantial majority of scholarship on Roman Comedy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries consisted of *Quellenforschung*—research not on the plays of Plautus and Terence themselves, but on what these plays might reveal about the plays’ Greek originals. As a result of this interest in *Quellenforschung*, scholarship focusing on the plays themselves was infrequent until the publication of Eduard Fraenkel’s breakthrough work on the true originality of Plautus.<sup>107</sup> Consonant with the broader trend, publication on sacrifice and ritual in Roman Comedy has largely been limited to combing through the texts to catalogue which ritual aspects are Greek and which Roman.<sup>108</sup> Though *Quellenforschung* often distracts from more substantive interpretations of Plautus and Terence, it will be of some importance in my study, for the theatrical effects of a sacrifice on the Roman stage will be different if it is a Greek sacrifice (or a Roman sacrifice *Graeco ritu*, as mentioned above) and not a Roman one.

The main scholars on the theory of Greek sacrifice (Burkert, Vernant, Girard<sup>109</sup>)—and theoretical interest has been overwhelmingly in Greek, not Roman, sacrifice—focus on the origins of sacrificial ritual and on tragedy first and foremost, and their focus has tended to

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accept that the interaction between the two, in the form of poetic engagement with ritual, might likewise be doing important cultural work.”

<sup>107</sup> Translated most recently into English in 2007, it appeared originally in 1922 as *Plautinisches im Plautus*, with a second edition, *Elementi plautini in Plauto*, in 1960; the English translation is of the second edition.

<sup>108</sup> Notably, Jocelyn (2000) and much of Dohm (1964).

<sup>109</sup> E.g., Burkert (1997), Vernant and Detienne (1989), Girard (1972), and on Attic comedy specifically, Cornford (1993), which is essentially a work of *Quellenforschung*.

distort their reading of comedic sacrifice when they do consider it.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, as Feeney argues, the partial use of models of sacrifice (as a heuristic device) is a necessary starting point for interpretation, even though such models can be too constrictive for understanding the texts.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, my approach to sacrifice and ritual in New Comedy will have the previously cited theoretical scholarship as background, and I will deal with issues of theory and interpretation as appropriate in my analysis.

In approaching sacrifice in New Comedy, it is important to keep in mind not only the comedic tradition, which I have discussed above, but also the poetic tradition of sacrificial ritual. There is, as Pavlos Sfyroeras has demonstrated, a “tradition of a correlation between sacrifice and poetry” evident in the work of Pindar and Aristophanes as well as in the poetic discussions of Plato, Aristotle, and even Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (1992: 9). Poems, within this correlation, are called or considered the equivalent of sacrificial offerings, and thus the production of poetry functions as a kind of religious, ritual act.<sup>112</sup> This correlation does not feature explicitly in extant New Comedy, but awareness of it may allow us to uncover possible metatheatrical manipulation of ritual scenes within the plays. If, for instance, the *seruus callidus*—a Plautine favorite character often metatheatrically associated with Plautus himself<sup>113</sup>—is shown involved with sacrificial ritual, then perhaps the playwright is invoking this

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<sup>110</sup> See also Sfyroeras (1992) 3–8 for a review of past scholarly attempts at incorporating Aristophanic sacrifice into interpretive models of Greek sacrificial ritual, and especially 1992: 8 n. 19 for more recent attempts at ritual origin theory for Greek tragedy and comedy.

<sup>111</sup> Feeney (2004) 19–20: “If we come to the poems with no model of sacrifice in our minds at all, we will find it very difficult to see the religious or cultural work they are doing... We need to acknowledge not only that we cannot read without some kind of contextualising model, but also that the imposition of such a model from another discipline can only be a preliminary heuristic step, for direct imposition of the model will fail to do justice to the way any given text may be working.”

<sup>112</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Sfyroeras (1992) 8–13.

<sup>113</sup> On which see, for consideration specifically of the most spectacular *seruus callidus*, Slater (2000a) 97–120 and Sharrock (1996), *inter alia*.

traditional correlation and connecting the play's contents with the social (and religious) context within which it is performed.

Indeed, Denis Feeney persuasively advocates considering Graeco-Roman literature not only passively within its religious context, but also as an active participant upon that context. In other words, literary texts can serve as a type of religious activity, as a "frame" for religious experience parallel to the "frames" of philosophy, theology, myth, and ritual (1998: 38–46). The relationship between poetry and myth, or poetry and ritual, is neither static nor unidirectional; literature, therefore, does not simply exist in a religious "context," but participates in constructing "religion" (1998: 141). As I argued above, the staging of sacrifice in New Comedy was not simply a theatrical occurrence, but in fact could hold religious significance for the plays' audiences. I would further add that when sacrifice is staged in the theater, it engages not only in representation (and sometimes distortion) of reality but also in representation—and therefore, to some degree, definition—of religious practice in society. This definition may end with the play, or with the Saturnalian spirit of the festival day, but nevertheless it does frame a religious experience for the festival-going audience and thereby participates in constructing some part of that audience's religion.<sup>114</sup>

A play's social and religious context—namely, the festival—is important as well for our approach to comedic sacrifice in particular. The previously mentioned classical tradition of equating poetry with sacrifice is concretized in the performances of comedies at religious festivals in both Greece and Rome. The Greek plays, according to Pavlos Sfyroeras, actually served as a ritual dedication or offering: "performances [of Attic comedy] themselves can be seen, and in fact were seen, as gifts dedicated to Dionysos," honoree of the primary Athenian

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<sup>114</sup> Peter Smith reminds me that, in addition, public religious rituals are themselves a type of drama, one that can accomplish religious ends by partly narrative means.



festival that included comedy (1992: 8). Similar arguments can be made for comedy at Roman festivals.<sup>115</sup> Just as the plays of New Comedy provide a “frame” for religious experience, then, they have a reciprocal frame of their own in the religious festival. Comedy performed at a festival is both a religious act and a by-product of religious observance. Theatrical performance, which effectively gathers the festal community, can be a central event to the festival as a whole, and the play’s contents can furthermore strengthen the bond between performance and religious observance: “the sacrificial rites, in addition to their function on the level of the plot, operate as a way of anchoring the plays to the Dionysiac [or, more broadly, religious] context of the dramatic festival.”<sup>116</sup> When considering the staging or description of sacrifice in comedy, therefore, we should take into account the implications not only for plot or characterization, but also for the religious milieu of the performance itself.

Sfyroeras also constructs a typology of Greek comedic sacrifice.<sup>117</sup> The typology is derived almost exclusively from Aristophanes, yet it is a useful analytic apparatus for evaluating sacrifice in Graeco-Roman comedy as a whole. Sfyroeras defines three broad categories of depictions of sacrifice in comedy (categories that can be applied to tragic sacrifice as well): literal sacrificial rites, metaphorical applications of sacrifice, and the substituted sacrificial victim. Literal sacrificial rites can be conducted in whole or in part,<sup>118</sup> and can take place onstage or be reported from off-stage. Metaphorical applications of sacrificial rites include “human activities presented in the guise of sacrificial ritual” (1992: 2), as well as cor-

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Marshall (2006) 16–20 for Roman Comedy. See also Feeney (1998) 28–38 on the *ludi saeculares* and the *Carmen Saeculare* specifically.

<sup>116</sup> Sfyroeras (1992) 26.

<sup>117</sup> For this whole paragraph, see Sfyroeras (1992) 1–3.

<sup>118</sup> By “in part,” Sfyroeras means the burning of incense or pouring of a libation without animal sacrifice (1992: 2). I would argue that the former offerings, without a live victim, are not incomplete but rather are simply a different type of sacrifice—but the distinction here is essentially irrelevant.

rupted, distorted, or perverted sacrifice (as seen most often in tragedy) and, by comedic extension, parody of sacrifice. Iphigenia and the deer are emblematic of the third category, the substituted sacrificial victim, but examples from comedy in fact abound. Sfyroeras mentions the wineskin presented for sacrifice as though it were a baby in *Thesmophoriazousai* (1992: 3), and I will discuss in chapter 3 a number of instances in Plautus where one character suggests that another character serve as substitute in a sacrifice—or a parody thereof.

### **Outline of the study**

Having dispensed with the preliminaries, we may commence analysis of sacrifice in Menander, Plautus, and Terence. In the next chapter, I will take up the matter of the stagecraft of sacrifice and the kinds of offerings and divine recipients that appear in New Comedy. The third chapter examines how sacrifice operates theatrically in New Comedy, with particular attention to comic talk about sacrifice. Two Plautine case studies—first, the problem posed by the figure of the pious (rather than impious) pimp in *Curculio*, and second, what I term a “program of sacralization” in *Epidicus*, whereby the title character ascends during the course of the play from self-avowed sacrificial victim to sacrificer/sacrificant to generally acknowledged demi-god—will figure in the discussion in this last part of chapter 3. Chapter 4 will treat matters of gender and status, and chapter 5 will examine the function of sacrifice within religion in comedy overall. The conclusion will tie together the thematic concerns of the study, will consider their development from Menander to Terence, and will connect comic use of sacrifice to other aspects of life presented in the genre, with a final look at what

sacrifice in New Comedy can tell us about religious experience in everyday life in ancient Greece and Rome.

## CHAPTER 2

### Staging sacrifice

As sacrifice is the fundamental rite of Greek and Roman religious practice, so also the theatrical manipulation of sacrifice is a central part of understanding how the playwrights of New Comedy construct religion in their works. John Hanson writes that “[t]he connection of theatrical performances with religion is not only basic, but also lasting” (1959a: 47), and it is a connection, I will show, based on sacrifice. In this chapter and the next, I investigate and analyze the many aspects of sacrifice in comedy: its simulation onstage, comedy’s representation of its component parts, the broader theatrical function of sacrifice, and the incorporation of sacrificial terminology into comic dialogue. The present chapter is devoted to the substance of sacrifice in comedy—stagecraft and offerings—while chapter 3 will focus on the theatrical and dramatic effects of sacrifice and sacrificial imagery. The “who” of sacrifice—which characters can and do perform sacrifice, and the concomitant matters of gender and status—is covered in chapter 4.

By considering the way Menander and Plautus could have used scenery, costuming, stage properties (commonly known as “props”), and action in their depictions of religious activity, we can develop an idea of how such activity was in fact seen onstage in New Comedy. In the short final portion of the chapter, I discuss the meaning of the content of the sac-

rifices (both with animals and with other offerings) represented in the plays. Plautus and Menander's stagecraft will be considered together. It is important to note that sacrifice is largely absent from Terence, and that this absence holds significant implications for our understanding religion in his plays. I explore this issue in chapter 5.

## **Stagecraft**

My starting point for analyzing sacrifice in New Comedy will be trying to recreate the audience's experience of seeing just such a comic sacrifice. In other words, I will use textual evidence—dialogue about sacrifice—along with inferences and reasoned guesswork to reconstruct the unrecorded aspects of sacrifice in Menander and Plautus. Since neither playwright left stage directions or blocking notes, I will be dealing in “possibilities,” so to speak, in how a play's *choragus* and actors may have enacted sacrifice for their production.<sup>1</sup> Here too, my conclusions on the stagecraft of sacrificial activity are intended to be presented not as facts, but rather as suggestions that can perhaps illuminate the wider matter of sacrifice and ritual imagery in the theater of New Comedy.

## *Setting and scenery*

The theater in which a work of New Comedy was performed was itself part of a religious context for the play. The plays were performed during religious festivals and, at the Roman dramatic festivals (*ludi scaenici*) in the time of Plautus and Terence, temporary theaters were constructed at or near the sacred precincts of certain temples, most notably that of

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<sup>1</sup> In so doing, I follow C. W. Marshall, the leading authority on stagecraft in Roman Comedy, in his disclaimer that “[s]tagecraft and performance are a challenge to document...[A] lack of evidence has meant that some speculation has been necessary” (2006: ix).

the Magna Mater at the Megalensia—a temple whose construction was celebrated by *ludi scaenici* featuring the production of none other than Plautus’ *Pseudolus*.<sup>2</sup> Thus the overarching backdrop to most plays of Roman comedy was the façade of a temple: “all sites for *ludi scaenici* which can be located with certainty or probability before the erection of a permanent theater in Rome [by Pompey the Great] are not only connected with a temple but are further specified as in front of a temple.”<sup>3</sup> This setting was also evident in the case of Menander’s plays, as the theater was located in a sanctuary and a few yards from its temple; and the presence of a fixed altar (the *θυμέλη*) located in the orchestra of the permanent Athenian theater<sup>4</sup> constitutes a constant physical religious underpinning for the theatrical event.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, as I mentioned briefly in chapter 1, the plays were performed in the presence of one or more gods—or, more precisely, in the presence of a statue or idol of the god honored by the festival, a statue brought to its place at the theater in a ritual procession before the play’s inception.<sup>6</sup> Having the performance observed by a deity reinforces the essentially religious bearing of the play—a dramatic offering to the god—and furthermore allows for metatheatrical jokes, “as the actors evoke the god whose presence can be seen by the

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<sup>2</sup> A point that is attested by the partially surviving *didascalía* for the play and is often mentioned by scholars on Roman theater—e.g., Goldberg (1998).

<sup>3</sup> Hanson (1959a) 25. Cf. Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 7.33 and Augustine *De Civitate Dei* 2.4, both cited at Hanson (1959a) 15 and n. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Sfyroeras (1992) 16.

<sup>5</sup> Hanson further suggests that the Roman “temple-theater complex” may derive from a non-Italic religious tradition (1959a: 33), and that the theater-like architecture of the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste may have been used for the performance not only of plays but also of public sacrifice (1959a: 34).

<sup>6</sup> The presence of the (statue of the) Magna Mater at plays is suggested by Lucretius 4.78–80, discussed at Hanson (1959a) 83. The statue of Dionysus was present at Greek dramatic competitions as well (Hanson 1959a: 86 and n. 35). See also my discussion on the pre-play *pompa* below.

audience.”<sup>7</sup> Also emphasizing the ritual properties of the production, I suggest, was the music that filled the plays: for Menander, choral entr’actes that were disconnected in content from the play and commonly associated with festal revelry,<sup>8</sup> but for Plautus and Terence, the piper (*tibicen*) who played accompaniment throughout nearly the whole comedy.<sup>9</sup> The *tibicen* or another musician was a crucial fixture of Roman sacrifice, as is clear from evidence both internal<sup>10</sup> and external<sup>11</sup> to Roman comedy—and the *tibicen* was likewise a foundational participant in the performance of any Roman comedy. I would, to adopt C. W. Marshall’s phrasing, describe the *tibicen*’s playing as “musical performance in a religious context” (2006: 238). The very presence of a musician accompanying the theatrical proceedings, I argue, invokes the setting of sacrificial ritual.

While the larger setting of the plays of New Comedy provides them with a general religious context, the anchor for ritual activity within them is the stage altar, a vital set element beginning with Aristophanes (at the latest)<sup>12</sup> that has been the subject of substantial scholarly interest for at least a century. The received opinion in the late 1800s was that there were two altars in a comic set: one of Apollo Agyieus (protector of streets, public places, and entrances

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<sup>7</sup> Marshall (2006) 38.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the slave Daos effects the transition to choral interlude between the first and second acts of *Dyskolos* by pointing to the chorus and calling them “some half-drunk Pan-fans” (τούσδε Πανιστάς τινας | ...ὑποβεβρεγμένους, 230–231).

<sup>9</sup> On music in general in Roman comedy, see Marshall (2006) 203–244 and 280–284, and especially the extensive work of Timothy Moore, such as 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2004b, 2008, and a book forthcoming.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., the two *fidicinae* in *Epidicus* who function as the pivot for the title character’s deception plot (cf. *Epidicus* 314–316: *me iussit senex | conducere aliquam fidicinam...* | <quae>, *dum rem diuinam faceret, cantaret sibi*).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Quintilian 1.10.32: *tibicen, qui sacrificanti Phrygium cecinerat*, and my description of the archetypal Roman sacrifice in chapter 1. Substantial iconographic evidence for the *tibicen* survives; see, e.g., discussion of a column of Diocletian in the *Forum Romanum* at Bowerman (1913) 92.

<sup>12</sup> For a glimpse at the stage altar in Aristophanes, see Revermann (2006) 244. For the altar in tragedy, see Wiles (1991) 46 and 233 n. 43: “it is often required in tragedy, and Pollux confirms its existence.”

to homes,<sup>13</sup> sometimes called Apollo Prostatorus in Latin) or of Liber,<sup>14</sup> and the other of the deity honored by the festival during which the play was produced. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, Catharine Saunders persuasively refuted this *communis opinio* (1911: 103) and argued instead that, in Plautus and Terence, there was only one stage altar and that the deity to whom it belonged depended on the specific setting or plot of the play in which it was used.<sup>15</sup> Her position has been wholly accepted by subsequent scholars.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, the Menandrian stage had only one altar, and it was in fact consistently dedicated to Apollo Agyieus.<sup>17</sup> This configuration is made evident by the deictic element in such stock lines as *νὴ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τουτονί*, “oh yes, by this Apollo over here”<sup>18</sup>—and the fact holds true even in plays where the divine prologue, though not Apollo, wields great influence over the play’s characters or events (as with Pan in the *Dyskolos*). For Plautus, George Duckworth’s seminal overview of Roman comedy identifies most altars with Apollo, but points also to altars to Diana at *Miles* 411, Lucina at *Truculentus* 476, and Venus at *Curculio* 71 as well as *Rudens* 688 (1952: 83). Duckworth also points out (1952: 84) that altars are frequently the focal point of stage action, including invocations by travelers returning home (as at *Bacchides* 172<sup>19</sup>), entreaties for divine aid (*Aulularia* 394) or protection (*Mercator* 675), attempts to seek refuge on sacred ground (*Rudens* 664 and 668; *Mostellaria* 1094),

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<sup>13</sup> Smith (1867) 83.

<sup>14</sup> Saunders (1911) 91.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, Saunders suggests that the altar in *Aulularia* is one of not Apollo but Fides (1911: 97–98).

<sup>16</sup> Duckworth (1952) 83–84, Hanson (1959a) 87 n. 40 and Marshall (2006) 38 n. 37. For archaeological evidence on a “permanent theatrical altar” in Roman temple-theater complexes, see Hanson (1959a) 88–89.

<sup>17</sup> Saunders (1911) 92–96, Arnott (1979) 290–291 n. 3, and, more recently, Wiles (1991) 47 and 233 n. 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Dyskolos* 659 = *Perikeiromene* 362.

<sup>19</sup> Here Duckworth was anticipated by Saunders (1911) 98.



and, as David Wiles has pointed out, the official marriage agreement at the conclusion of many Menandrian plays (1991: 46).

Scholars have not yet, however, fully discussed the issue of theatrical use of the altar for its intended purpose, sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> The altar is, of course, the location where much of the sacrificial ritual—grain-sprinkling, prayer, slaughter, butchery, extispicy or divination, and cooking—takes place, and so it could be expected that sacrificial activity onstage, whether real or simulated, might gravitate towards the stage altar. I believe that this is in fact the case. Characters making offerings (which I discuss in detail below) could and, I suggest, did employ the altar: placing garlands upon the altar,<sup>21</sup> libating or setting wine on it,<sup>22</sup> burning or simply laying incense and scented oils over it,<sup>23</sup> and leading sacrificial animals up to the altar, perhaps even to perform *immolatio* (or throw the *οὐλοχύται*) on the victims.<sup>24</sup> Essentially, any sacrificial activity represented onstage would, I argue, be centered on the stage altar. If there were to be sacrificial offerings made to multiple gods in any one comedy, this use of the stage altar could be complicated—for I agree with Duckworth that “it seems improbable that the altar of one god would be applied to the use of another” (1952: 84). Significantly, this assessment holds true for extant New Comedy: not a single play contains actual, serious sacrifices to more than one deity.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Duckworth makes only the smallest of references to *Miles* 411–412, in a parenthetical note (1952: 84).

<sup>21</sup> As at *Mercator* 675 or *Trinummus* 39.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., *Curculio* 125 or perhaps *Amphitruo* 1126.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Miles Gloriosus* 411, *Truculentus* 476.

<sup>24</sup> See my discussion of animals in the section on stage properties below.

<sup>25</sup> In *Poenulus*, all three sacrifices mentioned (at 452, at 617, and at 847, 1147, and 1205) are to Venus; in *Curculio*, the only legitimate onstage sacrifice (at 125) is to Venus, while an offstage sacrifice to Aesclepius is mentioned twice (at 532 and 558) and a humorous mock-libation is made to the alcoholic *ancilla* Leana (at 80), an

C. W. Marshall challenges the basic assumption that an audience would recognize to whom the stage altar was dedicated by appearance.<sup>26</sup> He argues instead that there are no identifiable features on the stock stage altar (so that it may be reused for different plays), and that it is not considered to be consecrated automatically to one specific deity. “The stage altar has no presumed association for the audience with a god until it is provided one during the performance of the play....[I]t remains unmarked until labelled by an actor’s speech” (2006: 53). I would add a suggestion that Plautus, if he (or the *choragus* producing his plays) was as imaginative a director as he was a dramaturge, may have used what Marshall calls “minor set dressings” (*ibidem*) to enhance the stock altar with fantastical, exaggerated aspects of the deity for whom it was consecrated in the play—and, if so, it is possible that the stage altar’s dedicatee was indeed easily identifiable for the audience from play to play.<sup>27</sup>

Another noteworthy aspect of scenery relevant to stage altars is the representation of shrines in the theatrical set. In an article on stagecraft in the *Dyskolos*, Ariana Traill notes that a shrine can be marked either by a third stage door (in addition to the two requisite doors representing citizen houses) or simply by the altar (2001: 89 n. 7). Marshall suggests that the third stage door in seven Plautine plays (*Aulularia*, *Bacchides*, *Curculio*, *Mercator*, *Mostellaria*, *Truculentus*, and *Vidularia*) represents not another domicile, but a temple or shrine (2006: 52–53 and nn. 137–143). In making this suggestion, Marshall likewise appears to assume independently that the presence of an altar in fact requires the third door to represent a

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offering that subsequently provides the substance of the libation to Venus at 125. In *Amphitruo*, one sacrifice, of *uasa pura* and *hostiae* to Jupiter, is legitimate (1126) and the other, apparently a bucket of water dumped upon Amphitruo, is an insult (1034).

<sup>26</sup> Marshall limits his discussion to his topic, Roman comedy. I follow Geoffrey Arnott in his assertion that the standard altar in Menander is regularly and recognizably that of Apollo Agyieus (1979: 290–291 n. 3).

<sup>27</sup> Though it should be noted that surviving actual (not theatrical) altars generally do not have features that identify the god to whom they are consecrated.

shrine. Without delving into the vagaries of the debate over stage doors,<sup>28</sup> I would suggest a slightly more conservative approach, in line with Marshall's argument that the stage altar was "unmarked" until "labelled by an actor's speech" (2006: 53). Unless the play specifically mentions a shrine or includes one in its plot—as with the shrine to Aesclepius in *Curculio* or that of Fides in *Aulularia*<sup>29</sup>—the presence of an altar does not, I would argue, necessitate the presence of a shrine.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, when a shrine is present, it, like the altar, places religion and sacrifice literally in center stage—and, I add, creates an opportunity for metatheatrical jokes about the collocation of a fake shrine in the foreground of the scenery with a genuine temple in the backdrop.

### *Costumes*

As is evident from my description of the archetypal Greek and Roman sacrificial rituals in chapter 1, clothing plays a role in the proper conduct of religious activity, especially at Rome. Would characters in New Comedy have worn special clothes to signify their religious activity, or would they have made offerings and prayers simply in the standard costumes dictated by their stock types? Reasoned arguments can be made both ways. On the one hand, a

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<sup>28</sup> On which see, e.g., Duckworth (1952) 83, Beare (1964) 285–294, very briefly Jocelyn (2001) 266–267, and Marshall (2006) 52 and n. 136.

<sup>29</sup> Saunders (1911) 97–98 suggests that the altar and shrine to Fides are located onstage.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Beare (1964) 285, cited at Marshall (2006) 52: "any door which was not required in a particular play was for the time being simply disregarded." Moreover, the stage altar is a fixed presence on the comic set. By contrast, sometimes the third door necessarily represents the shrine, sometimes it could represent the shrine or be unused (or, following Marshall 2006: 52 and n. 137, the third door could be either a shrine or another character's house), and sometimes the third door must represent not a shrine but the house of a third character. Therefore, since some disjunction exists between the presence of an altar and that of a shrine, I think that we should identify the third door as representing a shrine only in those plays whose texts require it. In a play's actual production, set dressings (see again Marshall 2006: 53) could have been employed to remove any ambiguity concerning the third door's function. Finally, an altar by itself could, independently of a shrine, indicate a holy precinct—as with, for example, the Ara Pacis.

thrifty *choragus* might avoid purchasing extraneous outfits,<sup>31</sup> or actors might not want to expend the time necessary for costume changes. On the other hand, pious garb is an important visual marker of a sacrificant (and so could be a useful visual cue or label for the audience), and the addition of such a costume opens up another avenue for humor: sacrificants decked out in outrageously exaggerated get-up.

I propose a simple, functional convention. In most cases of onstage religious activity, characters would not actually wear additional costuming, but would wear some small but easily recognizable indicator of their pious purposes. For Menander's characters, this marker would be a garland on the head, as implied at *Perikeiromene* 999–1000: *στέφανον ἀπὸ βω[μοῦ τινα | ἀφελὼν ἐπιθέσθαι βούλομαι*, “I’d like to take some garland from the altar and put it on my head.”<sup>32</sup> For Romans, the standard marker would, I believe, be the arrangement of the costume *capite uelato*—that is, sacrificants would wrap the garments they were already wearing (whether *toga* or *palla*) over their heads so that they were veiled. Although the characters and setting of Plautine comedy are nominally Greek, the sacrificing configuration *capite uelato* would be immediately and instinctively understood by Plautus’ Roman audience. It is also possible, of course, that the characters of Roman comedy simulated the *Graecus ritus* and so did not make offerings *capite uelato*, in which case I would argue that these characters, like Menander’s, would have worn *coronae* on their heads to in-

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<sup>31</sup> Though it should be noted that the *choragus* appears to have disguises—that is, extra costumes—In reserve at *Persa* 159.

<sup>32</sup> On these lines, see Saunders (1911) 95.

dicare their religious activity.<sup>33</sup> This sort of complex representation of Greek (i.e., non-Roman) rites may, however, have come across as not more realistic, but more exotic.<sup>34</sup>

Exactly how the characters were costumed is, on balance, not an overarching concern. Yet it can assist interpretation in plays like the *Aulularia*, which I believe to be closer in plot, characters, and religious content to Greek New Comedy than the rest of Plautus' corpus.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the textual evidence in that play is insufficient to determine whether the characters who engage in religious activity dress in their normal stock outfits, in togas *capite ue-lato*, with bare heads *Graeco ritu*, with garlands, or in garish outfits meant to tag them as superlatively Greek.<sup>36</sup>

### *Stage properties*

The physical components of sacrifice would, of course, be central to any onstage representation of the ritual. Animals, incense, food offerings, decorations, and implements all function theatrically as stage properties. In his definitive three-part work on props in Plautus, Robert Ketterer constructs a methodology, which I will now briefly summarize, for analyzing the role and effect of props on the Roman stage (1986a: 207–210).<sup>37</sup> According to his methodological framework, props have two general functions. First is the mechanical function, whereby a prop affects the play's plot, whether it is passive (such as a sword used by one

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Curculio* 389–390: *quis hic est qui operto capite Aesculapium salutat?* Note also that the quality of bare-headedness appears in this play to be associated with very Greek—and hence, to some degree, exotic—characters. See *Curculio* 288 and 293.

<sup>34</sup> See Jocelyn (2001) and my discussion in chapter 5. Conceivably, characters who are or who pretend to be foreigners in, e.g., *Poenulus* or *Persa* might sacrifice in outlandish costumes consistent with the overstated “Orientalism” in Plautus’ presentation of non-Romans—on which see Richlin (2005).

<sup>35</sup> A point that I will argue in chapter 3.

<sup>36</sup> And I will therefore delay my full consideration of sacrifice in the play until the next chapter.

<sup>37</sup> This methodology is adopted also by C. W. Marshall in his opus on Roman stagecraft (2006: 67–68).

character to threaten another) or “causative,” as when a bag of money generates a great deal of stage action in the form of efforts to obtain it (1986a: 209). The second function is the signifying function: props can label characters<sup>38</sup> and circumstances,<sup>39</sup> or they can symbolize a character’s situation<sup>40</sup> as it develops throughout the play (1986a: 208). I will refer to this methodology both in my current discussion of sacrificial props and in my broader discussion of sacrifice’s role in comedy in the third part of this chapter.

Animal sacrifice is indeed a common feature of New Comedy,<sup>41</sup> and sacrificial animals should therefore be counted among the “props” used in the genre. The question of how exactly these victims would be managed or represented onstage has not previously been discussed, though scholars discussing comic props and comic sacrifice seem to have assumed that live animals would be brought onstage in such scenes—in Menander, Plautus, and Aristophanes alike.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, animals would not be sacrificed onstage,<sup>43</sup> and it could be objected that goats (*Birds*), pigs (*Perikeiromene*, et al.), and sheep (*Peace*, *Aspis*, *Aulularia*, et al.) are too messy, noisy, or unmanageable to be reasonably incorporated into the production of a play. I would point out, however, the potential theatrical impact, the realism, of bringing

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<sup>38</sup> They can be labeled as stock characters (as with the soldier’s sword or the cook’s *culter*) or as characterized in a specific way (e.g., a soldier brandishing his sword is intent on violence).

<sup>39</sup> E.g., a lit candle at the opening of *Curculio* signifies a nighttime setting.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, a ring can symbolize the citizen status of a character not yet recognized as such (1986a: 208), while a sword can serve as the focal point for a soldier’s transition from a position of strength to a position of comic impotence (1986a: 207).

<sup>41</sup> Animals are the express objects of actual, intended, or suggested sacrifice more than a dozen times in the plays of Menander (e.g., *Dyskolos* 395, *Perikeiromene* 996) and Plautus (e.g., *Asinaria* 712, *Captivi* 860).

<sup>42</sup> Scholars on Plautine comic props: Ketterer (1986b) 123–124, Marshall (2006) 67. On Aristophanic and Menandrian comic sacrifice: Redfield (2008) 4–5, 8, and 10. Ketterer and Marshall point to humor generated by or based on the presence of animals such as the sheep at *Aulularia* 327–334; Redfield envisions a sheep onstage in *Dyskolos*, a goat—“the live animal is brought on but the actual sacrifice takes place off stage” (2008: 8)—in *Birds*, and, most convincingly, in a comic sequence involving the leading on and back off of a sacrificial sheep at *Peace* 949–1022 (a sequence ending with a metatheatrical joke, no less).

<sup>43</sup> On which see my discussion below in the section on stage action.

a live animal onstage; and a mess would not, I think, be of particularly great concern, given that the theater either was built out of permanent—and easily cleaned—stone (for Menander), or was a temporary stage structure in the first place (for Plautus).

Nevertheless, simulated animals made of perhaps wood or cloth could also have been used in lieu of the real sacrificial victim. C. W. Marshall writes about the potential for humor based on comically undersized or oversized props such as swords or rings (2006: 69–70). I propose to extend this idea to fake animal props, since (for instance) a miniature or giant sheep could provide for great slapstick, or for visual jokes on the incongruity of victim and sacrificer. Overall, I would argue that when the animal in question is not central to the humor or plot development of the scene in which it appears, the distinction of whether it is a real animal or a fake is not important to the audience. But in cases when the animal, or some quality of the animal, determines the play's content—as it does at *Aulularia* 327–334, where the slave Strobilus gets some jokes out of sending the fatter lamb (along with the thinner music girl) to his master and the thinner lamb (and fat girl) to his neighbor<sup>44</sup>—fake representations of the animal would likely be used for exaggerated effect (in this example, I suggest, one tiny toy lamb and one giant mock-up).

Non-animal offerings—incense, wine, sacrificial cakes, and garlands—are, as props, straightforward. Given the festival context of New Comedy, producers could readily have purchased all of these items. Garlands could be used as offerings and placed on the stage altar (so *Mercator* 675), be worn while sacrificing (as discussed above), or be present on the

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<sup>44</sup> See Ketterer (1986b) 124.

altar as decorations (implied by *Perikeiromene* 999–1000). Incense could be burned on the stage altar without difficulty,<sup>45</sup> and wine could be libated over it.<sup>46</sup>

Sacrificial gear—the implements used in performing a sacrifice—appears from time to time in New Comedy. Cranky old men tend to complain about strangers or neighbors using their gear to make offerings or to cook (pre- or post-sacrificial) meals.<sup>47</sup> A golden *patera*, for use in making libations, figures into the confusions of identity between Jupiter and the title character of *Amphitruo* throughout the play.<sup>48</sup> As part of the trappings that signify their stock type, Plautine cooks carry *uasa* (which can be cooking pots, containers for holding offerings termed *uasa pura*,<sup>49</sup> or both) and a knife, the *culter*.<sup>50</sup> The *culter* was primarily a sacrificial knife, used in slaughtering, butchering, and cooking animals;<sup>51</sup> its association with the *coquus* of Roman comedy is a holdover from the stock character *μάγειρος* of Greek New Comedy. A cook's *culter* (or that of a *μάγειρος*) could in the production of a comedy be either real or fake, and could be life-sized, overly large, or tiny.<sup>52</sup>

While the role of stage properties in the onstage conduct of sacrifice is primarily functional—that is, they serve as tools for the simulation or representation of sacrifice in the

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<sup>45</sup> As at *Truculentus* 476. I believe that the stage altar, whether removable or permanent, would have had a surface on which incense or even sacrificial cakes could be burned without creating a genuine fire hazard. On the importance of incense to Roman ritual, see Prescendi (2007) 81–87.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., *Curculio* 125. Again, the mess of pouring wine (just as that of animals) would be easily cleaned up.

<sup>47</sup> *Dyskolos* 914–918 (and elsewhere), *Aulularia* 91–99, *Rudens* 132–136. The last of these passages is quoted and translated in my discussion of sacrificial and non-sacrificial terminology in chapter 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ketterer (1986c) 45.

<sup>49</sup> *Amphitruo* 946 and 1126, *Captiui* 860.

<sup>50</sup> *Aulularia* 417, cf. Saunders (1909) 58–59, Ketterer (1986a) 208, and Marshall (2006) 69 n. 187.

<sup>51</sup> It was also apparently used by barbers: see Ketterer (1986b) 135 n. 51.

<sup>52</sup> I return to the *culter* in my discussion of cooks in chapter 3.



theater—props also help reinforce or communicate the significance of conducting the ritual within the course of the play. Marshall discusses how props can “create networks of meaning” in interactions among characters and between them and their environment, and also how the very presence of something onstage highlights its importance.<sup>53</sup> When it comes to props for sacrifice, therefore, the “networks of meaning” can, I believe, communicate some religious meaning as well—and the conduct of sacrifice onstage demonstrates that sacrifice is itself important to the play’s plot or themes.

For example, at the (extant) end of *Perikeiromene*, Polemon prepares to offer a sacrifice in celebration of the fact that his concubine Glykera (the title character) will return to him after he had mistakenly spurned her. When he orders his slave Doris to tell the μάγειρος to sacrifice a pig he himself has at hand for the occasion (τὴν ὕν θυέτω, 996), Doris points out that they do not have a basket of grain (κανοῦν, for sprinkling upon the victim) or the other necessities (τὰλλ’ ἂ δέῃ, 997) for the proper conduct of sacrificial ritual. Polemon’s response is that those items (i.e., offstage props) can wait,<sup>54</sup> but that the μάγειρος should slaughter the pig now—or rather, that Polemon himself should (ἀλλὰ ταύτην σφαττέτω· | μᾶλλον δὲ κἀγώ, 998–999). The demonstrative pronoun ταύτην indicates, I suggest, that the pig, or a prop representing it, is onstage.<sup>55</sup> Its presence, combined with the absence of both

<sup>53</sup> Marshall (2006) 71: “Props become a site for the development of comedy. An audience sees objects on stage and invests them with symbolic values that create networks of meaning among the characters.... These complex interactions help the audience to understand the narrative by emphasising some of what is important, for nothing appears onstage unless someone has decided to bring it onstage.”

<sup>54</sup> Literally, “he [the μάγειρος] will use the basket for the initial sprinkling of the first fruits later,” κα[νοῦν μὲν οὔν | ὕστερον ἐνάρξετ’ (997–998). Cf. *LSJ*, s. v. ἐνάρχομαι.

<sup>55</sup> The demonstrative τῇδε would be clearer evidence in support of my suggestion, and ταύτην could point offstage; yet the action in this scene makes it more likely, I think, that a pig (or prop) is in fact onstage.

the prop basket and the *μάγειρος*, emphasizes the characterization of Polemon as heedless and impulsive, traits evident in him from the opening of the play, when it is made clear that Polemon has brashly cut off Glykera's hair based on false suspicions of her infidelity.

### *Stage action*

Sacrifices in New Comedy are more often discussed than performed, as could be expected from the logistical realities of the Graeco-Roman (or, for that matter, almost any) stage. Nonetheless, the general absence of stage directions or blocking notes from the extant scripts of Menander and Plautus does leave ample room for unscripted stage business of all kinds, not the least of which is stage action that simulates ritual activity. In what follows, I will evaluate several passages from Menander and Plautus in which ritual-like stage action may take place, in order to discuss the possibility that such action represented elements of the archetypal Greek and Roman sacrificial rites.

The opening to each culture's sacrificial rite was the ceremonial procession, the *πομπή* or *pompa*. There are no formal processions of this sort in extant New Comedy.<sup>56</sup> There are, on the other hand, two extant passages<sup>57</sup> that stage what I would describe as a procession of *μάγειροι*: *Dyskolos* 393–426 and *Aulularia* 280–349.<sup>58</sup> Though there are no citizens present in either *pompa*, each still features one or more sacrificial lambs being led to the

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<sup>56</sup> Although, as John Hanson has written, “Roman theatrical presentations were *regularly preceded* by a sacred procession, a *pompa*” (1959a: 81–82 and nn. 5–6; emphasis added). So also were Greek dramatic contests preceded by a *πομπή* centered on the statue of Dionysus (1959a: 86).

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey Arnott suggests a missing “procession,” as I call it, in the middle of *Perikeiromene*: the cook entered “at some point earlier [than lines 992–1026] with his pig” and went into Polemon's house in some lost portion of the play (1979: 461 n. A).

<sup>58</sup> The characters in *Aulularia* are technically cooks (*coqui*), but they function throughout the play exactly like Menandrian *μάγειροι* rather than Plautine cooks. See my wider argument on *Aulularia* in chapter 3.

altar at the center of the stage. In Menander the procession consists merely of two *μάγειροι* with a sheep, while it is amplified in *Aulularia* by an extra lamb, two (mute but named) music girls, and an unspecified number of (mute, unnamed) assistants. The lamb in *Dyskolos* is led directly into the shrine of Pan (424–426<sup>59</sup>); those of *Aulularia* are separated, one lamb (plus one cook and one music girl) per household (327, 334, and 349).<sup>60</sup> It is interesting that the lamb in *Dyskolos* refuses to walk to the altar and shrine:

ἐὰν δ' ἀφῇ χαμαὶ τις, οὐ προέρχεται.  
 τοῦναντίον δὲ γέγονε· κατακέκομμ' ἐγὼ  
 ὁ μάγειρος ὑπὸ τούτου νεωλκῶν τὴν ὁδόν.  
 (397–399)

But if you put it down on the ground, it won't go forward.  
 It's like it's Opposite Day: I'm made into mincemeat—  
 I, the mincemeatmaker!—by this lamb here, as I haul its hull up the road.

The lamb's hesitance could strictly be viewed as a foreboding sign about the intended sacrifice's success or failure.<sup>61</sup> Yet the sacrifice is performed successfully, as indicated by the feast scene with which the play closes, so the victim's hesitance here simply offers a quick joke, and perhaps a subtle explanation to justify, within the world of the play, why the *μάγειρος* is carrying a fake (prop) sheep rather than leading a live one.

There is no definite onstage ritual throwing of grain (the *οὐλοχύται* or *immolatio*) in Menander or Plautus. An enactment of this part of the sacrificial rite would, however, be an excellent way of representing the sacrifice as a whole. Pavlos Sfyroeras refers to “the immo-

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Arnott (1979) 249.

<sup>60</sup> It is tempting to speculate that, if the lambs of *Aulularia* are real animals, they make their (first and final) stage exit and then are actually led to the real temple nearby (as discussed in my section on setting, above) for sacrifice at a later point in the festival. There is, of course, no textual evidence for such speculation.

<sup>61</sup> As I discuss in my description of the archetypal Greek and Roman sacrifices in chapter 1, the animal's consent was nominally needed prior to its slaughter in order to conduct the sacrifice properly.

lation of a goat to Pan” at *Dyskolos* 447 and following (1992: 1), though the text itself is much less certain. This scene does not directly depict a sacrifice, but rather it presents the title character Knemon disapprovingly observing one. He observes from onstage, but the characters performing the sacrifice could be offstage; and again, some of the ritual action (such as the “immolation,” or rather the tossing of the *οὐλοχύται*) could take place within view, and the rest behind the stage door representing Pan’s shrine.<sup>62</sup>

Prayer is common in New Comedy. Prayer as part of a ritual offering (Latin *precatio*<sup>63</sup>), on the other hand, is relatively rare. At *Curculio* 125–127, the slave woman Leaena offers a libation of wine to Venus, along with a grudging invocation (marked by rhyming at line 126: *amantes propitiantes uinum potantes*). At *Mercator* 675–680, the *matrona* Dorippa offers a laurel (*uirga lauri*, 676) and prayer to Apollo (featuring alliteration on *p* and *s*, and ritualistic repetition of the phrase *pace(m) propitius*). As Niall Slater persuasively argues, there were extensive opportunities for improvisation in the plays of New Comedy (1993: *passim*). I suggest that there was likewise the possibility of including an improvised prayer as part of a ritual offering, or even part of a visit to or walk past the onstage altar and shrine—as at, perhaps, *Truculentus* 476, where the courtesan Phronesium calls for incense and fire on the altar for an offering to “my Lucina” (*date mi huc stactam atque ignem in aram, ut uenerem Lucinam meam*).<sup>64</sup>

The act of making an offering upon the altar is a crucial one to our understanding of the stagecraft of sacrifice in New Comedy. Onstage offerings are clearly limited by what is

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<sup>62</sup> It is more likely that Knemon observes offstage characters, for animal sacrifice was not normally conducted actually within a shrine, and the representation of the ritual split onstage and offstage would mark it as an unusual sacrifice.

<sup>63</sup> On which see North (1988) 984.

<sup>64</sup> I discuss prayer further in chapter 5.

and is not possible to perform within the scope of a play. Sacrifice or the representation thereof simply cannot include the actual slaughter of an animal, for several reasons. First, obviously, the violence of the act and the copious amounts of blood that go with it would be an unmanageable interruption to the play's development, to actors and audience alike. Second, because sacrificial victims inherently cannot be reused—whereas garlands, unburned incense, votive offerings, and the like could be—onstage slaughter becomes a pricey prospect, an expenditure unlikely to be accepted by *choragi* operating on a tight budget.<sup>65</sup> Finally, and perhaps most prohibitively, the ritual strictures on sacrifice make onstage slaughter impossible, for without a properly completed *pompa*, *immolatio*, and *precatio* prior to it, the slaughter would constitute an unacceptable breach of religious dictates (and, therefore, impiety).<sup>66</sup>

Since onstage slaughter is indeed impossible, the playwrights build into their scripts devices for preventing or delaying the slaughter in scenes of sacrifice. In the previously cited lamb-and-μάγειροι scene in *Dyskolos* (393–426), the μάγειροι must take the lamb into the shrine (inside the stage building) before sacrifice, and thus they take it offstage.<sup>67</sup> The lambs in *Aulularia* are likewise led inside the stage building before sacrifice, and even their putative

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Redfield (2008), who cites a metatheatrical joke at Aristophanes *Peace* 1020–1022:

Ἄλλ' εἴσω φέρων  
θύσας τὰ μηρί' ἐξελὼν δεῦρ' ἔκφερε,  
χοῦτω τὸ πρόβατον τῷ χορηγῷ σώζεται.

Well then, take [the sheep] inside  
and sacrifice it, then cut up the thigh-bones and bring 'em out here—  
and that way the sheep'll be saved for the *choragus*!

(translation mine)

On the economy of Roman comedy, see Marshall (2006) 20–31.

<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, it is hardly likely that the festival-going audience of a comedy would be able to maintain ritual silence (εὐφημία) necessary for proper conduct of a sacrifice (cf. Horace *Odes* 3.1.2: *fauete linguis*).

<sup>67</sup> The actual sacrifice of the lamb inside the shrine would be odd, but the lamb did not remain onstage.

offstage slaughter is prevented when Euclio frantically kicks the *μάγειροι* out of his house.<sup>68</sup> Polemon's sacrifice of a pig (*Perikeiromene* 992–1026) is interrupted not once but thrice: first, he is for some reason spooked by the approach of his soon-to-be father-in-law Pataikos and runs off (ἐ[φύγ]εν, 1004). Polemon returns at 1010 (ἐ[ξέρχομ'] and calls upon Pataikos to “co-sacrifice” with him (σύνθυσε δῆ, Πάταικε, 1024)—but is interrupted again by Pataikos' announcement that he must arrange a marriage for his son Moschion, and then one last time by the entrance of Moschion himself (following Geoffrey Arnott's edition), the end of this final extant fragment of the play. Sacrifice by Nikeratos at *Samia* 399–420 is forestalled when he discovers his forlorn acquaintance Chrysis onstage and takes her into his house to console her. The *matrona* Dorippa, who offers a laurel at *Mercator* 675–680, is prevented from undertaking any further sacrifice by her slave Syra's re-entry at 681. Interruptions and plot turns like these cover for the need to take any live sacrificial animals offstage, while preserving for the audience some sense of verisimilitude regarding their disposition and fate.<sup>69</sup>

While animal offerings are impossible, non-animal offerings are indeed possible. Garlands can be laid upon the altar (*Mercator* 675–680), incense can be burned upon it (*Truculentus* 476<sup>70</sup>), and wine libated over it (*Curculio* 125–127)—or, when the wine is libated at a threshold (as at *Curculio* 80), onto the theater structure itself.<sup>71</sup> George Duck-

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<sup>68</sup> The play unfortunately breaks off before its conclusion, so a feast scene or other reference to the lambs or to a sacrifice may be missing.

<sup>69</sup> James Redfield has pointed out a couple of examples of this technique in Aristophanes: in *Peace* (1017–1022), the sacrificer points out to the sacrificant that the goddess Peace does not like bloodshed, so the sacrifice ought to be performed offstage (2008: 4–5); and in *Birds*, a central sequence of the play consists of incessant interruptions of the city's foundational sacrifice by unwanted interlopers (2008: 8–10).

<sup>70</sup> In this case, the incense indeed is, as I see it, offered and burned onstage, for Phronesium herself (the sacrificant) and at least part of her retinue remain onstage for the following three scenes (through line 632).

<sup>71</sup> In this way, the altar is incorporated into the action of the play and hence does not function merely as “an iconographic shorthand for a temple location,” as C. W. Marshall argues (2008: 53). Marshall, following

worth pointed to an onstage offering (of incense, *odor Arabicus*) at *Miles Gloriosus* 411–414 (1952: 84), though the text is somewhat ambiguous on this point. The courtesan Philocomasium, pretending to be her own (fake) twin sister Dicea, calls for “fire on the altar” (*indignem in aram*, 411<sup>72</sup>) in preparation for a sacrifice to Ephesian Diana in thanks for a safe voyage. She is observed saying this by two slaves, who eventually go up to her, pick an argument with her, and chase her back into her house. There is a short interval (5 lines, 415–419) between Philocomasium’s calling on her house servants for fire and incense and her interruption by the slaves—enough time for her to make a rudimentary offering in the background while they bicker among themselves, or enough time for her to mime impatience at her own servants’ delay. (Either way, further ritual activity, such as an animal sacrifice, is precluded by the onstage slaves’ interruption.)

Feasting is another, elaborate type of stage action that can suggest or represent part of sacrificial rites. The commensal feast was an important part of the sacrificial ritual, and feast scenes do sometimes operate as the celebratory denouement in the plots of New Comedy. Some comic feasts do not contain meat (other than fish) and therefore are non-sacrificial.<sup>73</sup> Others, however, such as the feast that takes up the final scene of *Dyskolos*, are in fact directly generated by sacrifice.<sup>74</sup> When a feast scene at the conclusion of a play appears to

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Duckworth (1952) 84, makes an exception to this point for when the altar is claimed as a site of refuge (2008: 54), a matter I discuss immediately below.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Truculentus* 476: *date mi huc stactam atque ignem in aram*.

<sup>73</sup> Redfield (2008) 4: “Greek comedy is an art dedicated above all to our fleshly nature, and in these works sacrifice is represented primarily as in the service of the appetite....I would, in fact, distinguish the sacrificial meal from what we might call ‘party food’; this is the kind of stuff Dicaeopolis enjoys at the end of the *Acharnians*: rabbit and little birds and eels and squid and sausages, along with bread and cakes.” For the content of feasts depicted by the Roman comedians, see my discussion of the term *obsonium* in chapter 1.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Redfield (2008) 11: “like every sacrifice it also leaves an edible animal, which surely shouldn’t be a waste—and in fact the sacrifice will lead to an all-night drinking party, a pannuchis” (underline preserved). I will discuss the importance of sacrifice and feasting to the health of the community in chapter 4.

have some ritual component, it is in essence adopting one of Aristophanes' uses of ritual, for "[i]n Old Comedy, the hero's success in re-creating his world is often ritually celebrated."<sup>75</sup>

Finally, a note on the comedic phenomenon where one character attempts to "smoke off" another from the stage altar or out of the onstage shrine. The altar is commonly understood to be a locus of refuge for slaves,<sup>76</sup> and it is apparently sacrosanct to the extent that masters cannot physically remove fugitive slaves from it—though they can force the slaves to leave the altar through the application of fire.<sup>77</sup> This is the context in which slave-owners bring (or threaten to bring) torches to the stage altar at *Rudens* 761–770, at *Mostellaria* 1094–1115, and in the longest fragment of Menander's *Perinthia*.<sup>78</sup>

In the passage of *Rudens*, Labrax the pimp intends to apply fire to the altar of Venus, where his two slave prostitutes have taken refuge (*Volcanum adducam, is Venerist adversarius*, 761) and is rebuffed by the *senex* Daemones. In *Mostellaria*, the *seruus callidus* Tranio takes refuge from his older master Theopropides's wrath by inching towards the altar while in conversation with him. In *Perinthia*, the *senex* Laches orders his slaves to surround the *seruus callidus* (or Menandrian equivalent) Daos, who is currently on the altar, with brushwood.<sup>79</sup> Duckworth simply cites the passages from Plautus and notes that Theopropides in *Mostellaria* intends "to set fire to" the altar (1952: 84). Marshall, writing that "Labrax intends to smoke his quarry away from their refuge" rather than burn the altar or shrine itself,

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<sup>75</sup> Scodel (1993) 164. I return to feast scenes in chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Heauton Timoroumenos* 975–976: *nemo accusat, Syre, te; nec tu aram tibi | nec precatorem pararis*, "No one's charging you, Syrus—you don't gotta find yourself an altar or a lawyer (intercessor)."

<sup>77</sup> Marshall (2006) 54: "Such sanctuary is inviolable, based on a religious tenet that had been exploited as a dramatic trope since fifth-century Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, a loophole existed....If [the slaves] leave by choice (because of the [fire's] heat or smoke)...[the owner] has not technically violated their sanctuary."

<sup>78</sup> The source is *P. Oxyrhynchus* 855. See Arnott (1996) 472–501.

<sup>79</sup> Terence omits this scene from his *Andria*, which is partially adapted from *Perinthia* (Arnott 1996: 474).



recommends not trying to “explain this behaviour in religious terms,” but calls it instead “a stock solution to a recurrent problem in New Comedy.”<sup>80</sup>

On the contrary, it is entirely appropriate to read these scenes in religious terms, since the context is itself explicitly religious.<sup>81</sup> The three masters in these scenes endeavor not to “smoke out” their slaves, but actually to set them on fire. They plan not to set fire to (and hence destroy) the altar—that would be sacrilege!—but rather they want to use the altar to burn the slaves alive.<sup>82</sup> The idea of burning a living being (in this case, a human) upon an altar does, I argue, invoke the specter of sacrifice to some degree in these scenes, although the characters do not make this allusion explicit.<sup>83</sup>

### Conclusions

There are, then, ample opportunities for simulating sacrificial rites onstage in the plays of Menander and Plautus. While animals obviously could not be sacrificed during the course of the production, they could be led in procession across the stage, and non-animal

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<sup>80</sup> Marshall (2006) 54. Marshall here incorrectly states that “the threat [of applying fire to the altar] is also made at *Heauton Timoroumenos* 975,” while this citation in fact provides evidence only for the possibility of a slave’s seeking refuge at the altar (see my note with citation and translation above).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Mostellaria* 1104, where Tranio describes his location as “from holy heights” (*de diuinis locis*), and even *Rudens* 761 (cited above), where Labrax refers to fire by its deified aspect, not by its common name.

<sup>82</sup> The pertinent line from *Rudens* clearly shows that Labrax’ intention is to burn not the altar but the two women on (or in) the altar (*immo hasce ambas hic in ara ut uiuas comburam, id uolo*, 768). In *Mostellaria*, Theopropides calls for either the altar or its asylum-seeker Tranio to be surrounded by fire and brushwood—and it is made clear which of the two is meant in Tranio’s cheeky (and alliterative) response, “stop, since I so often seem sweeter seethed, not smoked” (TH. *iam iubebo ignem et sarmenta, carnifex, circumdari*. | TR. *ne faxis, nam elixus esse quam assus soleo suauior*, 1114–1115). In *Perinthia*, the refugee Daos’ concern is that he will be burned alive, not that the altar will be burned (ἐπειτα κατακαύσει μ’; line 4 as numbered at Arnott 1996: 482). Here I disagree with Arnott’s note that brushwood is scattered “around the altar” (1996: 483).

<sup>83</sup> Setting a human on fire is a violent and appalling act, and I will return to discuss the theatrical effects that these passages have on characterization in chapter 3, in my analysis of sacrificial imagery as an expression of authority. Of course, as with animal slaughter, burning humans alive onstage would be impossible, and so the playwrights prevent it: in *Mostellaria*, the play ends with the intercession of a friend and reconciliation between master and slave, while in *Rudens*, Daemones forcibly checks Labrax.

sacrifices could be offered upon the stage altar. Feasting and prayer (sometimes scripted, sometimes improvised) are recurrent elements that can take on ritual meaning that is, in turn, amplified (in Plautus) by the placement of the theater structure itself near to an actual temple. This hallowed backdrop would combine with the nearly constant pipe music and the festal context of the play to create an underlying sense of religious bearing for the comedies. Even in the dramas where no mention of sacrifice is made, the stage altar—a permanent fixture of the set, whether itself movable or fixed—remains as a reminder of New Comedy’s religious potential.

While my analysis of sacrifice in stagecraft has largely been based on reconstructions and possibilities, the ritual (and imagery derived from it) frequently plays a concrete textual role in New Comedy. In the section that follows, and in chapter 3, I delve into the texts themselves, first with an eye towards what exactly is offered (or suggested as offerings) in the plays, and then (in the next chapter) with a full-scale analysis of the dramatic functions of sacrificial imagery. Again, Terence excludes sacrifice from his plays, and is omitted from my consideration in these chapters (though his exclusion of sacrifice will itself be a focal point of chapter 5).

### **The content of sacrifices in New Comedy**

Menander and Plautus stage a variety of offerings. (Terence, as is to be expected from the dramaturgic pattern emerging in this study, stages none.) Animals, aromatics, flora, and comestibles are burned on the altar, or reported as being so burned. In this section, I

briefly discuss the disposition and significance of these offerings, with a view towards both the content of sacrifices and the motivations behind them.

In Plautus, actual sacrifices, whether reported, implied, or even represented onstage, are substantially less common than are either intended sacrifices—when characters vow to sacrifice to a deity or announce their intentions to perform the rite—or suggested sacrifices, where one character tells another to make a sacrifice for any of a number of reasons, legitimate and ridiculous. (Some Plautine sacrifices are even falsified, whether they are faked, conducted in disguise, or performed for illegitimate reasons.) By contrast, in Menander, actual sacrifice is as common as intended or suggested sacrifice.

Throughout extant New Comedy, when offerings are in fact made (onstage or off), they tend overwhelmingly to be successful. This success rate is a stark, important difference between Greek New Comedy and Greek tragedy, wherein “sacrifice is abortive or perverted.”<sup>84</sup> There are few exceptions to this rule of success, and these exceptions reinforce the general pattern, I argue, because they play a special (exceptional) function in the development of plot or characterization of the work in which they appear.

At the opening of *Aspis*, the wedding ritual is interrupted by the announcement of a death in the family. This interruption is emblematic of the central conflicts of the play—the marriage is put on hold since the bride’s *kurios* is believed dead, and her greedy uncle can now claim her for himself—and it underscores the importance of the play’s now-lost conclusion with a double wedding (and implied double sacrifice). The interrupted sacrifice at the

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<sup>84</sup> Scodel (1993) 164. She continues: “there is human sacrifice in *Hecuba*, putrid sacrifice in *Antigone*, sacrifice interrupted by madness and murder in *Heracles*, and murder described in sacrificial language in *Agamemnon* and *Medea*.” Tragic sacrifice is a marker of societal and personal failure: “perverted or abortive sacrifice and ritual typically mark the failure of apparent authority and an inability to establish order” (1993: 165). Only when perverted tragic sacrifice demonstrates the corrupt authority of an individual such as Clytemnestra or Medea does the performance of such ritual take on a “grotesque efficacy” (1993: 166).

end of *Perikeiromene*, discussed above in connection with the issue of animals in the theater, constitutes not a failed sacrifice but merely one delayed by the impossibility of onstage slaughter—and also by the end of the play itself. In a fragment of *Karchedonios*,<sup>85</sup> an unidentified male character says the following:

ἐπιθυμιάσας τῷ Βορέᾳ <λιβαν>ἰδιον  
ὀψάριον οὐδὲν ἔλαβον· ἐψήσω φακῆν.

Even though I sacrificed a tidbit of incense to Boreas,<sup>86</sup>  
I didn't get any fish. I'll have to boil up some lentil soup.

As Geoffrey Arnott points out, the speaking character may be a slave comparable to Gripus in *Rudens*; whoever the character is, he is obviously poor, since lentil soup was a stock food for the destitute.<sup>87</sup> The sacrifice described here highlights the pathetic poverty of this character, both in content and in outcome: the character can afford to offer only a smidgen of incense, and even then, his sacrifice fails, and this failure drives him into further depths of financial woe.

The failed sacrifice described at *Poenulus* 452–454 performs, *mutatis mutandis*, the same characterizing function. Lycus, a wealthy pimp, offers an extravagant sacrifice—six sheep!—to Venus, or as he says sarcastically, “my super-pissed-off patron gods” (*di mei iratissumi*, 452). Despite his sacrificial munificence, however, he fails to propitiate her (*nec potui tamen | propitiam Venerem facere uti esset mihi*, 453–454). While pimps in Roman comedy are generically understood to be completely corrupt, this spectacularly failed sacrifice characterizes Lycus as superlatively impious, a trait later heightened by contrast when Lycus'

<sup>85</sup> Arnott fr. 1 (226 Körte-Thierfelder; 260 Kock). See Arnott (1996) 102–103.

<sup>86</sup> Boreas is an unusual recipient of sacrifice for a play of New Comedy. Without the larger context of the play, it is difficult to say more. Perhaps the setting of Carthage influenced Menander's choice of Boreas.

<sup>87</sup> Arnott (1996) 103. I disagree with Arnott on his suggestion that the speaker could be a parasite. It does not seem to fall within the characterization of a parasite to expend actual physical effort in obtaining food.

slave prostitutes (who are, in fact, of citizen birth) achieve successful sacrifice on his behalf (847, 1174, 1205). The three instances of failed sacrifice in extant New Comedy, therefore, serve to reinforce a character's unfortunate or unsavory circumstances (poverty, greed, pimpish impiety) and, in *Aspis*, to enhance the dramatic effect of a reduplicated marriage ritual at the play's end.<sup>88</sup>

Another general rule for sacrificial offerings in Menander and Plautus is that the offering's contents are always specified. Only two times in the extant corpus are the contents uncertain. First, there is at *Misoumenos* 88–89 a future-less-vivid conditional vow to sacrifice (something) if a beloved should greet her lover kindly;<sup>89</sup> and second, at *Curculio* 532 and 558, reference is made to a sacrifice that serves essentially as a device for getting the character performing it offstage.

Among the genuine offerings made or suggested, animal and non-animal offerings seem to be equally frequent, in Menander and Plautus both. On the other hand, ridiculous offerings—ones that are unrealistic and included exclusively for the purpose of a joke—are, contrary to what one might expect in comedy, uncommon in both Menander and Plautus. Only three such offerings are mentioned in what survives of New Comedy, all in comedies by Plautus: Menaechmus Soscicles, feigning insanity, threatens to sacrifice an old man at *Menaechmi* 858; Mercury disguised as Sosia “sacrifices” what is apparently a pail of water onto Amphitruo's head at *Amphitruo* 1034; and, at *Curculio* 71, the young lover vows himself, his slave, and the entire audience as an offering to Venus.

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<sup>88</sup> I return to the matter of sacrifice as characterization, and to the impious pimp, in chapter 3.

<sup>89</sup> ἀλλ' ἔγωγ' ἄν, φι[λόφρονως | κλη[θ]εῖς μόνον, **θύσαιμι** πᾶσι τοῖς θε[ο]ῖ[s].

### *Animal offerings*

When characters mention or discuss sacrificial victims, they regularly call sheep and pigs by the animals' standard names. Cattle in Plautus, however, are always called *hostiae* or *uictumae*, not *boues*.<sup>90</sup> The one mention of *bos* as a victim, at *Asinaria* 712, is truly exceptional, for it comes in the context of a mocking suggestion to sacrifice in a vulgar, sexualized scene. This instance is the only one in extant New Comedy where one character tells another specifically to sacrifice cattle, and the use of *bos* in place of the more elevated (and more euphemistic) *hostia* or *uictuma* perhaps reflects the lower status of the character making the suggestion—the clever slave Libanus mocking his master, who is currently subordinated to Libanus because the latter has obtained money the former needs to buy access to his courtesan girlfriend.

Menandrian characters regularly sacrifice sheep.<sup>91</sup> In one case (at the end of *Perikeiromene*), a character sacrifices a pig, but no cattle are ever sacrificed in the extant works of Menander.<sup>92</sup> Occasionally the type of animal to be sacrificed is not specified.<sup>93</sup> Animal offerings are more common in Menander than in Plautus, whose characters tend to sacrifice a little bit of everything. Cattle are rarely offered on the Roman stage, only in *Poenulus* as part of the multiple-offering sacrifice bankrolled by the wealthy pimp Lycus (but performed by

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Holland (2007) 1: "Plautus does not use the Greek names for certain cuts of meat in his comedies."

<sup>91</sup> Ruth Scodel asserts that "the animal being sacrificed is pathetically small" in Greek New Comedy (1993: 163). She only adduces one example (from *Dyskolos*), however, and the assertion strikes me as perhaps too much a generalization. I do not get the sense that the characters or the playwrights of New Comedy are particularly concerned with meager animal offerings.

<sup>92</sup> A reference at *Theophroroumene* 39 to a "sacrifice and splendid hecatomb" (θυσίαν κλειπὴν θ' ἑκατόμβαν), which would consist of a hundred oxen, is contained in a passage too fragmentary for complete understanding, though it is more likely that the speaker here (the title character) is not referring to an actual or intended sacrifice, but rather to the kinds of sacrifice associated with the worship of the goddess possessing her, Cybele (see Arnott 1996: 67).

<sup>93</sup> As with the *ἱερεῖον* at *Samia* 195 and the meat, *θύματα*, at *Samia* 674.

his slave prostitutes)<sup>94</sup> and in the peacemaking sacrifice dedicated to Jupiter by Amphitruo at the conclusion of the eponymous play (line 1126). In all extant New Comedy, a pig is only twice offered, and in each instance, the pig is offered in order to celebrate the return of a beloved woman: by Polemon in thanks for his girlfriend's return at the end of *Perikeiromene*, and by Daemones in response to the discovery of his long-lost daughter at *Rudens* 1206. The gender pattern here will be discussed further in chapter 4, alongside a wide range of gender matters in connection with onstage sacrifice.

### *Non-animal offerings*

It is in the area of non-animal sacrifice that we can identify several clear gender patterns, which I will briefly expound here and to which I will return in chapter 4. Women, specifically the *uirgines* of *Poenulus* and the *uirgo* Phaedria in *Aulularia*, give multiple-offering sacrifices, whereas men do not. Menander's characters, both male and female, burn incense on the altar, but in Plautus, fragrances and aromatics—*tus*, *murrinus*, *stacta*, *odor Arabicus*—are the offerings exclusively of women. The more exotic or uncommon terms for these aromatics, *stacta* and *odor Arabicus*, are used only once each, and each time by a *meretrix* who is performing a sacrifice under false pretenses.<sup>95</sup>

### *Divine recipients*

Many different gods are the dedicatees of sacrifice in Plautus, whereas in the extant Menandrian corpus, there is only a handful of recipients of the rite. The default god of wor-

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<sup>94</sup> References to the sacrifice are made at 847, 1147, and 1205, and see my discussion immediately above.

<sup>95</sup> Phronesium of *Truculentus* sacrifices *stacta* to “my very own Lucina” (*mea Lucina*, 476); Philocomasium of *Miles Gloriosus* pretends to be her own (fake) twin sister “Dicea” and offers *odor Arabicus* to Diana Ephesia in (fake) gratitude for safe arrival from a (fake) journey.

ship in Menander is the one to whom the standard stage altar is dedicated, namely Apollo-Agyieus, though sacrifices are made also to Pan, Boreas, “some god,”<sup>96</sup> or “all the gods”<sup>97</sup> or “all the Olympians”<sup>98</sup> in general. In Plautus, just as the stage altar is not immediately assumed to be dedicated to a specific god, so also there is no standard divine recipient of sacrifice, but a multitude, prominently including Jupiter, Venus, and the Lar Familiaris. Chapter 5 will investigate the relationship of sacrifice and divinity in detail.

### *Motives*

Sacrifice in New Comedy can be suggested or performed for a number of reasons. Falsified sacrifices, mentioned above, are of course motivated by some scheme or deception plot. Other motivations for sacrifice include expressions of gratitude, of celebration, and of reconciliation, as well as vows, either for propitiation or for the granting of a boon (in accordance with the *do ut des* model of religion). Celebratory sacrifices tend to commemorate the return of a beloved female (lover, daughter, or sister) or the transfer of one to another family (that is, a wedding). Characters suggest others offer sacrifice for all of these reasons, and some also suggest sacrifice in order to insult or mock another.

James Redfield suggests that most sacrifice in Greek comedy follows the *do ut des* pattern, and that many Menandrian sacrifices are “intended to accomplish something” (2008: 11).<sup>99</sup> He is generally correct, though I add that wedding sacrifices comprise another sub-

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<sup>96</sup> *Dyskolos* 260: θεῶ θύειν τινί.

<sup>97</sup> *Misoumenos* 89: θύσαιμι πᾶσι τοῖς θε[ο]ῖ[s]. Cf. *Samia* 399–400: τοῖς θεοῖς...καὶ ταῖς θεαῖς.

<sup>98</sup> *Kolax* fr. 1.3–4 (Arnott 1996: 184–187; 1 Körte and Sandbach): θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις εὐχόμεθα | Ὀλυμπίασι, πᾶσι πάσαις. Cf. *Samia* 402: τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις.

<sup>99</sup> Though see my discussion in chapter 5 of the limited importance of the *do ut des* model in Plautine comedy.



stantial part of Menandrian sacrifice (occupying as they do the underlying plot point of *Aspis* and a recurrent preoccupation in *Samia*). Sacrifices in Plautus are most often conducted or suggested for reasons of gratitude or propitiation, whether that propitiation is directed towards a real god, a false god, or a character pretending to be a god.

### *Conclusions*

Sheep are the currency of animal sacrifice in New Comedy, though pigs and cattle are not entirely absent. Performed sacrifice is almost always successful, and the contents of sacrifices are almost always specified. Consideration of non-animal offerings reveals interesting gender patterns for later consideration; while garlands and laurels may be offered by men or women, fragrances are, in Plautus, restricted to women alone. Menandrian sacrificants tend to seek some reward from their divine honorees, whereas those in Plautus endeavor merely to placate or repay the god for a boon already granted.

Having thoroughly explored how sacrifice is represented in New Comedy, we can move on to examine how these representations are used in the plays. Furthermore, perhaps the most interesting aspect of sacrifice in Plautus—how characters in these plays talk about sacrifice, and how they employ sacrificial imagery—has yet to be discussed. In the next chapter, I will look at the theatrical and literary effects to which sacrifice is used first by Menander, then by Plautus, and I will end with two extended case studies of sacrifice on the Plautine stage.

## CHAPTER 3

### Theatrical functions of sacrifice

In Graeco-Roman theater, as in Graeco-Roman society, performing sacrifice is a sign of power. Sacrifice is a marker of social order, and the ability to execute the ritual can signify the creation of a new society, whether tragic or comic. In Greek drama, “the ability to perform sacrifices and complete other rituals is an indication—perhaps *the* indication—of authority and the ability to establish order.”<sup>1</sup> Sacrificants, therefore, wield what I term “sacrificial authority,” a social and theatrical power that orders the dramatic community. Both Menander and (especially) Plautus use sacrificial authority as a way of negotiating and signifying power between characters in their plays.

I have identified five general ways in which Menander and Plautus use sacrifice theatrically. First, a scene or mention of sacrifice, like other type scenes, can operate primarily as a staging tool—that is, it may furnish a reason for characters to make entrances and exits, it may anchor a scene’s locational or temporal setting, or it may indicate the passage of time. Second, sacrifice (or feigned sacrifice) can become a tool of the clever slave, the *seruus calidus* by whom many of Plautus’ comedies are anchored. Third, talk or performance of sacri-

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<sup>1</sup> Scodel (1993) 167. Emphasis preserved. Scodel limits her statement to fifth-century tragedy and comedy, and writes: “New Comedy, even when it imitates tragedy, shows a different pattern.” On the contrary, I will argue in the sections below that sacrifice does stand as a marker for authority in New Comedy (and Roman comedy) as well.

fice is on occasion used to intensify the dramatic pitch of scenes of joy, gratitude, relief, or even frustration. Fourth, sacrifice (especially the attribution of habitual sacrifice to specific characters) serves as a means of characterization—those who sacrifice regularly, for example, such as the citizen mother of Menander’s *Dyskolos* or the citizen daughter Phaedria of Plautus’ *Aulularia*, are pious and therefore sympathetic characters. Sacrificial imagery can add a more nuanced characterization to stock personae, whether in the form of self-characterization or insults from one scoundrel to another. Finally, Plautus in particular boldly employs sacrificial imagery as a way to determine or to have his characters assert theatrical or social power between themselves.

This chapter evaluates sacrifice as it is used in the plays first of Menander and then of Plautus—how it affects the development of plot and characterization in these plays, and how characters talk about sacrifice. Some characters express intent to sacrifice, others suggest that their friends or rivals perform sacrifices, and still other characters use sacrificial and ritual imagery as a means of asserting dominance. The habitual performance of sacrifice can function for certain individuals as a primary characterizing feature, subtly underscoring their moral virtue or lack thereof.<sup>2</sup> I will conclude the chapter with two brief case studies (from Plautus) to illustrate the use of sacrifice in characterization. Again, since Terence omits sacrifice from his plays, I will postpone detailed consideration of this issue until chapter 5.

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<sup>2</sup> There is a gender pattern here that I will discuss in chapter 4.

## The dramatic functions of sacrifice in Menander

In this section, I begin with the functional usage of sacrifice in assisting a play's staging, and its use in certain plays' plots. After a brief consideration of *μάγειροι*, the sacrificers of Greek New Comedy, I examine the role of sacrifice in the essentially celebratory nature of comedy. The section concludes with the role of sacrifice in characterization and, finally, the underlying motif of human sacrifice evident in certain works in the extant corpus. There are three Menandrian plays—*Dyskolos*, *Epitrepontes*, and *Samia*—in which sacrifice plays a major role and which, accordingly, will be central to my argumentation. Reference to Plautus will be made where appropriate, although the majority of my analysis of him is deferred until the next section.

### *Sacrifice as a staging device*

I have studied at length the logistics pertaining to the stagecraft of sacrifice in New Comedy; here I discuss the impact of sacrifice as stagecraft. As I mentioned in the section on stage properties in chapter 2, Robert Ketterer has identified the functions of props in Plautine comedy (and, by extension, in New Comedy overall) as mechanical, with either passive or causative effect on the play's plot, and signifying, whereby the prop labels a character or circumstance, or else symbolizes a (sometimes changing) situation during the course of the play. As with stage properties, sacrifice also performs both mechanical and signifying functions in Menander and Plautus. In other words, the representation or announcement of sacrifice can in effect serve as a stage property.

In Menander, mentions of ritual can function mechanically to mark the passage of time, justify stage entrances and exits, and (most significantly) motivate substantial changes

in the development of the plot. Twice in *Dyskolos*, a character communicates an advancement in the time setting of the play by using the perfect tense of the verb for sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Sostratos explains his entrance at 259 by saying “having finished with the sacrifice, I’ve come back over this way” (ἐρρῶσθαι δὲ τῇ | θυσία φράσας ἤκω πάλιν πρὸς τὰνθάδε, 264–265), and Onesimos’ entrance at 382 is likewise justified by sacrifice, since he storms outside, frustrated with the conduct of the μάγειρος. Ruth Scodel argues that “the dramatic function of the sacrifice [in *Dyskolos*] seems mainly to be that of bringing Callippides to the scene.”<sup>4</sup> The young Moschion justifies his exit (at *Samia* 157–162), made against his father Demeas’ wishes, on the basis that he must go off to perform preliminary sacrificial activities for his wedding.

Just as often, the mechanical function of sacrifice exerts greater influence on the play, whether by generating extended stage action or by shaping the plot.<sup>5</sup> Knemon’s daughter (at *Dyskolos* 198–199) expresses concern that she, in fetching water, might interrupt a sacrifice. Her pious reticence provides an opportunity for her to flirt with Sostratos. There is furthermore, I believe, a metatheatrical comment on the influence of sacrifice at *Dyskolos* 417–418, “well this is why we’re sacrificing: so the thing we’re afraid of will turn out for the better,”

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<sup>3</sup> 430–431 (ἤδη τεθυκέναι | ἡμᾶς ἔδει) and 554 (τεθύκαμεν).

<sup>4</sup> Scodel (1993) 168. She continues: “so that he can consent to Sostratus’ marriage with Cnemon’s daughter and can be convinced to betroth his own daughter to Sostratus’ new friend, the farmer Gorgias; the lunch, with all the necessary characters assembled, can then turn into a party for the now united families, just as in *Birds* and *Peace* the sacrifices lead to the wedding feast.”

<sup>5</sup> Scodel describes the sacrifice in *Dyskolos* as “central to the action” because it “bring[s] together all the actors so that their mutual relationships can be re-adjusted, and provid[es] the meal which leads to the party at the conclusion, the symbol of order established. Further, it reminds us that a god stands behind the action” (1993: 168–169). I find it difficult to reconcile the idea that the sacrifice in *Dyskolos* is central with Scodel’s conclusion that “sacrifice is too dangerous to be taken seriously; it would overwhelm the play” (1993: 174). I believe that Menander does generally treat sacrifice in a serious way—only the sacrifice is not perverted (as it is in the *Oresteia* and in Euripides) nor the subject of a great deal of anxiety on the part of the protagonist (as it is in Aristophanes).

ἀλλὰ θύομεν | διὰ τοῦθ', ἵν' εἰς βέλτιον ἀποβῇ τὸ φοβερόν. Sostratos' mother performs a sacrifice to Pan in order to protect her son, and the sacrifice leads (indirectly) to the resolution of the play as a whole—the immediate conflict, τὸ φοβερόν, ends in marriage, the standard comedic denouement (εἰς βέλτιον). Within the play itself, this sacrifice is emblematic of the *do ut des* model of sacrifice. Sostratos' mother makes an offering (a sheep) in exchange for a reward (preventing her son from suffering the toils she foresaw in a dream). Indeed, James Redfield places this sacrifice in the context of several Aristophanic sacrifices, all of which, he argues, adhere to this model.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, twice in extant Menander, the play's storyline is affected mechanically by ritual action that has evidently taken place prior to the play's inception itself. The citizen daughter of *Epitrepontes* was the victim of an anonymous rape by her eventual husband at a ritual event, a festival (Ταυροπόλεια, 451 and elsewhere<sup>7</sup>), and this rape creates the fundamental crisis that the plays of New Comedy solve, namely the threat of failure to marry off citizen youth and produce legitimate children. In a fragment from a Menandrian play whose title is unknown, the apparent “hook” of the entire plot hangs upon sacrifice, as two characters discover that someone sought to incinerate a legal document while offering (or pretending to offer) sacrifice: πρόκλη[η]σιν [ἐ]πὶ τὸν βωμὸν ἐκτέθηκε τις. | καινόν γε πῦρ πάρεστιν, “someone's put a contract out on the altar—and the fire's fresh!”<sup>8</sup> Though it is impossible to piece together a full summary of the plot from what few fragments remain, I believe it is pos-

<sup>6</sup> Redfield (2008) 11. For more on the *do ut des* model of ritual, see my discussion of prayer in chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Samia* 40, where the rituals at the Adonia are mentioned as the setting for a rape.

<sup>8</sup> *Fabula Incerta* 7 lines 7–8 Ar. The working title and numbering are from Arnott (2000a) 529–555, and the source is *P. Antinoopolis* 55, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Arnott remarks that “[a]lthough these fragments do not contain any ties with previously known quotations from Menander, their language, style, metrics and imaginative quality combine to indicate a common source in one of his plays” (2000a: 530).

sible to say that this sacrifice, purported to have taken place just before the first lines of the play, would have been an important stage property in shaping the first act, if not the entire work.

One of the main ways in which sacrifice can serve as a signifying stage property, with both labeling and symbolic aspects, is through the characterization of individuals. I discuss this topic below. Yet sacrifice can also serve more simply as a label or a symbol.

When sacrifice does work in Menander as a label, it enhances some aspect of a character's onstage action. In a fragment from *Theophoroumene*,<sup>9</sup> the title character makes reference (unfortunately lacunose) to some form of exorbitant sacrifice to Cybele. The girl is labeled as truly "possessed" (or, if she is faking it, persuasively so) through the exoticism of her sacrificial imagery—both in offering size (one hundred magnificent cows, *ἐκατόμβη κλειτή*, not one lone sheep, as in *Dyskolos* and other plays) and in divine recipient, an eastern, non-Olympian goddess with no connection to hearth, home, or stage altar. On the other hand, in *Samia*, Demeas underscores his own misfortune by labeling himself "sacrificant":

τοιούτο γὰρ καὶ τοῦμόν ἐστι νῦν· ἐγὼ  
ὁ τοὺς γάμους ποῶν, ὁ θύων το[ῖ]ς θεο[ῖ]ς.  
ὦ πάντα κατὰ νοῦν ἀρτίως ἐγίν[ε]το,  
οὐδ' εἰ βλέπω, μὰ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, οἶδ[α] νῦν  
καλῶς ἔτ'.

(210–214)

And so my current situation is sort of like this: I,  
the wedding planner, **the sacrificant**<sup>10</sup> **to the gods**,  
the guy for whom everything was just now going according to plan,  
now I don't know—Athena damn it!—if I can even see  
straight anymore.

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<sup>9</sup> Line 39, Arnott (1996) 67.

<sup>10</sup> Arguably, this could mean "sacrificer" rather than "sacrificant," though I am confident in my translation, since the sacrificer, as demonstrated in chapter 1, would have been a *μάγειρος*.

By applying to himself the marker of the sacrificant, Demeas heightens the sense of his authority over the situation, and so increases the drama of his descent into helplessness (a descent that is, in turn, labeled by poor eyesight).

I have found only one clear instance of sacrifice functioning as a symbol of some changing situation in a Menandrian work.<sup>11</sup> At *Dyskolos* 613–616, Sostratos invites Gorgias to a sacrificial feast (after the former’s mother completes her *do ut des* offering to Pan). This invitation, and the subsequent interaction between the two youths that the invitation initiates, symbolizes the negotiation of acquaintance, then friendship, and eventually kinship between these characters. As I discussed in chapter 1, the sacrificial feast is commensal and an act of community; Sostratos’ invitation, then, extends an offer of community to Gorgias, and so opens the way for Gorgias to marry his sister to Sostratos.

### *Weddings and celebration*

Marriage is indeed central to the conclusion of most of Menander’s comedies, and an essential part of the marriage ritual is the performance of animal sacrifice. Evidence of the marriage ritual frequently appears in the texts of the plays themselves, particularly in the standard, recurrent phrase for betrothing one’s daughter, *ταύτην γνησίῳν | παίδων ἐπ’ ἀρότῳ σοι δίδωμι*, “I give this girl to you for the plowing of legitimate children” (as at *Dyskolos* 842–843, *Perikeiromene* 1013–1014, and *Samia* 726–727). Besides repeated in-

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<sup>11</sup> Though see my discussion of the symbolizing function of the marriage ritual (sacrifice) in *Samia*, below. Also contrast with Aristophanic comedy, in which “sacrificial rites occur almost invariably at a turning point of the comic plot” (Sfyrer 1992: 20, cf. Redfield 2008: 12 and 13), and so are symbolic of the change in dramatic situation on the scale of the play as a whole.



stances of this phrase as well as an occasional glimpse of matrimonial sacrifice elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> the wedding ritual appears many times throughout *Samia*, almost as a leitmotif.

A principal feature of this leitmotif of the wedding ritual is that characters in the play tend to describe the preparation or conduct of the marriage rites by picking out certain specific ritual actions, which differ by speaker and by position in the play's timeline.<sup>13</sup> Four different characters<sup>14</sup> engage in this sort of description seven times during the play, and I see in the ritual items that each of them picks out a clear dichotomy between pragmatic and romantic characters. The young lover Moschion is the romantic, and when he describes elements of the wedding rites, once as if in reverie (123–126) and again in a statement of intent, he consistently chooses to include actions focusing more on the celebration of matrimony than on the somatic components of sacrifice. Moschion envisions himself engaging in ritual bathing both times, and his daydream about the wedding centers on inviting his friends (οἱ φίλοι) to the post-sacrifice feast, on distributing (rather than physically dividing<sup>15</sup>) the sacral cake (σησαμῆ), and singing the wedding hymn (ὕμναιον, which is so entrancing to Moschion that he hums it to himself to the point of distraction).<sup>16</sup> The second instance (157–159), in which Moschion discusses not his fantasy but his specific agenda after he exits the stage, the rites mentioned are more concrete: ritual bathing, libation, and offering of incense. Never-

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<sup>12</sup> As at *Fabula Incerta* 9, lines 6–11 (Arnott 2000a: 599–605), which mention the wine for libation, water for ritual bathing, and the piper's song. The source is *P. Oxyrhynchus* 3966, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

<sup>13</sup> Arnott keeps casual track of this trend in footnotes throughout his translation (2000a: 15–189). See especially 2000a: 28–29 n. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Moschion, the young man to be married; Demeas, Moschion's father; Nikeratos, Moschion's soon-to-be father-in-law; and Parmenon, Moschion's slave.

<sup>15</sup> Other characters, such as Parmenon (discussed immediately below), focus on the physical cutting.

<sup>16</sup> Moschion does in this section mention offering the preliminary sacrifice (i.e., the προτέλεια), but it is the first and, as I see it, least emphasized item on his list.

theless, an important climax of the wedding sacrifice—the slaughter of the animal—is absent, and the true center of attention for Moschion here is going to get his bride (τὴν κόρην μέτειμι), a point in the process that, focalized through the young lover, is more romantic than ritualistic.

In contrast, Moschion's co-stars take a practical view of the ritual. His slave Parmenon, who is not a Plautine *seruus callidus* so much as a *paedagogus* concerned with getting his young master to behave appropriately, states his goal (at 74–75) of having Moschion offer the preliminary sacrifice, put on the garlands that signal sacrificial or ritual activity, and divide the cake—here physically cutting it, rather than distributing it to friends and family, as we just saw is the case with Moschion a bit later (at 123–126). Later in the play, Parmenon again focuses on the physical actions of the wedding ritual currently going on offstage: mixing the wine for libation, offering incense, offering the ἀπαρχαί, and burning the offering (673–674).

Similarly, Moschion's father Demeas, who obliquely fulfills a standard role as a blocking character, wants simply to be finished with the ritual and to solidify the marriage. He consequently mentions garlands, the sacrificial victim (ἱερεῖον), and the cake (190–192); cleaning the house, baking the cake, and preparing the basket for the ἀπαρχαί (222); and delivering the prayer, offering the incense, and making a libation<sup>17</sup> (609–610). In focusing on the physical rather than the more emotional aspects of the marriage rites, Demeas plots out a position opposite to his son's, and it is only near the play's conclusion that Demeas effects a resolution with Moschion in his final summary of the rites, when he mentions (as the rites are

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<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Koenen offers an alternative reading of σφάττε for σπένδε (1975: 133 n. 2). Either way—whether libation or slaughter of the victim—Demeas is emphasizing the ritual action, not the emotional or social ramifications of the marriage ceremony.

finishing up, now onstage) ritual washing and celebratory music<sup>18</sup> in addition to the garlands and torches necessary for the wedding procession.<sup>19</sup>

In *Samia*, then, the sacrificial marriage rites form a sort of thematic backbone to the play, and reflect (or, in Ketterer's terminology, symbolize) the ongoing disputes and concluding settlements between characters.<sup>20</sup> Although the marital ceremonies appear periodically throughout the work, their culmination is delayed until the denouement, so that they can mark the conventional celebratory union of families for the reproduction of Greek citizens. This style of conclusion is, of course, not specific to *Samia*; Greek comedy, especially New Comedy, generically tends to end with the celebration of marriage.

Endings of this sort—wedding celebration with attendant sacrifice<sup>21</sup>—are, I argue, natural to Greek comedy. Northrop Frye, discussing New Comedy but aiming for application to comedy universally, wrote that “[c]omedy usually moves toward a happy ending”

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<sup>18</sup> Although Demeas does make certain to include the practical side of getting the water, the servant termed the *λουτροφόρος*, and he refers to the music by calling upon the agent of its production, the piper.

<sup>19</sup> Shortly before Demeas provides this summary, in one of the central conflicts of the play, between Moschion and his intended father-in-law Nikeratos, the latter provides his own summary (713), as the rites are currently being conducted (still offstage at this point). His summary aligns itself with Moschion's—ritual bathing, *προτέλεια*, and the “wedding rites” in general (*οἱ γάμοι*). Yet this alignment does not reflect an agreement of purpose between himself and Moschion, but rather disagreement, for Nikeratos describes these actions in order to highlight the fact that Moschion is in fact absent from his own wedding, and his description of the rites in terms that would appeal to Moschion directly results in Moschion's onstage entrance and his pointed antagonism of Nikeratos (until Demeas intervenes to broker a solution).

<sup>20</sup> There are three additional, noteworthy instances of ritual in the *Samia*. At 444–449, Demeas intones a prayer to Apollo, and thus effectively conducts a portion of the marriage ritual onstage. Immediately following, Demeas halts the ritual to say that he is too upset to do a top-notch job with the *ἀπαρχαί*: ἄρ]ξ[ομ' ο]ὔκ ἄριστ' ἐγὼ <γὰρ> ὥς ἔχω νῦν (450). Although not quite tantamount to failed sacrifice, Demeas' hesitation does delay completion of the marriage ceremony until the end of the play. Finally, a fragment of uncertain location (Arnott fragment 2; 437 Kock) consists of a single line delivered by an unknown speaker: φέρε τὴν λιβανωτόν· σὺ δ' ἐπίθες τὸ πῦρ, Τρύφη, “Bring the incense—now apply the fire to it, Tryphe.” Arnott speculates that this line could be part of the wedding ritual, or could constitute an offering (by the hetaira Chrysis) for Demeas' safe return from abroad, or even Demeas' own thanksgiving offering for a safe return (2000a: 189). Whatever the case, this fragment re-emphasizes the importance of sacrifice to the plot and progression of *Samia*.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Redfield (2008) 12: “on the evidence of the *Samia*, a sacrifice was an integral element” of marriage.

(1957: 181). Comedy, that is, mandates celebration.<sup>22</sup> Marriage certainly is often a happy occasion for the families who arrange it, but sacrificial ritual is moreover a quintessentially Graeco-Roman mode of celebration, whether the celebration commemorates a marriage, safe overseas travel, the discovery of a lost family member, or even gratitude for perceived divine favor. Likewise, Frye pointed out that one of the ultimate outcomes of comedy is the creation of a new society. For Greeks, the fundamental symbol and fundamental act for establishing such a society, whether of a utopic fantasy world (as in *Birds*) or merely of a new interfamilial alliance (as in *Samia*), is sacrifice, particularly matrimonial sacrifice.

In this respect, the elemental connection between comedy, marriage, and sacrifice in Greek society becomes clear. As James Redfield points out, “comedy is life-affirming, and from a comic point of view both marriage and sacrifice affirm life” (2008: 13). Sacrifice can thus serve as a subtler, implicit symbol for the underlying concerns of New Comedy—the ritual marks celebration and commemorates marriage, and thereby it signals the successful formation of a new society.<sup>23</sup> Celebration is the link not only between comedy and sacrifice, but also between comedy and its performance context, for “[t]he sacrificial rite...is a point of contact between the plot and the performance.”<sup>24</sup> Sacrificial wedding ritual, whether conducted onstage, reported from offstage, or simply implied by the formula *γνησίων παίδων*

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<sup>22</sup> Note, for instance, that Arnott renders “sacrifice” (θύουσ’) as “party” at *Aspis* 219.

<sup>23</sup> Redfield continues:

Marriage “for the sake of legitimate children” places sexuality in a social order whereby our fundamental animal vigor leads to a kind of immor[t]ality through our descendents; thus it derives from the play of the instincts a link with the eternal. Sacrifice...similarly placed humanity between beasts and gods, with aspects of both. Meateating linked them to the earth, but through sacrifice they shared it with the gods—to whose existence they actually contributed by feeding them. Old Comedy was no respecter of limits; if it was set between the bestial and the divine it actually was capable of invading both. There is plenty of grotesque and vulgar behavior as well as crude sexuality. However it is also to be noted that two of Aristophanes’ surviving plays end with the protagonist marrying a goddess. The notion that the gods need our sacrifice is a similar invasion of limits (2008: 13–14).

<sup>24</sup> Sfyrroeras (1992) 17.

ἐπ’ ἀρότω, ties together the resolution of a play’s plot, its creation of a new society, and its religious (festival) context, and this link could be strengthened still further if the stage altar was, in fact, a genuine altar as well.<sup>25</sup>

### Μάγειροι

I touched briefly on the principal Greek sacrificial agent, the “sacrificer” or μάγειρος, in chapter 1. Menander stages μάγειροι in *Samia*, *Dyskolos*, *Aspis*, and briefly in *Misoumenos* (671–676, where the μάγειρος is mute and simply receives orders from his employer). The role of the μάγειρος in Menander has been extensively analyzed (especially in *Dyskolos*) by Hans Dohm, with a focus on Menander’s innovations on the stock type transmitted from Middle Comedy,<sup>26</sup> so I add here only a few brief comments.

The μάγειροι (for whom the name Karion is common, when they are actually named) generally provide comic relief.<sup>27</sup> They bemoan commissions lost to a birth or death in the hiring family (*Aspis* 216–220), and they joke about or acknowledge their reputation for being thieves (as the *senex* Euclio alleges in *Aulularia*). Inasmuch as they are a source of verbal—and occasionally physical—slapstick, μάγειροι are regularly portrayed as witty, often by appeal to the concept that their tongues are so sharp as to free them from needing their sacrificial knives:

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<sup>25</sup> See my discussion of stage altars in the section on stagecraft in chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> On *Samia*, 1964: 212–217; on *Dyskolos*, 1964: 217–243; on Middle Comedy, 1964: 154–210. See also Scodel (1993) on connections between the μάγειροι of New Comedy and sacrifice in Aristophanes and in Euripidean tragedy.

<sup>27</sup> But see also Scodel (1993) 164: the μάγειρος “bears the weight...of the tradition which makes sacrifice central to drama.”

μάγειρ', ἐγώ, μὰ τοὺς θεούς, οὐκ οἶδα σὺ  
 ἐφ' ὅ τι μαχαίρας περιφέρεις· ἱκανὸς γὰρ εἶ  
 λαλῶν κατακόψαι πάντα πράγματα.  
 (*Samia* 283–285)

Gods, sacrificer! *I* have no idea why you  
 carry around those knives—'cause you're  
 more'n able to cut up everything just with your chatter!<sup>28</sup>

The trade of the *μάγειρος* is here assimilated into his character type—in Marshall's wording, the *μάχαιραι* are not a prop, but a part of the sacrificer's costume—and the *μάγειρος* no longer wields sacrificial capacity, but embodies it.

In *Dyskolos*, the *μάγειρος* character is named (in this case Sikon) and appears several times during the play, famously at the end to help mock the injured Knemon and force him to take part in the sacrificial feast. Sikon's most significant contribution to the play, as I see it, comes at 639–646, when he remarks on Knemon's fall into the well:

εἰσὶν θεοί, μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον. οὐ δίδως  
 λεβήτιον θύουσιν, ἱερόσυλε σύ,  
 ἀλλὰ φθονεῖς; ἔκπιθι τὸ φρέαρ εἰσπεσών,  
 ἵνα μηδ' ὕδατος ἔχῃς μεταδοῦναι μηδενί.  
 νυ]νὶ μὲν αἱ Νύμφαι τετιμωρημέναι  
 εἴσ' αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ δικαίως· οὐδὲ εἴς  
 μάγειρον ἀδικήσας ἀθῶος διέφυγεν.  
 ἱεροπρεπὴς πῶς ἐστὶν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.

There *are* gods, by Dionysus! You won't give  
 a cooker to people sacrificing, you temple-raiding asshole,  
 but you just hold a grudge. Now you can drink up the well you fell in,  
 so you don't have to have any water left to give away to anyone.  
*Now* the Nymphs have justly brought vengeance  
 upon him for my sake—'cause *no one*  
 messes with a *μάγειρος* and gets away with it for free.  
 Our profession is sacred, in some way.

<sup>28</sup> See also *Samia* 292–294: κατακόπτεις γέ με, | εἰ λανθάνει σε, φίλτατ', εἰς περικόμματα, | οὐχ ὥς ἔτυχεν, “buddy, in case you haven't noticed, you're triflin' me into tripe—and not generic brand, either.”

Sikon the *μάγειρος* is the character who interprets the significance of Knemon's personal tragedy, and his explanation is based on sacrifice.<sup>29</sup> Earlier in the play, the old man had refused to lend the *μάγειρος* any implements needed for sacrifice, and had himself delivered a ranting monologue about people who perform frequent or prodigious sacrifices.<sup>30</sup>

In effect, Sikon labels Knemon impious and his misfortune an appropriate punishment for impiety.<sup>31</sup> Near the end of the play, Sikon again delivers his interpretation, this time directly to Knemon in an attempt to coerce him to join the new comedic society formed by the sacrifice and subsequent feast (932–933). The *μάγειρος* has assimilated the sacrificial capacity of his tools into a personal sacrificial authority of his own, and he now wields that authority over a citizen male in order to complete the new society that has formed by way of the sacrifice he himself conducted.

### *Characterization*

Since so much less survives of Menander than of Plautus, material in which sacrifice is used as a tool for characterization is consequently more scarce. The section below on the theatrical effects of sacrifice in Plautus will include a thorough consideration of characterization. Here, I am limited by the extant corpus to four characters, three from *Dyskolos* and one interchange from *Samia*.

Knemon, title character of *Dyskolos*, is the commonest subject of characterization via sacrifice. As both Pavlos Sfyroeras and James Redfield have pointed out, Knemon angrily

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<sup>29</sup> Scodel says that “[t]he spectator can hardly interpret the event as Sikon does” (1993: 170). I disagree. Sikon's explanation is the only one offered within the play and his explanation goes unanswered.

<sup>30</sup> On which see my discussion of Knemon in the section on characterization immediately following.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Scodel (1993) 169: Sikon “underscores the fact that Knemon's behavior upsets the social norms.” See also John Werner, who discusses “punishment due to divine *φθόγος*” in Middle Comedy (1962: 73).

rejects sacrifice when watching one performed near his home (447–453).<sup>32</sup> He suggests that the ritual is an act not of piety but of greed and gluttony, and he reinforces his suggestion shortly thereafter by criticizing those who offer cattle as sacrifices<sup>33</sup>—to which his interlocutor cleverly responds by suggesting that Knemon himself would not offer even a snail.<sup>34</sup> (Knemon additionally matches words to action by refusing to lend sacrificial implements to visitors at the nearby shrine to Pan.) Knemon’s statement reflects negatively on his own character because it communicates clearly to the audience that he has removed himself from their society. Participation in sacrifice is a sign of participation in the community, and therefore rejection of sacrifice constitutes rejection of the community. Even if the spectators did not consciously pick up on this characterization, they would nevertheless comprehend Knemon’s rant here as a cornerstone of his misanthropy.

Yet Knemon does not reject merely the social and communal aspects of sacrifice. He also, as Pan the prologue states, tries to avoid making any offerings to the gods—he pays reverence to Pan only when forced (ἐξ ἀνάγκης, 11). Paradoxically, he repeatedly hurls the insult of “imp” or “blaspheme” (ἀνόσιε, 108 and 469) at anyone who bothers him. And at the end of the play, Knemon must be coerced (as if again ἐξ ἀνάγκης) to join the feast and thereby to rejoin the community of humankind. In this way, talk about sacrifice combines with ritual imagery to reinforce the characterization of Knemon promised by the play’s ti-

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<sup>32</sup> Sfyroeras (1992) 13: “the misanthrope in Menander’s *Dyskolos* 448–53 has only rebuke for the traditional sacrificial practices.” Redfield likens Knemon’s commentary to the Hesiodic Zeus’ perception of the trick played by Prometheus in Mecone at *Theogony* 510–616 (2008: 11–12).

<sup>33</sup> θύειν με βοῦς οἷε ποεῖν τε ταῦθ’ ἅπερ ὑμεῖς ποεῖτ’; *Dyskolos* 474–475.

<sup>34</sup> οὐδὲ κοχλίαν ἔγωγέ σε, *Dyskolos* 475.



tle.<sup>35</sup> Another grumpy old man in Menander is Smikrines of *Epitrepontes*, whose (partial) withdrawal from society is underlined by his bitter complaints about the expense of festivals (748–756). His rejection of the religious value of festivals here matches him both to Knemon and to his own cranky stock character name.

In stark contrast to Knemon is his daughter, Plangon, who is a model of piety. Pan, in his prologue, remarks on how Plangon reveres (or “flatters”) and carefully honors the Nymphs residing at his shrine, Νύμφας κολακεύουσ’ ἐπιμελῶς τιμῶσά τε (37). It is because of her piety, not her father’s, that Pan intervenes in family business to ensure that she is married to Sostratos by the play’s conclusion. Furthermore, when Plangon herself appears onstage, she states that she is hesitant to fetch water because she “would be ashamed to bother people if they’re sacrificing inside, any of them,” αἰσχύνομαι μὲν, εἴ τινες θύουσ’ ἄ[ρα] | ἔνδον, ἐνοχλεῖν (198–199, discussed in brief above). Again, the way in which Plangon talks about sacrifice reflects directly on her piety and hence indirectly on her moral standing as a character.

Habitual sacrifice, or rather a habit of sacrificing, is indeed an important way to characterize individuals onstage. Both Plangon and Sostratos’ mother are habitual sacrificants, and their habits reflect well upon their moral bearings. Although some other characters speak of the mother with exasperation (so Sostratos at 260–264) or outright disdain (her slave Getas at 407–409),<sup>36</sup> Menander makes certain to demonstrate that she engages in ritual activity for selfless and pious reasons—she seeks divine protection for her son. This point is im-

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<sup>35</sup> See the next section for consideration of Knemon’s threat to “devour” other characters.

<sup>36</sup> And 438–439, where Getas impatiently remarks that the sheep for offering is “nearly dead,” presumably because of his mistress’ delay in starting the ritual (τὸ γοῦν πρόβατον μικροῦ τέθνηκε γάρ), to which his mistress responds (following Arnott’s line assignment) by pushing the sacrificial insult back onto Getas himself: “oh, the poor thing, it couldn’t await your availability!” (τάλαν’ | οὐ περιμένει τὴν σὴν σχολήν).

portant, because much of the play is taken up with commentary on the sacrifice, and the offering ultimately shows Sostratos' mother to be perhaps the most moral and sympathetic character who appears during the course of the play.

Menander also staged another mother who sacrifices regularly in his (mostly) lost *Phasma*. According to a plot summary by Donatus,<sup>37</sup> the mother lives not with her daughter but next door, and so she creates a fake shrine (*ita perfodit, ut...sacrum locum esse simularet*) between the two houses by which to see her daughter in secret. Yet when she goes to see her daughter, she apparently makes legitimate, and frequent, sacrificial offerings (*intenderet sertis ac fronde felici rem diuinam saepe faciens*). Although her primary reason for sacrificing is not really religious devotion, the mother's intentions do evoke sympathy and her rigor in actually conducting the sacrifices (*faciens*, not *dissimulans* or something similar) labels her as a pious, and therefore positive, character.

The final point of characterization to consider here is a short interchange in *Samia* involving the old man Demeas, his courtesan lover Chrysis, and a bystanding μάγειρος. Demeas is upset with Chrysis and threatens to replace her: “well, *another* woman will find pleasure in my stuff, Chrysis—and boy, will she sacrifice to the gods!,” ἑτέρα γὰρ ἀγαπήσει τὰ παρ’ ἐμοί, Χρυσί· νῆ | καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς θύσει (385–386).<sup>38</sup> Arnott remarks that this statement is “possibly a contemporary way of saying that she [the new woman] would show her gratitude to Demeas” by sacrificing (2000a: 94–95 n. 30). I suggest that sacrifice here is functioning as a symbol of the relationship between Demeas and Chrysis. Since some other woman will have sacrificial capacity in Demeas' house, his ex-lover Chrysis now is ritually

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<sup>37</sup> Writing on *Eunuchus* 9.3 (1.272 Wessner). See Arnott (2000a) 406–409 for full text and translation.

<sup>38</sup> Note that Demeas' message about sacrifice is emphatically driven home by alliteration on τ and θ.

rejected from his community, and thus disenfranchised from the society of his household.<sup>39</sup> It is furthermore unusual that the play's μάγειρος attempts in this scene to intervene on Chrysis' behalf ("don't snap at her!," μὴ δάκῃς, 384), since Menandrian characters generally hold μάγειροι in disdain, and "never show a sympathetic response" to what the μάγειροι say.<sup>40</sup> This thematic trend makes the μάγειρος unlikely to succeed in his intercession, and it also makes his intercession unlikely to have originated out of some concern for Chrysis' well-being. Perhaps he intervenes simply because he feels that it is in the best business interest of a μάγειρος to maintain the domestic tranquillity of his clientele.<sup>41</sup>

### *The specter of human sacrifice*

I suggested in chapter 2 that a visage of human sacrifice is raised in three scenes (one Menandrian, two Plautine) where masters seek to burn their slaves alive on the stage altar.<sup>42</sup> The stage altar and (when applicable) shrine, as I stated in my earlier discussion, are commonly understood in New Comedy to be a sacrosanct locus of refuge for slaves. While apparently true in Menander, Plautus, and Terence, this rule of asylum was not necessarily the

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<sup>39</sup> Of course, Demeas' outcry at 385–386 is impassioned and momentary, and the two are eventually reconciled.

<sup>40</sup> Scodel (1993) 162–163. She continues: "his interlocutor expresses boredom and annoyance."

<sup>41</sup> Or perhaps it is because the Menandrian μάγειρος generally considers himself an expert at managing people, as Scodel writes: "It is not surprising that a cook [μάγειρος], whose basic task is sacrifice, should also constitute himself as an authority on correctly dealing with people of all kinds" (1993: 170). I return to the women in this scene and elsewhere in my next chapter.

<sup>42</sup> See the end of my section on stagecraft in chapter 2 for a proof that the masters in these scenes seek to burn not the altars but the slaves taking refuge.

case in Greek Middle Comedy, for “[a]sylum is not always respected.”<sup>43</sup> Besides the three examples previously cited, we can detect a tinge of sacrificial connotation at a few more places in Menander, with relation both to burning humans alive and to murder generally.

Although the scene in Menander, a fragment from *Perinthia*, is too decontextualized to be of much help for interpretation, the two scenes from Plautus have one important shared feature: by the end of the scene, the master has lost his power over his slave and is thereafter consigned to a subordinated role. In *Mostellaria*, the *seruus callidus* Tranio effects a role reversal between master and slave, and in *Rudens*, Labrax the pimp finds himself completely beholden to the authority of Daemones, who has come to the rescue of Labrax’ slave girls. The theatrical effect enacted by undertones of human sacrifice in these altar scenes is, I suggest, the following. In trying to burn their human property upon an altar, the master is attempting a corrupt form of sacrifice. Attempting such a corrupt sacrifice causes him to forfeit his sacrificial authority—and this loss subjects him to another’s power, whether it is his own slave or a citizen with full sacrificial authority.

A human is threatened with incineration once elsewhere in the Menandrian corpus, at *Samia* 553–555. The speaker is Demeas, commenting on what he hears from inside the house of his neighbor Nikeratos, who has just discovered that his daughter has had a child out of wedlock: “What a fuss he’s raising! Gosh, he’s calling for fire—he says he’s gonna burn up the baby, he’s threatening it—my grandson, I’m gonna see ’im seared!,” ἡλίκον κέκραγε τοῦτ’. ἦν, πῦρ βοᾷ. τὸ παιδίον | φησὶν ἐμπρήσειν, ἀπειλῶν. ὕδοῦν ὀπτώμενον | ὄψομαι. These lines constitute the most blatant and most shocking invocation of human sac-

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<sup>43</sup> Werner (1962) 73. He also points out (*ibidem*) that “[a] fugitive’s taking hold of an altar and saying the proper words does not, of course, prove that he has an active faith in a deity who will protect him.” The same holds true for New Comedy—though in each extant case, the slave does end up escaping punishment.

rifice in extant Menander. The audience, thanks to the prologue (and to the widely apprehended conventions of New Comedy), need not worry about the child's fate, but for the sympathetic spectator, Demeas' sense of horror and suspense is palpable. The image is graphic, and it is made still more poignant by the alliteration on *ὀπτώμενον* and *ὄψομαι*. Menander uses a subtext of sacrifice (specifically, the roasting of flesh) in this passage to enhance the drama of the scene, and thereby shapes it into an important climax for the play.

Finally, the language of violence in Menander can overlap with the language of sacrifice. Characters in Greek New Comedy do not say "I'd rather die" or "he's killing me," but instead "I'd rather be slaughtered," *ἀποσφαγείην πρότερον ἂν* (*Epitrepontes* 401)<sup>44</sup> and "he's slaughtering me," *σφάττει με*.<sup>45</sup> The verb *σφάζω* can serve generally as a word for slaying, but it can also carry the connotation of sacrifice or other ritualized slaughter—and, as Ruth Scodel has demonstrated, "[a]bility at the skills associated with sacrifice and those necessary for murder are, in fact, the same" (1993: 167). A murderer or other violent character arguably wields some degree of sacrificial authority, though this authority is corrupt and misapplied.

Likewise, grouchy Knemon of *Dyskolos* is associated with "devouring" or "eating alive" anyone whom he dislikes. The verb *κατέδω* is twice used in reference to Knemon, first by someone fearful of his wrath ("he'll eat us right up!," *κατέδεται | ἡμᾶς*, 124–125) and then by the man himself ("I'll devour you alive," *κατέδομαί γε ζῶντα*, 468).<sup>46</sup> An implicit comparison to the Cyclops is of course possible, but I see here again an underlying hint of

<sup>44</sup> Cf. also *Epitrepontes* 575–576: *ἐκτεμεῖν | δίδωμ' ἐμᾶντοῦ τὰς γόνας*.

<sup>45</sup> From *Kolax*, listed by Arnott as fr. 8 (746 KT). Quoted at *Moralia* 547d–e. See Arnott (1996) 194–195.

<sup>46</sup> Contrast the non-sacrificial, more general-purpose insult *κρ]εμᾶ*, used at *Dyskolos* 249.

human sacrifice.<sup>47</sup> Threatening to eat another human being is aberrant behavior, just as trying to burn someone alive is a corruption of proper sacrifice: the latter causes masters to forfeit their sacrificial authority, and the former serves to reinforce Knemon's self-ostracism from healthy (that is, properly sacrificing) human society. In this respect, Knemon is a tragic figure: by rejecting appropriate sacrifice in favor of some perverted form of it—and by falling victim to divine anger, according to Sikon the *μάγειρος*—he becomes, as Ruth Scodel says, a “*theomachos*,” with “a heroic, though self-destructive, stance” (1993: 167).<sup>48</sup>

The effect of the sacrificial (or sub-sacrificial) imagery in each of these instances is, I propose, a negotiation of power between characters. Knemon asserts authority over his addressee, while the speaker at 124–125 willingly subordinates himself to Knemon's authority. Menander's use of sacrificial imagery as a means of defining power relations among characters is admittedly slight. Yet we will see in the next section that, in Plautus, such use is the mainstay of sacrificial imagery, with remarkable, and farcical, results.

### **The dramatic functions of sacrifice in Plautus**

Eduard Fraenkel long ago pointed out that Plautus inserts jokes and stage business about sacrifice into his Greek originals, as he does at *Pseudolus* 325–340 and *Asinaria* 712 (2007 [1922]: 81). When it comes to his treatment of sacrifice, Plautus is significantly more

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<sup>47</sup> This idea is in some sense related to the phenomenon mentioned by Ruth Scodel of “murder described in sacrificial language in *Agamemnon* and *Medea*” (1993: 164), in reference to Vidal-Naquet (1972). At any rate, whether Knemon were to consume the unfortunate bystander alive or consume him pre-killed, the end result would nevertheless be a slaughter; and since, as discussed in chapter 1, all meat consumed in Greece was the product of a sacrifice, one might think that human meat would, too, be a sacrificial product.

<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the sacrificial imagery in these passages seems in my view to demonstrate that Knemon possesses (albeit temporarily) the “grotesque efficacy” of a tragic protagonist, in Scodel's term (1993: 166), at least in preserving his state of social reclusivity.

active and tongue-in-cheek than Menander, just as in several other areas of his dramatic style. Sacrifice and sacrificial imagery in Roman comedy are not only present, but vibrant—and just as susceptible to Plautine meddling as are other normative social behaviors, like the master-slave relationship or age-appropriate behavior.

In his expansive article on religion in Plautus, in a short section on ritual, John Hanson effects the following *praeteritio*: “References to sacrifices and details of ritual are extremely numerous in Plautus. These have been fairly widely investigated...and for the most part will be excluded from the present study” (1959b: 97–98). He fails, however, to cite any of these investigations, with the resultant implication that they are buried in narrowly available publications of Plautine source criticism, if anywhere. I, at least, have not found any evidence whatsoever of such scholarship.<sup>49</sup> Direct examination of the Plautine corpus demonstrates a wide range of elements of sacrifice and sacrificial imagery. I follow here roughly the same structure as in the section on Menander above, with a look first at the use of sacrifice as a staging device, then at sacrifice as a tool for dramatic intensification (as in weddings and celebration), next consideration of cooks (the Plautine analog to *μάγειροι*), and then characterization. I continue with an examination of the relationship between sacrifice and authority in Plautus, and finally conclude the chapter with two case studies of the extensive use of sacrificial imagery in two Plautine plays, *Curculio* and *Epidicus*.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> I deal with his otherwise excellent article in more detail when I consider ritual imagery in chapter 5.

<sup>50</sup> The relationship between gender and sacrificial capacity and activities in Plautus is a primary subject of study in the next chapter.

### *Sacrifice as a staging device*

As in Menander (or perhaps even more so), sacrifice in Plautus regularly effects theatrical functions akin to those of stage properties.<sup>51</sup> As before, these functions can be mechanical or signifying. Also as before, they can serve simply as indications to the audience in the place of formal narration and stage directions, or they can play an important role in shaping or developing a play's plot.

Mentions or representations of sacrifice in Plautus can provide the setting (in place or in time), can denote the passage of time within the play's storyline, and can give motivations for characters' entrances and exits. The situation and consumption of the *exta* provide a general sense of the time compression in skipping from one point in the day to another (*Poenulus* 491, 803–804). The comic parasite often comes onstage—right on cue—for a meal or an anticipated meal, generally sacrificial. Gelasimus, parasite of *Stichus*, for instance, appears onstage to the *ancilla* Crocotium in order to ask about a post-sacrifice meal (251–252).<sup>52</sup> The two *senes* of *Aulularia* each exit one scene in the same way, to take a bath for sacrifice, the poorer man aping the richer (579 ~ 612–613). Adelphasium in *Poenulus* delays a kiss for her sweetheart until she finishes a sacrifice (405). Daemones goes inside to sacrifice and to order a dinner prepared (*Rudens* 1263).

Items related to sacrifice can also take on signifying functions in Plautus' work. As Robert Ketterer says of the cook Congrio's *culter*, or sacrificial knife, in *Aulularia*, the suspicious and stingy *senex*, "Euclio...tak[es] it as a label of violence and theft. Congrio takes it as a label and a tool of his profession" (1986b: 125). The ritual implement is for the audi-

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<sup>51</sup> Again, see my discussion of Ketterer (1986a, 1986b, and 1986c) in chapter 2.

<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Toxilus, the *seruus callidus* (*inamoratus*!) of *Persa*, prepares a (non-sacrificial) meal that immediately summons the super-parasite Saturio.



ence at once a label of the cook's stock character type, a symbol of Congrio's (stereotypical) pompous self-certainty, and, lastly, a way of reflecting Euclio's (again stereotypical) character flaws. Additionally, as Lora Holland has pointed out, "[m]eat in Plautus...becomes a signifier of social tensions" (2007: 2).

Furthermore, Plautus (like Menander) uses sacrifice in a manner more directly influential on the plots of his plays. The Roman playwright employs this influence in two main ways. First, Plautus assigns plot-driving mechanical functions to sacrificial tools as props; second, he features sacrifice (whether actual, feigned, or just mentioned) as a ploy for the clever slaves and other tricksters of Plautine comedy.

Multiple props with sacrificial associations are studied by Robert Ketterer, so I will merely summarize three of them here. First, in *Aulularia*, "[t]he [sacrificial] sheep are props with causative functions, generating humorous dialogue as Strobilus claims for his master the fatter lamb and in compensation awards the fatter flute girl to Euclio's cook (327–334)."<sup>53</sup> This humorous dialogue would likely have been accompanied by farcical stage business in dealing with the unruly livestock, whether the livestock was real or fake (as discussed in the section on stagecraft in chapter 2).

An *urna* for wine offerings plays important causative functions in *Rudens*, Ketterer argues (1986c: 38–40), and ultimately it represents the "continued intervention of the gods in the action of the play."<sup>54</sup> In *Amphitruo*, a *patera* (for libating wine) presented by Jupiter to Alcumena is "the play's most important prop" (1986c: 47). Here, the *patera* is misused "as a false token" (1986c: 50) rather than for sacrifice. This misuse, I add, harms the commu-

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<sup>53</sup> He goes on: "The skinny lamb generates further banter between the old men at 561–568" (1986b: 124).

<sup>54</sup> Ketterer (1986c) 40, cf. Leach (1974).

nity<sup>55</sup>—unlike sacrifice, which itself is an indicator of a healthy community (as I will argue in detail in chapter 5).

Sacrificing and making arrangements for a sacrifice provide excellent opportunities for clever characters to manipulate other characters in the play. The title character of *Epidicus* takes advantage of his older master's need of a piper for his sacrifice in order to swindle him. Menaechmus Sosicles cleverly tells a slave confused about his identity to buy a pig and get himself purified (*Menaechmi* 288–330); the language is later turned back against him (517) and so, in order to get himself out of a troublesome social situation, he feigns insanity and threatens to eviscerate the *senex* who is bothering him (858–859).<sup>56</sup> Indeed, a trend emerges of *seruii callidi* who mockingly make suggestions that others sacrifice to them in gratitude for their successful deception schemes, a trend that I will take up in the next chapter. Perhaps most majestically (and most cleverly), the über-*meretrix* Phronesium of *Truculentus*—who is as masterful as any *seruus callidus* and fulfills that role in this play—persuades one of her admirers to lend her his newborn baby. Phronesium twice offers sacrifice on behalf of the safety of “her” baby, once because it is appropriate to do so on the fourth day after birth (423–424), and the other time to venerate Lucina, goddess of healthy childbirth (476).

It is worth noting in connection to this trend that clever characters are generally the closest that Plautine comedy comes to heroic figures. When he puts sacrificial authority in the hands of these types of characters, then, Plautus is picking up (whether intentionally or incidentally) on a feature of sacrifice in Old Comedy. In Aristophanes, as Scodel points out,

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ketterer (1986c) 50: “causing a division in a formerly harmonious family....not a unifying device but a divisive one....it remains an instrument of division” throughout the play.

<sup>56</sup> Arguably, this threat again raises the idea of human sacrifice, but here the situation is so patently absurd as to make this comment, I believe, wholly and unproblematically comical.

“[t]he hero has the ability to sacrifice and possesses an abundance of food” (1993: 165). This connection between ritual power and clever protagonist is reinforced by prayer: successful clever slaves tend to offer prayers of thanks at the opening of monologues and monodies, a Plautine innovation on Greek New Comedy.<sup>57</sup>

### *Dramatic intensification*

Menandrian sacrifice is frequently and consistently linked with marriage, and with the concurrent celebration of the formation of kinship between members of the local citizenry. Plautus in fact rarely stages wedding ceremonies or celebrations of family unification—and when he does, as I argue in chapter 4, the circumstances generally center on slaves. Nevertheless, Plautine comedy significantly does employ sacrifice to heighten or highlight the emotional content of certain scenes and interactions.

In practice, there are three main types of sacrifices that enhance the dramatic situation. First, return sacrifices, offerings made in thanks for one’s own safe return from a voyage. Second, “recovery” or “rejoicing” sacrifices, offerings made in thanks for another’s safe return (as for a kidnapped daughter), recognition (as of long-lost siblings or children), or birth. Third, sacrifices in Plautus can act as premonitions, foreshadowing (whether for the characters or for the audience) good or bad things to come.

Jupiter disguised as Amphitruo goes to make good his vows for a safe return from military campaign (*Amphitruo* 946–948). Likewise, the *meretrix* Philocomasium burns incense for Ephesian Diana because she reached land safely from “Neptune’s places and whirlpoolly precincts” (*Miles Gloriosus* 411–414). Sometimes, however, return sacrifices are replaced simply by return meals (as at *Bacchides* 536–537 and *Stichus* 582–588).

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<sup>57</sup> Fraenkel (2007 [1922]) 125, cf. 411. See further my discussion of prayer in chapter 5.

Rejoicing sacrifices include Amphitruo's to Jupiter once he finds out that his wife has had a son by him and a son by Jupiter (*Amphitruo* 1126–1127<sup>58</sup>); Calidorus' intent to sacrifice when he hears that Ballio has not sold his beloved Phoenicium (*Pseudolus* 326–330); and Phronesium's sacrifices on behalf of the baby she pretends is hers (*Truculentus* 423–424, 476). Strikingly, Plautus includes a recovery sacrifice for Daemones' reunion with his daughter (*Rudens* 1206–1208) and thereby places an unusual, but welcome, degree of value on the life of a female child. In addition, Daemones' sacrifice is the only sacrifice to celebrate a unified (or, in this case, reunified) family in the Plautine corpus, a stark contrast from the highly celebratory comedies of Menander.<sup>59</sup>

Plautus rarely includes an on-stage sacrificial offering without a mechanical motivation as discussed above. When such sacrifice occurs (at *Mercator* 675–680), however, it can be read as a premonition sacrifice—that is, the act of offering forebodes some conflict or complication on the dramatic horizon. Dorippa, a free woman, gives an offering at the altar in front of her house, and then a full-blown prayer to Apollo to keep her house safe. As soon as Dorippa finishes her prayer, her *ancilla* comes out to tell her that there's a strange whore in their house (*nescioquaest intus...mulier meretrix*, 684–685).<sup>60</sup> The prologue to *Rudens*, delivered by the god Arcturus, indicates that good people's offerings will always be accepted benevolently, whereas bad people's sacrifices will fail (21–25). This bit of information is instructive in looking back at the *Poenulus* pimp Lycus' failed sacrifices and eventual ruin.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This sacrifice also marks formal peacemaking between Amphitruo and the god who made him a cuckold; it furthermore formally establishes the kinship entailed by the birth of Hercules to Alcmena, just as a sacrifice might do when part of a wedding ceremony in Menander.

<sup>59</sup> On which see more in chapter 4.

<sup>60</sup> I am tempted to see a tragic subtext—of Deianeira or Clytaemnestra—behind these lines.

<sup>61</sup> On which see my discussion of pimps below.

*Cooks, feasts, and parasites*

There is not a direct parallel between the Menandrian μάγειρος and the Roman cook—the latter has no sacrificial capacity, whereas the former is the primary sacrificer of New Comedy—but the two do often fulfill similar theatrical roles, and each wields a sacrificial knife (and, usually, wits as sharp as the blade itself). Plautus freely assigns sacrificial imagery not only to the producers of feasts—cooks—but also to the consumers of feasts: parasites, a stock type whose virtuosic use in Plautus is unparalleled in extant Greek New Comedy.<sup>62</sup> In one Plautine play, however—*Aulularia*—the archetypes of Menandrian comedy are preserved intact, especially in the role of the cook as μάγειρος.

“The Plautine cook is a literary creation and does not correspond exactly either to Greek or to Roman life. In fact the combination of Greek and Roman elements in Plautus’ cooks, as in other aspects of his plays, contributes to the unreal, fantastic character of Plautine comedy.”<sup>63</sup> The *Quellenforschung* of the Plautine cook—the question of which parts are Greek and which are Roman—is, though well studied,<sup>64</sup> not the most interesting aspect of the cook stock type.<sup>65</sup> In Greek comedy, “[a]lthough the creative energy of the cook [μάγειρος] is expended mostly on fish, his essential task remains the sacrifice of animals.”<sup>66</sup> Plautus, however, divorces cooking from ritual. For instance, in the magnificent cook scene of *Pseudolus*, the cook-to-end-all-cooks makes only one potential mention of beef: *terrestris*

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<sup>62</sup> By “unparalleled” I do not mean “unprecedented”—indeed, Menander stages a parasite in *Sikyonioi* and even wrote a (now extremely fragmentary) play, *Kolax*, titled after the stock type.

<sup>63</sup> Lowe (1985a) 102, cf. Segal (1987).

<sup>64</sup> Lowe (1985a) and Lowe (1985b) are fine examples of source-criticizing Plautine cooks to death.

<sup>65</sup> For the “‘metatheatrical’ potential” of the comic cook, see Gowers (1993) 78.

<sup>66</sup> Scodel (1997) 164.

*pecudes* at 835, in contrast to *Neptuni pecudes*, or fish<sup>67</sup>—and *terrestris pecudes* could very well refer to sheep. Likewise, Hans Dohm’s analysis of the role of cooks in *Mercator*, *Menaechmi*, *Casina*, *Miles Gloriosus*, and *Curculio* does not associate them with any sacrificial capacity or function (1964: 259–276).

Feast and feast-preparation scenes in Plautus, unlike those in Menander, often omit meat and requests for meat. For instance, at *Casina* 490–503, the *senex* gives his slave a long shopping list for an upcoming meal, all of it fish. When Peniculus, the parasite of Menaechmus, praises his patron’s good cuisine, he does not discuss meat (*Menaechmi* 100–103). Parallels to these scenes can be found in Greek New Comedy.<sup>68</sup>

Parasites, it should be noted, are in essence a completely Plautine innovation.<sup>69</sup> “The only interest in food expressed by characters in Menander is a fear of getting none at all...or [is expressed] because the animal being sacrificed is pathetically small, as it seems generally to be.”<sup>70</sup> Not so in Plautus. All sorts of characters—parasites, *serui callidi*, *adulescentes in-amorati*, *senes*, and *lenones*—take great delight in food (although the parasites are the most exaggerated, and the most interested in pork products). Only once are sacrificial victims portrayed as insufficient (*Aulularia* 561–568), and then the complaint is delivered by a stingy *senex* in a play that holds close to the Menandrian model of μάγειρος-driven sacrifice.

Indeed, *Aulularia* is arguably exceptional among the plays of Plautus in its treatment of sacrifice. It cleaves, I argue, close to its Menandrian roots (particularly *Dyskolos*) in this

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<sup>67</sup> Slater aptly remarks that “[t]he words of the cook are of a higher order: they are mythic” (2000a: 111).

<sup>68</sup> On which see generally Scodel (1997) and Dohm (1964).

<sup>69</sup> See Damon (1997) 23–79, 259–262, and *passim* on the parasite. See also Holland (2007) 2: “The significance of the religious aspects of the parasite, even in Roman comedy, has not been fully appreciated.”

<sup>70</sup> Scodel (1997) 163. See my discussion of offerings in chapter 2, where I take issue with Scodel’s remark.

respect, for many reasons. Firstly, the cooks in this play act almost exactly as Menandrian μάγειροι—in their scenes of generic comic relief and in their processions across the stage with cooking gear and sacrificial victims;<sup>71</sup> in the scenes where their *cultri* are linked to their razor-sharp tongues;<sup>72</sup> and in the fact that they bring lambs onstage (*Aulularia* 327–330).<sup>73</sup> Fraenkel centered his argument on this play when he stated that, in Plautus, “[t]he cook remains Greek” (2007 [1922]: 398). Second, the play opens with a divine prologue (delivered by the Lar Familiaris<sup>74</sup>) that makes reference to the importance of devotion through sacrifice.<sup>75</sup> Finally, the character of the *senex* Euclio forms a strong linkage between *Aulularia* and Menander’s *Dyskolos* specifically. Euclio mirrors the title character of *Dyskolos*, Knemon. Euclio is grumpy, miserly, and selfish, and he complains about lending out cookware for use in preparing sacrificial meals,<sup>76</sup> about the expense of foods (373–375), and about sacrifice (561–568).<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Hans Dohm groups *Aulularia* with *Dyskolos* and *Samia* for examples of Menandrian μάγειροι (1964: 244–259), because, he argues, the original of *Aulularia* was most probably a play of Menander (1964: 212).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Marshall (2006) 67 n. 183: “This routine was drawn from Greek comedy, where it seems to have been standard, e.g. Menander, *Dyskolos* 393–4.”

<sup>73</sup> In fact, these lambs are apparently the only animals brought onstage in Plautus. The possible staging techniques for this phenomenon are explored in chapter 2.

<sup>74</sup> Certainly, the Lar Familiaris is far from a Greek god, but it is a personal, private, domestic god—much like Pan as he is portrayed in delivering the divine prologue to *Dyskolos*. On the Pan of that prologue, see most recently Kantzios (2008).

<sup>75</sup> There is a connection here to *Rudens*, it should be noted, but the reference to sacrifice in *Rudens* (22–27) is cast in negative, generalized terms, whereas the references in *Aulularia* and Menander are positive and point specifically to a pious, frequently sacrificing character within the play.

<sup>76</sup> Again, Euclio of *Aulularia* is in this aspect connected to the *senex* Daemones of *Rudens*. Daemones, however, exhibits redemptive qualities to his character (particularly his unabashed love for his daughter) that are not evident in Knemon or in Euclio (whose final fate is unfortunately lost along with the concluding act of *Aulularia*).

<sup>77</sup> I note in passing the elements of Plautine doubling in *Aulularia*: two cooks, two lambs, two music girls—plus the opportunity from such doubling for a joke on the fat lamb and the fat music girl.

## Characterization

When sacrificial imagery is used to color a comedic stock type's persona, it generally comes in the form of self-characterization (intentional or otherwise), or else as an insult. Periplectomenes (of *Miles Gloriosus*) inadvertently shows himself to be greedy and calculating twice with reference to sacrifice, first by saying that any expenses for sacrifice are profits (675), and then by explaining how, since he has no children, his adult heirs give him the best portions of the sacrificial meat and invite him to the post-sacrifice dinners (710–711). Likewise, Euclio in *Aulularia* complains about the cost of all sorts of meats (373–375, including beef, *bubulam*);<sup>78</sup> he then reinforces his self-characterization by insulting the quality of the sacrificial lamb that Megadorus gives to him as a gift (561–568). Indeed, Robert Ketterer writes of Euclio, “his small offerings once again symbolize his miserly soul” (1986b: 124). Callicles of *Trinummus*, on the other hand, tries to display his piety by stating a desire to garland his *Lar Familiaris* (39).<sup>79</sup> The *Lar Familiaris* in the prologue to *Aulularia* characterizes the *uirgo* Phaedria positively by describing her daily offerings at his shrine (23–25).

Besides the divine prologue of *Aulularia*, when one character discusses the sacrificial practice of another, or directs sacrificial imagery towards another, the imagery is almost always cast as an insult. Periplectomenes uses a bit of sacrificial imagery to call Sceledrus an idiot: *occisam saepe sapere plus multo suem*, “a slaughtered sow's so often seriously smarter than him,” (*Miles Gloriosus* 586). Philocrates, one of the eponymous *Captiui*, describes his father as so greedy that he uses cheap dishes for sacrifices to his own Genius, for fear that the Genius might steal them (290–292). In *Epidicus*, one *senex* jokingly says that another *senex*

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<sup>78</sup> In this respect, he is much like Knemon of *Dyskolos*, as discussed immediately above.

<sup>79</sup> Callicles' statement of intent to sacrifice also functions as a mechanical device to bring him out onstage so that the play's other *senex* can meet up with him. I return briefly to Callicles in chapter 4.



habitually sacrifices to Orcus in gratitude for the death of his own wife—an odd insult to which I return in chapter 4.

### *Sacrifice and authority*

I wrote above about the term “sacrificial authority,” the power to order the theatrical social community. Now I analyze the role of sacrifice and (moreover) sacrificial imagery in asserting authority and managing power relations between characters. Indeed, the final mode of sacrificial imagery in Plautus is, I argue, his characters’ use of it to claim authority over each other. Whether humorous or serious, sacrificial imagery can be used by one character to mock or to display pure physical power over another. Mockery represents a proof of superior wit (or perhaps “callidity”), whereas pure shows of power through sacrificial imagery help mark the defeat of disreputable stock types.<sup>80</sup>

The slave figures in *Amphitruo* are masters of sacrificial mockery.<sup>81</sup> At 738–740, the slave Sosia tells his mistress Alcumena that her tale of a visit from Amphitruo (actually Jupiter in disguise) was just a dream, and suggests that she make a sacrifice—to Jupiter, Keeper of Prodigies. By inventing a god (or at least an aspect of a god) in charge of fantastical things,<sup>82</sup> and then encouraging Alcumena to engage in ritual worship of the new god, Sosia denigrates Alcumena and pulls himself up to (or beyond) her social status. Again, at 1034, Mercury, disguised as Sosia, “sacrifices” the “misfortune” of a bucketful of water on top of

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<sup>80</sup> See my more extended discussion of (clever) slaves and sacrifice in the following chapter. For the importance of mockery to comedy generally, cf. Bierl (2002).

<sup>81</sup> Whether *Amphitruo* is based on a work of New Comedy, Middle Comedy, or even Euripidean tragedy (on which see, *inter alia*, Slater 2000a: 182–195), the mastery of slaves with which I am concerned is certainly a Plautine innovation.

<sup>82</sup> For the argument that Iuppiter Prodigialis is a Plautine invention, see Galinsky (1966).

Amphitruo's head (*sacrufico...te macto infortunio*), and thereby reverses once more the roles of master and (purported) slave.<sup>83</sup>

In *Curculio*, the *seruus callidus* soundly trumps his *adulescens inamoratus* master Phaedromus in a game of sacrificial dialogue (akin to ones in *Pseudolus* to be discussed directly below):

**PHAED.** nunc ara Veneris haec est ante horunc fores;  
me inferre Veneri uoui ieientaculum.  
**PAL.** quid? tu te pones Veneri ieientaculo?  
**PHAED.** me, te atque hosce omnis. **PAL.** tum tu Venerem uomere uis.  
(71–74)

PHAEDROMUS: Now this here's an altar to Venus in front of these guys'  
doors; I vowed *I'd* vanquish Venus' breakfast hunger.  
PALINURUS: What? Gonna go feed yourself to Venus for breakfast?<sup>84</sup>  
PHAEDROMUS: Me, you, and all *these* guys.  
PALINURUS: Then you're volunteering Venus for vomit.

As Palinurus takes control of Phaedromus' own syntax, Plautus indicates early on that the normal role reversal between *seruus callidus* and *adulescens inamoratus* will be taking place. Furthermore, Palinurus assumes a kind of sacrificial authority over the situation. Since he suggests that Phaedromus' proposed offering will induce vomiting in the deity, Palinurus effectively determines what is and is not an acceptable sacrifice, and thus exerts significant and important control over his young master.

In a scene from *Asinaria* (712–727), two *serui callidi* use sacrificial imagery—in fact, self-deification (autapotheosis?) and suggested ritual behavior<sup>85</sup>—to exert authority over

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<sup>83</sup> This line is a mock corruption of the ritual formula *macte hoc sacrificio esto*, on which see Skutch and Rose (1938 and 1942), cited at Jocelyn (1996) 100 n. 71. Cf. also Jocelyn (2001) 287, on how this line is an instance of Plautus' "transferences of the colloquial language" of religious formulae into idioms of everyday speech.

<sup>84</sup> Again, as with the line in *Menaechmus* discussed above, I do not see a troubling shadow of human sacrifice behind these lines.

<sup>85</sup> And, as John Henderson has pointed out, Libanus' very name can be taken as a reference to incense, among other things (2006: 197 and 203).

their young, love-stricken master and to compete with each other. Libanus and Leonida, the two clever slaves, set themselves up as Salus and Fortuna Obsequens, respectively, because they have obtained the money their master Argyrippus requires to pay for his girlfriend (who is also present in this scene). Libanus demands from Argyrippus a cult statue, an altar, and a sacrifice (*mihi statuam et aram statuis | atque ut deo mi hic immolas bouem*,<sup>86</sup> 712–713)—and in so doing he places himself in a position far superior to Argyrippus. Leonida responds by initiating a contest with Libanus for Argyrippus’ supposed religious devotion (714–715), and thus puts himself on par with Libanus and, again, considerably higher than Argyrippus. The *adulescens* tries to push back on their sacrificial assertions of authority over him by encouraging their antagonism of each other and, indeed, he gets the last bit of sacrificial imagery in the scene (*ut consuevere, homines Salus frustratur et Fortuna*, “as usual, Salvation’s tricking people—and so is Fortune,” 727); yet he remains throughout this scene wholly subjected to their theatrical authority.<sup>87</sup> By initiating, perpetuating, and then abandoning sacrificial imagery as convenient, Libanus and Leonida demonstrate their own (admittedly limited) authorial agency within the play<sup>88</sup>—they are the characters in charge of the scene’s dialogue.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> On the singular and exceptional nature of this offering, a head of cattle (*bos*), see my discussion of animal offerings in chapter 2.

<sup>87</sup> John Henderson reads lines 712–716 as a culmination of more subtle religious imagery throughout the scene, though I am not convinced by his off-the-cuff explanation for Libanus’ demand of an ox, *bos* (713):

To be sure, this denouement caps the theme of heartfelt supplication from a believer that runs through the whole encounter: prayers for salvation from cruel fortune have accompanied salivating rituals of self-abasement (*salve*, 619, 623, *salus*, 648, 656, 672; cf. 911; *sospitor*, 683; *serua*, 654, 688, cf. 256, and 17, 911; *uostrae fortunae*, 629, *supplico*, 682, 715). If (spurred on by the puns *ut est libitum...Libanus*, 711, and *statuam...statuis*, 712) we thought that sacrifice to Lord *Libanus* ought simply to feature *frankincense*, we have missed the religious conversion of the governing metaphor of servitude as donkey business for tetrapods of every rank: for the extortioner’s demand is that an *ox* be the immolated victim (2006: 203; emphases preserved).

<sup>88</sup> See also the master of Plautine authorial agency, Niall Slater, on *Asinaria* (2000a: 45–56).

Sacrifice can, finally, come to violence. At *Rudens* 761–770, the pimp Labrax and the old man Daemones engage in a competitive display of purely physical power through sacrificial terms. Labrax is denied access to his slaves, who are sheltering in the shrine to Venus, so he calls for Vulcan to be brought to him so that he can light the shrine afire.<sup>90</sup> Daemones responds by threatening to roast Labrax himself halfway and feed him to the birds.<sup>91</sup> *Truculentus* 614 features a slave savagely threatening a disarmed braggart soldier: *tange modo, iam ego te hic agnum faciam et medium distruncabo*, “Just touch me, and I’ll make you here and now into a lamb and behead your guts.” Likewise in *Miles Gloriosus*, where the title character Pyrgopolynices is reduced to nothing. The old man Periplectomenus tells his slave cook Cario (a Menandrian stock name, perhaps with undertones of “Meat-head”) to get his *culter* ready against the soldier, and Cario says:

quin iam dudum gestit moeche hoc abdomen adimere,  
ut ea iam quasi puero in collo pendeant crepundia.  
(1398–1399)

“Man, I already wanna cut out this adulterer’s guts,  
so that his insides’ll hang outta his neck like a toddler’s toys.”

Cario not only expresses his power over Pyrgopolynices through sacrificial imagery, but he also throws in a butcher’s term as well—the verb *pendeo* can refer to a slab of meat hanging from a *carnarium*, a meatrack. At this point in the play, the slavish cook, by abusing the soldier and using language of authority against him, proves how totally powerless Pyrgopolynices is.

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<sup>89</sup> The analysis contained within this paragraph was inspired by a comment of Arthur Hanson’s: “the whole passage (*As* 712–27) deserves careful study” (1959b: 76). See also Segal (1968) 132–136, cited at Slater (2000a) 84 n. 13, for more on the deification of slaves in Plautus.

<sup>90</sup> I have discussed this scene above in connection with the *topos* of burning slaves upon the stage altar. I note that Venus and Vulcan are, of course, husband and wife, and to some extent figures in conflict with each other, given the myths that tell of Venus’ infidelity.

<sup>91</sup> This alone is not in and of itself clearly sacrificial imagery, but it can be read as such in context.

olynices really is.<sup>92</sup> This final example clearly demonstrates “the close relationship between ritual and authority, food and control” that Ruth Scodel discusses in the context of Menander’s comedies.<sup>93</sup>

An excellent extended example of the use of sacrificial imagery to negotiate the balance of power in relationships between characters can be found in that paragon of Plautine plays, *Pseudolus*. In his article on religion in Plautus, John Hanson discusses “with what explicitness the identification of a person with deity may sometimes be made...It shows how easily...the form ‘ego sum tibi deus’ may be expanded and given a real religious context...Such playful identifications are extremely common.”<sup>94</sup> These statements can also feature sacrificial imagery, as when the *seruus callidus* asks his master to immolate a cow for him at *Asinaria* 712–715, or when the parasite Ergasilus asks his master Hegio to sacrifice a sheep to him (*Captiui* 860–863).

One striking instance occurs at *Pseudolus* 318–347. Ballio the “super-pimp”<sup>95</sup> initiates the sacrificial imagery by telling the eponymous *seruus callidus* that he would trust him just as soon as he would trust a runaway dog with lamb’s guts (*agninis lactibus*, 319). A short bit later, when Ballio deceitfully tells the young lover Calidorus that his girlfriend Phoenicium is no longer for sale, Calidorus makes a joyous outburst:

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. Ketterer (1986a) 207 on the soldier’s sword as a sign of his powerlessness.

<sup>93</sup> Scodel (1993) 165. I consider in chapter 5 whether Plautus’ use of sacrifice and feasting is in any way normalizing or stabilizing for the community, as Menander’s and Aristophanes’ sacrifice scenes are.

<sup>94</sup> Hanson (1959b) 69. I return to this concept in my final chapter.

<sup>95</sup> Petrone (1981) 113.

**CAL.** quid iam? **BAL.** quia enim non uenalem iam habeo Phoenicium.  
**CAL.** non habes? **BAL.** non hercle uero. **CAL.** Pseudole, ei accerse hostias,  
uictumas, lanios, ut ego huic sacrificem summo Ioui;  
nam hic mihi nunc est multo potior Iuppiter quam Iuppiter.  
**BAL.** nolo victumas: agninis me extis placari uolo.  
**CAL.** propera, quid stas? ei accerse agnos. audin quid ait Iuppiter?  
**PS.** iam hic ero; uerum extra portam mi etiam currendumst prius.  
**CAL.** quid eo? **PS.** lanios inde accersam duo cum tintinnabulis,  
eadem duo greges uirgarum inde ulmearum adegero,  
ut hodie ad litationem huic suppetat satias Ioui.  
**BAL.** i in malam crucem. **PS.** istuc ibit Iuppiter lenonius.

(325–335)

**CALIDORUS:** What's that?  
**BALLIO:** 'Cause I don't currently have Phoenicium for sale.  
**CALIDORUS:** You don't?  
**BALLIO:** Gee golly, I really don't!  
**CALIDORUS:** Pseudolus! Go bring him offerings, victims, butchers, so I can sacrifice to this guy, mightiest Jupiter, 'cause as I see it now, this guy's a much more powerful Jupiter than Jupiter.  
**BALLIO:** I don't want victims—I wanna be appeased with lambs' guts.  
**CALIDORUS:** Hurry up! Why are you still standing here? Go get him some lambs! Didn't you hear what Jupiter said?  
**PSEUDOLUS:** I'll be back soon, but first I gotta run outside the gates.  
**CALIDORUS:** Why there?  
**PSEUDOLUS:** To get two butchers, with bells on, and two flocks of elm switches, so that we've got enough of 'em for, ahem, a *favorable sacrifice* to this Jupiter today.  
**BALLIO:** Oh, go to hell.  
**PSEUDOLUS:** That's right where Jupiter Pimpimus Maximus is headed.

Ballio has been deified,<sup>96</sup> and he picks up on his earlier *agninis lactibus* by requesting an offering of *agninis...extis* (329).<sup>97</sup> Pseudolus, however, being the *seruus callidus* with the chutzpah to take control of the entire play, also joins in on the sacrificial imagery, but twists it into torture talk (familiar from scenes of Plautine slave humor) with *duo greges uirgarum...ulmearum* (333). Ballio's response, *i in malam crucem* (335), indicates that he has

<sup>96</sup> Cf. the self-deification of Libanus and Leonida in *Asinaria*, as discussed above; and Feeney (1998) 114, restating a point from Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1895): "Power and immortality are the quintessential marks of ancient divinity"—and so, I argue, deification in comedy is an assertion or expression of power.

<sup>97</sup> In his desire to watch the sacrificial offerings made to him, Ballio evidently differs from other, legitimate Roman gods: "The gods are the destination, but they are very seldom represented as participants or spectators" (Feeney 1998: 119 and n. 22).

given up on the game of sacrificial wordplay, while Pseudolus wittily responds by twisting Ballio's recent deification against him.<sup>98</sup>

During the *Pseudolus*' central cook scene, sacrificial imagery comes up again, this time with Ballio on the losing side, for the most part:

**COQ.** sine sis loqui me. **BAL.** loquere, atque i in malam crucem.  
**COQ.** ubi omnes patinae feruont, omnis aperio:  
is odos dimissis manibus in caelum uolat.  
**BAL.** odos dimissis manibus? **COQ.** peccaui insciens.  
**BAL.** quidum? **COQ.** dimissis pedibus uolui dicere.  
eum odorem cenat Iuppiter cottidie.  
**BAL.** si numquam is coctum, quidnam cenat Iuppiter?  
**COQ.** it incenatus cubitum. **BAL.** i in malam crucem.  
(839–846)

COOK: Let me speak, dammit!  
BALLIO: Speak—and go to hell.  
COOK: When all the platters are boiling, I open 'em all: this scent flies into  
the sky with, um...palms then released.  
BALLIO: A scent...with embalments released?  
COOK: Oops, I didn't mean to say that.  
BALLIO: What then?  
COOK: I wanted to say with *feet* released. Jupiter dines on that scent daily.  
BALLIO: What does he eat if you don't make it into the kitchen?  
COOK: He goes to bed hungry.  
BALLIO: Oh, go to hell.

Again, Ballio ends up on the losing end of a game of words with sacrificial images—the *odos* from cooked food flying up to the gods touches on the belief that scents produced in the burning of incense and portions of sacrificial meat were what pleased the gods—and, again, he shows his resignation with the phrase *i in malam crucem*. Later in this scene (868–872), the sacrificial imagery takes on a mythological timbre, for Eduard Fraenkel noted that the cook likens himself to Medea and his addressee, Ballio, to Pelias (2007 [1922]: 60–61), who was killed and cooked—just as one might a sacrificial victim.

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<sup>98</sup> Whether Ballio tries to pick the sacrificial imagery back up with *sine ornamentis, cum intestinis omnibus* at 344 is doubtful. See my discussion of Roman sacrificial terminology in chapter 1.

*Case study: Curculio and the (im)pious pimp*

There is a modest, but not insignificant, correlation between pimps and sacrificial activity. Labrax, the pimp of *Rudens*, is an archetypical example of an impious pimp: “Labrax is repeatedly referred to throughout the play as *scelestus*, *impius*, *legirupa*, *peiurus*... This is of course standard Plautine language for a *leno*.”<sup>99</sup> Yet when the pimp is first mentioned on-stage, it is by the *adulescens* Plesidippus, who comes to the shrine of Venus at Labrax’ invitation for a post-sacrifice dinner (94–95 ~ 128–130). This same pimp, when the young women he owns have taken refuge from him inside the shrine of Venus, threatens to burn the shrine down, to which the *senex* Daemones replies that he will set Labrax himself on fire, roast him halfway through (*ambustulatum*), and feed him to some large birds (761–770).<sup>100</sup> Still later, Labrax swears an oath by the altar of Venus (1343–1349) and then immediately declares his intentions to perjure himself (1353–1355).<sup>101</sup>

Another noteworthy sacrificing pimp is Lycus of *Poenulus*. He enters the stage with a twofold complaint, first that he failed four times in a row to get a successful sacrifice, and second that his unsuccessful sacrifice was an incorrect prediction of the future, since he has gained four minae since his sacrifice attempt (449–467).<sup>102</sup> In an encounter with the play’s *miles gloriosus*, Lycus swears that if the man is telling the truth about his military accomplishments, Lycus himself should be afflicted with more sacrifices (488–489). Lycus pays

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<sup>99</sup> Hanson (1959b) 94.

<sup>100</sup> See my discussion of this scene in relation to the specter of human sacrifice, above.

<sup>101</sup> Arthur Hanson puts Labrax’ impiety into the moral context of the prologue to *Rudens* (1959b: 93–95) and suggests that Labrax’ behavior in the play “represent[s] the depths of moral degradation, the extreme of *impietas*” (95).

<sup>102</sup> The second part of his complaint here is directed at a ritual official, the *haruspex*, whose role in Plautine comedy I discuss in detail in chapter 5. On this passage, see also Slater (2000a) 160 and n. 29.



attention to where the *exta* from sacrifices at the local Aphrodisia festival are being carried (617) and complains again that the unsuccessful sacrifices were misleading, in light of his present success (746–750).

Finally, Lycus' slave Syncerastus comes onstage carrying Lycus' *uasa*, and Syncerastus too talks about how Lycus could not attain an auspicious sacrifice, but that the *meretrices* whom Lycus owns could (847–850, cf. 1174 and 1205). Characterization through sacrifice is demonstrated by the fact that offerings of the *meretrices*—girls who, as the audience knows, will turn out to be freeborn—are accepted while those of the corrupt pimp Lycus are not. The moral, innocent characters succeed with their sacrifices, whereas the venal, impious character finds his sacrificial authority denied by the goddess herself. In the end, Lycus is ruined, as is almost every Plautine pimp. He loses ownership of the *meretrices* and is hauled off to court by their free (Carthaginian) citizen father.

In marked contrast to Labrax and Lycus is *Curculio*'s pimp Cappadox. Ill at the beginning of the play, he has been incubating at the shrine of Asclepius in search of a cure. After successfully selling Planesium, a girl he owns, Cappadox decides to go sacrifice (532). The interval between this exit and his entrance after completing the sacrifice (558) is filled by more sacrifice: the banker Lyco mocks the *miles gloriosus* Therapontigonus, who has been swindled out of some money, by saying that he will not sacrifice (*macto, mactare*<sup>103</sup>) to the soldier because there is no debt between them (537–538).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The phrase *non edepol nunc ego te mediocri macto infortunio* here echoes the terminology used by Mercury-as-Sosia at *Amphitruo* 1034, discussed above; and, again, see Skutch and Rose (1938 and 1942).

<sup>104</sup> Lyco, too, appears to engage in ritual activity at the shrine of Asclepius: when *Curculio* stumbles upon him at 389–390, he describes Lyco as ritually greeting the god in the manner of the *Graecus ritus* (*quis hic est qui aperto capite Aesculapium | salutat?*). On the *Graecus ritus*, see the discussion in chapter 1. For formal greeting-prayers to gods, see chapter 5.

Cappadox' *ancilla* Leaena, too, has sacrificial associations: the young lover Phaedromus must give her a libation of wine (since she, like many elderly *ancillae*, is an alcoholic) to gain access to his beloved (80–92), and Leaena herself libates to Venus<sup>105</sup> from the libation she has received (125–127), though not without complaining about the loss of a few drops of her precious wine rations. The libation, C. W. Marshall argues, is central to the humor of the scene (2006: 72); and the prop of the libation bowl is arguably central to *Curculio* as a whole.<sup>106</sup> In fact, Robert Ketterer argues, Leaena essentially becomes a “priestess” in this scenario (1986a: 200)—an important reflection, I add, on the piety of Cappadox' household.<sup>107</sup>

There is clearly, then, a tension between Plautus' multiple characterizations of the *leno* stock type with regard to sacrificial capacity. Pimps are criminals, but pimps sacrifice. In *Rudens*, the pimp is clearly sacrilegious, whereas the pimp in *Poenulus* seemed to have undertaken his initial sacrifices with pious intentions—but the fact that he illegally holds freeborn girls as slave prostitutes overrides his devout intent.

Cappadox in *Curculio*, on the other hand, appears to be pious and to conduct successful sacrifices.<sup>108</sup> He does not appear to be a perjurer, he does not seem to hold free girls captive against their will, and he is not overly cruel. In fact, he demonstrates surprising compassion: “Cappadox, when he expresses *genuine sympathy* for his *meretrix* Planesium, becomes

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<sup>105</sup> There is an altar to Venus directly in front of Cappadox' house (Saunders 1911: 100–101).

<sup>106</sup> Ketterer (1986a) 197–200, especially 198: “the wine bowl...tell[s] us something about the characters by the reactions which [it] elicit[s] from the human actors....[T]he movement of the wine bowl marks a significant change of alliance” as Leaena goes from Cappadox' trusted doorkeeper to facilitator of Planesium's relationship with Phaedromus.

<sup>107</sup> Especially combined with the modest apotheosis for Leaena symbolized by the libation made to her.

<sup>108</sup> Cappadox also, as Arianna Traill has discussed (2004: 123–124), consults the play's cook (of all people) for dream interpretation, *coniectura* (229–279). I would point out in addition that, later in the play, Cappadox indeed actually follows the cook's “conjectural” advice (*pacem ab Aesculapio | petas*, 270–271) and offers sacrifice to Aesclepius. I look further at *coniectura* in chapter 5.

*even more pathetic* as an emblem of vice (*Curculio* 517–8, 522–3).<sup>109</sup> When Cappadox sells Planesium to her lover via the eponymous parasite Curculio, the pimp asks him to take good care of her, since, as he says, “I raised her in my house well and modestly” (*bene ego istam eduxi meae domi et pudice*, 518). Curculio’s response displays the crass venality normally expected of pimps, not of the play’s clever protagonists (“well are you gonna pay for her to be all right?,” *ecquid das qui bene sit?*, 519). This unexpected role reversal between comic villain and comic hero thwarts the standard identifications of moral character based on stock type, and reveals a connection between sacrificial activity and sympathetic portrayal—it is Cappadox, not Curculio, who has been active ritually throughout the play, and it is Cappadox, not Curculio, who expresses concern for the well-being of the girl Planesium.

Three effects result from Plautus’ linking pimps with sacrifice. First, sacrifice functions as a marker or theatrical label of free citizen status. Pimps are always free and often (but not always) local citizens. Yet they often hold one or more free citizens in a state of unlawful slavery, whether those citizens’ free status is known or not. To depict pimps sacrificing, successfully or unsuccessfully, draws out the stark contrast between the pimp’s own status and his abrogation of another’s. In *Curculio*, however, the contrast is perhaps instead between the pimp, a pious citizen even if one engaged in a repellent trade, and the parasite, whose standing as a free man is less important to him than the opportunity to glut himself.<sup>110</sup>

The second effect of the connection in Plautus between pimps and sacrifice is a contradiction in piety. As John Hanson notes, the archetypal pimp is criminal (*scelestus*) and sacrilegious (*impius*). Thus there is the potential for humor in the dissonance between a

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<sup>109</sup> Marshall (2006) 190. Emphasis added. The second set of lines that Marshall cites, 522–523, have nothing to do with Cappadox.

<sup>110</sup> It should, however, be noted that Curculio’s role as the clever schemer of this play can indeed lend considerable weight to the audience’s interest in and identification with him.

pimp's reputation and his seemingly pious actions—as evidenced by the seemingly backwards exchange between Cappadox and Curculio over Planesium's fate at *Curculio* 518–519, discussed above.

Third, one can see a kind of double determination in the failed or misconducted sacrifices of Lycus and Labrax. In Middle Comedy, John Werner writes, “[b]eing true to one’s oath is a characteristic of the righteous man” (1962: 101), but at the same time, “[f]orswearing, while disapproved, is portrayed as being widely practiced, without any thought of divine retribution” (1962: 140). Lycus and Labrax seem to forswear gleefully and without any expectation of punishment from the gods—but, unlike their counterparts in Middle Comedy, the perjurious in Plautus do get their just deserts. In the end, they lose both because they have acted unlawfully in kidnapping or purchasing freeborn girls and because they did not successfully propitiate the gods.

*Case study: a “program of sacralization” in Epidicus*

We saw above that some characters, typically the *serui callidi* who so captivate Plautus’ attention, will acclaim themselves gods and demand sacrifice (usually from their subordinate young masters) in a show of their theatrical authority. The title character of *Epidicus*, however, goes rather beyond straightforward deification by one character of himself or of another, in what I term a “program of sacralization” that Plautus undertakes on Epidicus through the course of his play. Early on, when his younger master Stratippocles (an *adulescens inamoratus*, as the genre dictates) comes to him for help in getting his beloved, Epidicus complains:

men piacularem oportet fieri ob stultitiam tuam,  
ut meum tergum tuae stultitiae subdas succidaneum?  
(139–140)

“Do I gotta become a purificatory sacrifice because of your stupid ass,  
so you can give over my back as a substitute sacrifice for your stupid ass?”

Epidicus sets the stage for a whole series of sacrificial (and, more generally, ritual) imagery during the play.<sup>111</sup> In determining the tenor of the play, Epidicus adopts authorial agency for himself, a technique mirrored by the *seruus callidus* in *Pseudolus* and the women in *Casina*.<sup>112</sup> Soon thereafter, Epidicus sets forth to swindle the play’s two *senes* out of their money and, in his preparations, employs both augural and sacrificial imagery in a single concise unit:

liquido exeo foras auspicio, aui sinistra;  
acutum cultrum habeo, senis qui exenterem marsuppium.  
(182–183)

“I’m headed out with clear auspices, a good bird-omen;  
I got a sharp blade, so I can gut out the old man’s purse.”

The *seruus callidus* has shifted from sacrificial victim to sacrificer or μάγειρος.<sup>113</sup> Epidicus is next ordered by his older master to hire a flute-girl to assist in the sacrifice (314–318); he takes this as an opportunity to swindle the old man further.

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<sup>111</sup> Indeed, one of the play’s two *senes* will use sacrificial imagery soon thereafter (at 173) to characterize the other *senex*—on which imagery, see my discussion of characterization above and of habitual sacrificants in chapter 4.

<sup>112</sup> Slater (2000a) *passim*.

<sup>113</sup> See also my discussion on auspices, *harsupices*, and other non-sacrificial ritual imagery in Plautine Comedy in chapter 5. At 186–189, Epidicus adopts terminology related to leeches in reference to himself, on which see Slater (1993) 117 (emphasis added):

The *seruus callidus* changes the old men into goats; at the same time he transforms himself, through a somewhat unpleasant metaphor, into a leech.... This ability of the *seruus callidus* to transform himself shows and indeed makes possible his verbal power. *He can characterize or rather frame other characters and thereby control them.*

Stratippocles anxiously awaits Epidicus' arrival in a sacrificial manner (*expectando exedor miser atque exenteror*, 320–321).<sup>114</sup> Epidicus, who may be aligned at 338–339 with the ritual embalmer called the *pollinctor*,<sup>115</sup> celebrates successes achieved under his own omen-taking, *meo auspicio* (343), and Stratippocles attributes his own success to the very same thing (*auspicio Epidici*, 381).<sup>116</sup> Then, as Eduard Fraenkel first recognized, Epidicus is made into a figure of myth at 488, where the *miles gloriosus* implicitly and metaphorically labels him Agamemnon and his master Iphigenia (2007 [1922]: 60)—and she, I add, was a sacrificial victim. The clever slave is now a mythic sacrificant, exploiting his kin (or, in this case, master) for a supposed greater good.

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Though the leech metaphor is not in itself sacrificial or ritual imagery, the idea of draining blood from *senes*/goats might be, especially when the “blood” drained is money, and the money is obtained by “gutting” (*exenteror*) the money pouch (on which see my next footnote).

<sup>114</sup> Hanson (1959b) 98 n. 67 says of *exenteror* here: “Apparently the metaphor [of gutting the moneybag] stuck in Plautus’ consciousness, for he uses the word *exenteror* three more times in the same play (320, 511, 672), but in none of the other plays.” Ketterer also focuses on the money metaphor (1986b: 95). I suggest that Plautus was in conscious control of his language and repeated *exenteror* not because of some subconscious caprice, but rather as part of his program of sacralization in *Epidicus*. *Exentero* is not attested before *Epidicus* and hence may be a Plautine invention, derived by verbalizing the Greek word for guts, *ἐντερα*, and adding to it the prepositional prefix *ex-*.

Greek *ἐντερα* is a common word (cf. *LSJ*, q. v.), sometimes with no sacrificial context (as in the disembowelment of warriors in Homer, e.g. *Iliad* 13.507). Sacrifice, however, definitely can be associated with the term. A segment of Cassandra’s prophecy in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, wherein she describes the murder (and disembowelment) of children by blood relatives, links *ἐντερα* with two terms for meat (*κρεῶν* and *βορᾶς*) and the standard Greek word for sacrificial innards, *σπλάγχχν’[α]* (1220–1221). In ancient Greece, as discussed in chapter 1, meat meant sacrifice, so it is very likely that *ἐντερα* has sacrificial undertones in this passage from *Agamemnon*. In Greek Old Comedy, Aristophanes uses *ἐντερα* both ways, for visceral death scenes (*Frogs* 476) and for sacrificial meat (*Knights* 1184, where the *ἐντερα* are described as sent by “the goddess,” 1185).

Slater (2000a) also identifies the first instance in Plautus of *exentero* (*Epidicus* 183) as related to sacrifice. Although primarily focused on Epidicus’ metatheatrical relationship to the audience, Slater identifies the linkage between sacrifice, augury, and military imagery in this passage. Epidicus’ “imagery of auspices and a knife to disembowel not the sacrifice but Periphanes’ purse (181–83) paints him in the typical military colors of the *servus gloriosus*, since auspices are taken before a military campaign” (21). Cf. also Slater (2001) 196 and n. 14.

<sup>115</sup> On which see Jocelyn (2001) 289–290 and nn. 168–172.

<sup>116</sup> Niall Slater also links the auspices to Roman military commanders, and more specifically to the pattern of *serui gloriosi* in *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Persa*, and *Pseudolus* (2001: 195–196 and nn. 10 and 12).

Epidicus grows to such a level of power, and thus disfavor with his older master, that not even the twelve Olympian gods can save him from the punishment awaiting him (610–611). Finally, in a climactic scene of the play, when the two *senes* have discovered how thoroughly Epidicus has bamboozled them, the one says to the other:

apage illum a me, nam ille quidem Volcani iratist filius:  
quaqua tangit, omne amburit, si astes, aestu calefacit.  
(673–674)

“Get that guy the hell away from me, ’cause he’s totally the son of an angry Vulcan:  
he completely burns whatever he touches and if you stand near ’im, he’ll make you hot with his in-canny-descence.”

Epidicus, whose name has arguably from the beginning of the play invoked the name of a divinity,<sup>117</sup> has gone from slave to victim to sacrificer to sacrifice-organizer (to ritual embalmer?) to *auspex* (or even *imperator*) to mythic king to demi-god.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, “[w]ith the discovery of Telestis, Epidicus’ fears turn to relief and smug victory, marked by the fact that *his perceptions of the gods’ powers seem to have changed.*”<sup>119</sup> The program of sacralization finishes with a pun on *calidus* (suggested by *calefacit*) and *seruus callidus*, of which Epidicus is a prime example.<sup>120</sup>

From this moment on, Epidicus has complete authorial power over the progression of the play’s plot. He wraps up the storyline, gets the girl for his younger master, makes his

<sup>117</sup> See Ketterer (1986b) 101 on the connection to the goddess Δίκη.

<sup>118</sup> Add this example, the identification of Epidicus as a son of Vulcan, to Hanson’s list in his section on “Human deification” (1959b: 69).

<sup>119</sup> Ketterer (1986b) 100. Emphasis added. Furthermore, Epidicus twice (at 192 and 675) has lines that group him with other *seruii callidi* who make onstage prayers in response to successful deception plots (Fraenkel 2007 [1922]: 125). Such religious activity fits with the program of sacralization I have identified in the work.

<sup>120</sup> For the *calidus/callidus* pun, cf. also *Miles Gloriosus* 226. For another pun on *callidus*, see *Asinaria* 419, *qui latera conteram tua, quae occalluere plagis*; Gowers has also identified the pun in play at *Epidicus* 256 and *Mostellaria* 665 (1993: 106). I see the potential for further wordplay on *aestus*, *astus* (craft, cunning), *astutus*, and Greek ἀστῆτος—plus a verbal patterning with *astes* and *aestu*.

older master unwillingly tie him up, and at last procures his own freedom—proof that he is more powerful than the twelve Olympian gods, since he extricated himself from punishment entirely on his own!<sup>121</sup> Plautus uses sacrificial and augural imagery throughout *Epidicus* to enact the ultimate sublimation of character, from *seruus callidus* to divine hero.<sup>122</sup> The divine hero<sup>123</sup> finally presides over the formation of a new comedic society,<sup>124</sup> in what Robert Ketterer calls a “triple promotion,” with the manumission of Acropolistis, Telestis, and Epidicus himself (1986b: 102).

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<sup>121</sup> Jocelyn (2001) 284, arguing *contra* Fantham (1981) 21: “the Chrysalus of the *Bacchides*, the Palaestrio of the *Miles* and the eponymous slave of the *Pseudolus* make as much as Epidicus does of the divine protection they confidently think they enjoy.” Yet what neither Jocelyn nor Fantham have identified is the emphatic progression from sacrificial victim to demi-god in what I have labeled the play’s program of sacralization.

<sup>122</sup> The entire program of sacralization is a product of Plautine invention. See Goldberg (1978) for an argument on the complete originality of *Epidicus*, and cp. Stärk (1989), as well as Benz and Lefèvre (1998). For a general catalogue of religious concepts in *Epidicus*, see Jocelyn (2001) 278, with a comment on the originality of this religious material: “In several cases the substance of what the personage says is unimaginable in Athens or in an Attic comedy. In all of them the words and phrases chosen seem deliberately to evoke the religious language of the Rome of Plautus’ time.”

<sup>123</sup> Henry Jocelyn felt that Epidicus was not a Plautine hero but that Plautus in fact “distances himself morally” from the play’s protagonist (2001: 264, arguing *contra* Slater 2000a). I disagree, for I believe that the sacralization of Epidicus throughout his play makes him a very important character both to the play’s progression and to Plautus’ own dramatic goals. I take issue especially with Jocelyn’s assertion about the religious language that “[n]one of the cases...affects the structure of the plot of the *Epidicus* or, *except at a superficial level, the characterisation of the personages*” (2001: 287; emphasis added). Again, Goldberg (1978) makes a strong case for the absence of a Greek original to *Epidicus*, so Epidicus is perhaps the most Plautine hero of all—and this was one of Plautus’ own favorite plays.

<sup>124</sup> In his conduct of the play’s resolution, Epidicus (as Elaine Fantham has pointed out) delivers “many inversions of suppliant language” when ordering his master around (1981: 22)—and thus Epidicus attributes to himself yet another layer of social authority and religious meaning.



## CHAPTER 4

### Gender and status

We have seen in much detail how sacrifice is represented onstage and how it operates theatrically. I now turn to several interesting patterns and questions regarding the relationship and interaction of sacrifice with gender and with status in the New Comedy of Menander and Plautus.<sup>1</sup> In my final chapter, I will take a step back to evaluate questions of sacrifice, ritual, and community in the genre as a whole.

In the first section of this chapter, I take up issues of gender. The women of New Comedy do indeed sacrifice, so I will discuss the contents of their offerings as well as the effects and implications of their sacrificial authority and general religious agency. The material dealing with men and sacrifice is noteworthy too, as much for what it omits as for what it contains. The chapter's second section focuses on status, specifically on the matter of slaves and sacrifice. As I stated in connection with pimp-sacrificants in the previous chapter, sacrifice can be used as a label of citizen status; I explore the other side of the question—the capacity of non-citizens, especially slaves, to conduct ritual—below.

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<sup>1</sup> As in the previous two chapters, here my discussion will not include Terence, since his work includes no mention or instance of any sacrificial offering. Examination of his comedy is again deferred to chapter 5.

## Gender

There are four main classes of women portrayed in New Comedy: adult married women (henceforth *matronae*, the shorthand for their Roman stock type), unmarried citizen girls (*uirgines*), self-employed courtesans or slave prostitutes (*meretrices*), and slave women (*ancillae*). In the plays of Menander and Plautus, members of each group do, at some point, conduct sacrifice. All types of women in New Comedy, that is, can wield sacrificial authority to some degree. Citizen men—whether obstreperous old men (*senes*) or lovestruck youths (*adulescentes inamorati*)—also conduct sacrifice, but male slaves (*serui*) generally do not. In this section I investigate the gender patterns to sacrifice that are revealed or suggested by my analysis of sacrifice in the previous chapter. I begin with women, both in the details of their ritual acts as sacrificants and in their general religious activity, and then turn to men.

### *Female sacrificants*

No difference exists, speaking proportionately, between the frequency with which women and men sacrifice animal offerings. Men sacrifice animals about half again as often as women, but men overall sacrifice about half again as often as women.<sup>2</sup> In fact, since male characters in both Menander and Plautus claim much more “screen time” or lines of dialogue than female characters, women actually do, proportionally speaking, sacrifice more than men.<sup>3</sup> The playwrights, then, are more likely to characterize female characters as religiously

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<sup>2</sup> Men sacrifice or intend to sacrifice animals 7 times out of 14 extant sacrifices by men in New Comedy. Women sacrifice or intend to sacrifice animals 3 times out of 8 extant sacrifices by women, not including two sacrifices by women with uncertain offerings.

<sup>3</sup> In Menander, women deliver 346 lines out of 4,080 total lines extant, or 8.48% of all lines (Bain 1984: 31). They perform or intend to perform 4 out of 11 extant Menandrian sacrifices, or 36.36% of all sacrifices. In Plautus, women deliver 2,620 lines out of 21,214 total lines extant, or 12.35% of all lines (Adams 1984: 49, 51). They perform or intend to perform 6 out of 13 sacrifices, or 46.15% of all sacrifices. Therefore, after adjusting for the amount of dialogue assigned to male and female characters in these plays, women sacrifice approxi-

devout. As we will see below, this suggestion by the numbers is indeed borne out in the anecdotal evidence.

For the most part, women's and men's offerings do not differ significantly. Both sacrifice sheep, cattle, wine, and garlands. Men in Menander additionally may offer a sesame cake in conjunction with the marriage rites.<sup>4</sup> Men likewise sacrifice cattle more often than do women, and only men offer pigs.<sup>5</sup> Although it might be expected that women would sacrifice female victims and men would sacrifice male victims, this pattern does not hold true in Menander,<sup>6</sup> while in Plautus the gender of victims is indeterminate.

In only one respect are the contents of women's sacrifices particularly distinctive from men's: incense and fragrances (*tus*, *murrinus*, *stata*, *odor Arabicus*) are the offerings almost exclusively of women.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, such offerings may be restricted exclusively to unmarried women, or exclusively to citizen women. With the former possibility, we include the *uirgo* Phaedria and the *meretrices* Phronesium, Chrysis, Adelphasium and Anterastilis, and Philocomasium<sup>8</sup>—in contrast to *Amphitruo* 738, where the *seruus callidus* Sosia is

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mately three times (in Plautus) to four times (in Menander) more than men do. The line counts and line assignments are disputable, to a certain degree, but the general relationship will remain steady: women sacrifice more often than men in relation to the amount of time they spend onstage.

<sup>4</sup> *Samia* 123 and 195.

<sup>5</sup> At *Perikeiromene* 996 and *Rudens* 1206.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., a (likely) male victim for a female sacrificant at *Dyskolos* 399 (ὕπὸ τοῦτου) and a (definite) female victim for a male sacrificant at *Perikeiromene* 996 (τῇν ὅν θυέτω).

<sup>7</sup> Two noteworthy exceptions: the *adulescens inamoratus* Moschion of *Samia*, who throughout the play is not really invested in the preparations for his own wedding (except for a preoccupation with ritual bathing), discusses making a libation and an offering of incense (158); and an unnamed sailor in *Karchedonios* fr. 1 (see Arnott 1996: 102) mentions that his sacrifice of incense to Boreas was (exceptionally for New Comedy) unsuccessful in bringing him a sizable catch of fish. See my discussion of this fragment in the next main section.

<sup>8</sup> Phaedria: *Aulularia* 23. Phronesium: *Truculentus* 476. Chrysis: *Samia* fr. 2 (see Arnott 2000a: 189)—the assignment here is uncertain, but I think it more likely that the offering of incense with the help of an *ancilla*, named Tryphe, is made by the *meretrix* Chrysis than by the *senex* Demeas. Adelphasium and Anterastilis: *Poe-*

harshly mocking the married Alcumena when he suggests that she make an offering of *mola salsa aut tus* (an exception proving the rule, so to speak). For the latter possibility we would point to the offerings of Phaedria, Alcumena, and Adelphasium and Anterastilis, in stark contrast to the falsified sacrifices of the real *meretrices*: Philocomasium as she pretends to be her foreign (and presumably citizen) twin sister and, most strikingly, Phronesium as she pretends apparently to be a kind of *matrona* with a baby at her hip.<sup>9</sup> I incline towards the latter explanation—that incense is an offering made by citizen women, or by courtesans mimicking citizen women.

Similarly, women alone, without exception, simply do not joke about sacrifice. They, unlike male characters, do not use sacrificial imagery to mock other characters, and they never suggest that another character sacrifice in order to insult that character.<sup>10</sup> The singular exception is the singular *ancilla* of *Curculio*, Leaena, and she merely participates in a mock sacrifice by accepting a “libation” made to her by an *adulescens inamoratus* goaded on by his *seruus callidus* (*Curculio* 80).

### *Women with religious agency*

New Comedy consistently characterizes citizen women—both *matronae*, namely Dorippa (*Mercator* 675) and the nameless mother of Sostratos (*Dyskolos* 259 and 395), and *uirgines*, the two held as *meretrices* in *Poenulus* as well as Phaedria of *Aulularia*—as habitu-

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*nulus* 847, 1174, 120. (Note that these two women are in fact unmarried *uirgines*, held by a pimp in unlawful slavery at the opening of the play.) Philocomasium: *Miles Gloriosus* 411.

<sup>9</sup> Also Chrysis of *Samia*, who is in an almost marital relationship with Demeas, as marked by Demeas’ regular use of the word *γυνή* to refer to her.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the only suggestion to sacrifice made by a female character in extant New Comedy comes from Demeas’ *ancilla*, who tells him to make a celebratory sacrifice at the end of *Perikeiromene*.

ally and piously performing sacrifices.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the sacrifices these citizen women perform are always successful. In fact, in *Poenulus*, Adelphasium and Anterastilis are marked out by a member of their household as the only ones able to achieve success in their offerings, despite significant earlier effort for successful sacrifice by their owner Lycus. Citizen women in extant New Comedy, then, repeatedly express their religious devotion in concrete form—that is, through material offerings—and with consistent acceptance by the gods.

Perhaps the most interesting of the previously mentioned citizen women is the mother of Sostratos, in *Dyskolos*. Early in the play, Sostratos wryly but straightforwardly describes his mother's religious behavior:

μέλλουσα δ' ἡ μήτηρ θεῶν θύειν τινί—  
οὐκ οἶδ' ὅτῳ—ποιεῖ δὲ τοῦθ' ὅσημέρῳ,  
περιέρχεται θύουσα τὸν δῆμον κύκλῳ  
ἅπαντ'—ἀπέσταλκ' αὐτὸν αὐτόθεν τινὰ  
μισθωσόμενον μάγειρον.

(260–264)

Mother's planning on sacrificing to some god or another—  
I don't really know which one—but she does this every day,  
she goes sacrificing all 'round the entire district in a circle—  
and she's sent *him* [their slave Getas] to go  
hire her a local sacrificer.

This passage is a prime example of characterization via habitual sacrifice. The fact that Sostratos' mother regularly and frequently conducts sacrifices labels her as either superstitious (to the skeptic, on which see directly below) or as upright and pious. Yet the audience, thanks to an expository prologue by the god Pan, knows his mother's motivation for the current sacrifice: she has had a dream foretelling of (romantic) hardship to be endured by her son. Since this is the reason for her ritual activity, Sostratos' mother is marked as clearly de-

<sup>11</sup> The *ancilla* Leaena also performs a libation sacrifice at *Curculio* 125, in accordance with her religious responsibilities, but, in doing so, she expresses dissatisfaction at her obligation to give up some of her newly acquired wine.

vout, and as clearly devoted to protecting her son's well-being. Such characterization is emphatically positive and makes her into a sympathetic character.

The mother's piety is negatively characterized by Getas himself a bit later on:

ἐὰν ἴδῃ γὰρ ἐνύπνιον τὸν Πᾶνα τὸν  
Παιανιοῖ, τούτῳ βαδιδούμεθ', οἶδ' ὅτι,  
θύσοντες εὐθύς.

(407–409)

'Cause if she saw in a dream Paeanian  
Pan, we'd go all the way over—believe you me—  
to sacrifice to him right away.

Getas' criticism essentially reflects his own dissatisfaction at having to lug around all the sacrificial materials, particularly the sheep with which he is encumbered. Hence, by contrast with Getas' reluctance, the mother's determination to pursue all means of protecting her son strengthens the sense of her as devout and devoted.

Ruth Scodel has remarked on Sostratos' mother that "[t]he only character in the world of New Comedy who tries to influence the action by sacrifice is a superstitious and silly woman" (1993: 172). I argue that this assertion is false. Sostratos' mother is not characterized as silly, except perhaps to a reader (or audience member) skeptical of the religious meaning of sacrifice to the Greeks. If sacrifice is a rote action with no sense of personal spiritual fulfillment, that is, a habitual sacrificant is therefore silly. As I demonstrated in chapter 1, however, such is not the case—rather, sacrifice was a central act to the Graeco-Roman religious experience, both personally and publicly. In addition, the sacrifice performed by Sostratos' mother succeeds both in terms of religion and in terms of its mechanical effect on the play's plot, for it leads to what Scodel acknowledges as the "dramatic and thematic importance...[of] the final reconciliatory celebration" (*ibidem*). In other words, since it is the sacrifice initiated by Pan but performed by Sostratos' mother that brings

Sostratos together with his beloved and that ultimately is responsible for the formation of the renewed comedic society, the act itself—and therefore the woman who undertook it—is central to the play, not merely a silly diversion.<sup>12</sup>

Another mother who sacrifices habitually seems to have played an important role in Menander's *Phasma*. Surviving primarily in a plot summary by Donatus,<sup>13</sup> *Phasma* apparently included a mother separated from her child, who lived next door. The mother constructed a shrine on the edge of her home so as to be able to see her child whenever she went out to “sacrifice.” Although the sacrifices mentioned by Donatus are technically falsified—since her true motivation for performing them is meeting her daughter—Donatus gives no indication that the offerings themselves were fake or spurious, and so I see in this scenario a combination of the religious devotion connoted by habitual sacrifice and the maternal devotion demonstrated by constant contact with her daughter.

We can identify two other instances where women are favorably characterized as habitual sacrificants: Knemon's daughter Plangon in *Dyskolos* and Phaedria in *Aulularia*. These two *uirgines* are described by the divine prologues to their respective plays as consistently honoring the deities inhabiting nearby shrines (e.g., Νύμφας κολακεύουσ' ἐπιμελῶς τιμῶσά τε, *Dyskolos* 37)—and the prologues promise a remarkable boon (namely, marriage)

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<sup>12</sup> I disagree equally and for the same reasons with Matthew Leigh's contention that Sostratos' mother (along with Pamphilus' mother in Terence's *Hecyra*) is an example of a *truphe*, a “free-spending” member of the “urban leisure class” (2005: 99 and nn. 12–13). Although Sostratos' mother may be relatively well-to-do, her elite status is not the reason for her sacrifice—her devotion to her son and to the gods is. On the other hand, Leigh's implicit point here, that only the relatively well-off would have the financial wherewithal to conduct regular animal sacrifice, is valid, and may help explain why slaves in New Comedy simply do not sacrifice (on which see my discussion below).

<sup>13</sup> Arnott (2000a) 406–409, and see the section on Menander in the previous chapter.

to each in reward for their piety.<sup>14</sup> Habitual sacrifice by the *uirgines* brings them rewards within the play, and their habitual sacrifice also aligns the audience with them, just as it did with Sostratos' mother. Although Phaedria does not appear onstage, Plangon does, and her words themselves reinforce her characterization as pious and sympathetic, for she hesitates to interrupt a sacrifice at the shrine next door.<sup>15</sup>

Two more citizen women are worth mentioning in a broader religious connection than simply sacrifice—Palaestra and Ptolemocratia from *Rudens*. Palaestra, the play's *uirgo*, is shipwrecked near her long-lost father's home while in servitude to a pimp; the play ends with an *anagnorisis* between her and her father, and the *anagnorisis* is followed by the father's sacrifice to celebrate their reunion. As Eleanor Leach (1974: *passim*) and Robert Ketterer (1986c: 41) have argued, the play presents Palaestra as a Venus-like figure, emerging from the sea and going to a shrine of Venus for purification and rebirth by *anagnorisis*—and, likewise, the casket containing her tokens of recognition goes through a similar Venusian rebirth process.<sup>16</sup> I simply add that the celebratory sacrifice, performed in honor of Palaestra at the shrine to Venus,<sup>17</sup> further enhances her affiliation with Venus and, by aligning her with

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<sup>14</sup> For the *uirgines*, the reward is a spouse; for Sostratos' mother, a *matrona* and the other pious sacrificant of *Dyskolos*, it is a spouse for her child.

<sup>15</sup> Text and citation in my discussion of Menander in chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ketterer (1986c) 41 on the significance of the prop:

The trunk also fits into a complex of birth imagery which runs throughout the play. The connection between the lost women and the goddess Venus has already been noted. It is made stronger by the parallel between Venus' birth from the sea and Palaestra's own emergence onto the shore in a shell-like boat (Leach 1974: 921–922 *et passim*). She goes from there to the shrine of Venus to be washed, i.e., purified, and eventually to find herself 'reborn' in the sense that she discovers her parentage. The retrieval of the trunk with the birth tokens inside it is a repetition of this process of birth from the sea. Her tokens, too, come to shore in a 'shell' (the trunk), and with their identity lost until they participate in an *anagnorisis* (cf. Konstan 1983: 82).

<sup>17</sup> Although the sacrifice is not performed onstage, it stands to reason that the sacrifice is to be conducted at the shrine to Venus, since it is the play's (only) onstage shrine and it is directly adjacent to the house of Palaestra's father.



the patron deity of the neighborhood in which the play is set, underscores the importance of her fate to the central concerns of the plot.<sup>18</sup>

The priestess of Venus in *Rudens*, Ptolemaecratia, wields a remarkable kind of sacrificial authority onstage.<sup>19</sup> As she receives the shipwrecked Palaestra and Ampelisca at her shrine, the priestess states that “it would have been better for you to approach with white garments and sacrificial victims—it’s unusual to come to this shrine in this manner of yours,” *aequius uos erat | candidatas uenire hostiatusque; ad hoc | fanum ad istunc modum non ueniri solet* (269–271). This is, remarkably, a suggested sacrifice coming from a woman—the only such suggestion in extant Roman comedy.<sup>20</sup> As I stated above, women do not joke about sacrifice, and Ptolemaecratia’s suggestion is, unlike the sacrificial suggestions of men discussed in the previous chapter, completely serious—yet it is still, like those suggestions, an assertion of authority. The term *hostiatus* is indeed grandiloquent<sup>21</sup> and, as Palaestra subsequently points out, well beyond the girls’ means (*quaene eiectae e mari simus... | unde nos hostias agere uoluisti huc?*, 272–273), but Ptolemaecratia is not making a disingenuous suggestion—she simply exhibits more concern for the proper ritual conduct of a post-travel thanksgiving sacrifice than the present temporal disposition of two shipwrecked foreigners.

Though her appearance onstage is brief, Ptolemaecratia’s characterization is very sophisticated.<sup>22</sup> She first claims the title of priestess for herself, for her entrance is neither an-

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<sup>18</sup> Palaestra also, during the course of the play, repeatedly demonstrates her filial piety in advance of the *anagnorisis* with her father—see Hanson (1959b) 92–93.

<sup>19</sup> And she is the only priestess who appears onstage in extant New Comedy.

<sup>20</sup> Compare the singular suggestion to sacrifice in Menander, by the *ancilla* Doris at the end of *Perikeiromene*—a passage discussed in chapter 3 and, briefly, above.

<sup>21</sup> See immediately below on Ptolemaecratia’s characteristic use of language.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Hanson states that her “outstanding moral quality is self-denying charity” (1959b: 93).

nounced nor foreshadowed and, as Zola Packman has shown, the earliest recoverable role designation in the text for her is merely *anus* (1999: 246). She uses archaic and poetic language, as with one of her first questions to Palaestra and Ampelisca, *nempe equo ligneo per uias caerulas | estis uectae?* (268–269).<sup>23</sup> The girls supplicate to her (275–279) and she takes them in under her protection (280),<sup>24</sup> she talks of herself as having a (positive) public persona,<sup>25</sup> and she appeals to appropriate, deferential behavior (*oportet*, 289)—while at the same time presenting herself as a paragon of women (*misericordior nulla est feminarum*, 281). Ptolemaecratia talks more openly and positively about the religious nature of her patron deity than does perhaps any other Plautine character: *bonam atque obsequentem deam atque haud grauatam | patronam exsequuntur benignamque multum*. Furthermore, in these lines, she describes Venus as *patrona*, a rare feminized form of *patronus* that does not appear before Plautus.<sup>26</sup> The effect of this appellation, I argue, is to highlight her own role as a kind of *patrona* to Palaestra and Ampelisca.

After she exits the stage from this scene, however, Ptolemaecratia is basically treated by other characters as merely another part of the apparatus of the shrine to Venus. Her name is supplied only once, at 481, when a local (the slave Sceparnio) yells at her to come get her temple’s sacred urn (*heus exi, Ptolemaecratia, cape hanc urnam tibi*); otherwise, characters

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Arnott (1969) 130: “By a technique grounded (even if it did not originate) in Greek new comedy, Ptolemaecratia is characterized by her diction. She betrays a fondness for poetical and old-fashioned expressions and forms.”

<sup>24</sup> This reception of supplication is the act of a (usually male) head of household. Paul Burton has described Ptolemaecratia’s action here as granting *hospitium* to Palaestra and Ampelisca (2004: 215 n. 25).

<sup>25</sup> 285: *ego huius fani sacerdos clueo*. Note the archaic flavor of *clueo*, in line with Ptolemaecratia’s general patterns of speech, as just discussed. The meaning of her very name is akin to the names of Plautine *milites gloriosi* (e.g., Pyrgopolynices of *Miles Gloriosus*), though her name is not comically overused by other characters as it is with the *miles* Polymachaeroplages in *Pseudolus*.

<sup>26</sup> Plautus uses it only once elsewhere (cf. *OLD*, q. v.), in a throwaway joke about the tongue at *Asinaria* 292—and there, I argue, it is merely a grammatically correct stand-in for *patronus* in agreement with *lingua*.

refer to her in the same way they refer to the shrine's other cult objects.<sup>27</sup> Because of this manner of reference to her, Ptolemaetia effectively ceases to be a character—indeed, she does not again appear onstage, not even at the play's central conflict between Labrax and Daemones over the shrine's sacrosanctity or at the play's festal denouement—and she becomes, instead, essentially a prop that, like the temple urn, simply enacts mechanical functions upon the play.<sup>28</sup>

Overall, Ptolemaetia arguably holds the most social, if not the most dramatic, authority in the play. Her reception of Palaestra and Ampelisca's supplication essentially obligates an upright citizen such as Daemones to defend the girls to the utmost, and her decision precipitates both the central conflict of the play (between Labrax and Daemones) and, indirectly, the play's crucial *anagnorisis* between Daemones and Palaestra. On a metatheatrical level, Ptolemaetia's status as a representative of Venus, goddess of love and one of the chief divinities of Plautine comedy,<sup>29</sup> underscores the sense of authority she displays in her self-presentation onstage. Unlike the citizen males of the play (namely Labrax and Daemones<sup>30</sup>), Ptolemaetia does not distort sacrificial imagery for her own purposes but instead demonstrates to Palaestra and Ampelisca the appropriate methods for conducting sacrifice—and, by extension, an appropriate way of interacting within healthy citizen society.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *haec sacerdos Veneris* (430), *sacerdos* (440), *iam hercle euocabo hinc **hanc sacerdotem** foras* (479); cf. *urna Veneris / urna Veneria* (473 / 475) and *Veneris signum* (648). Especially suggestive is the collocation of *sacerdos Veneria* and *in Veneris fano* (644).

<sup>28</sup> For the term “mechanical functions,” see my discussion of props in chapter 2 and also Ketterer (1986a).

<sup>29</sup> See the section on the nature of the gods in chapter 5, and, on Venus specifically, Hanson (1959b) 62.

<sup>30</sup> On the interchange of sacrificial imagery between Labrax and Daemones, see the section on the “(im)pious” pimp in chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup> On sacrifice and community (in Plautus and in general), see the next chapter.

Besides the women discussed here, there is only one other habitual sacrificant in extant New Comedy. Though the character will be discussed in the section on men and sacrifice below, I point out here that the character is a sort of exception that proves the rule for habitual sacrificants. While these women are all characterized as pious in a positive light, the character in question, Periphanes of *Epidicus*, is alleged to sacrifice habitually in a way that reflects negatively on his character.

If citizen women are comedic models of religious piety, *meretrices* are the polar opposite. Of the genuine *meretrices* in Menander and Plautus—professional courtesans such as the eponymous *Bacchides* or the mother-daughter teams in *Cistellaria*, rather than the many free citizen girls held in a state of slave prostitution—only two offer sacrifice.<sup>32</sup> Both of these sacrifices are falsified (that is, spurious and insincere): Philocomasium of *Miles Gloriosus* conducts a fake sacrifice in fake gratitude for a fake safe journey while acting as her fake twin sister (411); Phronesium in *Truculentus* conducts a fake protection sacrifice for her fake baby boy (476). For a point of contrast we can look to the sacrifices conducted by the *uirgines* held as *meretrices* in *Poenulus*—Adelphasium and Anterastilis are the only ones who can in fact obtain a successful sacrifice, a capacity that denotes clearly their true free-born status.<sup>33</sup> While the audience knows, thanks to the prologue of *Poenulus*, that Adelphasium and Anterastilis will turn out to be good citizen girls, the genre nevertheless demands a

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<sup>32</sup> Perhaps three, if the offering of incense in the uncertain *Samia* fr. 2 is assigned to the *hetaira* Chrysis, as I suggested is likely above. Arguably, Chrysis (who is apparently in a long-term monogamous relationship with the *senex* Demeas) is performing this sacrifice almost as a wife, and indeed not as a *meretrix*.

<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, another character in the play reports the contents of their sacrifice, including *tus*, *murrinus*, *uenustates*, *munera meretricum*, and *hostiae*. Cattle, *hostiae*, are an elegant offering indeed, and one bankrolled by their wealthy pimp, Lycus. The fragrances are, as I proposed above, consistent with the girls' real status as citizens. The terms *uenustates* and *munera meretricum* are unusual and interesting. I believe that they reflect the focalization of the account through a character uninterested in the sacrificial activity of women. Brian Kroschenko has stated that the latter item "surely included scented oils" (2001: 65 n. 147); if he is correct, then *munera meretricum* overlap with *tus* and *murrinus*—and, as I see it, these "gifts" are as much the offerings of "whores" as the girls themselves are *meretrices* (that is, not at all). The character reporting the contents of the sacrifice, therefore, perceived the offerings just as he perceived Adelphasium and Anterastilis: erroneously.

demonstration of their good, citizen character—and hence the emphasis laid upon their exclusive capability to perform sacrifice successfully. It is significant that the only sacrifices offered by actual *meretrices* are offered on false pretenses, for this trend adds a religious dimension to the generic character prescription for the *meretrix* (akin to that of the pimp): she is clever, she is deceptive, she is self-centered, and, in the realm of sacrifice, her actions amount to sacrilege.

Women in New Comedy are occasionally the honorees of celebratory sacrifices, particularly at the end of *Perikeiromene* and (as mentioned above) the end of *Rudens*.<sup>34</sup> The scene from Menander is not particularly unusual; it is perhaps worth noting that the animal sacrificed for the celebration is a sow, a cheaper offering than sheep or cattle, since sows produce neither wool nor milk, only meat. On the other hand, the sacrifice that takes place at *Rudens* 1206 is indeed unusual—it is the only such celebratory sacrifice in Plautus, for any character, male or female.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is a particularly extravagant offering and feast, consisting of multiple sheep and multiple pigs (*agni et porci sacri*).<sup>36</sup> Rather than contrast the two cases, I suggest that they both point towards the value New Comedy places on citizen

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<sup>34</sup> In fact, wedding ceremonies are more common than celebrations of non-matrimonial family unification; in Plautus, these kinds of marriage celebration are rare and tend to focus on slaves, not citizens (as with the sham slave-wedding in *Casina*).

<sup>35</sup> The young *matrona* Panegyris at *Stichus* 396 may be calling for a sacrifice to celebrate the return of her husband Epignomus (so Jocelyn 2001: 266 and n. 24), but the mention of sacrifice is short (one line only), vague, and not revisited during the play. See chapter 5 for a short consideration of a situation inverse to that of *Rudens* in *Heauton Timoroumenos*, wherein a celebratory sacrifice that would be expected upon the reunion of father and son is deliberately omitted.

<sup>36</sup> Why pigs in both the Menandrian and Plautine sacrifices? Froma Zeitlin, drawing on Delcourt (1959) 97, says of the sacrificial pig, “its value lies in neither the sacrificial nor the lustratory functions of the animal, but rather in its close association with female genitalia” (1996: 104, cf. 104–105 n. 37). Note that while a woman is honored with a female victim in Menander (τὴν ὅν θυέτω, *Perikeiromene* 996), the woman in Plautus is honored with male victims (or victims of unspecified gender, *agni et porci sacri*, 1206). The connection in comedy between women and pigs predates Menander, as Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians* jokingly refers to his daughters as “piglets.” See also Henderson (1991) 130–132. Sharon James suggests to me (*per litteras*) that one part of the reason for pigs, sheep, and goats being sacrificed for women but not for men is that cattle (or, more specifically, oxen), are useful for work as draft animals, whereas pigs, sheep, and goats are not so useful for such work.

girls. A single sow is not a plentiful sacrifice, but it is not meager either, given the rarity of meat in the Greek diet (on which see discussion in chapter 1). In both instances, then, the *anagnorisis* of a citizen girl, and the ensuing marriage, are celebrated with sacrifice. The primary objective of New Comedy, especially in Menander, is marriage and the production of citizen children, so marriageable citizen girls form a sort of hinge for the basic stock plot—and hence merit ample celebration when they are reunited with their kin.

### *Men and sacrifice*

Women, as I demonstrated above, sacrifice more than men. Yet men do sacrifice in New Comedy, and their sacrifices do concurrently generate worthwhile observations on the treatment of religion in the corpus. Most importantly, male characters—both citizen and slave, unlike women—more often joke about sacrifices than perform or plan them.

Genuine sacrifices by men—that is, actual sacrifices rather than those suggested, corrupted, or performed under false pretenses—are rare and, when genuine, the sacrifices tend to be in some way unusual. A presumably successful sacrifice mentioned at *Curculio* 532 and 558, for instance, is conducted by Cappadox, the pious pimp discussed in chapter 3. Another pimp, Lycus of *Poenulus*, offers sacrifice twice, once directly and, remarkably, unsuccessfully (452), the second time indirectly through slaves and with result unknown (617). A Menandrian soldier who appears to vow a sacrifice “to all the gods” (θύσαιμι πᾶσι τοῖς θεοῖ[s], *Misoumenos* 89) is actually quoting or impersonating his beloved—again a reflection of the fact that women’s sacrifice is more prevalent than men’s in the plays of the genre. The *adulescens inamoratus* Phaedromus makes an onstage libation at *Curculio* 80, but the

libation is not really genuine, because it is made not to a god but to the pimp's doorkeeper Leaena.<sup>37</sup>

The only normal, genuine sacrifices that men offer in New Comedy are celebratory sacrifices. Even so, these sacrifices are all focused on women or on citizen marriage. Men celebrate reunion with their daughters and lovers (*Perikeiromene* 996 and *Rudens* 1206, as discussed above) or they celebrate kinship units formed by the transfer of a citizen daughter to a new husband (*Aspis*; *Aulularia* 327 and *passim*; *Samia* 123, 158, 195, and 399). Even the peacemaking sacrifice made by *Amphitruo* to Jupiter at *Amphitruo* 1126 is still essentially focused on a woman, for the object of strife between the man and the god is Alcumena, the mother of each man's son.

Finally, what seems, at first, to be one male character's stated intent to offer a garland upon a nearby altar in fact reveals the lack of seriousness displayed by most men in New Comedy, especially in Plautus. The *senex* Callicles of *Trinummus* makes his first appearance onstage in the play with these words:

Larem corona nostrum decorari uolo.  
uxor, uenerare ut nobis haec habitatio  
bona fausta felix fortunataque euenat—  
teque ut quam primum possim uideam emortuam.  
(39–42)

I want our Lar honored with a garland.  
Wife, pray to him to make this our domicile  
turn out good and favored and felicitous and fortunate—  
*and also to make me as quickly as possible see you—dead.*

The grumpy old man, in a last-line aside, twists the prayer formula into a mean-spirited wish for violence against his wife.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The details of one sacrifice, a libation at *Misoumenos* 552, are too uncertain to allow for inclusion here.

The use here of sacrifice as an insult by a male character is not an isolated instance. Apocides, a supporting *senex* in *Epidicus*, alleges that Periphanes—another *senex* and the only male habitual sacrificant in extant New Comedy—often sacrifices to the Orcus, god of the underworld, in gratitude for the death of his wife.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned above, this passage seals the gender pattern of habitual sacrifice, with women sacrificing out of piety and men sacrificing out of malignity. Yet Apocides’ allegation also reflects negatively on the character of both old men—on Periphanes, for celebrating his own wife’s death in such formal and ritualistic manner, and on Apocides, for excusing Periphanes’ celebration. Furthermore, the selection of Orcus as the recipient of the supposed sacrifices is unusual, for (as I will demonstrate in chapter 5) this god nowhere else receives or is implied to have received sacrificial offerings. As Orcus is a god of the underworld, his inclusion here does not fit with the life-affirming, festal, Saturnalian bearing of the comedic stage.<sup>40</sup> The negative characterization of Periphanes and Apocides, as well as the distancing effect of the divinity chosen, alienate the audience further from the *senes* (who are already stock blocking characters) and set the

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<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that Callicles is also exceptional in his willingness to torture his slaves onstage. (I owe this point to Sharon James.)

<sup>39</sup> *Epidicus* 175–177:

quotiens sepulcrum uides, sacruficas  
ilico Orco hostiis, neque adeo iniuria,  
quia licitumst eam tibi uiuendo uincere.

However often you see [her] grave, you sacrifice  
cattle right then and there to Orcus—and no problem with that,  
since you got to win out on her in living.

Jocelyn rightly argued that the joke here is a Plautine innovation, but in doing so, he misread the joke as being about Periphanes’ attempts to delay his own death:

Plautus must therefore have invented Periphanes’ behaviour, using the Latin sacral vocabulary, exploiting a local belief that *Orcus* came himself to collect new residents for *Accheruns*, and expecting his audience to believe that at Athens, if not at Rome, *hostiae* would delay his coming (2001: 278).

<sup>40</sup> Note the verbal echoes of Orcus at *Epidicus* 362–363; also see Jocelyn (2001) 281.



stage for Epidicus' righteous bamboozling of them later in the play. Another pattern, too, is clear here: certain male characters<sup>41</sup> tend to use sacrificial terminology to insult women.<sup>42</sup>

In Menander, the use of sacrifice for joking or mocking is gentler overall than in Plautus, but this sacrificial misogyny (so to speak) still occurs. In *Dyskolos*, it is expressed towards Sostratos' mother, both by Sostratos himself and by his slave Getas.<sup>43</sup> Sostratos voices frustration that his mother has sent Getas to find a *μάγειρος* and thus has deprived Sostratos himself of Getas' services; Getas complains that he must carry sacrificial gear around to wherever the mother wishes to sacrifice. Though both comments positively characterize Sostratos' mother, both also evince a mild disdain for her on the part of the speakers. The men, one slave and one citizen, disrespect the citizen woman's sacrificial authority.

In *Samia*, we see one somewhat perplexing comment about sacrifice made by the *senex* Demeas to his lover Chrysis, with whom he is currently arguing: *ἐτέρα γὰρ ἀγαπήσει τὰ παρ' ἐμοί, Χρυσί· νῆ | καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς θύσει*, "well, *another* woman will take pleasure in my stuff, Chrysis—and boy, will she sacrifice to the gods!" (385–386). As I argued in chapter 3, the sacrificial imagery in these lines signifies Demeas' exclusion of Chrysis from his household and his community. At the same time, I believe, the imagery also works to degrade women's sacrificial capacity in general (or at least to portray Demeas as holding a degraded view of that capacity). By saying that another (anonymous, faceless) woman will gladly make some vague sacrifice to unspecified deities, Demeas displays complete disinterest in

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<sup>41</sup> Older, married (or widowed) citizen males, it would seem.

<sup>42</sup> Similarly, it is at religious festivals that some of the young men in New Comedy rape the citizen girls who stand at the center of the genre's standard plots—and it was at just such a festival that these plays were originally performed. Cf. Garton (1972) 36: "As the audience watch New Comedy and hear it tell of *the mischances of unchaperoned girls* at the Dionysia and other festivals, *they are themselves taking part in such a festival.*" (Emphasis added.)

<sup>43</sup> Both passages are cited and translated above.

the details of female religious activity<sup>44</sup> and furthermore assumes control over what will motivate a woman to sacrifice—namely, himself.

Sacrificial humor from the mouths of male characters can, however, be milder and more light-hearted. Disingenuous male sacrificants include gods who sacrifice (Jupiter and Mercury at *Amphitruo* 946 and 1034, respectively) as well as mock offerings: Mercury “sacrifices” a pail of water on Amphitruo’s head (*Amphitruo* 1034),<sup>45</sup> Phaedromus makes a libation to a doorkeeper-*ancilla* (*Curculio* 80), and Menaechmus Sosicles, feigning insanity, threatens (in a thoroughly farcical scene) to sacrifice a *senex* who will not leave him alone (*Menaechmi* 858). The ridiculousness of each of these situations is a comedic end in itself, particularly if one imagines that the vows which Jupiter-as-Amphitruo is fulfilling through sacrifice were vows made to Jupiter.

Men in Plautus also use suggestions to sacrifice as a way of asserting dominance. That is to say, one character can assert dominance over (and, incidentally, insult) others by suggesting that they make a certain offering to a certain, usually preposterous, god. So Ergasilus the parasite recommends that his patron sacrifice a full meal to him (*Captivus* 860), Menaechmus Sosicles signals his belief in another character’s insanity by suggesting that character sacrifice a lustratory pig,<sup>46</sup> Libanus renames himself *Salus* and demands a cow (*bos*!<sup>47</sup>) from his master (*Asinaria* 712), and Sosia gives his mistress Alcumena some cheek by inventing an aspect of Jupiter for her to honor with sacrifice after she reports a weird dream (*Amphitruo* 738).

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<sup>44</sup> As does the speaker describing the offerings of Adelphasium and Anterastilis, as I suggested above.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the pail of water, see brief mentions in chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Menaechmi* 288–330 and 517. I note that Menaechmus Sosicles is on the receiving end of some sacrificial suggestions in the earlier sequence.

<sup>47</sup> See discussion in my section on offerings in chapter 2.

The suggestion game works in reverse only once in the Plautine corpus. In a scene from *Pseudolus* cited, translated, and discussed in chapter 3, the *adulescens inamoratus* Calidorus expresses his joy that the pimp Ballio does not have his beloved Phoenicium for sale by calling upon his slave Pseudolus to send for sacrificial victims and gear. This case is exceptional, for it is the only time that one character willingly proposes to sacrifice to another character.<sup>48</sup> The reversal here demonstrates the totality of Calidorus' subjection to Ballio's dominance—and it also increases the comic tension of the moment, as the sacrificial word-play leads into the scene's main punchline: that Ballio does not have Phoenicium for sale because he has already sold her.

## Status

Much of my discussion of gender has centered on the sacrificial capacity, authority, and activities of men and women of the citizen class, as well as *meretrices*—courtesans who may be slaves but are, just as often, free (but non-citizen) women. Slaves, by contrast, tend in Menander and Plautus not to sacrifice, and tend not to exhibit any sacrificial capacity or authority. Of the six Plautine plays that omit any mention of sacrifice,<sup>49</sup> two are prohibitively fragmentary (*Cistellaria*, *Vidularia*) and the rest feature a major role for one or more slaves, generally *serui callidi*. *Mostellaria* and *Bacchides* are show pieces for the *callidi* Tranio and Chrysalus, respectively; though the plot of *Stichus* is rather decentralized, much

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<sup>48</sup> Phaedromus' libation to Leaena at *Curculio* 80 is required rather than desired—though, once Phaedromus commits to make the libation, he does indeed make it in earnest.

<sup>49</sup> *Bacchides*, *Casina*, *Cistellaria*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Vidularia*.

of it is concerned with the title character, a slave, on his “day off,” so to speak.<sup>50</sup> *Persa* is a play without any masters—without any citizens, that is—whatsoever. Indeed, sacrifice is absent even when it would be expected, as in the major feast scenes in *Mostellaria* (308–391) and at the ends of *Stichus* (683–775) and *Persa* (757–858). These are slave banquets (or, in the case of *Mostellaria*, a slave-coordinated sham banquet), and hence they lack any sacrificial ritual or offerings.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, sacrifice is wholly absent from *Casina*, despite the play’s concentration on a sham wedding. The reason is, I argue, that the wedding is a slave wedding, and hence sacrifice is inapposite, or perhaps uninteresting.<sup>52</sup>

There are exceptions, of course. Leana of *Curculio* and Strobilus of *Aulularia* both make or vow offerings (though they are not exactly normal offerings, as I discuss directly below). Similarly, the pimp Lycus has his slaves offer a sacrifice on his behalf (*Poenulus* 617), but here they are clearly functioning not independently but rather essentially as slave *μάγειροι*. But if, as I argued in my discussion of pimps in chapter 3, sacrifice is in New Comedy a marker of citizen or free status, then sacrificial capacity simply is not something associated with slaves.

### *Slaves and sacrificial capacity*

In the corpus of Roman comedy, slaves, as a rule, do not have sacrificial capacity. In Terence, slaves simply do not sacrifice and are not associated with sacrifice at all. When

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<sup>50</sup> *Stichus* does have one mention of sacrifice (*rem diuinam*, 396), but it is short, vague, fleeting, and largely irrelevant to the content of the play.

<sup>51</sup> And these are also, as C. W. Marshall points out, some of the major feast scenes in Plautus (2006: 54). I discuss feast scenes further in chapter 5.

<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, *Casina* is a play run by women (on which see Slater 2000a: 57–76) and, as I have already demonstrated, women do not joke about sacrifice—and so a sham wedding run by women plotters would by necessity exclude slave sacrifice.

slaves are associated with actual sacrifice (as opposed to sacrificial imagery) in Plautus, the playwright generally is casting the role of the cook as an almost Menandrian *μάγειρος*, as at *Aulularia* 327–330 and 417 (cooks with live lambs and with a *culter*, the ritual knife for sacrifice, respectively),<sup>53</sup> or depicting a slave—essentially a *seruus currens*<sup>54</sup>—obtaining or transporting the sacrificial equipment of his master (e.g., *Pseudolus* 31–34, *Poenulus* 847–850). At *Miles Gloriosus* 411–414, the *meretrix* Philocomasium prepares to offer a sacrifice as thanks for the safe conclusion of overseas travel. Though *meretrices* in Plautus are often slaves, Philocomasium is not—rather, she is a free woman kidnapped abroad by the title character—and, furthermore, she is here planning a sacrifice while impersonating her fictitious, free (probably citizen) twin sister.

Plautine slaves are associated with sacrifice almost exclusively in their harnessing sacrificial imagery to enact role reversals with free persons. In *Truculentus*, a slave threatens to turn the *miles gloriosus* into a sacrificial lamb and gut him (614). At *Asinaria* 712–715, two *seruii callidi* demand altars, cult statues, and sacrifices from the *adulescens inamoratus* they have been assisting, as was discussed in chapter 3.

The only genuine instance of a *seruus* as agent of actual sacrifice appears at *Aulularia* 622–623. (One other potential example of a slave’s sacrifice, *Karchedonios* fr. 1,<sup>55</sup> provides no secure evidence that the fisherman is in fact a slave, so I have excluded it from my consideration here.) The slave Strobilus, who has overheard the *senex* Euclio worrying in the shrine to Fides about the eponymous pot of gold, vows a libation to the goddess if he finds the pot, and then says *id adeo tibi faciam; uerum ego mihi bibam, ubi id fecero*, “So I’ll do

<sup>53</sup> See my discussion of the relationship between *Aulularia* and Menandrian sacrifice in chapter 3.

<sup>54</sup> An errand boy, a common Plautine routine. See Marshall (2006) 59, 193–194, and 272.

<sup>55</sup> See Arnott (1996) 102.

this for you—but when I’ve done it, I’ll drink it myself” (623). In the only instance of a *se-ruus* sacrificing or intending to sacrifice, the slave openly plans on corrupting the sacrifice as soon as he performs it.<sup>56</sup>

### *Slave women and sacrifice*

So also in the only instance of an *ancilla* offering sacrifice. The *ancilla* Leaena, by now a familiar figure to us, libates to Venus from a libation she herself received (*Curculio* 125–127). Yet in the process of making the libation, Leaena laments the fact that she must offer it:

Venus, de paulo paululum hoc tibi dabo haud lubenter.<sup>57</sup>  
nam tibi amantes propitiantes uinum potantes danunt  
omnes, mihi haud saepe euenunt tales hereditates.

Venus, I will grant to you this itty little from my little—but I won’t like it.  
’Cause drunk loverboys are always giving you wine in their offerings,  
all of ’em do it, but I hardly ever get my hands on such inheritances!

A pattern emerges: when slaves do (rarely) offer sacrifices, they loathe the idea of giving up food or drink, and thus they effectively negate the potential value of their sacrifice—and undermine their own sacrificial capacity—because of their schemes or complaints.

*Ancillae* are much less common characters in both Menandrian and Plautine comedy than are *serui* (whether *callidi*, *currentes*, or otherwise). They also function more as domestic servants, taking care of their mistress’ adornment and the like, than as general-purpose

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<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, when Strobilus does find the pot of gold later in the play, he does not in fact offer sacrifice, but instead just hands the pot over to his young master, who returns it to Euclio. Patrick Dombrowski has pointed out to me that an offering to Fides, goddess of trustworthiness, is an unusual choice for a trickster character like Strobilus, who is the closest *Aulularia* comes to a *seruus callidus* in the play. Cf. also Holland (2008) *passim* on the *ancilla* Staphyla’s attempt to fill the *seruus callidus* role in *Aulularia*.

<sup>57</sup> On the ritual parody of *haud lubenter* here, see Hanson (1959b) 85.

workers like *serui*.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, they have no role in sacrifice conducted by their masters, and hence no role in sacrifice at all. In fact, besides Leaena, the only slave women in all extant New Comedy with any sacrificial capacity are the two freeborn, unlawfully enslaved girls of *Poenulus*—and, as I have argued above, it is the fact that they are truly citizens that enables them to achieve a successful sacrifice when their sacrilegious master cannot.<sup>59</sup>

This fact—that slaves in New Comedy, and particularly in Plautus, do not sacrifice—is important. While Terence has erased all sacrifice from his dramatic world, and the surviving Menandrian corpus is too small to allow us to say with certainty that he precludes slaves from sacrifice, what Plautus has done is suppressed the sacrificial capacity of slaves.<sup>60</sup> In the Roman world, slaves could and did sacrifice, whether individually or as ritual officials in *collegia*.<sup>61</sup> As James Rives has pointed out to me (*per litteras*), the historical question was not of slaves’ sacrificial or ritual capacity, but rather of social norms: a slave would not, for instance, preside over a sacrifice in which citizens participated. Plautus, therefore, is effectively removing this aspect of Graeco-Roman social life from his work.

Why, then, does Plautus suppress slaves’ sacrificial capacity? Sacrificial capacity in Plautus, I argue, brings with it a kind of “civic” power, so to speak, whereas slaves who use not sacrifice but rather sacrificial imagery wield theatrical power. Perhaps giving slaves this “civic” power would take the Saturnalian spirit of Plautus’ drama too far.<sup>62</sup> Plautine *serui*

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<sup>58</sup> Though see Holland (2008) on the *ancilla* Staphyla’s ineffectual attempt in *Aulularia* to be *callida*.

<sup>59</sup> Niall Slater has pointed out that, among slaves, only girls are bought and sold (constantly so!) in Plautus, and calls it “a gender difference that invites much further contemplation” (1993: 122 n. 13).

<sup>60</sup> Again, I appeal to *Quellenforschung* to classify slave cooks with sacrificial capacity essentially as *μάγειροι*.

<sup>61</sup> Slaves sacrificing individually: Bömer (1981) *passim* (e.g., 184–185) and Noy (2000) 185; slaves as ritual officials in *collegia* Bömer (1981) 17–29 and Rives (2007 [2006]) 125–127.

<sup>62</sup> On the Saturnalian spirit in Plautine comedy, see Segal (1987).

*callidi* do occasionally possess authorial agency over the *anagnorisis* and wedding plots<sup>63</sup>—an agency that effectively constitutes the arrangement of civic order—but Plautus is not nearly as interested in these plots as he is in wordplay, stagecraft, and trickery, or as interested in them as is his Greek counterpart.<sup>64</sup> Against this sacrificial silence, so to speak, of slaves in Plautus, Strobilus’ self-contradictory offering to Fides in thanks for a windfall of stolen goods (in *Aulularia*) could perhaps be read as a subtle programmatic statement about slaves and sacrificial capacity: if they had it, (clever) slaves would abuse it, just as they abuse sacrificial terminology, language in general, and even the *senes* whom they habitually trick out of substantial amounts of money.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Otherness and sacrificial capacity in Plautine comedy*

An alternative, and effective, approach to explaining which kinds of characters exhibit sacrificial capacity and which kinds lack it, is through the concept of the Other. Niall Slater writes of Plautus:

The constant buying and selling of slaves in these comedies never allows the spectators to forget the difference between slave and free. The slave is ‘Other’ in Roman Comedy in a much sharper sense than in the Greek Nea. This otherness fascinated but also threatened the Romans (1993: 122).

Slaves, in New Comedy, are the Other. The Other is not part of the Roman civic community, and hence not part of the Roman sacrificing community. Slaves, therefore, do not possess

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<sup>63</sup> On authorial agency in Plautine comedy, see Slater (2000a).

<sup>64</sup> Menander, by contrast, shows no real interest in clever slaves or in the festival (carnival) spirit.

<sup>65</sup> Money, too, could itself be a reason that New Comedy does not depict slaves sacrificing—only citizens, and financially secure citizens at that, would be capable of frequent or habitual animal sacrifice. This latter point is made implicitly at Leigh (2005) 99, on which see my discussion in relation to the mother of Sostratos in *Dyskolos*, above.



sacrificial capacity or authority in the genre. This argument can be extended from slaves to other types of Other, so to speak, particularly to non-citizen foreigners.

Hanno, the eponymous Carthaginian of *Poenulus*, is marked as Other—foreign, non-citizen—from the moment he first starts to speak,<sup>66</sup> because he does so in (now hopelessly mangled) Punic. Hanno possesses no ritual capacity in the play, but his daughters wield the greatest sacrificial authority of all the characters. Plautus treats them, however, not as the Other, but instead as the standard *uirgines-turned-meretrices* awaiting the *anagnorisis* familiar from his other comedies.<sup>67</sup>

Dordalus, pimp of *Persa*, is unlike most other Plautine pimps in that he has no sacrificial capacity. His lack thereof can be attributed partially to the fact that *Persa*, as detailed above, is a slaves' play, and so sacrifice is completely absent from it. Dordalus, too, is a non-citizen: he is a foreigner, and thus possesses no sacrificial authority.

Soldiers, while familiar and comfortable to the Roman audience in real life,<sup>68</sup> constantly function as obstacles to the primary concern of most Plautine comedies—tricking the grumpy old man to get the pretty slave girl for the mopey, dopey young lover. As a rival of the *adulescens inamoratus* and *seruus callidus*, therefore, the *miles* (usually *gloriosus*) is a kind of Other on Plautus' stage—and so, once again, the soldier does not sacrifice and, indeed, is in one case abused by a cook wielding both a sacrificial implement (a *culter*, and the sacrificial capacity it denotes) and sacrificial authority of his own.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Or even the moment he appears onstage, since his costuming is very likely to have been lavishly exotic.

<sup>67</sup> For a closer look at Hanno's exotic, Orientalized otherness, see Richlin (2005).

<sup>68</sup> Though there did exist in Rome a ritual and social distinction between civic and military affairs—a distinction that could lie behind the treatment of soldiers as Other in Roman comedy.

<sup>69</sup> *Miles Gloriosus* 1398–1399, covered in my treatment in chapter 3 of the functions of sacrifice in Plautus.

Finally, *meretrices* also can be cast as the Other. They have irresistible, exotic sexual appeal, and their houses are often said (as in *Truculentus*) to devour men whole, as if they were some sort of fantastical beasts. *Meretrices* call for rather unusual and specialized offerings (such as *stacta* and *odor Arabicus*), and even their sacrificial activity merely forms part of their generally intricate deception plots. Practicing *meretrices*, then, also lack genuine sacrificial authority, and the offerings that they do make serve only as a ruse to climb the social ladder, just as with the rest of their citizen-imitating behaviors.

## Conclusions

Citizens sacrifice. Women and men, married and unmarried, respectable and shady (i.e., pimps) sacrifice. Again, sacrifice is a marker of free (or citizen) status, and so non-citizens tend either to lack sacrificial authority or to feign it. Slaves never sacrifice, except when ordered to do so or, in exceptional cases, in self-defeating offerings or vows.

Important gender patterns appear in an examination of men's and women's sacrificial activity. Women habitually sacrifice, and this habit redounds to their credit; men (with one iniquitous exception, namely Periphanes in *Epidicus*) do not. Female characters do not ever joke about sacrifice, but male characters do so more often than actually sacrificing, and when they do, their jokes are often cruel, either degrading women or asserting dominance over another character.

In the remainder of my study of sacrifice and ritual imagery in New Comedy, I expand my scope. Having thoroughly considered the issue of sacrifice in Menander and Plautus, we can move on to religion more generally. Chapter 5 examines important topics includ-

ing ritual imagery, relations between human characters and the divine, the absence of sacrifice in Terence, and the significance of sacrifice to healthy communities.

## CHAPTER 5

### Beyond sacrifice: ritual, divinity, and community

Sacrifice is the fundamental ritual act in Graeco-Roman religion, but it is not the only ritual act.<sup>1</sup> This final chapter explores religion in New Comedy beyond sacrifice and sacrificial imagery. From the Old Comedy of Aristophanes through the end of the Roman Republic, there always existed an underlying religious sentiment to drama, what John Hanson has described as a “conscious connection which continued to be felt between temple and theater” (1959a: 91–92). This sentiment is often evident in the comedy of Menander and Plautus, as we have seen, in reference to or representation of sacrifice. Yet it is even more apparent in the ubiquitous invocations of and prayers to the gods, in religious perceptions and behaviors exhibited by comedic characters, and in the basically religious nature of a play’s *raison d’être*, as a production staged during a civic holiday.

While sacrifice itself has been largely overlooked by scholars on New Comedy, the broader topic of religion has received a good deal of valuable attention, most notably in extensive articles on Plautus by John Hanson and Henry Jocelyn—important articles to which I

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<sup>1</sup> As John Hanson remarks, “[b]y the end of Plautus’ dramatic career, Roman religion, like Roman culture in general, was already a complex hybrid, far from the simple hearth-worship of a group of shepherds living on the Palatine” (1959b: 50).

make frequent reference throughout this chapter.<sup>2</sup> Hanson systematically catalogued and analyzed a wealth of religious information present in the Plautine corpus and, in so doing, he demonstrated that Plautus in fact “engages in some fairly serious discussion of religious questions.”<sup>3</sup> Jocelyn conducted a sustained collection of religious imagery in *Epidicus*—primarily with an interest in *Quellenforschung*—and his conclusion was that much of Plautus’ religious material is indeed original.<sup>4</sup> Niall Slater has also demonstrated a keen awareness of the effects of religious imagery in Plautus.<sup>5</sup>

My goal here is to synthesize this scholarship with the understanding of New Comedy’s take on sacrifice as developed in my earlier chapters. The more abbreviated studies that have been published to date have, perhaps out of necessity, been overly dismissive of the role of religion in New Comedy, both Greek<sup>6</sup> and Roman.<sup>7</sup> I argue, however, that Menander, Plautus, and Terence are all careful playwrights who deploy (or suppress) ritualistic speech and action for conscious and specific purposes. We have seen this observation hold true in relation to sacrifice, and I seek in the current chapter to show its applicability to other religious matters as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Hanson (1959b) and Jocelyn (2001); Feeney (1998) also makes some observations about Plautus.

<sup>3</sup> Hanson (1959b) 58. This point is made clear through his assessment and argumentation, despite his earlier statement that “[i]t is of course irrelevant as far as the value of this study is concerned whether or not Plautus himself took religion seriously” (1959b: 51 n. 8).

<sup>4</sup> Jocelyn (2001) *passim* but especially 288–292. Jocelyn did not devote much space in his article to analysis of the religious imagery, on which see my discussion of *Epidicus* at the end of chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> Especially Slater (2000b) and Slater (2001).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Jocelyn (2001) 288, contrasting Greek New Comedy with Attic tragedy: “[t]he *νῆα* on the other hand deployed religious imagery even less than it did other forms”—a claim for which Jocelyn supplied only one citation (2001: 288 n. 163) and a claim that I believe I have proven incorrect in chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Jocelyn (2001) 269: “Religion was just one of many aspects of Greek life which did not seem to demand more than a general description.” Yet there were important differences between Greek and Roman religious practices—differences that Plautus himself occasionally exploits.

This chapter commences with a consideration of what chapter 3 omitted: non-sacrificial ritual imagery. Such imagery is essentially confined to Plautus and is organized on the basis of ritual actors and officials (*harioli*, *haruspices*, and so forth). Most of the chapter is subsequently devoted to examining how Menander and Plautus present divinity in their works. Concluding the chapter is an exploration of the importance of ritual in the communities represented onstage in New Comedy. Terence, a *persona muta* in my analysis so far, will figure prominently in this final portion of the chapter.

### **Non-sacrificial ritual imagery**

Besides oaths, prayers, and other direct references to deities—all of which will be discussed in the next section—Menander’s plays do not include ritual unrelated to sacrifice. Non-sacrificial ritual turns out to be about as absent from the Terentian corpus as was sacrificial ritual. In Plautus, however, there is a modest amount of religious material, especially about divinatory activities like soothsaying and sign-reading.

Jocelyn argued that such material was too technical for the Roman audience to understand fully, and as such would have been perceived as exotic, as Greek:

A number of images...can be shown to have their sources in features of ritual peculiar to Rome. Such sources would not, however, have been evident except to experienced and perceptive observers. The Roman images contributed...to an overall Greek dramatic atmosphere. The personages talked Latin but Latin which seemed to a factually ignorant audience to possess a comically Greek colouring. (2001: 293)

While I would give the Roman audience more credit for a capacity to apprehend the religious orthopraxy of its own culture, Jocelyn’s point is nevertheless very useful. Overstatement of

detail—whether of ritual detail (as Jocelyn discusses in *Epidicus*), of sartorial detail (e.g., *Epidicus* 213–235), or of culinary detail (as in many Plautine cook and parasite scenes)—can alienate the speaker, can make the speaker seem more Greek,<sup>8</sup> and thereby can increase both the humor of the scene and the sense of the play’s setting far away from Rome. As we will see, such Greek associations are sometimes, but not always, the effect of passages of ritual detail in Plautus.

Two groups of ritual functionaries will be considered here. First are *harioli* and *haruspices*, two different kinds of seers considered together here because they often appear together in Plautus. Second is a miscellanea of other mediators between the mortal and divine realms, particularly the *augures* and the *auspices*.

#### *Soothsayers: harioli and haruspices*

The general-purpose freelance soothsayer in the Roman religious economy was the *hariolus*, a personage who also came to be a near-stock type in Plautine comedy. The *haruspex*, on the other hand, inspected the entrails of a sacrificial victim for omens and portents, and hence could be considered a sacrificer roughly on par with the Greek *μάγειρος*—that is, a skilled hireling employed to aid a sacrificant (or, for that matter, the state cult) in the conduct of sacrificial ritual. These two ritual roles are the subject of articles by Niall Slater (2000b) and Ariana Traill (2004); while the duties of *harioli* and those of *haruspices* are essentially distinct religious functions, they are paired together first in Plautus because of their phonological affinity, and subsequently grow into what Traill states “was no doubt a conventional association” (2004: 124 n. 30).

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<sup>8</sup> Such a perception might be influenced not just by a general impression of “Greekness” but also by any degree of familiarity with Greek comedy (that of Aristophanes and Menander both), which also takes interest in intricately detailed descriptive passages.

*Haruspices*, Etruscan in origin (and always male<sup>9</sup>), played an important part of the Roman state religion<sup>10</sup> and enjoyed considerable prestige among the Roman nobility.<sup>11</sup> The *hariolus*, on the other hand, as Slater demonstrates, “was a marginal figure outside the framework of state religion” (2000b: 345)—a figure who, although definitely Roman (347), was nevertheless primarily a showman (or showwoman), suspicious, and “possibly fraudulent” (348).<sup>12</sup> Traill identifies a kind of intermediary between *haruspices* proper and *harioli*, the so-called “*uicani*” *haruspices*, lower-class diviners who worked not for the Roman state but for private hire (2004: 124). These, Traill argues, are the *haruspices* who appear in Plautus (as at *Curculio* 483–484, *Poenulus* 457a–457b and 463–465).<sup>13</sup>

Plautus regularly presents haruspicy as a respectable and effective art.<sup>14</sup> The work of the *hariolus* is just the opposite: indeed, the term *hariolus* (and its related verb *hariolor*) is most often used ironically and sarcastically, applied to characters who state the obvious, as in the colloquial English “what are you, psychic?” or, by way of a transferred metaphor, “you’re a rocket scientist.”<sup>15</sup> When *hariolus* is used in this manner, its sense is somewhat distanced from its original ritual meaning, just as one-word oaths like *edepol* and *ecastor* are distanced from their associations with deities, as I discuss below.

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<sup>9</sup> Traill (2004) 125: “This kind of work was not open to women.”

<sup>10</sup> Slater (2000b) 345–346, and also 359: *haruspices* “were trusted allies” of the state religion.

<sup>11</sup> Jocelyn (1996) 95: “The lot oracle of the goddess Fortuna at Praeneste acquired a certain prestige and the methods of divination employed by the Etruscan *haruspices* considerable.”

<sup>12</sup> On suspicion of *harioli*, see also Jocelyn (1996) 95: “Foreign cults were usually repressed when they came to official notice and unofficial diviners, like astrologers and *harioli*, were looked at askance.”

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Slater (2000b) 348: *haruspices* “cluster in one play, the *Poenulus*”—and see 349–350 as well.

<sup>14</sup> Slater (2000b) 350. Cf. Traill (2004) 125: *Poenulus* portrays its *haruspex* “without disrespect to the profession...and as a reputable authority...who makes accurate predictions.”

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Slater (2000b) *passim*.



Slater argues that Plautus in fact “adopts and adapts to his dramatic purposes the growing, and apparently senatorially fostered, distinction between the *haruspex* and the *hariolus*” (2000b: 361)—a division of labor, so to speak. When Plautus wants (in *Poenulus*) to stage a figure with genuine insight into the future, he employs the *haruspex*. When he wishes to make a joke of the possibility of knowing the future, he uses the *hariolus*. Thus the impious pimp Lycus of *Poenulus* (on whom see the end of chapter 3) “hubristically mocks the *haruspex* for foretelling disaster for him (463–67; 746–50) but later acknowledges that the latter foretold sooth (791–93)” (Slater 2000a: 160 n. 29). Though Lycus is blinded by the temporary success of his cheating Venus out of her proper share in the sacrifice, the *haruspex* correctly predicts the pimp’s downfall—perhaps, in some sense, the *haruspex* of *Poenulus* is in fact a metatheatrical figure, since the comeuppance of the pimp is practically a necessity of the Plautine stock plot. The *hariolus* of *Rudens*, on the other hand, “is introduced only to be marginalized and then suppressed...[G]enerally he remains a figure of fun” (Slater 2000b: 346). The *hariolus* in Plautine comedy, like the doctor in Menandrian comedy (namely in *Aspis*), is a quack, a swindler more apt to be (like the pimp) knocked down to a fittingly low social position than to receive the respect of a genuine, legitimate agent of ritual action.

#### *Augurs, auspices, and other aspects of ritual*

The augurs (*augures*) were members of a special (and powerful) college of priests at Rome who read signs and portents such as lightning and birds in order to make pronouncements concerning the future—their bailiwick was, as Jocelyn described it, “the reporting of a sign that affected the human situation” (1996: 102). Although the term *augur* could, by the

Augustan period, mean by transference any diviner or seer in general,<sup>16</sup> the term was restricted during the time of Plautus and Terence to just those ritual officials so named by the Roman state cult itself.<sup>17</sup>

Since the domestic setting and concerns of New Comedy generally keep it away from the realm of public religion, as demonstrated in previous chapters, public ritual agents such as the *augures* are largely absent from the plays of the genre. One notable exception does exist, in a monologue just prior to the climax of *Cistellaria*. The *ancilla* Halisca has lost the casket of the play's title, a casket containing the tokens that will enable the plot's central *anagnorisis*. As she searches for the casket, she says to herself "Halisca, do this: look at and over the ground, track it down with your eyesight, augur it expertly" (*Halisca, hoc age, ad terram aspice et despice, | oculis inuestiges, astute augura*, 693–694). This sentence includes one of the earliest extant instances of the verb *auguro*,<sup>18</sup> and in this instance, a slave woman appropriates for herself the authority of a male citizen official of the state. Given that the *augures* were "interpreters of the will of Jupiter,"<sup>19</sup> Halisca's use of the verb for augury could be seen as a subtle pointer to the underlying stock marriage plot of New Comedy: as protector of social order, Jupiter necessarily wills Halisca to find the casket so that the citizen daughter may be recognized and married off to produce legitimate children. Such an interpretation is probably reading too much into the text, however, and anyway I see this soliloquy as a tender, very private moment—though in fact other characters eavesdrop upon Hal-

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<sup>16</sup> Though the original meaning of the term was still prevalent as well.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *OLD*, s. v. *augur*.

<sup>18</sup> One instance each in Ennius and Pacuvius; classical form *auguror*, cf. *OLD*, q. v.

<sup>19</sup> Jocelyn (1996) 97: "the *augures* enjoyed positive privileges where the sacred and the profane touched.... The *augures*, the interpreters of the will of Jupiter, could, by announcing a sign in the heavens, have a popular assembly automatically adjourned."

isca's monologue and the *anagnorisis* is thereby enacted—and thus I am inclined to ascribe *augura* here to Halisca comforting herself with the terminology of a well-respected, effective ritual rather than to some assumption or usurpation of religious or ritual agency.<sup>20</sup>

*Auspices*—etymologically “bird-watchers”—practiced *auspicium*, or divination from the observation of birds and, by extension, other animal and celestial signs. References to *auspicium* in Plautus are “usually a reference to reading animal signs,” with the notable exception of *Epidicus* 181–185, where the reading of entrails, *extispicium*, is invoked: “Epidicus not only watches for the bird signs but is prepared to gut his master's purse to read the signs therein as well.”<sup>21</sup> Barring this exception from *Epidicus*, then, *auspicium* in Plautus is a non-sacrificial rite. The taking of the auspices is, as Slater remarks, a “peculiarly Roman religious practice” (2001: 195), and so, when *auspices* appear in Plautus, they can securely be identified as Plautine invention, not adaptation of a Greek original. Likewise, I point out that the capacity to practice *auspicium* is a sign of high authority, and so characters who claim such ability (or have such ability attributed to them) are asserting an elevated level of authority within the scope of the play. As is to be expected, most of the Plautine characters who do claim the authority of an *auspex* are themselves *seruui callidi*.<sup>22</sup>

The distinction between religious ritual and magic ritual in Roman literature is not completely clear, and indeed some mentions of magic in Plautus can be seen to have religious connotations as well. At *Miles Gloriosus* 692–694, for instance, a diatribe against prodigal wives complains at the same time about both their expenditures on female equiva-

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<sup>20</sup> There could also be the potential for some humor over the idea of a female augur, along the same lines as the joke on the female *haruspex* (*haruspica*) that Traill identifies in *Menaechmi* (2004: *passim*).

<sup>21</sup> Slater (2001) 195–196; see also Jocelyn (2001) 279–280 and my discussion of *Epidicus* in chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Leigh (2004) 48 on Toxilus' preoccupation with properly conducting the *auspices* in *Persa* as a sign of his Roman-ness and of his assumption of the authority of a general.

lents to the *hariolus* and *haruspex* (*hariola* and *haruspica*, respectively) and their hiring of sorceresses such as the *praecantrix*, *coniectrix*, and, ridiculously, the *superciliospica*, or “eyebrowracle.”<sup>23</sup> The *coniectrix* was a dream-interpreter, and the practice of such interpretation, *coniectura*, recurs in *Amphitruo* and *Curculio*.<sup>24</sup> Not only are the *hariola*, *haruspica*, and *superciliospica* in this passage patently specious and absurd hirelings, so also is the *coniectrix* (for *coniectura* appears to have been the domain exclusively of men<sup>25</sup>)—and so, with only one genuine hireling in his diatribe, the *senex* Periplectomenus makes himself, not the wives he execrates, look petty and ridiculous.

Finally, it should be noted that the triumph of a successful general was itself a religious offering.<sup>26</sup> Triumphal language and imagery in Plautus, therefore, necessarily implies an undertone of ritual. This undertone is present both in plays that otherwise have no mention of sacrifice (such as *Persa*, whose final act opens with words of triumph from the *seruus callidus inamoratus* Toxilus<sup>27</sup>) and in plays where sacrifice does have a role (such as the drunken *canticum* performed by the title character of *Pseudolus* near the end of the play). Indeed, Eduard Fraenkel discussed the importance of what he called a “triumphal song” starting at *Captiui* 768 (2007 [1922]: 124). The characters who most often give voice to tri-

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<sup>23</sup> Passage cited at Slater (2000b) 348.

<sup>24</sup> Traill (2004) 123 and n. 27. In *Amphitruo*, the title character insults the mythic prophet Tiresias by calling him a simple *coniector*. In *Curculio* 229–279, the pimp Cappadox has the cook (of all people) perform a dream interpretation (*coniectura*)—and, I would add, later in the play Cappadox does actually follow the cook’s advice (*pacem ab Aesculapio* | *petas*, 270–271) by performing a sacrifice to Aesculapius. See my discussion of “the (im)pious pimp” at the end of chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Traill (2004) 117: “Women are well attested as witches and sorceresses [*praecantrices*], but not as soothsayers [*hariolae*] or interpreters of dreams [*coniectrices*] or prodigies [*haruspicae*].”

<sup>26</sup> Jocelyn (1996) 95: “The triumph was...an act of thanksgiving to *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus*, the chief god of the state, and the privilege of conducting one the greatest honour a noble could hope to achieve.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Leigh (2004) 48 and n. 101 on the “parody of the ritual prayer of thanks to Jupiter Optimus Maximus of the Roman *triumphator*,” a parody delivered here by Toxilus, as initially identified in Fraenkel (2007 [1922]).

umphal language are the *seruui callidi* who most often control Plautus' plots;<sup>28</sup> by using the ritual imagery of the triumph, these characters enhance their power in relation to other characters (and to the play as a whole) in a manner analogous as well to those *seruui callidi* who assert authority through explicit sacrificial imagery.<sup>29</sup>

## Divinity

Space does not allow for comprehensive analysis here of the role of divinity in New Comedy, but a study of sacrifice and ritual must include discussion of the deities to whom these rituals are consecrated. My considerations here are divided into four rubrics. First, I look at oaths and other invocations of divinity, from simple one-word interjections to more extended calls upon the gods. Second, related to oaths, I will evaluate prayer in New Comedy. Third comes limited discussion of the nature of the gods in the Plautine corpus; and, finally, I consider the way the characters of New Comedy seem to conceive of and perceive the gods and their own relationships with the gods.

## Oaths

Invocations of the gods are omnipresent throughout the extant works of Menander, Plautus, and Terence. Oligosyllabic oaths like Greek *μὰ τὸν Δία* and Latin *mehercle* can be found in nearly every scene of nearly every play.<sup>30</sup> Though these terms nominally constitute

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<sup>28</sup> On the trope of the *seruus gloriosus*, see Slater (2000a) 21 and (2001) 195.

<sup>29</sup> As discussed in the section on Plautus in chapter 3.

<sup>30</sup> For the intersection of oaths and gendered language, see Bain (1984) 39–42 on Menander, and Adams (1984) 47–54 on Roman comedy and on the set group of Latin oaths: *(me)hercle*, *(ede)pol*, *(m)ecastor*.

an appeal to divine power, in practice they are so commonplace as to be nearly devoid of religious meaning (as, for instance, “for Pete’s sake” is in colloquial English). In Plautus and Terence, words like *hercle* and *edepol* are non-entities: “their conceptual content is minimal.”<sup>31</sup> These oaths do, however, communicate one thing—a religious identity shared on some level between author, actors, and audience, an identity that recognizes the divinity of Castor, Pollux, Hercules, and (in Menander) Zeus, Apollo, and Ἡράκλεις.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, simple phrases like *ita di me ament*, again very common in Plautus and Terence (though not at all in Menander), are “trite” and filtered of any religious meaning<sup>33</sup>—these lines are comparable to a phrase like “God only knows”—except for certain cases where Plautus draws attention to the original meaning, as at *Bacchides* 892–895:

ita me Iuppiter, Iuno, Ceres,  
Minerua, Lato, Spes, Opis, Virtus, Venus,  
Castor, Polluces, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules,  
Summanus, Sol, Saturnus, dique omnes ament.<sup>34</sup>

The humor here is self-evident; but I would add that the exaggerated length of this list, in addition to providing a quick joke, also draws out and makes explicit the religious undertones of the more pedestrian, single-word oaths.

Menander creates a similar effect with an interchange between the slave Parmenon and old man Demeas at *Samia* 309–311:

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<sup>31</sup> Hanson (1959b) 53 n. 12. See also Nicholson (1893).

<sup>32</sup> Evangelos Karakasis makes several scattered, mostly unhelpful remarks concerning oaths in Terence (2005: 2, 3, 8–9, 109, 110, 117, 120, 139, 230).

<sup>33</sup> See Moore (2004a) 63 for citation of several instances of Plautine *ita...me ament* oaths in which the deities invoked have some personal significance to the characters invoking them.

<sup>34</sup> The discussion, the term “trite,” and the citation are from Hanson (1959b) 54–58.

ΠΑΡΜΕΝΩΝ: μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον, μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τουτονί,  
 μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν Σωτήρα, μὰ τὸν Ἀσκληπιόν—  
 ΔΗΜΕΑΣ: παῦ· μηδὲν ὄμνυ’.

PARMENON: By Dionysus, by this here Apollo,  
 by Zeus the Savior, by Asclepius—  
 DEMEAS: Stop—no more with the swearing!

Though the list is not as protracted as that in *Bacchides*, it nevertheless achieves comic effect through the repetition and alternating rhythmic pattern of μὰ τὸν...μὰ τὸν. Likewise, Menander’s list emphasizes the religiosity of these oaths with the deictic τουτονί, a demonstrative indicating that Parmenon points to the onstage altar to Apollo Agyeius as he intones the oath to the god.<sup>35</sup> The words and the stage action they imply here link the play’s dialogue, its scenery, and its temple and festival setting.

While Plautus has his character invoke more deities than Menander does his in these two passages, the overall pattern in their work is the reverse. Menander’s plays tend to invoke many more divinities than do Plautus’—for instance, 19 deities are mentioned in *Dyskolos*, compared to only four in *Epidicus*.<sup>36</sup> (Roughly the same distribution is reflected in the Terentian corpus as well.) Jocelyn identified reasons of Plautine adaptation of Greek models for this disparity: “The way the personages of the *Epidicus* invoke, or fail to invoke, deities indicates...that Plautus made no effort to represent accurately...Greek practice. At the same time he took care not to leave his stage Greeks indistinguishable from real-life Romans” (2001: 275). In other words, by restricting his characters for the most part to a small set of Greek gods (Castor, Pollux, Jupiter/Jupiter, Hercules), Plautus breaks with Menandrian style, yet still does not fully naturalize his treatment of divinity for his Roman audience.

<sup>35</sup> For the identification of the altar, see my discussion in chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> Jocelyn (2001) 273.

Jocelyn did acknowledge the importance of these deities to Roman state cult, but his point remains cogent all the same.

When Roman comedic characters do in fact invoke divinity, Jupiter is easily one of the most common gods to whom oaths are addressed—often by slave characters. Jocelyn speculated that “when the two Latin poets have a slave invoking *Iuppiter*, the chief deity of the Roman state, from whose cult slaves would have been excluded...they were trying to castigate the imagined insolence of the typical Greek slave” (2001: 277). His observation here is astute, but I would attribute Plautus’ (and perhaps Terence’s) use of Jupiter in slaves’ oaths not to a theatrical comment on the Greek models but to a characterization of the slaves themselves. By calling upon or swearing by Jupiter, they are not reflecting Greek servile impudence, but rather claiming for themselves an affinity with the king of the gods—and hence they are asserting for themselves an increased degree of authority in relation to their plays’ other characters.

One other extended oath in Plautus merits comment. Relatively early on in *Cistellaria*, the *adulescens inamoratus* Alcesimarchus gets into an argument with his girlfriend’s mother, Melaenis, and tries (but ultimately fails) to deliver an absurdly extenuated version of the *ita di me ament* formulation:

**AL.** at ita me di deaeque, superi atque inferi et medioxumi,  
itaque me Iuno regina et Iouis supremi filia  
itaque me Saturnus eius patruos— **ME.** ecastor pater.  
**AL.** itaque me Ops opulenta illius auia— **ME.** immo mater quidem.  
Iuno filia et Saturnus patruos et pater Iuppiter?  
**AL.** tu me delenis, propter te haec pecco.

(512–527)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The text is Timothy Moore’s (2004a: 53); the translation is my own.



ALCESIMARCHUS: Yet so help me all the gods and goddesses, those above, those below, and those in the middle, and so help me Juno the queen and highest Jupiter's daughter, and so help me Saturn her uncle—

MELAENIS: Her father, jeez!

ALCESIMARCHUS: —and so help me Wealthy Wealth, her grandmother—

MELAENIS: Uhh, no, her *mother* for sure. What, Juno's the daughter, and Saturn's the uncle, and the father's *Jupiter*?

ALCESIMARCHUS: *You're bedfuddling me...I'm messing it up because of you!*

These lines (and the continuation of them that follows) are not a parody of prayer formulae, but rather a characterization of Alcesimarchus as imbecilic and ritually impotent, because, as Timothy Moore has pointed out, the *adulescens* simply fails to produce the kind of traditional, solemn prayer that he seeks (2004a: 57, and n. 18 for citations of previous scholarship on the prayer parody). As Moore puts it, “These parodic elements...are very much in keeping with Plautus’ portrayal of Alcesimarchus throughout the play....[H]e is not only smitten, but completely insane” (62).<sup>38</sup> I would add that when Alcesimarchus’ interlocutor, the *lena* Melaenis, responds to his bungling—by correcting him and mocking his errors—she is effectively asserting dramatic authority over him, since she is repeatedly able to distract him and to interrupt his ability even to speak.<sup>39</sup>

### *Prayer*

Prayer, whether accompanied by a sacrificial offering or not, is an important recurrent element in the plays of Menander and Plautus. Jocelyn compiled an excellent catalog of formulaic prayer in Roman comedy (2001: 269–272) that does not require much additional comment about the genre’s treatment of prayer. Hanson divided prayer into three kinds—

<sup>38</sup> In extending an argument by Maurizio Bettini (1991: 123–130), Moore also contends that “the oath reinforces a central theme of *Cistellaria*: the distinction between *meretrix* and *matrona*” (2004a: 89).

<sup>39</sup> Moore points out that, earlier in this scene in which Alcesimarchus delivers his oath, Melaenis injects the issue of status into their conversations (2004a: 65, lines 493–495).

prayers of request, of thanks, and of adoration (1959b: 83–88). While the first group, entreaties, are the most common, and prayers of gratitude second most common, Hanson argued that the *do ut des* prayer formulation often attributed to Roman religion does not frequently occur in Plautus; and, when it does, the formula is almost always spoken by the (characteristically impious) *leno*, whereas the more positively portrayed characters do not exhibit this pure materialism in their petitions to the gods.

Just as characters' prayers can serve to depict their personalities (like the *leno* with the *do ut des* request and other examples discussed immediately below), they can also effect a mechanical function on a play's plot. Prayer is occasionally used, as Fraenkel noted, to set the stage for a new scene (2007 [1922]: 124–125). This use of prayer for the purposes of stagecraft runs parallel to the mechanical staging functions of sacrifice discussed in chapter 2. Charles Garton, furthermore, pointed out in reference to adulatory prayers that “[t]he spectator [of Greek and Roman New Comedy] can hardly forget that he is there to the glory of the god” (1972: 36). Displays of piety by characters onstage reflect the religious bearing of the dramatic festival, even if the displays themselves are arguably disingenuous.

When comedic personae pray, they demonstrate their character to the audience. Hanson found three kinds of *pietas* evident in the Plautine corpus—filial *pietas* towards one's parents and family (1959b: 89–90), religious piety towards the gods (90–91), and *pietas* with a sense of “general moral rectitude” (91, 93–94). Plautus primarily demonstrates this *pietas* (these *pietates*, rather) through prayer. Hence, the fact that Hanno of *Poenulus* “prays more consistently and more sincerely than any other Plautine character” makes him “generally a sympathetic character” (92) and, I add, foreshadows his ultimate triumph over his diametri-

cally opposed antagonist, Lycus the pimp.<sup>40</sup> Palaestra, the *uirgo-meretrix* protagonist of *Rudens*, negotiates her way through a complex of all three types of *pietas* because of the complicated situation in which she is placed (Hanson 1959b: 92–93). The young lover Sostratos of *Dyskolos* demonstrates his intense and heartfelt desire for Knemon’s daughter by praying for “Pan and the Nymphs at the same time [to] strike [him] out of [his] wits” if he has sought the daughter’s hand out of some ill purpose.<sup>41</sup> Prayer, therefore, is a valid—if less common and less concrete—alternative to sacrificial imagery in portraying religious and moral character in comedy.<sup>42</sup>

A final kind of prayer to consider is the greeting of the household gods. It was standard practice in Roman religion for family members to pronounce a formal greeting to their family’s Lar and Penates upon their return from travel outside the city. Thus Jocelyn, discussing the *adulescens* of *Epidicus*, remarked that “[w]e might have expected Stratippocles on his arrival from Thebes to wish to greet the gods of his father’s house. That Plautus allows him to express no such wish could conceivably hint at Greek carelessness in religious matters” (2001: 266). While this possibility cannot be completely excluded, I am more inclined to think that Plautus would only in fact include such greetings if they held a theatrical purpose—as does the mention of Ephesian Diana at *Miles Gloriosus* 411 by Philocomasium,

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<sup>40</sup> Though note that Hanno, as a Punic-speaking foreigner, arguably constitutes “the Other” in *Poenulus* and so is divested of any sacrificial authority—on which see the end of chapter 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Dyskolos* 309–313:

ἐπὶ κακῷ δ’ εἰ προσελήλυθ’ ἐνθάδε  
ἢ βουλόμενος ὑμῶν τι κακοτεχνεῖν λάθρα,  
οὗτός μ’ ὁ Πάν, μειράκιον, αἱ Νύμφαι θ’ ἅμα  
ἀπόπληκτον αὐτοῦ πλησίον τῆς οἰκίας  
ἤδη ποήσκειαν.

<sup>42</sup> If, as I suggested in the section of chapter 2 on stage action, characters could indeed improvise prayer on the stage (in line with Plautine improvisation as discussed generally in Slater 1993: *passim*), the types and contents of these prayers could have been constructed to reflect the religious bearings or characterization of the personages who delivered them.

who uses the custom of greetings-prayer to label herself fictitiously as her own out-of-town twin, “Dicea.” Otherwise, such greetings would not contribute substance to the play and would thus be omissible.<sup>43</sup>

### *The nature of the gods in Plautine comedy*

This topic is complex and a full consideration of it is outside the scope of this study. Notable relevant scholarship includes Hanson’s own disquisition on the nature of the gods in Plautus (1959b: 62–67) and Denis Feeney’s text *Literature and Religion at Rome* (1998: *passim*, esp. 64–107<sup>44</sup>). We will begin by examining which gods “exist” within Plautus’ dramatic world—that is, which ones are mentioned in his plays—and then focus in on those gods who specifically receive sacrifice in the extant corpus. Following will be a distinction between Roman adoptions of Greek divinities and original Roman ones; and finally a description of some qualities of the gods evident in Plautus.

Of course, the Olympian deities and a host of closely related deities and demi-gods appear throughout the Plautine corpus.<sup>45</sup> Of these, the most predominant are Venus, the goddess of love and sexual pleasure, a divinity obviously inherent to the genre; Jupiter, the foremost god of Rome, so again a natural inclusion;<sup>46</sup> and Hercules, whose inclusion probably

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<sup>43</sup> I do not mean to suggest by this statement that Plautus never puts filler into his play—but that we should look for reasons he included what he did, rather than for reasons he did not include other material.

<sup>44</sup> And also Feeney (1998) 12–46, with his problematization of the concept of religious “belief,” a problematization that forms an important background to any discussion of religion in literature. Feeney does not cite Hanson’s article in his book or include it in his bibliography.

<sup>45</sup> The god of death, Orcus, rarely appears, and when he does, it is usually for an exceptional purpose, as with Periphanes’ alleged habitual sacrifices to Orcus in *Epidicus*, as examined in the previous chapter.

<sup>46</sup> Note that this applies to Jupiter alone, not the very Roman grouping including him, the Capitoline Triad. Cf. Moore (2004a) 54 n. 3: “Plautus deliberately avoids explicit mention of the Capitoline Triad....Perhaps Plautus considered this central triad too important a religious phenomenon to be toyed with in comedy.” James Rives

reflects the importance of his cult at Rome in the time of Plautus' dramatic productivity. A pair of important, quintessentially Roman divinities, the Lar Familiaris and the Penates (or *di Penates*), are also present in Roman comedy.<sup>47</sup> Yet the Penates, while present, are not very much so: they are mentioned in Plautus only at *Mercator* 834 and 836, in a speech by the *adulescens* Charinus about his plan to abandon his household gods (*di Penates, familiai Lar pater*).<sup>48</sup> Terence includes the Penates only at *Phormio* 311, where the *senex* Demipho announces his intention to offer a greeting-prayer to them upon his safe arrival home (*ego d<eo>s Penatis hinc salutatum domum*).

A trickier question is that of deified abstracts, what Feeney calls “personifications” (1998: 85). The most common such deities in Plautus are Fides, Fortuna, Pax, Pietas, Salus, and Spes.<sup>49</sup> Divine personifications such as Febris and the oft-cited Robigus (or Robigo)—called *indigitamenta*—rarely appear in Roman literature,<sup>50</sup> and in fact do not seem to appear in Plautus at all. One notable exception is the lover's list at *Bacchides* 115–116 of ridiculous divinities culminating with *Suauisauitatio*, “Sweetkiss H. Kisst.” Although the list, delivered by the *adulescens* Pistoclerus, begins with the credible divinities Amor and Venus, the supposedly deified abstract *Suauisauitatio* is too much to take, and so his interlocutor challenges

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points out to me that the Capitoline Triad would shatter any illusion of “Greece” on the Plautine stage (unlike, for instance, the Lar, which could easily be universalized as simply “a household god”).

<sup>47</sup> The Lar was discussed at some length in chapters 3–4, in connection with the *uirgo* Phaedria of *Aulularia* and that play's (Lar-delivered) prologue.

<sup>48</sup> I note that this “abandonment” is, in essence, merely a melodramatic gesture of removal or alienation. Compare the lover at Tibullus 2.4.53–54, who claims to be so beholden to his beloved that he would sell his Lares if she asked: *quin etiam sedes iubeat si uendere auitas, | ite sub imperium sub titulumque, Lares*. (I owe this point to Sharon James.)

<sup>49</sup> Hanson (1959b) 67–69, 80–82, and 97.

<sup>50</sup> Feeney (1998) 85, citing Dumézil (1970) 23–28. Greek equivalents can be found at de Visser (1903) 54–156, cited at Feeney (1998) 84 n. 34.

him on the existence of the divinity (*an deus est ullus Suauisaiutio?*, 120).<sup>51</sup> It is, I argue, a general rule that Plautus does not seriously treat *indigitamenta*; for another example, I point again to the passage from *Mercator* cited above: when Charinus bids farewell to his threshold, he addresses it as *limen superum inferumque* (830), not by the name of the god to whom Christian authors attest, Limentinus (although their evidence is, admittedly, much later).<sup>52</sup>

There is a diversity of gods named in Plautus, but there are only a few gods who receive sacrifice from Plautine characters. Venus, the Lares Familiares, Aesclepius, and Fides are the only deities to whom genuine sacrifice—that is, sacrifice not suggested by way of an insult and not conducted under false pretenses<sup>53</sup>—is offered. Feeney states that, in Plautus, “divinity is having a statue and an altar and receiving sacrifice” (1998: 89 and n. 52, cf. *Asinaria* 712–713); but this definition is not strictly correct, for if it were, we would be left with startlingly few “real” divinities indeed.<sup>54</sup> Significantly, the Penates receive no offerings whatsoever, while the Lar receives several.<sup>55</sup> No offerings are made to the minor, numinous divinities, the *indigitamenta*, whom scholars identify with Roman domestic cult. Similarly, no offerings are made to most of the various Olympian and non-Olympian gods called upon, sworn by, or imprecated by the characters (as discussed above), and no offering is made to fake deities invented for a joke (such as Suauisaiutio). This last group of sacrifice-free gods

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<sup>51</sup> For more on *Suauisaiutio*, see Feeney (1998) 88–89 and Duckworth (1952) 298. James Rives describes this joke to me (*per litteras*) as “a comic take on a distinctively Roman priestly tradition of analyzing superhuman agency” into myriad minute actors.

<sup>52</sup> Tertullian *de Corona Militis* 13, *de Idolatria* 15; Arnobius *Aduersus Nationes* 1.15, 4.132; Augustine *de Ciuitate Dei* 4.8, 6.7. The late date of the evidence may point to Plautus’ calling the threshold-god by the name Limen or, as I believe, to Plautus’ not treating the threshold as one of the *indigitamenta*.

<sup>53</sup> On both of which, see chapter 3.

<sup>54</sup> For another, equivalent definition of the meaning of divinity, see Henderson (2006) 237 n. 23: “‘Statue + altar’ define cult status,” with citations of Axtell (1907) and Stewart (2003) 24, but not Hanson (1959b).

<sup>55</sup> *Aulularia* 23, *Rudens* 1206, *Trinummus* 39, and perhaps *Menaechmi* 288–330 and 517. Likewise, the *genii*, *Ianus*, and *Vesta* do not feature in Plautus, on which see Jocelyn (2001) 267, quoted below.

forms a striking contrast with the relatively frequent, lively use in Plautus of sacrificial imagery by characters to assert their dominance, as seen in chapter 3 in relation to, for instance, Ballio of *Pseudolus* (“Jupiter Pimpimus Maximus”), Libanus of *Asinaria*, and Ergasilus of *Captiui*.

While the *indigitamenta* are purely Roman, the deified abstracts (“personifications”) are Hellenizing innovations modeled on Greek religious practice, and at least some were apparently celebrated by the Romans *Graeco ritu*.<sup>56</sup> Yet in Plautus, the one deified abstract to whom an offering is promised (at *Aulularia* 622) is Fides, and the intended sacrificant is a slave vowing his gratitude for ill-gotten gains (an odd subject for a vow to the deity of honesty and trust!). It is impossible to determine whether the offering, if it had taken place, would have taken place *Graeco ritu*—but such a determination is not particularly important. For, as Jocelyn wrote about Roman comedy,

Few members of the original audiences would have been conscious that Greek houses did not have *lares* or *genii* in their main living room or a plurality of deities in their store-rooms or that Greek streets and roads were not infested with *lares*. It is much more significant that no Latin comedy referred to a *Ianus* guarding the doorway of a house or to a *Vesta* inside or to a *Iuppiter dapalis*. Plautus maintained the otherness of the city in which his action was set, and Terence took even more care to do so. (2001: 267)

The key issue here is that Plautus and Terence—and the point applies to Menander as well—do not depict most aspects of domestic cult. Of course, the parts of the cult limited to precincts within the home, such as the *genii*, the hearth, and the store-room, are restricted from appearing on stage by the nature of the stage building and its representation of characters’ houses. Yet the multiple feast scenes depicted in Plautus show no evidence of *Iuppiter da-*

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<sup>56</sup> See Feeney for the deified abstracts as modeled on Greek practice (1998: 85) and for their celebration *Graeco ritu* (86); see also 87–92 and my discussion of the *Graecus ritus* in chapter 1.

*palis*, god of feasting, nor of any other deities to whom libations and food offerings might be made by a family sitting down for a meal.

Likewise, most aspects of state cult are omitted in Roman comedy. Outside of *Amphitruo*, in which he is both a god and a *persona*, Jupiter does not receive a sacrifice, nor do Mars, Minerva, Ceres, Juno, or any of the other main Olympian deities who were of religious import to the Romans (with the notable exception of Venus, again generally in her guise as goddess of desire). As was the case with the omission of greeting-prayers, I think that Plautus simply omits offerings to the deities of state and domestic cults when such offerings do not directly contribute to the progression of the play. Venus is a fitting deity to receive offerings from those involved in the sex business (*meretrices*, *lenones*, and their households) and from lovers. The Lares are appropriate as the protectors of the citizen family and its home, an important underlying concern of the whole genre of New Comedy—indeed, the concept of a guardian deity (one associated with the verb *tueor*) is limited in Plautus solely to the Lares and Venus.<sup>57</sup> I suggest that the Lar, when receiving sacrificial offerings, perhaps stands in for the entire range of smaller domestic deities.

Hanson's article (1959b: 62–67) is still the best source for longer exposition of the nature of Plautine divinity, but a few additional notes here will be worthwhile. First, Venus and Jupiter are the two specific deities to whom divine power is ascribed in Plautus (Hanson 1959b: 64)—Jupiter as king of the gods and Venus, again, as queen of love. Hanson also points to Plautus' occasional divine prologues as evidence for the fact that deified abstrac-

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<sup>57</sup> Hanson (1959b) 77. I would add the Penates to this list, since the example Hanson provides for guardianship attributed to the Lar includes the *di Penates* as well (*Mercator* 834–835: *di Penates meum parentum, familiai Lar pater, | uobis mando, meum parentum rem bene ut tutemini*).



tions (namely *Luxuria* and *Auxilium*) are not at all devoid of religious meaning.<sup>58</sup> For all divinities, Greek and Roman, in New Comedy and in other literature, “[t]he canonical image of cult was the anthropomorphic statue of the god, inevitably represented with such human features as gender, and endowed with characteristic attributes.”<sup>59</sup> In addition, in Plautus, “[m]ore human qualities are sometimes added to the divine,” particularly wealth (Hanson 1959b: 66). While gods occasionally take on the characteristics of humans, especially Jupiter and Mercury in *Amphitruo*, it is much more common in the Plautine corpus for human characters—through sacrificial and ritual imagery, through oaths, and through prayer—to appropriate aspects of the divine.

### *Perceptions of the gods*

First and foremost, “the superiority of Jupiter is unequivocal” in mentions of deities in Plautus (Hanson 1959b: 62). Despite the Saturnalian spirit of role reversals in Plautine comedy, Jupiter, symbol of order, ultimately remains supreme. The general perception that comedic characters in Plautus have of the gods, both monolithically and individually, is essentially the standard conception of the Roman pantheon prevalent during the Republican period. Gods are immortal, powerful, and essentially moral, but not always just or omniscient; and they do not tend to operate on a “contractual” (*do ut des*) basis with humankind, but rather reward virtuous behavior with their favor.<sup>60</sup> Gods bestow fortune and misfortune,

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<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., Hanson (1959b) 68–69, 78. But see also Feeney (1998) 90, on the delayed and ruined prologue of *Auxilium* in *Cistellaria*.

<sup>59</sup> Feeney (1998) 83. A notable exception that Feeney omits is the goddess Vesta, who, although perceived to be female, had no cult statue, and was represented not anthropomorphically, but as the hearth fire itself.

<sup>60</sup> Hanson (1959b) 100:

The stock epithets of the gods postulate their immortality and their power, but seldom their justice and never their omniscience. The concept of a moral divinity, however, under-

and can be entreated to intervene in mortal affairs, but do not themselves make epiphanies (except, obviously, for *Amphitruo*).

In Plautus, of course, the gods are also good for a laugh. Calling another character a god—as with slaves’ references at *Casina* 230 to their mistress and master as *mea Iuno* and *tuus Iuppiter*, respectively<sup>61</sup>—is a way of introducing comic elevation, “a particular colour and bombastic formulation,” into the dialogue (Fraenkel 2007 [1922] 69–70). There is as well *Amphitruo*, in which two gods, Jupiter and Mercury, actively participate in the characteristic stage business and comic plot of Plautus’ plays. The two deities engage in this participation with full awareness that “it is all *iocus*...not *serium*.”<sup>62</sup> In this sense, the deities (at least of *Amphitruo*) are aligned closely with the audience, for both gods and spectators possess a metatheatrical awareness of one basic goal of the play: fun.

Hanson wrote of “the relative unimportance of mythology” in Plautus (1959b: 99), and I would extend this assessment of unimportance to include Menander and Terence, as well.<sup>63</sup> For the Romans, the use of mythological *exempla* was at root connected to Hellenization, and myths in Plautus come across as “unreal” and as historicizing—as “fictions of ear-

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lies...the interrelations of gods and men. Plautus offers little evidence to support the “contractual” view of Roman religion, and much that implies a more refined notion of the relationship between human virtue and divine favor.

<sup>61</sup> The play’s *senex* also uses these terms in the same scene.

<sup>62</sup> Feeney (1998) 106–107:

When the gods mingle with humans in disguise, they may also avoid the complexities and risks of a true interaction. Plautus highlights the differences in what is at stake for god and human with his conversations between Jupiter, disguised as Amphitryo, and Amphitryo’s virtuous wife, Alcmena. After the real Amphitryo has berated Alcmena for her apparent adultery, the disguised Jupiter returns for more lovemaking. The whole scene revolves around his claim that he was joking, not in earnest, and her avowal of how much pain his joke caused her (903–22). The humour here is mordant, since ultimately Jupiter is telling the truth: in the end, it is all *iocus* to him, not *serium*.

<sup>63</sup> Although, as Sharon James has pointed out to me, the painting of Jupiter and Danae in the *uirgo* Pamphila’s bedroom in *Eunuchus* does play an important role in Chaerea’s justification for raping Pamphila.

lier generations.”<sup>64</sup> For Menander, himself a part of Hellenistic literary production, mythology could play a different role, but in fact, in the extant plays and fragments, there is no significant such role. Plautus occasionally employs myth for analogy jokes, especially ones made by *seruui callidi* (as with Chrysalus’ virtuoso recounting of the Trojan War at *Bacchides* 925–978).<sup>65</sup> Menander, likewise, uses myth for humorous purposes, but in his case the use is only indirect: at *Aspis* 407–428, the clever slave incessantly quotes from the tragedians to create absurdly elevated, melodramatic paratragedy.

In the previous section I discussed offerings and divinity from the perspective of which gods received offerings in Plautus; I now conclude by briefly coming at the matter from the opposite perspective, of the meaning of characters’ decisions to sacrifice to certain gods. As is to be expected from the private, domestic quality of this genre, Plautine sacrifices tend to be to domestic or personalized divinities, particularly the Lar. Those involved with love—courtesans, *adulescentes inamorati*, pimps, and their servants—make offerings to the goddess of love, Venus. The title character of *Amphitruo* sacrifices to Jupiter, but he does so interestingly at the end of the play, by which point Jupiter is *de facto* a member of Amphitruo’s own household, so the sacrifice could perhaps be seen as a sign of familial *pietas* as well as a twisted kind of marriage-affirming sacrifice. Periphanes, a *senex* in *Epidicus*, is said to sacrifice to Orcus as thanks for the death of his wife—a perverse, yet still personal, connection between sacrificant and divine recipient.

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<sup>64</sup> For the connection to Hellenization, see Fraenkel (2007 [1922]) 45; for “unreal...fictions of earlier generations,” see Fraenkel (2007 [1922]) 58. Cf. also Feeney (1998) 8 on Hellenism as something “commonplace, yet exotic...foreign enough for comparison and interpretation to be necessary; [but] close enough for comparison and interpretation to be possible,” an adaptation of a quote from Smith (1982) xii.

<sup>65</sup> Timothy Moore furthermore argues that “in Plautus, divine and mythological genealogy is consistently a sign of pretension” (2004a: 59).

If the traditional identification of the generic stage altar with Apollo Prostatorus holds true for *Mercator* (see my discussion of the matter in chapter 2), the sacrifice at line 675 is offered literally to the “front-door” Apollo; this deity is, in any case, very much a personal, protective god. In *Curculio*, the unusually pious pimp Cappadox (on whom see chapter 3) sacrifices to Aesclepius in concluding a sale—but the pimp has a personal connection to Aesclepius, for at the inception of the play, he has been incubating at Aesclepius’ shrine for health reasons.<sup>66</sup> Finally, though she sacrifices under false pretenses, Phronesium of *Truculentus* chooses to make her offering to a divinity connected to her purported personal concern (Lucina for pregnancy) and, furthermore, she personalizes the offering by calling her “my Lucina” (*mea Lucina*, 476).

Some exceptions to this paradigm of private offerings to deities with personal connections do exist. At *Miles Gloriosus* 411, the *meretrix* Philocomasium (pretending to be her fake twin sister Dicea) conducts a fake “return-sacrifice” to Diana Ephesia—while Diana of Ephesus is not strictly a personal deity, she is in fact a local one (for the play is set in Ephesus), and picking up on the local cultic name enhances Philocomasium’s ruse.<sup>67</sup> Menaechmus Soscicles (of *Menaechmi*), while pretending to be insane, vows a (human) sacrifice to “Apollo,” though a personal connection could be seen in that this Menaechmus also pretends the god is “speaking” oracles to him at the time. Perhaps most magnificent is the offering vowed by the tricky, but not necessarily clever, slave Strobilus of *Aulularia*. His offering is to Fides, a deified abstraction and not quite as personal a deity as the others seen

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<sup>66</sup> And the sacrifice to Aesclepius has been recommended by the cook’s *coniectura*, on which see the earlier section of this chapter on non-sacrificial ritual imagery.

<sup>67</sup> This is, in fact, the only firm indication of local or regional cult in New Comedy, Roman or Greek. See my discussion of this line from *Miles Gloriosus* in the section on prayer, above.

so far; but his offering is one of gratitude, if Fides should ensure that Strobilus gets to keep the gold that he has just stolen from its hiding place.

### **Sacrifice and the community in Menander, Plautus, and Terence**

Since the rite of sacrifice is the bedrock of religious activity for Greek and Roman society, it follows that communities are strengthened and, to some degree, centered around sacrifice. Indeed, foundation sacrifices were inherently important to the formation of new communities and πόλεις, whether real-life colonies or fictional utopiae (such as that of Peisetairos in Aristophanes' *Birds*). Put simply, a sacrificing community is a healthy community. Given the commensality of sacrifice discussed in chapter 1, there is a corollary to this concept: a feasting or festal community, too, is a healthy community.<sup>68</sup>

The program of New Comedy is concentrated on the production of such healthy communities. Establishing citizen marriages—for the “sowing” or “seeking out” of legitimate children, depending on the Greek or Roman formulae (respectively)—is a baseline concern of the genre, although Plautus and Terence do both manipulate the genre in innovative and provocative ways through their Latin adaptations. As James Redfield remarks, “comedy is life-affirming, and from a comic point of view both marriage and sacrifice affirm life” (2008: 13). New Comedy seeks marriage as a way to form a new, healthy community; marriage is properly celebrated with sacrifice and feasting; and the acts of sacrifice and feasting themselves indicate the health of the newly formed society.

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<sup>68</sup> See my discussion below on feasting communities in Plautus.

In this final section of the chapter, I explore the relationship of sacrifice and community in New Comedy by author, in chronological order. My discussion of Menander and Plautus, who have received so much attention in the previous sections and chapters, will be limited. Terence, consideration of whom has been deferred until this point, will receive full, extensive treatment. A general conclusion to my study follows the conclusion of the chapter.

### *Menander's sacrificing communities*

Though Plautus stood out in chapter 3 as a virtuoso of sacrificial talk and imagery, it is Menander whose characters actually perform: there are more actual sacrifices in extant Menander than there are in the Plautine corpus, in proportion to the size of each author's surviving texts. This relative magnitude of actual sacrifices can be explained, I believe, by the directness of Menander's marriage plots. As the sole surviving paragon of Greek New Comedy, Menander's work is an epitome of the genre's motivation towards citizen marriage and the conception of legitimate citizen children. A properly conducted marriage necessitates sacrifice; hence the frequency of sacrifice in Menander.

Menander's families, then, are by and large healthy, for they generally end up performing sacrifice by the end of the play, despite what conflicts and turmoil may have come before. The communities that Menandrian comedy depicts, therefore, perfectly fit Northrop Frye's model of a comic society, a new, healthier one created by the resolution of the play's central climax.<sup>69</sup> Sacrifice, marriage, and comedy all affirm life (as in the previously cited quotation from Redfield), and, in the plays of Menander, they affirm as well the health and happiness of a newly formed community or interfamilial alliance.

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<sup>69</sup> I discuss Frye in slightly greater detail in chapter 3. Robert Ketterer also discusses comedy's formation of new societies in connection with Plautus' use of stage properties (1986a, 1986b, 1986c: *passim*).

*Plautus' feasting communities*

Unlike Menander, Plautus does not conclude his plays with festal sacrifice. He does, however, conclude his plays on four occasions with feasting: *Pseudolus*, *Stichus*, *Asinaria* and *Persa*.<sup>70</sup> In none of the four scenes is there even a hint of sacrificial imagery—there is only the potential subtext of sacrifice behind the meat that may be consumed by the participants. The feasting community of *Pseudolus* is relatively placid and unproblematic, though Plautus does add a coda for one final reversal of the roles of master and slave. In *Stichus*, the feast is a slaves' banquet, and so the possibility that this feast entailed sacrifice, while still present, is significantly diminished.<sup>71</sup>

Although he does in these two cases use feast scenes to depict his comedic communities as essentially healthy, Plautus nevertheless also employs feast scenes to problematize the conclusions to the other two plays mentioned above, *Asinaria* and *Persa*. In both instances, the emphasis is not on feast but on alcohol<sup>72</sup>—and, concurrently, these are not healthy conclusions to the plays, but scenes of confrontation. In *Asinaria* (830–941), the confrontation occurs between a lecherous husband and an infuriated wife, and the couple's son is included in the mix because his father demands a sort of *ius primae noctis* with his own son's girlfriend in his son's presence. *Persa* (758–857), on the other hand, features a physical alterca-

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<sup>70</sup> Plautus does in fact stage a healthy, successful reunion sacrifice (and implied feast) at the end of *Rudens* and he may imply a reunion sacrifice at *Stichus* 396.

<sup>71</sup> See my consideration of the sacrificial capacity of slaves in New Comedy in chapter 4.

<sup>72</sup> The feast scene recounted by *Pseudolus* and the feast in *Stichus* both feature drunken slaves and sexual licentiousness, but in both cases, there is no amatory competition or violence, in strong contrast to the scenes from *Asinaria* and *Persa*.

tion between violently drunk slaves and a bamboozled, bedraggled pimp. Both scenes (and the plays in which they take place) end abruptly, with sudden, curt final lines.<sup>73</sup>

In Plautus, therefore, the picture of the feasting community is not nearly so clear as that of the Menandrian sacrificing society. Plautus is almost entirely uninterested with the genre's convention of marriage and prefers instead complex, practically baroque plots surrounding the *seruus callidus*. Accordingly, he deploys sacrificial imagery—for insults, jokes, deceits, and assertions of authority or power—more than he does sacrifice itself. Plautine communities are not sacrificing communities, but feasting communities, and the disposition of Plautine feast scenes<sup>74</sup> complicates any attempt to describe these communities synoptically as “healthy” or “unhealthy.”<sup>75</sup>

#### *Terence's non-sacrificing communities*

In the entire Terentian corpus, no sacrifice is conducted, mentioned, planned, or suggested. This sacrificial silence, in light of the wealth of ritual material that permeates the plays of Menander and Plautus, is simply stunning. I argue that the audience—whether familiar with Menander, with Greek tragedy, with other Roman literature, or with Plautus alone—would have instinctively noticed the lack of sacrifice on Terence's stage, and would perhaps have been disquieted by its total absence.<sup>76</sup> In other words, I postulate that the Ro-

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<sup>73</sup> I differ in my reading of these scenes from C. W. Marshall, who discusses stage properties such as “the clutter associated with a dinner party, which helps characterise the feel of celebration (as at *Asinaria* 830–941 and *Persa* 758–857)” (2006: 71). His point about props is persuasive, but his optimistic reading of the “dinner parties” overlooks the emphasis on liquor, libido, and machismo that pervades the two scenes—and furthermore, as Sharon James has pointed out to me, all these characters remain enslaved at plays' end.

<sup>74</sup> There are other Plautine feast scenes internal to the plays, which there is not the space here to discuss.

<sup>75</sup> See also my brief discussion of Saïd (1979) in the section on Terence below.

<sup>76</sup> Sacrifice is, of course, only one of several ways in which Terence causes his audience to feel disquieted.



man audience on some level intuited that a sacrificing and feasting community was a healthy one, and so might have felt apprehension at the non-sacrificing social units of Terence's works.

Since substantive analysis of Terence has been delayed until this point, I will now undertake an examination of those aspects of ritual from previous chapters which do indeed appear in Terence. I will first discuss sacrificial and non-sacrificial meat in Terence's references to food, and second I will consider what ritual imagery and prayer exists in Terence's plays. I conclude with further investigation and speculation as to why Terence's characters do not sacrifice.

It is almost characteristic of a certain set of scholars to lament a supposed lack of items of interest in Terence's work, and this lamentation has spilled over into the realm of Terence and religion, as well.<sup>77</sup> Because he does not exhibit the unflinching, overwhelming wild exuberance of Plautus' stagecraft, or wordplay, or religious material, Terence is described as formalized, conservative, and unimaginative.<sup>78</sup> Thus, when considering Plautus' sometimes manic lists of fish and pork products, J.C.B. Lowe says that "[t]here is nothing comparable in Terence" (1985a: 78). What there is in Terence, however, is an interesting perspective on sacrifice.

First, when Terence describes food, it is never in any case sacrificial meat. A butcher and a sausage-maker are each mentioned once (*Eunuchus* 257), but otherwise, all comestibles are fish or vegetables. Terence's most elaborate food scene is at *Adelphoe* 376–381 and 420–

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<sup>77</sup> So Oliphant (1912) 173: "In almost every element of divination and folklore we have noted a...disproportion of mention and allusion between the two poets. This is but one of numerous indications that in content as in form the language of Plautus is nearer to the life and speech of the common people of that age."

<sup>78</sup> Duckworth (1952) 298–299: "Terence's failure to bring the gods into the speeches of his characters undoubtedly reflects his desire to preserve the more philosophical nature of his Greek originals." When scholars use the term "undoubtedly" in the place of evidence, there is often more than sufficient room for doubt.

426, with *obsonium*, fish-gutting, *salsamenta*, and fish-cooking. Not only does a focus on fish in this passage maintain the higher tone of dignity affected by Terence in his plays (since he thereby avoids for the most part the disgraceful *lanii* and *fartores*), but it also reflects the purely private nature of Terence's drama. Fish, in the Greek and Hellenizing Roman worlds, was "an item for private, secular consumption, as and when desired."<sup>79</sup>

Terence also uses the division between sacrificial and non-sacrificial foods as a signifier for plot and character. At *Andria* 369, the slave Dauos reassures his lovestruck young master Pamphilus that a wedding is not in fact being prepared by saying, in reference to one of the wedding's arrangers, *holera et pisciculos minutos ferre obolo in cenam seni*, "veggies and little fishkins worth just an obol are gonna be the old man's dinner." A marriage feast would require sacrificial meat, and a pescetarian meal such as the one described here thus necessarily precludes the possibility of a wedding feast. Once, at *Adelphoe* 587, the term *silicernium*, "funeral feast," is used as an insult by a slave against his master. This occurrence seems not to be replete with significance, but rather to be essentially a throw-away one-liner, more or less equivalent to the word *carnufex*.<sup>80</sup>

Elsewhere in the Terentian corpus, the slave Parmeno chides the parasite Gnatho for attaching himself to the *miles gloriosus* Thraso merely to feed his belly:

nam qui adsentari huic animum induxeris,  
e flamma petere te cibum posse arbitror.  
(*Eunuchus* 490–491)

'Cause a guy like you who's induced his mind to fawn over this guy,  
I think you could snatch food from the flame.

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<sup>79</sup> Davidson (1998) 12, commenting on "fish-madness."

<sup>80</sup> On which term see my discussion in chapter 1.

The import of the sacrificial imagery here seems to be that Gnatho is so repugnantly audacious that he would dare to steal the gods' portion of a sacrifice—such is the extent to which the parasite will compromise his morality (and religious *pietas*) for food. Parmeno's rebuke of Gnatho here also constitutes a nearly Plautine assertion of theatrical authority over the latter by the former.<sup>81</sup>

In addition, as Henry Jocelyn demonstrated, there is almost no substantive prayer in Terence. The playwright, “for some reason,” omits altogether any sort of greeting with religious formulae like *di dent quae uelis*, so common in Plautus (2001: 269). Likewise, at *Adelphoe* 699–700 and 704–705, Terence is “vague...about the prayer for approval of Aeschines' marriage” (266).<sup>82</sup> Though an audience might not take notice of this peculiarity of Terentian prayer by itself, the combination of prayer with Terence's total exclusion of sacrifice creates a noticeable and even foreboding tone in his plays because of this lack of any religious atmosphere for them.

Beyond the Terentian tidbits just considered, there is no further sacrifice or sacrificial imagery in the six plays of his corpus. This omission of sacrifice is a conscious, active decision on Terence's part that breaks with both his Roman and his Greek predecessors. Why do these families not offer sacrifice? One could expect the *senex* Menedemus to offer a rejoicing sacrifice when he is reunited with his son in *Heauton Timoroumenos*, but, strikingly, he

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<sup>81</sup> Another fire joke appears earlier in *Eunuchus*, at lines 84–85:

**PHAED.** tremo horreoque, postquam aspexi hanc. **PARM.** bono animo es: accede ad ignem hunc, iam calesces plus satis.

PHAEDRIA: I'm shivering and I've got goosebumps, now that I've seen her!

PARMENO: Keep your chin up—come on over to *this* fire, you'll get warm enough!

Saunders, citing Eugraphius on *Eunuchus* 1.2.5 (*'iam accede ad ignem' hoc est ad aram*), suggests that Parmeno is indicating the stage altar (1911: 100). If this is in fact the case, Terence makes in these lines a sophisticated joke employing sacrificial imagery and stagecraft to demonstrate the *seruus* (semi-) *callidus* Parmeno's authority over the *adulescens inamoratus* Phaedria.

<sup>82</sup> See also Jocelyn's discussion of formulaic prayer in Roman comedy (2001: 269–272) and my consideration of prayer in the plays of Menander and Plautus, above.

does not.<sup>83</sup> So also with Terentian weddings, births, and recognition scenes: there simply are no sacrifices or mentions thereof. The stage altar would, of course, be present, but its presence could even heighten the absence of sacrifice from Terence's drama, as Lora Holland has pointed out to me (*per litteras*): blocking and acting decisions, like having characters studiously ignore the altar as they pass by or instead pause by it and exude a sense of despair, could emphasize the altar's state of disuse.

It is not immediately clear why Terence effaces sacrifice from his plays. It is not simply because Terence is interested exclusively in domestic affairs, because the *Lar Familiaris* (along with the *Penates*) was a very important part of domestic life, and they play virtually no role in his drama.<sup>84</sup> Likewise unconvincing is the idea that the playwright omitted sacrifice because he merely did not wish to seem irreverent. I believe that Terence was aware that, in New Comedy, a sacrificing community is a healthy, successful one—and so he underscores his gripping depictions of domestic strife by removing the physical ritual embodiment of spiritual stability from the comedic household. Terence's interest in the comic genre is not to show the establishment of citizen marriage nor to play with clever slaves and witty courtesans, but to explore realistically the dynamics of families torn apart by quarrelling, by infidelity, and by rape. His interest, that is to say, is in markedly unhealthy communities. Thus, he precludes sacrifice from his scripts.

The kind of anxiety or discomfort present in *de Rerum Natura*, *Georgics*, and *Fasti* about the disconnect between pious dedication to the gods and the violence, even cruelty im-

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<sup>83</sup> Menedemus' failure to sacrifice can be seen as an inverse of the *senex* Daemones' readiness to sacrifice in celebration of the discovery of his daughter Palaestra in *Rudens*.

<sup>84</sup> Cf., for instance, the prologue to Plautus' *Aulularia*. A Terentian character does in fact offer a formal greeting to the household *di Penates* at *Phormio* 311–312 (on which see Jocelyn 2001: 267).

plicit in the sacrificial slaughter of animals<sup>85</sup>—an anxiety wholly absent from Plautus—could be another explanatory factor for the absence of sacrifice itself in Terence. If so, this anxiety could reflect the gods’ perceived readiness to reject sacrifices made by unhealthy communities, or could even reflect the underlying futility of such sacrifice.<sup>86</sup> A useful comparandum is perhaps the suitors of the *Odyssey*, the original unhealthy community of Graeco-Roman literature. As Suzanne Saïd has argued, the suitors’ villainy is consistently characterized throughout the epic by their failure properly to observe festal sacrifices, libations, banquet offerings, hospitality, and even the presentation of guest-gifts (1979: *passim*).

## Conclusions

Besides sacrifice, ritual imagery in Roman comedy appears mostly in the form of soothsayers and sign-readers of varying authority, experts who, albeit important to the Roman state cult, are not of great import to Plautus (or Terence). Oaths to divinities (such as *pol* or Ἡράκλεις) are in Menander, Plautus, and Terence mostly empty intensifiers, although both Menander and Plautus do on occasion emphasize the original religious meaning of these words. Prayer, on the other hand, is not meaningless, and does not follow the contractual, tit-for-tat pattern evident in other accounts of Graeco-Roman religion. The gods who are most prevalent in New Comedy are (besides the chief god Zeus or Jupiter) domestic and personal, though the variety of divinities in Roman domestic cult is largely absent from the Roman plays. The community of New Comedy is healthy if sacrificing or (responsibly) feasting,

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<sup>85</sup> See Gale (2000) 102–112, especially 107. Plautus, unlike Lucretius, Vergil, and Ovid, is uninfluenced by the Pythagorean and Empedoclean traditions.

<sup>86</sup> So Gale (2000) 110 on failed or rejected sacrifice in *Georgics*.

while a non-sacrificing, non-feasting community—such as those throughout Terence—is patently unhealthy and problematic. Terence’s choice to exclude sacrifice from his body of work highlights his artistic pursuit of the intense interpersonal and interfamilial drama spawned by communities in crisis.

In closing, I think it will be instructive to undertake a brief comparison of the religious material studied in this chapter with that from Middle Comedy (as expounded in a thorough study by John Werner).<sup>87</sup> In Middle Comedy, “there is some skepticism about oracles,” but “portents are being taken for granted, along with some amount of divine reward and punishment.”<sup>88</sup> We can see this contrast in Plautus, too, with the skepticism directed towards *harioli* but the general acceptance of the authority of *haruspices*. Just as Plautine characters, when they sacrifice, tend to sacrifice to gods with whom they share some personal connection, so also in Middle Comedy “[a]ctive faith in some deities is being maintained by people who consider themselves specially related to them.” In both Middle Comedy and Plautus, the *do ut des* formula is not predominant, while “by some people at least, prosperity is seen as a gift of deity.” Finally, in Middle Comedy “visits are being made to individual gods’ shrines in the expectation that each god will give helpful information or advice, or will restore health”—a striking similarity to the (pious) pimp of *Curculio*, Cappadox, who both incubates at the shrine of Asclepius and later offers sacrifice to the god in celebration of a successful financial transaction. While there are dramatic worlds of difference between Menander’s literary forebears and Plautus’ farcical adaptations of Menander himself, some of the basic elements of comedic religion nevertheless remain constant.

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<sup>87</sup> I do not mean to suggest that Plautus or Terence necessarily adapted material from the poets of Middle Comedy entirely, but rather to show how some aspects of religion present in Plautus but not in Menander can in fact be found in the earlier genre.

<sup>88</sup> Werner (1962) 73. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph *ibidem*.

## CONCLUSION

When Athenians of Menander's time or Romans of the middle Republic attended the production of plays of New Comedy, they did so not just as audience members, but as participants in a religious festival. They saw representations of life that were stylized, exaggerated, and generic—but representations that, nevertheless, did in some way reflect their own lives, including their own religious beliefs and practices.<sup>1</sup> Although individuals' perceptions of the plays, and the festivals of which they were a part, would vary, both context and content provided them with a religious frame.<sup>2</sup>

Sacrifice is the fundamental rite of Graeco-Roman religious practice. Its use, functions, and effects in the plays of Menander, Plautus, and Terence have not, however, previously been systematically analyzed and interpreted.<sup>3</sup> The stock type of the *μάγειρος* and the frequency of sacrifice in extant Menandrian comedy both attest to the fact that sacrifice is indeed fundamental to New Comedy, a genre concerned with the establishment of citizen

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Garton (1972) 33: "the religious origin and setting of the plays creates a 'magic interlock, guaranteed by religion, between the stage and life' that draws the Graeco-Roman audience into the play as somewhat active participants concerned with the outcome." Cf. also Feeney (1998) 127–133 and 38—"exegesis and interpretative dialogue help constitute Roman religious practice...[and i]nterpretation is already explicitly a part of the whole three-day spectacle" of the religious festival.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Feeney (1998) 46 on literary texts as "frames" for Roman religious experience—a concept I would extend to comedic performances in both Athens and Rome, as well.

<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, extended analyses of sacrifice or ritual in classical Graeco-Roman comedy have gone unpublished—e.g., Werner (1962), Sfyroeras (1992). The published exception is Dohm (1964).

marriage, which itself necessarily entails the ceremonial performance of sacrificial ritual. New Comedy does, to a certain extent, represent the everyday lived reality of contemporary Greeks and Romans, and so also the plays' religious content does, to a certain extent, communicate religious meaning to the audience.

Since "ritual represents the creation of a controlled environment,"<sup>4</sup> the theatrical simulation of ritual creates an environment doubly controlled. Every play of New Comedy was performed in a religious setting: for Menander, the Theater of Dionysos; for Plautus and Terence, the temple façade in front of which a temporary stage structure was constructed. The scenery for any play included by convention the stage altar, a constant reminder of the play's religious underpinnings. Menander and Plautus both treat the depiction of sacrificial offerings with care; they do, as would be expected, avoid the actual slaughter of animals onstage, while offerings of sacral cakes, incense, garlands, and even libations of wine are, in fact, occasionally staged. The use of stage properties and of onstage improvisation could allow for a great deal of humor—or even expression of religious sentiment—in the spaces between scripted dialogue during the course of a play.

Sacrifice can function in New Comedy as a staging device, by giving characters a reason to exit or enter the stage, or by creating a plot hook or a device for advancement of the plot. Personages who sacrifice—or who express intent or suggestions to sacrifice—can be characterized by their use of ritual words and actions. Pimps, for instance, are regularly labeled as impious oathbreakers, while the pimp of *Curculio* is an unusual, pious exception. The use of sacrificial imagery and suggestions to sacrifice also constitutes an important way for characters to assert theatrical power or authority over each other, particularly in the comedy of Plautus.

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<sup>4</sup> Smith (1982) 63, cited at Feeney (1998) 123.



In extant Menander, references to and representations of sacrifice are concentrated in three plays: *Dyskolos*, *Epitrepontes*, and *Samia*, the last of which is replete with elements of the marriage ritual. My examination of sacrifice in Menander reinforces James Redfield's assertion that "comedy is life-affirming, and from a comic point of view both marriage and sacrifice affirm life" (2008: 13). The celebration of marriage connects sacrifice and kinship-forming ritual with comedy, but also with the festival context of Menander's plays. The importance of sacrifice to Menander's work is emphasized, again, by the recurrent stock type of the *μάγειρος*. Rare, subtle references to the sacrilege of human sacrifice in Menander and, after him, Plautus form a distinct *topos* in New Comedy, one that both underscores the negative characterization of certain comedic personae (particularly the grouchy *senex* or the super-impious pimp) and effects a negotiation of theatrical power between characters onstage.

One of the most interesting ways in which Plautus manipulates sacrifice and sacrificial imagery is as a tool for *serui callidi* and other clever characters. Phronesium and Philocomasium, the *meretrices* of *Truculentus* and *Miles Gloriosus* (respectively), conduct sacrifice under false pretenses in order to bamboozle the male characters with whom they interact, while Pseudolus and Epidicus, stars of their own shows, appropriate sacrificial imagery to demonstrate control over other characters and even authorial agency over the play as a whole. While cooks (the Plautine analogue to Menandrian *μάγειρος*) and parasites also have a role in Plautus' manipulation of sacrifice, their role is not as pronounced as that of the clever tricksters. Another purpose for sacrifice in Plautus is dramatic intensification, especially in the commemoration of a joyous occasion, as with Daemones' celebratory sacrifice upon *anagnorisis* with his daughter Palaestra in *Rudens*.

Terence, in stark and striking contrast to Menander and Plautus, erases sacrifice from his drama. This erasure creates a palpable, foreboding undercurrent in his plays of a community without religion, without civic cohesion. A sacrificing community is a healthy community, and Terence's communities are markedly unhealthy. (Menander's comedic communities consistently sacrifice and thus are consistently healthy, while Plautus' communities feast more often than sacrifice, differ from play to play, and are not really the true focus of Plautine interest.) On some level, audiences watching the first productions of Terence's plays would have perceived his suppression of sacrifice, a suppression that combines with other features of Terentian drama—like his omission of expository prologues—to create a serious, strikingly uncomic theatrical atmosphere.

Women sacrifice more than men, but men talk about sacrifice more than women, who, in turn, do not joke about sacrifice. Citizen women can be characterized as habitual sacrificants, and such characterization is, for them, always positive. *Meretrices* are associated with the ritual offering of fragrances, and also with sacrifice conducted under false pretenses. Men do not often sacrifice, and when they do sacrifice, their performance of the ritual is often problematic. In Plautus, citizen men are almost never devout, whereas citizen women often are. This trend is a significant Plautine divergence from Menander, and it may signal a dim assessment of the religious sincerity of Roman citizen men—or it may simply underscore the Saturnalian spirit of Plautus' comedy, whereby citizen men are regularly subordinated to their own slaves. Sacrifice in New Comedy is a marker of citizen status, and is especially linked with pimps; in Menander, Plautus, and Terence, though not in Graeco-Roman life, slaves possess no sacrificial capacity whatsoever.

The gods are important to New Comedy, although the deities depicted as truly influential are limited to a small, traditional set. Oaths and prayers, though conventional, can be invested with personal meaning, or with humor. Religion and religious imagery can be found in practically every play of Plautus and Menander, and the comic manipulation of religion constitutes a common thread that links these two playwrights with their predecessors in Middle Comedy and with Aristophanes.

Literature does not simply exist in a religious context—literature participates in constructing “religion.”<sup>5</sup> Understanding the way religion, and particularly sacrifice, are depicted and manipulated in New Comedy can therefore help us better understand Greek and Roman religion more generally. I believe that this genre, like the Old Comedy of Aristophanes, treats religion in a serio-comic manner, consistent with the concept of *spoudaiogeloion*.<sup>6</sup> Sacrifice and ritual have humorous functions in comedy, but there is an unmistakable pattern to their use in these plays: people who properly manage sacrificial agency will, in the end, be better off,<sup>7</sup> while those who misuse it will eventually receive their just deserts, whether it be the *senex iratus* (who usually suffers a role reversal, transacted by his clever slave, by the end of the play), the *leno* (who is always tricked or mistreated, sometimes violently so) or even

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<sup>5</sup> Feeney (1998) 141: “We should...use the word ‘context’ with care. It is important to move away from formalism by placing Roman literature within its intellectual, social and political contexts. But...we must beware of making those other contexts ‘primary’ and ‘real’, with literature ‘secondary’ and ‘unreal’; for literature is itself, so to speak, another context, another set of discourses with distinctive capabilities.”

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Aristophanes *Frogs* 391–392: πολλὰ μὲν γέλοιά μ’ εἰ|πεῖν, πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα. For the current meaning of the concept of *spoudaiogeloion*, see Giangrande (1972) 17–19, and 15–16 for its application to Aristophanes. See more recently Ercolani (2002); for the argument that the term was not in use by writers before Strabo (and even then was not a common concept), see Plaza (2006) 27–29 and especially n. 65.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., in *Dykolos*, the prayers and sacrifices performed by Sostratos’ mother for his own well-being are fulfilled; and Phaedria of *Aulularia* is rewarded for her piety by her Lar with respectable marriage.

the *seruus callidus* (whose power automatically dissipates with the play's conclusion).<sup>8</sup> Thus the works of New Comedy, in context and in content, exhibit clear patterns of sacrifice and religious attitudes. The playwrights integrate representations of sacrifice into their theater, thereby representing ritual meaning and social health<sup>9</sup>—or familial and social dysfunction—in their communities.

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<sup>8</sup> Compare the sentiments about sacrificial offerings expressed in the prologue delivered by the god Arcturus at *Rudens* 1–82.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Zimmerman (2005) for the “social health function” (“sozialhygienische Funktion”) of the *spoudaiogeloion* in Aristophanic comedy.

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## Abbreviations

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
CA	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JRH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
NECJ	<i>New England Classical Journal</i>
PAwB	<i>Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge</i>
PCPhS	<i>Papers of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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