

WHEN A YOUNG MAN
FALLS IN LOVE

The Sexual Exploitation of Women
in New Comedy

Vincent J. Rosivach.



London and New York

values in two different cultures, but to give some sense of scale to the figures we shall meet it will be helpful to keep in mind that at least at the time the Greek originals were written, a working man earned one and a half to two and a half drachmas a day – and that of course only on the days he actually worked.⁴¹

And finally: except as indicated, the editions followed here are the *Oxford Classical Texts* of Menander by F. H. Sandbach (second edition, Oxford, 1990) for the longer fragments; that of Plautus by W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1904–5); and that of Terence by R. Kauer and W. M. Lindsay (second edition, Oxford, 1926), except that I have tried to make Lindsay's occasionally inconsistent spelling of the Latin somewhat more consistent; the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* edition of Menander by A. Körte, re-edited by A. Thierfelder (Leipzig, 1959) for the fragments of Menander not in Sandbach's edition; and the *Poetae comici graeci* (PCG) edited by R. Kassel and C. Austin (Berlin and New York, 1983–) for the fragments of Greek comic authors other than Menander. All translations are my own.

RAPE

One of the stranger things about New Comedy, at least for the modern reader, is how often rape is used as a plot device. In the surviving plays and fragments of New Comedy young women are raped before the action of the play begins in Menander's *Georgos*, *Epitrepontes*, *Heros* (two rapes), *Kitbaristes*, *Plokion*, *Samia*, *Phasma* and an unnamed play a fragment of which is contained in a papyrus found at Aphroditopolis in Egypt (*P. Cariensis* 43227);¹ in Plautus' *Aulularia*, *Cistellaria* and *Truculentus*; in Terence's *Phormio*, *Hecyra* and *Adelphoe*; and in the *Davos*, *Plocium* (an adaptation of Menander's *Plokion*) and *Titthe* by Plautus' younger contemporary Caecilius Statius (d. 168 BC); a young woman is also raped in the course of the action in Terence's *Eunuchus*. The better preserved of these plays are discussed in the main text below, while consideration of the more fragmentary ones is reserved for Appendix 2, A, B and D (below, pp. 146–8, 149).

Neither Greek nor Latin has a specific word for "rape." Rather both languages use words with broader extensions, where the narrower sense of "rape" follows from the context. In the language of Greek New Comedy the most common of these words are the verb φθείρω and its related noun φθορά, whose basic meaning is that of "destruction," "ruin," with the extended notions of "corruption" and "spoiling." Thus, for example, in his discussion of Menander's plays in the quotation which begins Chapter 1 above Plutarch speaks of αἱ φθοραὶ τῶν παρθένων, literally "the ruinations of the maidens," where the context in Plutarch – and familiarity with Menander's plays – make it clear that the young women are "ruined" by being raped. The Latin of Roman Comedy takes over the idea of φθορά/φθείρω in the noun *vitium* and the verb *vitio*, whose basic meaning is that of "defect" (for the noun), "cause a defect, spoil, impair" (for the verb, e.g. *virginem vitiare*, literally "to spoil a maiden" (Ter. *Eun.* 857–8). Greek also commonly uses the noun βία ("physical force, violence, constraint") and related words in the sense of "rape," e.g. βιασμόν τοῦτον . . . παρθένου, literally "this violent act against a maiden" (Men. *Epitr.* 453). Latin expresses the same idea with its noun *vis* ("physical force, violence, constraint") e.g. *vi . . . compressisse*, "to embrace with violence" (Ter. *Hec.* 828). Other, less common terms for "rape" will be introduced below as needed. Here, however, we may note the basic ideas underlying these more commonly used

terms, that rape is an act of violence carried out by a male upon a woman against her will, and that even though the woman is in no way responsible, the condition of having been raped nonetheless imposes a defect upon her (sc. her loss of virginity) which makes her a less than suitable mate for anyone other than her rapist.²

We may also note prefatorially that all the rapes we shall examine here are really rapes, and that there is absolutely no evidence in the texts to support speculation that any were really consensual sex referred to as rape to protect the reputation of the young women.³ In the world of New Comedy, young women who are being raised to be prostitutes may have affairs with young men, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, but the women we shall see in this chapter are all respectable, and respectable women simply do not willingly have sex outside of marriage. A premarital affair, even if it were concealed from the other characters in the play, would still damage the young woman's reputation in the eyes of the audience. In effect, the only way these young women can retain the audience's respect is by being the unwilling victims of rape.

Rapes are used as a plot device in New Comedy in three different ways:

- 1 some rapes lead to the marriage of the rapist and his victim;
- 2 the revelation of other rapes allows the marriage of the victim's daughter in the next generation;
- 3 the discovery of premarital rapes temporarily complicates recent marriages.

These different uses of the rape motif are examined each in turn in sections 1-3 below. Section 4 discusses some general characteristics of the rape motif as it is used in the plays studied in sections 1-3, while section 5 considers the literary sources of the motif. Finally section 6 discusses the anomalous case of Terence's *Eunuchus*, the only New Comedy whose rape occurs in the actual course of the play and not before it.

1. RAPES WHICH LEAD TO MARRIAGE OF RAPIST AND VICTIM

Plautus' *Aulularia* (*The Pot of Gold*) (based on an unknown Greek original)

We learn from the prologue of the *Aulularia* (23-36) that ten months earlier the wealthy Lyconides, "a young man from the highest rank" (*de summo adolescens loco*, 28), raped⁴ the daughter of the poor⁵ farmer Euclio one night during a nocturnal festival of Ceres (*Cereris vigiliis*, 36, 795). This rape, in fact, set the play's plot in motion, for the Lar Familiaris, the domestic god who protects Euclio's household, subsequently enabled Euclio to find a hidden treasure to use as a dowry for his daughter, whom, by play's end, the Lar Familiaris will

arrange to marry Lyconides. Here, as elsewhere in New Comedy, the play assumes that marriage to a respectable young man like Lyconides would normally be impossible without a dowry.⁶

We learn from a conversation between Lyconides and his mother rather late in the play that the young man was drunk (*vinolentum*, 689) when he raped Euclio's daughter, and Lyconides himself subsequently attributes his actions to drunkenness, the night and his own youthful passion (745):

It was the fault of wine and love that I did it
(*vini vitio atque amoris feci*);

and (794-5):

I admit that I wronged your daughter
during the night-time festival of Ceres because of wine and the impulse
of youth
(*ego me iniuriam fecisse filiae fateor tuae*
Cereris vigiliis per vinum atque impulsu adolescentiae),

where "the impulse of youth" (*impulsu adolescentiae*, 795) helps us understand exactly what Lyconides meant by "love" (*amoris*) in the parallel sequence at 745.⁷ As Lyconides tells it, these were powers beyond his control ("a god impelled me, he attracted me to her" [*deus mihi impulsor fuit, is me ad illam inlexit*], 737). Lyconides claims that he did not know what he was doing ("if I made some mistake without thinking" [*si quid ego . . . imprudens peccavi*], 792; cf. "because of my foolishness" [*ob stultitiam meam*], 752), and so, he says in effect, he cannot be held responsible for his act, wrong as it was. Euclio, it is true, rejects this line of thought, at least initially when he mistakenly thinks that Lyconides has stolen the treasure he had found and is now making excuses for his theft,⁸ but the play repeatedly portrays Euclio as a greedy, cantankerous curmudgeon, and so predisposes the audience to reject his views.

Conversely, the play encourages the audience to view Lyconides in a positive light, and so to accept his excuse. Throughout the play the rape itself is treated as a simple matter of fact, and there is no mention of violence or of the suffering the rape must have caused Euclio's daughter. Nor is Lyconides elsewhere censured for the act. Indeed, already in the prologue the Lar Familiaris, while critical enough of Euclio for his selfishness, never speaks ill of Lyconides for what he has done, and in fact is eager to marry the young woman off to him as a good match. Lyconides' mother similarly supports her son's efforts to marry the young woman (682-95; she even specifically mentions, but does not censure the drunken rape: "that you raped that young woman while you were drunk" [*te eam compressisse vinolentum virginem*, 689]). Further, there is an obvious structural parallel between the rape of Euclio's daughter and the theft of his treasure, a parallelism which is underlined when Euclio mistakes Lyconides' confession to the rape for a confession to the theft (731-68); and as the theft is never censured - indeed, the play suggests that Euclio was just getting what he deserved for his

greediness when he lost his treasure – so the parallelism of theft and rape suggests to the audience that the rape should not be censured either.

Lyconides himself is consistently portrayed as a fine young man intent on doing what in earlier times we might have called “the right thing.” Although he could reasonably expect to escape the consequences of the rape – while he knew who his victim was, she did not know the identity of her assailant (cf. 29–30) – he has nonetheless come forward “of his own accord” (*ultro*, 752) – albeit after a delay of ten months – seeking to marry Euclio’s daughter, as the law would require were his identity known.⁹ In fact, although the end of the *Aulularia* has been lost, we know from metrical summaries of the play found in the manuscripts that Lyconides does marry Euclio’s daughter and receives as her dowry the treasure which Euclio had found. In other words, the structure of the play not only fails to censure or punish Lyconides for the rape, but it actually rewards him once he owns up to it.

Euclio’s daughter is never asked what she thinks about the marriage. In fact, she is so unimportant that the play does not even give her a name.¹⁰ Nor does she ever appear on the stage. The audience hears her cries as she gives birth offstage to Lyconides’ child by the rape (691–2), but these cries are hardly meant to elicit audience sympathy for the young woman. Rather they are a simple stage convention which we see in other plays, meant to announce the birth of the child, which in the present instance will eventually bring more pressure on Euclio to marry his daughter to Lyconides (cf. 797–807). Almost all we know about the young woman is what we are told in the prologue, that she daily offered sacrifices to the family’s household god when Euclio did not (23–5), and that she will be rewarded for this good behavior by being married to Lyconides. What is important here is that Lyconides is “a young man from the highest rank” (28), and hence a desirable match. Within the economy of the play, the fact that he had previously raped the young woman in no way lessens his desirability. Indeed, given the social distance between the wealthy Lyconides and the poor young woman, without the rape the two would probably never have met, and the young woman would have been married off instead, in a far less attractive match, to Lyconides’ uncle, the elderly (*senex*) Megadorus.¹¹ Thus from the perspective of the play, the rape is a positive good because it has brought together the deserving young woman with the wealthy young husband she deserves.

Terence’s *Adelphoe* (*The Brothers*)

(based on Menander’s *Adelphoi B*; also discussed below in Chapters 3 and 4)
 Much the same treatment of rape is found in the *Adelphoe*. Here, also some ten months before the play, the wealthy young Aeschinus raped the daughter of Sostrata, the poor widow who heads the household next door.¹² Like Lyconides in the *Aulularia*, Aeschinus was drunk when he raped the young woman, and her representative Hegio accordingly excuses his actions (470–1):

Night, love, wine, youthfulness persuaded him:
 it is only human.¹³

(*persuasit nox amor vinum adulescentia:
 humanum est.*)

This defense of Aeschinus’ actions might be easily dismissed if it were spoken by the young man himself rationalizing what he has done, but it should be taken seriously when it is spoken, as it is, by a relative of the young woman who is supposed to be defending her interests. More importantly even the young woman’s mother forgave Aeschinus, we are told, when he came to her of his own accord (*ultro*, 472), promising to do “the right thing” and marry the young woman whom he had made pregnant in the rape (471–4).

Again, the rape is seen as a windfall, as it were, for the young woman because it has brought her together with a young man from such a distinguished family (295–7, my emphases added):

Given the way things are, it could hardly have happened better than it has, mistress,
 when the rape occurred, that it involves especially him,
such a person, from such a family, with such a spirit and born from so great a household.

(*e re nata melius fieri haud potuit quam factumst, era,
 quando vitium oblatumst, quod ad illum attinet potissimum,
 talem, tali genere atque animo, natum ex tanta familia.*)

(The words are those of the young woman’s nurse, with which Sostrata, her mother, agrees: “it is, by Pollux, just as you say: I pray the gods to keep him safe and sound for us” [*ita pol est ut dici: salvo nobis deos quaeso ut siet*], 298.)

Aeschinus, as it happens, has delayed asking his adopted father Micio for permission to marry the young woman. Expecting Micio to oppose a marriage to someone beneath his station Aeschinus has been waiting for the child of the rape to be born in order to put further pressure on his father to permit the marriage.¹⁴ It is uncertain whether in Athens a young man needed his father’s permission to contract a legally valid marriage, but at a bare minimum Micio’s approval would be necessary if Aeschinus was to stay in his father’s good graces and continue to have access to his wealth.¹⁵ If Aeschinus is to be the Prince Charming that the tale requires, it is essential not only that he marry the young woman whom he has raped, but also that he remain rich.

During the delay, however, Aeschinus rather publicly abducts a slave musician/prostitute (*psaltria*) from her owner. The kidnapping is done as a favor for his brother Ctesipho, but Aeschinus keeps this last detail secret lest Ctesipho’s strait-laced father (who is also Aeschinus’ natural father) finds out and puts a stop to the affair. Sostrata and the other members of the young woman’s household quite naturally – but incorrectly – assume that Aeschinus has lost interest in the young woman, abandoned her, and taken the *psaltria* as his new flame.

In deliberating what to do, Sostrata's family slave Geta provides some very realistic advice, urging his mistress to keep the rape secret since Aeschinus would now probably deny any part in it (and a wealthy young man is more likely to be believed than the poor women accusing him), with the result that nothing would be gained and the young woman's reputation would be ruined; and if he admitted the rape and married her, this would hardly be in her interest either now that he loves someone else (337-41). Sostrata, however, rejects Geta's advice. From her point of view her daughter is too poor to have a dowry, and she has lost her "second dowry," her virginity, as well (345-6); her only hope now for a decent match is to marry Aeschinus, and Sostrata has Aeschinus' ring as evidence of his involvement with her daughter (347). Sostrata will use the courts to force Aeschinus to marry the young woman (*experiar* ["I will go to court"¹⁶], 350).

Taken by itself, Sostrata's decision to turn to the courts may appear to be a piece of shrewd calculation, but from the broader perspective of the play's construction it is rather a naive rejection of grim reality (represented by Geta's assessment) in favor of an optimistic belief that the poor really can obtain justice from the rich despite their inferior position. Now this naive view is precisely what the play endorses through its happy ending. In the *Aulularia* Euclio expressed a negative view of Lyconides' rape which many in the audience might well have shared, only to have that view proven wrong by his own discomfiture and Lyconides' contrasting success in the play's happy ending. Similarly here in the *Adelphoe* Geta's negative assessment articulates a view of social relations between rich and poor that many in the audience might well have shared. Sostrata's rejection of that view, and the good fortune which follows upon her rejection, when her daughter is engaged to marry Aeschinus, in effect demonstrates to those who would accept Geta's negative view of social relations why they are wrong to do so.

Having decided to pursue legal remedies, Sostrata sends Geta to fetch her relative Hegio (since as a woman she could not take the matter to court herself).¹⁷ When Hegio and Geta return to the stage they meet Aeschinus' natural father Demea, and Hegio tells him what Aeschinus has done. What Hegio says here is instructive, for it shows what the play considers to be wrong with Aeschinus' perceived behavior as far as the aggrieved parties are concerned. Contrary to what we might have expected, Hegio is willing to excuse the rape, as we have seen (470-1 quoted above). What is inexcusable to Hegio is Aeschinus' subsequent behavior, his pleading with Sostrata to keep the rape a secret, promising to marry the young woman, and then abandoning her for the *psaltria* (471-7): in short, Aeschinus has acted like a cad. To set matters right, Hegio says, Aeschinus must willingly accept his responsibility to the young woman and marry her, something which the law will force him to do anyway.¹⁸ Speaking of the rich Demea and his family, including Aeschinus, the poor Hegio couches the conclusion of his appeal in patent class terms (501-4):

As you (plural) live most easily, as you are most powerful, rich, fortunate, famous, so you, most of all, should acknowledge with a fair mind what is fair, if you wish to be spoken of as upright.

(quam vos facillime agiti, quam estis maxime potentes dites fortunati nobiles, tam maxime vos aequo animo aequa noscere oportet, si vos vultis perhiberi probos.)

Members of the elite like Demea and Aeschinus have a special obligation to behave justly, especially in their treatment of poor people like Sostrata and her daughter, if they wish to enjoy the superior status which society has accorded their class. This at least is the view of Sostrata and those associated with her, as represented by Hegio. But the play's sympathetic portrayal of Sostrata and Hegio naturally leads the audience to accept their perspective on what has transpired; and from that perspective, the rape itself is excusable, but Aeschinus' perceived failure to take responsibility for it is not.

As it turns out, Hegio's arguments are unnecessary, for Aeschinus had never wavered in his intention to marry the young woman. When Aeschinus finally confesses to Micio what he has done, the latter perfunctorily chastises him for the rape itself, and then immediately excuses him for it (687-8):

Now that was your first mistake, certainly a great one, but human nonetheless:

other good people have often done the same.

(iam id peccatum primum sane magnum, at humanum tamen: fecere alii saepe item boni.)

If other "good" people have done the same thing, then the act of rape itself cannot really be that bad, and it certainly does not make the rapist a bad person. Where Aeschinus has really fallen down, as Micio sees it, is in his irresponsible behavior after the rape, when, out of embarrassment, he failed to tell his father that he wished to marry the young woman (688-95). Micio's judgment on the rape and its sequel is essentially the same as Hegio's.¹⁹ The play presents Micio and Hegio as sympathetic characters. Aeschinus is rewarded in the play's happy ending with his adopted father's permission to marry and his natural father's enthusiastic approval of the marriage. In effect the play, through both characterization and structure, leads the audience to accept the view of Micio and Hegio that there is nothing wrong with rape as long as the rapist acts responsibly and does "the right thing" after the rape.

One is left to wonder, however, what would have happened if the social standing of victim and rapist were reversed, and a wealthy young woman were raped by a poor young man. But then, such rapes never occur in New Comedy, and with good reason, for the poor young man has little protection against the socially powerful and, more importantly, nothing to offer his victim in return for her rape. By contrast, as Geta has reminded us, the social status of a wealthy

rapist like Aeschinus would seem to render him immune to the consequences of his actions. If, however, when he could get away with the rape he nevertheless chooses to do "the right thing" and marry his victim, he provides her with an unexpected and otherwise quite impossible entrée into a wealthy, upper-class family.²⁰ Donatus, Terence's fourth-century commentator, perceptively remarks on Hegio's appeal to Demea (501–6) quoted in part above:

The anxious obsequiousness of Hegio at the conclusion of his speech shows a character who is comparatively powerless against Aeschinus; because of this, the joy of the comedy is further increased when a girl who is poorer but still desired is joined with someone as prominent and wealthy as Aeschinus.²¹

What increases our "joy," however – what makes this a particularly happy ending – is not simply that the poor young woman has "married up" into a wealthy family, but that the rich young man has not acted as we might otherwise expect rich people to act toward the powerless poor.

Menander's *Samia* (*The Samian Woman*)

(also discussed below in Chapter 5)

The text of the *Samia* has been reconstructed principally from a group of papyrus fragments published only in this century. The reconstruction is incomplete, but the remaining gaps in the text do not seriously hamper a study of the rape motif in the play.

Some time before the *Samia* begins the extremely wealthy young Moskhion²² raped Plangon, the daughter of his poor neighbor Nikeratos,²³ while the latter was away on business with Moskhion's adopted father, Demeas. In an expository monologue at the start of the play Moskhion tells the audience that the rape occurred during an all-night celebration (cf. ἐπαννύχιζον, 46) in honor of the god Adonis which was taking place at his house (34–41). "There was much playfulness at the celebration, as was to be expected" (τῆς δ' ἑορτῆς παιδιάν [πολλή] γ' ἐχούσης οἶον εἰκόσ, 41–2) and the women "were dancing, scattered about" and separated one from another on the roof of the house (ὄρχο]ῦντ' . . . ἐσκαδασμέναι, 46).²⁴ Moskhion glosses over the actual rape in his narrative, saying that he is too ashamed to tell what happened next (47–8), and skips immediately to the rape's result, that Plangon became pregnant (49).²⁵ Unlike the young men in our first two plays, Moskhion does not claim to have been drunk.²⁶ Indeed, the only explanation he offers for the rape is the noise from the celebration which kept him from sleeping, at which point he went to watch the women (42–4) – presumably they did not see him – and, we are left to understand, he was aroused by what he saw.

After the rape Moskhion did "the right thing," accepting responsibility for what he had done, and promising Plangon's mother under oath that he would

marry the young woman as soon as his father returned.²⁷ He is too embarrassed about the rape, however, to tell his father anything about it (68, cf. 528–9), and all involved understand that it will be kept secret, at least until after the marriage. To complicate matters Plangon was made pregnant by the rape, and has given birth to a child, who must also be concealed in order to conceal the rape. Rather than exposing the newborn baby, however, Moskhion has gotten Khrysis, his unmarried father's live-in mistress,²⁸ to pretend that the child is her own, and so also the child of Demeas himself.²⁹ As it turns out, Demeas and Nikeratos had already agreed that their two children should marry, and the plot's complication arises from Demeas' mistaken belief, based on incomplete information, that Khrysis had seduced Moskhion, who would thus be the father of her child. The misunderstanding is eventually corrected with Moskhion's acknowledgement that the child is really his and Plangon's, and the play ends happily with an on-stage wedding.³⁰ The *Samia*, with its nocturnal rape of a poor young woman by a rich young man, the young man's willingness to do "the right thing," and its happy ending rewarding him, thus fits squarely within the pattern of rape plays we have been examining.

Plangon, the victim of the rape, appears on stage only in the play's concluding scene, when the (significantly) silent young woman is handed over by her father in marriage to her rapist (725–8). As we might expect, we are told nothing of her feelings either about the rape or about the marriage – indeed, we do not even learn her name until line 630 – all of which shows how little Menander was concerned with her.³¹ The play again focuses on the young man, Moskhion, from its opening words where he expresses his anguish at the situation ("why must it grieve me? . . . it is painful; for I have made a mistake")³² to his efforts at the end of the play to punish his father for falsely suspecting him of an affair with his concubine (cf. 619–38). Sander Goldberg, speaking of the play's opening scene, calls attention to Moskhion's "remarkable egotism"³³ – and Moskhion certainly is egotistical from beginning to end – but it is still Menander who has chosen to focus his play on this egotistical male and to ignore the female Plangon, the victim of the rape. Given Menander's own disregard for Plangon, it is somewhat ironic that the playwright has Moskhion's slave Parmenon take his master to task for selfishly fixating on his own embarrassment and forgetting his responsibilities to Plangon and her mother (67–9).

Finally, it is perhaps worth observing that despite the differences in wealth and social class between Moskhion and Plangon the rape was not necessary to bring them together inasmuch as their fathers had already agreed upon their marriage.³⁴ That the *Samia* makes Moskhion a wealthy male and Plangon a poor female even when such class differences are not strictly required by the plot³⁵ shows quite clearly how much such class differences are an integral part of the version of the rape motif we are presently examining.

Menander's *Plokion* (*The Necklace*) and Caecilius' *Plocium* (*The Little Necklace*)

Our knowledge of these two plays comes mainly from a lengthy (and on the whole unfavorable) comparison which the second-century AD Latin grammarian Aulus Gellius makes (in his *Attic Nights*, 2.23) between Caecilius' play and Menander's original, upon which it is based.³⁶ Gellius tells us that in both plays "a poor man's daughter was raped during a nocturnal religious festival" (*filia hominis pauperis in pervigilio vitata est*, 2.23.15).³⁷ The rape results in pregnancy and in the birth of a child in the course of the play – following convention, the young woman's offstage birth screams are heard on stage (2.23.17–18). Given the woman's condition, it is unlikely that she appears at all on stage during the play, whose emotional focus must therefore lie elsewhere. The fragments introduce us to another older man, this one married to a rich wife, whose son is probably the rapist. The son does not appear in the extant fragments of Caecilius' play, though he is briefly mentioned in one of the fragments from Menander's *Plokion*, which says that he is treated even more harshly by his rich mother than his father is (frag. 334.5–6 K-T); since in New Comedy domineering rich wives are generally unsympathetic characters, the fact that this mother mistreats her son suggests that the young man will be portrayed in a favorable light. Gellius also tells us that the young woman has kept the rape and pregnancy secret up till now (2.23.16), and it seems reasonable to infer that she has done this in concert with the young man,³⁸ who must therefore have come to her after the rape and promised to do "the right thing" by seeking his father's permission to marry her. For some reason (possibly fear of his domineering mother)³⁹ he has not yet done so,⁴⁰ but this being New Comedy, we may reasonably assume that the true facts will eventually out and that the play will end happily with the marriage of the poor young woman and the rich young man.⁴¹

Menander's *Georgos* (*The Farmer*)

Most of the *Georgos* has been lost, but from the surviving fragments we can tell that a poor young woman had been raped by a rich young man,⁴² and gives birth to a child during the course of the play.⁴³ The fragments tell us nothing about the actual circumstances of the rape. We do know that the young man is now in love with the young woman – he calls her "most dear" (τὴν φιλάτην, 15) – and wants to marry her (15–16), despite his father's wish for him to marry someone else (6–12). For the young man, marrying the woman is not only a question of love but also one of "piety" (εὐσεβέας, 16); in other words, he wants to do "the right thing." Although the end of the play has been lost we may assume that it concludes happily with the young man marrying the woman he had raped. Given the young woman's condition we can be sure that she does not appear on the stage, and that the play focuses, as usual, on the young man.

Menander's *Heros* (*The Hero*)

(also discussed below in section 3)

Two rapes figure in the plot of the *Heros*, that of Myrrhine in the previous generation (discussed below in section 3) and that of Myrrhine's daughter in the present one. The play is, again, quite fragmentary, and most of what we know about its plot comes not from the play's fragments but from a metrical summary of the play (its "hypothesis"), which was written some time in antiquity and has also survived. From this summary we learn that before her marriage Myrrhine bore twins from the rape, whom she handed over to a servant to raise (*hypoth.* 2). The twins, a boy and a girl, are now about eighteen years old.⁴⁴ At present they are in the household of Lakhes, Myrrhine's husband, where the young man is working off a debt which the man who raised them had incurred before his death.⁴⁵ The twins believe that this man who raised them, a freedman shepherd, was their father. Myrrhine knows that the twins are her children,⁴⁶ but neither they nor apparently anyone else know that she is their mother. The twins' social position is so low that a marriage between the young woman and a slave is a credible possibility (cf. 41–4).

The young woman has been raped by Pheidias, a young neighbor who we may assume was rich. Neither the summary nor the surviving fragments tell us anything about the circumstances of the rape. In the course of the play the young woman's true identity is revealed (she is the daughter of the wealthy Lakhes; cf. *hypoth.* 10–11), and the play ends happily with her marriage to her assailant (*hypoth.* 12). The summary says that Pheidias marries her "willingly" (θέλων, *hypoth.* 12), suggesting that he had wanted to do "the right thing" after the rape; that he did not marry her earlier implies that he was initially prevented somehow from doing so, presumably because of the young woman's low social status as, it was thought, the daughter of a freedman shepherd. There is no mention in either the metrical summary or the extant fragments that the young woman was made pregnant by the rape, but given the pattern we have been examining, it seems a reasonable assumption that she was. As usual, the young woman does not appear on the stage.⁴⁷

2. RAPES WHOSE REVELATION ALLOWS MARRIAGE OF VICTIM'S DAUGHTER

Plautus' *Cistellaria* (*The Casket Comedy*)

(based on Menander's *Synaristosai*; also discussed below in Chapter 3 and briefly in Chapter 4)

The *Cistellaria* focuses principally on the love affair of the fine young Alcesimarchus with Selenium, a young woman who has been raised to be a prostitute but who is really the respectable Demipho's long-lost daughter.

Some seventeen years earlier,⁴⁸ while still a young man, Demipho, a citizen of Lemnos, came as a merchant to Sicyon. There, as we learn from the delayed prologue, he raped the young woman Phanostrata (156–9):

There was at Sicyon a long time ago a festival of Dionysus.
A merchant came here to the celebration, a Lemnian,
and here he raped a young woman, himself being a young man,
<violently> while drunk, in the dark of night, in the street.
(*fuere Sicyoni iam diu Dionysia.*
mercator venit huc ad ludos Lemnius,
isque hic compressit virginem adolescentulus,
<vi> vinolentus, multa nocte, in via.)

We note again the common elements of the rapist's drunken state, the night and (as in the *Aulularia*, *Samia* and *Plokion/Plocium*) a nocturnal religious festival. The detail of the nocturnal festival explains – albeit obliquely – how a respectable young woman like Phanostrata came to be out-of-doors after dark.

Unlike the young men in our earlier plays, however, Demipho, the rapist, did not do “the right thing,” at least not immediately. Rather, the prologue tells us, when he realized that he could be punished for what he had done⁴⁹ he turned tail and fled back home to Lemnos, leaving Phanostrata, his victim, to fend for herself. This she did, giving birth to a daughter in secret and handing her over to a family slave to expose (160–6; the slave exposed the newborn baby, then observed as an old woman picked it up and took it away, 167–9).⁵⁰ Phanostrata, we should note, did not know who her assailant was (cf. 164), and so there was no possibility of finding him and compelling him to marry her.

Meanwhile, the prologue continues, Demipho married a relative of his back in Lemnos, but as soon as this first wife died, “straightaway” (*ilico*, 176) he migrated to Sicyon, where he married Phanostrata, the woman whom he had raped (173–8). We are not told how Demipho came to marry Phanostrata, but the emphasis on *ilico* (the first word in its clause) could suggest that he had repented of his initial flight and decided to do “the right thing” as soon as his circumstances allowed.⁵¹ Conveniently, Phanostrata had remained unwed during all these seventeen-plus years,⁵² presumably because her lost virginity (and possibly less-than-prosperous family circumstances⁵³) made it difficult to find her a mate. By remaining unwed she thus remained available to marry Demipho when he again became free to marry her.

The rape itself is once again merely a datum of the plot announced in the prologue, simply stated and not graphically portrayed. The play never censures Demipho for the rape, nor for abandoning his victim. In fact, the Demipho we see in the actual course of the play is not the young man who raped and ran, but an older and now quite respectable person who has acted honorably (as the play would define it) by marrying Phanostrata and taking responsibility for her interests. Thus, when in turn Phanostrata told Demipho about his daughter, he “immediately” (*extemplo*) set a slave to find the woman who had picked up

the exposed child (180–3). Within the overall economy of the play Demipho's swift action is especially commendable since it will eventually lead to the discovery of his daughter as part of the play's happy ending.⁵⁴

To elaborate briefly on this last point, as in the plays considered earlier, so too here the rape results in the birth of a child. In the other plays the birth occurs as part of the play's denouement, and the child is simply incorporated into the happy ending, together with its mother, as part of the young man's new family. In the *Cistellaria*, however, the baby girl was abandoned shortly after birth some seventeen years earlier, and has now grown to a marriageable age. Under these circumstances the happy ending will not be complete until the young woman is found and suitably married, as she is certain to be by the end of the play. Indeed, as we have noted, the principal focus of the *Cistellaria* is not on Demipho or Phanostrata but on Alcesimarchus and Demipho's daughter Selenium. For Selenium and Alcesimarchus the rape – or more precisely its revelation and the consequent discovery of Selenium's true parents – is actually a good thing since it unexpectedly provides Selenium with a suitably respectable father in Demipho, thus making possible an otherwise impossible marriage between herself and Alcesimarchus.

Terence's *Phormio*

(based on the *Epidikazomenos* by Apollodoros of Karystos [younger contemporary of Menander]; also discussed below in Chapters 3 and 4)

Something of the same pattern which we have just seen in the *Cistellaria* is also found in the *Phormio*. Here the focus of the play is on the relationship of the young man Antipho with Phanium. We first hear of Phanium as a poor orphan at her mother's funeral (93 ff.). Antipho, we are told, caught sight of her there rather by chance, fell in love, and married her during his father's absence from Athens. At this point, of course, neither Antipho nor the audience (nor apparently Phanium) knows who her father is. When Antipho's father returns he vehemently objects to his son's marriage to an “undowered and undistinguished young woman” (*indotatam virginem atque ignobilem*, 120; cf. “what were you thinking⁵⁵ when you were marrying a poor person?” [*qua ratione inopem ducebat domum?*], 298) and he tries to force Antipho to divorce Phanium.

In the course of the play, however, Demipho and the audience will come to learn that Phanium is the daughter of Demipho's brother Chremes, the product of a rape Chremes had committed some fifteen years earlier on the island of Lemnos.⁵⁶ She is also, by a remarkable coincidence, the very person whom Demipho had previously agreed to have his son Antipho marry, to help keep the rape a secret especially from Chremes' wife. Phanium and Antipho, on the other hand, have no idea that Chremes is her father until this is revealed in the course of the play. Within the structure of the play then, the revelation of the rape leads to the recognition of Phanium's true identity, it removes Antipho's father's objection to his marriage to her, and it leaves the two lovers united in

the play's happy ending. As in the *Cistellaria*, so too here, the revelation of the rape provides a poor young woman with the social status she needs to be the wife of the rich young man who loves her, and so makes an otherwise impossible marriage possible.

Once again the rape is blamed on wine,⁵⁷ and when Chremes' wife finally learns of the rape she is also assured that Chremes has had no further sexual relations with his victim since the rape (1017-18):

While drunk some fifteen years ago he raped the little woman,
the one from whom this one [Phanium] was born; nor did he ever touch
her afterwards.

*(violentus fere abhinc annos quindecim mulierculam
eam compressit unde haec [Phanium] natast; neque postilla unquam adtrigit.)*

And once again, the victim of the rape was poor.⁵⁸ Unlike Demipho in the *Cistellaria*, however, Chremes did not totally abandon the woman whom he had raped. While he did not marry her — he was apparently already married, and so could not — he did do the “right thing” at least up to a point, by supporting the woman and her child and visiting them in Lemnos,⁵⁹ and he further planned to take care of Phanium, while keeping his relation to her secret, by marrying her to his nephew Antipho (cf. 567-84). On the other hand, Chremes never revealed his real name to the woman (cf. 740-6) nor (apparently) that he was already married back in Athens, nor even that he had already arranged the marriage of their daughter.

When Phanium came of an age to marry and Chremes failed to appear in Lemnos to see to her wedding, her mother came to Athens to find him. This, of course, she failed to do since Chremes had never told her his real name (cf. 747). In her grief⁶⁰ at not finding Chremes the woman died, and it was at her funeral that the young Antipho first saw Phanium. From the point of view of the play, Phanium's mother is, like the rape itself, simply a means to an end, a way of producing Phanium and of bringing her to Athens. In herself she is of no importance, and it should not surprise us that the play does not even provide her with a name. Alive she would have been difficult to accommodate in the play's happy ending, which includes Chremes' wife's forgiveness of her husband's deception. Fortunately, however, she “has passed away” (*ea mortem obiit*), as his brother tells Chremes' wife, and “the awkward feeling that was at the heart of this thing has now disappeared” (*e medio abiit qui fuit in re hac scrupulus*, 1019).

Menander's *Phasma* (*The Ghost*)

The *Phasma*, as far as we can tell, fits well into the pattern we have been examining. Most of the play has been lost, but Terence's commentator Donatus (*ad Eun.* 9) provides a partial summary of the plot, from which we learn that a woman was raped⁶¹ and gave birth to a daughter, whom she has raised secretly

and is hiding in the house next-door as the play begins. The woman has since married a widower with a son who is now a young man. The rape was some time ago, and the woman's daughter is now old enough for the woman's stepson to fall in love with her when he sees her by chance, and eventually to marry her at play's end.⁶² A very fragmentary scrap of papyrus contains some sort of interrogation concerning the rape (93-107), with mention of the Brauronia (97, 104), a nocturnal religious festival (“when there was an all-night festival and dancing” [παν]νυχίδος ούσης καὶ χο[ρῶν], 95) such as those at which rapes were committed in other plays. Since the rape occurred in the previous generation, the child of the rape is, as usual, a daughter, whose marriage to a desirable young man in the present generation will provide the play's happy ending. Donatus says that the marriage is “to the advantage of the young woman and her mother” (*ex commodo matris et virginis*) and that it occurs “with the father's consent” (*consensuque patris*); the two details suggest that the young woman may have been raised in poverty and that, as is often the case in New Comedy, the father initially opposed his son's marriage to someone who was poor.⁶³ One might also speculate from the circumstances that the mother herself was poor before she married her widower husband. Finally, as far as we can tell from the fragments, the rapist in the *Phasma* did not do “the right thing” after the rape, and it was left to the victim herself to see to her daughter's upbringing.

3. PREMARITAL RAPES

Terence's *Hecyra* (*The Mother-in-Law*)

(based on the *Hecyra* of Apollodoros of Karystos; also discussed below in Chapter 5)

The *Hecyra* takes us in a quite different direction, albeit one that will still lead through rape and its acknowledgement to a happy ending. We learn in the play's opening scenes that the young Pamphilus had once been infatuated with Bacchis, an expensive *meretrix*. Despite his feelings for Bacchis, however, at his father's insistence Pamphilus married the sweet young Philumena but he did not consummate the marriage at first, in the hope that his new wife would eventually leave him and he could then resume his affair with Bacchis. Despite this obviously rocky start, Philumena's patience and natural goodness gradually won Pamphilus over, and in time he transferred his affections from his mistress to his young wife (cf. 114-70). All of this has happened fairly recently, in the months leading up to the start of the play.

Pamphilus is away from Athens on family business when the play opens. When he returns in the course of the play he is understandably distressed to find that his wife is about to give birth to a child⁶⁴ which he believes, given the timing, cannot possibly be his.⁶⁵ Although crushed by this appalling turn of

events, Pamphilus takes pity on Philumena when he learns from her mother that she had been raped by some unknown scoundrel (383): he agrees to keep the birth a secret or, if necessary, to acknowledge the child as his own – the assumption is that the child will be immediately exposed,⁶⁶ and there is no question of Pamphilus ever raising it (400). But despite his real love for Philumena, Pamphilus still feels compelled by honor to divorce her (403–4):

About taking her back, that I truly consider in no way honorable,
nor will I do it, even if love and her companionship have a heavy hold on
me.

*(de redducenda, id vero ne utiquam honestum esse arbitror
nec faciam, etsi amor me graviter consuetudoque eius tenet.)*

The play presents all of this in a way that leads the audience to admire Pamphilus for his noble response and to feel sympathy for him as his sense of honor and circumstances beyond his control force him to surrender the woman he loves.

So how then do we reach the happy ending which will reunite Pamphilus and Philumena? Through rape. Quite near the end of the play we learn that some ten months earlier a distraught Pamphilus had come one evening to the house of Bacchis the *meretrix*, where he confessed that he had just raped an unknown woman on the street and stolen her ring, which he then gave to Bacchis. Thanks to this ring Pamphilus eventually comes to learn that he himself was the man who had raped Philumena. And this discovery in turn leads directly to the play's happy ending, for it allows Pamphilus to recover the woman he loves – and to be blessed with an unexpected son in the bargain. In effect, the rape serves as a plot device first to create and then to resolve a complication in the young man's love affair.

There is, of course, a good deal of irony here, particularly in the fact that Pamphilus felt honor-bound to divorce his young wife Philumena because she had been raped and bore a child even though she was herself the innocent victim of the attack, and even though Pamphilus himself had similarly attacked an unknown woman not that long before. The irony is, however, unconscious, and we should not suppose that Terence was aware of it, much less that he wished to call it to his audience's attention. The fact of the matter is that the *Hecyra* is focused on Pamphilus and his emotional ups and downs, not on Philumena, who does not even appear on stage. Philumena has no independent existence: she exists only in terms of her husband and of his feelings for her. And once Pamphilus reaches his happy ending, reunited with his wife, no one is the least bit concerned that his wife will spend the rest of her life with the man who first raped her and then was prepared to disown her for being raped. Quite the contrary, Philumena is simply ignored – or rather, since Pamphilus is to be reunited with the woman he loves, the play, by its generally joyful conclusion, along with its complete silence about Philumena, leaves the impression that she must be as happy as Pamphilus is that the two of them are back together again.

Returning to the rape itself, we may briefly consider Bacchis' account of how Pamphilus had come to her house (822–8):

For I remember that some ten months ago in the early evening
he came running to my house, out of breath, all by himself, full of
wine . . .

the man confessed that he had violently raped some woman in the street.
*(nam memini abhinc mensis decem fere ad me nocte prima
confugere anhelantem domum sine comite, vini plenum . . .
homo se fatetur vi in via nescioquam compressisse.)*

We see again the now familiar elements of a public place,⁶⁷ the darkness of night, and the drunken state of the rapist. Pamphilus' agitation, as described by his mistress, shows that he was upset at what he had done, but it also suggests that what he had done was out of his normal character and that wine had beclouded his mind. Moreover, while Pamphilus may have been upset, he was not remorseful, and Bacchis' narrative certainly makes no mention of any sympathy or concern Pamphilus might have felt for his victim. Indeed, we are even told that Pamphilus gave his mistress Bacchis the ring which he had pulled from his victim's finger as they struggled (cf. 829–30). This may strike us as consummate insensitivity, but none of the characters ever criticize Pamphilus for it, and as far as we can tell they see nothing wrong with it.

More generally, no one criticizes Pamphilus for anything that he has done: not for the rape, not for his insensitivity after the rape, not for the inconsistency between his own behavior and the standard which he sets for Philumena, not for the pain and suffering which he has obviously caused her. Quite the contrary, nothing will spoil the play's happy ending, which belongs to Pamphilus and to him alone. Note the beginning of the happy ending, Bacchis' words as she enters to announce to the audience that through her agency Pamphilus has been identified as the man who raped Philumena (816–20):

How much happiness I have brought to Pamphilus by my coming today!
How many good things I have brought! how many cares I have taken
away!

I restore his son to him, who almost perished thanks to these women
[Philumena and her mother] and to him himself;
his wife, whom he never thought to have again, I have restored.
and the grounds on which he was suspected by his father and Phidippus
[his father-in-law] I have removed.

*(quantam obtuli adventu meo laetitiam Pamphilo bodie!
quot commodas res attuli! quot autem ademi curas!
gnatum ei restituo, qui paene harum ipsiusque opera periit;
uxorem, quam numquam est ratus posthac se habiturum, reddo;
qua re suspectus suo patri et Phidippo fuit, exsolvi.)*

By rewarding Pamphilus with its happy ending the play endorses his behavior. Whatever one may think of the rapes in the other plays we have examined, at least from the perspective of the plays themselves some good comes from them in that they serve to bring about otherwise impossible marriages between rich and poor. In the *Hecyra* the rape serves no similarly "socially useful" function. It is an amoral plot device that temporarily jeopardizes and then restores a marriage that already existed. Pamphilus' insensitivity is also that of the play.⁶⁸

Menander's *Epitrepontes* (*The Arbitration*)

(also discussed below in Chapter 4)

Like the *Samia*, the *Epitrepontes* has been reconstructed from papyrus fragments which have left us with an extensive but incomplete text of the play. Its plot is very much like that of the *Hecyra* in that a young man (here Kharisios) rapes a young woman (here Pamphile), subsequently marries her without realizing that she is the woman he raped, then becomes estranged from her when she gives birth to the child of the rape, and is in the end reconciled to her when he learns that the child is really his own and not that of another man.⁶⁹

As in other plays we have examined, the *Epitrepontes*' rape occurred well before the action of the play, again "when there was an all-night festival" (παννυχίδος οὔσης, 452; cf. "the women celebrating an all-night festival by themselves" [τάς γυναῖκας παννυχιζούσας μόνας], 474), thus accounting for Pamphile's presence outside of her house at night.⁷⁰

As was the case with other rapists, Kharisios was also drunk when he committed the rape (μεθύων, 407; cf. "beside himself with wine" [παροινῶν γύ], 472). Within the play as we have it however, his drunkenness is presented only as an explanation for how he could have committed the rape, but not as an excuse. Indeed, no excuse of any sort is ever offered for the rape. This may perhaps be due to the fragmentary condition of the text, but it may also be that Menander arranged his play so that no excuse would need to be offered: Kharisios' reconciliation with Pamphile takes place off stage, and he will also be reconciled with her father Smikrines off stage at the end of the play, but in this case, perhaps significantly, in setting up this reconciliation Kharisios' slave Onesimos makes excuses to Smikrines for Kharisios' other misbehavior,⁷¹ but not for the rape. Or it may simply be that Menander thought that twice mentioning Kharisios' drunken state was sufficient by itself to excuse his actions to the audience.

The child, a boy (cf. the masculine τὸν . . . θυγατρίδου ["my daughter's son"], 1112), was born and immediately exposed, all while Kharisios was away from home, but upon his return he learned about the child despite Pamphile's efforts to keep the birth secret from him.⁷² Distraught by what he has learned, Kharisios abandons his wife, moves in next door with his friend Khairestratos,

and reverts to a youthful pattern of partying, including hiring the expensive prostitute Habrotonon, although he does not make use of her sexual services (cf. 432-41). All of this has happened quite recently, the birth some thirty days before the play (cf. 242-5), and Kharisios' return, discovery of the birth, and abandonment of his wife only two or three days ago (cf. 441-2); the brief length particularly of Kharisios' estrangement from Pamphile makes their swift reconciliation more believable.

To be noted is Kharisios' reason for rejecting his wife: his "attention to my own reputation" (εἰς δόξαν βλέπων, 908), which would be damaged, one may observe, by remaining married to a wife who had given birth to another man's bastard, but would apparently not be damaged by Kharisios' having fathered a bastard himself (as by his own admission he has done, 896).

As we might expect (with or without a divine prologue to guide us), the exposed child was picked up and, by a series of coincidences, brought to the stage so that Kharisios eventually discovers first that he is the child's father and then that his wife Pamphile is its mother. Significantly it is the first of these discoveries that makes the happy ending possible. Kharisios is led to believe that the prostitute Habrotonon is the woman whom he had raped and whose child he has fathered. At this point he happens to overhear a conversation between Pamphile and her father Smikrines wherein Pamphile protests her loyalty to Kharisios and refuses to leave him despite the urging of Smikrines, who is distressed by Kharisios' partying and his apparent affair with Habrotonon. Recognizing the parallels between Pamphile's situation and his own, Kharisios realizes how cruel and insensitive he has been ("barbaric and un pitying" [βάρβαρος ἀνηλεῆς τε], 898-9; cf. "barbaric" [βάρβαρος], 924), and he resolves to restore his marriage.⁷³

It is interesting to observe the "logic" Kharisios uses here: Pamphile has been an unwilling victim of misfortune ("woman's unwillful misfortune" [ἀκούσιον γυναικὸς ἀτύχημ'], 914; cf. 898); Kharisios now finds himself in the same unfortunate circumstances as she is ("for that woman who has had the same misfortune as I" [ἀτυχοῦση ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνη, 898; "having stumbled into a similar situation" [εἰς ὅμοι' ἐπταυκότα], 915); and because of this he especially should be compassionate toward her. What Kharisios and Pamphile have in common is that they are both the parents of an illegitimate child (cf. "having done such a deed as this, myself having become the father of a bastard baby" [τοιοῦτον ἔργον ἐξεργασμένος αὐτὸς γεγονώς παιδίου νόθου πατήρ, 895-6). Kharisios conveniently neglects the fact that he and Pamphile have come to be in these circumstances by two very different routes, he by raping, she by being raped. He also implicitly denies personal responsibility for what he has done by attributing it to "misfortune" (cf. also "unfortunate" [ἀτυχῆς], 918; "I was unfortunate" [ἤτύχηκα], 891) as if in some way he were himself the passive victim of circumstances in the same way that Pamphile clearly was. We should also note here the implication of Kharisios' argument, that he should forgive Pamphile for her illegitimate child because he expects to be for-

given for his, and on the same grounds, that he has been "unfortunate." Note also that all of this focuses on the illegitimate child, and the rape itself that produced the child is simply ignored.⁷⁴

The *Epitrepontes* thus revolves around Kharisios: his broken marriage, his anguish, his determination to set things aright again. Rather unusually Pamphile, his victim, does appear on the stage, but only in the roles of Kharisios' faithful wife⁷⁵ and mother of his child, and not as victim of the rape.⁷⁶

The actual rape is not narrated in any graphic detail, but unlike the neutral presentation of rape in other plays (with the exception of the *Eunuchus* to be considered below), the violence of the act is here conveyed to the audience in a description of Pamphile after she had been assaulted, a description which should evoke the sympathy of the audience (487–90):

Then suddenly, crying, she ran toward us all by herself,
tearing at her hair. Her beautiful,
thin – o gods – Tarantine cloak had been
ruined, the whole thing had become a rag.
(εἶτ' ἐξαπίνης κλάουσα προστρέχει μόνη,
τίλλουσ' ἑαυτῆς τὰς τρίχας, καλὸν πάνυ
καὶ λεπτόν, ὦ θεοί, ταραντίνον σφόδρα
ἀπολωλεκυῖ· ὄλον γὰρ ἐγεγόνει ῥάκος.)

The same detail of the torn clothing will be used again to convey a sense of the violence of the rape in the *Eunuchus* (646). Interestingly, it is the prostitute Habrotonon who gives us this description; perhaps ladies just did not talk about such things. Even more interesting is the way Habrotonon, pretending to be Kharisios' victim, will later flatter⁷⁷ him for the violence of his act (526–8; note again the mention of ruined outer clothing):

I will affect these commonplaces with my speech
. . . "how shameless you were and
rather impetuous . . . you threw me down so violently:
poor me, how I completely ruined my cloak."
(τὰ κοινὰ ταυτί δ' ἀκκιούμαι τῷ λόγῳ
. . . "ὡς ἀναιδῆς ἦσθα καὶ
ἰταμός τις . . . κατέβαλες δέ μ' ὡς σφόδρα·
ἰμάτια δ' οἱ ἀπόλεσ' ἢ τάλαιν' ἐγώ.")

Again perhaps something a lady not would say, but Habrotonon at least understands that rape has to do with power and it is meant to be violent. Since Kharisios is to be tricked by this flattery, Habrotonon's intent is clearly to undermine the construction of virility based on violence to which her flattery plays. One would like to believe that this was Menander's intent as well, to bring home to his audience the foolishness of such macho posturing and the violence that can flow from it.

Menander's *Heros* (*The Hero*) (also discussed above in section 1)

As we know from the metrical summary of this very fragmentary play,⁷⁸ the young woman Myrrhine was raped and bore twins, whom she gave to a servant to raise (*byboth.* 1–2). "She later married the man who had raped her" (εἶθ' ὕστερον ἐγήμηε τὸν φθείραντα, *byboth.* 4–5), but questions posed to Myrrhine in two of the papyrus fragments which survive from the play indicate that she learns the identity of her attacker and he hers only in the course of the play (78–80, 93–6). The marriage is thus rather a matter of coincidence, like the marriages in Terence's *Hecyra* and Menander's *Epitrepontes*, and not a question of the rapist doing "the right thing." A reference to Athena Alea (84) seems to be an allusion to the mythological rape of Auge,⁷⁹ which took place at a nocturnal religious festival,⁸⁰ but other than this the surviving fragments provide no evidence about the circumstances of the rape. Neither the summary nor the surviving fragments say anything about a child being born of the rape, but given the pattern we have been examining, it would be very surprising if there were not one.

Lakhes, the rapist, is now rich⁸¹ and presumably was already so at the time of the rape. That Myrrhine married him independently of the rape suggests that they were both from the same socio-economic background. As with the other plays in this category (*Hecyra*, *Epitrepontes*, *Truculentus*), the rape itself does not lead to marriage, as it does in the other two categories of rape plays (either in the present or in the succeeding generation), where there is a significant difference in the socio-economic background of the young lover and his future bride.

Plautus' *Truculentus*

(based on an unknown Greek original; also discussed below in
Chapters 3 and 5)

The *Truculentus* is a difficult play to analyze from our perspective: motivations for actions are sometimes obscure and several important pieces of background information are missing, all of which leaves one with the impression that Plautus took from his Greek original only what he needed as a scaffold for his own elaborations and discarded the rest.

The focus of the *Truculentus* is on the young man Diniarchus, who has exhausted his available wealth on the expensive *meretrix* Phronesium but still wishes to continue the affair *gratis*. Phronesium, however, has other plans for obtaining money, including tricking the wealthy professional soldier who had been her lover before Diniarchus, by pretending that she has given birth to the soldier's son. Quite late in the play (770, less than two hundred lines before its end) we are suddenly introduced to the older man Callicles. As Callicles interrogates two female slaves on stage (one his daughter's, the other Phronesium's)

Diniarchus watches unseen by the others. From the slaves' replies and from Diniarchus' comments we learn for the first time in the play – and in rather short order – that Callicles' daughter had been engaged to Diniarchus but the engagement had been broken off,⁸² that Diniarchus has done something wrong ("my old misdeeds," [*male facta antiqua mea*], 774; "I erred" [*peccavi*], 786), that Callicles' daughter has borne a child (789), and that this child has been passed on to Phronesium to use in her pretended birth (790–804). A few more lines and Diniarchus is revealed as the man who had violated⁸³ Callicles' daughter (825).

Diniarchus now steps forward and begs Callicles' pardon for what he has done (826–8). His apology does not satisfy Callicles (829–33), and after dismissing the two slaves, Callicles summons Diniarchus to court (840) to face the legal consequences of the rape.⁸⁴ Diniarchus, however, puts the matter in Callicles' hands and asks that he give him his daughter in marriage (840–1). Callicles rather crudely accepts Diniarchus' proposal,⁸⁵ on the condition that six talents be deducted from the dowry they had previously agreed upon (844–5), and then leaves, saying that he will break off the engagement which he had made to marry his daughter to another man.⁸⁶ Thus again in the *Truculentus*, rape, once acknowledged, leads to a happy ending, at least for Diniarchus, who gets to marry the woman he now wishes to have.

All of this transpires on the stage in little more time than it takes to read this summary, and much is left unexplained: how Diniarchus gained access to Callicles' daughter to rape her; why he is now so eager to marry her when he had spent most of the play protesting his desire for Phronesium; why Callicles is willing to marry his daughter to Diniarchus when he has an apparently good match already arranged for her with another young man. The real problem, however, is not so much the speed of the scene (under eighty lines for the entire narrative from the first hint of the rape to Callicles' betrothal of his daughter to Diniarchus) as the fact that there has been absolutely no preparation for it earlier in the play. We may perhaps guess at the plot of Plautus' Greek original (Phronesium as Diniarchus' former lover?, Callicles cancelling the betrothal of his daughter because he suspects that Diniarchus has not really abandoned Phronesium?, the fortunate discovery of the rape which makes possible again the marriage of Diniarchus and his new true love?), but the fact is that these were details which did not concern Plautus.

One detail which did concern Plautus, however, was Diniarchus' excuse for the rape (826–8, addressing Callicles):

I beg you
by your knees that you bear with wisdom what was unwisely done to you,
and that you pardon me for what I did when I had lost control of myself
because of wine.

(*per te opsecro*
genua ut tu istuc insipienter factum sapienter feras
mibique ignoscas quod animi impos vini vitio fecerim.)

Here again we see a rape excused on the grounds that the rapist was drunk ("by the fault of the wine" [*vini vitio*]) and not fully in possession of his mental powers ("unwisely" [*insipienter*], "without self-control" [*animi impos*]).⁸⁷

Callicles, however, rejects Diniarchus' excuse (829–33), saying in effect that a scoundrel is a scoundrel whether sober or drunk (*qui improbus si quasi bibit sive adeo caret remeto, tamen ab ingenio improbus*, 832–3). But despite this rejection of his excuse Callicles is still willing to marry his daughter to Diniarchus, especially if he can use the rape as grounds for reducing the size of his daughter's dowry (cf. 844–5). Callicles is, in fact, a very unpleasant person: his first words, for example, when he comes on stage are a threat to torture the two female slaves (775–7); he blames his daughter for giving away her child to keep its birth secret (805–9), and gratuitously blames her slave for failing to protect her from the rape;⁸⁸ and he seals the marriage by curtly telling Diniarchus to "get your wife out of my house as soon as possible" (*uxorem quam primum potest abduce ex aedibus*, 847). The whole characterization of Callicles predisposes the audience to dislike him, and if they dislike him they are unlikely to give much weight to what he says, especially when the newly noble Diniarchus humbly accepts – and so in a way dismisses – Callicles' abuse as the kind of unpleasantness he shall have to tolerate for what he has done.⁸⁹ We have seen this technique before, notably in Euclio's rejection of Lyconides' excuse in the *Aulularia*: a view which the audience itself might perhaps share is voiced by an unpleasant character as a way of discrediting the view.⁹⁰ In effect, as typically in New Comedy, the play portrays the young man as admirable for owing up to the rape even while excusing it on the grounds of diminished capacity, and suggests that any criticism of what he has done is nothing short of churlish.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RAPE MOTIF IN NEW COMEDY

The foregoing survey shows quite clearly that there is no significant difference in the way rape is handled by Roman authors of New Comedy compared with Menander as representative of Greek New Comedy. Whatever differences there may be between plays, they are specific to the individual plays and are not part of a separate Roman pattern distinct from the Greek. Rather, the authors of Roman New Comedy (Plautus, Caecilius and Terence) simply took over the rape motif, unchanged and in its entirety, as they found it in Greek New Comedy, which, given the common Greek background of both Roman and Greek plays, is exactly what we would have expected.⁹¹

There are numerous common elements running through all these accounts of rape, Greek and Roman:

- 1 The rape always happens before the play.
- 2 With the partial exception of the *Epitrepontes*, the rape is never narrated in graphic terms that might excite either the indignation or the prurient interest of the audience.
- 3 The rapist is always a young man, never an older man (γέρων, *senex*), even though there are enough dirty old men especially in Roman New Comedy that the thought of a senior rapist should not be unimaginable.⁹²
- 4 The rapist is always unmarried at the time of the rape.
- 5 The rapist always comes from a wealthy family, never a poor one, even though there are enough poor families in New Comedy, so that the thought of a poor rapist should not be unimaginable.
- 6 As far as the plays tell us, the rapist and his victim did not know each other before the rape. In particular, rape is consistently presented as a spur-of-the-moment affair with a stranger, and never as the consummation of a passion which the young man had previously formed for the woman.
- 7 The rapist is almost always drunk, and when the time of the rape is known it is always at night. In fact, to judge from the plays themselves, other than partying, raping young women seems to be the only thing young men in New Comedy do when they are drunk and/or at night.⁹³ The combination of night and wine was thought to be, for young men, a particularly potent incitement to sex.⁹⁴
- 8 The rapist is excused on the grounds that he was mentally impaired, usually by wine, occasionally by passion. Sometimes this excuse is rejected by one of the characters in the play, but the character who does so is always someone whose views the play has prepared the audience to ignore or dismiss.
- 9 Most rapes occur at nocturnal religious festivals, helping to explain why the victims were out of their houses at night. The element of a festival might also suggest an atmosphere of revelry wherein the young men might feel themselves less constrained by societal norms, and the young women might be caught more easily off their guard.⁹⁵
- 10 The rapist is never punished either by family or state, or in terms of the play's overall structure of rewards and punishments. Indeed, the rapist always shares in the play's happy ending.
- 11 The rapist always acknowledges his rape, at least eventually, and does "the right thing," usually by marrying his victim (or if he has already married his victim and become estranged from her, by taking her back), or at a minimum by acknowledging his child, albeit years later, but still in time for the child to be married.
- 12 The rapist is always viewed favorably when he does "the right thing."
- 13 The rape is always the fault of the rapist, and there is never a suggestion that the victim in any way contributed to her own predicament.⁹⁶
- 14 The rape always results in a pregnancy, which is always brought successfully to term.

- 15 If the child of the rape is born shortly before or during the play, as far as we can tell the child is always male.⁹⁷ If the child is born substantially earlier it is usually female and has reached the age of marriage by the time the play begins.⁹⁸
- 16 The victim is always a young woman of marriageable age, but unmarried at the time of the rape.
- 17 As far as we can tell from the plays, the rape is always the victim's first sexual experience.
- 18 The victim is always free and free born, never a slave or a freedwoman.
- 19 The victim is always a "respectable" woman, never a prostitute or *hetaira*.
- 20 Except in the case of what we have called "pre-marital" rapes, the victim of the rape is always poor.
- 21 With the exception of Phanostrata in the *Cistellaria* and the silent Plangon in the *Samia*, the victim never appears on the stage, although she may be briefly heard crying out as she gives birth off stage.
- 22 The rape and its acknowledgement always result in a marriage, either of the victim or of her daughter, to a wealthy young man, or in the restoration of a marriage with a wealthy husband when the two parties had become estranged. The marriage or its restoration is always an important component in the happy ending of the play.
- 23 In general, we hear nothing about how the victim feels about being raped.
- 24 In particular, when a play ends with the victim marrying her rapist, the play assumes that this is a happy ending for the victim as well.
- 25 Finally and most generally, while the rape by itself is never commended and may occasionally be censured by one of the characters in the play, the positive feelings which the play associates with the rape's discovery and/or acknowledgement and the ensuing marriage or reconciliation far outweigh any negative feelings associated with the rape itself.

But for the few exceptions noted above, all the features in this lengthy list appear in each and every one of the rapes which we have examined. This consistency in the portrayal of rape and its aftermath strongly suggests that we have here a stereotypical literary motif whose basic elements and eventual denouement would be as familiar to the audiences of New Comedy as those of similar motifs like "exposed child identified and married to her lover" or "boastful professional soldier duped." And because it was so familiar, the audience would see it as something natural, the sort of thing one expects in the world of New Comedy, without raising an eyebrow.

But why rape?, we might ask. Or more precisely, why this specific pattern of rape with the same set of details repeating themselves, as they do, from play to play? For given this stereotypical pattern of details, it is not unreasonable to suppose that we are dealing here with something more than a mere plot device for bringing together a young man and a young woman from two different social backgrounds.⁹⁹

If we suppose that stereotypes of this sort are rooted in a commonly held view of society, then one way of approaching the question would be to consider the assumptions which this rape motif makes about society, and the messages it sends by representing – by re-presenting – those assumptions on the stage. One rather obvious assumption/message is that males are more important than females. A less obvious one lies in the role the rape motif assigns to women as instruments of men's sexual pleasure. Here it is worth repeating that the women are all innocent victims: they have done nothing which the plays ever construe as contributing to, acquiescing in, and certainly not as taking any sexual or emotional pleasure from the experience of rape. The plays give us to understand that responsibility for the rape is totally the young men's – not, however, to make the young man look that much worse, but because the women in this motif count for nothing in themselves.¹⁰⁰ Recall again that we never hear how women feel about what has happened to them, because – the motif tells us implicitly – what they feel does not matter. Rape is a relationship of power, as feminist critics remind us, the domination of the victim by force. While the plays may question the propriety of exercising domination in such a public and anonymous fashion, they never question the underlying assumption that the relationship of male and female is basically (one may even say "essentially") one of dominance and submission.

A further assumption/message is that marriage is an important social institution for both male and female, and for society as a whole. For the young man, not merely in the rape plays but throughout New Comedy, marriage marks the end of his youth, the period of his transition from child to adult. Significantly, we never hear in our plays of anyone's expectations or hopes or dreams (or fears) for the future beyond the wedding day, in no small measure because these plays are about the love affairs of youth, which is expected to end with marriage. Even when the young men marry the women whom they love, as they often do in the rape plays, they are changed – and their relationship with their women is changed – by the very fact that they become married adults. In particular, in the world of New Comedy there is no place for love, at least not for passionate romantic love, between husband and wife.

From the point of the view of the plays then, marriages are less important as the beginning of adulthood than as the end of youth. Indeed, one may see reflected in the plots of all these plays, but especially clearly in the rape plays, the familiar pattern of initiation into adulthood in which a young man, now no longer a child but not yet an adult, leaves the community in which he had been raised in order to live a temporary existence outside the community and its norms; during this period of transition the young man is expected to engage in certain non-conformist, even primitive acts, after which he is formally reintegrated into society as an adult through an appropriate ritual, in the case of New Comedy the ritual of marriage.¹⁰¹ Viewed in this light, the rape of the young women in our plays is both a chaotic act which marks the young men's temporary existence outside society and its norms,¹⁰² and a figure of the

domination of female by male in marriage, the ritual which will reintegrate the young man into society as an adult. In other words, rape is the sort of behavior society cannot openly sanction but nonetheless expects and tolerates in its young men – not as a means by which that they can prove their manhood, however, but rather as one step in an extended process by which they become adults.¹⁰³

So much for the young man. For the young woman the assumption and the message in New Comedy's treatment of rape is that her proper role is not so much to be married as to be the wife the young man needs if he is to complete his transition from child to adult by marriage.

As for society as a whole, rape can – and in New Comedy always does – produce children, but in Athens only formal marriage between a citizen father and a citizen mother could produce new citizens to continue the life of the community into the next generation.¹⁰⁴ Especially in plays involving rape, the actions of the young man can be viewed as privatist and anarchic, while the marriage at the end of the play represents a return to a more communally minded normalcy. Indeed, from an Athenian point of view the purpose of marriage was precisely the production of citizen children, as the formula of betrothal ("for the plowing of legitimate children"¹⁰⁵) makes quite clear. In our plays the children whom the young rapists father, illegitimate and incapable of producing citizen offspring, are fitting symbols of their fathers' private violence. When their fathers marry their victims, however, these same children become instead legitimate citizens capable of producing their own citizen children, or in the case of long-lost daughters who are unexpectedly found, women whose newly discovered capacity to produce legitimate citizen offspring is manifested through the marriages which the recognition of their citizen status has now made possible.

Rape, it should be stressed, is never commended or even approved in New Comedy, and it is sometimes even criticized. It is unacceptable, anti-social behavior, but this is precisely what the motif of separation and reintegration requires. Significantly, however, the plays also regularly make the point that the rapist's rational capacities were diminished by drink and/or youthful passion and the seductive effects of the night. Sometimes the rapist excuses himself or is excused by others on these grounds (so e.g. Plaut. *Aul.* 745, Ter. *Ad.* 470–1), but at other times the fact that the rapist was drunk is an incidental detail of a narrative and could have just as easily been omitted (e.g. Plaut. *Cist.* 159, Ter. *Heu.* 823). These latter instances make it especially clear that the defense of diminished capacities, which forms a regular part of the rape motif, is addressed primarily to the audience, and is meant to help them see the rapist in a better light. In effect, if the act of rape is to be censured, the agent is less so, especially since no one ever asks why he allowed himself to get drunk in the first place.¹⁰⁶ By conceding, as they regularly do, that the rapist's mental capacities were impaired – that he was not really himself when he raped the young woman – the plays open the door to his reintegration into society in a way that

would be difficult to do if the rapist had known what he was doing and nonetheless consciously and rationally acted against society's moral norms.¹⁰⁷

What matters most in the motif, however, is not the rape itself, which is never dwelt upon, but its aftermath, what the young man does after the rape. It is thus not surprising that the characters who do criticize the rape (and thus look to the past) are unsympathetic persons whose views the audience has been prepared to dismiss, like Euclio in the *Aulularia* and Callicles in the *Truculentus*, while those who forgive the rape (and thus look to the present and future) are sympathetic persons, like Hegio and Micio in the *Adelphoe*, whose views the plays have prepared the audience to accept.

In all these plays the rapist eventually does "the right thing" and takes responsibility for the rape, never reluctantly and under compulsion but always freely and on his own initiative. Particularly in our first group of plays, where the rape leads immediately to marriage, the rapist himself seeks to marry his young victim with whom he has subsequently fallen in love. In the real world of fourth-century Athens "shot-gun" marriages may have been a way to lessen the damage done to the rapist's victim and her family, concealing the embarrassing facts and assuring the marriage of a young woman who would otherwise find it difficult to marry.¹⁰⁸ In this real world rape was an offense punishable in a court of law, as a way of bringing pressure on the young man to marry his victim or, failing that, at least to provide some compensation for the harm he has done her. In the world of New Comedy, however, such legal remedies are occasionally mentioned, but no rapist is ever actually brought to court, and perhaps more importantly, no rapist is ever compelled to marry his victim by the threat of legal penalties if he does not.¹⁰⁹ One obvious reason for this difference is that the plots of the plays focus on the young men and their interests, while the laws defend the interests of the young women and their families, which are generally of little importance in the plays.¹¹⁰ In the plays, the happy endings must be those of the young men: the plays must end by giving them what they want.

Seen against the background of fourth-century realities, the rape motif in its entirety also sends a broader social message, on the one hand, that "good" people can and should be forgiven for their misdeeds against the vulnerable when they do "the right thing" by taking responsibility for their actions; and, on the other hand, that "good" people can generally be counted on to do "the right thing" of their own free will. It is an interesting fact, however, that in New Comedy's rape motif it never hurts the rapist to take responsibility for his actions.¹¹¹ Indeed, in every instance the rapist shares in the joy of the play's happy ending, and no one ever objects. The message, in other words, is that it is right for "good" people to acknowledge their misdeeds and make some gesture toward the victim, and it is correspondingly right for the victim to accept the gesture, and thereby acquiesce in a scenario which effectively exonerates the rapist by suppressing the adverse consequences of the rape. The converse of this message is that it would be wrong for the victim or her defenders to reject

the proffered gesture and seek to punish or wreak vengeance upon "good" people for the ill they have done. Rape is, I would suggest, a worst-case scenario: If something as horrible as rape can lead to a happy ending when "good" people do the right thing, then, New Comedy implies, there is no reason to believe that lesser grievances will not be just as amicably resolved.

And who are these "good" people? As it happens, they are all young men from wealthy families, which in turn further refines the message of the motif, not quite that wealthy folk should be allowed to rape women at will, but that wealthy folk should be granted a wide latitude to do as they please, and if in so doing they bring harm to those less fortunate than themselves, society can expect them to make amends – albeit on their own terms and not in any way that will cause them any serious harm or pain.

We said earlier that the rape motif in New Comedy is something more than a convenient plot device to bring together wealthy young men and poor young women who otherwise would probably never have met. On the other hand, we should not ignore the fact that this is exactly what the large majority of these rapes do. What is important here, however, is the particular dynamic of the relationship which victimizes a poor woman in order to create the circumstances whereby she (or her daughter) may be married to some wealthy young man.¹¹² Recall that as the plays are structured, this marriage is a happy ending primarily for the young man and only secondarily for the young woman who, it is simply assumed, will live happily ever after in her new life as a rich woman. This happy ending, focused as it is on a rich young man and his reintegration into normal society through marriage (and not focused e.g. on punishment of the rapist or the exaction of vengeance), is in effect an affirmation of "normalcy," which in this case is simply the privileging of male over female and, equally, the privileging of rich over poor.

It is worth noting that the status of the rape victim is never diminished by the rape, provided that her rapist marries her. The proviso is very important. Commenting on the words "that she spend her life with one man" (*ut cum uno aetatem degeret*) at Ter. *Phorm.* 417 Terence's commentator Donatus asks rhetorically "for what is chastity except the knowledge of only one man?" (*quid enim est pudicitia nisi unius scientia viri?*). Of course, by this definition, "chastity" is an exclusively female virtue. More importantly, it is a virtue from the point of view of her husband's interests. From the perspective of those who accept this definition of "chastity," the victim of rape is "damaged goods" for every potential husband except her rapist. By doing "the right thing," by marrying his victim, the rapist does not "restore" her chastity, as it were, but rather he preserves it.¹¹³

Finally, it is worth recalling what should be obvious, that with this motif we are talking here about rape, about physical violence inflicted by a temporarily powerful man upon an unwilling woman. The frequent use of the rape motif in New Comedy banalizes the reality of rape, making it less shocking and thus more acceptable.¹¹⁴ A body of literature that makes the fact of rape a

prominent part of its plots and then, even while censuring the fact of rape, nonetheless welcomes the rapist into every happy ending inevitably sends a message to its audience that self-serving violence of the powerful against the vulnerable, especially violence of male against female, is permissible despite any public protestations to the contrary. That both Athenians and Romans allowed such a message to be sent through their publicly financed mass entertainment – indeed, that they probably did not even realize it was being sent – tells us something about both societies and their unconscious tolerance of such violence.

5. SOURCES OF THE RAPE MOTIF IN NEW COMEDY

Roman authors of New Comedy took the rape motif over from Greek New Comedy, but where did the Greek authors of New Comedy get the motif? Where did it come from originally?

To answer this question from a literary-historical perspective, as in so much else, so in the case of the rape motif the authors of New Comedy appear to have used Euripides as their model.¹¹⁵ The late-third-century BC author Satyros, in his biography of Euripides, speaks of:

the things that have to do with sudden reversals of fortune – rapes of young women, substitutions of children, recognitions through rings and necklaces – for these are the things which of course comprise New Comedy, and which Euripides brought to a high point.¹¹⁶

In this connection one thinks, naturally, of Apollo's rape of the Athenian princess Kreousa in Euripides' *Ion*,¹¹⁷ with its secret birth, the exposure of the baby Ion, and the eventual discovery of Ion's identity through the birth tokens Kreousa had left with the abandoned child.

Far less important for the plot of the *Ion*, but more interesting for our purposes is another rape recounted in the play, that which Xouthos, Kreousa's husband, tells the youthful Ion he had once committed upon an unknown young woman¹¹⁸ in Delphi (545–55). At this point in the play's action Ion believes that Xouthos is his father, and the young man is trying to discover how he came to be raised in Delphi rather than at Athens. It emerges from Xouthos' answers to Ion's questions that before he married Kreousa (and thus while he was still a young man) Xouthos had come to Delphi, where his host brought him to spy¹¹⁹ on the young devotees of Dionysos as they celebrated the nocturnal rites in honor of their god (545–52). Ion asks Xouthos whether he "had his wits about him or he was drunk" at the time (ἔμφορον ἢ κάποινον ὄντα, 553), and when Xouthos replies that he was "enjoying the pleasures of Bakchos" (βακχίου πρὸς ἡδοναῖς, 553), Ion concludes that this was how he had been conceived (554), a conclusion Xouthos implicitly accepts by further suggest-

ing Ion's unknown mother may have exposed him at birth in the Delphic temple of Apollo (555).

Xouthos' rape of the unknown Delphian woman is a minor detail in the play and one quickly forgotten, and it could hardly have served as the source for the New Comedy rape motif we have been discussing. It is nonetheless of interest for our purposes, since it reproduces in so many points the pattern found in the New Comedy motif: nocturnal rites, a drunken young rapist, and a young woman who abandons at birth the child the rape has forced her to bear. It is also of interest for what is not included: in contrast to the young men of New Comedy, Xouthos did not do "the right thing." Quite the contrary, there is no indication in the play that Xouthos had ever even thought again about the rape after it happened until he was questioned about it by Ion. And even when he is reminded of the rape, Xouthos remains unconcerned about the woman – in contrast to Ion, who at least would like to find his mother – and he shows not a sign of remorse either for the way he raped the woman or for the way he has neglected his child born of the rape for all these years. Xouthos' complete nonchalance about the rape he has committed is in pointed contrast to the anguish caused Kreousa by the parallel rape she has suffered, a woman's anguish about which – unlike New Comedy – the play informs us at length.

The concealed birth and exposure of children born of rapes by a god (Poseidon) also figure in two other plays by Euripides, both known only from fragments, his *Melanippe the Wise* and his *Alope*, the latter of which also contains an arbitration scene between two shepherds arguing over ownership of the child's birth tokens, which may well have served as the inspiration for the similar scene in Menander's *Epitrepontes*.¹²⁰

Even more interesting for us, however, is Euripides' *Auge*, whose entire plot reads remarkably like something from New Comedy – indeed in Menander's *Epitrepontes* (1123–5) the slave Onesimos begins to quote from the play in a not so covert allusion to the rape which forms the background of that play. As plausibly reconstructed,¹²¹ the *Auge* tells how Herakles raped Auge, priestess of an Arcadian cult of Athena, during a nocturnal religious rite, leaving behind a ring as evidence of what he had done. Pregnant from the rape, Auge in time gave birth to Telephos. Auge's father was outraged by what had happened and ordered the child to be exposed and Auge killed, but Herakles, who, by a fortunate coincidence, was passing by at the time, recognized the ring he had left behind and rescued first his child and then Auge, who subsequently married Teuthras in accordance with an oracle of Apollo.¹²² Not much of the actual play survives, but frag. 265 N², clearly spoken by Herakles, is particularly relevant to our discussion:

Wine caused me to lose my mind: I agree
I wrong you, but the wrong happened unintentionally.
(νοῦ δ' οἶνος ἐξέστησέ μ'· ὁμολογῶ δέ σε
ἀδικεῖν, τὸ δ' ἀδικημ' ἐγένετ' οὐχ ἐκούσιον.)

Note here – once again – the familiar setting of the rape at a nocturnal religious festival, the way in which the rapist, here the forever-youthful Herakles, uses his drunken state as an excuse for the rape. Note also the birth of a male child, and a happy ending in the form of a wedding for the victim of the rape, albeit this time not with her assailant.

The *Auge* is a plausible source for the rape motif in New Comedy. On the one hand, while Greek mythology provides numerous examples of gods raping young women, there does not seem to be any mythological model or literary source earlier than or contemporary with Euripides to which this specific rape narrative, with all of its various details, can be traced with any degree of probability. On the other hand, Euripides' *Auge* was apparently a memorable play.¹²³ Aristophanes alludes to it in his *Frogs* (1079–80, with the schol. *ad loc.*), and Menander quotes from it directly in his *Epitrepontes* (1123–4, cf. 1125) and either quotes from it or alludes to it in his *Heros*.¹²⁴ Particularly from the way he quotes the play in the *Epitrepontes* it is clear that Menander expected his audience to be familiar with it.¹²⁵ The Old Comedy writer Phyllylios also wrote a play called *Auge*, as did the Middle Comedy writer Euboulos. The one surviving fragment from Euboulos' play is written in tragic diction, suggesting that it was a parody, possibly of Euripides' play. Frag. 5 K-A of Phyllylios' play describes Auge herself drinking with young men, similarly suggesting a parody, perhaps again of Euripides' play. Finally, the story of Auge, probably again as known through Euripides' play, was the subject of a painting famous enough to be reproduced on four different walls in Pompeii.¹²⁶

While we are on quite familiar ground with the plot of the *Auge* there are still two major differences between the *Auge* and the rape plays of New Comedy which call for comment. First, in the *Auge* – and this is also true of both rapes in the *Ion* and those in the *Alope* and the *Melanippe* – the rapist, far from doing “the right thing,” essentially abandons his victim to her own devices. Secondly, all four plays (*Auge*, *Ion*, *Alope* and *Melanippe*) are focused on the female victim of the rape and her trials and tribulations, in contrast to the plays of New Comedy which focus on the emotional happiness of the male (depending on the play, either the rapist himself or the young man who a decade and a half later wishes to marry the girl born of the rape). The two changes are in fact two sides of the same coin: if the comedies are to focus on the males, then the males cannot remain as heartless as those of tragedy had been. But if the first of the two changes (the more responsible role played by the male) can be explained in terms of the second (the shift in focus and sympathies from female to male), the reasons for this second change are not immediately clear.

We might step back for a moment and view our question (“Where did this motif come from?”) from a slightly broader perspective. A literary precedent does not become a precedent until someone else decides to follow it. Until then it is nothing more than potential raw material for later writers who may or

may not choose to use it in their work. There is nothing in the raw material that requires that it be used, much less how it be used. Now, as we have seen, individual authors of New Comedy did choose to use a very specific version of the rape motif in their plays. Perhaps the Greek authors did so initially in partial imitation of Euripides, and then by borrowing from another author (or recycling from their own work) what had proved to be a successful plot device. The effect of these repeated decisions made by different authors over a period of time – and, as far as we can tell, decisions not made in consultation with each other – was the gradual incorporation of this specific version of the rape motif as part of the repertoire of conventional motifs of Greek New Comedy (and a similar process worked for the retention of this version as a stock motif in Roman New Comedy).

Now, aesthetically, there is nothing particularly pleasing or unpleasing in this version of the motif – especially when the details of the actual rape were suppressed, as they usually were. The choices made by these authors to use the rape motif were not a matter of aesthetics but rather, I would suggest, broadly speaking one of ideology. If this motif in this particular form, including its emphasis on the male rapist instead of the female victim, was successful, it was because it “made sense,” because it “worked” in terms of the shared attitudes and views of the broader society of which the authors, like the audiences they sought to entertain, were a part. And our best evidence that it “made sense,” that it “worked” is the fact that it was used as often as it was. But why did it work? Probably not because there were in fact large numbers of rich young men raping young women, especially poor ones, a proposition which is impossible to prove or disprove from the evidence of the plays, but which is at least *a priori* unlikely. Perhaps it worked because Athenian audiences were prepared to believe that large numbers of rich young men were doing so, whatever the actual fact may have been (which the evidence of the plays suggests is at least possible¹²⁷), and Roman audiences were prepared to believe the worst about Greeks. Or perhaps the shifting of focus from the victim to the rapist “made sense” because of a third change in the motif as it moved from tragedy to comedy: In tragedy, with the minor exception of the singularly non-heroic Xouthos in the *Ion*, the rapist was always a god or hero, and the victim was always a member of the human elite of kings and their families that populates mythology; in New Comedy the rapist is always a rich but mortal male, and the victim is often poor, and always ordinary. Now there is nothing in this shift from mythology to the more day-to-day world of New Comedy that necessarily requires a shift in focus from female to male except, perhaps, that young women could be allowed a greater importance in the unrealities of mythology than the contemporary world was willing to grant them in a genre that was supposed to represent real life. A plot motif that privileges the male, especially the socially elite male, “makes sense” because, from an ideological point of view, that is the way things should be in reality. Understood in this sense, the rape motif in New Comedy is simply a convenient re-presentation of broader

and less sharply defined attitudes about male and female and rich and poor, attitudes which would tolerate such behavior as rampant rape if such behavior really did exist.

6. TERENCE'S *EUNUCHUS* (THE *EUNUCH*)

(based on Menander's *Eumoukhos*; also discussed below in Chapters 3 and 5)

I have reserved a discussion of the rape in the *Eunuchus* until now since in several ways it does not fit the pattern we have been considering. The rape does not take place at a nocturnal religious festival before the play begins, but in one of the houses represented on stage and during the course of the play. More importantly, the rapist is not drunk but cold sober, although he does later say, by way of an excuse, that he did what he did "because of love" (*amoris causa*, 878). The rape here is deliberately planned, not, as elsewhere, a spur-of-the-moment affair. And only here does the rapist attempt to justify his actions, first by casting them as revenge against *meretrices* as a class (382–7), and then by implying that there is nothing wrong with rape when its victim is a slave (858).¹²⁸

Specifically, the wealthy young Chaerea¹²⁹ has been smitten at the sight of the young¹³⁰ slave Pamphila and wishes to "possess" her sexually (*potiar*, 320, 362; *potiri*, 614).¹³¹ This element of physical sexuality should be noted. Unlike her sisters in other plays, Pamphila actually appears on the stage, where she is paraded as a sort of trophy by Gnatho, who is delivering her as a gift from the soldier Thraso to the *meretrix* Thais (227–88; note especially 273–5). Pamphila says nothing while she is on stage, and she is brought on solely to display her good looks (cf. the description of her as she enters, 229–30). Similarly in the following scene, when Chaerea himself comes on stage he raves at length about her beauty (296–7, 314–19), and concludes that he must "possess" her no matter what it takes (319–20).

Chaerea had seen Pamphila by chance on the street and began to follow her, but then they became separated (cf. 321–41). Learning now that she is in Thais' house (cf. 344–54), he substitutes himself for a slave eunuch (whom his brother has sent to Thais as a gift) in order to gain access to Pamphila. Disguised as the eunuch, Chaerea is taken into Thais' house, where he remains for some one hundred and sixty lines. When he returns on stage he meets by chance his friend Antipho, another young man, to whom he relates what he has just done.

Three parts of Chaerea's extended narrative (572–606) are of interest to us here. First, he prefaces his account by again praising Pamphila's beauty (565–7), to which he adds "why say more? I fell in love" (*quid multa verba? amare coepi*, 568), where we see quite clearly that Chaerea's "love" is nothing more than a sexual response to Pamphila's physical attractiveness. Second, Chaerea tells Antipho that inside the house he saw Pamphila gazing at a paint-

ing of Jupiter and Danaë and was encouraged when he saw that the god "had played the same game" he was now playing (*consimilem luserat iam olim ille ludum*, 586–7) – Chaerea's language here shows clearly that in his mind what he and Jupiter have done, sneaking into a house and raping a young woman within, is nothing but a "game" (*ludus*), a lark. Third is Chaerea's narrative – or rather non-narrative – of the actual rape. Chaerea's account is quite detailed¹³² up to the point at which he tells Antipho how, finding himself alone with Pamphila (who had fallen asleep), he bolted the door (600–3). Now, however, when Antipho asks him what happened next, Chaerea leaves the answer to Antipho's (and the audience's) imagination, saying only that if he had missed this grand opportunity he would be no different from the eunuch he was pretending to be (604–6). To this Antipho replies "of course, by Hercules, just as you say" (*sane bercle ut dicis*, 607), and then, in his very next breath, he asks about arrangements for their dinner ("but meanwhile, what's been done about the club meal?" [*sed interim de symbolis quid actumst?*], 607). For Chaerea (who, it should be noted, is bragging to Antipho) the rape is nothing more than the consummation of the little escapade he has been describing, and of no importance in itself. For Antipho it is so insignificant that it does not merit further question or comment, a trivial incident that has just delayed plans for dinner. Needless to say, neither young man gives a thought to Pamphila, the victim of the rape.¹³³

The important difference here, of course, is that Chaerea and Antipho think that Pamphila is a slave, and slaves simply do not matter in the same way that free persons do.¹³⁴ This is not to say that one can mistreat any slave with impunity, for one might eventually find oneself answerable to the slave's master for harm done to his property. But Pamphila is a slave in the household of Thais who, as both foreign-born (cf. 107) and a *meretrix*, has little standing in Athens, a point of which she herself is well aware (146–9; cf. 759–60). And so, when, after the rape, Chaerea sees Thais on the stage he is momentarily afraid,¹³⁵ but then realizing that he has nothing to fear from her, he decides to brazen it out.¹³⁶ For people like Chaerea and Antipho it is not simply that they can take advantage of vulnerable people like Thais and Pamphila without suffering the consequences, nor even that there is nothing wrong with doing so, but that such behavior is perfectly normal and undeserving of any further comment.

Not surprisingly, Thais is willing to pardon Chaerea (879) when he explains that "I acted not for the sake of insult but for love (*contumeliae me non fecisse causa, sed amoris*, 877–8), i.e. that in raping Pamphila he did not intend to offend Thais, but only to gratify his own uncontrolled passion. Her reply to this is remarkably indulgent ("for my nature is not so inhuman, Chaerea, nor am I so inexperienced that I do not know what love is able to do" [*non adeo inhumano ingenio sum, Chaerea, neque ita imperita ut quid amor valeat nesciam*], 880–1), either out of calculation or because she really shares the values of the dominant class that sees nothing wrong with treating slaves the way Chaerea has treated Pamphila.

Elsewhere in New Comedy the rapist is forgiven when he agrees to marry his victim, but here Thais forgives Chaerea before he promises to marry Pamphila. But then Chaerea's apology is for the way the rape has offended Thais, not for the harm it has done Pamphila.¹³⁷ If Thais thus ignores Pamphila's interests it is because she, just like Chaerea, has never been interested in the young woman for her own sake but only for the advantage she can derive from her. For Thais knows (as does the audience since the play's first act) that Pamphila was born an Athenian citizen, kidnapped and sold into slavery (cf. 108–15). It is Thais' hope that by reuniting Pamphila with her family she will receive in return the family's patronage and protection, which would make her situation as a foreigner in Athens less precarious (146–9, 867–71, 1039–40). And so, upon learning of the rape, Thais' concern is not for Pamphila but for herself ("ah, poor me, I am done for, unfortunate me" [*bem misera occidi, infelix*], 827–8), that she may no longer be able to reap the reward of returning Pamphila to her family as she had planned (cf. 866–71).

In fact, the only person who seems to care at all about Pamphila for her own sake is Thais' servant Pythias. It is Pythias who first provides the sort of detail, found elsewhere only in the *Epitrepontes*,¹³⁸ that gives some sense of the violence involved in the rape and of the effect it has had on Pamphila (645–6, 659):

Besides on top of everything else the scoundrel, after he had made sport of the young woman,

he tore apart all her clothes, poor thing, and then tore her hair. . . .

The young woman herself is crying and, though you ask repeatedly, she does not dare to say what the matter is.

(*quin etiam insuper scelus, postquam ludificatus est virginem, vestem omnem miseræ discidit, tum ipsam capillo conscindit. . . .*

virgo ipsa lacrumat neque, quom rogites, quid sit audet dicere.)

Donatus observes on "he tore apart all her clothes, poor thing" (646) that Chaerea "acted not from love but to wrong her" (*adeo non amore fecit sed iniuria*," i.e. that, at least as Pythias describes it, Chaerea was not responding to sexual passion, as he will claim to Thais, but to an arrogant desire to humiliate his victim (cf. especially her "made sport of" [*ludificatus*], 645). And when Chaerea (still pretending to be the eunuch) minimizes what he has done by saying that he thought his victim was just a fellow slave (856–8, quoted below, note 134), Pythias reacts sharply to the word "fellow slave" (*conservam*, 859), seeing in it not an excuse but a further insult ("he has come to mock still further" [*etiam ultro derisum advenit*], 860). Pythias' is a view which Thais most emphatically does not share – "go away from here, you crazy woman" (*abin hinc, insana*), she says to Pythias (861) – but this is to be expected, for Thais is a part of the world of Chaerea and his ilk, and even if she must deal with people like him from a position of inferiority, at least she can deal with them. Pythias is part of a different world. She is a slave like Pamphila, her *conserva* – her sister in slavery – and the only character in the play who can really sympathize with her.¹³⁹

And so even when Thais pardons Chaerea and is willing to co-operate with him, Pythias repeatedly expresses her distrust of the young man (883, 896–904), thereby reminding the audience of what she sees him to be. Pythias is, of course, Terence's creation,¹⁴⁰ and he has created her to make a point, that from the victim's perspective rape is a terrible thing. The point, however, should not be exaggerated. The play's sympathy (or even concern) for Pamphila does not extend beyond the two scenes with Pythias, the first (643–67) when she confronts Chaerea's brother with what his "eunuch" has done, and the second (850–909) when she plays counterpoint to the reconciliation of Chaerea and Thais. Nor should we forget that Pythias is merely a slave, female and probably old, hardly a figure of authority.¹⁴¹ Terence has had his audience hear what she has to say, but he has also made it easy for the audience to dismiss it, just as Thais does (861).¹⁴²

The play now assumes a more normal course. Pamphila is discovered to be not merely a free-born Athenian, but a member of one of Athens' best families (her brother is "singularly illustrious" [*adprime nobilis*], cf. 952). Chaerea, who earlier had wanted nothing more than to "possess" Pamphila sexually (*potiar*, 320, 362; *potiri*, 614), is now eager to marry her, and even assures Thais that he will easily gain his father's permission now that it is known that Pamphila is a citizen.¹⁴³ Note, however, that Chaerea's intention in marrying Pamphila is not to do "the right thing" by his victim, but to satisfy his own sexual passion in a socially acceptable way. So once again there is to be a marriage and a happy ending, but here even more clearly than elsewhere it is a happy ending for the rapist. Pamphila gets nothing from the rape or the marriage.¹⁴⁴ No one cares at all about her except Pythias, and Pythias too, just like Pamphila herself, is absent from the stage during the play's happy ending.

The *Eunuchus*' partial exception to the configuration of the rape motif can help us to distinguish between what is accidental and what is essential to the motif. Thus, for example, the nocturnal religious ceremony is not essential, but it is essential that the victim find herself unwittingly in a situation where she will be vulnerable but not responsible. Again, drunkenness is not essential, but it is essential that some excuse be provided for the young man's actions, in this case "love."¹⁴⁵ What is also essential is the basic pattern of a wealthy young man raping a young woman and then marrying her. While the rape itself is never commended, at least by adults, it is always tolerated as understandable, even expected youthful behavior.¹⁴⁶ In this context, as we have seen, marriage represents the young man's transition from youth to adulthood and his reintegration into society as a full adult male member. Understandably then the motif always focuses on the young man and his happy ending, and deals with the young woman only as a means of his arriving at that end. Needless to say, the society into which the young man is reintegrated is one which privileges males over females, and the rape motif in its essentials validates the notion that this is the way things should be. What is also essential to the motif is that the rapist be from a wealthy family: society could not tolerate behavior like this from its poor.

* * *

As a final note on the acceptability of violence against some women but not against others, in Plautus' *Rudens* not only is the slave Sceparnio fresh to Ampelisca when the young woman comes to his master's door looking for water, but he feels free to fondle her despite her repeated protests,¹⁴⁷ and the only way she can get free of him is by promising to "amuse" him later (418-27). At this point in the play, Ampelisca and Palaestra are, as far as anyone knows, both slaves who have escaped from the slave-dealer Labrax with the wreck of his ship. But like Pamphila in the *Eunuchus*, Palaestra will in time be discovered to be a free-born Athenian, while Ampeliscæ will not. It is perhaps no accident then that Plautus has Ampelisca and not Palaestra come to the door to be pawed by Sceparnio in order to provide a few chuckles for the males in the audience. Behavior like Sceparnio's is acceptable from one slave to another, but it would be intolerable for a slave to treat a free woman and a citizen like this, even one whose free citizen birth has yet to be revealed.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Young men in New Comedy frequently fall in love and enter into relationships with young women which are essentially unstable and cannot lead to marriage for reasons of social status, because the women are either foreigners, slaves, prostitutes or poor. In the present chapter we will consider relationships with poor young women who are under the authority of their mothers or other female guardians, and in the next two chapters we will turn to affairs with women who are owned or were formerly owned by slavers dealing in prostitutes (*pornobaskoi/lenones*), and affairs with independent women (*betairai/meretrices*).

In the situations we shall examine in the present chapter the young women are, like the last chapter's victims of rape, all of marriageable age. At least up until the time of their affairs with the young men in our plays they have lived with their mothers or other female guardians, who are themselves either widows or women who have never married. With no adult male in the house,¹ their mothers or other female guardians exercise a *de facto* authority over these young women analogous to that which a father would normally exercise, including authority over the young woman's sexuality. Thus the relationship between the young woman and her lover is always approved by the mother or guardian, and it often involves an agreement between the mother or guardian and the young man in which the young woman has no say. In some cases the young woman is in love with the young man, but in others she merely goes along with her mother's or guardian's wishes. Even when the young woman is in love with the young man it is not a simple matter of "boy meets girl"; rather we are either told or we must assume that the mother or guardian first provided the young man with access to the young woman and thus created the circumstances wherein her love could develop. In most, but not all cases the mother or guardian quite clearly exploits her daughter's sexuality for her own financial benefit. Apparently the exploitative mother was even recognized as a distinct character type in New Comedy with her own special headdress.²

The young woman and her mother or female guardian are always poor,³ and her lover is always a wealthy young man. The young woman may move in with her lover, but more often she continues to live with her mother or guardian; in either case the young man apparently sees to the young woman's needs for