

Glaucumam ob Oculos Obiciemus:
Forbidden Sight in *Miles Gloriosus*¹

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Plautus' comedies are full of direct references to myths utilized for various comic ends, such as to make hyperbolic comparison of characters to well-known mythical figures.² In the *Miles Gloriosus*, for example, the soldier Pyrgopolynices is told that he is regarded as Achilles or his brother (60 f., 1054a); he thinks of himself as more handsome than Paris (777) and is mockingly heralded as the grandson of Venus (1413, 1421). At the hands of the slave Palaestrio and his fellow conspirators, however, he becomes "a Troy to be taken" (1025), while one of the conspirators casts his deceivers as maenads (1016).³ But in structuring the framework of deception in the *Miles Gloriosus*, Plautus also uses myth and mythological motifs in a far more subtle way, moving beyond simple direct references to utilization of mythic patterns without using the names traditionally associated with them.

The first ploy undertaken in the comedy is motivated by an inadvertent action of the slave Sceledrus who, while pursuing an ape over the rooftops of Ephesus, has accidentally seen Philocomasium kissing her lover in the neighbor's house without the knowledge of her abductor, the soldier Pyrgopolynices. Ironically, Pyrgopolynices had appointed this same Sceledrus to guard Philocomasium against any amorous advances, save his own. Up to this point she has been able to carry on her secret affair next door without arousing suspicion, for she has been successfully protected by other characters privileged to the circumstances. The lengths to which her friends are willing to go to safeguard her dalliance are indicated by the elaborate deception, used to wonderful comic effect, of a breach between

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² Good basic studies on Plautus' use of direct allusions to mythology include E. Fraenkel, *Elementi plautini in Plauto* (Florence 1960) and N. Zagagi, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies of the Amatory Motifs in Plautine Comedy* (Göttingen 1980). On the use of mythological characters in reference to the soldier, see E. W. Leach, "The Soldier and Society: Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* as Popular Drama," *RSC* 27 (1979) 203-04.

³ Compare the lofty mythological heights reached by the slave Chrysalus at *Bacchides* 925 ff., where he pictures himself as Ulysses at the sack of Troy.

Pyrgopolynices' house and that of the neighbor, Periplectomenus. When they learn that Philocomasium has been spotted by someone not in on her secret, they are anxious to identify the culprit quickly and then eliminate the threat to Philocomasium that his action poses. After Sceledrus is so discovered, the clever slave Palaestrio develops a plan that relies on Philocomasium's ability to think quickly and act convincingly (as well as on his own ability) in order to persuade Sceledrus that he has not seen what in fact he really has seen (147–49):

ei nos facitis fabricis et doctis dolis
glaucumam ob oculos obiciemus eumque ita
faciemus ut quod viderit non viderit.

The plan contrived works so well that, hopelessly flustered, Sceledrus leaves the stage never to be seen, or see, for the remainder of the comedy.

The intrigue in several ways resembles patterns found in the tales of those individuals, such as Actaeon, Tiresias, and Pentheus, who see what is forbidden and are punished by loss of vision, metamorphosis or dismemberment, even though such sight is unintentional.⁴ The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that through indirect references Plautus comically employs the motif of the unwitting sinner deliberately punished for accidentally seeing, and hence gaining knowledge of, the forbidden.⁵

The theme of the consequences that ensue when a mortal witnesses a god or something sacred contrary to a divine will is not uncommon.⁶ As with many Greek mythical narratives, those of the Thebans noted above are known in several versions and serve as good illustrations of the type of the

⁴ The argument here will not be whether such punishment is deserved or just (cf. Dioid. Sic. 4. 81. 4–5) outside the world of the comedy. On the subject of blindness as a divine punishment, see E. A. Bernidaki-Aldous, *Blindness in a Culture of Light* (New York 1990) 57–93; on blindness as a punishment for sexual crimes, see G. Devereux, "The Self-Blinding of Oidipous in Sophokles: *Oidipous Tyrannos*," *JHS* 93 (1973) 36–49.

⁵ By "indirect references" I mean allusions to the myth or motif without utilization of the names (i.e. Actaeon, Tiresias, Pentheus) traditionally associated with them. See W. T. MacCary, "Patterns of Myth, Ritual and Comedy in Plautus' *Casina*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15.5 (1974) 881–89; cf. N. Frye, "The Argument of Comedy," *English Institute Studies* (1948) 58–73. Taking his cue from Frye, MacCary demonstrated mythic patterns and themes in the *Casina* which had survived "the dropping of names," that is, themes in the comedy derived from the myth but not employing the traditional names. In addition, parallels to the rescue scene in Euripides' *Helen* have been found in *Miles Gloriosus*: see K. Gaiser, "Zum 'Miles Gloriosus' des Plautus: eine neu erschlossene Menander-Komödie und ihre literaturgeschichtliche Stellung," in E. Lefèvre (ed.), *Die Römische Komödie* (Darmstadt 1973) 228–29, reprinted from *Poetica* 1 (1967) 452–54. For other folktales motifs see also J. P. Small, "Plautus and the Three Princes of Serendip," *Renaissance Quarterly* 29 (1976) 183–94.

⁶ In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 90 ff., for example, Hermes, while driving away Apollo's cattle, advises an old man not to see what he has seen (καί τε ἰδὼν μὴ ἰδὼν εἶναι, 92) and then he will have an abundant crop. At 201 ff., however, the farmer tells Apollo what he has witnessed (cf. 354 f.) but suffers no punishment, although there had been an implied threat in Hermes' ὅτε μή τι καταβλάπτῃ τὸ σὸν αὐτοῦ (93). Contrast the myth of Battus in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2. 676 ff.

unwitting transgressor. The cause of Actaeon's demise is variously given,⁷ but in the account found in Callimachus, *Hymn* 5. 107 ff., his fault was overstepping the bounds set by the gods, for he invaded Artemis' domain and inadvertently saw her bathing (111–15):⁸

ἀλλ' οὐκ αὐτὸν ὅ τε δρόμος αἴ τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
 ῥυσεῦνται ξυναὶ τᾶμος ἑκαβολίαι,
 ὀπτόταν οὐκ ἐθέλων περ ἴδη χαρίεντα λοετρά
 δαίμονος· ἀλλ' αὐτὰ τὸν πρὶν ἄνακτα κύνες
 τουτάκι δειπνησεῦντι.

Here Athena uses the myth to illustrate the Κρόνιοι νόμοι which state that to behold a divinity uninvited exacts a heavy penalty (100–02):

Κρόνιοι δ' ὦδε λέγοντι νόμοι·
 ὅς κε τιν' ἀθανάτων, ὅκα μὴ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἔληται,
 ἀθρήση, μισθῷ τοῦτον ἰδεῖν μεγάλῳ.

In the *Hymn*, Artemis brings about the offending Actaeon's punishment by turning the hunter into the hunted, pursued to his death. This brief account of his demise is designed to mollify Chariclo's feelings on the fate of her son Tiresias who, also while hunting, intrudes upon sacred space (ἱερὸν χῶρον, 76) and unwittingly views something that he is not privileged to see, Athena bathing (οὐκ ἐθέλων δ' εἶδε τὰ μὴ θεμιτά, 78). In this case the offender is punished not by destruction but by instant deprivation of his sight.⁹

The other representative of the motif, Pentheus, is presented in Euripides' *Bacchae* as a hunter turned hunted who sees what he, as an adversary of the worship of Dionysus, is not permitted to witness in a place he is not entitled to be.¹⁰ Like Tiresias, he becomes the victim of loss of real vision, for his perception is altered at the hand of Dionysus, the manipulator of events in the tragedy: Under the delusion brought about by the god, for instance, Pentheus sees a double sun and a double Thebes, and

⁷ The earliest account is in Hesiod, *Catalogue* fr. 217a (see T. Renner, "A Papyrus Dictionary of Metamorphoses," *HSCP* 82 [1978] 277–93); cf. the versions of Stesichorus (apud Pausanias 9. 2. 3) and Acusilaus (apud Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3. 4. 4). On the history of the Actaeon myth, see especially J. Heath, *Actaeon, the Unmannerly Intruder* (New York 1992) 1–23; C. Schlam, "Diana and Actaeon: Metamorphoses of a Myth," *CA* 3 (1984) 82–110; L. R. Lacy, "Aktaion and a Lost 'Bath of Artemis,'" *JHS* 110 (1990) 26–42. See also J. Fontenrose, *Orion: The Myth of the Hunter and the Huntress* (Berkeley 1981) 33–43 and P. M. G. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths* (Oxford 1990) 197–201.

⁸ Cf. Apollodorus (previous note). In Ovid's version (*Met.* 3. 138 ff.), which is close to that of Callimachus and Apollodorus, a sexual significance is placed on Actaeon's deed. See Lacy (previous note) and J. Heath, "The Blessings of Epiphany in Callimachus' *Bath of Pallas*," *CA* 7 (1988) 72–90; also idem, "Diana's Understanding of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *CJ* 86 (1991) 233–43.

⁹ See Bernidaki-Aldous (above, note 4) 73; Devereux (above, note 4) 44–45.

¹⁰ E.g. *Bacch.* 472: ἄρρητ' ἀβακχεύτοισιν εἰδένα βροτῶν and 912–13: σὲ τὸν πρόθυμον ὄνθ' ἂ μὴ χρεὼν ὄρᾶν / σπεύδοντά τ' ἀσπούδαστα.

he mistakes Dionysus for a bull.¹¹ Pentheus is also compared directly to Actaeon several times in the tragedy (*Bacch.* 230, 337–41, 1227, 1291), and like his mortal cousin he is torn apart for his trespass (*Bacch.* 1121 ff.).¹²

The first intrigue of *Miles Gloriosus*, aimed at the slave Sceledrus, contains many of these same elements: pursuit of an animal, invasion of space he is not entitled to, unintentional sight of the forbidden, reversal of status from hunter to hunted, and distortion, or loss, of real vision. But, as one could naturally expect in the inverted world of comedy, in the place of mythical hunters and goddesses, the characters are an ape-chasing slave and a clever *meretrix*.

Like the three mythical Thebans, Sceledrus is presented in the act of hunting, for he has pursued an ape over the neighborhood rooftops, as he explains to his fellow slave Palaestrio (284–85):

SC. simiam hodie sum sectatus nostram in horum tegulis.
PA. edepol, Sceledre, homo sectatu's nihili nequam bestiam.

The use of pursuit first hints that Plautus, or the unknown author of the original, the Ἀλαζών, has in mind the theme of the intrusive hunter found in the myths. Certainly, the playwright could have employed any number of standard mechanisms to allow Sceledrus to discover his charge's secret, such as overhearing a conversation (a very commonly used strategy in comedy, after all), but instead the author has used a rare device, chasing after an animal, that permits the slave access to an area which has been so vigorously restricted by Philocomasium's protectors.

As in the case of Actaeon and Tiresias, it is by mere chance that Sceledrus has intruded upon Philocomasium, as the slave is careful to emphasize in his very first words of explanation to Palaestrio (287–89):

forte fortuna per impluvium huc despexi in proximum:
atque ego illi aspicio osculantem Philocomasium cum altero
nescioquo adolescente.

And it is precisely for his *inscitia*, as well as for his *stultitia*, that Sceledrus begs forgiveness (540–43):¹³

SC. Peripleptomene, te opseco
per deos atque homines perque stultitiam meam
perque tua genua— PE. quid opsecras me? SC. inscitiae
meae et stultitiae ignoscas.

¹¹ *Bacch.* 616–31, 918–22. See W. C. Scott, "Two Suns over Thebes: Imagery and Stage Effects in the *Bacchae*," *TAPA* 105 (1975) 333–46, and J. Gregory, "Some Aspects of Seeing in Euripides' *Bacchae*," *G&R* 32 (1985) 23–31.

¹² On Euripides' comparisons of Pentheus to Actaeon, see Heath (above, note 7) 10–18 and C. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton 1982) 33 and 166.

¹³ Cf. Palaestrio's remark to Sceledrus at 335: *vin iam faciam uti stultivudum te fateare?* At 408 f. he again refers to Sceledrus' *stultitia*. Cf. Ovid, *Tristia* 2. 105: *inscius Actaeon vidit sine veste Dianam* (noted by A. W. Bulloch, *Callimachus: The Fifth Hymn* [Cambridge 1985] 224).

The slave further pleads that he did not look upon Philocomasium with any malicious intent, again reinforcing his claim that he had not acted deliberately (561–63):

nunc demum a me insipienter factum esse arbitror
quom rem cognosco: at non malitiose tamen
feci.

Nevertheless, such extenuating circumstances have no weight at all on the final verdict.¹⁴ Just as Actaeon and Tiresias, each acting οὐκ ἐθέλων, are no less guilty—in divine judgment and in accordance with the Κρόνιοι νόμοι—than they would have been had they been deliberate voyeurs, so too Sceledrus is punishable, and therefore has to be removed, despite the inadvertency of his transgression.¹⁵

The motif of the hunt continues to be utilized in the second act, for while Sceledrus incurs guilt while in pursuit of a beast, Palaestrio serves as the hound that will seek him out and bring him down. His function in the role is established early, even before he discovers that Sceledrus is the culprit he is trying to find. When he vows to find the invader of Philocomasium's carefully guarded privacy, he too uses hunting imagery for the inversion in store (259–61):

et quidem ego ibo domum
atque hominem investigando operam huic dissimulabiliter dabo
qui fuerit conservos qui hodie siet sectatus simiam.

Thus Palaestrio intends literally to track down (*investigando operam dabo*) the hunter (*qui siet sectatus*). The same roles are spelled out again a few lines later when Palaestrio pictures himself as a hunting dog and regards the still unidentified offender as his quarry (268–69):

si ita non reperio, ibo odorans quasi canis venaticus
usque donec persecutus volpem ero vestigiis.

The use of *odorans persecutus* gives emphasis to the roles Palaestrio envisions, for as the hound he will now stalk Sceledrus the hunter, thereby making the guilty Sceledrus a comic Actaeon.¹⁶ Sceledrus is not only pursued, but he is also presented with the possibility that he will be torn apart, again reminding the audience of Actaeon and also of Pentheus. For

¹⁴ See Callim. *Hymn* 5. 96 ff. and Bulloch's remarks (previous note) 48–50. In his account of Actaeon, Ovid drives home the unwittingness of the deed (*Met.* 3. 142): *quod enim scelus error habebat?*

¹⁵ At *Bacchae* 810 ff. Pentheus begins to be persuaded to witness the worship of Dionysus against his rational will. Tiresias, however, is recompensed by Athena for his invasion, but neither Actaeon nor Pentheus is granted any such alleviation; see R. G. A. Buxton, "Blindness and Limits: Sophokles and the Logic of Myth," *JHS* 100 (1980) 31.

¹⁶ The hunting imagery is echoed later at 581, when Sceledrus remarks on Palaestrio's cunning: *numquam hercle ex ista nassa ego hodie escam petam*. See W. Forehand, "The Use of Imagery in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*," *RSC* 21 (1973) 13–14.

example, in her confrontation with the slave, Philocomasium threatens both blindness and mutilation (368–69):

PH. tun me vidisti? SC. atque his quidem hercle oculis— PH. carebis, credo,
qui plus vident quam quod vident.

Elsewhere, Palaestrio says that he has committed a capital offense against his legs and head (294) and he speaks of cutting out Sceledrus' tongue (318).

As for Philocomasium herself, she manifests power to maneuver Sceledrus in two ways: First, she works on him directly to impair his vision, leading him to question whether he saw what he actually had seen and therefore to be in no position to be able to reveal her secret to the soldier, and, second, she undergoes a metamorphosis into her own twin sister, Dicea. By utilizing the breach in the wall (of which Sceledrus, of course, has no knowledge),¹⁷ Philocomasium achieves the feat unique in Plautine comedy of successfully appearing to be two different persons at once in the same place.¹⁸ And not only does she remain herself and also transform herself into another woman, but by a calculated soliloquy meant to be overheard by Sceledrus, she also gives the appearance that as Dicea she has just been rescued from dangerous waters. Naturally, she invokes none other than Ephesian Diana (411–14):¹⁹

inde ignem in aram, ut Ephesiae Dianae laeta laudes
gratisque agam eique ut Arabico fumificem odore amoene,
quom me in locis Neptuniis templisque turbulentis
servavit, saevis fluctibus ubi sum adflicta multum.

Here she calls upon the very goddess who in Callimachus' version of the myth had, from the water, instigated the demise of the hunter Actaeon, just as the Κρόνιοι νόμοι were brought to bear when Athena was seen in the water by Tiresias. Philocomasium has verbally evoked something which the spectators have been watching develop through the second act, for they know that she really is *adflicta multum*, severely compromised by Sceledrus' unintentional sight of her. Like the offended deities, Philocomasium must have vengeance upon the one who saw her against her will: *neque me quidem patiar probri falso inpune insimulatam* (396). Thus will she forestall any revelation of what she wishes to keep secret.

This evocation is further developed by the name, Dicea, that Philocomasium has chosen for the imaginary twin sister, for by it

¹⁷ The breach in the wall is itself a folktale motif, as was shown more than 110 years ago by E. Zarncke, "Parallelen zur Entführungsgeschichte im *Miles Gloriosus*," *RhM* 39 (1884) 1–26; cf. B. Brotherton, "The Plot of the *Miles Gloriosus*," *TAPA* 55 (1924) 128–36.

¹⁸ See Palaestrio's advance notice to the spectators at 150 ff.: "et mox ne erretis, haec duarum hodie vicem / et hinc et illinc mulier feret imaginem, / atque eadem erit, verum alia esse adsimulabitur."

¹⁹ See Lacy (above, note 4) 32–33.

Philocomasium sets herself up as the dispenser of justice whose privacy has been violated. The fictitious appellation is revealed to the slave shortly after the sacrifice and is naturally fair game for the punning found at 438 when Sceledrus asserts that the woman before him really is Philocomasium: ἄδικος *es tu, non δικαία*. By selecting “Dicea” Plautus has highlighted the role of Philocomasium as avenger, and Sceledrus as one doomed δίκην διδόναι.

Now, it is true that the idea of the imaginary twin sister is Palaestrio’s and that Philocomasium is working on his basic instructions, but it is essential to observe that within the broad outlines of the slave’s plan she is the one who uses her own native ingenuity and cunning at being Dicea in order to perplex Sceledrus. As Palaestrio himself observes at 189–92, she is just the right woman to make the deception plausible:

os habet, linguam, perfidiam, malitiam atque audaciam,
 confidentiam, confirmatam, fraudulentiam.
 qui arguat se, eum contra vincat iureiurando suo: 190
 domi habet animum falsiloquom, falsificum, falsiurium,
 domi dolos, domi delenifica facta, domi fallacias.

Indeed, she works the scam so well that the flustered Sceledrus even expresses his fear that he and Palaestrio have lost their true identities (426 ff.).

Not only is the slave finally removed as a threat by this comic legerdemain, but at the present moment, as in the case of Pentheus, the other mythical hunter turned hunted, he becomes the victim of altered, unreal vision because of what he has seen and at the hands of a person who has no real existence. That is, just like Dionysus’ guise as the Stranger, Philocomasium’s “metamorphosis” is so successful that Sceledrus no longer has the same vision that he had at the beginning of the act, as he finally confesses to Periplectomenus (547–57):

meruisse equidem me maxumum fateor malum
 et tuae fecisse me hospitae aio iniuriam;
 sed meam esse erilem concubinam censui,
 quoi me custodem erus addidit miles meus . . . 550
 vidi (quæ negem quod viderim?)
 sed Philocomasium me vidisse censui.

He is confessing that he has earned his punishment not because he saw Philocomasium, but because he has seen Dicea, who as the audience knows does not really exist. He is now convinced that he did not see what he saw and he has accepted that there are certain matters in which he is not entitled to share, and certainly not to reveal, save at his own peril (565–67):

egone si post hunc diem
 muttivero, etiam quod egomet certo sciam,
 dato excrucandum me.

And so, in an interesting exchange at the end of the act, Periplectomenus advises Sceledrus that if he hopes for the love of the gods, he will restrain his tongue as well as his eyes, that is not to see what he has seen nor to say what he has seen.²⁰ For Periplectomenus, while pretending that it is only with the greatest difficulty that he brings himself to forgive Sceledrus, makes his meaning quite clear: Those in power have acted to deprive the slave of his vision because, inadvertently or not, he stuck his eyes where they have no business. And so Sceledrus pays the heavy penalty of his infelicitous, uninvited sighting.²¹

Now blinded to the reality, as it were, Sceledrus leaves the stage vanquished physically and mentally (*nam illius oculi atque aures atque opinio / transfugere ad nos*, says Periplectomenus at 589–90) to be seen no more himself, only heard indirectly from the depths of the soldier's wine-cellar (818 ff.), where he wishes neither to see the soldier and conspirators nor to be seen by them. The very last thing we hear of him is that he is asleep and that his eyes are closed.²² And now that the conspirators have finished with him, he acknowledges only that he must not reveal what he is convinced he has seen. He from this point on wilfully remains alone in the dark but he has achieved no great advancement in insight at all; that is, he does not realize how or why he has been duped. In fact, even at the end of the deception, he still misunderstands the situation completely, believing instead that he has been set up to be sold, should he tell the soldier about the affair he originally thought he saw (579–80: *una hic et Palaestrio / me habent venalem: sensi et iam dudum scio*).

In sum, Sceledrus has stumbled upon a dangerous truth to which he was not entitled and which then pursues him relentlessly, forcing him to question both the truth ("I saw") and untruth ("I did not see") and to suffer thereby the dangers of forbidden sight. Sceledrus then is not only the hunter hunted but also has become both the unseeing and the unseen, hiding himself from the light and effectively removed for transgressing the boundaries established for him. Palaestrio, working on Philocomasium's behalf, serves as the instrument of his fellow slave's punishment and uses hunting imagery early in the play to depict the investigation he will undertake to protect her. Philocomasium assumes the ability to metamorphose herself upon emergence from the water and has as her purpose *glaucumam ob oculos obicere*. Such elements are consistent with Plautus' delight in inversion by which the lowly are exalted and the mighty placed into subordinate roles.²³ Indeed, as Zagagi has well stated, "comedy

²⁰ Periplectomenus drives the lesson home at 571–73: "ne tu hercle, si te di ament, linguam comprimes, / posthac etiam illud quod scies nesciveris / nec videris quod videris."

²¹ See the word-play on his name and *scelus* at 289, 330, and 494.

²² 826–27: PA. *qui lubitum est illi condormiscere?* / LU. *oculis opinor*.

²³ Thus, for example, at 219 ff. Periplectomenus urges Palaestrio to lead him and the others as their general. See E. Fantham, *Comparative Studies in Republican Latin Imagery* (Toronto

is able to make the most of the evident discrepancy between everyday reality and the prodigious events of myth."²⁴

The slave's fate is a fitting prelude to the soldier's, for Pyrgopolynices is also connected with hunting and he also suffers from problems of vision.²⁵ It is surely no accident that Plautus makes the soldier's very first command in the opening lines relate to the eyes, for he wants his shield polished so brightly that it will dazzle the sight of the enemies arrayed against him (*ut . . . praestringat oculorum aciem in acie hostibus*, 3–4). By the end of the play, it is the soldier who is dazzled and who suffers from distorted vision, ready to believe that the disguised Pleusicles is a one-eyed sailor and that Acroteleutium is his neighbor's wife and that she wants an adulterous affair with him.

At the beginning of his delayed prologue, Palaestrio had stated ambiguously *ait sese ultro omnis mulieres sectarier* (91; cf. 778), and, given the mendacious nature of the soldier as explicated here and in Artotrogus' earlier remarks (19 ff.), it appears that Pyrgopolynices claims that all the women hunt after him. The second intrigue of the play, however, shows that in fact the soldier is another victim of the inversion of hunting roles, for as soon as he learns that Periplectomenus' "wife" is languishing for his sexual favors, he, like Sceledrus, becomes the pursued both as the object of the invented woman but also of the conspirators who, wanting to see Philocomasium safely out of his grasp, fabricate the story of the adulterous wife. Shortly after the maid Milphidippa enters at 986, Palaestrio even tells the soldier that he is being hunted (990):

viden tu illam oculis venaturam facere atque aucupium auribus?

Later he advises Milphidippa also to be a hunter (*tu cetera cura et contempla et de meis venator verbis*, 1029). And, at the conclusion of the piece the slave from the house of Periplectomenus says that he will hunt for soldier (1380); the word he uses is *investigabo*, the same Palaestrio had used at 260 for tracking down the slave who had seen Philocomasium.

Like Sceledrus also, the soldier is fooled by appearances: He readily, even eagerly, believes that Acroteleutium is the wife of his neighbor and that Pleusicles is a one-eyed sailor. In these matters of the sight of the hunter Pyrgopolynices resembles Pentheus more than Actaeon or Tiresias, for, like the Theban king, he watches the forbidden (here, the prospect of adultery) from a hiding place at the instigation of the deceiver Palaestrio (*st tace! aperiuntur fores, concede huc clanculum*, 985),²⁶ and he has

1972) 107–08, E. Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1987) 99–136, and D. Konstan, *Roman Comedy* (Ithaca 1983) 29–31.

²⁴ Zagagi (above, note 2) 32.

²⁵ See Forehand (above, note 16) 8 and 11.

²⁶ With the exception of the *Amphitruo*, no extant Plautine comedy exhibits a successful adulterous affair. See G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK 1994) 150.

completely surrendered himself to the manipulator (*tibi sum oboediens*, 1129). Milphidippa herself makes a direct allusion to a Dionysian aspect of the soldier's deception at 1016: *cedo signum, si harunc Baccharum es*.

The three mythical Thebans undergo transformations into opposites at the hand of the gods, and the soldier also is subjected to inversions: Whereas at the beginning of the comedy, he is the one eager to blind the enemy with his shield, now he is the one who has been overwhelmed by the appearance of a beautiful woman who, as the putative wife of his neighbor, is forbidden to him; Palaestrio himself calls the pending affair "dazzling" (*condicio nova et luculenta*, 952) and the woman herself also is dazzling (*luculenta ac festiva femina*, 958). Moreover, in the first scene of the comedy Pyrgopolynices personifies his sword, which longs to make mincemeat of the enemy (*quae misera gestit fartem facere ex hostibus*, 8), and in a striking irony at the end of the play, the cook Cario iterates the same idea in his exchange with Periplectomenus (1397–98):

PE. vide ut istic tibi sit acutus, Cario, culter probe.

CA. quin iamdudum gestit moeche hoc abdomen adimere.

Pyrgopolynices is now the victim of violence, rather than the author of violence he was in the opening scene.

Both Sceledrus and Pyrgopolynices are taken in by women who have no real existence and they are deceived by what they think they see. The audience knows of course that Philocomasium transforms herself into Dicea through the breach in the wall, and they are painfully aware from Periplectomenus' windy speech between the two deceptions that he has never been married (678 ff.). At the end, however, Pyrgopolynices *sees* that he has been deceived (*verba mihi data esse video*, 1434); that is, he has at last gained insight and is now in a position both to acknowledge the justice of the deception and to make a general application of the lesson he has learned (1435–37):

iure factum iudico:

si sic aliis moechis fiat, minus hic moechorum siet,

magi' metuant, minus has res studeant.

Such a realization is in stark contrast to that of Sceledrus who, when the conspirators have finished with him, acknowledges only that he must not reveal what he thought he had seen and he sits alone in the dark of the cellar having achieved no real advancement in perception at all.

As noted earlier, Plautus had identified the original of the *Miles Gloriosus* as the Ἰαλκίον, and scholarship has been sharply divided on the degree to which Plautus has altered it.²⁷ We are thus left with an

²⁷ A good overall summary of various views of Plautus' workmanship in the *Miles Gloriosus* has been given most recently by H. D. Jocelyn, "The Life-Style of the Ageing

unanswerable question: Was the mythic framework of the deceptions taken over from the Greek comedy or is it Plautus' own invention? Even if he took it over from the Ἀλαζών, Plautus expected his audience to be familiar enough with myths to recognize them and enjoy their comic application. And the mechanisms employed are certainly consistent with Plautus' delight in reversing the status of his characters. In any event, the utilization of mythic patterns, and the new comic twists on them, do indeed "make the most of the evident discrepancy between everyday reality and the prodigious events of myth," and serve Plautus well in depicting a comic world turned upside down.

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Bachelor and Theatrical Improvisation (Plaut. *Mil.* 596–812)," in L. Benz, E. Stärk, and G. Vogt-Spira (eds.), *Plautus und die Tradition des Stegreifspiels* (Tübingen 1995) 107–22.