

DICEA'S PORTRAYAL IN PLAUTUS' *MILES GLORIOSUS* RECONSIDERED

In Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, the clever slave, Palaestrio, successfully re-unites his young master, Pleusicles, with his beloved, the courtesan Philocomasium, after plotting against Pyrgopolynices, the soldier of the play's title. With the help of Periplectomenus, Palaestrio 'instructs' another courtesan, Acroteleutium, to pretend she is a rich matron, desperately in love with Pyrgopolynices and eager to abandon her husband for him. As a result, the soldier leaves Philocomasium free in order to enjoy his new love-affair; hence, the young lovers finally escape together, along with Palaestrio. Yet, before getting a happy ending, Palaestrio faces a problem: a slave from the soldier's house, Sceledrus, has accidentally witnessed Philocomasium in a tête-à-tête with Pleusicles, at the neighbour's *impluvium*. For overcoming the complications of this unfortunate encounter, Palaestrio must persuade Sceledrus that the girl he saw with a stranger was not Philocomasium but her twin sister, Dicea¹. Whereas Palaestrio is free to entirely fabricate his second intrigue, in the first part of the play the slave has to deal with a prior situation². More importantly, this first comic intrigue constitutes a special occurrence: although Philocomasium, similarly to other comic characters, has to perform a certain role³, nevertheless, she is the only Plautine character that adopts a *persona* that *has* to bear her own, identical appearance⁴.

While scholarship has extensively studied Plautus' exceptional composition of *Miles Gloriosus* – often in relation to the central question of the playwright's originals⁵,

¹ On the invention of the 'twin' being a part of Palaestrio's intrigue, see also I.C. CRAPISI, *Omnes congeminauimus* (*Amph.* 786). *Rappresentazioni e immagini del doppio nelle commedie plautine*, in *Pan* 21 (2003), pp. 105-129, in p. 113.

² C. BUNGARD, *To Script or not to Script: Rethinking Pseudolus as Playwright*, in *Helios* 41, 1 (2014), pp. 87-106, in p. 92, due to the emphasis on the scheme's conception (line 208), rightly places Palaestrio against improvising *serui*; yet, there is an evident difference between Palaestrio's first and second scheme.

³ On this intrigue as a play-within-the-play, see T. MOORE, *The Theater of Plautus*, Austin 1998, pp. 72-74; on plays-within-the-play in the whole comedy, see J.C. DUMONT, *Le Miles Gloriosus et le Théâtre dans le Théâtre*, in *Helmantica* 44 (1993), pp. 133-146.

⁴ F. MUECKE, *Plautus and the Theater of Disguise*, in *CA* 5, 2 (1986), pp. 216-229, in p. 217 n. 4 observes that Dicea's case is rare for being "a specific person who is invented as existing in the world of the play".

⁵ E. FRAENKEL, *Plautine Elements in Plautus*, tr. T. DREVIKOVSKY and F. MUECKE, Oxford/New York 2007, pp. 174-179 and C. QUESTA, *Sei lecture plautine*, Urbino 2004, pp. 87-93 suggest that Plautus, through *contaminatio*, might have used two originals. On the other hand, E. LEFÈVRE, *Plautus-Studien IV. Die Umformung des Ἀλαζῶν zu der Doppel-Komödie des Miles gloriosus*, in *Hermes* 112, 2 (1984), pp. 30-53, in pp. 32-37 argues that only *Alazon* was used, to which Dicea's episode was added. Similarly, G. WILLIAMS, *Evidence for Plautus' Workmanship in the Miles Gloriosus*, in *Hermes* 86, 1 (1958), pp. 79-105 argues for the use of a single original, often re-structured or even enriched by Plautine material. For a good overview of the scholarship, see also L. MAURICE, *Structure and Stagecraft in Plautus' Miles Gloriosus*, in *Mnemosyne* 60, 3 (2007), pp. 407-426, in p. 409 n. 4 and 5. The play itself, following the convention, gives the title of the Greek play, *Alazon* (line 86), on which this Latin one is based, but not the name of the Greek author. However, it should be noted that this is the only evidence for this play, which is not recorded anywhere else (see *PCG* VIII p. 2).

the play's strong metatheatrical tone⁶ and Palaestrio's portrayal as an exemplary *seruus callidus*⁷, Philocomasium's double role, i.e. her impersonation of Dicea, and its distinctive position in the Plautine corpus have not been fully appreciated. This paper will therefore focus on the first part of the play, or, rather, the first of Palaestrio's two intrigues. More specifically, it will examine the portrayal of Philocomasium's 'twin', particularly what can be perceived as problematic with regard to her status, since, as we shall see below, Dicea, in contrast to her 'sister', is inferred as a citizen. Drawing on previous studies and suggestions, by treating the play as an 'autonomous' literary creation by Plautus,⁸ and by re-examining textual as well as performative aspects of this episode, I shall attempt to demonstrate that Dicea's – and consequently Philocomasium's – representation is enriched by the comic motif of the *pseudo-meretrix*.

To be sure, the portrayal of Philocomasium's supposed twin sister, Dicea, is ambiguous. Philocomasium's impersonation unexpectedly presents a considerably serious profile, since, in her first entrance as Dicea, the spectators are confronted with an invocation to Diana (411-414)⁹. Undoubtedly, the discrepancy between Philocomasium's nature, being a courtesan, and Dicea's serious tone would constitute an amusing moment for Plautus' audience. However, this discrepancy soon becomes more intriguing. At first, Dicea mentions that she came from Athens with her lover (440 *cum meo amatore, adulescente Atheniensi* – “with my lover, a young Athenian”)¹⁰, without clarifying whether she is a citizen or a courtesan. The latter is of course naturally expected, since she is Philocomasium's sister, and it is also possibly implied by the use of the term *erus*, a ‘master’ in line 451, which De Melo appropriately translates as a “procurer”. Nevertheless, Periplectomenus, in his subsequent attack towards Sceledrus, refers to her as a freeborn citizen (488-490; *ingenuam et liberam* – “freeborn and free” in 490). This reference to Dicea's status forms a paradox. Naturally, one may wonder how she can be a citizen while her twin a courtesan¹¹. Whereas this puzzling situation has caused doubts regarding Plautus' successful ma-

⁶ On various uses of the term ‘metatheatre’, see MAURICE, *art. cit.*, pp. 407-408. In his seminal work, N.W. SLATER, *Plautus in Performance: the Theater of the Mind*, Amsterdam 2000, p. 10 defines it as the “theatre that demonstrates an awareness of its own theatricality”; I use this term to refer to all instances that remind the audience that they are watching theatre, either explicitly, e.g. when the theatrical illusion is interrupted, or through passages that reveal elements of theatrical composition, e.g. when there is a dramatization of the theatrical process or when the characters themselves seem aware of their acting.

⁷ On the metatheatricality of the *Miles Gloriosus*, see mainly S.A. FRANGOULIDIS, *Palaestrio as Playwright: Plautus, Miles Gloriosus 209-212*, in C. DEROUX (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History VII*, Brussels 1994, pp. 72-86, S.A. FRANGOULIDIS, *A Prologue-within-a-Prologue: Plautus, Miles Gloriosus 145-153*, in *Latomus* 55 (1996), pp. 568-570, MOORE, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-77, MAURICE, *art. cit.*

⁸ That is, by leaving aside the complicated question of Plautus' original(s), on which see note 5.

⁹ M. HAMMOND-A.M. MACK-W. MOSKALEW (eds.), *T. Macci Plauti Miles Gloriosus*, rev. M. Hammond, Cambridge, Mass./London 1997, p. 115 on 411 note Philocomasium's “ritually solemn” tone.

¹⁰ Plautus' text throughout comes from W.M. LINDSAY, *T. Macci Plauti Comediae*, vol. 1-2, Oxford 1904-1905; translations are quoted from W. DE MELO (ed., tr.), *Plautus*, vol. 1-5, Cambridge, Mass./London 2011-2013.

¹¹ This problem is also noted by S. PAPAIOANNOU, *Πλάτων Ο Κωμικήσάρης Στρατιώτης, Εισαγωγή, Μετάφραση, Σχόλια*, Athens 2009, pp. 441-442, n. 44, on 490.

nipulation of the plot¹², I believe that Plautus intends Dicea's ambiguous status to belong exclusively to the world of theatre.

In III.i, where Palaestrio asks Periplectomenus to provide him with a woman – indicating the role that Acroteleutium will assume – the *senex* asks the slave whether he refers to a citizen or a freedwoman – *ingenua/ libertina* (784, “a freeborn girl or one who's been freed”). Palaestrio's response suggests that they are looking for a courtesan (784-786, especially 785: *quae alat corpus corpore* – “who feeds her body by means of her body”). Yet, in comic contexts, ‘free’ women practise this profession in exceptional circumstances; more specifically, in plots that use a *pseudokore* or *pseudo-meretrix*¹³, which are terms that usually (and rather conventionally) describe a female character who is introduced in a play as a prostitute but eventually proves to be a citizen. As it has been noted elsewhere, this allusion to the well-known motif of the *pseudokore* can simultaneously shed light on Dicea's dubious descent¹⁴: the fact that Dicea, possibly a citizen, is, supposedly, the sister of Philocomasium, an enslaved courtesan, suggests that her representation is presumably related to this comic convention. More importantly, this parameter gives rise to the possibility that Philocomasium is also freeborn¹⁵, although she is not ‘acknowledged’ as such during the course of action¹⁶.

I believe that the hypothesis that Plautus exploits the concept of the *pseudo-meretrix* is further bolstered by a reference that Periplectomenus makes about Philocomasium. The old man characterizes her a *prudica concubina* (508-509), a “chaste concubine”. Thus, Periplectomenus' depiction of Philocomasium assigns her *prudor*, a characteristic traditionally attributed to matrons¹⁷. A similar instance is noted in *Curculio*, where Phaedromus emphasizes that his beloved, although living in a brothel, is *prudica* (51), alluding in this way to her status as a citizen, which will be revealed at

¹² HAMMOND *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118 on 451 interpret Periplectomenus' reference to Dicea's freeborn descent as an effort to accentuate Sceledrus' inappropriate behaviour, pointing to the improvisatory character of this deception that allows for such inconsistencies. In p. 71, on line 1 of *Argumentum II*, they suggest that this statement by Periplectomenus is the reason for the *argumentum*'s erroneous reference to Philocomasium as freeborn (*ingenua*).

¹³ As C.W. MARSHALL, *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy*, Cambridge 2006, p. 152 notes, the Greek term follows POLLUX 4, 151; scholars (e.g. PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 401) often use the Latin version. On various possible interpretations of Pollux's term, see D. GILULA, *The Mask of the Pseudokore*, in *GRBS* 18, 3 (1977), pp. 247-250; also, D. WILES, *The Masks of Menander. Sign and Meaning in Greek and Roman Performance*, Cambridge 1991, pp. 177-178, who points to its basic meaning as a female character whose real status is initially hidden. I am aware that both terms are not clearly defined and I am here using them in their conventional sense, as the girl that is eventually recognised as freeborn.

¹⁴ PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 453, n. 62, on 784 suggests that this stock situation could be an explanation for Dicea's presentation as freeborn.

¹⁵ Plautus' possible allusion to the motif the *pseudo-meretrix* is suggested by some scholars. PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, pp. 441-442, n. 44, on 490, i.e. Periplectomenus' claim that Dicea is freeborn, notes that such a situation could result in Philocomasium's being recognized a citizen. LEFÈVRE, *art. cit.*, pp. 47-48 suggests that in the Greek original Philocomasium was indeed recognised as a citizen girl.

¹⁶ Cfr. K. MCCARTHY, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plantine Comedy*, Princeton 2000, p. 180 n. 24, on that in *Asinaria* and *Mostellaria*, Plautus, through the girls' devotion to their lovers, seems to present the portrayal of *pseudo-meretrices* but not their eventual recognition.

¹⁷ D. DUTSCH, *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: on Echoes and Voices*, Oxford/New York 2008, p. 160, on *Pl. Poen.* 304-307, notes the “hilarious paradox” of comic courtesans bearing “the matronly virtue of *prudor*”.

the end of the play. In a likewise manner, *pseudo-meretrices* display their ‘modesty’ before their *anagnorisis*. In *Poenulus* 300-305, Adelphasium draws attention to the qualities of the good character that she wants to possess (including *pudor* in 304) and, similarly, in *Cistellaria* 88, Silenium emphasizes her desire to have *pudicitia*¹⁸. Thus, in light of the references to Dicea’s citizen status and these parallel cases, Periplectomenus’ characterisation of Philocomasium as *pudica* recalls the stock role of a courtesan of freeborn origins. Besides, we should not forget that Philocomasium’s portrayal is hardly one-dimensional: while she bears typical characteristics of an experienced courtesan, as these are evident, for instance, in the way she deceives and manipulates both Sceledrus and Pyrgopolynices (cfr. Palaestrio’s instructions on how Philocomasium should behave in 189-194)¹⁹, she is, at the same time, truly devoted to her beloved (100-101), a characteristic common for ‘good’, *pudicae* courtesans, as the ones mentioned above²⁰.

What is more, in addition to the above textual evidence, the examination of the stagecraft related to Philocomasium’s appearance reinforces the suggestion that Plautus exploits the motif of the *pseudo-meretrix* in this instance. This becomes particularly obvious when Dicea’s episode is compared to the second intrigue of the play. As scholars have noted, the two deception plans share parallel structures²¹ which emphasize their symmetry²²: most notably, in both cases, Palaestrio arranges each play-within-the-play²³, while both female players have similar reactions to his instructions, calling themselves *malae*, dexterous deceivers (cfr. Philocomasium’s and Acroteleutium’s reactions in lines 354-357 and 878-884 respectively)²⁴. Yet, what particularly distinguishes the first intrigue from the second is the lack of references to a disguise

¹⁸ On the discourse on *pudicitia* in Roman Comedy and the development of the spectators’ expectations about a girl’s *anagnorisis*, see R. LANGLANDS, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 205-218.

¹⁹ M.M. BIANCO, *Ut Medea Peliam concoxit... item ego te faciam. La Medea di Plauto*, in G. PETRONE-M.M. BIANCO (eds.), *La commedia di Plauto e la parodia. Il lato comico dei paradigmi tragici*, Palermo 2006, pp. 53-79, in pp. 60-62 reads this description as a stock element that evokes the tragic tradition associated with the portrayal of Medea; he rightly observes that this is especially evident in the reference to women’s possession of poisons, which is not otherwise exploited in Philocomasium’s representation in the rest of the play.

²⁰ U. AUHAGEN, *Die Hetäre in der griechischen und römischen Komödie*, Munich 2009, pp. 168-170 notes that Philocomasium’s love for Pleusicles (lines 100-101) could have been associated to a possible *anagnorisis*. On Philocomasium combining features of both ‘bad’ and ‘good’ comic courtesans, see PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-402 (n. 3).

²¹ See, for instance, MAURICE, *art. cit.*, pp. 411-412, on parallel references to acting.

²² C.F. SAYLOR, *Periplectomenus and the Organization of the Miles Gloriosus*, in *Eranos* 75 (1977), pp. 1-13, also, MAURICE, *op. cit.*; W. FOREHAND, *The Use of Imagery in Plautus’ Miles Gloriosus*, in *Rivista di Studi Classici* 21 (1973), pp. 5-16, in p. 8 also points to imagery «unifying the play’s action».

²³ FRANGOULIDIS, *art. cit.* (1994) and (1996), MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 73 and MAURICE, *art. cit.*, pp. 423-424. On the comic slave as the playwright’s reflection more generally, see A. SHARROCK, *Reading Roman Comedy: Poetics and Playfulness in Plautus and Terence*, Cambridge/New York 2009, pp. 116-117.

²⁴ On this parallel’s dramatic effect, see PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 457, n. 66. See M.M. BIANCO, *Ut utrobique oratione docte divisit suam (Plauto, Mil. 466). Il ‘discorso ingiusto’ di Filocomasio*, in *SIFC* 2, 1 (2004), pp. 62-82, in p. 63, on the ‘fictitious’ pair of Philocomasium-Dicea corresponding to the ‘real’ pair (Acroteleutium – Miphidippa) of the second part of the play. On Plautine courtesans (including those of this play) often being deceptive and thus serving as reflections of actors, see A. DUNCAN, *Performance and Identity in the Classical World*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 140-152.

process. In the second intrigue, emphasis to Acroteleutium's transformation is already given in Palaestrio's first instructions to Periplectomenus (*Mil.* 790-794):

*PA. ut ad te eam iam deducas domum
itaque eam huc ornatam adducas, ex matronarum modo,
capite compto, crinis uittasque habeat, adsimuletque se
tuam esse uxorem: ita praecipiundum est.*

“PAL So that you can take her home to your place and bring her here fitted out like this, in the style of matrons, with her hair done up; she should have plaits and ribbons and pretend to be your wife. That's what you have to instruct her in”.

Later on, when Acroteleutium appears onstage dressed as a matron, Palaestrio's reaction accentuates the overall success of her performance (872 *quam digne ornata incedit, hau meretricie!* – “How worthily dressed up she comes along, not in the style of a prostitute!”)²⁵. Periplectomenus refers to the disguise of both Acroteleutium and her maid, Milphidippa, emphasizing, like Palaestrio, the use of the appropriate garment (899 *quas me iussisti adducere et quo ornatu* – “whom you told me to bring to you and in the outfit you told me”). A similar point is reiterated by both Palaestrio and Pyrgopolynices, when Pleusicles appears in a captain's costume, ostensibly coming to take Philocomasium to the ship where her mother and her ‘twin’ sister are supposedly waiting for her (1177 *facito uti uenias ornatu huc ad nos nauclerico* – “you must instantly come here in a captain's costume”)²⁶.

There are no references to costume transformation in Palaestrio's ‘direction’ of the first intrigue. Nevertheless, the use of similar terminology alludes to Philocomasium's performance. Palaestrio urges Pyrgopolynices to let Philocomasium leave with her jewellery and clothing, *aurum* and *ornamena* (981)²⁷, terms that are later repeated by the soldier in his instructions to Palaestrio, during the girl's departure (1302 *aurum, ornamenta, uestem, pretiosa omnia* – “gold, jewelry, clothing, and all the valuables”)²⁸. The emphasis on Philocomasium's belongings²⁹ functions as an allusion to Philocomasium's acting in the first part of the play. Terms like *ornatus* and *uestis* often indicate comic garments. As seen above, this significant use of *ornatus*, as the costume used in the arrangement of an intrigue, is found in the cases of Acroteleutium's and Pleu-

²⁵ On the *ornatus* (costume), *schema* (gait) and *imago* (mask) of a comic *meretrix*, see D. DUTSCH, *Feats of Flesh: The Female Body on the Plautine Stage*, in D. DUTSCH-S. L. JAMES-D. KONSTAN (eds.), *Women in Roman Republican Drama*, Madison 2015, pp. 17-36, in p. 19. On Acroteleutium's theatrical performance, see DUNCAN, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

²⁶ On Pleusicles, see also 1183 (*exornatus* – “dressed up”), 1282 (*ornatu... thalassico* – “in a maritime outfit”), 1286 (*hoc ornatu* – “in this getup”).

²⁷ References to Philocomasium's belongings are repeated in lines 1127 and 1147.

²⁸ MAURICE, *art. cit.*, pp. 420-421 considers these as indications of Palaestrio's role as the director of the scheme.

²⁹ PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 465 n. 81 suggests that this emphasis stresses the soldier's defeat, who loses both the girl and part of his fortune. MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62 suggests that these references comment on the legislation that controlled women's ornaments (*lex Oppia*).

sicles' role-play. This is of course not the only case in the Plautine corpus³⁰; derivatives of *ornare* (cfr. the participle used in *Mil.* 872) are used also in other instances of role-play³¹. References to *uestis* are also in some cases associated with a character's theatrical garment³². More interestingly, the term *ornamenta*, which, as seen above, receives special emphasis in the description of Philocomasium's belongings, is used by Plautus as a *terminus technicus*, not only for stage costume³³ but also for the process of disguise in connection to an embedded theatrical intrigue³⁴. In this context, the above references remind the audience of Philocomasium's role in the first part of the play. What is more, they simultaneously link her *actio* with the second intrigue, in which, as seen above, a similar terminology is noted. In other words, the emphasis on Philocomasium's *ornamenta* urges the audience to, inevitably, remember her performance: the courtesan leaves the play taking Dicaea's role with her.

Nevertheless, the use of the particular term does not confirm that the adoption of Dicaea's role was accompanied by any change in her costume. The use of similar terminology, while connecting the two comic intrigues, simultaneously underlines their differences. Undoubtedly, Acroteleutium's and Pleusicles' examples show that impersonation can be supplemented with a costume change; some scholars suggest that Philocomasium's acting was also accompanied with a garment modification³⁵. However, given the strong emphasis on costume change in the second part of the play, it would be odd to have a similar transformation in the first part without a clear indication³⁶; besides, because of Sceledrus' witnessing, no change of the characters' mask is rendered possible.

Yet, in light of Acroteleutium's transformation, the practicalities of Philocomasium's impersonation are certainly much more complicated, due to the discrepancy between her status, as a courtesan, and Dicaea's representation as potentially free³⁷. According to the *exemplum* of Acroteleutium's disguise, described in the passages quoted above, a strong distinction between the appearance of matrons and courtesans, in both their costumes and masks (cfr. the reference to a specific hairstyle) must be es-

³⁰ Cfr. the use of *ornatus* in *Ps.* 935 in regard to Simia's role-play; also, *Am.* 116-117, on Mercury's adoption of the costume (*ornatus*) of a comic slave; in *As.* 69 the term is also used in connection with a scheme (*fallacia*).

³¹ E.g. the use of the participle in *Capt.* 997 in regard to Tyndarus' costume; also, the imperative in connection with Epidicus' transformation (*Ep.* 194).

³² E.g. *Capt.* 37. See also G.E. DUCKWORTH, *The Nature of Roman Comedy: a Study in Popular Entertainment*, Princeton 1971, pp. 88-89, on *uestimentum*, *uestis* and *uestitus* as indications of the comic clothing.

³³ MAURICE, *art. cit.*, p. 420. See e.g. *Am.* 85, *Cur.* 464, *Trin.* 858.

³⁴ E.g. *PL.* *Ps.* 756, discussed in MUECKE, *art. cit.*, pp. 219-220; on *ornamenta* as a *terminus technicus*, see also G. MANUWALD, *Roman Republican Theatre*, Cambridge/New York 2011, in p. 76 and DUCKWORTH, *op. cit.*, p. 89. On *ornamenta* indicating "stage props", see *PL. Mos.* 248, discussed in DUTSCH, *art. cit.* (2015), p. 28.

³⁵ E.g. PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 219; CRAPISI, *art. cit.*, p. 115 n. 23; HAMMOND *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 114 on 411;

³⁶ As MUECKE, *art. cit.*, p. 218 indicates, in Plautus, the process of disguise is normally described; in p. 217 and n. 3-4, she notes that Philocomasium's performance does not require costume disguise, in contrast to Acroteleutium's and Pleusicles'.

³⁷ See also V. KELLA, *Introducing Geminate Writing: Plautus' Miles Gloriosus*, in *Dionysus ex machina* 2 (2011), pp. 189-210, in p. 199, who assumes that Philocomasium, for Dicaea's role, would put on a garment suitable for a freeborn girl.

established³⁸. However, whereas it is generally assumed that stock characters must be easily recognisable by the audience³⁹, as Acroteleutium's acting confirms, nevertheless, this barely suggests that their appearance follows inflexible, structuralistic principles⁴⁰. It is certainly not a coincidence that Plautus' *Menaechmi* also favours flexible theatrical costumes. Although one of the twins is a traveller, this particular characteristic would not have been evident in his costume; thus, the twins' identical appearance, which results in misunderstandings, is established⁴¹. The dynamics of the relationship between status and appearance are heavily explored by Plautus in *Captivi*, a play that presents another interesting duplet: although Philocrates is a young citizen dressed in a slave's costume, and Tyndarus is a slave pretending to be his master, both characters' masks would be those of an *adulescens*, since Tyndarus will eventually be revealed to be a free-born citizen. Marshall, in his discussion on the characters' masks, highlights the way in which this "play works aggressively at blurring the categories of slave and free"⁴². Notably, as seen above, Dicea's portrayal forms another case of status 'blurring', a fact that must have been also demonstrated with the appropriate stagecraft. It is worth noting that the masks of young female characters are often treated in a quite flexible manner, especially in the case of the stock character of the *pseudokore*, which is located on the threshold of the distinction between slaves and citizens⁴³.

Thus, in the case of *Miles Gloriosus*, if we assume the allusion to the motif of the *pseudo-meretrix* – and the relevant stagecraft – the possibility to have a shared appearance by both a (pseudo)courtesan, i.e. Philocomasium, and a (potentially) free female character, i.e. Dicea, is certainly stronger⁴⁴. From the beginning of the play, Philocomasium must have appeared in a certain mask and costume that correspond to both *personae*. The play's prologue is particularly interesting in this respect (*Mil.* 150-152):

PA. ...et max ne erretis, haec duarum hodie uicem
et hinc et illinc mulier feret imaginem,
atque eadem erit, uerum alia esse assimulabitur.

"PAL ... Don't get it wrong hereafter: this girl will bear the likeness of two girls today, from here and from there, and yet she'll be the same person, but she'll pretend to be a different one".

³⁸ On this basic distinction between "respectable women" and courtesans, see also WILES, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

³⁹ MANUWALD, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80 rightly defends the use of masks and their individualisation for each stock character. On costume distinguishing characters, see MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁰ See e.g. MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-138, on stock characters' masks.

⁴¹ MANUWALD, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁴² MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, p. 150, making a parallel with the "ambiguity" governing female characters' masks. On this play's exploitation of identity matters, see also MCCARTHY, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-185, who acutely observes that Tyndarus' raising (992, *pudice*) reminds us of the characterisation of *pseudo-meretrices* (p. 171). CRAPISI, *art. cit.*, p. 120 rightly notes that the prologue of this play (35-39) is similar to that of *Miles Gloriosus* and *Amphitruo*, with *imago* signifying identity transformation.

⁴³ MARSHALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

⁴⁴ On the mask of the *pseudokore*, see WILES, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-184. Although the evidence is complex, it nevertheless suggests that this character's mask would differ from a 'typical' courtesan's.

The term *imago* refers to Philocomasium's external appearance, presumably alluding to her mask⁴⁵. Yet, the passage seems rather ambiguous⁴⁶: *imago duarum* has been interpreted also as an indication that Philocomasium bears two faces⁴⁷. I think that Nixon's translation highlights nicely Philocomasium's twofold role: "this girl will soon take the parts of two girls"⁴⁸. Interestingly, the term *imago* has been also interpreted as an indication of someone's identity, contrary to the term *uultus*, which specifically indicates one's facial expression⁴⁹. In this context, in *Amphitruo*, *imago* is explicitly related to the definition of someone's personality, as we can see in Mercury's description of the process of 'stealing' Sosia's identity (*Am.* 265-267):

ME. ...quando imago est huius in me, certum est hominem eludere.
et enim vero quoniam formam cepi huius in me et statum,
debet et facta moresque huius habere me similis item.

"MER ... Now that I am his double, I'll definitely make a fool of him. And since I took on his looks and dress, I also ought to have similar ways and habits".

Mercury's words do not solely function as a comment on his acting⁵⁰; they also delineate the elements that define an individual. For Mercury, Sosia's external appearance (*forma, status*) is not sufficient: in order to 'dress himself up' as Sosia, he also has to 'steal' his behaviour and character⁵¹; and all these elements are included in the slave's *imago*.

Thus, in light of this extended meaning of *imago* as the mask that signifies one's identity⁵², Palaestrio's explanation in the prologue of *Miles Gloriosus* is particularly interesting: *imago duarum* may also imply Philocomasium's adoption of two distinctive personalities. Indeed, Palaestrio acknowledges Philocomasium's dexterity in making this distinction evident in her performance (466 *ut utrobique orationem docte diuisit suam* – "How cleverly she divided her speech for each part!")⁵³. While in the case of Mercury's acting the external transformation is accompanied by the implementation of

⁴⁵ On *imago* here as "appearance" but also "mask", see MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁴⁶ This is also noted by MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 212 n. 14.

⁴⁷ E.g. MAURICE, *art. cit.*, p. 413 and SHARROCK, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁸ P. NIXON (ed., tr.), *Plautus*, vol. 3, Cambridge Mass. 1924, p. 137.

⁴⁹ F. DUPONT, *The Theatrical Significance of Duplication in Plautus' Amphitruo*, in E. SEGAL (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Menander, Plautus, and Terence*, Oxford/New York 2001, pp. 176-188, in pp. 185-186, with reference to the *ius imaginum*.

⁵⁰ On Mercury's words alluding to the adoption of a role, see D.M. CHRISTENSON (ed.), *Plautus: Amphitruo*, Cambridge 2000, p. 195 on 265-269.

⁵¹ See also CRAPISI, *art. cit.*, p. 126.

⁵² On *imago* in this instance as both "appearance" and "mask", see MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 110. As DUTSCH, *art. cit.* (2015), p. 19 notes, *imago* indicates "metonymically, the whole appearance of a staged body". On *imago* being associated with identity in *Amphitruo*, see M. BETTINI, *The Ears of Hermes: Communication, Images, and Identity in the Classical World*, tr. W.M. SHORT, Columbus 2001, p. 191; chapter 5 (pp. 171-199) offers a very interesting reading of Sosia's encounter with his double, which is placed in its cultural context.

⁵³ V. LEV KENAAN, *Truth and Appearance in Roman Comedy: Readings in Plautus' Miles Gloriosus*, in E.I. TYLAWSKY-C. WEISS (eds.), *Essays in Honor of Gordon Williams: Twenty-five Years at Yale*, New Haven 2001, pp. 147-168, in pp. 164-165 suggests that Philocomasium would use distinct body language when enacting Dicaea. On the rhetorical devices of Philocomasium's performance, see BIANCO, *art. cit.* (2004).

the appropriate *mores*, Philocomasium's case presents a different situation: due to the special circumstances of this particular incident, the girl keeps her original appearance, which is also shared by Dicea, but, at the same time, accentuates the distinct characteristics of her double. In fact, Philocomasium's aim is different from Mercury's: the god has to assume the personality of another person in its entity, while Philocomasium has to prove the existence of two persons⁵⁴. The allusion to the character of the *pseudo-meretrix* allows for an extended possibility: not only Philocomasium's theatrical *persona* is presented as a distinctive person, but the two characters – potentially citizen Dicea and courtesan Philocomasium – sharing an identical appearance, a common *imago*, align to the duality of this particular stock character. Thus, in an extended sense, *imago duarum* might be also connected to the role of the *pseudo-meretrix*, a character of 'dual' status: a prostitute, who however hides a citizen origin, a fact evident in her 'image'.

As seen above, Dicea's identity can only be explained in reference to the principles of theatre. Thus, the fact that the dramatic characters do not seem puzzled by Dicea's ambiguous status⁵⁵ is not only related to the need for securing a 'smooth' happy ending; the characters' 'approval' of this awkward situation serves a prominent characteristic of the whole play: its strong self-referential tone. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, scholarship has extensively dealt with the metatheatrical context of *Miles Gloriosus*, which constantly unveils the arrangement of a theatrical play⁵⁶. The emphasis on the disguise process, which alludes to one of the basic steps in the arrangement of theatrical performances, is of course placed in the same context⁵⁷. I would add that the allusion to the common comic motif of the recognition of a courtesan's actual – citizen – status also belongs to this self-referential framework: through this textual and performative game on Dicea's – and, consequently, Philocomasium's status – Plautus adds another point to his long list of metatheatrical references to structural elements of comic composition, which would have been certainly appreciated by informed spectators (and readers).

Thus, Plautus' blurred representation of Dicea is anything but accidental. All in all, the representation of Philocomasium's fake twin as a (potential) citizen can be understood better if we turn to the dynamics of the stock character of a *pseudokore* or *pseudo-meretrix*, the conventional terms that describe comic courtesans that are eventually recognised as having a freeborn origin. And, more importantly, such semantics reinforce the implicit, 'partial' representation of Philocomasium as that of a 'good' courtesan with citizen status, which is however not explicitly acknowledged at the end of the play.

⁵⁴ B. GARCÍA-HERNÁNDEZ, *Paradoxes in the Argumentation of the Comic Double and Classemic Contradiction*, in *Argumentation* 17, 1 (2003), pp. 99-111, in pp. 103-104 observes that whereas in *Amphitruo* we have the addition of a copy, in the case of Palaestrio's plan we have a person 'splitting' into two.

⁵⁵ PAPAIOANNOU, *op. cit.*, p. 442 on 490 (n. 44) indicates that the absence of any reactions by either Sceledrus or the soldier to Dicea's 'free' status is strange.

⁵⁶ MOORE, *op. cit.*, p. 76 notes the play's emphasis on the «imagery of performance».

⁵⁷ On «disguise as a vehicle of metatheater», see MUECKE, *art. cit.*, p. 217.

ABSTRACT

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Darstellung von Philocomasiums falscher Schwester Dicea. Durch das Einbeziehen früherer Lesarten sowie eine Reihe neuer Beobachtungen zu textuellen und performativen Aspekten von Palaestrios erster Intrige argumentiert er, dass Plautus' 'unscharfe' Darstellung des sozialen Status von Dicea als ein weiteres Merkmal des starken selbstreferenziellen Tons des Stücks verstanden werden sollte. Näherhin legt die Arbeit den Schluss nahe, dass die Darstellung von Dicea - und folglich von Philocomasium - durch das bekannte Komödien-Motiv der *Pseudo-Kore/Pseudo-Meretrix* bereichert wird.

This paper re-examines the portrayal of Philocomasium's fake sister, Dicea. By elaborating on previous readings and through a number of new observations on textual and performative aspects of Palaestrio's first intrigue, it argues that Plautus' 'blurred' representation of Dicea's social status should be understood as another feature of the play's strong self-referential tone. More specifically, the paper concludes that Dicea's – and consequently Philocomasium's – representation is enriched by the well-known comic motif of the *pseudo-kore / pseudo-meretrix*.

KEYWORDS: Plautus; *Miles Gloriosus*; Philocomasium; Dicea; *pseudo-meretrix*; metatheatre; stagecraft.

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