Plautus and His *Pot of Gold*
Critical Perspectives

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Introduction

“The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy... Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light”-- said Polonius, in *Hamlet*, while introducing the troupe of actors who came to Elsinore. This clearly shows that the name of Plautus, in Elizabethan England, came to be a metonym for ‘comedy’—coming through the Roman tradition. One of the most popular plays by Plautus, *Auluraria* or *The Pot of Gold* had enjoyed a great time with the Roman audience, and also a great afterlife as a major influence on Jacobean comedies, Comedy of Manners and even in some comical ‘hits’ on stage and screen, in the twentieth century. The play has attracted a considerable amount of critical attention, and come to be incorporated as a representative text of Roman comedy in college and university-curriculum. The idea of writing a student-friendly book of critical perspectives on Plautus, with special reference to *The Pot of Gold*, has taken shape while preparing self-learning materials for the Undergraduate course in English Honours (CBCS), under the auspices of Netaji Subhas Open University. The present author is thankful Dr Srideep Mukherjee, Associate Professor of English, NSOU, for his kind permission to let her use some portions of those study materials, written by the same author, for the preparation of a book, which may be of use to a larger number of students, belonging to several other colleges and universities. However, to develop a book from self-learning materials is indeed a different journey, and for making that possible, the author is grateful to Mr Goutam Dutta, proprietor of Imprint Publication, Delhi and Kolkata, and everyone associated with typesetting, printing and other publication-related matters.

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Chapter 1

Ancient Roman Society and the Early Development of Comedy

The relics of ancient Rome, situated on the banks of the river Tiber can now be located in modern-day Italy. It was inhabited by the Latin tribes (Latini or Latians), almost a thousand years before the birth of Christ. The city of Rome, however, according to historians, was founded, in circa 753 BCE. Legends often tend to associate the foundation of Rome to the story of the Trojan Prince Aeneas, hailed in Virgil's epic but a more popular story regarding the foundation of Rome owes itself to the mythical character of Romulus.

Roman society was patrilineal since its foundation, with a Father-god, like Jupiter, at the head of its polytheistic pantheon. However, as in many other primitive communities, women had to play a vital role in consolidating the society, stopping war and bloodshed, and by peacemaking through marriage. The story of Romulus' wife Hersilia can be cited as a mythical representation of this role played by women in ancient Roman society.

The development of Rome continued through such major phases as the Republican (590-27 BCE) and the Imperial (27 BCE-476 CE in the west, 330-1453 CE in the east). The political structure of the society involved a powerful patriarchal leader at the top — called the 'Consul' during the Republic, and 'Emperor' afterwards. The administration consisted of the senate, judges, and assemblies, which operated under the Consul or the Emperor.

There was a major social division between two classes – the aristocratic Patricians, mainly the landowning gentry and the working-class Plebeians – involving not only the poor labourers but farmers, artisans, small traders, craftsmen and even teachers — basically those who were non-aristocratic. The Roman laws were heavily in favour of the upper class Patricians – until a power-struggle, called the 'Conflict of Orders', ensued in the period c. 500-287 BCE. The Plebeians made up a large portion of the army needed by the Patricians to fight against the neighbouring tribes.

In 494 BCE, the working-class Plebeians refused to continue fighting until their demands were addressed properly. New laws were framed to give the Plebeians some voice *by* allowing them to send to the Senate a 'Tribune' as their representative. By the time the Conflict of the Orders was resolved, Roman society was hierarchically divided in five social classes: 1)Patricians, 2) Equites, 3) Plebeians, 4) Freedmen and 5) Slaves. Gradually, however, some of the Plebeians gained importance in society and marital relationships between Patricians—the traditional landed gentry and some Plebeians who later gained some wealth and position—became possible.

The Equites (the equestrian class, associated with horses or the cavalry) came from the class of knights who later became associated with trade and commerce. They also belonged to the upper class but were inferior to the Patricians who made up the Senate.

The freedmen, former slaves who had been able to buy their freedom or set free by their masters and were recognized as citizens but did not have any representation in politics. Former slaves could choose any common profession according to their capacity or serve their former masters as clients.

Slaves belonged the lowest position in society; they had no rights and were considered to be the property of their owners. Yet, Roman civilization depended heavily on the manual labour of the slaves. Their lives were spent in tremendous hardship and *there was* a major protest, by Spartacus and his followers, in 71 BCE.

The family was at the base of Roman society where women were, in general, under the jurisdiction of men—a legally appointed father-figure, a husband, or some male guardian. However, experienced elderly ladies and mothers were influential in maintaining the stability of the family. Aristocratic ladies hardly had a public life outside the household whereas, slave-women, along with their male counterparts, had to work hard mostly in their owners' houses. Despite a few worthy examples of learned women, women, in general, were denied education. Roman citizenship was granted to a male who belonged to one of the Latian tribes and was above the age of

fifteen–according to his ancestry, landed position, and profession. For a detailed idea about the Roman society, students may refer to such books as *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (1998) by Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, and *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilisation* (2014) by Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth.

An exposure to Greek culture, mostly through the influx of Greek people brought to Rome as slaves during the 3rd century BCE, *initiated* the beginnings of Roman drama. The history of Roman comedy *has become* available to today's world mostly through the writings of Livius Andronicus, a Greek, who came to Rome as a slave but later *earned* his freedom and was made to tutor the children of some noble Roman households. In 240 BCE, he presented a play before a large Roman audience, an adaptation from the Greek, and this event played a great role in triggering a Roman interest in the Greek classics. His translation of Homer's *Odyssey* in Latin was considered a pioneering work. The other texts he adapted into Latin include, Sophocles's *Ajax*, *Andromeda*, *Gladiolus* and *Ludius*.

For Roman society, the adaptation of a Greek cultural ethos, was not so easy. The free individualism of the Greeks would have been problematic in imperial Rome. As the Classical scholar W. A. Oldfather observes in his essay on 'Roman Comedy',

> Perfect solidarity in public action and in private conduct, and hence in thought and belief, could alone save the imperilled nationality. Out of this spirit grew that sturdy sense of public duty which governed the whole moral life, a recognition of the superior claims of social justice, and of the need of uniformity in regulating the intercourse of men. These qualities, together with the indomitable will of generations of fighting men, produced the incomparable Roman achievements in character, administration and jurisprudence. (218)

However, as the politico-social situation of old Rome left little scope for literature and cultural modes of self-expression, the Romans thus turned to Greek literature and its liberal spirit for these activities. Thus the adaptation of Greek works in Latin gave an impetus to the shaping of what we call 'Roman

literature' of the early period. Soon the Romans became exposed to the Greek comic theatre, and turned to adapting Greek comedy into Latin. Of course, there had been a tendency to introduce 'Roman' elements of society, events, and characters, into typical 'Greek' plots and settings—elements which would help the Roman audiences to relate with the plays. For instance, *when* the setting of a play was Athens, a Roman playwright would use a 'Prologue' which would set the tone of the play, adding local colour and situations, thereby, acclimatizing Roman audiences with the different milieu.

Gnaeus Naevius (c. 235-204 BCE) adapted many of Euripedes' tragedies and Menander's *Kolax*. He also composed historical plays and about thirty comedies are ascribed to him-- the most famous of them was *Tarentilla*. He was a predecessor to Plautus, who gave Roman drama a distinguished position. Naevius introduced songs and a variety of metres. His plays were rich in critical commentaries on Roman social and political life, which led to his imprisonment in 207 BCE. In many ways, his use of stock characters, well-knit plots and colourful, colloquial language, his vivid portrayal of the common people's lives with intrigues, amusement and romantic engagements would later be found more vividly in Plautus, who was respectful of the elder poet. His application of the device of mingling or fusing plots (known as 'contaminatio') had been a major influence on two of his most famous successors, Plautus (254-184 BC) and Terence (185-159BC).

In the hands of Plautus, the plays of Menander and the other Greek playwrights were adapted into musical Latin comedies. His stock characters involved – the braggart soldier, the parasite, the old miser, the identical twins and the resourceful slave−the last providing a major force behind the comic action. Plautus confined himself to a single literary species, and brought the Greek masters onto the Roman stage, with a renewed vigour. Some critics have, however, often blamed him for not trying to produce a genuine 'national' comedy for Rome as all his works had been adaptations of Greek comedy wrapped with some local flavour.

In this discussion, we should also include, however briefly, the contribution of Caecilius Statius (c. 220 BC- c. 166/168 CE) who marks an 'intermediate' phase in the development of old Latin Comedy. According to W. A. Oldfather, "Neither so original as Plautus nor so refined as Terence, he left much to be desired in point of good taste and of good Latinity. But he followed his originals, principally works of Menander, more closely in the construction of plots." (220) His plays were marked by a tendency towards debate and argument.

With Terence the development of Roman Comedy was believed to be complete. His plays mark a distinctive aesthetic achievement in language involving an uniformity of elegant style giving to the plays of Terence, in the opinion of many scholars, a greater sense of 'refinement' than those of Plautus. Terence's use of the verse-form was more polished, more stylistic in conception and structure, coupled with a subtlety of humour, avoiding the farcical and the 'lowly comical'. But this element of sophistication perhaps rendered his plays less popular to the Plebeian audiences than those of Plautus. Plautus's plays, on the other hand, was more vivacious and full of energy. Oldfather, thus points out that he was essentially nearer to the Greeks than was Terence and, consequently, he developed the style and structure of what we call 'closet' drama.

The Atellan farce, a native form of the Old Latin comic-dramatic endeavour did exist before the Romans' association with Greek drama. This kind of farce, originally from the Oscan town of Atella in Sothern Italy, used to be performed with masks, and was popular for almost half a millennium in Italy. Historians would date its origin around 300 BCE. This form had similarities with the improvised Greek farces known as *komos* (revels). The use of masked stock characters and slapstick gags were a common feature in this farce; plots generally involved domestic affairs, mostly as in Greek New Comedy-- 'boy meets girl, falls in love, but parents object to their union, finally a loyal and clever slave intervenes and makes the marriage possible'. Thus Atellan farce could be easily mixed up with the spirit of Greek New Comedy in adaptations that were called *fabulae pallaitae* ('plays in a Greek cloak'). The scripts were rich in lively action, robust puns and jokes. The reliance on boisterous

scenes of physical comedy was significant as it undermined Roman etiquette in a licensed manner.

Performed as a popular form of entertainment in ancient Republican and early Imperial Rome, Attelan farces originally came *from* an oral tradition, mostly in the Oscan dialect. Later they became a literary genre and came to be performed in Latin by the 1st century BC, but only a few fragments have survived. Lucius Pomponius of Bononia and Novius were among the writers who used the form of Attelan farce in Old Latin comedies, but their written legacy is almost extinct. The stock characters in these farces included Maccus, the clown; Bucco ("Fat Cheeks"), the simpleton; Pappus, or the old fool; Dossennus, perhaps meaning the "Hunchback"; and Manducus, who can be understood as "the Glutton." There is no evidence of farces in existence beyond the 1st century AD, but as a matter of 'legacy', we may trace some of the stock characters used in the 16th-century Italian 'commedia dell'arte' from this tradition. These old Roman farces, with a typical use of mimicry and a reliance on stock characters, got incorporated into the new strain of Latin comedy which flourished under the Greek influence.

Having a meagre pre-existent tradition to adhere to, Plautus retained some features of the Atellan farce, and freely adapted Greek comedies, especially Menander's New Comedies. Except for the period called the 'Middle Ages', Plautus's comedies hardly failed to attract audiences when performed; his plays, therefore remained popular through European history and its cultures of theatre. His works were even quoted and appreciated by strict and conservative church fathers like Saint Jerome and so on.

The plays had the richness, energy and complexity of Greek plots but were free of unwanted Hellenisms as they were strongly embedded in the contemporary Roman context. In temperament, Plautus was nearer to Aristophanes. Avoiding Menander's subtle character portrayals, Plautus's exaggerated depiction of character verged on caricature. Plautus had an infallible instinct and a perfect sense of comic timing to turn his art into achieving stage success, for it was dedicated to amuse with compulsive, extravagant laughter and musicality.

Chapter 2

The Tradition from Greek New Comedy to Plautus and Terence

In the previous chapter, it has already been discussed that the fascination of the Romans with the Greek culture started with Livius Andronicus's translation of *Odessey* and some Greek plays. In the genre of comedy, Menander with his Greek New Comedies has been the major influence.

The Athenian Menander was considered the greatest among the comic playwrights of the third and the final stage of Greek comedy — known as New Comedy. By the time he started writing, Greek comedy was no longer interested in satirizing public affairs as in the time of Aristophanes. Menander concentrated more on domestic affairs and young people's love-intrigues. He also used stock-characters, suitable for a romantic-familial plot. Characters in his plays could often be identified as stern fathers, boastful soldiers, young lovers, cunning slaves, and so on.

Despite his use of stock characters, Menander excelled in characterization sometimes with a touch of subtlety, for example, the portrayal of the old misanthrope Knemon — a typical 'stern father' in *Dyscolus* (the only complete text we have among his surviving plays) who is not without a touch of sympathy, especially when he relinquishes everything and retires towards the end *leaving* the stage for the lovers' union. Menander dispensed with the chorus and instead of mythical or social plots, introduced domestic problems of daily life and, finally, their happy resolutions. Menander's works were adapted by the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence and, through them, the influence continued to work upon the development of European comedy during the Renaissance. It is from their work and some writings by other Latin authors that the twentieth century readers have come to know about the lost corpus of Menander's plays, before.

The discovery of several fragments of Menander's texts in Egypt in 1898 and 1900 — more than the halves of two plays,

Witnessess or *By-Standers,* and the *The Girl Whose Hair Was Cut Short* -- had revived scholars' interest in some of his lost work. Subsequent discoveries were made and scholarship on Menander flourished in the twentieth century. More than a hundred plays were attributed to Menander, of which mostly fragments have been discovered till now. While compiling the fragments in an accessible form, for students of Roman comedy, W C Wadell relied largely upon Koch's *Comicorum Atticorum Fragments*, Volume III, Edward Capps' *Four Plays of Menander* (1910), Van Leeuwen's *Menandri Fabularum Reliquiae* (1919) and Francis G. Allinson's *Menander* (Loeb Classical Library, 1921). Wadell's compilation, *Selections from Menander* (Oxford University Press, 1927) remains, till date, a significant text for the study of Greek influences on Roman Comedy.

It is to be noted, however, that Menander's significant influence has caused general readers (except a dedicated group of Classical scholars) forget the other exponents of New Comedy—including Alexis-- Menander's uncle, Philemon and Diphilos — who were 'rivals' of Menander and more oriented towards the farcical, and also Hegesippus and Euphron. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the notion that Philemon and Diphilos were more of an influence on Plautus whereas, Terence was closer to Menander. In her 2015 paper on 'New Comedy and Roman Comedy: With and Without Menander' Sophia Pappaioannaou shows that Plautus "was better inclined towards models that favored less refined speech, cruder jokes, farcical violence, and more impressive dramatic effects, and were closer to the prankish and paradramatic character of Middle Comedy. Diphilos and Philemon comply much better with this profile, and it is not fortuitous that they have been classified as writers of the Mése by later critics in antiquity." (69). The term 'Mése' literally stands for 'Middle Street'—the main road running through Constantinopole was known as the Mése. So the phrase 'writers of the Middle Street' suggests that Diphilos and Philemon were more associated with the mass-audiences, than the aristocrats. Pappaioannaou also points out that Philemon's Thensaurus and *Emporos* provided the models for Plautus' *Trinummus* and *Mercator* (70). William S. Anderson (1993) mentions that

Diphilos was the main source for Plautus' *Rudens* and *Casina* and his *Vidularia* and *Captivi* also includes elements from the fragments of Diphilos. (45-69) However, Terence's *Adelphoe*, once thought to be inspired fully by Menander, was at least partially indebted to Diphilos' *Companions in Death*. (Petrakis 55)

However, it is historically recognized that Menander's leading position as the most *notable* playwright of New Comedy, remains unchallenged both for his Roman successors and students of classical literature. Ovid expresses his appreciation for his writing, Plutarch compares Menander's skill to that of a skilled craftsman, musician or painter and Quintillian's praise of him is reiterated by a 20th century Classical scholar like Sidney G. Ashmore (Introduction, *The Comedies of Terence,* New York: Oxford University Press, p.7) Summarising Menander's achievement C.R. Post, therefore writes:

> Preeminently a Greek, he excels in those very qualities which always lend charm to the most insignificant literary products of Hallas, which were always less possible to the heavier Roman mind and the more cumbrous Latin tongue, and especially, despite the more advanced stylistic art of Terence, to that mind and that tongue in their as yet inchoate condition of the second century before Christ. (Quoted in Petrakis, 64)

Considering Menander *as* the chief exponent of New Comedy, we may take a brief note of its *major* features. In 'The Argument of Comedy' Northorp Frye argues,

> New Comedy unfolds from what may be described as a comic Oedipus situation. Its main theme is the successful effort of a young man to outwit an opponent and possess the girl of his choice. The opponent is usually the father (sensex). (450)

Therefore, it is basically concerned with a domestic-romantic plot which seeks its final resolution in marriage and in the 'triumph' of the younger over the 'traditional' and sometimes 'dogmatic' elderly generation which also tends to harp on a social reconciliation. As Frye adds : "The essential comic

resolution, therefore, is an individual release which is also a social reconciliation. The normal individual is freed from the bonds of a humorous society, and a normal society is freed from the bonds imposed on it by humorous individuals (452)."

Trying to trace Menander's influence on Roman comedy, it would be best to begin with a question here: How closely did Roman Comedy follow the Greek originals? The legacy remained alive not merely in translation but, in this period, much more in the spirit of adaptation. Considering the differences in cultural setting, much of the subtle nuances, literary and historical allusions and, sometimes, the delineation of characters, originally done by Menander with a finer touch of the Attic language, had to be modified.

For a long time, Classical scholarship maintained that Plautus had rather 'freely' reworked the original texts of Menander or his contemporaries like Diphilos and Philemon, adapting them to indigenous settings and by adding local colour thereby making them suitable for his contemporary Roman society, whereas Terence offered a comparatively 'Romanised' version of New Comedy. For both Plautus and Terence, more action was infused to fill up the corpus of the play to satisfy the expectations of the local audiences; and, according to early sources, they sometimes achieved this, by a combination of plots and elements of two or three plays. According to Oldfather, "Such combinations were, with the stock figures and when made on a small scale, comparatively easy, and Terence was especially successful therein. Names of personages were changed freely, sometimes, as in the *Eunuchus*, without any very obvious purpose, but with Plautus, in the main, no doubt, for comic effect". (220)

Another way of reworking was accomplished by substitution of characters— one for another, or from one play to another (for instance, the character of the misanthrope Knemon in *Dyscolos* is substituted by the miserly Euclio in the *Pot of Gold*, where some similarities between the two characters can be found, but the plot and contexts, on the whole are very different) and, sometimes, by suggesting a change of situation. Plautus' plays

did not 'defamiliarise' the originals by Menander, but they excelled in structurally and thematically modifying the Greek plays, in mixing up plots and characters and, sometimes, deconstructing the original with a vibrant, populistic approach. Another major difference *was in the use of* language, and meter, especially in the inclusion of rhythm and music.

Next comes the name of Publius Terentius Afer, better known as Terence in English, who was born in the Roman colony of Carthage in Africa. He was brought to Rome as a slave by a senator called Terentius Lucanus, who gave him his own name, and impressed by his intelligence, helped him to get a fair education, and finally, set him free. Since the revival of classical learning in Europe during the Renaissance, Terence was held, after Plautus, as the greatest comic playwright of Rome. For the classical and Neo-classical scholars, his dramatic verses were celebrated as the model of simple and conversational yet, refined Latin. However, in his lifetime, he was not as popular as his famous predecessor, Plautus. Moreover, he faced slanders from his senior contemporaries and, his association with the Scipian circle—a group of cultured Roman nobles named after one called Scipio Africanus the Younger, who was an admirer of Greek literature—also led to the accusation that his plays might have been written by some noble patron.

Terence's plays differed in presentation and structure from those of Plautus, and also in their use of language. Terence's humour depended more on a literary sensibility, whereas, Plautus excelled in its dramatic and visual presentation which might have been crude and physical at times but able to please his audiences. Plautus used to add a prologue at the beginning, so that the audiences could be given an idea of the plot. Terence, on the contrary, did not suggest the plot in his prologues. Using shorter prologues he would rather defend himself against the attacks from "malicious old poets" like Lucius Lanuvinus, who accused him of meddling with the originals—combining materials from two Greek plays by the same author or by different authors. It was true, Terence did sometimes incorporate some extraneous sources into the main plot, but that could not be labelled a 'discredit'. For Instance, in the *Andria (The Andrian*

Woman), he combines the Greek play by Menander, sharing the same title, with materials from another play, also by Menander — *Perinthia* (*The Perinthian Girl*). Terence's *Eunuchus* was an adaptation of Menander's *Eunouchos*, in which the Roman playwright added two characters, a soldier and his parasitic flatterer from another play called *Kolax (The Flatterer*)—also by Menander. As already mentioned in the previous unit, in the *Adelph*oe*,* Terence added extraneous material into the main plot *in the form of* an interesting scene from a play by Diphilos, a contemporary of Menander.

Both Plautus and Terence added much to the development of Roman comedy, but their aims and approaches were different. During Plautus's writing career, a steady form of Latin comedy was yet to be conceptualised. The Greek models were available but a simple translation of them would not be accepted by the local audience. Plautus had to improvise considerably and make the plays more interesting than intellectual. Plautus's challenge was in providing genuine laughter, often mixed up with crude farce, for the common audiences—otherwise they would leave and seek other kinds of entertainments such as a gladiator fighting with lions, or a wrestling match. This was exactly the case with the two productions of Terence's play, *Hycera*: people left in the middle of the play, and the productions failed. Thus we can see that by the time Terence started to write comedies, the situation of the general public was approximately the same though, Roman theatrical culture had by then, been able to claim a stronger appeal—at least among a chosen few. Terence wrote mostly for the educated 'Scipionic' coterie, whose taste demanded more refinement than that of the general Roman mob.

Modern scholarship on Terence has often faced a problem, regarding the question of his 'originality' as a playwright. However, as Roman literature and culture owed considerably to the Greeks, the question of 'originality' could not be viewed unequivocally. The term should not be used in a modern-day sense, to criticize or appreciate plays of classical antiquity. Here, the question of 'originality' is important, however, because it has enabled modern scholarship to trace the tradition, through

Plautus and Terence, back to Menander whose plays could not be preserved in their entirety. Terence indeed found his model mostly in Menander and, in some cases, also adapted from the works of other Greek poets. Four of his plays were based on Menander and the other two mentioned Apollodorus of Carystus – a follower of Menander -- as the original author. Classical scholars have shown that Terence did not fully 'translate' the Attic Koine of Menander but he maintained a studied adherence to his style which gave to his use of Latin a sense of 'standard' artistry. Besides his skill as a translator or adapter, he dressed his plays with a sophisticated, sensitive approach to individual characters and their problems. His combination of two plots, known as 'contaminatio', was not uncommon: Plautus also used it even with more creative freedom and vivacity. Terence aimed at a conversational realism, and reduced the long, expository prologues or such conventional devices as the character's address to the audience.

He died young, and was not so successful in gaining the favour of the audiences in his lifetime. History, however, gave him his due for, with Terence, Roman comedy reached its final stage of development and, after him, it is difficult to find any comic playwright worthy of mention. The age of Roman comedy survived only a short time after Terence. His life was short and his works were not many in number but his language and art of presentation set a standard for "pure Latin" for a long time. Finally, for classical and neo-classical studies, Terence is even now a part of the curriculum.

Chapter 3

Plautus : Life and Works

Though the plays of Plautus are more or accessible to the present generation of readers, it is difficult to know the man behind them. Existing scholarship has, however, has come to a consensus regarding some biographical details. Though there is no definite proof, Plautus is believed to have lived approximately between 254 and 184 BCE. As it is clear to us, that the time when Plautus lived is historically so remote and the literary and cultural remnants of this age are so few and fragmentary that it is difficult to make any claim of a definite sort. However, Plautus's comic plays constitute one of the literary relics of that time gone by and remain as important documents that testify to the abiding values of humanity. The common desires and concerns that existed in that civilization now lost seem to find an echo even today. Therefore the plays seem to unify human civilizations across time and space.

According to whatever historical or quasi-historical information is now available to us, Plautus was originally called Titus Maccius Plautus. This tripartite name was a convention in the names used by Roman aristocrats. A closer look will, however, prove that this name was itself a deception. The very name is a comic artifice on part of the classical dramatist. Thus, a close analysis will show that the first name (praenomen), that is, Titus; the second (nomen) – Maccius, and the third (cognomen) – Plautus, taken together as the full name, suggests "Titus belonging to the Flatfoot clan of the Maccus family". It can be noted in this context that Maccius refers to the son of "Maccus", where Maccus was the clown figure of Atellan farce. Moreover, in Latin Titus was slang for "penis"; thereby revealing that Titus Maccius Plautus was just a contrived name. It is, therefore quite apparent that the name of the comic dramatist was itself a joke -- a joke in the typical Plautine style – remarkable for its exaggerated coarseness.

In all probability, Plautus was not born into the upper class of the Roman society. His close references to ordinary life, in many of his plays give us ample proof of that. In fact, the name he uses may have only been a stage name for the playwright

might have been trained as a performer in the genre of Atellan farce. Many fabricated stories have been doing the rounds since Plautus's death. There is one which states that he was born about 254 BCE in Umbria. His early associations with theatre probably began as an actor and he came to Rome when travelling with a theatre-group. He is said to have fallen out of luck several times as he had worked in a theatre, saved a little money and lost it subsequently in a trading venture. After this he returned to Rome in a state of insolvency and had to work in grain mills. While working in the mill he wrote three of his plays in a row, and encouraged by their success, went on to write more comedies. These are some of the available information on Plautus's life but these are not based on any factual evidence. These biographical details are conjured from his own comedies. Similar kinds of fabricated stories have been created about the great Greek dramatist Euripedes.

Twenty one comedies of Plautus are still extant. For his source materials, Plautus depended on the New Comedy of Menander and other Greek dramatists. He adapted them freely, often retaining the Greek setting but using references to Roman lifestyle and local scenario. Sometimes he used to give topical references—such as the imprisonment of the comic poet Naevius (207 BCE), or incorporated scenes of a Roman city or marketplace and sometimes even referring to Roman politics or laws. However, in general he avoided political satire and relied more on the ridiculous follies of human nature. Most of the stories of his plays came from the life of the lower or middle-class Roman citizens. As a result of his skilful adaptation of Greek comedies into the new Roman context, Plautus's lines serve not only as important examples of Roman theatre of what later came to be known as the Classical age, but also as indications of the linguistic and cultural peculiarities of late third-century and early second-century Rome. The comedies employ archaic Latin vocabulary full of what might be considered unusual by later civilizations but, nevertheless developed around Roman culture. Extensive study and experimentation have been conducted by academics and translators, regarding the language of the Plautine plays. Despite such scholarly efforts, it is impossible to properly transfer these

into modern languages -- as they are a storehouse of realistic and brilliant colloquial idioms. The plays dramatise the humour that won the appreciation of Roman audiences. Recurrent rhetorical devices like the pun, quipping, alliteration, assonance that run through Plautus's texts are the hallmarks of his comic technique.

A number of plays are attributed to Plautus, but only twenty one of them have been authentically recognised, and revived mostly in entirety. The dates of his plays are rather disputed yet, we can include *Cistellaria* (202 BCE), *Miles Gloriosus* (200 BCE), *Stichus* (200 BCE) among his early plays. On the other hand, *Pseudolus* (191 BCE) *Bacchides, Persa, Trinummus* and *Truculents* are assumed to be written in his later life. The dates of many other plays like *Amphitrion, Asinaria, Auluraria* (The Pot of Gold), *Captivi* and the famous *Menaechmi,* are difficult to determine.

The original versions of the Plautine texts are mostly lost, what *have* survived are basically 'performing editions'. These had been prepared for production purposes, with necessary *interpolations*, expansions, modifications and reductions. *The* plays continued to hold popularity on *the* stage until the time of Cicero and Horace. In the Middle Ages, Plautine plays lost their popularity, but literary interest in them revived during the Italian Renaissance. In 1429, Nicholas of Kues revived twelve of his plays. It was through Ariosto that Plautine adaptations, in the Italian vernacular, came to light. *Amphitruo* was the first Plautine play to be translated into English during the Renaissance. Edwardes' *Damon and Pythia*, Heywood's *Silver* were based on Plautine models, and the most famous example of *a* Plautine influence on Shakespeare is *The Comedy of Errors*, which is modeled on Plautus' *Menaechmi.* However, *Menaechmi* presents only one set of twin brothers, whereas *Amphitruo* offers a double set of twins — both masters and slaves. It can also be assumed that Shakespeare, for his *Comedy of Errors*, combined the ideas from two plays by Plautus. The degree of esteem in which Plautus was held in the Elizabethan age, can be justified by the speech by Polonius, introducing the group of actors and their talents, refers to Seneca and Plautus, as models for tragedy and comedy – "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light" (*Hamlet*, 2.2). The most famous successor of the miser-

figure in Plautus can be found in Molière's play *L'Avare* (1668). However, there is a difference, too—as noted by E.F. Watling, in his introductory note to *Auluraria*:

> Of the numerous successors of Euclio, the Harpagon of Molière's *L'Avare* is the best known and most complete reincarnation; yet the comparison between the two plays shows a world of difference in the authors' treatment of the subject and character.[22] Euclio's avarice—or rather his unexpected acquisition of unearned wealth—brings only gentle ridicule upon his head and involves him in a train of inconveniences, from which he eventually escapes with his honour and good nature unimpaired. Harpagon remains a miser and a curmudgeon to the end.

Besides Molière's *L'Avare* , there are a number of plays inspired by *The Pot of God*. *The Miser* (1672) by Sheridan and another play, bearing the same title, written by Fielding (1732) were notably inspired by *Aulularia,* and also his influence was not exhausted even in the age of Hollywood movies. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, the 1963 musical motion picture can be regarded as a 20th century adaptation of Plautus.

A major aspect of Plautus' plays is his innovative use of stock characters. In terms of stock characters, Plautus served as an important source of inspiration for the English and French playwrights of the 16th and 17th centuries, and beyond. The braggart soldier-figure in *Miles Gloriosus* has its successor in the 'type' character of the 'Capitano', as found in the Italian 'commedia dell arte'. We can also find a similar character in Nicholas Udall's comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*—the first 'comedy' in English. Ben Jonson's *The Case is Altered* (1609) is an adaptation of Plautus' *Aulularia* (*Pot of Gold).* The Plautine influence can be recognized in iconic comic characters – ranging from Shakespeare's Falstaff to George Bernard Shaw's Sergius in *Arms and the Man* (1894).

Plautus showed a careful organization of his plots and, as a popular playwright, he was familiar with the ways to make the plot interesting with such devices as farce, boisterous jokes, intrigues, the theme of mistaken identity and so on. The Plautine plots often relied heavily on comic exaggeration, burlesque,

robust humour and often turning traditional values upside down with the purpose of achieving comic effect. All these were done in the genial spirit of comedy and, in some of his plays, he also upheld moral virtues. His plays displayed a wide thematic range from plays based on history, sentimental comedy (as in *Captivi* and *Cistellaria*) to plays which involved a mockery of mythological stories (*Amphitruo*) and *plays using* coarse humour verging on the farcical (*Asinaria*).

The use of rhythmical lines gave a musical quality to Plautus' plays. He employed the long, six-or seven-foot line in iambic and trochaic meters, as found in the Greek originals of his plays. However, Plautus also introduced variations by employing colloquial dialogue to suit the mood and temperament of the characters and also included songs. His use of alliteration and the pun made his dialogues racy and vigorous; he picked up the colloquial idioms used by the common people to achieve the effect of a fleshly realism.

Therefore, there is a common consensus that Plautine stock characters had an active life on stage centuries after his death. Let us discuss some notable character types, with examples:

Pargopolynices, the "braggart soldier" in *Miles Gloriosus* amuses the audience with his vain-glorious posturing and tendency towards self-aggarndisement, while Artotogrus, his parasite or flatterer, keeps on filling him up with newer and ridiculous claims of glory. The 'cunning slave' or 'intriguing slave' was a character type familiar in Menander's New Comedies, but the way Plautus used this figure, is more interesting in its variety. While in Menander the slave was an intelligent comic character and helpful to his young master, Plautus made him more active in devising ingenious schemes of action and, sometimes, even controlling the action of the play. The slaves in Plautus often turn the comic world topsy-turvy by *controlling* their masters, boasting like military heroes and becoming the driving force of the plot. The ingenious deal-making Pseudolous in the eponymous play, is a major example. Sometimes the characters are very sure of their specific roles: both Strobilus in *Auluraria* (*Pot of Gold*) and Chrysalus in *Bacchides* have pointed out what a 'good' (i.e., clever) slave should be. C. Stace, however, in his essay on "The Slaves of

Plautus", has categorized Plautine slaves into 'cunning', 'deceived', 'ordinary', and 'slaves of special interest'. [64-77]

In Greek comedies, the character of the old man is sometimes typified as an ill-tempered miser, a misanthrope, or a stern father opposing the marriage of his son with his beloved. The lustful old man or 'sensex amator' is a character improvised by Plautus upon the mere 'sensex' or 'stern old father' which was a staple in Greek New Comedies. Thus, the old lech develops a passion for the beautiful heroine and seeks opportunities to satisfy his desire but ultimately he is outwitted and removed from the path of the young lovers. Demaenetus in *Asinaria*, Demipho in *Cistellaria*, Lysidamus in *Casina*, Demipho in *Mercator*, and Antipho in *Stichus*— aged men driven by a sort of 'vulgar' amorous passion, are recognized as belonging to this type. All these characters share a similar purpose of winning the young woman but their situations and the procedures they adopt vary. Despite his repeated use of stock characters, Plautus saves his plots from monotony by providing different settings and courses of action. Ben Jonson's Volpone, the 'miser' is also a Platuine type, possessing the traits of the 'lusty old man' as well.

The women characters in Plautus are rather conventional, but they do not lack variety as they are modelled on the common types already used by other playwrights in the tradition of Roman comedy. 'Mulier' is usually the wife of the 'Sensex', sometimes supportive of her husband, sometimes dominating and shrewd. 'Meretrix' is the courtesan, often the love-interest of more than one young men; 'Ancila' is the slave-woman always loyal to her mistress—a female counterpart of the male 'servus' or 'slave', but not as clever or resourceful as the male. 'Virgo' is the young woman, rarely presented on stage but traditionally viewed as an epitome of beauty and innocence.

As for themes, Plautus showed his skill in such essentially comic themes such as those of mistaken identity and impersonation, that of the twin brothers, the problem of the generation gap leading to a father-son conflict but, ultimately, giving way to a happy resolution -- themes which remained to entertain the audiences of the European stage and screen till the middle of the 20th century.

Chapter 4
The Pot of Gold: Understanding the Text

Having learnt about Roman theatre in general and Plautus in particular in the earlier chapters, here we come to a detailed analysis of the text, *The Pot of Gold*. This will provide the students with a detailed summary of the scenes, a close understanding of the characters and thematic issues, along with the representation of Roman society that is attempted in this play.

Plautus's artistry regarding plot-construction is etched in perfection. The well-knit structure of this play, which might have partially been adapted from Menander's *Dyskolos* or some other 'lost' play, is the basis for its timeless commercial success. A protoptype for Euclio can also be traced in the character of Smicrines in Menander's *Arbitration* . Against this backdrop of literary influences from known or unknown Greek sources, let us have a look at a detailed plot-summary:

Prologue

Lar Familliaris, Euclio's household God, introduces the context of the play. The pot of gold entrusted by Euclio's grandfather to him was kept secret from Euclio's father for his neglect of the God. However, Euclio's daughter Phaedria regularly worships the God, much to his pleasure. Therefore the God has revealed the treasure to Euclio for her dowry. He also proclaims to generate a process of the wedding of Phaedria, who is made pregnant by Lyconides, whose uncle Megadorous seeks to marry her. Thus the Deity's prologue introduces all the thematic concerns in the play, and also establishes the symbolic and metaphorical significance of the titular 'pot of gold'.

Act 1, scene 1

In the first scene of first act of the play readers, the protagonist Euclio appears in front of the spectators. He is chasing and beating his old slave Staphyla angrily, because he suspects her of spying and prying. Staphyla wonders why her master is behaving so strangely. From her utterance the readers get to know that Euclio does this with her everyday, more than once. Lamenting,

Staphyla goes on to describe how Euclio behaves all day: he does not sleep at night, he sits at the house all the day, always in high temper. She is also concerned for the young mistress—that is, Euclio's daughter, and wishes to protect her from any kind of 'disgrace'. This natural impulse to protect the lady from the trouble gives a motherly streak to the character of Staphyla who has been growing old, serving at this household and looking after it.

Scene 2

Euclio is unwilling to go out of his house leaving the house unwatched. He asks Staphyla to watch over the house. Staphyla is surprised that there is nothing valuable in the empty house other than cobwebs. Euclio's gripping insecurity runs through his instructions to Staphyla: he asks her to bolt the door and let no outsider in. Euclio's greatest fear are the neighbours who might knock and enter to fetch day to day household items like fire, knife, axe, mortar, pestle and so on.

Once outside, Euclio informs the audiences that director of their ward has called them for doling out a present of two shillings per head. The amount is very little, but if Euclio skips the visit he will attract undue attention. It will make people think that he has got a pot of gold at home. To assuage that suspicion he has to leave the house against his wish. Euclio also reveals his suspicious mind which believes that everyone has found out the truth about the gold he has got and has a changed response now.

Act 2, scene 1

In this scene a conversation takes place between Eunomia and her brother Megadorus. Eunomia urges Megadorus to marry and give birth to a son, to continue the family-line. A suitable mature lady who is fit to be his wife should be found. Megadorus objects to Eunomia's opinion. He thinks, a middle aged lady may not be able to give birth to a healthy child, without any problem. Megadorus rather wishes to marry the young daughter of his neighbour Euclio. Eunomia accepts the proposition, and Megadorus prepares for an interview with Euclio concerning the marriage-proposal.

Scene 2

Euclio returns home. His visit to the forum has been of no use. Neither the director nor anyone from his ward was present to keep the promise. As a result Euclio did not receive the promised shillings. He is terribly anxious of having lost his gold which he has left home unattended. At this point of time Megadorus comes his way. Megadorus's polite behaviour raises Euclio's suspicion. When Megadorus finally reveals that he desires to marry Euclio's daughter, Euclio is shocked and refuses such an offer as Megadorus is tremendously rich and Euclio is dreadfully poor. For a poor man to try and get into an association with the rich would be like an ass yoked with a bull. An ass cannot be in an equal set with the bull, says Euclio. Nevertheless, he finally agrees to let Megadorous marry his daughter, without any dowry. Megadorus agrees and leaves with his servant Pythodicus for preparation of the marriage. The marriage is to take place on that very day itself without delay. Euclio thanks his lot, because he has been conjecturing that Megadorous has come to house only for inheriting the hidden gold

Scene 3

Euclio calls Staphyla and tells her that her daughter is going to be married. He asks her to keep the door locked and prepare for the wedding by the time he returns from the forum. Staphyla's reaction is one of shock. She exclaims that the decision is too sudden. Once Euclio exits, Staphyla gets worried that he secret about the young lady's disgrace can no longer be kept. Meanwhile she has to prepare for the occasion.

Scene 4

After an hour Pythodicus, servant of Megadorus, returns with Cooks-- Anthrax and Congrio, and music-girls-- Phrygia and Eleusium. He is accompanied by a few more attendants, with provisions from the market. Pythodicus instructs that the party should get divided into two parts. One part would attend to the house of Megadorus, while the other would prepare the household of Euclio. Humorous word-playing and gossip-sharing go on, as these people are set to work. A robust comic atmosphere sets in. They make comments in all elaboration

regarding the miserly nature of Euclio who is unable to pay for catering of his daughter's marriage. They observe that he bawls about his bankruptcy. They joke about the miserly nature of Euclio. At the end, their discussion unravels that it is normal for cooks like Anthrax and Congrio to thieve things from the household they work in.

Scene 5

Pythodicus allocates the cooks, the lambs, and the music girls to each household according to his wisdom. Anthrax is assigned to the household of Megadorus. Congrio complains and is assuaged. Since the fattest lamb has gone to the household of Megadorus, the fattest of the music girls, Phrygia is sent to the house of Euclio. Congrio is sent to the house of Euclio.

Scene 6

Pythodicus calls Staphyla and leaves the cook, music girls and supplies in Euclio's house. When she says that there is no firewood for cooking, Congrio suggests that cooking can be done with the rafters or timbers. Staphyla is enraged at the suggestion of burning the house down for cooking. The impoverished condition of the house is revealed through this dialogue and the unsuitability that comes with such poverty. Staphyla also remarks about the absence of drinks in the supply. Congrio suggests that Euclio might bring it from the forum.

Scenes 7-8

Pythodicus leaves for Megadorus's house, to supervise things there. In the meantime, Euclio returns from the forum with a small package and a few forlorn flowers. He found everything too costly. Fish, lamb, tunny, pork, veal-- everything has become unaffordably expensive for him. The miser's psychology is beautifully developed as he gives logic against unreasonable expenditure in wedding. The principle of economizing is put forward with an adage equivalent to "Holiday feasting makes everyday fasting". Euclio decides to cut down his daughter's wedding expenses just as much as possible. He finally comes home with a little frankincense and some wreaths of flowers to honour their Household God, so that he may bless the daughter's marriage. At this moment he notices that unknown people have

entered his house. The cook talks about a pot for cooking. Euclio mistakes it for his pot of gold. He thinks that the pot is found and robbed. He cries for God Apollo's help and protection before he is ruined completely.

Scene 9

This scene opens with Anthrax , the cook employed for wedding preparations at the Megadorus's house. He gives instruction to his subordinates with boning and scaling of fish so that in the meanwhile he can visit Euclio's house to fetch a bread pan. At Euclio's house there is an uproar. Anthrax mistakes this sound of scuffle for cooking preparation at its height. This makes him return to his own responsibilities instead of going out. He fears that leaving his work station will create further trouble in his domain.

Act 3, Scene 1

In continuation of the shouting that is heard from afar in the previous scene, Congrio and his followers are awfully clubbed and beaten and they wish to run out of Euclio's house for their lives. As they tumble out of Euclio's house they shout out loud to all the Romans writhing in pain and give a brief idea about their predicament. Euclio runs after them with a cudgel in his hand. Congrio resents that he has never been in such a madhouse like this, never been so severely beaten.

Scene 2

Euclio shouts for stopping Congrio and his fellow-workers as he intends to report them to the police. Congrio has been holding and threatening Euclio with a knife, says the latter. Euclio complains that they entered his house without his permission. Congrio explains that he came to cook for the wedding. Euclio objects that it is none of Congrio's business whether he consumes his food cooked or raw. A miser's miserliness grows to absurd and impractical proportions. Congrio grudges that his two shilling job here would cause him to pay more as doctor's bill. Euclio forbids them to enter his house, and leaves again, to hide the pot of gold.

Scenes 3-4

Euclio now hides his pot of gold under his cloak so that it does not get stolen. He happily asks the cooks and music girls to

cook, work and scurry about the house now. They can work to their heart's content as there is no need to watch out for anything anymore. Congrio says that it is useless to have the promise of a good time now. The situation has been bitter already, as Euclio clubbed his head till it is all cracks. He also threatens to present the doctor's expenses before Euclio, who complains how the evils of associating himself with a wealthy man like Megadorus are leading him into insecurity and compromises. He observes that a cock came and started digging the place where the gold was hidden. This is simply for the purpose of making an oven, but Euclio is certain that all these are a ploy of Megadorus to steal his treasure.

Scene 5

Megadorus returns from the forum, meets Euclio, and congratulates himself for making such a good and wise choice. He says that his friends call it a fine idea and a sensible thing to do. He says that marrying a poor girl like Phaedria is not only a wise choice but also effective. Marrying into poor families will also lessen the divide between rich and poor and the society will be more unified. It is easier to have control over poor girls whereas the wealthy women pester their husbands' lives out.

Scene 6

Euclio appreciates Megadorus' speech and again harps on the idea that he is extremely poor. Megadorous merely suggests, in an assuring tone, that what he has got is enough. That causes the miserly Euclio to suspect that Megadorus has got to know about the pot of gold. Euclio complains that Megadorus has peopled his house with thieves and that itself is a cause of great worry. At the end of the scene, Euclio is again convinced that Megadorus is up to stealing his pot of gold and makes up his mind to hide it outside-- in the shrine of Faith.

Act 4, Scene 1

Strobilus, while waiting for his master, gives a soliloquy. He says that a good servant should know his master's inclinations like a book, so that he can read his wishes in his face and act accordingly. His master Lyconides has learnt that his uncle Megadorus is about to marry the lady he is in love with. He settles down behind a sacred altar to keep an eye on things and report everything to Lyconides.

Scene 2-3

Euclio is unaware of the presence of Strobilus around the spot and enters to secretly keep his pot of gold. He entrusts to the deity in the shrine the safety of his pot of gold. He plans to go for a bath so that he can make a sacrifice and not hinder his prospective son-in-law from marrying his girl the moment he claims her. Strobilus is overjoyed to hear of the treasure. The moment Euclio leaves he wonders about the prospect of procuring the treasure. Euclio re-enters the shrine following an ominous sign. As soon as he leaves, he hears a raven cawing on his left. Considering it an ill omen, he gets superstitious, and hurriedly goes back to the shrine.

Scene 4

A few moments lapse and a scuffle between Euclio and Strobilus is heard on the street. Euclio beats Strobilus hard and asks him to return whatever of his property he has stolen. Strobilus pretends ignorance. Suddenly Euclio hears Strobilus's accomplice carrying out his work inside the shrine and rushes towards the temple.

Scene 5

Strobilus stands up and resolves to give a proper lesson to Euclio. He is convinced that Euclio will not keep his gold in this shrine after this event. He hides by Megadorus's house and watches over Euclio and his activities. He sees Euclio coming out of the shrine with the pot of gold.

Scene 6

Euclio exclaims that he had a great regard for Faith of all deities but this has proved to be impractical. He feels thankful towards the raven which croaked and warned him against the danger. He wonders where he can safely hide his wealth and chooses the grove of Silvanus. He pronounces that he trusts Silvanus more than Faith now. Strobilus observes him closely. Strobilus plans to climb a tree and locate the place where Euclio hides the gold. He fears that his master will punish him for leaving the spot. Notwithstanding the prospect of being thrashed he undertakes the venture. He is hopeful that it will be faced with cash in hand.

Scene 7

Lyconides enters with his mother Eunomia. He has told her the whole story and Eunomia finds it a perfectly reasonable request to make Megadorus stop from marrying a woman who is bearing his nephew's child. In the middle of the conversation, labour pangs of Phaedria are heard from the inner quarters of the house, and this further confirms the truth of Lyconides's words. While Eunomia proceeds to talk to Megadorus, Lyconides looks for Strobilus.

Scene 8

Strobilus enters with the pot of gold and gives a speech of joyful victory. He jubilates on the fact that he is now richer than the most powerful king that ever was. He narrates how he climbed a tree before Euclio came to the spot and watched where he hid the pot of gold, and took it after Euckio's departure. Towards the end of the scene Strobilus sees that Euclio is coming and hides.

Scene 9

Euclio runs wildly back and forth, having lost his pot of gold. The happy faces of the passers-by make him suspect the thief to be in them. He prays to God for justice and asks and wants to know who the thief is. He observes how thieves dress up well and pretend to be honest men. He guarded the gold carefully denying comfort and pleasures to himself. Now others are making merry and he is sunk in the despair of loss. At the end of the scene Lyconides hears Euclio's howling in front of their house. He thinks that Euclio has got to know about his daughter's pregnancy.

Scene 10

Euclio has in mind nothing but the lost pot of gold. Lyconides has in mind the wrong he has done to Euclio's daughter. Euclio's complaint and Lyconides's desire for atonement lead to a conversation with humorous interest for the readers/ audiences. At the end of this dialogue comes the understanding that they are talking at cross purposes. Lyconides confesses that he knows nothing about the pot of gold stolen from the grove of Silvanus.

He on the other hand shocks Euclio by saying that Megadorus has broken the engagement. Euclio is furious to hear this. He is certain that stealing the pot of gold was Megadorus' actual intention. Now that the gold has been successfully appropriated, Megadorus cancels the ceremony. Lyconides tries to cool him down and admits the wrong that has been done by him to his daughter. Euclio is traumatised to hear that he is a grandfather on his daughter's wedding day as it is the tenth month since the festival of Ceres, when being drunk and unable to control his passions Lyconides ravaged the woman he loved, i.e., Euclio's daughter. At the end of the scene Lyconides wonders where his servant Strobilus is and leaves Euclio to himself so that he can find out the truth enquiring with Staphyla- the old nurse who has been maid to Euclio's daughter.

Act 5, scene 1

Strobilus triumphantly tells Lyconides what he has found and begs to be set free, as a reward. Lyconides asks him to hand over the gold so that it can be restored to Euclio. Strobilus rejects the proposition. After this point the play is lost, except a few fragments. Apparently Lyconides, convinces his slave to return it to Euclio, so that he may be given permission to marry Euclio's daughter. The end possibly shows that Euclio, with a change of heart, influenced by his Household God, gives the pot of gold to the young couple as a wedding present.

From this brief plot-summary, it can be fairly understood that the plot of *Pot of Gold* has a simple yet very well-knit structure. The Prologue, spoken by the household Deity of Euclio, brings together the themes, which are going to discussed later. The first act, through the character of the miser, Plautus attracts critical attention to his obsession with the wealth, and his alienation from social life. Because his hoard is secret, Euclio is caught in a dilemma: if he stays home to guard his pot of gold, he thinks that his refusal to go to the forum may arouse the curiousity and suspicion of his neighbours. His sense of insecurity is revealed through his abusive behaviour towards his loyal slavewoman Staphyla, and this action also brings out the gendered context of

the play: a slavewoman, in the strictly hierarchy-based society of ancient Rome, was doubly bound: because of her gender, and also by virtue of her bondage to her master.

Act 2 brings out the romantic theme, however verging on the farcical. Megadorus, a mature and quite elderly rich man gains Euclio's consent, after much persuasion, to have his daughter's hand in marriage. He also sends a troupe of cooks and musicians to prepare for the festivities, fearing that Euclio is too miserly to provide for the waiting ceremony. The scene involving the jesting and howling of the cook and his associates provides a "carnivalesque"(the term should not be used in a pre-Christian context, but one may take a comic license in appreciating a comedy) flavour, and a means of social reintegration—although on a farcical level. Euclio, however, returns home from the market, and finding these people, drives them out. The theme involving a constant conflict between the self-obsessed miser and the vibrant society is once again at play.

Suspicious of Megadorus and his slaves who frequent his house, Euclio decides to hide the pot of gold in the temple of Fides. While Euclio is busy in hiding the pot, we see the clever slave of Lyconides passing by the temple. This man, Strobilus, informs the audience that his master is in love with Phaedria. As David Konstan aptly points out, "Plautus does not explain Lyconides' sudden feeling for the girl he raped nine months before. Presumably, he is anxious lest, thus violated, she should become his uncle's wife, and Megadorus' interest in her may also have awakened a slumberine passion of his own (310)." However, Strobilus overhears Euclio's injunction to the god of the temple to protect his gold. He is not successful in his first attempt to appropriate the gold; Euclio, seeing him, drives him away, and decides to hide the pot in a grove. Strobilus does not give up; as if, to teach the miser a 'lesson', he finally steals it from the sacred grove—which is a symbolic admonition to the miser. His lack of trust in everybody around him (which is a sort of dishonour to social life), even his shifting faith in gods, is thus punished.

Chapter 5
A Comedy of Characters

It is a common consensus among the scholars that Plautus' plays in general, and the *Pot of Gold* in particular, betray(s) his commendable art of characterisation. Plautus of course maintains the tradition of stock characters as found in Greek New comedy, but projects it with a touch of 'individual talent'. Stock characters are indeed important, since they provide the audience with the popular level of comic exuberance, but Plautus' improvisation also attracts critical interest. The stern 'sensex' of Greek comedies has become a character with many shades: Euclio in Plautus' play is one who can be laughed at, but also pitied. Megadorus follow the type of 'lusty old man', but his generosity and sense of dignity cannot be missed. Lyconides can hardly be called the 'hero', considering his act of violating the modesty of a girl he loves, and remaining silent for a long time, but at the end he repents and comes with a proper proposal of marriage. Such improvisations deserve critical attention. Let us look at the characters in some details:

Euclio

Euclio, the miserly old man is a stock character since the time of Menander, but he is presented with a Plautine flavour of novelty. He has found a pot of gold which has been unveiled to him by the household God of his house so that his pious daughter can have a good marriage and a good dowry for that. He is extremely possessive about the pot and suspects everyone to be a thief. The portrayal of the psychology of a miser with all his doubts and insecurities is one of the finest presentations of human mind from the classical age. He is approached by his rich neighbour Megadorus for the hand of his daughter. He thinks this to be a ploy to usurp his gold and repeatedly proclaims his impecunious situation. He nevertheless agrees to the marriage as Megadorus promises to accept Phaedria without a penny. The preparations begin. The cooks sent to his house make fun of his peculiar miserly habits. He even beats Congrio, the cook, fearing theft of his treasure—which reminds one of Menander's Knemon, also

beating a cook, in *Dyscolos*. Finally Euclio goes out to the Shrine of Faith to hide his gold, wherefrom Strobilus steals it. Euclio is ruined and devastated. At this point he has a revelation about Lyconides violating his daughter and the child born of the act. The miser's breakdown is complete, but he shows a sign of changing his heart, finding that nothing good has come of his self-obsessed, miserly and insensible nature. The situation is saved as Megadorus cancels the engagement, Lyconides acquires and replaces his lost treasure from Strobilus, his own servant and finally Euclio agrees to get Phaedria married to Lyconides . This section is however lost and exists only in fragments.

Megadorus

Megadorus is a rich man who lives next door to Euclio. In the play his sister Eunomia urges him to marry as he has grown old and needs to have a child. Megadorus refuses to marry a middle aged woman as it is difficult to have a child from a mature woman and the baby may be born posthumous. He also disapproves of the rich lady's baggage, her pretentious self-importance. Megadorus specifically desires to marry his next door neighbour Euclio's daughter. However, his specific interest in Phaedria is unmistakable: he wishes to marry her to satisfy his desire, not out of 'love'. His age, in any case, has given him a sense of dignity: so he makes a formal proposal to the girl's father, and agrees to marry her without a dowry. So far he is a stock character, a typical 'lustful old man', but Plautus brings a touch of originality, showing the positive and generous side of his nature at the end. When he comes to know about his nephew's interest in the same girl, he calls off his own marriage. Megadorus bears all the expense of the marriage preparations and divides what he buys in the forum into the two households-bride's part of the celebration and bridegroom's part of celebration. He speaks of the efficacy of marrying a poor lady as it is hassle free and unifies the divided rich and poor population of the society. On the other hand, his words against rich women and their extravagance, appears to be misogynistic from a modern feminist point of view.

Lyconides

Lyconides (the name suggests, 'wolfling') has violated Phaedria's honour in the festival of Ceres. He blames his drunken condition for this offence, but is unable to mend the situation during the following ten months, till Phaedria is in labour pain. On the verge of the end of this pregnancy Megadorus plans to marry Phaedria on a day's notice. Now, with a renewed 'love' for Phaedria, Lyconides asks for help from his mother Eunomia. He explains the whole situation to Euclio and asks for his forgiveness and wishes to marry his daughter. Lyconides is a flawed character but at the end he shows the honesty to admit his deed, and behaves like a mature lover. The lost fragments at the end possibly contained a happy closure, showing Lyconides restoring the gold to Euclio and finally marrying Phaedria.

Strobilus

Lyconides' slave Strobilus can be categorised as a "clever slave", one of the significant stock characters in Greco-Roman comedy. While waiting for Lyconides, he gives a speech on what a good slave should be: clever, conscious of his master's intent, quick in action and so on. His soliloquy gives his self-impression, enumerating the ways in which he has been so resourceful to his master. Strobilus also plays a significant role in the discovery and theft of the pot of gold, giving a new turn to the development of the plot. He watches over Euclio, when he comes to hide the pot in a grove, and appropriates it once he is gone, leading to Euclio's complete breakdown and change of mind which comes afterwards. By the intervention of the slave, this incident becomes instrumental in Lyconides winning Euclio's favour, when he restores Euclio's gold, and gains his permission to marry Phaedria.

Women characters:

Plautus' treatment of women characters is rather conventional, as far as the Pot of Gold is concerned. In the patriarchal society of ancient Rome, women were subject to the rule of their fathers, guardians, or husbands. The condition of slavewomen was worse. However, only mature and matronly ladies, by virtue of their social and domestic position, had some motherly

authorities. This is exactly the picture we get through the portrayal of Eumonia, Staphyla and Phaedria.

Eunomia

Eunomia shifts her role from being a sister to Megadorus to the mother of Lyconides. In the beginning of the play he urges Megadorus to marry and towards the end she urges him to cancel the marriage and succeeds. At first, she proclaims her loyalty and adherence to her brother's cause. She advises him to marry a mature woman suitable to his age, but in the end of the conversations agrees with his brother's decision to marry a younger lady, Phaedria in specific. Upto this point, she appears to be a mere homespun woman, bound to agree with whatever a male authority proposes. However, she shows her matronly qualities when Lyconides tells her everything about Phaedria. Considering the young woman's situation and her own son's happiness, now she takes a motherly, strategic role to convince Megadorous to cancel his engagement with Phaedria. Her timely intervention earns a happy resolution for the crisis.

Staphyla

Staphyla is a slavewoman who manages Euclio's household . She looks after and protects and nourishes young Phaedria and keeps the secret of her sexual violation. She bears the torture of Euclio when out of insecurity he beats her. As a female slave, she is extremely loyal to the master's family. She cordially cooperates with the gang of cooks who came in to make preparations for the marriage. At the climax of the play Euclio goes to Staphyla to know the truth of Phaedria's pregnancy which has been unknown to him for all these ten months.

Phaedria

Phaedria is Euclio's daughter. She is mentioned at the very beginning of the play by their household God, Lar. Phaedria regularly worships the God with incense, garland and wine. So the God is extremely pleased with her. He causes the discovery of the pot of gold to her father for her to have a good marriage. God divulges that she has been violated at the festival of Ceres

by Lyconides, and to initiate the process of marriage between the two the God will make Megadorus, Lyconides's uncle come and propose to marry her on that very day.

Phaedria does not appear in the action of the play, but her offstage voice is once heard calling for the nurse during the pains of childbirth. Phaedria is a passive character. She does not have a say in her marriage. She also did not have the power to protect herself when Lyconides raped her. However, the readers and audience of Plautus like to believe that Phaedria is also in love with Lyconides, so ultimately she wins her love, by the grace of their household Deity.

Chapter 6
Insights into the Text: Thematic Overview

The Pot of Gold revolves around two themes—one of avarice or obsession with wealth, and the other concerning love, marriage and sexual morality. Along with this, come the concerns of 'gender', society' and 'religious faith'. In the ancient Roman society, 'marriage' and 'commerce' had long been associated, and the custom of dowry from the bride's family can be viewed as symbolic of the monetary concern for marriage. Plautus carefully merges these two themes within the comical structure of his play. The role of Lar Familiaris, functioning as a guiding spirit behind the action, also reflects the importance of religious belief in Roman life. Euclio, for all his faults, has some kind of respect for the God, and his daughter is earnestly devoted to the God, so the God has taken responsibility to save the girl from her disgrace, and allow her a happy marriage with a handsome dowry. Thus the prologue itself defines the thematic associations – the position of a young woman is determined by her prospects of marriage; and for that marriage, a large dowry is required, and that dowry is granted by a benevolent Deity, who has revealed the treasure to the girl's father for the purpose of her marriage.

On the other hand, we find Eunomia urging her brother Megadorus to get married, for the continuation of the patrilineal structure of the family. She has been married to another family, and has nothing to say about a man's choice — even if that man is her brother. However, she is concerned of the continuation of her father's line, which will be secured if her brother gets married. In the character of Eunomia as a matronly, mature lady, we have an example of patriarchal family structure getting internalised. Later, when she comes to know about her son's interest in the same girl chosen by her brother, she has to intervene, learning that Phaedria is carrying the child of her son. Such concerns are not explicitly said, but a sensible reader can feel that now Eunomnia has to think of Phaedria and her child as involved with the honour of her husband's family, and the reputation of her son, Lyconides.

Earlier, she did not object to her brother's choice of a young girl who could be his daughter. But now, considering the situation, she no longer wishes to let her brother marry a girl who is carrying the child of her son. Thus the question of sexual morality is portrayed through a typical viewpoint of patriarchy, which, for the modern readers, leaves ample scope of argument.

Personal motivations often clashing with each other adds to the dramatic dynamism of the play. The threefold concealment of the pot of gold, initially beneath the fireplace in Euclio's own house, then in the temple of Fides and finally in the grove of Silvanus, in fact undermines the miser's motivation to guard the treasure. Euclio cannot trust his family Deity, under whose protection the treasure has really been safe. Next he moves to the temple of Fides, the god who stands for good faith, which, in Roman society, was looked upon as a bond of social importance, the very spirit of all pledges and contracts in the community. Again, he is unable to keep faith on Fides, and goes beyond the boundary of the city – to the wilderness, and nor can the god of the forests (Silvanus) protect his gold, because he has estranged himself from the society. The role of the divine authority thus functions in correspondence to the basic theme of the play—the miser's realization of his fault and the futility of his self-absorption. When Lyconides faces him, Euclio is still obsessed with his loss, and cannot understand that the young man is actually talking of the wrong he has done to his daughter, and now he is willing to marry her. Finally, when he comes to know about Lyconides' motivation, and accepts his offer, he is assured of being a grandfather—which reflects his humbling and attempt to reintegrate himself with the society and a new generation.

It is further to be noted that the Plautine plays, especially the *Pot of Gold* has been a major influence on the development of what we call 'Comedy of Humours' in the 17th century. Ben Jonson's Every Man in his Humour famously appropriates the Plautine type of the 'braggart soldier', and his Volpone bears certain thematic resemblances with the *Pot of Gold*. Volpone is a combination of Euclio and Megadorous, his worship of the gold and his desire for a young girl reminds one of the Plautine

themes. However, Euclio retains the audiences' sympathy to a certain extent, while Volpone is shrewder and a cunning old villain, he resembles Megadorus to a degree, in his role as a lusty old man, but he lacks the generosity and good sense which Megadorus shows at the end. Molière's character of the 'Miser' is largely modelled on Euclio, though there is an interesting twist: Harpagon, the miser in Molière is in love with the beloved of his own son. Plautus' vibrant portrayal of comic characters, with their shortcomings and follies, and sometimes, also a touch of redeeming sympathy never failed to inspire his European successors on the English and French stage.

Reflection of society

Despite its essentially comic nature, the *Pot of Gold* offers a social commentary without being didactic. Though the setting is Athens, it reflects the social disparity between the rich and the poor. When Megadorous seeks to marry Euclio's daughter, the latter refuses him on the ground of the huge social and financial disparity between them. Euclio may be a miser, and a target of joke for his obsession with the gold, but in this case, he shows a clear-sighted and pragmatic understanding of his social position: if he gets his daughter married to Megadorous, his own class will disown him, nor will he be accepted by the upper class. On the other hand, the scenes involving cooks, servants and music-girls draw attention to a vivid reality of the 'lowly' but vibrant life of the commonfolk in a Roman city. However, Euclio's maniacal harsh treatment on them also betrays the way such 'lowly' people were treated, even by middle-class Plebeians.

Euclio's self-centred avarice and miserly nature cause his estrangement from society. In the very first scene of the first act, Euclio instructs Staphyla to bolt the doors, so that nobody may enter into his house, to deny "fire and water" to anybody. As David Konstan points out, in ancient Rome, denying fire and water was a symbolic act of isolating someone from the society. To this social issue of disintegration, is added the question of 'disgrace' which puts an unmarried but pregnant girl under a social stigma. Thematically, thus the plot of an

otherwise ‘comic’ play brings into consideration the position of women in Augustan Rome.

Women’s position in society

Women in the Roman society were subjugated to men, and the play bears ample proof of this reality. Let’s consider the following speech by Megadorous,

> MEGADORUS: No, I never want to hear a wife say ‘I brought you more in dowry than your whole property was worth, so I have a right to expect you to give me purple and gold, mules, servants, stablemen, footmen, page-boys, and carriages to ride in.’
>
> EUCLIO: He knows wives all right, doesn’t he? I’d like to see him made censor of women’s morals.

Euclio’s retort may lighten the meaning of what Megadorus says, but his complaints verbal abuse of women reflects a longstanding tradition of misogynistic attitude in Roman (and Greek) literature. The soliloquy begins, when Megadorus goes on commenting on the multiple advantages of marrying Euclio’s daughter, who deserves praise, but who is ‘indotata’, that is, “a woman without dowry,” because she belongs to a poor father. The speech thus cuts into the one of the major themes of this play—the social hierarchy between the rich and the poor—and this falls on the same kind of power-relation between men and women. Megadorus rationalizes his desire to marry a poor girl, on the ground that rich women will be always demanding and extravagant. Thus the gender-issue in the play also connects back to the rich/poor hierarchy. As Megadorus feels it, Euclio’s daughter as a docile bride will stand as a moral exemplar because of her poor financial status which stresses her dependence on her father or husband, and thus keeps her perpetually subjugated to male guardians.

The notion of patriarchy was so internalised in the Ancient Roman society that even mature, motherly women, who were at least capable of expressing their opinions, could not think outside the formal, traditional way of gender-bias. Eumonia is an elderly, matron-like lady, yet she has internalised patriarchy so well that she openly admits that women are merely “chatter-

boxes”, and their talks are without any value. Yet, out of her sisterly regard for Euclio, she urges Euclio to get married. She is a complex character – on the one hand, she knows her ‘shortcomings’ as a woman, and accepts them in a typical allegiance to patriarchy. She even agrees to Megadorous’ wish to get married to a young girl. However, when her son reveals his love for Euclio’s daughter, she understands the situation and takes the responsibility to persuade Megadorous to change his mind. Phaedria is not presented on stage—she remains the innocent girl, who is ravished by her own lover, and waits painfully for anything that may be imposed upon her, without having a voice at all. The position of an ‘undowered’ woman was really painful in the ancient Roman society. When Euclio ultimately agrees to Megadorous’ proposal, he never feels like asking the daughter about it—she is a ‘property’ to her father, just like the pot of gold. The parallel between the woman as a ‘treasure’ and the pot (which may be taken as a symbol of the womb) containing gold is reinforced, when Euclio loses the gold, panics for it, and come to know about the violation of his daughter’s virginity, from a repentant Lyconides. The condition of slave-women in Rome was even worse: Staphyla bears all kinds of torments at the hand of her master, yet has to remain faithful and concerned for the household, as well as for the fate of her young mistress, showing a helpless yet genuine female solidarity.

Both structurally and thematically, the theft of the miser’s gold, and the violation of the chastity of his daughter present a parallel situation. The theft exposes the miserly social outcaste’s lack of self-sufficiency. Now made wiser by his loss, towards the end, Euclio finally agrees to make a ‘deal’ with the thief—at least to recover the wealth partially. He no longer wishes to keep it hidden, but wishes it back, to use it as dowry for his daughter’s marriage, which points towards his conformity with the social norms of his time. On the other hand, Lyconides, who has ravished Phaedria, becomes conscious of his wrong-doing only when he fears a loss of his ‘woman’—finding that his own uncle is willing to marry the girl he has ravished. His change of mind and confessing gesture

as a repentant lover, who is willing to marry the girl he has raped, also acts as a redeeming factor towards a positive end and social reintegration.

Comic elements

In 'The Argument of Comedy', Northrop Frye describes Greek New Comedy as a 'comic Oedipus situation', where the father and son desire the same girl. The mother becomes an ally of the son, and finally the young couple's path is cleared. This is exactly the situation in Plautus' *Pot of Gold*— possibly adapted from Menander. The play is but partially similar to *Dyscolos*, whereas the main content is different—which might have been adapted from some lost play of Menander's. However, the situation really puts Megadorus the uncle (father-figure) as an opponent to the nephew, Lyconides (the son-figure) – who gets help from his mother, Eumonia. Besides this essentially comic 'Oedipus situation', the play also generates humour in a typically Plautine process, distinct from Menander. Euclio's miserly attitude turns him into an extreme character type, a laughable 'stock'. The common Roman audiences were fond of mimicry and caricature. Relying on the Roman audiences' appreciation of jesting, repartee and quipping, Plautus successfully creates intelligent and comic conversations in his play. The comic humour results from Plautus' keen observation of class-attitudes, reflected in the speeches and gestures of his characters. The vibrant jokes played in the conversation among the cooks and servants-- Anthrax, Congrio and Pythodicus , and their symbolic names—are sources of hearty laughter. 'Anthrax' stands for 'coal', and 'Congrio' for the 'eel'— suitable names for people who are associated with the kitchen. The ironic speech of Megadorus, commenting on the vanities and expensive nature of the rich women—provide much amusement. The irony becomes all the more sharp because Megadorus himself is a rich man and has irrational desires, but as a man he can take the upper hand and satirize women belonging to his own class.

The play can also be viewed in terms of a satire on the Roman upper-classes, though his characters share Greek names. The

lusty old man, Megadorous, becomes a target of satire—showing his foolish desire for a girl who could be his daughter as well. However, at the end he realises the absurdity of his desire and breaks off his engagement with Euclio's daughter. The character of Euclio the miser is a favourite laughing stalk. He is so obsessed with the treasure that he is always in fear, he beats up his maid-servant unnecessarily, assaults the cook, and the height of irony comes when he cannot understand what Lyconides has to say about his daughter, he is thinking of the loss of his pot of gold instead. The misguiding conversation, with obviously serious connotations underlying, apparently leads to enough of verbal humour.

The cook and his party, joking about Euclio's miserly character, provide another sort of racy humour. Megadorus has begun preparations for his wedding, and with an attitude of favouring his would-be 'father-in-law', sends cooks and flute-playing girls, who come and create havoc in Euclio's house. Euclio comes back and finds his house full of unknown, rowdy people. He panics that these people must have come to steal his gold, and beats them up. This is a situational irony, because Euclio is panicking over a matter which is already exposed in a different way, of which he knows nothing. Thus the play is rich in both verbal and situational humour, which often verges on the ironical, and dramatic actions like Euclio running wildly in search of the lost gold, or beating up the cooks, or the slave Strobilus entering triumphantly with the 'prize'-- also provide a sense of physical humour, with vigour and immediacy.

Significance of the Title

Aulularia, the "little pot" or more popularly known as 'the Pot of Gold' bears its titular significance in more than one level. It symbolises, at first, the materialistic concern of Euclio. However, the family Deity speaks of it as a treasure preserved for the purpose of the dowry of Phaedria, a pious and loyal devotee of the god. Thus, the worth of a woman is measured in terms of gold—a concern that brings out the commodification of women in ancient Roman culture, and in many other cultures—a tradition which survived afterwards as well. A

virgin woman is to be ‘guarded’ by her parents before her marriage, and the pot of gold is also to be preserved with care. However, the contrast between the woman and the gold is also evident in a metaphorical level: a woman, however subjugated to male guardians or husbands, is ‘productive’, since she continues the family-line through procreation. Gold is an abstract embodiment of wealth and power, which, unless used, remains unproductive. The miserly Euclio enviously guards the pot of gold against all living creatures around—which leads to his social estrangement and lack of faith in everybody. Such is his obsession with the pot that he suspects the cook, who wants a larger ‘pot’ for cooking, and decides to hide it elsewhere. Finally, when it is stolen from the grove of Sylvanus, Euclio behaves like a madman, and when Lyconides comes to confess to him that he has violated the modesty of his daughter, he considers it to be a confession of the theft. The double-meaning conversation, notwithstanding its obvious comic overtones, once again captures the notion of a symbolic analogy between a woman’s womb and the pot of gold. At the end of the play, which is lost but as far as the indications (given in the prologue) can tell us, the pot of gold is restored to Euclio and he, humbled by his miseries, uses it as dowry for his daughter’s wedding. Thus the pot of gold transforms into a means of enabling social integration and a remedy of the violation of a woman’s honour, offering a comic yet socially significant resolution to all the key issues in the play.

Chapter 7
Pot of Gold: Critical Reception

One of the most popular plays by Plautus, *Pot of Gold* has received much critical attention. Some scholars have highlighted the social issues embedded in the play, some have been especially concerned with the notion of gender and economy, some others have focused on its stylistic aspects. However, few scholars have missed the point that from comic elements to concerns related to marriage and economy, social customs to gender—everything depicted in the plays by Plautus, is grounded in a realistic consciousness. As Eric Segal has pointed out in *Roman Laughter:*

> The Romans had a violent aversion to spending anything... One of Plautus’ most brilliant characters, Euclio the miser, reflects this trait, caricatured to absurdity. He would not only refuse to expend the energy for laughter, but he is parsimonious even with his ordinary breath. (54-55)

Segal’s comment brings out the idea that the character-type of a miser was not merely entertained for the sake of comedy, such an individual like Euclio was actually representative of a social ‘type’. Thus here is a character who is obsessed with preserving gold so much so that he does not let it come into circulation. The miser neither tries to increase his wealth nor does he spend or circulate it. This extreme attitude in Euclio, as Segal explains, reflects a specific trait in the conservative and conventional life of the Romans—it is ‘stasis’, without any change.

The wealth, as long as guarded without making any use of it, remains a frozen and fixated entity. The household deity, Lar Familiaris, speaks the prologue and narrates the series of events that will take place, which shows his plan to put the wealth in action, through movements across the plot. Alison Sharrock notes a programmatic effect in the Prologue, which initiates “the proper movement of property between the generations – and it is that which was so sadly lacking in

Euclio's ancestry" (35). Thus the prologue explains clearly that Euclio has been entrusted to preserve this pot of gold so that it can be passed on to his daughter, Phaedria, who had served the household god with sincere devotion. So far this treasure had been stagnant , it had no participation in any kind of social transaction. Euclio, as a miser, is not only appointed a guardian of this wealth, but he is also an alienated figure who excludes himself from the normal vivacity of life, from socialisation or building up relations with the others belonging to the community. Nor does he make use of his wealth for social transaction, and thus he is placed outside the socio-economic discourse. In this context, Erich Segal brings in the typical figure of the 'agelast' or 'spoilsport' who is antagonistic to the pleasure principle of a comedy. As he puts it,

> This group of "spoilsports," incapable of play, constitute the antagonists to the comic spirit. In one way or another, but usually in a literal sense, they remain "on the job."… These non-players are also nonlaughers, and in the discussion to follow they will be referred to as "agelasts",... (70)

Segal also compares Euclio to the "cakes and ale"-denying Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.* He furthers notes that the Roman society was preoccupied with people for whom money was the ultimate concern. Segal explains this as follows:

> As we have already demonstrated, the average Roman was preoccupied with financial matters, and to enjoy himself he would have had to banish from his mind not some vague "loathed Melancholy" but a very specific concern about money. This fact explains why the Plautine agelast is almost always connected with *alienum aes*, a bill to be paid… But the most common trait of the Plautine agelast is greed, an obsession with lucrum, making him a caricature of the typical materialistic Roman. Euclio, the miser in the Aulularia, is perhaps the most famous example. (75-76)

Segal further points out how Plautus's miser displays a series of "anti-holiday" attitudes. For him, there is no moment of

enjoyment his life, which gets reflected in his constant fear, lack of self- confidence and abusive attitude to others. However, there is a possibility of redemption for the miser Euclio, unlike other 'spoilsports', is finally integrated into the society, and this is possible only when he gets rid of the pot of gold.

David Konstan views the miser-figure as an "internal exile", who does not wish to engage in communication with anyone in society. He goes to an extreme level, when out of fear that the neighbours may discover his wealth, he instructs Staphyla to refuse anything that the neighbours may ask for. This may be interpreted as a self-imposed isolation from society. Konstan goes on to explain the role of the citizen in Roman society, and brings into focus the e "twin principle" on which citizenship was constituted—''*ius connubii et commercii*, the right of marriage and of commerce". In light of this principle, Euclio himself remains outside the society and he also keeps Phaedria outside the contract of marriage, he seems to have no thought of his daughter's marriage. According to Konstan, they are placed outside civilised bounds in a state of violence. The sphere of hidden wealth has been violated by the theft, and the sphere of a girl's guarded 'chastity' has been violated by the molestation of Euclio's daughter.

Other critics have also found connections between the pot of gold and Phaedria's pregnancy. C W Marshall writes:

> In *Aulularia*, Euclio's pot of gold possesses a symbolic value that exists because he treasures it disproportionately over his pregnant daughter, Phaedria. In what survives of the play, she does not appear on stage, but is heard giving birth at 691–2. ...Euclio is shrouding the pot with his cloak, and consequently embodies a pregnant image of his unseen daughter. (71)

In this context, the play is open to further interpretations in terms of socio-economic and gendered questions. Insights into the play can draw the readers' attention to the discomfort of men in power with any kind of financial fortification of the women in society. If there was a shift to a system of marriage

that kept the woman relatively free from the control of the husband, one can sense disquiet as expressed by Megadorus especially with respect to "dowried" women. His comments on dowry and marriage bring out the anxieties of a patriarchal man who is resentful of a strong-natured spouse. In his essay 'Historical Topicality in Plautus', Paul B Harvey Jr. explains the legal nature of 'Lex Oppia' in detail, while historicizing the play within a timeline of the development of the Roman society. In this context, he singles out the *Pot of Gold:*

> Many have argued that the *Aulularia* should be dated to 195 or shortly thereafter, because this play contains allusions to the debate on lex Oppia held that year. That suputuary law passed in 215 and repealed in 195, forbade Roman women from conspicuous display in the form of multicoloured garments (construed in most ancient sources as purple), extravagant gold jewellery and transport. (300)

E. F. Watling, too, has highlighted this point, as a means of dating the play. Trying to historicize the playtext in terms of its socio-legal context, however, the debate around the financial condition of women must be addressed. The purpose of the law of 'lex Oppia' was to control the exhibition of monetary affluence by women. This display of wealth could have a serious connotation, it became a status symbol. The repealment of this law, must have worried the husbands whose grip over richly dowried wives could no longer be supreme. What Megadorus resentfully says about the extravagant ways of rich women is evidence of these concerns. The world depicted by Plautus in *Pot of Gold* presents not only a static society which comprised of the rich and the poor only. It represents a broader and more dynamic social canvas. Megadorus, while condemning the extravagant ways of rich women, mentions a number of small traders who were thriving against the market economy of the Roman cityscape –

> Nowadays, wherever you look, you see more vehicles outside the town houses than you ever see when you're on holiday in the country. And that's nothing to what

> you have to put up with27 when the creditors are at the door. Here come the cloth-fuller, the embroiderer, the goldsmith, the wool-weaver; the designers of fringes, makers of underwear, inventors of veils, dyers in purple and saffron, sleeve-stitchers, linen-weavers, per-rumiers; shoe-makers and slipper-makers, sandal-fitters and leather-stainers, all waiting to be paid; repairers, corset-makers, girdle-experts. And when these have been got rid of - income another three hundred with their bills; the hall full of needlewomen, cabinet-makers, bag-makers…

This represents a dynamic world involving commodities, traders and consumers—especially women-consumers, who could afford to purchase and pay for fashionable items—much to the chagrin of their husbands. Besides, the play devotes longer portions to cooks, music-girls, sellers of different kinds of provisions at the market, slaves—all these people give the social landscape a more vibrant colouring. *Pot of Gold* perhaps contains the most lengthy scene involving the cooks and music-players and servants, and above all comes the 'clever slave', who not only gets hold of the treasure and gives the play a twist, but considers the gold as a means of buying his freedom. Thus, money becomes not only an indicator of the old miser's obsession, it also marks the materialistic potential of 'gold' which could have been translated into a slave's desire for freedom, in a world dominated by money and power. However, Lyconides persuades or forces him to restore it to Euclio, who is supposed to bless Lyconides and agree to get his daughter married, with the pot of gold as 'dowry'. The slave, however intelligent he may be, remains in bondage, whereas his master Lyconides makes use of the gold to please his prospective father-in-law, assumes the role of responsibility. As it is aptly interpreted by Sarrock, "Lyconides is no longer the snivelling youth, but the authoritative master. When his slave tells him about the theft of the pot of gold, he... demands the pot's return in a way that would make Euclio proud. The parallelism between Lyconides and Euclio is both comic and socially meaningful." (201)

The ending of the play is lost, but scholars have made attempts to reconstruct it, keeping in mind the desired resolution for the double plot-line—the young couple's love triumphs at the end, from 'disgrace' it becomes a proper marital union acceptable to society. The old miser, tired of his own obsession with gold and self-centred alienation from the larger world, gives away his treasure to his daughter and son-in-law, and thus the process of social and economic reintegration is complete. E.F. Watling, in the introductory note to his translation of *Aulularia,* makes it clear:

> The end of *Aularia*a is, in fact, only known to us in outline from the 'arguments' (those metrical summaries of the plot, usually in two alternative versions, added to the plays by later Roman editors). These inform us that Euclio recovered his gold and made a present of it to his daughter and son-in-law; and note may also be taken of the one significant Une among a few unplaceable fragments surviving from the missing last act: nec noctu nec diu quietus unquam eram; nunc dormiam ('I have never had a moment's peace by day or night; now I am going to sleep'). From these clues I have ventured to construct a final scene, to indicate the probable denouement and to restore the completeness of this peculiarly enjoyable and genial comedy. Here Plautus, as nowhere else in his work, concentrates his attention on a single and simple topic, building the play around its central personage, with the minimum of digression or adventitious by-play; indeed there is not a single incident that does not connect neatly and necessarily with the progress of the plot.

Thus the possible ending of the play affirms the theme of social integration, offers an apparent comic resolution of all the problems, but the worldly and realistic artistry of Plautus never fails to hint at questions of social hierarchy, injustice, gender and oppression, position of slaves and several other issues, left unresolved to disturb a modern-day audience. This is what lies at the basis of the critical worth of the play, which makes it an ageless classic.

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