

“I WENT IN A LOVER AND CAME OUT A BROTHER?” NEAR-MISS INCEST IN PLAUTUS’ COMEDIES

I. Near-Miss Incest and Woman Sharing in New Comedy

	NEAR-MISS INCEST		QUASI-INCESTUOUS WOMAN SHARING
	Father/Daughter	Brother/Sister	
Menander	<i>Georgos</i>	<i>Perikeiromene</i>	<i>Samia</i> ¹
Plautus	<i>Rudens</i> <i>Poenulus</i>	<i>Epidicus</i> <i>Curculio</i> <i>Casina</i>	<i>Casina</i> <i>Asinaria</i> <i>Mercator</i> <i>(Bacchides)</i> ²

II. Common Elements of Recognition Plots

- child separated from parents through dramatic calamity or deliberate exposure
- child suffers hardships derived from uncertain social status
- *anagnorisis*: recognition via tokens (*symboli*) or verbal remembrance (*signa*)
- salvation from sex labor, slavery, incest
- emotional reunion with parents
- reconciliation: reintegration of child into natal society (often a marriage occurs)

III. Near-Miss Incest

A. *Rudens* (892-94)

Daemones: Bene factum et volup est, me hodie his mulierculis tetulisse auxilium. iam clientas repperi, atque ambas forma scitula atque aetatula.

It was well done and a pleasure that today I gave help to these little ladies. I’ve obtained them as my dependents and both are shapely and juicy.

B. *Poenulus*

Prologus character: ilico omnis meretrices, ubi quisque habitant, invenit; dat aurum, ducit noctem, rogat postibi und’ sit, quoiatis, captane an surrupta sit, quo genere gnata, qui parentes fuerint. (106-110)

Pro: At once he locates all the *meretrices*, where they live; he gives each one money, spends the night, asks where she’s from, what her birthplace is, was she captured or abducted, who is her natal family, who were her parents.

Hanno: Gaudio ero vobis. **Adelphasium:** At edepol nos voluptati tibi.
Han: Libertatique. **Ad:** Istoc pretio tuas nos facile feceris. (1217-18)

Han: I’ll give you some “joy”. **Ad.** And we’ve got pleasures for you.
Han: And freedom. **Ad.** At that price we’ll definitely be all yours.

Antamoenides: quid hoc est conduplicationis? quae haec est congeminatio? (1297)

Ant: What is this clinging embrace? What is this lecherous hugging?

¹ Demeas fears that his adoptive son Moschion has been sleeping with his concubine Chrysis.

² To avoid making both son and father their lovers, the Bacchis twins swap old men so that Bacchis I has her young man Pistoclerus and the old man Nicobulus (father of Mnesilochus), but Bacchis II has Pistoclerus’ father Philoxenes and her young man Mnesilochus.

C. *Epidicus* (648-54)

Stratippocles: Nunc enim tu mea es.

Telestis: Soror quidem edepol, ut tu aequae scias.
salve, frater.

Stra: Sanan haec est?

Epidicus: Sana, si appellat suam.

Stra: Quid? ego modo <amator sum> huic frater
factus, dum intro eo atque exeo?

Epi: Quod boni est id tacitus taceas tute tecum et
gaudeas.

Stra: Perdidisti et repperisti me, soror.

Epi: Stultu's, tace. tibi quidem quod ames domi
praestost, fidicina, opera mea; et sororem in
libertatem idem opera concilio mea.

Stra: And now you're mine.

Tel: Of course, as your sister, for your information.
Hello, brother.

Stra: Is she nuts?

Epi: Of course not, if she calls you hers.

Stra: What the...? I went in a lover and came out a
brother?

Epi: Oh hush up and stay quiet. Be satisfied with
what you have and be happy.

Stra: You lost and found me again at the same
time, sister.

Epi: Hush up, don't be stupid. You already have
something to love at home, that music girl, thanks
to me. And also thanks to me, your sister is free
and safe.

IV. Quasi-Incestuous Woman Sharing

A. *Casina*

Prologus: era fecit, educavit magna industria
quasi si esset nata (45-46)

Lysidamus: At quamquam unicus,
nihilo magis ille unicus mihi filius quam ego illi
pater:
illum mi aequiust quam me illi quae volo concedere
(263-65)

Pro: His [the slave's] mistress did it, she raised her
with great effort, as though she were a daughter.

Lys: I may have only one son, but he's got only
one father. It's more fitting that he yield to me than
I yield to him.

B. *Asinaria*

Demaenetus: Omnes parentes, Libane, liberis suis,
qui mi auscultabunt, facient obsequellam†
quippe qui magis amico utantur gnato et benevolo.
atque ego me id facere studeo, volo amari a meis
(64-67)

Dem: Numquidnam tibi molestumst, gnate mi, si
haec nunc mecum accubat?

Argyrippus: Pietas, pater, oculis dolorem prohibet.
quamquam ego istanc amo,
possum equidem inducere animum, ne aegre patiar
quia tecum accubat.

Dem: Decet verecundum esse adolescentem,
Argyrippe. **Arg:** Edepol, pater,
merito tuo facere possum. (830-34)

Dem: All parents, who pay attention to me, will
show indulgence to their children, if they want to
have a friendly and loving child. I myself make an
effort to do this, I want to be loved by my kids.

Dem: Surely it doesn't bother you, son, if she lies
with me?

Arg: *Pietas*, father, keeps the tears from spilling
out. Even though I love her, I can keep my temper
in check, and I can bear it without being sick,
seeing her lie with you.

Dem: It's proper for a young man to have a sense
of shame and duty.

Arg: By god, father, I can do it because you
deserve it.

Artemona: fundum alienum arat, incultum familiarem deserit. is etiam corruptus porro suum corrumpit filium (873-5)

Art: He's plowing someone else's field and leaves his own uncultivated. And this corrupt man then corrupts his own son.

Art: istoscine patrem aequom est mores liberis largirier? nilne te pudet? (932-33)

Art: Are those the kinds of habits a father should pass down to his kids? Do you have no shame?

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