

The Pot of Gold



• **Plautus**, (born *c.* 254 BCE, Sarsina, Umbria? [Italy]—died 184 BCE), great Roman comic dramatist, whose works, loosely adapted from Greek plays, established a truly Roman drama in the [Latin language](#).

Life

Little is known for certain about the life and personality of Plautus, who ranks with [Terence](#) as one of the two great Roman comic dramatists. His work, moreover, presents scholars with a variety of textual problems, since the manuscripts by which his plays survive are corrupt and sometimes incomplete. Nevertheless, his literary and dramatic skills make his plays enjoyable in their own right, while the achievement of his comic genius has had lasting significance in the history of [Western literature](#) and [drama](#). According to the grammarian [Festus](#) (2nd or 3rd century CE), Plautus was born in northeastern central [Italy](#). His customarily assigned birth and death dates are largely based on statements made by later Latin writers, notably [Cicero](#) in the 1st century BCE. Even the three names usually given to him—Titus Maccius Plautus—are of questionable historical authenticity. Internal evidence in some of the plays does, it is true, suggest that these were the names of their author, but it is possible that they are stage names, even

theatrical jokes or allusions. (“Maccus,” for example, was the traditional name of the clown in the fabula Atellana (“Atellan plays”), a long-established popular burlesque that was native to the Neapolitan region of southern Italy; “Plautus,” according to Festus, derives from *planis pedibus, planipes* [flat-footed] being a pantomime dancer.) There are further difficulties: the poet Lucius Accius (170–c. 86 BCE), who made a study of his fellow Umbrian, seems to have distinguished between one Plautus and one Titus Maccius. Tradition has it that Plautus was associated with the theatre from a young age. An early story says that he lost the profits made from his early success as a playwright in an unsuccessful business venture, and that for a while afterward he was obliged to earn a living by working in a grain mill.

Plautus Biography

Titus Maccius Plautus is the biggest Roman comedy writer. He lived between 254 and 184 BC. He worked as a stage worker, actor in Rome and then he got himself into some debts and became a slave.

Plautus style, filled with folk talk and jokes, became a role model to many other writers. Because of many works were written in his tone he is considered to have written over 130 comedies while some believe that he only wrote 21 works that are completely his. The most popular ones are “Aulularia” or “The Pot of Gold” and “Maneachmi”.

In his works, he showed everyday city life scenes but he introduced rough comedy, music parts and elements of burlesque into the Greek comedy.

The Plautus comedy is recognizable by the clever servant who has the most important role and twists the plot. Plautus is considered to be one of the most skilled descriptors of human characteristics that are worthy of being laughed at

Approach To Drama

The Roman predecessors of Plautus in both tragedy and comedy borrowed most of their plots and all of their dramatic techniques from Greece. Even when handling

themes taken from Roman life or legend, they presented these in Greek forms, setting, and dress. Plautus, like them, took the bulk of his plots, if not all of them, from plays written by Greek authors of the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE (who represented the New Comedy, as it was called), notably Menander and Philemon. Plautus did not, however, borrow slavishly; although the life represented in his plays is superficially Greek, the flavour is Roman, and Plautus incorporated into his adaptations Roman concepts, terms, and usages. He referred to towns in Italy; to the gates, streets, and markets of Rome; to Roman laws and the business of the Roman law courts; to Roman magistrates and their duties; and to such Roman institutions as the Senate.

Not all references, however, were Romanized: Plautus apparently set little store by consistency, despite the fact that some of the Greek allusions that were left may have been unintelligible to his audiences. Terence, the more studied and polished playwright, mentions Plautus's carelessness as a translator and upbraids him for omitting an entire scene from one of his adaptations from the Greek (though there is no criticism of him for borrowing material, such plagiarism being then regarded as wholly commendable). Plautus allowed himself many other liberties in adapting his material, even combining scenes from two Greek originals into one Latin play (a procedure known as *contaminatio*).

Even more important was Plautus's approach to the language in which he wrote. His action was lively and slapstick, and he was able to marry the action to the word. In his hands, Latin became racy and colloquial, verse varied and choral.

Whether these new characteristics derived from now lost Greek originals—more vigorous than those of Menander—or whether they stemmed from the established forms and tastes of burlesque traditions native to Italy cannot be determined with any certainty. The latter is more likely. The result, at any rate, is that Plautus's plays read like originals rather than adaptations, such is his witty command of the Latin tongue—a gift admired by Cicero himself. It has often been said that Plautus's Latin is crude and “vulgar,” but it is in fact a literary idiom based upon the language of the Romans in his day.

The plots of Plautus's plays are sometimes well organized and interestingly developed, but more often they simply provide a frame for scenes of pure farce, relying heavily on intrigue, mistaken identity, and similar devices. Plautus is a truly popular dramatist, whose comic effect springs from exaggeration, burlesque and often coarse humour, rapid action, and a deliberately upside-down portrayal of life, in which slaves give orders to their masters, parents are hoodwinked to the advantage of sons who need money for girls, and the procurer or braggart soldier is outwitted and fails to secure the seduction or possession of the desired girls. Plautus, however, did also recognize the virtue of honesty (as in *Bacchides*), of loyalty (as in *Captivi*), and of nobility of character (as in the heroine of *Amphitruo*).

Plautus's plays, almost the earliest literary works in Latin that have survived, are written in verse, as were the Greek originals. The metres he used included the iambic six foot line (*senarius*) and the trochaic seven foot line (*septenarius*), which Menander had also employed. But Plautus varied these with longer iambic and trochaic lines and more elaborate rhythms. The metres are skillfully chosen and handled to emphasize the mood of the speaker or the action. Again, it is possible that now lost Greek plays inspired this metrical variety and inventiveness, but it is much more likely that Plautus was responding to features already existing in popular Italian dramatic traditions. The *Senarii* (conversational lines) were spoken, but the rest was sung or chanted to the accompaniment of double and fingered reed pipes, or auloi. It could indeed be said that, in their metrical and musical liveliness,

performances of Plautus's plays somewhat resembled [musicals](#) of the mid-20th century.

Although Plautus's original texts did not survive, some version of 21 of them did. Even by the time that Roman scholars such as [Varro](#), a contemporary of Cicero, became interested in the playwright, only acting editions of his plays remained. These had been adapted, modified, cut, expanded, and generally brought up-to-date for production purposes. Critics and scholars have ever since attempted to establish a "Plautine" text, but 20th- and 21st-century editors have admitted the impossibility of successfully accomplishing such a task. The plays had an active stage life at least until the time of Cicero and were occasionally performed afterward. Whereas Cicero had praised their language, the poet [Horace](#) was a more severe critic and considered the plays to lack polish. There was renewed scholarly and literary interest in Plautus during the 2nd century CE, but it is unlikely that this was accompanied by a stage revival, though a performance of *Casina* is reported to have been given in the early 4th century. St. Jerome, toward the end of that century, says that after a night of excessive penance he would read Plautus as a relaxation; in the mid-5th century, Sidonius Apollinaris, a Gallic bishop who was also a poet, found time to read the plays and praise the playwright amid the alarms of the barbarian invasions. During the Middle Ages, Plautus was little read if at all—in contrast to the popular Terence. By the mid-14th century, however, the humanist scholar and poet [Petrarch](#) knew eight of the comedies. As the remainder came to light, Plautus began to influence European domestic comedy after the Renaissance poet [Ariosto](#) made the first imitations of Plautine comedy in the Italian [vernacular](#). His influence was perhaps to be seen at its most sophisticated in the comedies of [Molière](#) (whose play *L'Avare*, for instance, was based on *Aulularia*), and it can be traced up to the 20th century in such adaptations as [Jean Giraudoux's](#) *Amphitryon 38* (1929), [Cole Porter's](#) musical *Out of This World* (1950), and the musical and [motion picture](#) *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1963). Plautus's [stock character](#) types have similarly had a long line of successors: the braggart soldier [Miles Gloriosus](#), for example, became the [Capitano](#) of the Italian [commedia dell'arte](#) and is recognizable in [Nicholas Udall's](#) *Ralph Roister Doister* (16th century), in [Shakespeare's](#) *Pistol* and even in his [Falstaff](#), in [Edmond Rostand's](#) *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), and in [Bernard Shaw's](#) *Sergius in Arms and the Man* (1894). A trace of the character perhaps remains even in [Bertolt Brecht's](#) *Eilif in Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941). Thus, Plautus, in adapting Greek New Comedy to Roman conditions and taste, also significantly affected the course of the European theatre.

[The Pot of Gold](#)

AUTHOR: Titus Maccius Plautus

Introduction

Like all of Plautus' plays,

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too is set in Athens. Yet, the themes and issue she highlights are Roman. His comedies are a reflection of the society of his time. The characters he describes help the modern researcher to build an idea of the manner in which society functioned in Plautus' time.

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gives us an insight into Roman life at that time—especially the position of the women and slaves. Women did not enjoy much freedom in Roman times. Their position can be gauged from Cicero's statement, "Our ancestors, in their wisdom, considered that all women, because of their innate weakness, should be under the control of guardians" (www.theatrehistory.com). So, after the father, it was the husband's duty to be the woman's guardian. In the absence of either, the state recommended a male relative who would be appointed as guardian. Girls were given the same education as boys, but only girls from rich families continued their education beyond primary education. Marriages were arranged, and girls were given dowries. According to Roman custom, the marriages of girls were arranged at a young age, and the wedding took place when she became an adult. Interestingly, marriage gave the Roman woman immense freedom. A Roman wife would be her husband's companion at all social ceremonies. She would be seated next to him at banquets and shared control over children, slaves and the household. Often it was she who supervised the slaves. Slave labour was common in Roman society. Slaves were either captured from the losing side of a war or bought from provinces like Turkey. Much of the Roman economy depended on the exploitation of slaves. The public works were managed by the slaves. Educated slaves helped in the administration and private industries. Slaves helped in the household chores. Slaves could also be gladiators, and most actors of the Roman stage were slaves. They were considered a sign of prosperity for the owner, and even people with modest means owned slaves. Some households even entrusted the running of the entire house on a free slave, or *procurator*.

. Slaves could buy their freedom. Some slaves took up small-time jobs like selling wares or offering services for a fee. This would allow them to have money of their own, with which they could eventually buy their freedom.

"The Pot of Gold" is a play where the main motives are greed, cheapness and gold. The theme is Euclio's cheapness and greed for gold. The play is easy to read and the author makes fun of people's characteristics. There are four acts.

Euclio is a poor man who finds the pot of gold and gets materialistic richness with it but becomes poor in every other aspects of his life. He only thought about his gold. Phaedria is his daughter and she loves Lyconides. Megadorus is his uncle and he wants to marry Phaedria because he wants to settle down but in the end he gives up on that idea. Lyconides out of love for Phaedria gives up his inheritance just to be with Phaedria who is pregnant with his child. In the introduction Euclio found the gold and hid it, in the twist Megadorus wants to marry Phaedria, then the pot of gold disappears and in the end Euclio gets his pot of gold and Lyconides gets Phaedria.

The play begins with a monologue by Euclio's household deity. He tells us that Euclio's grandfather once entrusted him with the guardianship of a pot of gold. The god has protected the secret of the pot of gold until now. He chooses to reveal the location of the treasure to Euclio because of the latter's daughter, Phaedria.

The household deity tells us that Phaedria has pleased him by her devotion to him. He also reveals that Phaedria has been ravished by a gentleman of high rank. The only reason the deity has given up the location of the gold is to ensure Phaedria's marriage to Lyconides, the man who ravished her.

Meanwhile, Euclio is obsessed by his newfound pot of gold. In his paranoia, he fears that even his servant, Staphyla, will learn of its whereabouts. Meanwhile, Staphyla knows that Phaedria is pregnant, and she despairs over her mistress's fate.

We next meet Megadorus and his sister, Eunomia. The siblings talk about marriage; Eunomia wants Megadorus to marry. However, Megadorus declares that he has no use for ladies of rank with high dowries. Instead, he wants Phaedria, Euclio's daughter. Ironically, the wealthy Megadorus is also Lyconides's uncle.

Having decided on his course of action, Megadorus goes to meet Euclio to ask for Phaedria's hand in marriage. For his part, Euclio thinks that Megadorus has discovered the secret of his treasure, and he panics. Megadorus, of course, has no inkling of the treasure. He lays out his suit to Euclio, who declares that he doesn't care if Megadorus makes a match of it with Phaedria. The only thing he won't provide is a dowry.

The two agree on the terms, and Euclio tells Staphyla that Phaedria is to marry Megadorus that day. The servant is distressed to hear this, for she knows that her mistress is already carrying Lyconides' child. Meanwhile, Megadorus hires a caterer and entertainers for the wedding.

As for Euclio, he is such a miser that he only purchases some frankincense and a wreath of flowers for his daughter's wedding. As the cooks and entertainers begin arriving, however, Euclio becomes progressively more anxious. He thinks that Megadorus has set up the cooks and servants to steal his gold. So, Euclio decides to carry his pot of gold around on his person.

Meanwhile, Megadorus is quite pleased with his match. He asks Euclio to have a drink to celebrate, but the latter refuses. Instead, Euclio makes his way to the temple of Faith and hides his pot of gold there. What he doesn't know, however, is that Strobilus (the servant of Lyconides) is spying on him for Lyconides's sake.

When Euclio leaves, Strobilus tries to look for the gold. He doesn't find it and is disappointed. Meanwhile, Euclio doubles back to check on his gold and catches Strobilus looking around the temple. He attacks Strobilus and searches him. However, he finds nothing on Strobilus and has to let the servant go. Next, Euclio hides his gold at the grove of Silvanus. This time, Strobilus manages to steal the gold from the grove.

Meanwhile, Lyconides confesses all to his mother, Eunomia. He tells her that he wishes to marry Phaedria, since it was he who violated the young woman. Eunomia agrees to help her son. For his part, Lyconides tries to reason with Euclio, who is aghast that Phaedria won't be marrying the wealthy Megadorus, after all. As for Megadorus, he renounces his claim on Phaedria.

Euclio's frustration is further compounded when he discovers that his pot of gold is gone. He blames Lyconides, who vehemently denies any knowledge of the gold. Meanwhile, Strobilus tells Lyconides what he has found. For his part, Lyconides orders Strobilus to hand the gold over. The two have an argument, but Lyconides prevails. He returns the gold to Euclio, who is so happy to get his treasure back that he agrees to the marriage between Lyconides and Phaedria. Ironically, Euclio later bequeaths the pot of the gold to the couple as a wedding gift.

SUMMERY :

gold from everyone. In the meantime Lyconides and Phaedria fell in love. Megadorus wants to settle down and he goes to Euclio and asks for his daughter's hand. Euclio said yes just because Megadorus didn't ask for dowry.

Euclio went to bury the pot into the woods but Lyconides servant Strobilus saw him and stole the pot. Lyconides asked Megadorus to let him have Phaedria. After that the Household Ghost of Euclio's house tells the story of an old cheap man who also found gold and Phaedria prayed to him every day and in the end he gave the pot of gold to Euclio so he could have dowry for Phaedria.

Euclio yelled at his servant because he thought she was spying on him. Megadorus and Euclio met on the street and Megadorus was rushing the wedding so Euclio got scared about his gold. He said yes to the wedding just because Megadorus didn't ask for dowry. Everyone arrived to Euclio's house to prepare the wedding.

When Euclio heard all of that rumor coming out his house he was convinced that somebody was about to steal his gold. Euclio hit one of the men in his house because he thought he was trying to rob him. He was convinced that Megadorus prepared all of this just so he could get his hands on the pot of gold. Megadorus lead a monologue from which we find out he is a really honest man.

Megador thinks out loud and Euclio eardrops on him. Euclio is still scared for his gold so he goes to hide it in the temple. Strobilus knows that Lyconides loves Phaedria and that he wants to marry her. Strobilus follows Euclio while Lyconides begs his mother to talk his uncle Megadorus out of the wedding.

The pregnant Phaedria goes into labor right when Euclio realized his pot it missing and he goes crazy.

In the end Storbilus appears and tells Lyconides that he found the pot of gold. Lyconides demands that the gold returns to Euclio and the story end there because the rest of it was lost. It is assumed that Lyconides returns the pot of gold and in return gets Phaedria.

SCENE:

Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.) composed over 100 comedies in Latin, adapting them from Greek originals. The play on which he based his *Aulularia* (“The Pot of Gold”) has not survived. Molière’s 17th-century *L’Avare* (“The Miser”) is the most famous of the later comedies inspired by the *Aulularia*. Like all classical drama, the *Aulularia* is written in verse, and certain sections are meant to be sung by the actors. We have set five of these lyrical passages to music. In ancient times accompaniment would have been provided by an *aulos*, a double-reed instrument similar to an oboe.

Although the characters in the *Aulularia* speak Latin, nearly everything else about them is Greek: they have Greek names, Greek clothing, and Greek customs. The action takes place on a residential street in Athens.

All of Plautus’ actors were men or boys, and they wore masks. The *Aulularia* would have been performed without intermission, as we too perform it.

Prologue: The Lar (guardian god of the household) tells the audience about Euclio, a poor, stingy man who lives alone except for an old housekeeper named Staphyla and Euclio’s daughter Phaedria, nicknamed Aula (“Pot”). Euclio has no idea that Phaedria is pregnant and about to give birth. He has just discovered a pot filled with gold and is frantic that someone may steal it from him. The Lar assures us that the pot of gold will eventually enable Phaedria to marry Lyconides, the young man who loves her and has fathered her baby.

Scenes 1-2: Euclio drives Staphyla out of the house, suspecting that she is after his pot of gold—when, in fact, no one except Euclio even knows that it exists. He then leaves for the marketplace, where there is to be a free handout.

Scenes 3-5: Eunomia has come to visit her bachelor brother Megadorus, Euclio’s rich neighbor. She advises him to get a wife (Song #1). Reluctant at first, he soon relents and decides

to ask Euclio for his daughter's hand in marriage, not knowing that she is pregnant. As Eunomia departs, Euclio shows up and is persuaded to accept Megadorus' proposal. Megadorus volunteers to pay for two wedding feasts, one in his house and one in Euclio's; he takes his slave Strobilus with him to the marketplace to help him hire cooks and buy food. Euclio, after giving directions to Staphyla, leaves to go shopping himself.

Scenes 6-15: Strobilus leads back from the market four silly cooks. After lamenting their bad reputation as crooks (Song #2), the cooks enter Euclio's and Megadorus' houses. Euclio, returning to find his home filled with commotion, chases everyone out, sure that his gold has been stolen. Finding it still safe, he lets the cooks continue with their work while he carries the pot with him under his cloak.

Scenes 16-18: Megadorus comes on stage, reflecting on the wisdom of marrying a poor girl with no dowry (Song #3). Euclio, overhearing the song, is pleased with its sentiments but still suspect Megadorus of wanting to marry his daughter only to get at his gold. Megadorus leaves to prepare for the wedding as Euclio goes into the shrine of Fides ("Trust" or "Faith") to hide his pot there. Lyconides' slave Pythodocus now appears, having been sent by his master to spy out the situation. He boasts about his perfect behavior (Song #4).

Scenes 19-23: Euclio, talking to himself about his gold as he leaves the shrine, is overheard by Pythodocus. As soon as Euclio enters his house, the slave rushes into the shrine to steal the pot. At that moment the sound of a bleating sheep sends Euclio running back into the shrine to check on the gold. Finding Pythodocus there, he drives him out and interrogates him, finally letting him go when he sees that the slave is empty-handed. He decides to hide the pot in a remote grove; as he exits, he is followed secretly by Pythodocus.

Scenes 24-28: Lyconides and his mother Eunomia arrive at Megadorus' house. Eunomia, having learned the truth from her son, goes inside with Lyconides to convince her brother to abandon his wedding plans. Pythodocus joyfully runs by with the pot he has pilfered; after him comes Euclio, bemoaning the loss

of his gold (Song #5). Lyconides now confesses to Euclio and reports that Phaedria has had a baby. As Euclio races inside his house to confirm this, Pythodocus returns, having hidden the pot in his master's house. He brags to Lyconides about the theft and asks whether he can buy his freedom with the stolen gold; outraged, Lyconides orders him to give the pot back to Euclio. At this point the text breaks off. In our production the Lar will deliver an epilogue reconstructing the lost ending of the play, and everyone will, of course, live happily ever after.

Characters Analysis

Euclio – cheap old man who lived with his servant and his daughter. With the help of his household God he finds the pot of gold and becomes obsessed with keeping it safe. He became selfish and suspicious of everyone. He was scared of marrying his daughter because he didn't want to give dowry to anyone. He accepted Megadorus proposal because he didn't ask for dowry. His gold was more important than anything else.

Phaedria – Euclio's daughter and she is in love with Lyconides. They have a child together and it is believed that they get married at the end

Lyconides – in love with Phaedria. He does not care that she is poor and that her father will give her away without dowry. He tried everything just to be with her and their child.

Household God – he managed the whole situation and played around with the characters because he wanted to teach them the real values of life

The Pot of Gold
: Plautus

Roman Comedy

The Roman Comedy was influenced by Greek comic theatre when the Romans conquered Greece. This led to several Latin adaptations of Greek comedy. The Roman playwrights rewrote and adapted the plays into Latin,

keeping the scene of the action in Athens, but introducing Roman characters and topical situations. The Roman plays were performed for the general public thrice a year. They were also performed at times of celebration, as when a high official took up a new charge. The actors were often slaves, who could hope for freedom if they impressed an important official with their performance. The Roman theatres too were modelled on the Greek theatres, but unlike the Athenian theatre, its audience was not representative of all classes. The Roman audience largely comprised of men from the lower classes. To cater to this audience, the comedy was coarse and vulgar. Any sensitive portrayal of ideas and characters would have been lost on them. The Roman dramatist also had to make sure that he could hold his audience's attention, since they would leave the moment they were distracted by anything more interesting—even if it were a brawl in a nearby street. It is said that Terence's performances were famously disrupted once when the audience heard of a tightrope walker performing nearby. Another time the audience of his play

Hecyra

abandoned the play to see some gladiators. Given the composition of the audience, which was no better than a mob, the Roman dramatists gave a prologue at the beginning of the plays which explained the opening of the story and gave hints about how the plot would unfold. All Plautus' plays have prologues by a character of the play which introduces the audience to the complications of the plot.

Umberto Eco's take on Roman Comedy

Aristotle's

Poetics

is the earliest treatise on dramatic theory. The book on tragedy is available to us, but the second book, in which Aristotle did suggest an outline of a theory of the genre of comedy, is lost to us. In his first novel,

The Name of the Rose

(1980), a historical murder mystery, Umberto Eco (1932-2016) finds the solution to the murder in the contents of Aristotle's book on Comedy. In the novel, the only manuscript of Aristotle's treatise on comedy is destroyed in a fire that ruins the monastery library which has important books of classical learning. Although no copy of this work survives, Eco describes Aristotle's second book of

Poetics

so well that it is difficult to guess how much of the details are fact and how much Eco's clever surmises about the book. The stage was a plain platform, with a wall as a background. The wall may have doors which could represent the houses of some characters. The Roman actors' speeches were accompanied by a flautist sometimes. This gave the impression of a recitation.

Some of the dialogues were even set to music, like songs. Sometimes a singer came on the stage to sing a song, while the comedian merely mimed the scene. The Roman dramatists tried to sustain the interest of their audience at all times. They introduced local colour into the play and tried to

make it as topical as possible. Plautus used Athens as the scene of his plays but he picked characters, dialogues and situations which the audience would identify with and enjoy. Even though he drew his plots from Menander, his sketches of the common Roman people found great popularity. Plautus was practical in his outlook, and made sure his plays were bawdy and vulgar enough to appeal to his audience's tastes.

.The play
The Pot of Gold
was titled
Aulularia

in the original Latin. The setting is a typical street in Athens, in front of the houses of Euclio and Megadorus. Euclio is an old miser, who has come in possession of a pot of gold, and guards it fiercely. The entire plot of the play revolves around Euclio's attempts at hiding the gold from others, until it is stolen from him. This makes him learn a lesson, and in the end, he gives it away happily to his daughter and son-in-law. While Euclio is preoccupied with hiding his treasure, his daughter Phaedria has been seduced by Lyconides, a youth who wishes to marry her as she is expecting their child. Oblivious to this, Euclio has accepted his neighbour Megadorus' proposal of marriage for his daughter. Megadorus happens to be Lyconides' uncle. Lyconides confesses his love for Phaedria to her father, and while he does so, his slave steals the pot of gold. The manuscript of the play which survives contains the action only upto this point. Most editors who have completed the text, including E.F. Watling, have done so from summaries that have survived or bits of dialogues which are available to them. From the summaries available to researchers, they have been able to fathom that the ending of the play is happy, with Lyconides and Phaedria marrying each other, and miserly Euclio characteristically deciding to give them the pot of gold as a wedding gift.

The Significance of the Title

Megadorus' speech against dowry can be seen as Plautus' comment on Roman practices. It gives an insight into the low position women held in the social ladder. Yet,

The Pot of Gold

is first and foremost a satire on miserliness. Euclio's desperate desire to protect his pot of gold makes him restless and suspicious of everyone around him. There is comic irony in the incident where Euclio himself facilitates the slave's access to the treasure. Euclio maintains a farce of poverty, even though he has become rich on finding the gold. He even attends a meeting to seek donations and projects himself as a needy old man. Euclio's assent to Megadorus' proposal for Phaedria stems from his happiness at not having to provide a dowry for her. Plautus stresses his contempt of Euclio's miserliness by giving the steward Strobilus scenes where he narrates stories about Euclio's stinginess. For instance, he suggests that if someone stole a grain of salt from Euclio, he would see it as a serious burglary. The moral that the play

presents is that miserliness is a great vice. The love for riches is a source of anxiety. Euclio learns this lesson at the end of the play and is shown to willingly give it away to Lyconides.

The Plot Construction

The two main strands of the plot are Euclio's desperate antics to keep his pot of gold hidden from prospective thieves and Phaedria's affair with Lyconides. Megadorus' interest in Phaedria complicates both plot lines. Euclio suspects Megadorus' sudden interest in Phaedria as an attempt to rob him of his treasure. On the other hand, his marriage proposal interferes with Lyconides' desire to marry Phaedria. Both these plotlines are interwoven to present situations which cause tremendous laughter. Puns, jokes, ribaldry and good comic timing keeps the audience riveted to the action. Plautus also relied heavily on music and songs, which are unfortunately lost to the modern-day audience, which add variety to the visual experience. The Greek New Comedy was a major influence on Plautus' plays. Plautus borrows several elements of this dramatic tradition. Thought to be inspired by Menander's play

Dyskolos, The Pot of Gold

has a well constructed plot. Even though the conclusion of the play is missing, translators have been able to reconstruct the ending with hints in the prologue and contemporary summaries available. The 'Acrostic Argument' which prefaced some versions of the play, along with a supplement written at the end of other versions helped translators to assume an ending in which Euclio gives away the gold as a dowry for his daughter. The play has a very compact structure. There are no digressions to distract the audience from the main storyline. Even the minor characters, such as the steward and the cooks, throw more light on Euclio's character apart from contributing to the comic element of the play. As with all Roman plays, Plautus maintains the Unities of Time, Place and Action in the play. The action of the play revolves around the theme of avarice and miserliness. The entire play takes place within a short span of a few hours in a local street of Athens.

Stock Characters

Comic drama has always used stock characters. A stock character is a character which is a common social stereotype. They are most commonly used to add to the comic elements of the play. However, some playwrights have used stock characters to serve other purposes too, such as to further the action of the play or act as foils to other characters. Stock characters have typical names or qualities which represent a type, and this makes it simple for the audience to recognise the character and place it in a certain context. In Roman comedy, the miser, the intelligent servant and the braggart soldier are common stock characters. Elizabethan comedy's most common stock character is the Fool—Feste, Touchstone and Bottom from Shakespeare's plays being some examples. Yet, like Plautus, Shakespeare also developed his stock characters into more than a flat

character. He gave them sympathetic aspects which made them more complex and interesting. One of the major theatrical devices that Plautus relies on to generate the comedy onstage is the presence of stock characters. Euclio as the old miser is a typical stock character he uses as a protagonist. Plautus presents him in a genial light. Even though he acts greedily, Plautus redeems him in the end when he learns a lesson and appears to be just a good-hearted person who had been misguided by his greed. His first reaction to Megadorus' marriage proposal for his daughter is a suspicion that he may be after his gold. Yet, being the miser he is, he gladly agrees when Megadorus not only does not demand any dowry, but even offers to pay for the entire wedding. A Relief in white marble that shows Menander seated with masks of New Comedy. These masks are said to be Youth, False Maiden and Old Man.

The old yet lusty bachelor is another stock character that Plautus uses. His Megadorus generates much laughter as the lusty old man thinking of marrying the young and beautiful Phaedria. A major part of the play's humour comes from the lavish and elaborate preparations for his wedding. Plautus manages to draw an interesting parallel between Euclio's lust for his gold and Megadorus' lust for Phaedria. At the end of the play, like Euclio, Megadorus too is shown to be kind-hearted when he allows Lyconides and Phaedria to be married.

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