

## HON 195 Ancient Greek and Roman Comedy

### Comic Scenario Project. DUE: March 7 (Friday before Spring Break)

Please devise a comic scenario in the classical mold. The hard part will be thinking it up, not writing it up. Please incorporate the following conventions:

- 1) A stage with up to 3 buildings. (*Menaechmi* uses only two; *Dyscolus* used the central building as a shrine to Pan.
- 2) The stock character types we've encountered: old man/father (sympathetic or blocking character); old woman/mother (same); young man (typically in love or in some relationship problem); young woman (same); courtesan (scheming or heart-of-gold, often involved w young man); pimp (typically a greedy blocking character); parasite/mooch (often connected with young man or soldier, often ironical); slave (clever/scheming or running/abused); cook (typically greedy/boastful); soldier (typically boastful); quack doctor.
- 3) One or more recognitions, either of misunderstood connection (ex. lost relative) or some self-recognition (as the Grouch in Menander 'realizes' that no man is an island).
- 4) One or more reversals of fortune, with a character passing from good to bad or bad to good situation (and remember Aristotle's recommendation that these are most effective when combined with a recognition): Ex. when Menaechmus 1 gets locked out of his house, that is a reversal to the bad for him; the play has many other minor reversals like that, both good and bad; but the big one is at the end when the brothers are reunited: that is a change in both their fortunes, and is accompanied by a recognition of kinship.
- 5) Observe unity of time (1 day max), space (i.e. the stage w up to 3 buildings) and theme. Stage Left goes to Town, Stage Right to country / port / exotic destinations.
- 6) Observe Menander's canonical five act format (this will help), with the principal resolution in Act IV and some sort of 'After play' in Act V (resolution of sub-plot, trickery play on blocking character, etc.).

Within these parameters you have free reign. For instance, you could transpose things into a modern setting, finding modern counterparts for the character types (so for instance the prostitute could become a 'fast girl', the soldier could become a bully). Conversely, as Lexi has suggested, you might look for a modern comic plot that could be customized to fit the ancient setting.

### FORMAT:

1-2 pages single spaced, 10 or 12 point font.

Please include at least:

- 1) List of dramatis personae: give each character a name, and describe their relationships and motivations
- 2) A paragraph explaining the background of the story, its initial set-up: in other words, what the play's prologue would normally tell the audience: the initial 'bind' (*desis*) that will get resolved (*lysis*) by Act IV.
- 3) Summary of principle actions/events/twists for each act.

### TIPS:

Menander likes to foil audience expectations of character types; so they can be quite flexible.

It might be worth consulting Theophrastus *Characters* and picking one of his types to build the play around; this will make it clear to you what direction a self-recognition would take for that character (recall the Grouch); Theophrastus also gives you a number of typical actions that type will take.