



The Adultery Mime

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THE ADULTERY MIME

OF all the themes treated by the mimes, perhaps the one that gave the most delight to their audiences throughout the centuries was that of adultery. References to it, from various parts of the ancient world, are found from the first century before Christ to the sixth century of the Christian era, and in many cases it is spoken of as a theme typical of the mime as a whole. There does not seem to be satisfactory evidence of its existence in a genuinely dramatic form at an earlier date. It is reported that the *μαγῶδοί*, among other impersonations, mimicked the behaviour of *μοιχοί*;¹ but their performance, so far as can be discovered, was purely a piece of imitative buffoonery. When the theme of adultery was treated by Greek mimes of a later date, the approach seems to have been rather a psychological study of the adulteress than an attempt to bring out the dramatic possibilities inherent in the situation. This is certainly the case with Herondas' fifth mime, which portrays a lady jealously in love with a slave. Evidence from sources bearing a close relationship to the mime is equally negative. Thus a well-known Egyptian papyrus contains a song, written perhaps in the third or second century B.C., in which Helen complains of Menelaus' indifference to her after bringing her back from Troy;² but this is far from constituting a variant on the adultery theme. The wall-song in Marissa, which was composed in the middle of the second century B.C., does indicate a situation in which a woman is trying to keep her lover's presence outside the house from the knowledge of another man with whom she is consorting inside. But this latter may not be her husband; indeed, the vagueness of the word *ἕτερον* in the line *κἄτα κείμαι μεθ' ἕτερον σε μέγα φιλοῦσα*; seems to argue against such an inference.³ In any case, this brief song, like the songs called Locrian, *μοιχικαί τινας τὴν φύσιν ὑπάρχουσιν*, of which Athenaeus said all Phoenicia was full,⁴ can scarcely be cited as convincing evidence for the subject-matter of a dramatic mime.

Nevertheless, from the existence of Herondas' mime one must infer the existence also, on the stage of the unlettered mimes, of a little sketch of an erring wife. It may have been in Alexandria, that great home of mimic invention, that this was first elaborated into a dramatic treatment of the whole triangular relationship. The increasing commercial connexion between Alexandria and Rome during the first century B.C. brought with it a flood of mimic performers from Egypt to Italy. Although Cicero's well-known dictum,⁵ that all mimic plots had their origin in Alexandria, was an oratorical remark made for the purpose of scoring a point against an adversary, there is little reason to doubt that the statement was, speaking generally, accurate enough. It is to Alexandria that we should most probably trace the influence that resulted in the great Roman mimodramas, with their complex plots and their exciting incidents, features which came to rival in interest the study of character that had been the special concern of the earlier mime.

At the same time, it is certain that, even if it was reborn in Alexandria, the Adultery Mime reached its full popularity neither in Egypt nor in any part of the Greek-speaking world, but on the mimic stages of the Romans, in whose more liberal attitude to the status of women it found perhaps a more congenial atmosphere. It is

¹ Athen. 621 D.

² *Pap. Tebt.* i. 1; Powell, *Collectanea Alex.* 185; J. G. Winter, *Life and Letters in the Papyri* (Michigan, 1923), 216.

³ First printed by J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa* (London, 1905), p. 59. Text also in Powell,

Collectanea Alex., p. 184. Cf. W. Crönert in *Rh. Mus.* lxiv (1909), 433-48; Christ-Schmid, ii. 338.

⁴ Athen. 697 B.

⁵ Cic. *pro Rab. Post.* 35: 'audiebamus Alexandriam, nunc cognoscimus. illinc omnes praestigiae, illinc, inquam, omnes fallaciae; omnia denique ab his mimorum argumenta nata sunt.'

noteworthy that the Oxyrhynchus Jealous Lady Mime, which was written perhaps two centuries after Cicero, reverts to the old treatment that was visible in Herondas' mime. Despite its increased use of incident, it remains a character sketch of a passionate woman, and makes no real attempt at a dramatic treatment of the whole situation. The lover and the husband are seen only through the woman's eyes—if, indeed, the husband is seen at all; for many scholars believe that, like the playlets of Herondas, the whole piece was intended to be spoken by a single archimima, in the character of the jealous lady herself.¹

In Rome the first faint trace of a mime dealing with adultery occurs in a fragment of the *Compitalia* of Laberius, which seems to preserve the rueful words of a married lady who has strayed from the paths of chastity.² If this interpretation is correct, the tone of the excerpt is not in harmony either with anything that has been quoted from earlier Greek writers or with the version that was soon to become popular in the Roman world. But Laberius, a man of standing writing in a style with some literary pretensions, was far from being a typical mimographer, and the tone of his extant fragments suggests a writer of a staunch Roman outlook, comparatively unresponsive to contemporary foreign influences.

About a dozen years after Laberius' death, however, Horace introduced into one of his *Satires* an image that does fit perfectly with the later version. In the character of his slave Davus he had been philosophizing on the essential similarity of the amours of master and man, and he concluded:

quid refert, uri virgis ferroque necari
auctoratus eas, an turpi clausus in arca,
quo te demisit peccati conscia erilis,
contractum genibus tangas caput?³

The terms in which Horace introduces his illustration are sufficiently casual to make it certain that the situation was quite familiar to his readers, while the similarity between it and the central situation in the later version of the Adultery Mime affords a strong probability that his image was drawn from the popular stage of his day.

At all events, the Adultery Mime was certainly to be seen in Rome towards the end of Augustus' reign. Writing from exile, Ovid complained virtuously:

quid si scripsissem mimos obscena iocantes,
qui semper vetiti crimen amoris habent?
in quibus assidue cultus procedit adulter,
verbaque dat stulto callida nupta viro. . . .
nec satis incestis temerari vocibus aures:
adsuescunt oculi multa pudenda pati.
cumque fefellit amans aliqua novitate maritum,
plauditur et magno palma favore datur.
quoque minus prodest, scaena est lucrosa poetae,
tantaque non parvo crimina praetor emit.
inspice ludorum sumptus, Auguste, tuorum:
empta tibi magno talia multa leges.

¹ Grenfell and Hunt, *Pap. Oxy.* iii. 413; Hermann Reich, *Deutsche Literaturz.* xxiv (1903), 2680-1; Christ-Schmid, ii. 337-9; S. Sudhaus, *Hermes*, xli (1906), 247-77; Otto Crusius, *N. Jahrb.* xxv (1910), 99; Powell and Barber, *New Chapters in the Hist. of Gk. Lit.* (Oxford, 1921), 122-3; D. L. Page, *Gk. Lit. Papyri* (London, 1941), 350 ff.

² Lab. 33-5, Ribbeck: 'quo quidem me a

matronali pudore prolubium meretricium progredi coegit'. On a fragment from Pomponius' Atellan farce *Pappus Agricola*, which runs, 'volo scire ex te cur urbanas res desubito deseris', Merry (*Sel. Fgts. of Rom. Poetry*, Oxford, 1898, p. 193) comments rather imaginatively: 'A young wife's anger at her goodman's unexpected return.'

³ Hor. *Sat.* 2. 7. 53 ff.

haec tu spectasti, spectandaque saepe dedisti—
 maiestas adeo comis ubique tua est—
 luminibusque tuis, totus quibus utimur orbis,
 scaenica vidisti lentus adulteria.¹

In Tiberius' day the inhabitants of Massilia imposed a total ban on mimes, 'quorum argumenta maiore ex parte stuprorum continent actus'.² It was feared that such spectacles would corrupt the spectators. The elder Seneca spoke of 'vere mimicae nuptiae,' in quibus ante in cubiculum rivalis venit quam maritus'.³ Two references in Juvenal⁴ give more detailed information about the Adultery Mime, and will therefore be discussed below.

The general theme of adultery was still being burlesqued on the mimic stage a century later. Tertullian refers to 'moechus Anubis' as one of the characters typical of the mime of his day.⁵ Minucius Felix, after making his Christian apologist speak with disgust of the scenes common at races in the circus or gladiatorial shows in the amphitheatre, continues: 'in scaenicis etiam non minor furor et turpitudine prolixior; nunc enim mimus vel exponit adulteria vel monstrat . . .'.⁶ The image in the writer's mind may perhaps have been more vivid than a casual reader would imagine; for, somewhere about the same time, if we may believe a not very trustworthy biographer, the emperor Elagabalus introduced realism to the stage to an extent rarely surpassed: 'in mimicis adulteriis ea quae solent simulato fieri effici ad verum iussit'.⁷

But such a grossly inartistic alteration was, it is to be hoped, as unique as Domitian's substitution of a real criminal to be crucified instead of Laureolus.⁸ It was rather the light-hearted shallowness with which the mimes treated the serious problem of sexual irregularity that made the grave Fathers of the Church shake their heads. Like the city rulers of Marseilles three centuries earlier, they were greatly concerned with the influence that such an outlook would have upon the general level of morality of the populace. Many people to-day, and those not the most hasty, condemn a certain type of film for a similar reason; these would find much to agree with in the reasoned statement of Lactantius. 'Quid de mimis loquar', he writes, 'corruptelarum praeferentibus disciplinam? qui docent adulteria, dum fingunt, et simulatis erudiunt ad vera? quid iuvenes et virgines faciant, cum haec et fieri sine pudore et spectari libenter ab omnibus cernunt? admonentur utique quid facere possint, et inflammentur libidine, quae aspectu maxime concitatur, ac se quisque pro sexu in illis

¹ Ovid, *Tristia*, 2. 497-514. The remarks in *Ars Am.* 1. 501-2 and *Rem. Am.* 755-6, mention lovers only, not an adulteress; it is not certain, indeed, that they refer to mimic performances.

² Val. Max. 2. 6. 7.

³ Sen. *Controv.* 2. 4.

⁴ Juv. 6. 41-4; 8. 196-7.

⁵ Tert. *Apol.* 15. It has been suggested that the plot may have been based upon the story of the deception practised upon a Roman matron under the guise of religion in the reign of Tiberius, as told by Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. 3. 4. See Hermann Reich, *Der Mimus* (Berlin, 1903), p. 593, note 1.

⁶ Minuc. Felix, *Octav.* 37. 12. The rest of the passage concerns pantomimes.

⁷ Lamprid. *Heliog.* 25. 4. The reference is surely to the scenes of love-making. Lampridius has been giving instances of the emperor's fondness for extravagant practical jokes, introducing them with the remark (18. 4): 'de huius vita

multa in litteras missa sunt obscena, quae quia digna memoratu non sunt, ea prodenda censui quae ad luxuriam pertinebant.' They are not grouped systematically. Apart from prurience, their most common characteristic is a total disregard both for human dignity and for the value of property. Casaubon, however (*Scr. Hist. Aug.*, Lugduni Batav. 1671, vol. ii, p. 859), reading *mimicis adulteris* for *in mimicis adulteriis*, thought that the emperor here wished rather to gratify his love of inflicting pain: 'a mimicis autem adulteris simulate poenae exactae, quae vere ab adulteris veris: ut raphanus eos intraret, vel mugil, et his similia.' But I do not know where he obtained this information. The only authority who mentions the mimic lover being brought to account for his actions is Choricus, and he, as will be seen, does not suggest any punishment of such a cruel nature.

⁸ Mart. *de Spect.* 7. 1-6.

imaginibus praefigurat, probantque illa, dum rident, et adhaerentibus vitiis corruptiores ad cubacula revertuntur; nec pueri modo, quos praematuris vitiis imbui non oportet, sed etiam senes, quos peccare iam non decet.¹ Similarly, a century later, Salvianus of Marseilles wrote: 'itaque in illis imaginibus fornicationum omnis omnino plebs animo fornicatur, et qui forte ad spectaculum puri venerant, de theatro adulteri revertuntur.'²

The thunder of St. Chrysostom puts the question into a rather different emotional background. 'Have you no fear, fellow, when with the same eyes you look at the bed in the orchestra, where are performed those abominable dramas of adultery, and this sacred table, where the dread mysteries are celebrated?'³—'Do not tell me that this is mere play-acting! Such play-acting has made many men adulterers, and has destroyed many families. And this is the cause of my greatest sorrow, that you do not even think that what is done there is evil, but there are clapping and cheering and roars of laughter when they have the audacity to present such scenes of adultery.'⁴ And again: *πόθεν γὰρ οἱ τοῖς γάμοις ἐπιβουλεύοντες; εἰπέ μοι· οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς ταύτης; πόθεν οἱ τοὺς θαλάμους διορύττοντες; οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀρχήστρας ἐκείνης; . . . καὶ τίς μοιχός, φησὶν, ἀπὸ τῶν θεαμάτων τούτων γέγονε; τίς γὰρ οὐ μοιχός;*—and the worthy preacher seeks to strike panic into his congregation by the threat that he is about to divulge the offenders' names.⁵

It is interesting to turn from these passionate outbursts to the words of one who is trying to make a defence of the mime against its many critics. More than a century after St. Chrysostom, the sophist Choricus of Gaza took up the point that the spectator, and especially the young spectator, sees the scenes of illicit love on the stage and is induced to imitate them in real life. 'But when [sc. on the stage] you see adultery, my friend,' he replies to his imaginary opponent, 'you see also the power of the court of justice. The husband of the woman caught in adultery lodges a prosecution, and with her is tried the man who dared to make love to her, and the judge threatens both with punishment. . . . Practically nobody in a mimic paignion commits adultery and gets away with it, and the result of this is that the mimes encourage the spectator to practise decent behaviour. . . . Every man who plots against a marriage is detected by justice and handed over to the husband of the woman he has wronged. But, it seems, you left the theatre without seeing the man caught, and did not wait for the end of the play.'⁶

Another argument is put forward a few pages later. At some length the sophist maintains that the actors are not to be blamed if those who watch give way to their baser instincts. How can they live up to the name 'mimes' unless they imitate everything, good or bad? One might as well blame a cook because a careless indulgence in his dainties is not beneficial to health. The right persons to blame are those who order the dainties and those who do the evil actions which the mimes imitate.⁷

¹ Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 6. 20 = Migne, *P.L.* vi. 710-11.

² Salv. *de Gub. Dei*, 6. (3). 19.

³ Chrys. 6. 558 = Migne, *P.G.* lvi. 543: οὐ δέδοικας, ἄνθρωπε, τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τὴν κλίην τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς ὀρχήστρας βλέπων, ἔνθα τὰ μυσσὰρὰ τελεῖται τῆς μοιχείας δράματα, καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν ταύτην τὴν ἱεράν, ἔνθα τὰ φρικτὰ τελεῖται μυστήρια;

⁴ Chrys. 7. 101 = Migne, *P.G.* lvii. 72: μὴ γάρ μοι τοῦτο εἶπης ὅτι ὑπόκρισις ἐστὶ τὰ γινόμενα· ἡ γὰρ ὑπόκρισις αὕτη πολλοὺς εἰργάσατο μοιχοὺς, καὶ πολλὰς ἀνέτρεψεν οἰκίας. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα στένω, ὅτι οὐδὲ δοκεῖ πονηρὸν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον,

ἀλλὰ καὶ κρότοι καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ γέλωσ πολλός, μοιχείας τολμωμένης τοιαύτης.

⁵ Chrys. 7. 423 = Migne, *P.G.* lvii. 427. See also 2. 318 = Migne, *P.G.* xlix. 315; II. 464-5 = Migne, *P.G.* lxii. 428.

⁶ Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 30-5 (ed. R. Foerster and E. Richsteig, Teubner, Leipzig, 1929, pp. 351-2) = Charles Graux, *Rev. de philol.* i (1877), 219-20. Similarly 54-5 = 223-4, Graux.

⁷ Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 87-90 (Teubner edn., pp. 363-4) = 231-2 Graux. The theme of adultery is referred to also in 26, 71-2, 98 = 218, 228, 234, Graux.

With such arguments, however, we are not now concerned. It is clear from the frequency with which Choricus returns to the subject of mimic adultery that it was a typical feature of the stage of his day. I shall make one more quotation, in which the effective word is the first one: *πολλὰ γὰρ τῶν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τελουμένων παιγνίων ἐκ προουμιῶν εἰς τέλος οὐδὲν ἕξω σεμνότητος ἔχει.*¹

Although the general theme of adultery was popular on the stage for at least seven centuries, it is not to be suggested that the same plot was used throughout. There must have been many variants on the type. It is possible, however, to form a fairly definite conception of a plot of this class which was famous during the earlier part of this period, and which may be taken as typical of them all.

In his sixth satire Juvenal writes:

quid fieri non posse putes, si iungitur ulla
Ursidio? si moechorum notissimus olim
stulta maritali iam porrigit ora capistro,
quem totiens textit perituri cista Latini?²

On this passage the scholiast writes: 'qui totiens superveniente marito sub cista celatus est, ut in mimo'.

A married woman, in the absence of her husband, has admitted her lover. The husband returns suddenly, and she hides her lover in a large chest. This is certainly the essence of the plot; and in this form, as we have seen, though not necessarily on the mimic stage, it was known to Horace more than a century before Juvenal. Mimes seem to have been, in general, short, depending more upon the portrayal of character than on the development of an intricate story; it may, for this reason, be unwise to attempt to expand this framework into a play containing several scenes, built up after the fashion of a modern comedy. The only necessary part of the plot that has been omitted is the climax: some sort of discovery scene is essential, or the play will lack point.

Regarded in its barest form, then, this *Adultery Mime* may have consisted of a single scene—I use the word in its modern sense—which was placed indoors, perhaps in the woman's bedroom; for St. Chrysostom, it will be remembered, mentions the use of a bed.³ It began with the two lovers on the stage. On the entry of her husband, the woman concealed her paramour in the chest, where he stayed until he was almost smothered—for this seems to be the sense of Juvenal's *perituri*;⁴ Horace's *contractum genibus tangas caput* points to the same conclusion. At last he was discovered, and the three characters appeared on the stage together for the denouement.

¹ Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 108 (Teubner edn., p. 369) = 236 Graux.

² Juv. 6. 41-4.

³ Chrys. 6. 558 = Migne, *P.G.* lvi. 543: . . . τὴν κλίνην τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς ὀρχήστρας βλέπων, ἔνθα τὰ μυσσὰρὰ τελεῖται τῆς μοιχείας δράματα. This expression surely disproves Reich's translation (*Der Mimus*, pp. 120 and 609) of κλίνη as *das Sopha*. The use of the word 'orchestra' does not seem to have any special significance; cf. Isid. *Etym.* 18. 43 = Migne, *P.L.* lxxxii. 658: 'scaena autem erat locus infra theatrum in modum domus instructa cum pulpito, qui pulpitus orchestra vocabatur, ubi cantabant comici, tragici, atque saltabant histriones et mimi.' Also

Chrysostom himself, in the passage already quoted (7. 423 = Migne *P.G.* lvii. 427): πόθεν γὰρ οἱ τοῖς γάμοις ἐπιβουλεύοντες; οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς ταύτης; πόθεν οἱ τοὺς θαλάμους διορύττοντες; οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀρχήστρας ἐκείνης;

⁴ The scholiast, however, seems to have thought it an allusion to Latinus' coming death: 'qui postea propter adulterium Messalinae punitus est'; and on 1. 35: 'Latinus autem mimus quasi conscius adulterii Messalinae uxoris Neronis, ab ipso occisus est.' This information, however, may be untrustworthy; see the discussion in the article on Latinus in Pauly-Wissowa, xii. 937-8.

In the time of which Juvenal was writing, the three parts were made famous by the actors Latinus¹ and Corinthus and the actress Thymele. Latinus was a well-known archimime, whose name occurs more frequently in literature than that of any other mimic actor; Thymele and he often played together.² Latinus is never called a *stupidus*. Accordingly, when Juvenal caustically inquires,

mortem sic quisquam exhorruit, ut sit
zelotypus Thymeles, stupidi collega Corinthi?³

the only possible conclusion is that the *stupidus* in the mime played the part of the cuckolded husband. Friedländer, commenting on this passage, suggests that Corinthus may have played the part of a slave; but this is contradicted by an allusion of Capitolinus to the *Adultery Mime*, in which the *stupidus* asks a slave for the name of his own wife's lover.⁴

So we may imagine the three characters, the elegant young gallant—*cultus adulter*, Ovid calls him—played by the archimimus; the pretty, wanton, and clever girl, who finds no difficulty in tricking her husband (*verba dat stulto callida nupta viro*); and the husband himself, fat, stupid, bald-headed, and ugly, fit only to be made a mock of by the quick-witted pair of lovers. The weight of the ridicule was directed at the simple gullibility of the husband, and not at the lover ungracefully concealed in the chest.⁵ If Reich had remembered this, he would not have been so ready to deduce from the words shouted by Caesar's soldiers as he rode in triumph—*urbani, servate uxores, moechum calvum adducimus*—that the *moechus calvus* was a character in the *Adultery Mime*.⁶

One may now, perhaps, make an attempt to elaborate the scanty information given by Ovid and Juvenal into a complete little play; but it must be with the proviso that one should not, as Reich does,⁷ stress too closely the analogy between the requirements of ancient and modern audiences.

The opening scene⁸ may perhaps be conjectured from the passage of Capitolinus already quoted. The *stupidus*, that is, the husband, asks a slave for the name of his wife's lover. This must occur before he returns to surprise his wife entertaining the young man. If it is to be taken as a regular part of the mime, and not a scene added specially for the occasion (for the pun on Tertullus would not, of course, have been apt at other times), then it is clear that the husband's suspicions are already aroused.

¹ C. J. Grysar, 'Der römische Mimus', *Sitzungsber. der phil.-hist. Classe der k. Akad. der Wissenschaften*, Bd. xii (1854), Heft 2, p. 267, calls Latinus the composer of the *Adultery Mime*, but there is no evidence of this. On p. 297 Grysar himself says that the composer is unknown.

² Suet. *Dom.* 15; Juv. i. 36, and scholiast; 6. 44, and scholiast; schol. on 4. 53. Mart. 2. 72. 3; 3. 86. 3; 5. 61. 11; 9. 28. 1; 13. 2. 3. He is mentioned with Thymele in Juv. i. 36 and Mart. i. 4. 5.

³ Juv. 8. 196-7.

⁴ Capit. *M. Ant. phil.* 29. 1-3: 'crimini ei datum est quod adulteros uxoris promovet, Tertullum et Tutillum et Orfitum et Moderatum, ad varios honores, cum Tertullum et prandentem cum uxore deprehenderit. de quo mimus in scaena praesente Antonino dixit, cum stupidus nomen adulteri uxoris a servo quaereret, et ille diceret ter 'Tullus', et adhuc stupidus quaereret,

respondit ille 'iam tibi dixi ter, Tullus dicitur.' et de hoc quidem multa populus, multa etiam alii dixerunt patientiam Antonini incusantes.' See below.

⁵ In a parallel scene in Mr. J. B. Fagan's play, *And So to Bed*, it is the unfortunate Mr. Pepys, hidden inside a 'marriage chest', who has to bear the brunt of the joke. This situation, whatever its treatment, is of course still very popular. I need refer here only to the Russian comic opera, *Sorotchinski Fair*, which was produced in London at the Savoy Theatre in the autumn of 1941, and to a recent film burlesque, *Twin Beds*.

⁶ Suet. *Div. Iul.* 51; Hermann Reich, *Der Mimus*, Berlin, 1903, p. 194.

⁷ Op. cit., p. 563.

⁸ A modern writer would probably begin his play with a scene in which the assignation between the lovers was made, but we have no right to assert dogmatically that the ancients felt the same necessity.

Two courses are now open to him. He may leave the house himself, with the expressed intention of returning sooner than he is expected, in the hope of catching his wife red-handed; in this case, the next scene will show the girl admitting her lover. Or he may decide to cross-examine her at once. But his dull wits are no match for her quickness. It may be imagined how easily she evades his challenge, possibly allaying his suspicions by allowing him to make love to her; his absurd appearance and clumsy movements make this quite farcical. It is a simple matter for her then to concoct some errand that will necessitate his leaving the house.¹

With her husband safely out of the way, as she thinks, the girl admits her lover. The love scene proceeds,² but is brought to a sudden conclusion by the unexpected return of her husband. There is no time for the lover to escape; the girl hides him in a large chest, which is conveniently placed, perhaps on one side of the room. She faces her husband; their conversation continues at least for a short time, to increase the suspense, and it is not to be imagined that it is without reference to the situation. Perhaps, whether innocently or otherwise, he wants to get something out of the chest, and the girl has to use all her ingenuity to put him off. Perhaps, like King Charles in *And So to Bed*, though without his malicious intent, he sits on it and drums on it with his heels. There is unlimited scope here for the mime with the gift, common to his profession, of ready improvisation. Perhaps, too, the dialogue is spattered with *doubles entendres*; for these were an ever popular form of mimic humour. At all events, this scene lasts long enough for the unhappy lover inside the chest to become almost smothered. Lack of air, if nothing else, compels him to reveal himself, and the secret is out.

Here is clearly the climax of the plot; but what happens now? Are the guilty pair ready with some fictitious story which allays the poor husband's fears? In some such way ended the piece that Ovid had seen:

cumque fefellit amans aliqua novitate maritum,
plauditur et magno palma favore datur.³

Or does the fat and awkward husband burst out in clownish rage, and bellow, as in Choricus' day, *κάλει παῖδα* and *μάχαράν τις φερέτω*?⁴ The ensuing scene, with the debonair young lover neatly eluding every attack, with the girl using all her feminine ingenuity to speed his escape, and with the clumsy buffoon, rushing about wildly, stabbing the empty air, tripping over his own feet, perhaps even falling into the chest, which lies conveniently open, may be left to the imagination.

With this riotous scene the farce may have come to an end.⁵ As we have seen,

¹ Martial II. 7 describes a similar situation, in which it is the woman who wants to absent herself. The epigram begins:

iam certe stupido non dices, Paula, marito,
ad moechum quotiens longius ire voles,
'Caesar in Albanum iussit me mane venire,
Caesar Circeios.' iam strophā talis abit.

Other excuses—a sick relative, or a disorder of her own—are suggested in the lines that follow.

² Ovid wrote (*Tr.* 2. 501-2):

non satis incestis temerari vocibus aures;
adsuescunt oculi multa pudenda pati.

Cf. the passage of Lampridius already quoted.

³ Ovid, *Tr.* 2. 505-6.

⁴ Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 55 (Teubner edn., pp. 356-7) = 224 Graux.

⁵ Grysar (op. cit., pp. 253-4) suggests that the wife caresses her husband into forgiveness, citing Juvenal, i. 35 (of a delator):

quem Massa timet, quem munere palpat
Carus, ut a trepido Thymeles summissa Latino,
where he accepts Heinrich's emendation *ut* for the generally received reading of the MSS. *et*. For, he says, if *et* be read, then Latinus the delator is himself afraid of a delator, which is impossible. But this is the whole point! *Et* is the correct reading, and the reference is to some incident, whether real or imaginary, taking place in real life and not on the stage. There is no need for Turnebus' interpretation (*Adversarii*, Basileae, 1631, 20. 8. 23 ff.): 'mimi igitur argumentum egit cum ea (sc. Thymeles) Latinus, in quo cum ea ut in aliena uxore moechus pene deprehendebatur,

however, Choricus postulates a different finale.¹ He is trying to convince his hearers that mimic plays are not, in fact, of an immoral tone, and that vice is punished on the stage, as it is in real life. So his husband—deceived, but not stupid—pauses for reflection. He rejects the knife, which a slave has brought at his command, and instead brings the guilty pair to court. There the judge threatens them with severe punishment—and here Choricus' argument breaks down. The punishment is not, in fact, inflicted. The *stupidus* is duped again. The lovers escape. The whole thing is a farce after all. ἐπεὶ δὲ ὄλον παιδιά τίς ἐστι τὸ χρῆμα, τὸ πέρασ αὐτοῖς εἰς ὠδὴν τινα καὶ γέλωτα λήγει· πάντα γὰρ εἰς ἀναψυχὴν μεμηχάνηται καὶ ραστώνην.²

There is reason to believe that a trial scene was of common occurrence in the Imperial mime.³ But it entails rather a large cast, and it may, perhaps, have been a late addition to the play dealing with adultery. Juvenal, like Ovid, mentions only three characters, the husband, the wife, and the lover; and in his day the little tale of cuckoldry may have been complete with them.

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vel marito de adulterio aliquorum delatione suspectus erat: sed dolosam et astutam moecham ad maritum allegavit, quae ei os sublineret, et periculo Latinum et crimine eximeret.¹ Such a scene does not fit in with the plot as I imagine it.

¹ Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 54-5 (Teubner edn., pp. 356-7) = 223-4 Graux.

² Choric. *Apol. Mim.* 30 (Teubner edn., p. 351) = 219 Graux.

³ Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium*, (48), 358 ff.; Origen, *Ep. ad Afric. de Hist. Sus.* 11 = Migne, *P.G.* xi. 73 ff. (cf. Africanus, *De Hist. Sus. ep. ad Orig.* = Migne, *P.G.* xi. 44 A); Amm. Marc. 30. 4. 21. Cf. *Acta Sanct.* v. 122; xi. 213.