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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 He said, she said

Menaechmus' wife, no longer able to endure her husband's trysts with the neighboring courtesan, his drinking parties, and the serial thefts of her property, decides to obtain a divorce. So she summons her father and asks him to escort her back home (*hinc me abducas*, 782).[1] The father, after hearing his daughter's complaints, dismisses the charges of infidelity and inebriation. How else, he implies, is Menaechmus to put up with her?[2] The charge of theft, however, gives him pause and he decides to question Menaechmus about it. Let us consider how the old man initiates his talk first with his daughter, then with his son-in-law:

1 The old man addresses his daughter.

SE: Quid tu tristis es? Quid ille autem aps te iratus destitit?
Nescioquid vos velitati estis inter vos duos.
Loquere, uter meruistis culpam, paucis, non longos logos. (*Men.* 777–779)

SE: What are you upset about? And why does he angrily stand at a distance from you? You had some fight between you two. Tell me which of you is guilty, briefly, no long stories.

2 The old man addresses his son-in-law.

Dic mihi istuc, Menaechme, quod vos dissertatis, ut sciam.
Quid tu tristis es? Quid illa autem irata aps te destitit? (*Men.* 809–810)

Tell me this, Menaechmus, what you're arguing about, so that I know. What are you upset about? And why does she angrily stand at a distance from you?

The content of both passages is the same: the old man wants to know from each interlocutor why she or he is upset. But they are phrased differently with respect to morphology, syntax, diction, and discourse; that is, a unit of meaning that extends beyond the sentence.[3] What accounts for these differences?

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They cannot be explained by metrical considerations. It has been argued that the recited and sung verses of Roman comedy contain a greater proportion of high-register elements than the spoken verses, the senarii.[4] Since both passages above are cast in trochaic septenarii, any stylistic differences between them must be explained by factors other than meter. These factors, I contend, are the addressee's status, gender, and her or his relationship with the speaker.

On the level of morphology, the old man changes only the gender of the pronoun and its modifying adjective to suit the addressee of the repeated questions: *quid tu tristis es? Quid ille / a autem aps te iratus / a destitit?* (777, 810). On the level of syntax, the old man's interrogation of his daughter contains five independent clauses, occupying three lines of trochaic septenarii. Apart from the *autem* in the first line, there are no connecting particles integrating any clause to a previous one. There is furthermore triple anaphora of *quid*: Quid *tu tristis es?* Quid *ille autem aps te iratus destitit? / Nescio* quid *vos velitati estis inter vos duos*. Students of rhetoric from Aristotle to Longinus and the anonymous writer of a first-century BCE Roman treatise identified the effects of such asyndeta as concise, forceful, abrupt.[5]

Contrasting with the old man's "rapid-fire" questioning of his daughter is his more elaborate query of Menaechmus. Consider the syntax of the first line: *dic mihi istuc, Menaechme, quod vos dissertatis, ut sciam* (809). The *senex*' expression (*dic mihi istuc … quod*), recalls the padded question *quid est istuc/illuc quod*, etc., "what is the reason for which you …?"[6] Both evince the impression of studied care.

With this question, and through two other linguistic means, the old man conveys respect toward Menaechmus. In the confrontation with his daughter, the old man had declined to address her at all. He does, however, address Menaechmus by name. And while the old man does not soften the command addressed to his daughter (*loquere, uter meruistis culpam*, 779), he elects to do so when speaking with Menaechmus (*dic mihi istuc … ut sciam*, 809). By giving the reason for his request, "tell me this … so that I know," the old man prospectively characterizes Menaechmus' response not as compliance with an order, but as a favor the son-in-law can do to satisfy the father-in-law's curiosity.

There is also variation on the level of discourse. Note the positioning of the query in each passage. In the first, which the old man addresses to his daughter, he begins with the pair of questions (*Quid tu tristis es? Quid ille autem aps te iratus destitit?*), then gives his assessment of the situation (*nescioquid vos velitati estis inter vos duos*). According to one possible performance of these lines, a rapid switch from questions to assessment

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gives no time for the daughter to respond. By contrast, the old man concludes his initial address to Menaechmus with the same two questions, thus inviting his son-in-law to answer them.

Moving now to observations on the level of diction, the old man's alternation of "quarrel" verbs is significant: he first uses *velitari* in his conversation with his daughter, but switches to *dissertare* when addressing Menaechmus. While *velitari* belongs firmly to the register of comedy, *dissertare* is of a more formal register. With the meaning "quarrel," "dispute," the latter verb occurs only here and in a fragment from one of Cato's speeches: *quid ego cum illo dissertem amplius?* "Why should I quarrel further with him?"[7] With this word (*dissertare*), then, the old man elevates the register in speaking to his son-in-law.

The connotations of each verb, moreover, are context-appropriate. *Velitari* is suited to describing a domestic quarrel.[8] On the other hand, the old man can appeal to Menaechmus, an experienced *advocatus* (571–601), by using *dissertare*, which connotes formal debate.

As noted above, the old man, when speaking with his son-in-law, softens his imperative by specifying the reason for his request: *dic … ut sciam* ("tell me … so that I may know"). But he makes no such attempt to be polite to his daughter. Besides issuing a peremptory command (*loquere, uter meruistis culpam*, 777), the old man hints, impolitely, that she may speak at unnecessary length: "tell me … briefly, no long stories" (779).[9] The father's choice of *logi* ("tales, yarns") – a word that has pejorative connotations – to describe his daughter's talk also contributes to the brusque, rude tone of these lines.[10] A final point: the father wants to know from his daughter who is to blame (*uter meruistis culpam*), but any mention of blame – *culpa* – is suppressed in the old man's address to Menaechmus.

We can surmise that old man's degree of intimacy with the addressee – closer with his daughter, and more distant from Menaechmus – the type of relationship he has with each one, and the hearer's gender determine the variations in these two parallel turns. To his daughter, the old man presents the face of a concerned and angry father, but with Menaechmus, he takes a different line, indicating his respect by adopting a higher register of speech, softening his command, and underscoring their common background in litigation.

1.2 What is linguistic interaction?

The old man of *Menaechmi*, then, alters his language to suit his hearer. Latin speakers who lived millennia ago chose expressions appropriate to

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expectations which society held for them, to the social identity of their addressee, and to the larger speech setting (a dinner party, a pre-trial settlement, an informal conversation).

Certain types of expression, like vocatives, most obviously indicate the identity of the addressee, convey the interlocutors' relationship to each other, and correlate with the social context in which they are uttered.[11] By naming his son-in-law with the vocative *Menaechme*, the old man simply produces the default mode of address in classical Latin.[12] On the other hand, though his daughter greets him with *mi pater*, an endearing form of address characteristic of women, the old man declines to address her at all.[13] Perhaps in his eagerness to discover why his daughter has summoned him, the father dispenses with linguistic decorum.[14]

Commands and requests can also mark the relationship between speaker and addressee. They do so by reflecting a hierarchy in which the person commanding has more power than the addressee. But even when such a hierarchy does not already exist, a speaker can *imply* that he or she has authority greater than the hearer's precisely by issuing an order. To avoid this unwelcome implication, the old man in *Menaechmi* softens an imperative form for his son-in-law. But when speaking with his daughter, the old man issues an unmodified present imperative, a form that reflects his authority over his daughter and her affairs.

This book is about expressions like these, linguistic features that emerge from interaction and reflect or even alter the relationship between its participants: commands and requests, conversation particles (command softeners and strengtheners, statement hedges), and conversational formulae and devices: attention-getters, interruptions, and greetings and closings. These words, then, constitute *linguistic interaction*.

With respect to commands and requests, we shall try to answer questions about politeness, sociolinguistic values, and register, among others. Which request-forms were "softer," more polite? Was, for instance, the second person present "jussive" subjunctive (*facias istuc*) a polite alternative to the present imperative (*fac istuc*)? Which of the following prohibitions was most polite: *noli* + infinitive (*noli facere*), *ne* + present subjunctive (*ne facias*), or *ne* + perfect subjunctive (*ne feceris*)? Were indirect commands, like *aequom est te facere*, "it's right that you do" more polite than direct ones *fac*, *facito*, *facias*?

With respect to other expressions, under what circumstances do we find speakers opting for one over another? When might the attention-getter *quid ais* ("what do you say [to this]") be uttered in preference to the similar *heus* ("hey!")? Is *salvus sis* more deferential than *salve*?

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What can the comedies tell us about the linguistic habits of certain groups? Were slaves and women, given their subordinate status, more likely as a rule to soften commands and requests? Do they however strengthen orders, with words like *quin* or *modo* less frequently than, say, free males? Do men and women differ in the type of politeness used? The same question can be asked for differences in politeness between a free citizen woman who is married and a courtesan and between free persons and slaves. And in general, can we characterize the linguistic politeness of the Romans of the late third and early to mid-second centuries BCE, contemporaries of Plautus and Terence, on the basis of the evidence we find in Roman comedy and the fragments of drama?

The aim of this book as a study in linguistics is to answer these questions, and in so doing enrich our descriptions of "interactional" features of the Latin language. As a literary study, the book investigates the suiting of language to the addressee and the linguistic depiction of gender, status, stock types, and individual characters in Roman drama, and particularly in Roman comedy. In the latter area – linguistic characterization – we will further previous work that has sought to distinguish the idioms characterizing each of the many comic stock types, including the *callidus servus*, *adulescens*, and *senex*. At the same time, we will see that Plautus and Terence nevertheless occasionally have characters speak in a style *not* their own in order to achieve a certain effect. Another goal in the pages that follow, then, is not only to identify characterizing patterns but also to point out and interpret departures from them.[15]

1.3 Why Roman comedy?

The extant plays of Plautus and Terence and the fragments of Roman drama form our corpus because they abound in interactional Latin.[16] Characters in the plays swear, interject, exclaim, greet, insult, beg, request – in short, their words often emerge from the context of a conversational "dyad," from the interaction between a speaker and an addressee.[17] The world of Roman comedy is a heterogeneous one, unlike that of Cicero's austere philosophical dialogues, populated exclusively by high-status men. In the comedies, men and women, low- and high-status characters, free and slave engage each other in talk. We can therefore examine, as we did in our reading of the passages from *Menaechmi*, how factors like gender, social status, civic status, and the relationship between speaker and addressee influence linguistic choices. Besides, the corpus of Republican drama is rich in relevant data. The comedies alone consist in

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26 complete plays representing 27,300 lines of early Latin.[18] The fragments of comedy – *palliata*, *togata*, scripted Atellan farce, and mime – number 1971 verses; of tragedy and *praetexta*, 1,970 verses. From this relatively large corpus, I have gathered commands and requests, softeners, strengtheners, statement hedges, attention-getters, interruptions, greetings, and closings, in addition to other types of data. (I will present information on collection methods in the relevant chapter.)

Now, extant Roman comedy proves to be the most important for this study because it provides us with the context – the situation, the intended addressee, and the speaker – necessary to analyze linguistic interaction, a context that most fragments lack. The fragments, however, are of some help because we can sometimes find corroboration in them for claims made on the basis of the extant comedies. They are also useful because we can suggest the register of an item based on its distribution over the fragments of light and serious drama. One incidental benefit of the patterns we recover is that they sometimes can be used to make educated guesses about the identity of the speaker in certain fragments.

1.4 Previous work on linguistic interaction

Before proceeding to analyze this material, we need to review briefly some concepts taken from two interrelated branches of linguistics – pragmatics (1.4.1) and sociolinguistics (1.4.2) – since these will prove especially useful for the investigation.

1.4.1 Pragmatics

Behind the term *pragmatics* is the Greek πράγμα, "action," and students of pragmatics view language as action carried out by two people engaged in the on-going give and take of verbal communication.[19] Students in this field view speakers' assumptions about interaction and their particular speech situation as crucial factors affecting interpretation of meaning, word order, and linguistic choice.

Since the groundbreaking work of the philosophers of language Grice and Searle, scholars have not only devoted effort to elaborating those assumptions which operate in the background of most conversations, they have also focused more broadly on how the speech situation influences language use within the fields of politeness, conversation analysis, and speech-act theory.[20]

Classicists have initiated a "pragmatic" turn in the scholarship on Latin and Greek, employing insights from conversation analysis, politeness, and

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speech-act theory with excellent results.[21] For the pragmatics of Latin, Terence has furnished rich material. As has long been recognized, aspects of the African poet's language – for instance, ellipses, brief emotional outbursts, and primary interjections (*o*, *au*, *vah*) – emerge "naturally" from a particular speech situation. Thanks to Terence's close attention to the various situational constraints on conversation, scholars have been able to achieve rich context-based descriptions of dialogue signals: interjections, greetings, and attention-getters.[22]

In our investigation of Terence's and Plautus' language, we will attend to one set of situational constraints on linguistic usage: the speaker, the addressee, and their relationship to one another; in short, the conversational "dyad." The impact of the latter on speech constitutes one concern of sociolinguists, who, in general, study language use in its social contexts.

1.4.2 *Speech patterns*

The present work takes not only its perspective, but also its methodological orientation from sociolinguists, who employ a quantitative method in order to elaborate speech patterns.[23] In particular, we shall investigate variations in language by character type and by the binary categories: male/female, free/slave, and "high" or "low" status.[24] Much excellent work has already been done in this area but more of it has focused on Terence than on his predecessor. Alongside recent work, the present one aims to redress this imbalance.[25]

1.4.2.1 *Ancient authors on linguistic variation*

Yet the interest in linguistic variation in drama by gender, age, social status, and character type is not a recent development. Quintilian, first occupant of the chair of rhetoric at Rome under Vespasian, sees Menander as useful instruction in *ethopoiia*, the imitation of a person through speech whereby one ascribes language to that person which conforms with the latter's character and situation. (The famous example is Cicero's "resurrection" of Appius Claudius Caecus in *Pro Caelio*.)[26]

3

> ego tamen plus adhuc quiddam conlaturum eum declamatoribus puto, quoniam his necesse est secundum condicionem controversiarum plures subire personas, patrum, filiorum, <caelibum> maritorum, militum, rusticorum, divitum, pauperum, irascentium, deprecantium, mitium, asperorum, in quibus omnibus mire custoditur ab hoc poeta decor. (*Inst.* 10.71 Radermacher/Buchheit)

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> Nevertheless I think that he [*sc.* Menander] will bring still something more to declaimers, since it is necessary for them to assume rather many characters, according to the nature of their debates: fathers, sons, spouses, soldiers, rustics, rich, poor, those who are angry, pleading, gentle, harsh. The fittingness of speech in all of these is preserved amazingly well by this poet.

Plutarch, in his comparison of Menander and Aristophanes, similarly recognizes Menander's art in linguistic characterization.[27] Beginning with Sandbach's important article, numerous recent studies on Menander's art of individualization by speech have borne out the ancients' observations.[28] As we shall see, Plautus and Terence borrow from their source-author the concern with linguistic depiction of character.

For Terence's skill in this area, the testimony of Donatus is especially important. Readers of the fourth-century grammarian will already be familiar with many of his comments bearing on the topic.[29] Jakobi places these remarks in the tradition of *differentiae*, a category of *scholia* concerned with differences between two synonymous expressions. As Jakobi observes, when a character in Terence chooses from among two expressions conveying the same meaning, Donatus sometimes explains the choice by Terence's desire to depict character through language.[30] Donatus' comment on Demea, with his tendency toward exaggeration, is illustrative.

4

> *ad Ad.* 96 bene alienas dicit quia lenonis si diceret, parva res erat.
>
> *ad Ad.* 96 He does well to say "women belonging to others," because if he were to say "belonging to a pimp," the matter would be of small moment.

We shall occasionally employ Donatus' testimony on linguistic characterization, politeness, and pragmatic aspects of dialogue.

Before applying the commentary's insights, it may be useful to review several points. First, by "Donatus' commentary" I mean the mass of ancient scholia to Terence's plays, which consist of Donatus' in addition to other ancient scholars' thinking on the plays.[31] Second, Donatus so-named has native-speaker intuitions on the language, but these are relevant to the variant of Latin spoken by educated Romans of his own time. He can therefore go wrong in his assessment of Terence's Latin, a representation of the idiom spoken some six centuries before.[32]

I will therefore also make use of "metalinguistic" comments in Roman comedy and the testimony of Cicero and Quintilian, closer in time to our poets than Donatus. When possible, I will test Donatus' claims about a linguistic item using a quantitative approach, to be outlined below.

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In one particular, Donatus' commentary agrees with the earlier testimonies. The latter, when discussing linguistic characterization, refer to a linguistic norm, deviations from which are typical of women, slaves, rustics, and older people.[33] A speaker in a fragment from an Aristophanic play appears to laud a neutral dialect by casting it in opposition to effeminate and slavish speech.[34]

5

διάλεκτον ἔχοντα μέσην πόλεως
οὔτ' ἀστείαν ὑποθηλυτέραν
οὔτ' ἀνελεύθερον ὑπαγροικοτέραν

having the middle dialect of the city,
neither the foppish one, rather feminine,
nor the one characteristic of a slave, rather boorish.

(706 Kassel-Austin)

On one extreme, the speaker identifies a refined mode of speaking and dismisses it as effeminate (ἀστείαν ὑποθηλυτέραν). On the other extreme, he or she mocks a "slavish dialect, rather boorish" (ἀνελεύθερον ὑπαγροικοτέραν). In between the extremes of effeminate hyper-elegance and slavish boorishness is the preferable neutral "dialect" of the city (διάλεκτον … μέσην πόλεως). The speaker thus marks out a linguistic norm by opposing it to speech mannerisms characteristic of the "other": women, slaves, and uneducated rustics.[35] Implicit in Aristophanes' comments is a common assumption made by the ancients that a noble style results from noble character, the latter typically embodied in citizen men.[36]

We find a similar assumption in the commentary of Donatus.[37] Women, slaves, rustics, and old people depart from a linguistic norm of concise, grammatically correct speech because of their marginal status, lack of education, or age. To take an example, the ancient commentator, referring to an anacoluthon in a slave's speech, says

6

> *ad Ph.* 249 HABENDAE COMPEDES vitiosam locutionem servili personae dedit Terentius; nam integrum esset, si diceret "habendas compedes."
>
> *ad Phorm.* 249 SHACKLES ARE TO BE HAD Terence assigned an incorrect manner of speaking to a slave character: for were he to say it in the accusative "*habendas compedes*," it would be irreproachable.

The commentator implies that the slave's grammatically incorrect speech – his use of a nominative, although an accusative was expected – reflects

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his moral inferiority to free men. Similarly, for Donatus, rustic speech is characterized by grammatical mistakes, due to a lack of education, and old men, with their "loquacity characteristic of old age" *senilis garrulitas*, transgress the expectation for concise speech.[38]

In sum, ancient readers understood Menander and Terence to have differentiated the characters in their plays on the linguistic level. And these early writers assume that citizen males, central to the functioning of civil society, produce a linguistic norm in their speech from which marginal groups – women, slaves, and the elderly – diverge.

The inferiority of these groups to citizen males is reflected in Roman law on guardianship and throughout Republican literature.[39] To take one example of many, Cicero, in a discussion on largess in the form of theatrical and gladiatorial shows, observes that children, women, and slaves are susceptible to frivolous entertainments, thus suggesting their lack of reason and self-control: "these things are pleasing to boys, women, slaves – and to free men who are very much like slaves – but are impossible for a serious man to approve of": *haec pueris et mulierculis et servis et servorum simillimis liberis esse grata, gravi vero homini probari posse nullo modo* (*Off.* 2.57).[40]

These prevailing views on marginal groups determined to some extent how comic poets represented them on stage. In a humorous passage on gestures and delivery appropriate for an orator, Quintilian points out the intonational features of young, elderly, and feminine speech:

7

> Cum mihi comoedi quoque pessime facere videantur quod etiam si iuvenem agant, cum tamen in expositione, aut senis sermo, ut in Hydriae prologo, aut mulieris, ut in Georgo, incidit, tremula vel effeminata voce pronuntiant. (*Inst.* 11.3.91)
>
> Since to me, comic poets, too, seem to do very poorly because if they put a young man on stage, though he is still in a narration, or an old man's speech occurs, as in the prologue of the *Hydria*, or woman's, as in the *Georgos*, they all deliver their lines in a quavering or effeminate way.

In this passage, Quintilian is clearly reflecting performance practices relevant to the New Comedy of his own day. In the following section, we will see how these groups' – particularly women's, young men's, and slaves' – presumed inferiority and lack of self-control are reflected on the linguistic level.

1.4.2.2 Gender and the language of Roman comedy

About a decade before Adams published his important article on female speech in Roman comedy, Lakoff's 1973 "Language and women's place"

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