FEMALE ROLES IN THE PLAYS OF HROSWITHA AND TERENCE: THE AUTONOMY OF CELIBACY

A Thesis

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by

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Introduction: Hroswitha and Terence

There have been few women writers in the history of Latin literature. Therefore it is incumbent upon feminist scholars and those interested in the history of women in Western culture to raise from their relative obscurity the works of Hroswitha of Gandersheim. Hroswitha was a canoness (a nun who took the vows of chastity and obedience, but not the vow of poverty) of the abbey at Gandersheim, Saxony, about twenty miles from the present city of Hildesheim in Germany. She lived in the tenth century; the exact dates of her birth and death are unknown, but have been conjectured to have been approximately 935-1002.¹ She was still a young woman when Otto I founded the Holy Roman Empire, and inaugurated a revival of learning and artistic endeavor in Germany. The fruits of Hroswitha's literary career are eight saints' lives in verse, six dramas, two quasi-epic poems -- the *Gesta Ottonis*, a celebration of the achievements of Otto I's reign, and the *Primordia Coenobii Gandeshemensis*, the story of the founding of her abbey -- and a 35-line poem recounting the Revelation of St. John.

The works of Hroswitha which have received the most critical attention are the six dramas, inspired by the works of Terence and by the material found in the *Acta Sanctorum*, a collection of legends about the early Christian saints and martyrs.² Most critical discussions of Hroswitha's plays take as their point of departure her imitation of Terence's works. The justification for this approach comes from the preface which Hroswitha wrote to her dramatic works:

Plures inveniuntur catholici, cuius nos penitus expurgare nequamus facti, qui pro cultioris
facundia sermonis gentilium vanitatem librorum utilitati praeferunt sacrarum scripturarum. Sunt etiam alii, sacris inhaerentes paginis, qui licet alia gentilium spernant, Terentii tamen fingmenta frequentius lectitant et, dum dulcedine sermonis delectantur, nefandarum notitia rerum maculantur. Unde ego, Clamor Validus Gandeshemensis, non recusavi illum imitari dictando, dum alii colunt legendo, quo eodem dictationis genere, quo turpia lascivarrum incesta feminarum recitabantur, laudabilis sacrarum castimonia virginum iuxta mei facultatem ingenioli celebraretur. (Praefatio 2-3)³

Her purpose for writing and the nature of her imitation of Terence are stated clearly enough, but have been ignored or misunderstood by many commentators. First of all, it is clear that the author of the passage above does not intend to slavishly imitate Terence out of admiration for both his style and his subject matter. Hroswitha admits his style is quite attractive, but to her, his subject matter is not only undesirable for copying but actually dangerous. She wants rather to rewrite Terence, to keep the medium, drama, while changing the message. Secondly, she singles out "the laudable chastity of holy virgins" as her particular interest in theme, and "the shameless deeds of lascivious women" as the particular evil she wishes to supplant by her works.

Despite Hroswitha's statement of purpose, however, many critics still choose to chide her for not measuring up to Terentian standards of dramatic accomplishment, as if she had explicitly stated that she was going to compose Terence's brand of comedy instead of Christian drama. Those writers want to pin Hroswitha down to her suggestion that she will "imitate" Terence; their notion of what literary imitation should be does not admit such a wide divergence in theme and characterization as is found between Hroswitha's and Terence's works. Gilbert
Norwood considers Hroswitha's work "beneath serious criticism". Some commentators find interesting similarities and differences between Hroswitha's and Terence's works, but fail to recognize their significance for Hroswitha's drama. For instance, Cornelia Coulter lists some words and phrases, mainly oaths and exclamations, which are common in Terence's plays and also found occasionally in Hroswitha's. She does not note, however, which characters generally use these expressions and how that might help us better understand Hroswitha's intent in using them. Ms. Coulter also notices the importance of courtesans' roles in both Hroswitha and Terence, and the "prominence of the love element", but does not go far in discussing the important changes which Hroswitha made in adapting these Terontian themes for use in her own work. Arthur Roberts lists a number of differences between Terence's and Hroswitha's works, but does not discuss any of them in detail; he is led to believe that Hroswitha's imitation of Terence lies only in the use of the dramatic form. Kenneth DeLuca, on the other hand, finds some parallel scenes and common dramatic techniques in the two playwrights but does not relate them to Hroswitha's statement of purpose. Perhaps it is these authors' fixation on Terence as a paragon of dramatic writing in Latin that makes them fail to appreciate Hroswitha's uniqueness and to go beyond surface appearances in comparing her and Terence.

Many modern critics find Hroswitha's brand of Christianity, with its insistence on the superiority of the celibate life, impossible to accept. It is true that Hroswitha, dedicated to the celibate life and convinced of its beneficial nature, had difficulty accepting the validity of any other life style for the Christian
woman or man. It is unfortunate, however, that some commentators have let their bias against Hroswitha's Christianity obstruct their appreciation of Hroswitha's uniqueness. Harry Wedekl seems to equate the religious life with stuffiness and lack of wit. Taking the humor of Hroswitha as his topic, he assumes that Hroswitha's declaration of intent to imitate Terence meant that she intended to write comedy, which was not the case. Kenneth DeLuca reduces Hroswitha's convictions about celibacy to a kind of prudery:

To speak of the "wickedness" of Terence's matter seems to stretch even tenth-century morals to the breaking point. Perhaps Hrotsvit's sense of humor had grown dull. Or perhaps she had fallen victim to an overly rigorous spirituality (she has an unhappy tendency, for example, to equate the true Christian life with one of absolute virginity). More probably, however, she simply did not understand the ways of the imagination, nor the concern of literature to comment on, rather than to reform, the human situation. This is why, instead of accepting Terence's prostitutes and love-smitten young men as merely part of the comic landscape, she saw them as a threat.

Not only does DeLuca refuse to accept Hroswitha on her own terms, but he rejects any writer who does not conform to his rather limited vision of the purpose of literature. At the heart of Hroswitha's writing is a call to radically reform the human situation, a call shared by other Christians. Her message is carried by the heroines of her plays, who reform their own lives and the lives of those around them.

Most of Hroswitha's critics also ignore the centrality of women to Hroswitha's dramatic works, even while discussing individual female characters. A. Daniel Frankforter has pointed out this problem in his recent essay on Hroswitha's plays. He insists that Hroswitha's
preface must be taken at its face value — that is, that the importance of women in her plays must be realized — for a full understanding of the thematic structure of her plays to be possible. The same is true, I believe, for the question of Hroswitha's imitation of Terence. Any comparison of Hroswitha and Terence must be made in the context of her statement of purpose: she wants to focus on womankind, and change the picture of women which Terence has presented in his plays.

Hroswitha wrote about the same kinds of women that Terence did; they fall into three basic categories: virgines or young unmarried women, matronae or married women, and meretrices, courtesans or prostitutes. She shows them interacting with men, as did Terence, although she does not borrow scene for scene. Some of the situations are similar, but are given such a different twist by Hroswitha that they are practically unrecognizable as borrowings. But the nature and outcome of these interactions with men are quite different for Hroswitha's heroines than for Terence's female characters. Hroswitha contrasts the fates and characters of her women sharply with those of Terence's: her "imitation" or borrowing from Terence has this contrast as its goal.

The contrast is sharp indeed. Hroswitha's women are generally much more prominent in her plays than Terence's are in his, especially in the cases of the virgines and matronae. They have more to say and more to contribute to the dramatic action. Although a woman might provide the pretext for action by the men in a Terentian play, she rarely initiates a decisive action herself. Even if she has an idea or complaint, a woman often must wait for a man's action to change the situation. The women in
Hroswitha's plays are more autonomous in the sense that their thoughts and deeds are not motivated by consideration for or dependence upon men. They show great degrees of inner strength and boldness in speech and action appropriate to their individual situations.

All of the women in Terence are tied to men in some sexual way, in the role of wife or mistress; this often serves to inhibit the range of their action and speech. The celibate life which Hroswitha holds up as the ideal for her heroines frees them from such sexual ties and the social ties of financial and personal dependence which they entail. Men place no restrictions on their freedom of speech or action. But Hroswitha does not stop at the goal of personal independence; in her Christian scheme of things no person is fulfilled outside the service of God. To Hroswitha, then, the best way for a woman to spend her life would be to free herself, through celibacy, from personal ties (particularly sexual ties) to men which would keep her from devoting all her time to God.

In summary, the method of Hroswitha's imitation of Terence was to depict women of the same basic role types as are found in Terence, and show them interacting with men, as they did in Terence. The twist was to make the women more central to the dramatic action, and to change the outcome of their interactions with men. The idea behind this effort was to show the superiority of the celibate life for women. The following pages will illustrate the contrast that appears between the major female characters in Terence and those in Hroswitha, within each of the categories virgines, matronae, and meretrices. These descriptions will also serve to point out the greater importance and increased autonomy of women in
Hroswitha's plays.

Such a change in depiction of women is heartening to a modern feminist scholar, and it is tempting to say that Hroswitha was advocating an increase in personal independence for women. But this would be taking Hroswitha out of context. Women's autonomy as such was not a concern to Hroswitha, who lived in a society that took for granted the interdependence of all beings, and everyone's ultimate dependence on God. Hroswitha wanted women to be free from earthly ties so that they could take on heavenly ones. The domination involved in sexual relationships with men was to be removed from women's lives because it was an obstacle to their perfection of the more fulfilling relationship with God. Hroswitha was a kind of tenth-century feminist, but the liberation she held out to women is not one that can be enjoyed within the limitations of this world.
Part I: The Virgines

All of Terence's virgines are bound to men in some way, or become so by the end of the play. All are mute or near-mute parts; Pamphila of the Adelphoe and Glycerium of the Andria are merely heard to cry out in childbirth. An exception is Antiphila, who appears briefly onstage in Act 2, Scene 4 of the Heauton Timorumenos. Although the plot of the Andria revolves around Pamphilus' passion for Glycerium, Glycerium herself never appears on stage. The only picture we have of her outside of her anguish in childbirth (heard in Act 3, Scene 1) is given by the old man Simo's description of her behavior at the funeral of her foster-mother, the courtesan Chrysis (l. 127-136). Glycerium is beside herself with grief and seeks to throw herself on Chrysis' funeral pyre. Pamphilus attempts to restrain her and she falls into his arms, weeping. The commission of Glycerium to Pamphilus' care by the dying Chrysis (described by Pamphilus in l. 282-298), moving as it is, takes place without a word from Glycerium herself. Glycerium was old enough to have been related to Pamphilus pro puero (l. 273), but still had no say in this transfer of authority over her.

When Antiphila has her brief moment on stage in the Heauton Timorumenos, she has very little to say beyond the revealing statement nescio alias: me quidem semper scio fecisse sedulo/ ut ex illius commodo meum compararem commodum (referring to Clinia, her lover) (l. 396-397). Shortly afterwards, when she finally sees her long-lost lover Clinia coming toward her, she nearly faints (l. 403, 405). The report of Syrus the slave to Clinia in
Act 2, Scene 3 gives us another insight into the character of this man-oriented woman. When Syrus had found Antipha, she was living chastely with an old woman, working hard and waiting for Clinia. When he informed her that Clinia wanted to see her, *mulier telam desinit/continuo et lacrumis opplet os totum sibi, ut facile scias desiderio id fieri tuo* (1. 304-307). She has no words for the messenger, but he assumes her consent to her beloved's wishes from the appearance of her grateful tears.

The tears of Pamphila in the *Eumuchus* are more likely tears of grief and outrage, as they come, reported by a servant in 1. 659, after she has been brutally raped by the "hero" of the play, Chaerea. As if to add insult to injury, Pamphila is later betrothed to her rapist. Her mistress, the courtesan Thais, rebukes Chaerea mildly for his misdeed, agreeing with his poor excuse for the rape: *unum hoc scito, contumeliae/ non me fecisse causa, sed amoris* (1. 877-878). Thais tells him, *non adeo inhumano ingenio sum, Chaerea, neque ita inperita, ut quid amor valeat nesciam* (1. 880-881). She is actually more upset that he has spoiled her property and her chances for ingratiating herself with Pamphila's family, than that he has injured and abused Pamphila as a person (1. 865-871). The maid Pythias, who is the only character to express real indignation over the rape, is dismissed by Thais as a raving madwoman (1. 861) and by Chaerea as a pest (1. 900-904). Chaerea's betrothal to Pamphila is generally seen by the others as a felicitous outcome of unfortunate circumstances. But not a word is heard from Pamphila herself.

The other Pamphila, in the *Adelphoe*, has nothing to
say either. At the beginning of the play, she is pregnant by a lover who appears to have abandoned her; actually, he is just temporarily occupied with abducting a slave girl for his brother's pleasure. Although all the machinations of these two brothers involve their desire to secure their futures with their lady-loves, the ladies themselves contribute nothing directly to the action or dialogue of the play.

One must keep in mind, however, that even had Terence wanted to portray strong and interesting virgines, he would have been restricted by the limitations of the tradition within which he was working. Terence wrote fabula palliata or "comedies in Greek dress" -- plays adapted from Greek originals, which had to respect Greek social convention. Terence therefore was doubly constrained; he had to consider not only Roman but the harsher Greek customs. As George Duckworth notes:

Social convention and the rigidity of the stage setting (with its lack of interior scenes) alike made it difficult for young girls of good family to take part in the action. When the heroines of Roman comedy are girls of respectable parentage, they remain offstage.

To even allow the virgo to become part of the plot, Terence, following his models in Greek New Comedy, often had to contrive a situation in which the young woman was actually of free and noble birth, but through some misfortune in her early childhood had lost her natural family and did not know her true origins. This gave the young man in the play the necessary opportunity to meet and become intimate with her, without any blot on her "respectability". For, as Gilbert Norwood notes, a reputable unmarried woman in ancient times did not
come and go freely and had little access to male company. Terence had to make concessions to what public opinion would bear. Though he expanded upon the achievements of his comic predecessors in other areas, notably in his characterization of the meretrices, he apparently did not feel free to make a change in the virgo's situation. It is interesting to note that the later fabula togata or "comedies in Roman dress" gave women a larger part in the dramatic action. Perhaps this was not only because this more thoroughly Romanized version of comedy did not have to respect Greek social convention, but also because the fabula togata mainly depicted people of a lower social class, unlike the palliata which always dealt with well-to-do families, concerned about social status and respectability.

Hroswitha too depicted women of a higher social class, even of aristocratic family, but she was not bound by Terence's constraints. She was reviving and revamping the drama, not continuing in an unbroken tradition. She was not intent on writing comedy per se, and so was not obliged to exaggerate character to make the audience laugh. And Hroswitha lived in another time; the social and intellectual climate had changed. It might be argued that there were just as many restrictions on the free movement of virgines in Hroswitha's time as in Terence's. Even ladies who sought the religious life had first to obtain their fathers' consent; noble virgines destined for marriage were often pawns in political alliances. In any case, the boldness with which Hroswitha invests her heroines is not a boldness with which patriarchal moralists would necessarily quibble. They are headstrong in resisting love-affairs, not in instigating or participating in them. The heroines
of the Gallicanus and the Dulcitius refuse proposals of marriage; the heroines of the Dulcitius manage to escape from less lawful advances.

The virgo Constantia, daughter of the emperor Constantine, is the heroine of the Gallicanus, Hroswitha's only two-act play; all of her other plays consist of only one act. The first act relates how Constantia manages to solve the dilemma in which her father finds himself, while standing firm in her resolve to remain celibate. Gallicanus, a powerful general in Constantine's army, asks for Constantia's hand in marriage on the eve of a very important battle against the Scythians. Constantine needs Gallicanus' help in the war desperately; he is therefore unable to dismiss Gallicanus' suit. He knows, however, that Constantia has taken a vow of chastity, so he is reluctant to approach her with news of Gallicanus' request. The first scene of the play is rather amusing, and reveals the power of Constantia in her relationship with her father. Gallicanus is hesitant in declaring his suit, fearful of his lord the emperor's reaction, while Constantine, when he hears Gallicanus' request, is fearful of Constantia's reaction. When the courtiers who are present urge Constantine to grant Gallicanus this favor, Constantine replies cautiously:

Si abnuo, quantum ad me; sed subtili primum inquisitione reor investigandum, an filia praebet assensum. (I, 8)

In the second scene, Constantine goes into Constantia's chambers with a heavy heart; like a dutiful daughter, Constantia solicitously coaxes him to unburden himself to her. When she realizes, however, that her own vocation to celibacy is at stake, her filial solicitude
changes into a steadfast refusal:

Constantine: Gallicanus dux, cui frequens successus triumphorum primum inter principes dignitatis adquisivit gradum cuiusque ope saepissime indigemus ad defensione patriae,

Constantia: Quid ille?
Constantine: Desiderat te sponsam habitum ire.
Constantia: Me?
Constantine: Te.
Constantia: Malim mori.
Constantine: Praescivi.
Constantia: Nec mirum, quia tuo consensu, tuo permisso servandum deo virginitatem devovi.
Constantine: Memini.
Constantia: Nullis enim suppliciis umquam potero compelli, quin inviolatum custodiam sacramentum propositi.
(II, 2-3)

Constantia cannot be sold on her suitor's merits; she even gently upbraids her father, who gave her permission to make her vow, for not having known better than to bring up the subject of marriage. Her father agrees, but attempts to explain the bind in which he finds himself. Constantia is undaunted by her father's obstacles. She reminds him that, as a Christian, his trust should be in God;

Constantia: Si enim divinum desperarem esse auxilium, mihi quam maxime, mihi potissimum esset dolendum.

Constantine: Verum.
Constantia: Nunc autem nullus relinquitur
locus maestitiae praesumenti de
domi pietae.
(II, 4)

Constantia convinces her father to put off Galli-
canus by pretending that he has her consent. She plans
to send her primicerii or chamberlains, John and Paul,
off to the Scythian wars with Gallicanus, while she in
turn hosts Gallicanus' daughters in her own home. When
her father insists, *Et quid, si victor revertetur, mihi
erit agendum?* Constantia entrusts the success of the
scheme to God: *Reor omnipatrem prius esse invocandum,
quo ab hujusmodi intentione Gallicanus revocet animum*
(II, 5). Both Constantine and Gallicanus are satisfied,
for the time being.

In Scene V, Constantia prays for help in converting
Gallicanus and his daughters. The prayer touches on a
number of themes which are recurrent in Hroswitha's
plays -- ultimate trust in God, determination to remain
celibate, the desirability of the spiritual marriage to
Christ over marriage to a human husband:

*Amator virginitatis et inspirator castitatis,
Christe, qui me precibus martiris tuae Agnetis
a lepra pariter corporis et ab errore eripiens
gentilitatis invitasti ad virgineum tuæ geni-
tricis thalamum, in quo tu manifestus es verus
deus retro exordium natus a deo patre...te...
suppliciter exoro, ut Gallicanum, qui tui in
d me amorem surripiendo conatur extingvere, post
te trahendo ab injusta intentione revocare
suique filias digneris tibi assignare sponsas;
et instilla cogitationibus earum tui amoris
dulcedinem, quatinus excreantes carnale consor-
tium pervenire mereantur ad sacrarum societatem
virginum. (V, 2-3)*

Constantia then effortlessly persuades Gallicanus' two
daughters to adopt the Christian faith and take vows
of chastity. She then calls in her chamberlains John and Paul. She instructs them to go with Gallicanus and convince him to become a Christian.

In the heat of the battle against the Scythians, in Scene IX, John promises victory to Gallicanus if he will vow to become a Christian, Gallicanus agrees, and a miraculous victory ensues. Gallicanus is baptized and vows to live the rest of his life in God's service. When he returns from battle, he no longer wishes to claim Constantia as his prize, and is happy to see that his daughters too have decided on lives of celibacy. He greets them:

Vivite feliciter, o sanctae virgines, perseverantes in dei amore, decusque virginitatis inviolatum servate, quo dignae inveniamini amplexibus regis aeterni. (XIII, 1)

Constantia's faith in God has been vindicated.

When the second act of the Gallicanus opens, Julian is emperor and seeks to control the freedom of the Christians. Constantia does not appear in this second act, but her influence is still keenly felt. Gallicanus, whose conversion to Christianity she worked and prayed for, resists the pagan emperor and suffers exile and eventually martyrdom for his beliefs. John and Paul, Constantia's chamberlains, are arrested for causing a disturbance by wandering about and giving away Constantia's wealth (Scene IV). They too are steadfast in resistance, and suffer martyrdom. Even in their graves, however, they facilitate the conversion of others to Christianity. A young man whose father, curiously enough named Terrentianus, was responsible for John and Paul's deaths suffers demonic possession at the site of their graves. He is cured by the intercession of the martyrs
when Terrentianus calls upon them and promises to have both his son and himself baptized. The continuing action of God's favor through those who are beloved to Him, even after death, is celebrated here.

In the Gallicanus, then, Constantia motivates the actions of the male characters in Act I: her beauty elicits Gallicanus' proposal, which in turn creates Constantine's dilemma; her advice resolves Constantine's dilemma and persuades Constantine to put off Gallicanus by a ruse; her command sends John and Paul to the front with Gallicanus, and indirectly leads to his conversion to Christianity, which permanently solves the original dilemma. Her unwavering faith in God surmounts all obstacles and diverts the challenge posed by Gallicanus to her choice of the celibate life. Directly or indirectly, she brings Constantine and Gallicanus around to her point of view, instead of capitulating to them. Although she is not physically present in the second act of the play, her spirit of steadfast faith shines through in the male characters whose lives she had touched in the first act. Gallicanus, John, and Paul all become witnesses to the faith, stalwart in adversity. In turn, God shows His allegiance to them, even after their deaths, by effecting the cure of Terrentianus' son and the conversion of both father and son. For Hroswitha, Constantia was a model of Christian fortitude; she also served to illustrate how women, through their lives and through their faith, could be examples to others in their world.

The virgines of the Dulcitius were also examples of fortitude. They meet much more resistance to their determination to remain virgin and Christian, but they are equal to the task. At the beginning of the play, the emperor Diocletian offers to arrange suitable marriages
for the well-born maidens Agape, Chonia, and Hirena, if they will deny Christ. Agape refuses for all of them:

Esto securus curarum, nec te gravet nostrum praeparatio nuptiarum, quia nec ad negationem confitendi nominis, nec ad corruptionem integritatis uilis rebus compelli poterimus.
(I, 1)

Diocletian is offended by the boldness of the sisters' resistance to his authority, and has them incarcerated and placed under the surveillance of his lieutenant Dulcitius. Dulcitius is taken with the sisters' physical beauty and plots to force his attentions on them. His plot backfires, however, and the young women are miraculously saved from rape as Dulcitius stumbles into the kitchen near their cell and embraces the pots and pans instead. His lust is viewed by his would-be victims as a kind of insanity: Ecce, iste stultus, mente alienatus, aestimat se nostris uti amplexibus (Hirena, IV, 2). Agape sees it as a diabolic possession (IV, 3). The unsuspecting Dulcitius, black with soot from his amorous encounter with the kitchen implements, is mistaken for the devil by his cohorts who flee from him in fear, and is beaten by the palace guards. When he realizes that he has been made a laughing-stock, the outraged Dulcitius orders the virgins to be punished by being publicly stripped. The clothes miraculously cling to the girls' bodies, however, and they are once more saved from sexual humiliation.

Diocletian then removes the virgins from Dulcitius' jurisdiction and hands them over to Sisinnius to be tortured. Agape and Chonia are not swayed by the threats of Sisinnius, and refuse to sacrifice to the pagan gods. They are condemned to be burned, and they submit to death.
not because they are truly vanquished by their captors, but because they are weary of this world, and eager for their heavenly prize. Agape prays:

Non tibi, domine, non tibi haec potentia insolita, ut ignis vim virtutis suae obliviscatur, tibi obtemperando. Sed taeget nos morarum; ideo rogamus solvi retinacula animarum, quo extinctis corporibus tecum plaudant in aethre nostri spiritus. (XI, 4)

The virgins trust that God could save them again, as He saved them from rape and humiliation; the martyr's death is truly their choice.

Hirena remains behind, but cannot be persuaded by Sisinnius to deny her faith. She does not blanch at the mention of torture, for she believes Quicquid irrogabis adversi, evadam iuvamine Christi (XII, 2). Sisinnius threatens to send her to a brothel, but she responds, Melius est, ut corpus quibuscumque injuriis maculetur, quam anima idolis polluatur (XII, 3). Sisinnius counters, Si socia eris meretricum, non poteris polluta intra contubernium computari virginum (XII, 3). But Hirena replies, Voluptas parit poenam, necessitas autem coronam; nec dicitur reatus, nisi quod consentit animus (XII, 3). The will is all-important; Hirena refuses to accept personal blame for something that Sisinnius would impose upon her. She knows that if she remains determined, she cannot be forced in any way to worship what she considers false gods: the pagan idols, and sexual lust.

Sisinnius orders Hirena to be carried off, but once more she miraculously escapes harm and eludes Sisinnius' soldiers with the help of two celestial beings. Sisinnius rides out himself to find her, but is frustrated in his attempt to ascend the mountain ridge where his men
lost Hirena. He finally orders his archers to shoot the maiden, as she taunts him:

In felix, erubesce, Sisinni, erubesce, teque turpiter victum ingemisce, quia tenellae infantiam virgunculae absque armorum apparatu nequivisti superare. (XIV, 3)

Irena, like her sisters, accepts her death readily, with a parting shot at Sisinnius:

Hinc mihi quam maxime gaudendum, tibi vero dolendum, quia pro tui severitate malignitatis in tartara dampnaberis; ego autem, martirii paimam virginitatisque receptura coronam, intrabo æthereum aeterni regis thalamum, cui est honor et gloria in saecula. (XIV, 3)

She reminds Sisinnius that although she and her sisters will have been physically vanquished, the real victory is theirs.

The virgines of the Sapientia, Fides, Spes, and Karitas, face a challenge to their faith similar to that which the triad of sisters face in the Dulcitius. Their situation is different, however, in that their virginity is not directly threatened by any of the men in the play. But the issue of chastity is not totally absent; in Scene I, when the emperor Hadrian and his lieutenant Antiochus are discussing the disruption which the virgines' mother, Sapientia, is causing by her preaching, Antiochus complains that wives newly converted to Christianity have been deserting their husbands' beds:

Antiochus: Haec igitur femina, cuius mentionem facio, hortatur nostrates, avitus ritus deserere et christianae religioni se dedere.

Hadrian: Num praevalet hortamentum?

Antiochus: Nimium; nam nostrae coniuges fastiendo nos contemnunt adeo, ut de dignantur nobiscum comedere, quanto
minus dormire.

Hadrian: Fateor, periculum.
(I, 5-6)

The Christian women are viewed as a subversive force; their unique lifestyle of celibacy is a threat to the status quo. Hadrian and Antiochus decide that the women must be made to yield to their authority and sacrifice to the pagan gods, for this threat to be removed. It is not stated explicitly anywhere in the play that the Christian women must be made to marry or otherwise give up their celibate status, but the words of Antiochus and Hadrian make it clear that they saw sexual activity as a normal part of Roman life, and they were unpleasantly surprised that the Christian women did not conform to that norm. Their Christian faith and their celibate lifestyle went hand in hand, and both were viewed by the Roman officials as disruptive forces which must be stopped.

In this play, Hroswitha makes great capital out of the supposed helplessness of women. When Sapientia and her daughters are first presented before Hadrian, he asks Antiochus, Numquid hae sunt mulierculae, quas deferebas pro christianae religione? (III, 2) He refers to the women with the diminutive, expressing scorn and disbelief that these "little women" could be precipitating such a great disturbance in the state. He admires their physical beauty, and suggests to Antiochus that they should be approached first with sweet words, since harsher measures may not be needed to elicit their compliance: Quid, si illas primule aggredeat blanda alloquutione, si forte velint cedere? (III, 3) Antiochus answers: Melius est; nam fragilitas sexus feminei...
facilius potest blandimentia molliri (III, 3). Their hopes are dashed, however, for Sapientia is firm in her refusal to worship the pagan gods, and she urges her daughters to follow her example. Even the threat of torture cannot move them. The dialogue of Scene IV, which takes place between Sapientia and the virgines in prison, exhibits the strong bond between mother and daughters, and their determination to stand firm against Hadrian’s threats. Sapientia exhorts her daughters, who steel themselves for the trials they must undergo and confirm their commitment to Christ as their heavenly spouse. They are willing to die if they must to remain faithful to their commitment, and they owe the strength of their faith to their mother’s teachings; as Karitas says, Quod surgentes ubera in cunabulis didicimus, nullatenus oblivisci quibimus (IV, 3).

Fides, Spes, and Karitas drive Hadrian and his men to desperation. None of the arguments they use can persuade the virgins to renounce their faith; none of the terrible punishments they inflict on the girls are effective. Fides, while being scourged, proudly addresses the emperor:

Erras, Adriane, si reris me fatigare suppli- ciis; non ego quidem, sed infirmi tortores deficiunt et sudore ob lassitudinem fluunt. (V, 8)

Hadrian orders the nipples of her breasts cut off — a blatantly sexual mutilation — but this does not work either; Fides retorts:

Inviolatum pectus vulnerasti, sed me non laesisti, En, pro fonte sanguinis unda erumpit lactis. (V, 9)

Boiling her in pitch and wax does not change her heart;
she taunts Hadrian:

Ubi sunt minae tuae? Ecce, illaesa inter ferventem liquorem ludens nato, et pro vi caumatis sentio matutini refrigerium roris. (V, 11)

Hadrian turns to Antiochus in despair, Antioche, quid ad haec est agendum? (V, 12) They decide to behead her, for Aliquuin non vincetur, as Antiochus admits (V, 12). Fides accepts her demise gladly: Nunc est gaudendum, nunc in domino exultandum (V, 13). She affirms her solidarity with her mother and sisters through an exchange of kisses and mutual exhortations before her death.

Spes follows boldly in her older sister's footsteps. She is beaten by Hadrian's men, so severely that the very flesh is torn from her body. Nothing moves her; in fact, the torn shreds of flesh give off a celestial fragrance:

Decidentia frusta mei laceratis corporis dant flagrantiam paradisiaci aromatis, quonolens cogeris fateri me non posse suppli-
ciis laedi. (V, 23)

Nor can she be conquered with boiling oil and pitch; the vessel in which she is simmering bursts, and Hadrian's men are burned instead. Hadrian admits, Fateor, victi sumus (V, 25), and Antiochus agrees, Penitus (V, 25). Again they agree to use the sword; after encouraging her remaining sister, Spes bends her neck willingly: Libens excipio gladium (V, 28).

Although Hadrian modifies his demands for Karitas -- he asks her not to sacrifice, but only to say magna Diana (V, 32) -- she too stands firm in her refusal to submit. She affirms her solidarity with her
dead sisters:

Ego quidem et sorores meae, eisdem parentibus
genitae, eisdem sacramentis imbutae, sumus
una eademque fidei constantia roboratae; qua-
propter scito nostrum velle, nostrum sentire,
 nostrum sapere unum idemque esse, nec in me
ullo unquam illis dissidere. (V, 33)

Hadrian groans, O iniquia, quod a tantilla etiam con-
tempnor homulululal (V, 34) Karitas replies, Licet
penella sum aetate, tamen gnara sum te argumentose
confundere (V, 34). The outraged Hadrian orders her to
be beaten and thrown into a furnace, but, as she pre-
dicts, she again emerges unharmed, though many men are
burned by the flames. Hadrian shamefacedly admits,
Erubesco illam ultra videre, quia nequeo illam laedere
(VI, 3). For the last time he resorts to the sword, and
Karitas willingly submits, crying, Tibi, Christe,
gloria, qui me ad te vocasti cum martyrii palma (VII, 2).

The three virgines of the Sapientia, like their
counterparts in the Dulcitius, are bold and courageous
in their confrontations with men; they resist male
authority and often reduce it to impotent frustration.
Like Constantia, their faith in God is unwavering, as is
their conviction that the virginal life is the best
choice for them. In the characters of Hroswitha's vir-
gines, feminina fragilitas vinceret, et virilis robor
confusioni subiaceret (Praefatio 5), as she promises in
the preface to her plays.

Of course, in normal human terms, the "victory" of
the maidens is bittersweet at best. Although they es-
cape sexual and intellectual humiliation, the virgines
of Hroswitha's Dulcitius and Sapientia are submitted to
torture and killed in the end by the men they have so
stubbornly opposed. One must view this seeming tragedy
through the eyes of faith in the Cross of Christ for it
to make any sense, and that is precisely how Hroswitha viewed it. She wanted to focus on the heroism and steadfast faith of the virgines, on their allegiance to something or Someone beyond the ties and pleasures of this world. For Hroswitha, a believer in the kingdom of God which is not of this world, death was not necessarily a tragedy, and suffering in the name of Christ -- a spouse who could impose none of the material restrictions of an earthly spouse -- was actually a privilege.

It is difficult to compare Hroswitha's virgines with Terence's; the two sets of women are so different in characterization and in dramatic function within the plays. In Terence, the young women provide an excuse for the young men to scheme and struggle, but they themselves rarely appear on stage, and seem to have no will of their own apart from the will of their lovers. In Hroswitha, the women do the scheming and struggling themselves. The virgines in Hroswitha provoke the actions of the men, and also play a central part in most of the action and dialogue. They stand for a set of beliefs and principles, and hold firm to those beliefs and principles, even in the face of opposition from men. Terence's virgines have no such convictions, and wordlessly go along with the wishes of the men in their lives. Their fortunes rise or fall with those of their lovers. The religious commitment to celibacy of Hroswitha's virgines gives them an independence from men -- and a dependence upon God -- which Terence's virgines do not have. The dependence upon God is significant; Hroswitha's plays are not simply celebrations of the virtues and accomplishments of individual women, but they all point to the working of God's power and grace in and through these women.
Part II: The Matronae

The matronae in Terence's plays, as a group, have considerably more lines to speak than do the virgines, but the general impression one gets of their situation is not too different: the matronae, too, are subservient to men. They may express frustration at their situation, like poor Sostrata in Act 2, Scene 3 of the Hecyra, but can do little to actually change it. Terence is not unsympathetic to their plight; he generally depicts the matronae as more compassionate and sensible than their menfolk. Still, their compassion and common sense must wait on the blustery tempers of the male characters for any action to take place. The matronae of Terence are long-suffering mothers and wives; the older matronae are consumed with care for their children, but cannot seem to envision their happiness in any state other than marriage.

Philumena in the Hecyra, the youngest of the matronae, was raped by her husband Pamphilus before their marriage. The crime occurred under cover of darkness, and Philumena was not able to see her rapist's face. Pamphilus, who was quite drunk at the time, was unaware of his victim's identity. Philumena became pregnant as a result of the rape, and taking the entire burden of guilt for the rape and pregnancy upon herself, fled to her parents' home to hide from her husband as soon as her condition became obvious. All the misunderstandings arising from this situation furnish matter for the plots and sub-plots of the Hecyra, but Philumena remains mute throughout the entire play, and never appears on stage.

Myrrina, Philumena's mother, is party to her
daughter's guilty feelings. She aids Philumena in her intent to hide the pregnancy from Pamphilus. She even contrives to hide it from her own husband, Philumena's father, until Philumena has given birth and the facts can be hidden no longer. Myrrina fearfully confronts her husband in Act 4, Scene 1, and even then admits to only half the truth — the birth of the child, not the circumstances of his conception. To Myrrina's way of thinking, the best thing she can do for her daughter is to keep her married to Pamphilus, under any circumstances. Of course, Myrrina and Philumena were both probably fearful that Philumena would be accused as an adulteress by her husband, when he found out that she was pregnant and knew that it could not have been a child of their only recently consummated marriage. Divorce under those circumstances would have brought great shame upon Philumena and her family, caused at least the loss of her dowry, and made it next to impossible for her to remarry.\(^{19}\)

Myrrina is apologetic when she explains about the rape to Pamphilus; she even offers to expose the child at birth so that he and Philumena can stay together without scandal (L. 378-384, 386-401). Pamphilus for his part places his masculine sense of honor above his feelings for his wife or for the child (L. 403-406). When the story comes out that the identity of Philumena's rapist and that of her husband are one and the same, there is rejoicing on all sides. There is no sense of indignation, no accusal or rebuke of Pamphilus for the rape. There is only joy that Pamphilus is the true father of Philumena's child, and a sense of relief; their marriage may proceed blissfully now. Philumena is expected to feel joy and relief too, and love
for the man who once brutally raped her. But we never

do find out first-hand what her reaction is. Nor do we
discover first-hand the reaction of Myrrina, who un-
covered the rapist's identity by recognizing her
daughter's ring on the hand of the courtesan Bacchis,
to whom Pamphilus had given it immediately after the
rape. We are left to assume from Bacchis' report in
1. 815-840 that Myrrina is as satisfied with the out-
come of the situation as is Pamphilus himself at the
end of the play.

Pamphilus' mother Sostrata, like Myrrina, is soli-
citous about her child's well-being, but sees it only
within the context of marriage. Her well-meaning con-
cern for her son and his marriage are met only with
scorn by her husband Laches, who reviles her (Act 2,
Scene 1). Although she realizes his unfairness, and
the unfairness of men to their wives and to mothers-in-
law in general (Act 2, Scene 3), apparently Sostrata
cannot conceive of happiness outside the married state.
She offers to sacrifice her residence in town for her
son's marital bliss (1. 583-588).

Another Sostrata, the mother of Clitipho and Anti-
phila in the Heauton Timorumenos, is also compassionate
and concerned about her children. But like the matronae
of the Hecyra, she is browbeaten by her husband, Chremes,
Sostrata is always the butt of Chremes' misogynist
jests and angry outbursts. He reviles her as stupid and
obstinate (1. 630, 632-643; 1006-1010), though she says
nothing to reveal herself as either. Instead, she an-
swers him meekly. Sostrata fears Chremes and is careful
in her speech with him, begging mercy only for her
children (Act 4, Scene 1; Act 5, Scenes 4 and 5).
The Sostrata in the *Adelphoe* is assertive in a way; she is determined to make the father of her daughter Pamphila's child take responsibility for his promises, even if it means taking him to court. But throughout her short role in the play (she appears only in Act 3, Scenes 1 and 2), she is totally reliant on the support and approval of the men in her life, the slave Geta and her kinsman Hegio. And it is to win a husband, the youth Aeschinus, for her daughter that she undertakes her desperate scheme in the first place.

The one _matrona_ in Terence who gains an upper hand over her male relatives quickly loses it -- in fact, by giving it away. Nausistrata in the _Phormio_ is an assertive personality. She first appears in Act 5, Scene 3, vigorously denouncing her husband Chremes' business sense to his brother Demipho. At one point she exclaims, _virum me natum vellem; ego ostenderem_ (l. 793), implying that she could and would do a better job than her husband, were it not for the restrictions on her sex. Nausistrata becomes indignant in Act 5, Scene 9 when informed about Chremes' bigamy: _pro di inmortales, facinus miserandum et malum!...an quicquam hodiest factum indignius?_ (l. 1008-1009) Her wrath strikes fear into Chremes' soul, but instead of using this situation to gain greater leverage for herself in her dealings with the men in her life, she hands it over to her son Phaedria, deferring to his judgment. Her reason for this is that Phaedria was slighted by his father's hypocrisy; while he forbade his son to keep a mistress, Chremes kept two wives himself:

_adeone indignum hoc tibi videtur, filius homo adulescens si habet unam amicam, tu uxores duas? nil pudere? quo ore illum obiurgabis?_ (l. 1040-1042)
The character Phormio, by his informing on Chremes and thus discrediting him with his wife, had in essence placed the regulation of Phaedria's affair into Nausistrata's hands. Nausistrata, however, abdicates all responsibility by trusting Phaedria to decide not only his own future but hers as well, that is, the future of her relationship with Chremes:

immo ut meam iam scias sententiam, 
neque ego ignosco neque promitto quicquam
neque respondeo
prius quam gnatum videro: eius iudicio
permitto omnia.
quod is iubebit faciam.
(1, 1043-1046)

The roles of these matronae in their respective dramatic situations are limited by their relationships to men. They cannot be completely self-assertive, as they always have the wrath of their husbands or the welfare of their sons in mind. They also do not see celibacy -- freedom from sexual commitment -- as a choice of life style, either for themselves or for their children. Neither the husbands of Hroswitha's matronae nor the other men in their lives limit the autonomy of their speech or action. Of Hroswitha's two matronae, one has taken a vow of celibacy within the state of marriage and her husband willingly complies with it; the other's husband does not appear in the play and no reference is made to his personal existence.

The married celibate is Drusiana, wife of Andronicus and heroine of the play Calimachus. Calimachus is the youth who poses a threat to Drusiana's intention to remain chaste. In the second scene of the play, he reveals his passion for Drusiana to his comrades, who try to dissuade him from approaching her. Calimachus
cannot believe that the lady is beyond persuasion; he asks his friends, *Num ego primus huiusmodi rem peto, et non multorum ad audendum provocatus sum exemplo?* (II, 3) This is vaguely reminiscent of Chaerea's account of his rape of Pamphila in the *Eunuchus* (Act 3, Scene 5). Chaerea tells his friend Antipho how he, while dressed as the eunuch and waiting for his moment alone with the maiden Pamphila, noticed a picture on the wall representing Danaë and the shower of gold. As Jove gained sexual access to Danaë through that ruse, so Chaerea hoped to possess Pamphila through the disguise of his eunuch's garb (I, 583-590). Chaerea is urged on to the commission of his misdeed by Jove's example; so Calimachus too, though he gives no specific allusion, is encouraged by the examples of those who have gone before him in the enterprise of illicit passion. Calimachus' friends, however, tell him that Drusiana is a devout Christian and will not even share her husband Andronicus' bed, much less involve herself in an affair with Calimachus.

Calimachus still cannot be dissuaded from his purpose, and confronts Drusiana with his feelings in Scene III. Drusiana dismisses him firmly and curtly:

**Drusiana:** Quod ius consanguinitatis, quaeve legalis conditio institutionis compellit te ad mei amorem?

**Calimachus:** Tui pulchritudo.

**Dru.**: Mea pulchritudo?

**Cal.**: Immo.

**Dru.:** Quid ad te?

**Cal.**: Pro dolor! hactenus parum, sed spero, quod attineat postmodum.

**Dru.:** Discede, discede, lento nefando; confundor enim diutius tecum verba.
· commiscere, quem sentio plenum
diabolica deceptione.
(III, 2-3)

When Calimachus suggests that she might change her
mind, she assures him she will not; Non mutabo,
percerte! (III, 4) She views his passion as a kind
of insanity:

O insensate et amens, cur falleris? Cur te
vacua spe illudis? quo pacto, qua dementia
reris me tuae cedere nugacitate, quae per
multum temporis a legalis thoro viri me
abstinui? (III, 5)

In frustration, Calimachus swears:

Pro deum atque hominem fidem! si non cesseris,
non quiescam, non desistam, donec te cap-
tuos circumveniam insidiis. (III, 5)

This amounts to a threat of rape; Calimachus promises
to snare the lady however he can, and force his at-
tentions on her. He does not respect the integrity of
her faith, of her will, of her body. Drusiana resists
this attack on her integrity through choosing to die
rather than be compromised. She turns to prayer in
her extremity:

Eh heu! domine Jesu Christe, quid prodest
castitatis professionem subiisse, cum is
amens mea deceptus est specie? Intende,
domine, mei timorem; intende, quem patior,
dolorem! Quid mihi, quid agendum sit, ig-
noro: si prodidero, civilis per me iiet
discordia; si celavero, insidiis diaboli-
cis sine te refragari nequeo. Iube me in
te, Christe, oecus mori, ne fiam in ruinam
delicato iuveni! (IV)

Drusiana's prayer is interesting in comparison
with the Terentian matronae who conspire to suppress
the fact of Philumena's rape and resultant pregnancy.
Those women hide the information to avoid discord between husband and wife; Drusiana decided not to betray Calimachus' intentions to anyone to prevent "civil discord". So in Hroswitha, there is still reticence on the part of the woman to make the rapist, or would-be rapist, publicly responsible for his actions, though the reason for her reticence has nothing to do with maintaining the marriage bond or indeed with relations between the sexes. However, the fact remains that the rape does not occur in Hroswitha. The woman preserves her integrity through the one way she sees fit to follow -- death. This is a rather disappointing solution to the modern reader, especially to the feminist critic. One would hope that there are ways to resist rape and still remain alive. Apparently Hroswitha was more interested in the spiritual or psychological aspect of resistance than in portraying physical self-defense -- that is, if the latter thought could even have occurred to her. As mentioned in connection with the virgines, Hroswitha viewed neither death nor suffering as necessarily tragic, in light of her belief in eternal life. Martyrdom, for her, had its glorious reward, and did not have connotations of masochism. Hroswitha found much of the inspiration for her poems and plays in the stories of the early Christian saints and martyrs.

Drusiana's prayer for swift release in death is answered. In Scene V, her spiritual adviser St. John consoles Andronicus over the loss of his wife, and Andronicus intimates that he knows the true cause of her death. She is laid to rest, but Calimachus' passion is not; he bribes Andronicus' slave Fortunatus --
at the slave's own suggestion -- to lead him to Drusiana's grave, so that he may vent his lust on her lifeless body. But Drusiana's integrity is preserved even after death; the corpse is miraculously spared desecration, as a serpent appears and bites Fortunatus. Fortunatus dies from the serpent's venom and Calimachus dies too, from sheer terror.

On their way to visit Drusiana's tomb, Andronicus and St. John experience a vision. God tells them, *Propter Drusiana eiusque, qui iuxta sepulcrum iacet, resuscitationem apparuit, quia nomen meum in his debet gloriari* (VIII, 2). They rush to the tomb and find the dead men there. Andronicus tells St. John what he knows about the circumstances of Drusiana's death; apparently he overheard her praying in Scene IV. The two men comment on Calimachus' and Fortunatus' sins; they also refer to Calimachus as *a mens* (IX, 3). The view of carnal passion as *amentia* excuses it to some degree; Andronicus muses:

*In hoc tamen illud est vel maxime admirandum, cur huius, qui pravum voluit, resuscitatio magis quam eius, qui consensit, divina sit voce praenuntiata, nisi quia forte hic, carnali deceptus delectatione, deliquit ignorantia, iste autem sola malitia.* (IX, 5)

St. John defers to the judgment of God, and prays for Calimachus' resurrection. Calimachus comes back from the dead and tells his story. He admits his guilt and repents of his lust; his repentance is the final condition for his forgiveness. Calimachus promises to become a Christian and change his ways. The change from pagan to Christian also involves a change from active sexuality to chastity:
Ideo ne moreris, ne pigriteris lapsum erigere, maerentem consolationibus attollere, quo tuo moniti, tuo magisterio a gentili in christianum, a nugace in castum transmutatus virum, tuoque ducatu semitam arripiens veritatis, vivam iuxta divinae praecomium promissionis. (IX, 17)

St. John prays for Calimachus and then proceeds to resurrect Drusiana. Upon reviving, Drusiana asks St. John to resurrect Fortunatus as well. Calimachus objects, but is rebuked by St. John: *Lex nostrae religionis docet, ut homo homini dimittat, si ipse a deo dimitti ambiat* (IX, 23). One assumes from this that Drusiana forgives Calimachus, though she does not speak to him directly after her resurrection. St. John reminds Calimachus at some length that the Christian attitude must be one of compassion and forgiveness, that no one is in himself worthy of God's grace or forgiveness. Drusiana then prays for Fortunatus, who comes back to life. Unlike Calimachus, however, Fortunatus is not sorry for his misdeeds; moreover, he envies the state of grace that both Drusiana and Calimachus are now in. He rejects forgiveness and chooses eternal death instead. Hroswitha makes it clear that the final choice was his, and she had Drusiana offer him that final chance to amend his life. Drusiana is Hroswitha's model for the Christian virtue of compassion; she accepts the conversion of the man who wanted to violate her, and offers the man who had helped him plan the desecration of her dead body forgiveness and a second chance at eternal life.

It is interesting to compare the attitude toward rape in the cases of the married women in Terence and Hroswitha. In Terence's *Hecyra*, the rape of Philumena
is viewed as a negative event, but the psychological/spiritual or physical damage which the victimized woman suffers pales into insignificance next to the damage which the results of the rape will do to her marriage. Once Philumena's rapist and the father of her child is known to have been her husband, and the suspicions of adultery are dissipated, all is forgiven and forgotten. In reading Hroswitha, it is difficult to imagine that rape or the threat of rape would be taken less seriously even if the rapist were the woman's husband. To Hroswitha, Andronicus is a model Christian husband because he too is completely chaste, and he respects his wife's vow of chastity. It is also significant that Drusiana acts with respect to Calimachus and his threat of rape without consulting Andronicus or even mentioning him. The threat of rape is viewed as an assault on the woman herself, an affront to her autonomy and religious convictions, not to her husband or to their relationship. However, there is a notion that somehow God would be the offended party in the case of this rape, in place of Andronicus. Like the virgines, Drusiana is "married" to Christ, though the wedding imagery is not overtly employed in this play; and lust is an offense against Christ and his heavenly Father, therefore ultimately forgiveable by them, too. Drusiana prays to be delivered from becoming the cause of Calimachus' perdition, not simply to be delivered from assault.

This takes the edge off a strictly woman-centered interpretation of Hroswitha's handling of the situation; but as noted earlier, Hroswitha did not mean to celebrate the achievements of the individual. The play
does not end with Drusiana's resistance and death, because Hroswitha wanted to use the figure of Drusiana to exemplify the virtue of compassion. In the end, Drusiana forgives the men who planned her violation -- not an attitude that would be popular in feminist literature, but one that was of paramount importance to Hroswitha as a Christian. Compassion is a characteristic which Drusiana shares with the Terentian matronae. Drusiana's compassion, however, is on a somewhat more cosmic scale than Myrrina's, Nausistrata's, and the various Sostratas' natural compassion for their own children.

Sapientia, the central figure of the play which bears her name, is a stark contrast to the timorous matronae of Terence whose capacity to act and speak is limited by their fear or regard for their husbands and sons. Sapientia is bold and fearless; no man, not even the Roman emperor, dampens her wit or confounds her wisdom. When Antiochus first announces to her, in Scene II, that the emperor wishes to see her, she answers, Palatium cum nobili filiarum comitatu intrare non trepido et minace imperatoris vultum comminus aspicere non formido (II, 1). Antiochus growls, Invisum genus christicolarum semper promptum est principibus ad resistendum (II, 2). Sapientia replies with confidence, Princeps universitatis, qui nescit vincì, non patitur suos ab hoste superari (II, 2). In Scene III, Sapientia exchanges words with Hadrian:

Hadrian: Illustriis matrona, blande et quiete 
ad culturam deorum te invito, quo nostra perfrui possis amicitia.

Sapientia: Nec in cultura deorum tuis votis 
satisfacere, nec amicitiam tecum 
gestio indire, 
(III, 3-4)
Sapientia urges her daughters to follow her in resistance: *Nolite, meae filiae, serpentinis hulius satanae lenociniis cor apponere, sed meatim fasti-dite* (III, 5) When Hadrian asks her the ages of her daughters, she dazzles him with a display of her mathematical prowess, which, although it adds nothing to the action of the play, certainly serves to show Sapientia's self-possession, as well as Hroswitha's own erudition, with which she must have been anxious to impress her patrons. Sapientia surprises Hadrian and Antiochus, who expect women to be weak, with her steadfastness and unflinching resolve.

The men think that they can break Sapientia's resolve by attacking her through her children. Antiochus orders:

_Hortare puellulas et, si renitantur, infantaes ne parcas, sed fac, ut illae necentur, quo rebellis mater funeribus natarum acrius torqueatur._ (V, 3)

But he and Hadrian are proven wrong; Sapientia even encourages the girls to resist the blandishments of the men and to endure the tortures they inflict. She consoles and exhorts them in prison, before they begin their trials at the hands of the Romans (IV). Before Fides dies, Sapientia addresses her:

_O filia, filia, non confundor, non con-tristor, sed valedico tibi exultando et osculor os oculosque prae gaudio lacri-mando, orans, ut sub ictu percussoris inviolatum serves misterium tui nominis._ (V, 13)

She prays for Spes while Spes is being beaten and comforts her before she submits to the sword, while also urging Karitas to similar resistance:
Nunc quidem gaudeo, sed tunc tandem perfecte exultans gaudebo, quando tui sororculam pari conditione extinctam caelo praemiserò et ego subsequar postrema.
(V, 27)

She beseeches her youngest daughter:

O Karitas, soboles inclita, spes uteri mei unica, ne contristès matrem bonam tui certaminis consummationem expectantem; sed sperne praesens utile, quo pervenias ad gaudium interminabile, quo tui germanae fulgent coronis illibatae virginitatis. (V, 29)

While Karitas bends her neck to the executioner's sword, Sapientia effuses:

Nunc, nunc, filia, gratulandum, nunc in Christo est gaudendum; nec est, quae me mordeat, cura, quia secura sum de tua victoria. (VII, 1)

Though they kill all her children, the Romans cannot break Sapientia. Interestingly enough, they do not put her to death themselves; she dies quietly at the play's end, at the graveside of her daughters whose violent deaths she witnessed.

Sapientia's role is rather different from that of Hroswitha's other matrona, Drusiana. Sapientia's chastity is not directly threatened, though the comments of Hadrian and Antiochus imply a distrust of her celibate state, as noted in the discussion of the virgines; her confrontation with the Roman authorities is based primarily on her allegiance to the Christian faith. Also, Sapientia is involved in the action of the play from beginning to end, unlike Drusiana, whose death gives considerable space for dialogue and action
to the male characters. All the actions of the male characters in the Sapientia directly concern either Sapientia or her daughters; they are attempts to break down the women's resistance or to punish them for it. Sapientia embodies steadfast faith and resistance to non-Christian authority; while Drusiana does resist an attack on her chastity, she particularly embodies compassion. Perhaps it is this different emphasis on aspects of the Christian life that causes the difference in the roles of these two matronae. Strong resistance calls attention to the character of the resister, while compassion by its very nature must flow outward, to focus on others.

Sapientia is also unique in that she is the matrona without a husband. The existence of her daughters presumes the presence of a man in her life at some time in the past, but his existence is not important enough to Hroswitha for even an explanation of his absence. Perhaps such an explanation is immaterial; Sapientia's name, and the names of her daughters (Fides, Spes, Caritas), may indicate that Hroswitha intended these characters to be viewed more as ideal allegorical abstractions than as real individuals with past histories. Whatever the reason for the omission, Sapientia's husband never appears in the play, nor does she ever speak of him directly. In fact, she is a little less than scornful of all human husbands, justifying her marriage and subsequent loss of virginity only by her mothering of Christian virgins. She tells her daughters when they are in prison together:

Ad hoc vos materno lacte affluenter alui, 
ad hoc delicate nutrivi, ut vos caelesti, 
non terrae, sponse traderem, quo vestri 
causa socrus aeterni regis dici meruisse.
(IV, 3)
She adds shortly afterwards, *hoc excepto, ut vestra virginitate coroner, ut vestro martyrio glorificer* (IV, 4) Hroswitha apparently felt that a full marital relationship with a man, including the raising of a family, precluded a certain degree of closeness in a woman's relationship with God. It was possible, however, to reclaim that closeness through one's children, as Sapientia wanted to do through her daughters.

Marriage and motherhood, or any kind of sexual involvement and the responsibilities or commitment it entails can divert a woman's time and energies from other efforts. For Hroswitha, the supreme and only effort a woman need be concerned with was the service of God; the only relationship really worth cultivating was a relationship with God. Sapientia, through her marriage and loss of virginity, lost the freedom to devote herself to God alone; that loss, according to Hroswitha, is salvageable only through Sapientia's encouragement of her daughters' intent to remain virgin. Sapientia prays before her death: *quamvia non possum canticum virginitatis dicere, te tamen cum illis merear aeternaliter laudare* (IX, 8). She will merit that reward not only because she raised her daughters to be Christian and virgin, but because she did not hesitate to offer them as a sacrifice to God: *pro te mactandas obtulisse non distuli* (IX, 8).

This is a rather odd notion of marriage and motherhood, and a rather limited scenario for the Christian life for women. It seems as if marriage and the loss of virginity were a sacrifice Sapientia had to make to insure that there would be more Christian virgins in the world, and more Christian virgins to sing Christ's
praises in heaven -- either that, or it was simply a bad mistake. Although Sapientia is not depicted as having no traditional "motherly" feelings at all -- she does show love and compassion for her daughters in her attempts to console and encourage them -- she delivers her daughters to death without flinching, and then prays that that aspect of her motherhood will be richly rewarded in heaven (IX, 4-9). Again, this is not an issue that can be easily understood or accepted apart from the context of Hroswitha's Christian faith, or her particular interpretation of the Christian faith, which put a premium on celibacy and did not shrink from martyrdom. The story of Sapientia is actually Hroswitha's attempt at an apologia of sorts for the married state. It is her valiant attempt to work into her catalog of Christian heroines a married woman who actually experienced sexual relations and the fruit of those relations, the bearing of children. It may not be a very realistic model and might have had as little appeal to the average married woman of Hroswitha's time as it would have to most women today. But Hroswitha was an idealist, and she was totally convinced of the superiority of the celibate life. As noted in the introduction, she had difficulty accepting the validity of any other life style for Christian women.
Part III: The Meretrices

Courtesans have larger speaking parts and contribute more to the dramatic action than do the other types of women in Terence. It is probably true that these women can speak and act more freely on the stage because they are outside the jurisdiction of the social conventions of more "respectable" folk. Terence's sympathetic treatment of the meretrix in his dramas was perhaps meant as a critical comment on the hypocrisy of a society, either his own or that of the Greeks who produced the plays on which his own dramas are based, whose citizens patronized prostitutes, even joined in long-lasting relationships with them, while social pressure and law kept them from regularizing these relationships in marriage. On the other hand, many of the "respectable" matronae -- particularly in Greek society but also at times in Roman life -- had too few opportunities to speak freely in public or to manage their own affairs. They lived under a double standard, which allowed their husbands to have extramarital relations with prostitutes or slaves, but did not give the wives any such escape from prosecution for adultery. It can also be said that Terence's view of the courtesan's nature was a kind of criticism of the limitations of his predecessors in the comic genre, particularly Plautus.

There is a progression in Terence's representation of the courtesan, from more to less of a caricature. Even in the early stages of this progression, however, one has a sense in reading Terence that there is more to the meretrix than meets the eye, even that she might
not be living the life she is living if she felt that there was another choice open to her. Bacchis in the Heauton Timorumenos has most of the stock traits of the wicked meretrix. She is a greedy spendthrift, who gouges her lovers for all she can get and apparently enjoys the game of it. Chremes' lamentation over her behavior at his table (1. 455-464) bears this out. So does the soliloquy of Clitipho in 1. 213-229, in which he bemoans his mistress' temperament and the lengths of misery to which he is driven by her greed. In Act 4, Scene 4, Bacchis waits for the slave Syrus to bring her some money he has promised her. She swears that if he does not deliver, she will not keep any future dates, and thereby get Syrus in trouble with Clitipho. When Syrus arrives without the money, she threatens to transfer her attentions to a certain soldier.

Terence lets us see a more compassionate side of Bacchis, however, in the conversation she has with the virgo Antiphila in Act 2, Scene 4. There is a kind of wistfulness in her speech which leads the reader to think that she is not quite satisfied with her life. She envies the virgo Antiphila and those like her. Although Bacchis may command the attention and tribute of men, although she may speak more freely and act more boldly than the virtuous virgines and matronae, she is not totally in charge of her life any more than they are. She seems to blame her situation on circumstance; there is an element of fatalism in these lines:

et quom egomet nunc mecum in animo vitam
tuum considero,
onniumque adeo vostrarum volgus quae ab
se segregant,
et vos esse istius modi et nos non esse
haud mirabilest:
nam expedit bonas esse vobis; nos, quibus-cum est res, non sinunt:
quippe forma impulsi nostra nos amatores
collunt;
haec ubi inminutast, illi suum animum alio
conferunt:
nisi si prospectum interea aliquid est,
desertae vivimus.

(1. 385-391)

Bacchis is tied to men and dependent upon a bodily standard of beauty for her very living. Although she is an expert at playing the game of love and getting men to support her, this speech of hers seems to reveal that she does not really enjoy it very much, and that she does not even feel that she had a choice in the matter from the beginning.

Bacchis is important in the Heauton Timorumenos for the comic effect which she creates with her extravagance. She also contributes to the complication of the plot by agreeing to pose as Clinia's mistress in order to outwit Clitipho's father Chremes and make Clinia's father Menedemus more amenable to his relationship with Antiphila. However, it is the slave Syrus, working on behalf of Clitipho, who persuades Bacchis to agree to this masquerade, and later to move to Menedemus' house; it is not Bacchis' idea. Bacchis also has no active role in the denouement of the plot. When Chremes learns the truth about Clitipho's affair, he forces Clitipho to forsake Bacchis. Clitipho readily agrees to marry a respectable girl instead. We never find out Bacchis' reaction to this.

Terence's other two meretrices are much more important in the resolution of the plot, if not in its instigation. Thais in the Eunuchus has the one really
major woman's role in all of Terence. She, like Bacchis, is a woman of elegant tastes who drains her lovers of money. It is established in Act 1, Scene 2 that her present fortunes were established mainly by a former lover of hers and by her present lover Phaedria. She also accepts gifts freely from the braggart soldier Thraso, who seeks her favors. The mercenary aspect of Thais' character is played down, however, relative to Bacchis' greed in the Heauton Timorumenos. And like Bacchis, Thais does not seem to feel as if she really has a choice about the way in which she makes her living. When Phaedria complains to her in Act 1, Scene 2 about the attention she is showing his rival Thraso, Thais protests: non pol, quo quemquam plus amem aut plus diligam, eo feci; sed res ita erat, faciendum fuit (l. 16-17). Terence skillfully shows throughout the play how the necessity of earning her precarious living causes Thais to act in a mercenary fashion, perhaps otherwise than she would rather act, if she had the freedom to be compassionate instead of diplomatic. She must be constantly on the watch for any situation that might be turned to her advantage. Terence makes us feel sympathy and even admiration for Thais, despite the selfishness of her words and actions.

Thais is driven to use people as things, as means to an end, usually the procurement of money or favorable connections. The person who is most cruelly used by Thais is another woman, the virgo Pamphila, who had been bought as a slave and given to Thais as a present by Thraso. Thais recognized the young woman as the foundling whom her mother had raised along with
her. She wants to find Pamphila's true family and restore her to them, but her reasons for doing so are less than simply altruistic. She is blunt about them to Phaedria: *sola sum; habeo hic neminem/ neque amicum neque cognatum; quam ob rem, Phaedria,/ cupio aliquos parere amicos benficio meo* (I. 147-149).

Thais' situation forces her to fend for herself, often at the expense of compassion for others. When she does show compassion or love, she shows it to a man who would be in a position to help her financially or socially. When Pamphila is raped by Phaedria's brother Chaerea, Thais rebukes him mildly: *non te dignum, Chaerea/ fecisti* (I. 864-865). The "indignity" of his crime is not so much abusing a woman (her foster-sister, no less) as it is spoiling her plans to hand Pamphila over intact to her family and thus reap some material benefits from a friendship with them (I. 864-871). The insult has not been done to Pamphila, the victim of the crime, but rather to Thais, as the owner of vandalized property. When Chaerea presumptuously answers that he hopes the incident will forge an "eternal bond" (*aeternam gratiam;* I. 871-875) between them, Thais quickly accepts his overtures of friendship and forgives him, resolving the conflict created by his scheme. After all, he is her lover's brother, and a well-born young man. He could possibly be of some help to her in the future. In fact, at the end of the play, the two brothers become party to a scheme to keep Thraso hanging on in hopes of Thais' favors. They do it for their own sport and for Thais' financial gain (I. 1070-1085). Thais is not informed of the deal right then, but the general attitude seems to be that she would approve. And indeed one assumes
she would, following her pattern of dependence upon men for financial and social security.

Bacchis in the Hecyra is the culmination of Terence's efforts to show the human side of the courtesan and make her worthy of audience sympathy. As Kenneth DeLuca has observed, "Bacchis, the prostitute of the Hecyra, must be one of the noblest ladies of her calling." She is a kind, generous woman, respectful of the institution of marriage, thoughtful of her lover Pamphilus even after their separation and his wedding. She has lost all the hallmarks of the sycophantic meretrix common to ancient comedy; she almost seems miscast. In fact, her status as a courtesan seems to sit ill with her. Although her speeches contain no outright protestations of the fate which drove her to seek her living as a courtesan, as do some of Thais' and the other Bacchis' lines, it would not be too far-fetched to assume that Terence would have us understand her as dissatisfied with her social status, and her exemplary behavior as a way to break free of that status. Throughout Scenes 1 and 2 of Act 5, Bacchis constantly apologizes for her status as a prostitute, as if it were something that could not be helped, like a physical disability. She asserts repeatedly in her speeches of Act 5 that she is not like the other women of her trade:

Faciam, quod pol, si esset alia ex hoc quaestu, haud faceret, scio, ut de tali causa nuptae mulieri se ostenderet.
(1. 756-757)

haec res hic agitur: Pamphilo me facere ut redeat uxor
Bacchis seems to be much less motivated by acquisitiveness or concern for her living than the other courtesans in Terence. It is Laches, Pamphilus' father, who mentions the amicitia with his well-situated family which will accrue to her from her good deeds, in 1. 766 and again in 1. 796-798. Even when Bacchis has time to herself (1. 816-840) to reflect on what she has done, she rejoices that she has reunited a family and brought happiness to her friend and ex-lover Pamphilus, not that she has procured any gain for herself. Like the other women in the Hecyra, though, she passes no judgment on the means by which Pamphilus and Philumena are reunited. She is more concerned with the good of Pamphilus than with that of Philumena, except inasmuch as the happiness of the latter is supposed to consist in being married. She is hardly indignant over the rape of Philumena, treating it as a matter of course in the life of a normal young man (1. 822-833). For her the rape is indirectly a source of joy (1. 833-835), as only she was able to resolve the central dilemma at last, putting together the picture with Myrrina and revealing the true identity of Philumena's rapist and the father of her child.

What Bacchis was able to do, to some extent, by
helping Pamphilus and his family, was to loosen the bonds of fate which her fellow courtesans Thais and Bacchis had been chafing against in the earlier plays of Terence. She did so by disregarding the limitations on sympathetic, unselfish behavior placed on women of her profession by the demands of seeking a living. She became compassionate; by doing so, she became more of an individual. Bacchis swears (l. 835-836) that she will never misuse a lover for gain: verum ecasitor/nunquam animum quaestir gratia ad malas adducam partis. There is no guarantee that she will not have ties to men in the future, but she is making certain that the nature of those ties will be different from what it has been in the past. Bacchis, in Act 5, assures Pamphilus’ relatives that she is no longer involved with him. We can see that she is still somewhat emotionally tied to him, but the ending of the physical relationship freed her to interact with Pamphilus on another level:

ego dum licitumst usa sum benigno et lepido et comi, incommode mihi nuptiis evenit, factum fateor: at pol me fecisse arbitror, ne id merito mi eveniret, multa ex quo fuerint commoda, eius incommoda aequomst ferre.
(l. 837-840)

Whatever Bacchis does for Pamphilus in the context of the play’s action — that is, since they have not been lovers — is done out of the goodness of her heart, out of sincere, disinterested affection for Pamphilus, with no ulterior motives. She tells Laches:

nolo esse falsa fama gnatum suspectum tuom, nec leviorem vobis, quibus est minume aequom, eum viderier
inmerito; nam meritus de me est, quod queam illi ut commodem.

(1. 758-760)

With the end of her physical relationship with Pamphilus, Bacchis breaks the cycle of dependence and exploitation in her relationships with men. Her resolution never to use another lover for gain seems to indicate that she wants to extend that effect from her particular involvement with Pamphilus to her other relationships with men. Pamphilus does not ask Bacchis to help him, but she does, and without any concrete remuneration. She gives freely, and he freely receives her non-sexual favor of intervention to save his marriage. Pamphilus appreciates it for the free gift that it is, not seeing it as something he should have on demand or in return for his money (Act 5, Scene 4).

Hroswitha, influenced as she was by Terence, could not help being affected in some way by his sympathetic portrayal of prostitutes. Terence depicts the merestrices as women who feel somewhat limited by their fate, and who struggle to do what good they can, for themselves or for others, within the limitations of their profession. What Hroswitha does with this picture is to bring it to what in her mind would be its logical perfection. Hroswitha ends the struggle of the merestrices by totally breaking the bonds of the past and bringing them into a world of Christian celibacy, free from dependence on men, free from concerns about their living, free to relate to people from a standpoint of spiritual love, not of material need. Even Bacchis of the Hecyra, the most "Christian", because of her compassion and selflessness, of the Terentian merestrices, would not have satisfied Hroswitha; not just for the obvious reason that Bacchis could not
acknowledge the Christian God, but for the fact that celibacy was not important to her, or even within the realm of possibility, Bacchis does not see the sacred nature of virginity, as Hroswitha would have her see it. Bacchis does not rule out ties with men; she is still emotionally indebted to Pamphilus; she sheds no tears over the rape of Philumena; she respects marriage in a way that seems to indicate that she views it as the norm of human happiness. As pointed out earlier, Bacchis advances further than the other two meretrices in the expression of her individuality and her humanity, but she did not go far enough for Hroswitha, to whose mind the celibate life was the best choice for a woman, the best way she could use her human potential, in the service of God.

It is not apparent that Hroswitha based either of her meretrices directly on any of the three characters from Terence discussed in this section, though one of her meretrices, Thais, bears the same name as one of Terence's. Rather, she took elements common to the situations of all three -- the prostitute's sense of despair or helplessness about her fate; the acquisition of and preoccupation with material goods; the ability, or inability, to have a relationship with a man based on mutual affection and trust rather than sexual or material ties -- and weaves these into her peculiarly Christian stories, having the meretrix emerge as a celibate devoted to Christ. The prostitute's sense of despair about her fate is much more sharply defined in Hroswitha than it is in Terence; of course it would be, considering Hroswitha's feelings about the place of sexuality in human life. In Terence, the meretrix
feels nothing stronger than a sense of wistfulness or resignation towards her lot in life. As mentioned in the introduction, critics have accused Hroswitha of being a prude, but she does show sympathy and compassion in dealing with the meretrixes. That sympathy and compassion, however, is relative to the extent to which the meretrixes admit the evil of their ways and resolve to change them.

Both of Hroswitha's meretrix plays have a basic similarity in their plot structure. They both involve male hermits who go out to seek the courtesans disguised as potential lovers; once the hermit is alone with the courtesan, he reveals his true identity and induces her to leave behind the life of a courtesan and accept the ascetic routine of a nun. Both of the women are Christians to begin with, so it is not a question of conversion from disbelief to belief, but from a life of sinful prostitution to one of virtuous celibacy. Neither can blame ignorance of the "true way" for the life in which they find themselves. Yet there is a basic difference in the psychology of the two heroines: Maria has become a prostitute out of despair; Thais, apparently because she enjoys it, which is questionable, or because she cannot think of another occupation for herself. Thais does not seem to be driven by the same sense of hopelessness as Maria. Yet Thais' decision to forsake the life of a meretrix has more immediately observable dramatic consequences than Maria's. Both women motivate the actions of the main male characters in the plays, and allow the men to become the catalysts of major change in their lives. Thais is perhaps the more interesting of the two women
in the very personal, independent way in which she resolves her affairs before heading off to the cloister. Also, Thais' spiritual progress is followed to her very death, whereas the Abraham ends with the homecoming of Maria. Both women, however, have the same choice to make; in terms of its end result for their lives, they make the same choice.

Maria, orphaned and adopted at a young age by her uncle, the hermit Abraham, embraced the ascetic life under the tutelage of Abraham and his fellow-hermit and friend Euprem. She lived in a cell near them until she was seduced, through the window of her cell, by a young man. She left her cell to meet him and lost her virginity. Once she realized what she had done, she despaired of ever being forgiven by God, and felt she could only sink deeper into the realm of the flesh. She ran away from home, driven by shame and hopelessness, and ended up in the house of an innkeeper who sold her sexual favors to men. When Abraham, pretending to be another customer, finally meets her there, she greets him punctiliously: Quicumque me diligunt, aequalem amoris vicem a me recipiunt (V, 2). One may perceive a note of weary resignation in that speech. Hroswitha's Thais greets her would-be lover with a similar phrase in the Paphnutius (III, 1). The fact that both women, who are rather unlike each other, use similar phrases to welcome their lovers may indicate that Hroswitha wanted this to be thought of as a kind of stock greeting, not indicating any genuine feeling on the part of the woman who used it, but rather exhibiting a weariness, a lack of enthusiasm natural to one who had to satisfy so many men and may feel confined or saddened by the limitations of her life.
This is not unlike the resignation of Thais in Terence's *Eunuchus*, who must accept what favors she can from men, however disloyal or promiscuous it makes her seem, to keep going.

When Maria first embraces Abraham, a wave of sadness and then despair sweeps over her:

> Quid sentio? Quid stupenda novitatis gustando hauroi? Ecce, odor istius flagraniae praetendit flagrantiam mihi quondam usitatae abstinentiae... Vae mihi infelici! unde cecidi et in quam perditionis foveam corrui! (VI, 3)

Reprimanded by both Abraham and the innkeeper, she brushes it off, but when she is left alone with Abraham and he reveals his identity to her, the full depth of her despair is revealed. In a very emotional scene, Abraham asks:

> Quare me despexisti? quare deseruisti? quare eventum tuae perditionis mihi non indicasti, quo ego cum dilecto meo Effrem dignam pro te poenitentiam agerem? (VII, 5)

Maria answers, *Postquam lapsa in peccatis corrui, tuae sanctitati polluta proximare non praesumpsii* (VII, 5). Abraham, although firm, shows a father's kindness to her, reminding her again and again of God's mercy. Her real fault is despair, he tells her:

> Humanum est peccare, diabolicum est in peccatis durare; nec iure reprehenditur, qui subito cadit, sed qui citius surgere negligit. (VII, 6)

When Maria insists, *Enormitas peccatorum prostravit me in desperationis profundum* (VII, 9), Abraham counters with:
Peccata quidem tua sunt gravia, fateor; sed superna pietas maior est omni creatura. Unde tristitas rumpe datumque poenitendi spatiolum pigrando noli neglegere, quatinus superhabundet divina gratia, ubi superhabundavit facinorum abominatio. (VII, 10)

The emphasis is much more on the evil of Maria's despair than on the evil of her exercise of sexuality, though the latter is referred to as peccata and eventum perditionis. Perhaps the meretricies of Terence inspired Hroswitha to take this tack. For all their vague misgivings about their style of life, none of them could really find a way out. Hroswitha makes her meretricies' misgivings very grave indeed, with the consciousness of their sexual activity as not simply unrespectable, but sinful, a source of alienation from God, the supreme good in life. At the same time, she finds them a way out: through the mercy of God and the refuge of the celibate life.

Maria leaves behind her career of bringing satisfaction to male lovers; she also leaves behind some money and other possessions. When she asks Abraham what to do with them, he answers: Quae adquisisti peccando, cum ipsis peccatis sunt abicienda (VII, 14). Her possessions are not even fit to be given to the poor or to the church: Non satis acceptabile munus deo esse comprobatur, quod criminibus adquiritur (VII, 14). Maria resolves, Nulla super his ultra sollicitudine fatigar (VII, 14). Her new life as a holy hermit frees her from care about worldly goods. Bacchis' acquisitiveness in the Heauton Timorumenos is what made her such a generally scurrilous
character; Thais' constant concern over her living in
the Eunuchus is what made her so pitiable, as opposed
to despicable, which is what she might well have been
but for Terence's sympathetic handling of her charac-
ter. Maria, through her choice of a religious vocation,
freed herself from such distracting, consuming care
about her material welfare, much as Bacchis of the
Necyra did when she decided to act selflessly. Hros-
witha, however, would have us see Maria's freedom as
more complete, since her selflessness is built on an
eternal, divine foundation (Christ) while Bacchis' is
centered on an ephemeral, human person (Pamphilus).

The play ends with a scene in which Abraham and
Effrem rejoice over Maria's return, and discuss the
strength of her resolve to persevere in the spiritual
life. Abraham tells his friend:

Quicquid ipsi agendum proposui, quamvis
difficile, quamvis grave, hact abrogavit
subire...Nam induta cilicio continuaque
vigiilarium et ieiunii exercitacione
macerata, artissimae legis observatione
corpus tenerum animae cogit pati imperium.
(IX, 2-3)

Maria exhibits her newly-found inner strength through
the outward discipline of her body.

The scene between Abraham and Effrem complements
the opening scene of the play, in which Abraham dis-
cusses with Effrem how he should raise the orphan girl
left in his care, and Scene III, in which Abraham goes
to Effrem with the news of Maria's seduction and de-
parture, and formulates, with Effrem's approval, a
plan to get her back. Effrem was Maria's first spiri-
tual teacher; in Scene II, he explains the spiritual
benefits of the chaste life to Maria, and receives her vow of celibacy. He plays no active role in the central action of the play -- that is, the search for Maria and the effort to convert her -- but his friendship with Abraham gives Abraham the opportunity to voice his feelings about Maria and his plans concerning Maria in dialogue. Effrem helps Abraham interpret a dream-vision he had concerning Maria (III, 8-10). Effrem's prayer at the very end of Scene IX voices a central theme of the play, God's unconditional mercy towards sinners:

Congratulantes laudemus, laudantes glorificemus, unigenitum et venerabilem, dilectum et clementem dei filium, qui non vult perire, quos sui sacro redemit sanguine. (IX, 6)

In Hroswitha's dramatization of this theme, Maria is the main figure, the recipient of that unconditional mercy. The words and deeds of both the holy men concern her at all times. But the inner strength and freedom that Maria gained from her conversion was not something that was to be cultivated for the benefit of her ephemeral self, but to be used, through the practice of the spiritual life, in the service of God -- and ultimately to Maria's eternal benefit.

Unlike Maria, Thais is not related by blood to the man who becomes her spiritual adviser. Nor was she lured away from an early asceticism; apparently Thais has been a prostitute for most of her life when her notoriety reaches the ears of the monk Paphnutius. Thais' attractiveness has even been a source of civil discord; men have been fighting over her publicly, wounding each other in the streets, as Paphnutius tells his followers:
Paphnutius: Qui amentes, dum caeco corde, 
quis illam adeat, contendunt, 
convicia congerunt.
Discipuli: Unum vitium parit aliut.
Paph.: Deinde, inito certamine, nunc ora 
naresque pugnis frangendo, nunc 
armis vicissim eiciendo, decurren-
tis illuvie sanguinis madefaciunt 
limina lupanaris.
(I, 26)

This is reminiscent of the rivalry over Thais in Terence's *Eunuchus*, culminating in the mock siege of Thais' house by Thraso and his partisans. But that conflict was amusing, and did not come to actual blows; perhaps Hroswitha wished to underscore what she felt to be the seriousness of the problem of prostitution by having the rivalries over her Thais end in bloodshed. Paphnutius is horrified and saddened by the situation, and resolves to change Thais' life.

Paphnutius comes to Thais disguised as a potential customer, and Thais leads him to a bedroom. He asks for a more well-hidden meeting place:

Estne hic aliud penitus, in quo possimus colloqui secretius?

Thais: Est etenim aliud occultum, tam 
secretum, ut eius penetral nulli praeter me nisi deo est cognitum.
(III, 3-4)

Paphnutius is amazed at Thais' mention of God; he cannot believe that this woman knows of the Christian God and still persists in her way of life:

O Christe, quam miranda tuae circa nos 
benignitatis patientia, qui te scientes 
vides peccare et tamen tardas perdere!
(III, 5)
How could she be squandering on men what should be preserved and dedicated to God? She must be sinning willfully, assumes Paphnutius. Hence, he is much harder at first on Thais than Abraham was on Maria, who had felt so hopeless and desperate:

Paph.: Tui praesumptionem horresco, tui perditionem defleo, quia haec nosti et tantas animas perdidisti.

Thais: Vae, vae, mihi infelici!

Paph.: Tanto iustius damnaberis, quanto praesumptiosius sciente offendisti maiestatem divinitatis.

Thais: Heu, heu, quid agis? quid infelici minitaris?

Paph.: Supplicium tibi imminet gehennae, si permanebis in scelere.

Thais: Severitas tuae correctionis concussit penetrab veli cordis.

Paph.: O, utinam esses viscera tenus concussa timore, ne ultra praesumeres periculosae delectioni assensum praebore.

(III, 5-7)

Apparentl y Thais, not unlike Maria, had seen no other alternative for herself. Once Paphnutius makes her aware that there is a choice -- the choice of celibacy -- she begins to despair of the gravity of her mistake. Paphnutius then offers her the same hope that Abraham offered Maria:

Nullum enim (tam) grave peccatum, nullum tam inmane est delictum, quod nequeat expiari poenitentiae lacrimis, si effec- tus sequetur operis. (III, 8)

Thais asks how she might be forgiven, and Paphnutius tells her how she might amend her life: Contempne saeculum, fuge lascivorum consortia amationum (III, 9).
She agrees immediately to do so: *Si hoc speras proficere, non addo momentum morulae* (III, 9).

In the next scene, Thais publicly repudiates all her lovers, in their presence: a much more drastic measure than Bacchis' private repudiation of her relationship with Pamphilus in the *Hecyra*. Bacchis had in fact already finished with Pamphilus as a lover; she simply assured his family of the fact, as a favor to him. She remains friends with Pamphilus, taking their relationship into another level of interaction, as noted earlier. Thais does no favors for her lovers in the Paphnutius; she confuses and upsets them, and refuses to have anything to do with them in the future:

*Dimittite; nolite vestem meam adtrahendo scindere. Sit satis, quod hoc usque pecando vobis consensi: finis instat pec-candi tempusque nostri discidii.* (IV, 4)

The change in Bacchis' relationship with Pamphilus probably made an impact on the rest of her life, but we are not permitted to see how much of an impact; for all we know, she remains a *meretrix* by trade. Thais is definitely revolutionizing her life by her break with her lovers. She purges her life of all sexual relations with men, and remains celibate to her death, giving her life over to God.

One is tempted to wonder why Hroswitha did not show Thais interacting on another level with her former lovers, perhaps evangelizing them, converting them to the celibate life as Constantia brought about the conversion of her suitor in the *Gallicanus*. If it even entered Hroswitha's mind to do so, perhaps she thought it too dangerous a situation for Thais; after all, Thais had been intimate with these men,
while Constantia had never known Gallicanus that way. Their proximity to Thais would constitute a near occasion of sin. Better leave the past behind entirely, with no threats whatsoever to Thais' newly professed celibacy. So might Hroswitha have thought to herself, eschewing the Terentian approach which might have been more edifying to modern readers, though not necessarily to a medieval audience.

Thais also makes a great bonfire, in Scene IV, of all the wealth which she has amassed from the donations of her various lovers. In doing so, she makes a dramatic break with the past, and rids herself of care about her material welfare -- the very sort of care which, as has been pointed out, plagued Thais in the Eunuchus, and made somewhat of a caricature out of Bacchis in the Heauton Timorumenos. Bacchis in the Nectyra swears never to use another lover for gain, but Thais in the Paphnutius takes that promise one step further: there will be no more lovers; there will be no more gain. Thais has set her life in order; she is now free to seek the perfect good. Paphnutius, in Scene VII, entrusts her to the care of another woman, the abbess of a convent of virgins, for help in starting her new life. Thais of the Eunuchus abused another woman, Pamphila, in search of her own material security. Thais of the Paphnutius moves beyond the need for material security; she eventually resigns herself to not even having the comfort of a separate privy in the small cell allotted to her -- a condition rather extreme and distasteful to the modern imagination. Thais, beginning her new life free from the quest for material gain, is sheltered by another woman. Women are free to help, not to use or
abuse each other when sexual and social dependence upon men becomes unnecessary. Some readers may question whether shutting Thais away in a cell was actually helping her; Hroswitha apparently thought it was.

Thais, like Maria after her conversion, is determined to persevere in the spiritual life and atone for her sins. She perseveres to such a degree that, after three years, Paphnutius is able to ascertain through supernatural means that she indeed has been found pleasing to God. Paphnutius goes to visit his fellow-hermit Antony; they have a relationship comparable to that of Abraham and Effrem, though Antony only appears in two scenes of the Paphnutius, unlike the more visible Effrem. Paphnutius asks Antony and his disciples to pray for a sign concerning Thais, and Paul, one of the disciples, has a vision:

Paul: Videbam in visione lectulum candidum, palliolis in caelo magnifice stratum, cui quattuor splendidae virgines praerant et quasi custodiendo astabant; at ubi iocunditatem mirae claritatis aspiciebam, intra me dicebam: 'Haec gloria nemini magis congruit quam patri et domino meo Antonio.'

Antony: Tali me non dignor beatitudine.

Paul: Quo dicto intonuit vox divina, dicens: 'Non, ut speras, Antonio, sed Thaidi meretrici servanda est haec gloria.'

(XI, 2)

The vision is a tribute to the quality of Thais' repentance, the strength of her perseverance in the difficult ascetic discipline which she elected to follow.

Paphnutius then goes to visit Thais, and tells
her that she may modify her discipline now that her salvation is assured. He tries to lead her out of her cell, but she refuses to come out, wishing to persevere in her difficult life until the very end. Respecting her decision, Paphnutius then foretells her death and entrance into eternal life. Together, praising God, they restate the play's theme of God's mercy to sinners:

Thais: Unde laudet illum caeli concentus omnisque terrae surculus...quia non solum peccantes patitur, sed etiam poenitentibus praemia gratis largitur.

Paph.: Hoc illi antiquitus fuit in more, ut mallet misereri quam ferire. (XII, 6)

Thais, in the final scene, prepares to die, as Paphnutius prays over her.

In the Paphnutius, Hroswitha dramatizes the concept of God's eternal mercy, the conversion of sinners, and God's bounty to those who will turn to Him in sincere repentance. The special significance of this dramatization is that it focuses on a woman. In the character of Thais, Hroswitha shows that a woman, through the grace of God, can have sufficient strength and determination to make the necessary decisions and endure the hardships involved in the life of a Christian penitent.

It would seem that both Maria and Thais, however, are still dependent upon the men who lead them out of prostitution and become their spiritual advisers. But the dependence of these women is of a different nature than the dependence of the Terentian women. The bonds between the meretrices and their "saviors" are totally
disinterested because they are purely spiritual. Neither Abraham nor Paphnutius seeks any favor, sexual or otherwise, from the *meretrices*. The women reap no financial or social benefit from being associated with the men, nor do they serve the men in any way or even relate to them as men. Out of a selfless desire for the spiritual good of the women themselves, the monks give their insight into the *meretrices*' situation. The *meretrices* do not blindly, subserviently obey the monks' orders. They must first realize in their own hearts that their lot in life is other than it could be; the monks' words jolt them into doing that. Then they take the monks' advice about what steps can be taken to change their situation. The women then live as hermits, not directly under the jurisdiction of the monks. The bond that remains between them is one of spiritual friendship; the sex of the spiritual friends seems to be immaterial.

If sex is so immaterial to the "savior"-penitent relationship, then it is curious that the sex of the "savior" was male in both cases, and the penitent female. Critics have noticed the similarity of the disguise motif in Hroswitha's *meretrix* plays to the disguise used by Chaerea in the *Eunuchus* to gain entrance into Pamphila's chamber. The twist, of course, is that Chaerea meant to debauch a woman, while the hermits of the Abraham and the Paphnutius meant to save a woman from a life of debauchery. To make that contrast, the "savior" would have to be a man, and the "saved" a woman. Also, Hroswitha may not have felt the necessity to change the material in the Christian source for her dramas -- the *Acta Sanctorum* -- as she felt the need to change what she found in
Terence. Either way, the reason for her casting of particular sexes in particular roles in these two plays in probably to be found in her sources.
Afterword: Hroswitha and Her Heroines vs. "Pagan" Culture

Although Hroswitha borrowed elements of Terence's art, such as the stock types of female characters (virgo, matrona, and meretrix) and certain motifs or themes, such as the disguise motif, or the motivating force of erotic love, her treatment of them differs radically from Terence's. Hroswitha's use of the dramatic genre in general is quite different from Terence's: Terence meant to entertain; if he waxed philosophical at times, it was still within the context of entertainment. Hroswitha, however, meant to preach and reform; if her plays are entertaining in the comic sense, which they are at times (the opening scenes of the Gallicanus and the "pots and pans" scene in the Dulcitius readily come to mind), it is as if by accident. "Her contrast with Terence serves a purpose; as noted in the introduction, she wrote these plays as an alternative to what she saw as the insidious moral influence of pagan, classical literature. She was interested in promoting the virtues of the chaste Christian life, particularly for women. Whatever material she used to compose her dramas was subordinated to the purpose of discrediting pagan influence and advancing her own, Christian viewpoint. The way in which Hroswitha uses, or rather transforms, bits of Terence reveals the nature of her perspective on the pagan world. Her use of Terentian language is a case in point.

Hroswitha does not use much specifically Terentian language at all. Occasional expressions, particularly
oaths or other exclamations, surface now and again in the plays. It is significant that when they do occur, they are generally placed in the mouths of pagan men, often the antagonists of the heroines. For instance, Gallicanus, before his conversion to Christianity, uses the expressions **dii propitii, favete (IV, 1), euax (IV, 5), and pro Juppiter (IX, 1).** In the battle scene, the tribunes of his army exclaim **hercle** and **edepol (IX, 1).** After Gallicanus' conversion to Christianity, this type of expression disappears from his speech. In the **Dulcitius,** Dulcitius **exclamis papae!** when he first sees the young Christian women (II, 1); Sisinnius threatens his soldiers with **di vos perdant** when the virgin Hirena slips out of their custody (XIII, 2). In the **Calimachus,** Calimachus groans **pro dolor!** when confessing his passion to Drusiana (III, 2), and also uses the oath **pro deum atque hominem fidem (III, 5);** later in the same play, the wicked servant Fortunatus exclaims **atat!** when a fatal serpent approaches him at Drusiana's graveside (VII, 2). All of these men are pagan, or were pagan at the time when they uttered these Terentian ejaculations. Broswitha's women and Christian men do not use the same expressions. They do use the Terentian **floci non facere,** but always in the context of "not giving a hang for" the material world or material punishments, next to the rewards of the Christian spiritual life. For instance, the **primicerius** tells the emperor Julian in Act II of the **Gallicanus**:

Acceptas non floci faciamus indùcias,
sed facultates caelo praemittamus nọsque
ieluniis et obscessionibus deo interim
commendemus, (V, 7)
Compare this with Gallicanus' concern for Constantia's feelings about him, before his conversion: \textit{Si hunc scirem, responsum flocci non facerem} (I: IV, 3). The Terentian expression is used in one case to express refusal to be dominated by earthly concerns; in the other, to express concern over earthly love.

Too much can be made of this matter of language alone; after all, some of the Christians do use some Terentian expressions, although they do not use the oaths. Hroswitha may simply have wanted to show pagans swearing, to add to the colloquial nature of her dialogues. There is no denying, however, that Hroswitha identified male lust and sexuality in general with paganism in her plays. The antagonists of her female characters, excepting the \textit{meretrices}, are all pagan men, most of whom pose some threat to the women's determination to remain celibate and chaste. Gallicanus wants to marry Constantia; Calimachus desires an adulterous relationship with Drusiana, by trickery or force if necessary; Dulcitius attempts to rape the Christian virgins in his care, and Sisinnius orders them to be humiliated by a public stripping. Hadrian and Antiochus do not pose direct threats to the chastity of Sapientia and her daughters, but they do consider their celibacy to be suspicious, even threatening to the order of the state. All of these men are pagan; the first two eventually convert to Christianity and thereafter eschew sexual relations. All of the Christian men in Hroswitha's plays -- Andronicus, St. John, Abraham, Effrem, Paphnutius, John and Paul -- are celibate. One would assume Constantine is also, but no direct reference is made to his own chastity, only
to his Christianity and his approval of Constantia's vow. Hroswitha saw male sexuality as a threat to the vocation of Christian women to the celibate life. Her writing comes from an ideal view of the Christian life, with celibacy as the highest expression of Christian piety for both men and women. Given that view, she could not have made her heroines' antagonists Christian men. But she also had an axe to grind with pagan culture.

The preface to Hroswitha's plays, quoted in the introduction, betrays a definite distaste for the content of much of pagan literature. The only way Hroswitha could justify using Terence as her model at all was to use his words, his style, his themes to inveigh against what she saw as the "pagan" way of life. Hroswitha's placing of Terentian oaths in the mouths of those male antagonists of hers could have been another way to identify pagan culture -- including pagan literature -- with moral evil. For Hroswitha, the paganism of classical civilization was sheer benightedness, a failure to recognize the one true God. Paganism was idol-worship, both in the literal and figurative senses: worship of man-made statues, worship of the material and sensual world. It is identified with sexuality, a misplaced love which rightfully belongs to God. Speaking of the Dulcitius in particular, Douglas Cole says, "The parallel themes of true religion and true love are set off by their false opposites -- the attraction to worthless images." Material goods and attractive bodies are "worthless images" to Hroswitha, as much as are pagan idols. The meretrices had to give up
both sex and their possessions to be saved; they had been "pagans" at heart, if not by birth. Terence, among the classical writers, was a poet of the eroticism which Hroswitha considered false religion. As she notes in her preface (Praefatio 3-5), she felt compelled to disassociate herself from that component of his work by using his material in a way that shows the depravity of false religion (paganism/materialism/lust) and the praiseworthiness of true religion (Christianity/poverty/celibacy). Hroswitha was particularly concerned with rectifying the situation of women in Terence; as she saw it, Terence made them very sexual creatures.

As a celibate woman living in a community of celibate women, Hroswitha's life revolved around other women. She found the lack of freedom from men and the lack of commitment to celibacy among Terence's female characters shocking; after all, this was what gave meaning to her life and the lives of her companions. Hroswitha succeeded in giving her female characters more vigorous, autonomous parts than Terence gave to his. "This is no cause, however, to hang the twentieth-century label "feminist" on the tenth-century Benedictine; not only because it would be an anachronism, but also because Hroswitha's overwhelming conviction about the good of celibacy led her to include in her plays elements which would seem restrictive, even offensive, to modern-day feminists. But Hroswitha should be appreciated for what she did, not what she did not even set out to do. She was a learned woman, writing at a time when there were probably very few female writers; certainly few whose writings have survived at all, none who can be called well-known. She chose
to concentrate on women in at least one cycle of her works, though little of the classical or ecclesiastical literature with which she was acquainted had taken that approach. Also, Hroswitha revived an old genre, drama, for a new use, Christian didactic literature.

In all fairness, Terence too must be appreciated for what he did, not what he did not set out to do. Terence never claimed to have women as his primary interest, as did Hroswitha. He was not totally uninterested in or unsympathetic to women, but in the context of classical comedy, it would not have occurred to Terence to focus upon women in particular, or upon celibacy, which was not an option for most women in his time. He seemed to be more interested in problems peculiar to men, such as the relation between father and son, or that between master and slave, which are recurrent themes in his plays. But even had Terence wanted to focus on women, his portrayal of them would have necessarily been limited by the restrictions of the comic genre in which he was working.

Hroswitha, as noted earlier, was not constrained by the conventions of Roman comedy as was Terence. And unlike Terence, she definitely wanted to focus on women; although many of her themes are universal Christian themes, such as faith, martyrdom, repentance and forgiveness, all of her central characters are women. Social and intellectual changes separating her age from Terence's may have influenced her perception of the female role. Hroswitha lived at a time when the life of a nun gave women an alternative to the traditional domestic role of wife and mother, on a scale unprecedented in the classical Roman world. Yet even the wifely role was changing and broadening, due to
the restructuring of Western society under feudalism.\textsuperscript{31} The view of marriage had also been subject to new developments, thanks to the influence of the Christian Church -- developments which made a marriage like Drusiana and Andronicus' much closer to reality than it seems to us today.\textsuperscript{32} Hroswitha's celibate life, however, did have its limitations on the range of her perception, which show through in her work. By choosing to concentrate on women and to celebrate the glories of the celibate life, Hroswitha unconsciously limited the audience that could feel free to appreciate her work. It is unfortunate that Hroswitha's insistence on the "narrow way" of the celibate life and her celebration of Christian virtues has had the effect of making her less popular through the ages and more misunderstood than her model, Terence.
Notes


3 Homeyer, Helene, ed., Hrotsvithae Opera (Ferdinand Schöningh: Paderborn, 1970), p. 233. All the quotations from Hroswitha's works are taken from this edition of the text. References to the texts of the plays are indicated by a Roman numeral for the scene and Arabic numerals for the section numbers which appear along the right-hand margins of Homeyer's text. Quotations from Terence are taken from Ashmune, Sidney G., ed., The Comedies of Terence, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press: New York, 1910).


5 See note 2 for citation.

6 Coulter, p. 526-527.

7 Roberts, Arthur J., "Did Hroswitha Imitate Terence?" Modern Language Notes, 16 (1901), 478-481.

8 See note 2 for citation.


10 DeLuca, p. 92.

12 See p. 30, 34-35, 36, 51, 56, 58, 60-62, 64 of this paper.


15 Duckworth, p. 69.

16 Duckworth, p. 69.


20 See note 2.

21 For evidence of this concern, see the letter to Hroswitha's patrons which follows the preface to her plays in Homeyer, p. 236 (section 9).


23 Pomeroy, p. 57-84, 125-131, 149-189; Balsdon, p. 45-46, 270-277.
24 See note 19.

25 Duckworth, p. 258-261.

26 DeLuca, p. 90.

27 For an idea of what Terentian language is, see Duckworth, p. 331-360; for Terentian language in Hroswitha, see Coulter (note 2). Homeyer's notes to her text are also helpful in identifying Terentian words and expressions.

28 Cole, p. 602.

29 On the limits of the celibate vocation for Roman women, see Balsdon, p. 192, 235.

