I. The Women

a. Thais – a foreign prostitute with good intentions and two men vying for her attention

b. Pamphila – a girl aged about 16, kidnapped in infancy and sold into slavery, raped by Chaerea

c. Pythias – a slave-girl owned by Thais, outspoken and sassy

II. Roles of Women in the Eunuchus

a. Tensions between men and women

   i. Phaedria’s insecurity about Thais’ love and his jealousy of her other lovers.

   ii. Pythias’ vengefulness toward Parmeno, whom she blames for her mistress’ troubles.

   iii. Parmeno’s pessimistic view of love.

b. Portrayal of problems that arise from ignorance, misunderstanding, and prejudice.

   i. Chaerea’s plan to trick Thais into accepting him as a eunuch so that he may gain access to Pamphila.

      1. ... an id flagitiumst si in domum meretriciam deducar et illis crucibus, quae nos nostramque adolescentiam habent despicatam et quae nos semper omnibus cruciant modis, nunc referam gratiam atque eas itidem fallam ut ab eis fallimur? ... quod qui rescierint culpent; illud merito factum omnes putent. (Chaerea, 382-7)

   ii. Chaerea’s rape of Pamphila.

      1. “For the purposes of New Comedy it is apparently preferable that a ‘respectable’ woman should be raped rather than seduced. Physically, her honor may have been defiled but mentally she
remained pure. To portray an Athenian girl being seduced would perhaps have reduced her respectability in the eyes of the audience. Paradoxically we find that the force of rape, as is so often illustrated by the torn clothing of the victim, emphasizes the respectability of the woman raped.” (Pierce, p. 166)

2. quin etiam insuper scelus, postquam ludificatust urginem uestem omnem miserae discidit, tum ipsam capillo conscidit. (Pythias, 645-6)

iii. Constant prejudice against Thais as a prostitute

1. sed eccam ipsa egreditur, nostri fundi calamitas; sam quod nos capere oportet haec intercipit. (Parmeno, 79-80)

2. utinam istuc uerbum ex animo ac uere diceres: ‘potius quam te inimicum habeam’! si istuc crederem sincere dici, quiduis possem perpeti. (Phaedria, 175-7)

3. ... iam tum erat suspicio / dolo malo haec fieri omnia. (Chremes, 514-5)

4. ego pol, quae mihi sum conscia, hoc certo scio neque me finxisse falsi quicquam neque meo cordi esse quemquam cariorem hoc Phaedria. et quidquid huius feci, causa uirginis feci. (Thais, 199-203)

c. Strong female characters.

i. The men compete for Thais’ affections, which in turn gives her power over them. Due to Thais’ seemingly almost pure heart, she gains sympathy from the crowd for her plight despite her profession.

ii. Pythias’ persona seems a bit harsh around the edges, but her speeches are so vehement that she not only brings the wrongness of rape to light, but she also manages to pull one over on Parmeno.

d. Character and plot realism.

i. “But for all of its discomfitures, the ending of Eunuchus is realistic. Marriage between Thais and Phaedria is impossible; Thais will continue
earning her living as a prostitute; and social realities dictate that her life will (still) be controlled by men of higher status ...” (Christenson)

e. A ‘happy’ ending.

i. Thais gains protection from Phaedria’s father and financial stability from the controversial arrangement of a continued servicing of Thraso.

ii. Pamphila’s citizenship is discovered and her future saved by a marriage to Chaerea.

Bibliography


