

Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage





Satiric Advice
ON
Women AND Marriage



FROM PLAUTUS TO CHAUCER

Warren S. Smith, Editor

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For Anne Marie, Josh, Caleb, and Rachel



Preface



The essays in this book examine satiric attitudes toward women and marriage in later classical literature, starting with Plautus (ca. 200 B.C.) and continuing into the Christian era as far as Walter Map (twelfth century A.D.). With the exception of two closing chapters on Chaucer (d. A.D. 1400), the emphasis will be on authors writing in Latin; this choice is based on the belief that there is a continuity of thought, ideas, and vocabulary throughout Latin satiric literature, from Plautus and Lucretius to Walter Map and beyond. Moreover, greater focus is gained by concentrating on Latin authors, making it possible to trace both a consistency of terms and a literary continuity between the classical and medieval periods, particularly in the case of the important transitional writers Tertullian and Jerome, who are a central feature of two of the essays. This book is not so much about women as about male attitudes toward women and marriage, particularly as that attitude is conveyed in the eccentric and distinctive context of satiric writing. It should also be added that the list of authors under consideration was chosen to reflect various points of view and was in no sense intended as exhaustive or definitive.

Chapter 1, "Satiric Advice: Serious or Not?" by Warren S. Smith (University of New Mexico), looks at the authors who discuss women and marriage from the point of view of what we can deduce about their attitudes and intentions: what makes such advice "satiric" and how the genres of satire and comedy influence our attitude toward the narrative voice, how seriously its message may be intended, and the reader for whom the message is intended.

Preface

The second chapter, “‘In a Different Guise’: Roman Education and Greek Rhetorical Thought on Marriage,” by Richard Hawley (Royal Holloway, University of London), shows how the education of the Roman male elite had an important focus on Greek moral values: teachers posing the question “Should one take a wife?” encouraged schoolboys to search through Greek literature, starting with Homer and the dramatists, for negative examples of married relationships.

Susanna Morton Braund (Stanford University), in “Marriage, Adultery, and Divorce in Roman Comic Drama” (chap. 3), shows how often Plautus and Terence focus on tension in the married relationship. *Uxores dotatae* (dowried wives) are dangerous in Plautus, who seems to warn against a legal shift in which a wife becomes *sui juris* after the death of her father. In Plautus’s *Amphitryo* and *Menaechmi*, where threats of divorce are a central theme, Plautus challenges the convention of the *palliata* (which avoided the theme of divorce), and Terence outdoes Plautus with his highly experimental play *Hecyra*, which shows a marriage held together by the manipulations of unsuspecting men by generous and intelligent female characters.

Warren S. Smith, in chapter 4, “‘The Cold Cares of Venus’: Lucretius and Anti-Marriage Literature,” discusses Lucretius as a satiric writer and describes his urging of the (male) reader against any sexual relationship that is accompanied by love, for fear it will distract his thinking and affect his objectivity in the search for philosophical truth. The force of love is finally seen as comparable to that of a plague or an invading army.

Karla Pollmann (University of St. Andrews, Scotland), in “Marriage and Gender in Ovid’s Erotodidactic Poetry” (chap. 5), shows how Ovid, in his *Ars amatoria*, teaches young men and women how to refine, cultivate, and control the sex drive as a natural force. The status of the women courted in Ovid’s poems is not always clear, and there is a blurring of boundaries between the married and unmarried. The addition of sex advice to women is unusual, even unique, and the female psyche and personality are seen as both complex and subtle.

Warren S. Smith, in “Advice on Sex by the Self-Defeating Satirists: Horace *Sermones* 1.2, Juvenal *Satire* 6, and Roman Satiric Writing” (chap. 6), shows how Horace and Juvenal warn against sexual relationships with a pessimism that ends up as self-defeating, not only since the sex drive itself is powerful, but because the resourcefulness and resilience of women gives them an unbeatable advantage in their encounters with men.

In chapter 7, “Chaste Artemis and Lusty Aphrodite: The Portrait of Women and Marriage in the Greek and Latin Novels,” Regine May (Oxford University) points out that women are prominent in the idealized Greek novel and may have been intended readers. In the Roman novels of Petronius and

Apuleius, women are presented much more negatively (through the vehicle of the Milesian tale), as unscrupulous seducers. The vicious stepmother of Apuleius's book 10 outdoes anyone in Petronius as part of an indictment against the female sex.

Elizabeth A. Clark (Duke University), moving forward to the early Christian era in "Dissuading from Marriage: Jerome and the Asceticization of Satire" (chap. 8), analyzes the anti-marriage tracts of the Latin Christian authors Tertullian and Jerome. Jerome borrows and exaggerates much of Tertullian's material and is imbued with a far stronger anti-sexual animus than his predecessor. Jerome's purpose is not to reform marriage but to warn Christians away from it entirely.

Barbara Feichtinger (University of Konstanz), in "Change and Continuity in Pagan and Christian (Invective) Thought on Women and Marriage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages" (chap. 9), an overview of antigamous and anti-gynous literature, stresses the importance of historical and geographical context for judging each of these works. Feichtinger shows a change between pagan and Christian misogamy, a change stemming from a new attitude toward chastity. Sexuality to Christians is seen, in the post-Eden world, as the situation of fallen men. Tertullian, in his treatises on marriage, tries to instill in women good behavior, chastity, and subservience, but to Jerome (Tertullian's successor and imitator), marriage only has value in producing virgins. Both men and women must now be persuaded of the value of abstinence. Misogynistic misogamy is part of the takeover of married life by the medieval church, which attempts to control female authority by placing norms on women.

In chapter 10, "Walter as Valerius: Classical and Christian in the *Dissuasio*," Ralph Hanna III (University of Oxford) and Warren S. Smith see Walter Map's *Dissuasio matrimonii*, a popular twelfth-century antimatrimonial treatise, as "a riotous fabric of sources with an eye for the colorful and humorous," intermingling classical and Christian sources and achieving a rhetorical tour de force even while disdaining rhetoric.

P. G. Walsh (University of Glasgow), in his survey "Antifeminism in the High Middle Ages" (chap. 11), points out that an anonymous treatise like *De coniuge non ducenda* (On not taking a wife) had the specific interest of maintaining sufficient numbers of ordained clergy, by discouraging potential clerics from entering the married state. In such treatises as the third book of Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*, we find an astonishingly virulent onslaught on the female sex. The influence of Juvenal and Ovid is strongly felt here, as in other writers of the High Middle Ages, such as Walter of Chatillon and Bernard of Cluny, who update classical satire by applying it to the vices of contemporary women.

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Chapter 12, “The Wife of Bath and Dorigen Debate Jerome,” by Warren S. Smith, is another reminder of the great influence of Jerome’s *Against Jovinian* in the Middle Ages and shows how Chaucer’s work provides a kind of peaceful resolution to Jerome’s anti-marriage theme. *Against Jovinian* is a central preoccupation in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, where the Wife of Bath, in her prologue, debates with Jerome about the biblical position on marriage, while Dorigen, in the “Franklin’s Tale,” humanizes and provides a softer moral for many stories from Jerome about women who escaped or reacted to rape by suicide.

Acknowledgments



The idea for this book began to take shape at a conference on Apuleius at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1995. The conference was organized by Stephen Harrison, whose work on the Roman novel has always been a model for me. At that same conference, I met Peter Walsh, another of my longtime role models, who later agreed to write a chapter for this book, in which he surveys medieval Latin satire on marriage. Heinz Hoffman, at the University of Tübingen, had some helpful ideas on getting the book organized and made the happy suggestions of Karla Pollmann and Barbara Feichtinger as possible contributors. Susanna Morton Braund—then at Royal Holloway, University of London, and now at Stanford University—suggested Regine May, who at that time was Steve Harrison’s doctoral student at Oxford, to write on the Greek and Roman novel; she also introduced me to Richard Hawley, who eventually wrote the chapter on Greek rhetorical influence on the Romans. Susanna herself read an early version of my chapter on the *Wife of Bath* and encouraged me in that effort, and to top it off, she also contributed the chapter on attitudes toward women in Roman comedy. In a very real sense, she is a spiritual parent of this book. The other contributors, Ralph Hanna III and Elizabeth A. Clark, are well known in their fields and fortuitously joined the project when they were needed.

Many years ago, I heard Wendell Clausen lecture on Juvenal one summer at Harvard University, and this started my lifelong fascination with satire, which is still my first love in the classics, though my research gets side-tracked in other directions. My interest was renewed after a summer National

Acknowledgments

Endowment for the Humanities session at the University of California, Berkeley, with W. S. Anderson in the late 1970s. Other more recent fruitful contacts have come from Maaïke Zimmerman at the University of Groningen; from Martin Winkler, a Juvenal and film scholar; from Barbara Gold, who was to have written a chapter on Juvenal's sixth satire but finally had to decline because of other commitments; and from the late Don Fowler, a generous and kind man, whose illness finally prevented him from completing a chapter on Lucretius.

I first read Jerome's *Against Jovinian*, a work that finds prominent mention in this book, in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* more than a decade ago, when I taught for a year at St. Andrews Theological Seminary in Manila in the Philippines. That I had extra time to spend and that the library was the only air-conditioned room in the complex drove me to these books at first out of boredom, which turned to fascination.

In conclusion, I thank Lori Czosnyka, who, as an editorial assistant, helped me prepare the bibliography; Joseph McAlhany, who read part of the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions; and John Owen, who continually supplemented my rudimentary computer skills.

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