

*Bad Girls: The Role of the “Mala” in Ancient Greek and Roman Literature*

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## I. Introduction

A common trope in much of Ancient Greek and Roman literature is the practice whereby a typically older woman advises a typically younger woman on ways to profit from a man who will pay to sleep with her. Plautus' *Casina*, *Truculentus*, *Cistellaria*, and *Mostellaria*, the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid, Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, and Herodas' *Mimes* provide a useful context for examining this transaction of advice giving. Oftentimes, women who participate in this pedagogical process are labeled as "bad women," usually by the male characters.<sup>1</sup> These women are especially "bad" if they put their newfound knowledge to the test and use these skills to the detriment of men. The words that are used for "bad women" vary according to genre and author and include words such as *mala*, *improba*, and *pessuma*.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in Lucian, these women are not typically labeled as "bad." However, Lucian's work still showcases the same type of "bad women" who advise other women on how to profit from their lovers. Since this process is present in all of these genres it stresses the fact that this trope is an important method for expressing cultural anxieties surrounding women. The process of advice giving is threatening to the male characters in these texts because it emphasizes the command that these women have over words and language. This transaction draws attention to the fact that these women have control over younger women and have the

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<sup>1</sup>As Gilhuly notes, "Didactic scenes enact the moment when an individual is told how to act in order to assume or properly inhabit a particular social role" (Gilhuly 68-69). The process of advice giving tells these women how to assume the role of a *mala*.

<sup>2</sup>Variation between genres should be expected. As Wyke notes, "Broadly speaking, literary representations of the female are determined both at the level of culture and at the level of genre: that is to say, by the range of cultural codes and institutions that order the female in a particular society and by the conventions that surround a particular practice of writing" (*Roman Mistress* 78). This statement is reflected in both the unique vocabulary of each genre, as well as the distinctive aspects of the advice giving process that these texts focus on, which will be discussed in more detail, later on.

power to transform them into *malae* like themselves. Soon these desirable young women will also have power over persuasive language, which they can use to manipulate male characters. In elegy, this power over transformation and language frequently manifests itself in the form of magical powers that these women use to control nature.

Despite the fact that the *mala* is one of the most pervasive characters in classical literature, this paper is one of the first to look specifically at the figure of the *mala* as a distinct character type that is defined by her participation in the transaction of advice giving. This paper brings cultural specificity to a seemingly generic concept by examining this specific definition of “bad.” Other papers that have had similar goals include Vincent Rosivach’s article, “Anus: Some Older Women in Latin Literature,” which brings cultural specificity to a negative stereotypes to discover “something about the male society which generated and transmitted” it and their anxieties (Rosivach 107). The crossover in the demographics of *anus* and *lena* make this article particularly interesting, although Rosivach’s article does not make the *lena* a main area of study. The aim of Arthur Wheeler’s two-part article on erotic teaching is the most similar to this project, although it mainly focuses on Roman elegy and a wider selection of Greek sources, whereas this paper places the greatest emphasis on Roman comedy. Wheeler’s article also examines the process of erotic didacticism, which is more limited in its scope than the process of advice giving, which covers a wide variety of advice both erotic and nonerotic. In addition, He does not address how this process causes women to be labeled as “bad” or the concept of the *mala*.

Sharon James’ article, “The Economics of Roman Elegy: Voluntary Poverty, the *Recusatio*, and the Greedy Girl,” shares some topics in common with this paper, namely

the similarity in the speech of many elegiac women. However, instead of attributing this parallelism to the process of advice giving which promotes the same basic set of instructions across several genres, James claims that they are characteristics driven by their profession as sex workers, not character flaws, which are specific to the individual (*The Economics of Roman Elegy* 225). While the distinction between women as a product of advice giving and as a product of their profession is an important one, it should be noted that these two claims are not mutually exclusive. Much of the advice that is given in these texts could be linked to the status and profession of these women, especially the economic motivation that lies behind much of their advice. Likewise, James comments on this monetary preoccupation by expanding her discussion to include the notion of the “greedy girl.” She says, “A primary example is greed, for which the elegiac speakers never tire of criticizing their *puellae*, as though *avaritia* were a character flaw of a specific woman rather than a professional obligation” (*The Economics of Roman Elegy* 225). Sharon James continues her work on women’s speech in elegy in her article, “*Ipsa Dixerat*: Women’s Words in Roman Love Elegy.” As in “The Economics of Roman Elegy: Voluntary Poverty, the *Recusatio*, and the Greedy Girl,” James notes similarities in speech of elegiac women and says that all these courtesans follow the advice of Dipsas and Acanthis (*Ipsa Dixerat* 315). Notably, this quote specifically mentions the process of advice giving and will be discussed more later on in this paper. James’ article also comments on the lack of direct speech from female characters and focuses on the select instances where they are not limited to reported speech (*Ipsa Dixerat* 314). While this paper shares many similar areas of discussion, it omits any detailed discussion of the process of advice giving.

While this paper focuses on “bad” women and often, “bad” prostitutes, there has also been some work done on “good” courtesans. One example is Madeleine Henry’s dissertation entitled, *Menander’s Courtesans and the Greek Comic Tradition*, which traces the evolution of the *hetaira* as a character in Greek comedy up to the development of the *bona meretrix* in Menander’s plays. Throughout her analysis, Henry seems to imply that the “bad” *hetairai* are not very interesting or developed characters, until Menander makes “good” courtesans “heroic and vital to the plot” (Henry 48). On the other hand, this paper presents “bad” courtesans in a new and compelling way that emphasizes their important place in these texts.

## II. Roman Comedy

Plautus’ *Truculentus* is a text that offers many examples of *malae* including the infamous prostitute, Phronesium and Astaphium, her *ancilla*. Even though, there is no implication that Astaphium is herself a prostitute, she is clearly trained by Phronesium to help her take advantage of her lovers and shares many of Phronesium’s economic motivations. Throughout the play, both women are repeatedly called “bad” by men and at times even refer to themselves in this manner. From the very beginning of the play these women are called “bad women.” These accusations start when Diniarchus is pointing out Phronesium’s house to the audience. He says that once he ran out of money Phronesium chose a new lover *quem antehac odiosum sibi esse memorabat mala* [whom this bad woman was saying before was troublesome to her] (*Truc.* 84). Phronesium is a *mala* for forsaking a lover for economically motivated reasons, but also because her new lover is a man whom she previously said she hated. Phronesium is acting in a way that will maximize the ways in which she profits from men who will pay to sleep with her.

Diniarchus also calls her a *pessuma* for pretending that she has had a child in order to get more money from the soldier (*Truc.* 88). In both instances, Phronesium is labeled as “bad” for deceiving men, especially through language. Diniarchus even says, *mihi verba retur dare se?* [does she reckon she is fooling me?], which emphasizes that most of Phronesium’s power comes from words (*Truc.* 89).

Diniarchus also calls Astaphium bad when she tells him that she is going to fetch another prostitute, when she is really going to bring back another lover for Phronesium. Diniarchus says, *mala tu femina es, oles unde es disciplinam./ manifesto mendaci, mala, teneo te* [You are a bad woman and you stink of the place where you got your instruction, bad woman, I caught you by means of your obvious lie] (*Truc.* 132-133). This passage is so striking because not only does Diniarchus call Astaphium *mala* twice, but he also used the word *disciplinam*, which emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of advice giving. Clearly, Phronesium has been advising Astaphium about how to deceive men with words and use language to the detriment of men. Diniarchus continues these same accusations by saying, *mala es praestrigiatrix* [you are a wicked deceiver], immediately afterwards (*Truc.* 134). Diniarchus even calls Astaphium *mala* only thirty lines later. He says, *mala es atque eadem quae soles illecebra* [you are a bad woman and temptress, which same things you are accustomed to be] (*Truc.* 184). The verb *soleo* draws attention to Astaphium’s consistently bad behavior.

Phronesium is also labeled as a “bad woman” when she tells Diniarchus that she is secretly raising someone else’s child as her own in order to extort more money from her lover, Stratophanes by convincing him that the child is his own. Diniarchus responds, *o mercis malae!/ eum nunc non illa peperit prior,/ sed tu posterior* [Oh bad piece of

work! She who gave birth before did not give birth to him now, but you, the later one gave birth to him] (*Truc.* 409-411). Here, Diniarchus labels Phronesium as a *mala* because she is deceiving men and more specifically, she is deceiving men about the paternity of her children. Since child bearing is such an important part of women's social function this deception is especially dangerous. *Mala merx* is also a fairly common phrase that is used to label women as "bad" (OLD s.v. *merx* 1b). It also appears in Plautus' *Casina* and *Cistellaria* (*Cas.* 750-752, *Cist.* 727). This phrase is particularly fitting for a woman like Phronesium since the word *merx* is an inherent part of being a *meretrix*. As Wedeck notes, "The word *meretrix*, used in a generic sense for a wanton of any type, is strictly a professional harlot who sells herself for *merx* (Wedeck 117). These are women who wish to profit from men and obtain *merx* from them.<sup>3</sup> By labeling the women as *merx*, the men identify them as the type of women who wish to profit from men who will pay to sleep with them and by extension the process of learning how to profit from men in this way. This phrase also has the effect of making the women themselves into a commodity that must be bought. As both the subject and the object of

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<sup>3</sup>The connection between women who are commodities and women who work for commodities is also present in the Greek system of thought. In Greek literature, *hetairai* are equated with the process of gift exchange, whereas the *pornê*, "who derives her name from the verb *πέρνημι*, 'to sell (especially slaves),' represents the commodification of sex for pay" (Kurke 108). However, these categories are not always mutually exclusive since ideology oftentimes does not map onto reality. As Kurke notes, "there is frequent slippage between the two terms in ancient sources" (Kurke 108). This "slippage" makes the Greek system of thought more similar to the Latin system since the term *meretrix* contains both the idea of the commodification of women contained in the concept of the *pornê* and the idea of working for gifts that is embodied in *hetaira*.

selling these women are inherently connected to a system of profit and economic motivation.<sup>4</sup>

Heading home after her conversation with Diniarchus, she refers to her plot as a *commentum male* [bad fabrication] (*Truc.* 451). Phronesium echoes Diniarchus' own language and labels her actions as "bad." Immediately after this, she says, *minus perhibemur malae quam sumus ingenio/ ego prima de me, domo docta, dico* [We are called less bad than we are by nature/ I talk about myself first, having been instructed by my own household] (*Truc.* 452-453). Not only does Phronesium call herself a *mala*, but she insinuates that men, such as Diniarchus underestimate just how "bad" women are. It is clear that she is using the same definition of *mala* that Diniarchus is employing since she utilizes the same vocabulary to refer to the same set of actions. She also emphasizes the didactic aspect of being a *mala*. Women must learn to be a "bad," usually from other women. The word *domus* subtly conveys this since it encompasses the entire household, including the people that occupy it. This is another indirect way of referring to the process of advice giving since she would need someone else from her household to make her *docta*. Phronesium herself says something similar a few lines later. She says, *ego quod mala sum, matris opera mala sum et meapte malitia/ quae me gravidam esse assimilavi militi Babylonio* [As to the fact that I'm bad, I am bad because of the effort of my mother and my own badness, I who pretended I was pregnant to the Babylonian soldier] (*Truc.* 471-472). This quote not only supports the reading that Phronesium had

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<sup>4</sup>The concept of prostitute as both subject and object is also a matter of concern in the Greek sources, especially in Lucian. As Gilhuly notes, "These subjects [*hetairai*] are on the most basic level complicated, for central to the identity of any manner of prostitute is objectification. Fundamentally, this text is preoccupied with exploring what happens when objects become subjects" (Gilhuly 61).

to be taught to be “bad” by someone in her household, but it is an example of a woman directly calling herself *mala* in the same context, which causes male characters to label her as “bad.” Here, she supports Diniarchus’ earlier accusation that she is a “bad woman” by citing the exact same reason that he employs.

Later in the play, Phronesium calls both herself and Astaphium *malae*. When Stratophanes finally arrives at Phronesium’s house, Astaphium announces his arrival and reminds Phronesium to pretend to be in a weakened state from having just given birth (Truc. 500). Phronesium replies, *tace./ quoi adhuc ego tam mala eram monetrix, me maleficio vinceres?* [Be quiet. You, to whom I was such a bad adviser, will you surpass me in doing bad deeds?] (Truc. 500-501). The term *monetrix* is clearly connected to the didactic process of advice giving. The fact that it is modified by the adjective *mala* creates an incredibly strong connection between advice giving and the reasons that women are labeled as “bad.” The consonance between *mala* and *monetrix* is continued by the term *maleficio*, which further emphasizes the negative association between advice giving and “bad women.” This statement also highlights an anxiety about the effectiveness of advice giving as a didactic tool, which can transform women into *malae*. The idea that the process of educating another woman through advice giving can be so effective that the younger woman begins to give the older woman advice is what makes this pedagogical process so terrifying for men. The fact that Astaphium has been so thoroughly transformed into a *mala* that she advises and reminds Phronesium to deceive Stratophanes is the ultimate proof of the efficacy of this process.

Plautus’ *Cistellaria* provides even more typical examples of advice giving between a *lena* and a *meretrix* or, in the case of Selenium, a citizen girl, who was exposed

as a baby and has been raised by a *lena* to be a *meretrix*. The first example of advice giving is when Selenium is talking to her friend and fellow *meretrix* Gymnasium and Gymnasium's mother who is an unnamed procuress, about her lover Alcesimarchus. Selenium says that she wants to marry Alcesimarchus, instead of being a prostitute. The *lena* says, *o mea Selenium,/ assimulare amare oportet. Nam si ames, extempulo/ melius illi multo quem ames consulas quam rei tuae* [Oh my Selenium, it is necessary to pretend to love. For if you love, you immediately look out for that man whom you love far better than for your needs] (*Cist.* 95-97). Of course, Selenium does not follow the advice of Gymnasium's mother, but the fact that the *lena* advises her to deceive men by pretending to love them so that she can look after her own interests and continue to profit from them still remains.

Unlike Selenium, the two *lenae* in this play do participate in the deception of men. As in Plautus' *Truculentus*, the procuress, Melaenis raises a child that is not her own in order to profit from men in some way. She acquires Selenium as a baby after Gymnasium's mother finds her after she has been exposed. Unlike Phronesium who pretends she was pregnant in order to receive more money from Stratophanes right away, Melaenis pretends that Selenium is her daughter so that she can profit from her economically once she reaches sexual maturity. When the unnamed *lena* tells the audience that she was the one to find Selenium as a child she says:

*eam meae ego amicae dono huic meretrici [Melaenis] dedi,  
 quae saepe mecum mentionem fecerat,  
 puerum aut puellam alicunde ut reperirem sibi,  
 recens natum, eapse quod sibi supponeret.*

I gave her as a gift to this prostitute [Melaenis], who often made mention to me that should I find for her from any

place a boy or girl, being born recently, whom she could counterfeit as her own.  
(*Cist.* 133-136)

While it is not explicitly stated here, it is clear that Melaenis' motivations for taking in an exposed child are economic in nature. Apollodorus' speech *Against Neaira* provides a useful context for looking at the practice of raising small children to be prostitutes once they reach puberty. In fact, Nikarete's practice of buying young slave girls to sell off once they reach sexual maturity closely resembles Melaenis' own actions. As Apollodorus tells it:

ἑπτὰ γὰρ ταύτας παιδίσκαζ ἐκ μικρῶν παιδίων ἐκτήσατο Νικαρέτη, Χαρισίου μὲν οὔσα τοῦ Ἡλείου ἀπελευθέρα, Ἴππιου δὲ τοῦ μαγείρου τοῦ ἐκείνου γυνή, δεινὴ δὲ καὶ δυναμένη φύσιν μικρῶν παιδίων συνιδεῖν εὐπρεπῆ, καὶ ταῦτα ἐπισταμένη θρέψαι καὶ παιδεῦσαι ἐμπείρως, τέχνην ταύτην κατεσκευασμένη καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τὸν βίον συνειλεγμένη. προσειποῦσα δ' αὐτὰς ὀνόματι θυγατέρας, ἵν' ὡς μεγίστους μισθοὺς πράττειτο τοὺς βουλομένους πλησιάζειν αὐταῖς ὡς ἐλευθέραις οὔσαις, ἐπειδὴ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐκαρπώσατο αὐτῶν ἐκάστης...

For Nikarete acquired seven young small female slaves from when they were small, [Nikarete] being a freedwoman of Charisos of Elis, and being the wife of Hippias, the cook of that man, she being skillful and being powerful at seeing that the appearance of young children would be beautiful, and knowing how to raise them and teach them skillfully, having made this her skill and collecting her livelihood from the girls. Calling them by the name of daughters, so that she would gain the greatest profit from the men wishing to have relations with them on the grounds that they were free, after she enjoyed the profit of the youth of each of them...  
(Demosthenes 59.18-19)

Although Melaenis does not intend to sell Selenium she still profits from her sexual desirability and youth in a similar manner. Like Nikarete, Melaenis also calls Selenium

her daughter. She too shares Nikarete's reasoning that she will be able to obtain the greatest profit from selling her to men, who will pay to sleep with her by calling Selenium her daughter. Selenium functions as a kind of insurance that allows Melaenis to continue profiting from men using the same skill set that she employed when she was a prostitute, even after she is no longer young and attractive. In both cases, prostitutes deceive men about the paternity of their children for economically motivated reasons. This specific type of deception is the result of a process of advice giving that teaches women how best to financially profit from men who will pay to sleep with them.

Later in the play, Selenium's biological mother, Phanostrata, and Phanostrata's slave, Lampadio, discover Melaenis' deception when Gymnasium's mother confesses that she was the one who found Selenium as a baby and gave her to Melaenis (*Cist.* 550-583). However, later on the *lena* revokes her confession. Lampadio is reporting this fact to Phanostrata and says, *scelestiorem in terra nullam esse alteram;/ omnia infitari eam, quae dudum confessa est mihi!* [There is not another woman more wicked on the earth; she denies all things, which she confessed to me a short time ago] (*Cist.* 661-662). Lampadio is calling Gymnasium's mother *scelestiorem* and thereby labeling her as a *mala* because she is using language to the detriment of men. By going back on her earlier confession she is maintaining a deception, which only profits Melaenis.

Almost immediately after, Halisca, Melaenis' *ancilla* loses the casket and the rattle that were discovered with Selenium when Gymnasium's mother found her. Lampadio and Phanostrata find them just before Halisca returns to look for them. They ask her what she is looking for and she gives an evasive answer and says she looking for something that will cause sadness to her household. In reply, Lampadio tells Phanostrata,

*mala merx, era, haec et callida est* [Mistress, this woman is a bad piece of work and learned by experience] (*Cist.*727). Not surprisingly, he labels Halisca as a *mala merx* for using evasive and deceptive speech to the detriment of himself and Phanostrata. The word *callida* emphasizes a cunning that comes from experience and when used in combination with the word *mala*, it emphasizes that the skills of *mala*, including her deceptive use of language are learned (s.v. *callidus* 1). A *mala* must learn her specific skillset through the didactic process of advice giving. In Roman elegy, the word *callida* is also used to describe *lenae*, who are stereotypically *malae* and infamous for using language to the detriment of the elegiac poet (Tib. 1.5.47). Phanostrata agrees with Lampadio's assessment that Halisca is a *mala*, and he adds that, *imitatur nequam bestiam et damnificam...involvolum, quae pampini folio intorta implicat se:/ itidem haec exorditur sibi intortam orationem* [she imitates a bad and injurious beast...a caterpillar, which entangles itself in a vine leaf; in the same way this one weaves twisted speech] (*Cist.* 728-730). Here, Lampadio again labels Halisca as "bad" and more explicitly connects her to deceptive speech, using the phrase *intortam orationem*. This is yet another example in this play that conveys anxieties around women's use of deceptive language and emphasizes that this ability is learned and not innate. These women are the product of a process that teaches them to use language in ways that benefit themselves, often to the detriment of other characters.

The *Mostellaria* is yet another Roman comedy that is preoccupied with the process of advice giving. The most notable example from this play is scene 1.3 where Scapha, Philematium's slave gives her advice about how to take advantage of her lover, Philolaches, while he secretly listens in. Philematium is a prostitute, who was bought and

freed by her lover. In this scene, Philolaches constantly curses Scapha for giving Philematium bad advice and labels her a *mala*. The first time that Philolaches calls Scapha “bad” is after she advises Philematium to decorate herself with *moribus lepidis* or charming habits since she is already physically beautiful and does not need pretty clothing (*Mos.* 168). Philematium agrees to follow Scapha’s advice and Philolaches calls Scapha *scelestas*, despite the fact that he agrees that Philematium does not need any other adornment (*Mos.* 170). Whether or not he agrees with the advice is irrelevant. The very fact that Scapha is the type of woman who gives advice makes her “bad.”

Philolaches again calls Scapha “bad” after Philematium actually asks for advice. She says, *quin mone quaeso, si quid error* [Indeed, I beg you advise me if I err] (*Mos.* 187). Scapha advises her to take more than one lover since she is a *meretrix* and not a *matrona* (*Mos.* 188-190). Philolaches calls her a *mala* and says, *nam quod malum vorsatur meae domi illud?* [For what a bad thing is this dwelling in my house?] (*Mos.* 191). Again, Scapha’s status as a “bad woman” is directly linked to her participation in the process of advice giving. In fact, Philematium replies to Scapha’s advice by saying, *nolo ego mihi male te, Scapha, praecipere* [I do not wish you, Scapha, to advise me badly] (*Mos.* 194). The repeated use of *male* shows Philematium’s unwillingness to take her advice and participate in this process, despite the fact that she indirectly participates by being the one to ask for advice in the first place. The verb *praecipere* also emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of advice giving. *Malae* are made, not born. Even when women are reluctant to follow such advice, they are still part of the process and the potential to become a *mala* remains.

Shortly after, Scapha reveals why the process of advice giving is a cause of such great anxiety for men. She says, *postremo, si dictis nequis perduci ut vera haec credas/ mea dicta, ex factis nosce rem. Vides quae sim et quae fui ante./ nilo ego quam nunc tu...amata sum; atque uni modo gessi morem* [Finally, if you are not able to be led by words so that you believe these words of mine to be true/ know the truth from deeds. You see what I am and what I was before,/ by no less than you now...I was loved; and I was obedient to one man alone] (*Mos.* 198-200). This process has the ability to transform a “good” or at least agreeable woman like Philematium into a *mala* like Scapha. As Scapha points out, she was just like Philematium in her youth. Scapha has learned from experience how to take advantage of men and now she can pass this information onto her. Philematium’s indirect participation in the process of advice giving betrays that the potential to become a *mala* is already present. It is apparent that this is exactly what Philolaches is afraid of. A few lines later, he says, *illa hanc corrumpit mulierem malesuada cantilena* [the woman is ruining this woman with ill-advising prattle] (*Mos.* 213). This quote establishes a clear connection between advice giving and a woman’s status as *mala*. The compound adjective *malesuadus* emphasizes the strong negative association with advice giving by physically linking it to the *mal* word element.

Throughout the rest of this scene, Scapha continues to give Philematium advice about how to be pleasing to her lover. Although, on the surface, this advice may seem “good” because Philematium genuinely seems to want to please Philolaches, it also inherently bad since it is advice given by a *mala*. When Scapha tells Philematium not to wear makeup because she does not need it, Philematium thinks about how this will make her seem more beautiful to Philolaches (*Mos.* 261-264). However, Scapha knows that a

girl who is pleasing to her lover stands to gain more money from him. The fact that the advice comes from a place of economic motivation taints it. Scapha also gives Philematium much more explicitly economically motivated advice. After Philematium touches a mirror, Scapha tells her to wipe off her hands so that they will not smell like money, which would cause Philolaches to think that she had already accepted money from another lover recently and to give her less money (*Mos.* 267-269). Hearing this advice, Philolaches says, *non videor vidisse lenam callidiorum ullam alteras./ ut lepide atque astute in mentem venit de speculo malae!* [I do not think I have seen any other procuress more learned by experience. How wittily and expertly it [the idea] came into her mind for that bad woman about the mirror] (*Mos.* 270-271). Once again, he labels Scapha as a *mala*. As in the *Cistellaria*, the word *callida* is used in combination with the word *mala* to refer to a woman who is either deceptive or advises another woman to profit from men (*Cist.* 727). Only a few lines earlier, Scapha herself implies that she is *callida* (*Mos.* 198-200).

Even more strikingly, Philematium does not reject this piece of advice and instead asks Scapha for more advice. She says, *etiamne unguentis unguendam cense?* [Do you also think I must anoint myself with perfume?] (*Mos.* 272). Of course, Scapha does not fail to further advise Philematium. Hearing her advice, Philolaches says, *ut perdocte cuncta callet! Nihil hac docta doctius!* [How learnedly she knows all things by experience! Nothing is more learned than this learned one!] (*Mos.* 279). The repeated use of *doctus* and its compounds emphasizes the didactic aspect of advice giving. The verb *calleo* has similar connections to advice giving because of its relation to the adjective *callida*, which was discussed above (OLD s.v. *calleo* 3). Scapha has dangerous

knowledge that she can impart on Philematium through this process of advice giving. The fact that this knowledge is what a detestable old *lena* and an attractive young *puella* have in common is what makes it so threatening to men. Once young *meretrices* like Philematium listen to enough advice and become *docta*, they come that much closer to transforming *puellae* into *malae* themselves. This anxiety is also inherent in other contexts since the word is such an important feature of Roman elegy. Philolaches' greatest fear is that his agreeable Philematium will become as *docta* as Scapha. Strikingly, the scene does not go on much longer before Philolaches steps in and makes his presence known. Perhaps he has noticed that his beloved Philematium has begun to ask for and accept Scapha's advice and is afraid that his agreeable *puella* will begin to become *docta* and *mala*.

Not only is this one of the most quintessential examples in which an older woman advises a younger woman how to profit from a man who will pay to sleep with her, but it is also remarkable for its parallels with elegy. Propertius' *Elegies* 4.5 and Ovid's *Amores* 1.8 both feature a similar dynamic where the poet secretly listens, while the *lena* advises the *puella*.<sup>5</sup> However, in elegy the interaction between poet and *malae* is a level removed since the poet is the one to report what he heard.

Plautus's *Casina* differs from the typical examples of advice giving that were present in the other plays of Plautus. However, this work is still very preoccupied with the process of advice giving and *malae*. *Casina* is different from all of the other texts

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<sup>5</sup> Wheeler further nuances this point by emphasizing the close relationship between comedy and elegy. He says, "...in several cases the Roman elegists who use comic motives agree more closely with comedy itself than with any extant elegiac treatment. Thus Ovid A. i. 8 (*lenae praecepta*) agrees closely with Plautus Most. i. 3 (Scapha's precepts to Philematium) and not with Propertius iv. 5, which Ovid must also have known" (Wheeler 444).

discussed in this paper because the process of advice giving does not take place between a madam and a prostitute. An older woman is still in a position of power over a younger woman, but the older woman's status as a *matrona* completely changes the motivations of the characters. In addition, the play's namesake, Casina never appears onstage, which necessitates a different dynamic of advice giving between the characters. As is often the case with *meretrices*, the younger women are the slaves of the older woman. However, Cleostrata's higher social status changes the discourse of advice drastically. Throughout this text, the language of power and control is much more overt and the advice loses the economic motivation that is a prominent feature of these other texts. As Sharon James claims in her article, "*Ipsa Dixerat:*" *Women's Words in Roman Love Elegy*, "we shall not be surprised to find the elegiac woman's speech representing the perspectives and interests of her class and profession, rather than those of an individual woman" (*Ipsa Dixerat* 315). James' argument draws attention to the similarity of advice given by many of the sex workers in the various texts that will be examined here.

The idea that the examples from *Casina* should be different than other works is even echoed by the characters themselves. As Cleostrata says, *non matronarum officium est, sed meretricium, / viris alienis, mi vir, subblandirier* [It is not the duty of a wife, but of prostitutes, my husband, to speak soothingly to other men] (*Cas.* 585-586). It is a prostitute's responsibility to be pleasing to any man whom she can profit from, whereas a wife must only use charming language when she wishes to profit from her husband. Most importantly, Cleostrata draws a sharp distinction between her duties and the profession of a prostitute. Using *blanditia* is the main method a prostitute possesses to

manipulate men and thereby earn enough money to survive.<sup>6</sup> As a wife, Cleostrata's responsibilities and concerns are very different because she has more resources at her disposal and does not have to worry about providing basic necessities for herself.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these noticeable differences between the women in *Casina* and the women in the other works, these women are still referred to as “bad” by the male characters and in some instances, even seem to conceive of themselves as “bad women” or the very least acknowledge their ability to negatively use language to the detriment of men. Early in the play, Cleostrata appears to show an awareness of her ability to use language to men's disadvantage when she is angry with Lysidamus. She says, *ego illum fame, ego illum siti, maledictis, malefactis amatorem ulciscar,/ ego pol illum probe incommodis dictis angam* [I will punish that lover with hunger, thirst, bad words and bad deeds] (*Cas.* 155-156). In many ways, she is a Roman man's worst nightmare. Cleostrata is aware of her power over language and she knows that she can use it to punish men. The repeated *mal* word element on both *maledictis* and *malefactis* are as

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<sup>6</sup>Cleostrata's statement echoes “the stereotype of *blanditia* as feminine discourse” (Dutsch 205-206). In fact, “Of all Plautine personae, prostitutes (*meretrices*) and madams (*lenae*) are most frequently accused of using *blandimenta* to manipulate others. (Dutsch 208).

<sup>7</sup> While Cleostrata is certainly able to use language to get her way, she does not draw attention to this skill by labeling it as an *officium*, which conveys a sense of necessity (OLD s.v. *officium* 4). Instead she emphasizes other areas of responsibility. As she says, when she refuses to let Lysidamus have control of *Casina*, *mirum ecastor te senecta aetate officium tuom non meminisse... Quia, si facias recte aut commode,/ me sinas curare ancillas, quae mea est curatio* [By castor it is a wonder that you do not remember your duty in your old age... Since, if you were doing it rightly and properly, you would allow me to care for my maids, which is my area of management] (*Cas.* 260-263). Cleostrata emphasizes their separate responsibilities and the areas where they each have authority. Cleostrata's power comes from managing the household and all the female slaves that are part of that household. In the simplest sense, the management of these other women is similar to the job of a madam, but the differences in the motivations between a *lena* and a *matrona*, which are decided by their socio-economic status, determine what they will train these women to do.

close as an *uxor* ever comes to calling herself a *mala*. Attaching *mal* to both *dictis* and *factis*, instead of using a separate adjective adds even more emphasis to her command over language. In addition, it foregrounds her power and agency in general because it stresses that her words and deeds are dangerous tools, which she can use against her husband.

Many other times in this play women use words to get what they want, often to the disadvantage of men. Pardalisca, Cleostrata's *ancilla*, is particularly skilled at constructing an entirely new *fabula* in order to manipulate male characters. She lies to Lysidamus and says that Casina is in the house with a sword and wants to kill him. This new *fabula* utilizes Lysidamus' preexisting notions of the women in his household in order to portray Casina as a "bad woman." In fact, when Pardalisca first appears and says that she has terrible news, Lysidamus calls her *pessuma* for mocking him by not telling him the news immediately and purposefully delaying the information with her dramatic antics (*Cas.* 645). Lysidamus calls Pardalisca "an extremely bad woman" because she is withholding what he perceives to be vital information. However, what makes Pardalisca an even worse woman is constructing a narrative about Casina in the first place and using it to deceive Lysidamus. Labeling Pardalisca as a "bad woman" shows that Lysidamus already conceives of the women in his household as the type of "bad women" who manipulate language to achieve their ends.

When Pardalisca finally tells Lysidamus the tale she describes Casina's actions as *malum pessimumque* (*Cas.* 650). She also refers to Casina as *tua ancilla* (*Cas.* 651). By referring to Casina in terms that could just as easily be applied to herself, Pardalisca creates an association between Casina and a woman that Lysidamus himself labeled as a

“bad woman” only a moment ago. This connection begins to set up the expectation that Casina too is “bad.” Pardalisca goes on to describe Casina’s behavior and says, *Imitatur malarum malam disciplinam,/ viro quae suo interminetur: vitam* [She is imitating the bad behavior of bad women, since she threatens her husband: his life] (*Cas.* 657-658). This statement implies that Casina participates in the process of advice giving, since she is imitating the bad behavior of other *malae*. When Pardalisca says that Casina is imitating “bad” women by threatening the life of her husband, she also portrays her as a woman who uses her power to the detriment of her future husband. This use of power is similar to Cleostrata’s own declaration that she will punish her husband at line 155 and further brands Casina as a *mala* in her own right. The fact that Lysidamus even believes this outlandish tale is a testament to the pervasiveness of these women’s power and the role of the *mala* in this work. Through her power over language, Pardalisca successfully transforms Casina from an attractive *ancilla* into a terrifying *mala*.

Pardalisca casts Casina as a “bad woman” by connecting her to this process of advice giving, which is often detrimental to men. However, she admits that she is also part of this didactic process. She says, *ludo ego hunc facete;/ nam quae facta dixi omnia huic falsa dixi:/ era atque haec dolum ex proxumo hunc protulerunt,/ ego hunc missa sum ludere* [I mock this man wittily; for all the things which I said to him, I said falsely] (*Cas.* 686-689). In the next few lines Pardalisca tells the audience that the other women invent the strategies for manipulating men and profiting from them. Then, Pardalisca uses her own control of language to carry out their plan. This process is akin to advice giving. Older women tell a younger woman how to take advantage of a man and she follows their advice. This confession ensures Pardalisca’s status as a *mala*.

In fact, Pardalisca has mocked Lysidamus just as he accused her of doing in line 645. The fact that Lysidamus cannot recognize the real deception and the true reason why the women in his household are “bad women” is irrelevant. He still attributes it to a control over words and language and comes away with the distinct impression that they are bad. Olympio on the other hand, can recognize the real reason that these women should be labeled as “bad.” After Lysidamus rushes off to tell him the horrible news about Casina, he says, *sic sine habere;/ nugas agunt: novi ego illas malas merces* [Let her have it so; they are talking rubbish: I know these bad pieces of work] (*Cas.* 750-752). Again, the women are labeled as “bad” by the men for using language to mock them and to obtain their ends. The use of the phrase *mala merx* clearly emphasizes this point.<sup>8</sup>

The bad behavior of these women comes to a head at the end of the play with a direct instance of advice giving. When Chalinus is dressed up as Casina and is waiting to be married to Olympio, Pardalisca says:

*Sospes iter incipe hoc, uti viro tuo/ semper sis superstes  
tuaque ut potior pollentia sit vincasque virum victrixque  
sies,  
tua vox superet tuomque imperium: vir te vestiat, tu virum  
[de]spolies.  
Noctuaque et diu ut viro subdola sis...*

Begin this journey safely, so that you are always superior to your husband and so that your power is strong and you conquer your husband and you are the victress, may your voice and your power rise above his; may he clothe you, may you plunder your husband. So that by night and by day you are crafty with your husband...  
(*Cas.* 816-823)

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<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the phrase *mala merx* see above (*Truc.* 409-411, *Cist.* 727).

This entire sentiment is filled with the language of power to the point where it is almost shocking. Even more strikingly, this quote echoes Lysidamus' own begrudging statement in line 409 that if his wife has power while he is alive, he must endure it. He says, *Patiundum est, siquidem me vivo mea uxor imperium exhibet* [It must be endured, if indeed my wife holds the power with me being alive] (*Cas.* 409). Importantly, both statements use the word *imperium*, as though this is the type of power that a wife or *mala* should expect to have over her husband. Yet, the wives themselves never refer to their power this way. This assertion of Cleostrata's power is even stronger than her own claim in line 260-263 where she uses the words *officium* and *curatio*. These words imply a sense of duty or management of something, as opposed to the much stronger denotation of power and authority that are part of the word *imperium*. *Curatio* and *officium* are the things, which it is necessary to use one's power to manage and control, whereas *imperium* is the power itself. *Imperium* is a word that is associated with institutionalized male power, such as the power that a *proconsul* would exercise over his province. By using this specific vocabulary, Lysidamus affords Cleostrata an enormous amount of power that it is even equal to the power of the Roman state.

Similarly, in Plautus' *Truculentus*, Astaphium implies that women should have the same kind of institutionalized and militaristic power and should use it gain control of her lovers. She says, *amator similest oppidi hostilis...quam primum expugnari potis [est], tam id optimum est amicae* [A lover is similar to a hostile town...as soon as it is able to be conquered, the better it is for the girlfriend] (*Truc.* 170-171). Both Pardalisca's advice and Astaphium's statement contain the idea of women using typically masculine power to conquer their lovers in a militaristic manner. This same type of power is

contained in the word *imperium*. It is shocking that Pardalisca advises Casinus to seek this same type of power in his role as a wife. However in *Casina*, there is the continued emphasis on crafty, cunning language, which is contained in the word *subdola*. Just as Cleostrata, Myrhinna, and Pardalisca conspired to deceive Lysidamus, Casinus should strive to be cunning in the same way. It becomes even more obvious that this trickery is primarily based in control over language and even control over the narrative of the play, when Myrhinna is discussing the Casinus trick and says, *Nec fallaciam astutiozem ullus fecit/ poeta atque ut haec est fabre facta ab nobis* [No poet has ever made a more cunning trick than this one skillfully done by us] (*Cas.* 860 -861). This statement also makes these women even more similar to the *lenae* of elegy who compete with the poet over who will have control over the *puella* and by extension the *carmina*.<sup>9</sup>

This passage is marked by transformation. Not only has Chalinus been changed into Casinus, but through their words the women in this play have transformed Casina into a *mala*. Indeed, Olympio finds Pardalisca's advice striking enough to comment *mala malae male monstrat* [the bad woman wickedly advises the bad girl] (*Cas.* 826). This statement is a clear acknowledgement of the connection between the process of advice giving and the identification of women as "bad." It is obvious that Olympio feels that this teaching will have a negative impact for both Lysidamus and himself. This is shown through his heavy repetition of "m sounds." In addition, the word *mala* is used twice in a four-word sentence, adding emphasis to the severity of this statement and its ramifications for the male characters.

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the *lena praecepta* see Myer's article.

Above all, Roman comedy is a genre that is shaped by the process of advice giving. All three of these comedies are marked by a preoccupation with deceptive language and women's willingness to profit from men. This pedagogical practice gives women the ability to effectively act on the desire to behave in a way which will benefit them, even to the disadvantage of the male characters. The extensive portrayals of the entire process of advice giving, from the moment that the advice is given to the time when men label these women as "bad," promote a consistent definition of what it means to be a *mala* that is espoused by male characters and is occasionally echoed by female characters. Being a *mala* means behaving in a way that will allow a woman to profit from a man who will pay to sleep with her or teaching another woman how to act in this manner.

### III. Roman Elegy

Roman elegy continues to support the definition of *mala* that is present in Roman comedy through the violently negative portrayals of women who wish to profit from men. In elegy, the complaints of the poet are largely a reaction to the behavior of women, who are the product of this didactic process. In fact, the act of labeling a woman as "bad" is a much more common occurrence in elegy than the direct representation of the act of advice giving. In fact, the elegies of Propertius provide several examples of women being labeled as "bad." In Propertius 2.8, the poet calls Cynthia *improba* because he thinks that she has taken another lover (Prop. 2.8.14). Right before this, he also laments all the money and personal energy that he put into their relationship. He says, *munera quanta dedi vel qualia carmina feci!// illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit 'amo'* [How many gifts I gave and even what a sort of poems I made!// nevertheless that cruel girl never said

‘I love you’] (Prop. 2.8.11-12). By connecting Cynthia’s ability to benefit from him economically and emotionally to her role as a “bad woman,” Propertius casts her as the product of this pedagogical process. He portrays Cynthia as the type of woman who has followed every piece of advice that a *lenae* would give. As James says, “every female speech in love elegy practices the generic instructions of Dipsas and Acanthis (Propertius 4.5; *Amores* 1.8) by aiming to manipulate the lover's emotions and thereby keep his pocketbook open” (*Ipsa Dixerat* 315). Cynthia is the type of woman who follows this advice. She knows how to profit from men who will pay to sleep with her and she is willing to take more than one lover and obtain gifts from them in order to maximize her profit.

Propertius 2.9a also emphasizes Cynthia’s status as a “bad woman.” In this poem, he calls her *impia* and *perfida* (Prop. 2.9a.20, 28).<sup>10</sup> Both of these complaints are connected to the accusations that Cynthia has taken another lover. While these words highlight Cynthia’s supposed infidelity, it can also be seen as the result of the process of advice giving, since several *lenae* advise this exact thing. In lines 188-190 of Plautus’ *Mostellaria*, Scapha advises Philematium to take more than one lover, so that she will not end up like Scapha when she is old. In Herodas’ *Mime* 1, Gyllis also tells Meretrice to take another lover. Likewise, Ovid *Amores* 1.8, Dipsas advises Corinna to take multiple lovers. Both of these examples will be discussed in more detail later on. In any case, it is not surprising to find Propertius continually complaining about Cynthia taking other

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<sup>10</sup> In general, words such as *perfida* and *impia* will not be included in this paper since they represent a more particular subset of the *mala*. Namely, they emphasize specific characteristics, which are detrimental to men, such as infidelity or willingness to take more than one lover. This specific example is included because it establishes and informs the status of women as “bad” in elegy. In the future, a larger analysis of these words is needed.

lovers and labeling her as “bad” since he admits that his poems will not be about “chaste girls.” In the first few lines of his *Elegies* he says, *donec me docuit castas odisse puellas/ improbus* [At length the wicked man [Amor] taught me to hate virtuous girls] (Prop. 1.1.5-6). Just as *lenae* teach *puellae* to become *malae*, Amor teaches Propertius to hate girls who are not “bad.” Later on in Propertius 2.9a, he makes a reference to the didactic aspect of the transaction of advice giving. He says, *sed vobis facilest verba et componere fraudes:/ hoc unum didicit femina semper opus* [But it is easy for you all to bring together words and deceptions: this is the one work a woman always learns] (Prop. 2.9a.31-32). The poet’s accusation contains an indirect reference to the process of advice giving since he says that women must learn to use deceptive and harmful language. Cynthia is the type of woman who has learned how to use evasive language to her advantage and she is the product of a process that promotes this type of control over language.

In Propertius 4.5, the poet finally portrays not only the result, but also the process of advice giving itself. This poem focuses on the figure of the *lena* and the poet’s dislike for her. In the beginning of the poem, the poet wishes horrible death on the *lena* (Prop. 4.5.1-5). He then goes on to detail her various magical powers including her ability to turn herself into a wolf (Prop. 4.5.13). By beginning the poem with such a negative characterization of the *lena*, the poet reveals his own anxiety about her role in educating the *puella*. Foregrounding the shape shifting ability of the *lena* emphasizes her ability to transform *puellae* into *malae* through her advice or words just as she can transform

herself into a wolf using magical words.<sup>11</sup> Immediately after talking about her magical abilities, the poet allows the *lena* to have a moment of direct speech by inserting her advice in to the poem without any transition. Acanthis' extensive advice is largely economically motivated and encourages the deception of men. For example, she says, *et simulare uirum pretium facit: utere causis!* [And to make up a lover makes the price: use excuses!] (Prop. 4.5.29). Unlike the similar scene from Plautus' *Mostellaria*, the responses of the *puella* are suppressed and the poet does not even relay her reported speech. However, if we are to assume that Cynthia is the *amica* that Propertius refers to and Acanthis is advising her in this poem, it seems safe to assume that she followed all of her advice since he labels her as "bad" in his other poems (Prop. 4.5.63). Perhaps Acanthis' success as a *monetrix* is the reason that Propertius hates her so fiercely. In fact, instead of Cynthia's response to the advice, the poet takes control of the poem and prays to Venus that the *lena* will die a horrible death. Propertius allows himself to have the last word in this poem, since in some ways the rest of this text is Cynthia's enthusiastic response to Acanthis' advice.

Like Propertius, Tibullus 1.5 focuses on the poet's hatred for a *lena*. In this poem, Tibullus implies that the *lena* advised Delia to forsake him for another, wealthier lover and as a result, he wishes that she die a horrible death (Tib. 1.5.47-56). He says, *quod adest nunc dives amator,/ Venit in exitium callida lena meum* [Because now a rich lover is present, that experienced procuress took part in my ruin] (Tib. 1.5.47-48). Not

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<sup>11</sup>The *lena* as *saga* figure has the ability to transform things and turn them against their nature. As Myers notes, "The *lena* is in every way *contra naturam*, as her magical ability to pervert the natural forces of water (Prop. IV.5.12; Am. I.8.6), the moon (Prop. IV.5.13; Am. I.8.12), the sky (Am. I.8.9-10), and magnets (Prop. IV.5.9) reveals...As an unnatural social and sexual deviant she serves to verify the naturalness of female passivity. Female magic poses a threat to the erotic power and control of the elegiac lover" (Myers 9).

only does this betray the economic motivations of the *lena*, but it references the transaction of advice giving, since the *lena* would have taken part in his ruin by advising Delia to forsake him for a wealthier lover. As in Propertius 4.5, an elegiac poet curses a *lena* who successfully carries out the transaction of advice giving. It is also important that the poet uses the word *callida* to refer to the *lena*, since this word is also used to describe bad women in Plautus' *Cistellaria* and *Mostellaria* (*Cist.* 727, *Mos.* 270-271). In both occurrences in Plautus, *callida* is used in conjunction with *mala* to label a woman as "bad" and emphasize the didactic aspect of this process. Although Tibullus does not explicitly label the *lena* as a *mala*, he does immediately follow this description of her with the wish that she be haunted by ghosts and chased by wild dogs. By wishing such horrible and vivid actions on the *lena*, the poet conveys his own anxieties about her effectiveness as an adviser to the *puella*. Similarly, Dipsas also implies that she is *callida* in *Amores* 1.8. This will be discussed in more detail later on, but it is important to note that this pronouncement is followed by the poet not only wishing harm on the *lena*, but actually attacking her himself by scratching her face and pulling her hair (*Am.* 1.8.110-112). The fact that the appearance or even implication of the word *callida* is followed by such violent reactions from the poets shows how threatening the process of advice giving is perceived to be.

Tibullus continues to betray his anxiety when he addresses Delia directly and says, *At tu quam primum sagae praecepta rapacis/ desere* [But you abandon the advice of the greedy witch as soon as possible] (Tib. 1.5.59-60). This one clause connects the poet's anxiety about the role of the *lena* in the practice of advice giving and her economic motivations. This order also betrays his anxieties that the *puella* is either following or

will follow her advice since he commands her to not take the advice.<sup>12</sup> Labeling the *lena* as a witch subtly reveals further anxieties about her effectiveness since both her use of magic and place in the process of advice giving are marked by a transformative power that is effected through her control over language. As in Propertius, we do not hear the girl's reply. However, Tibullus also labels Delia as *callida*, when he suspects her of taking another lover, which seems to be its own reply (Tib. 1.6.6).<sup>13</sup>

In Tibullus 2.4, Venus herself is cast as a *mala*. The poet laments the terrible things he must do to acquire presents for his mistress including stealing from temples (Tib. 2.4.21-23). He blames Venus for making him resort to such actions and says, *illa malum facinus suadet dominamque rapacem/ dat mihi: sacrilegas sentiat illa manus* [That woman advises the bad deed and gives to me a greedy mistress; let that woman feel my sacrilegious hands] (Tib. 2.4.25-26). The poet labels Venus as a *mala* by saying that she is a woman who advises bad deeds, but it is unclear exactly what the evil deeds are. Most obviously, the *malum facinus* could refer to defacing temples, but it could also refer to Tibullus' mistress asking for the presents in the first place. Similarly, the poet's accusation that Venus gave him a greedy mistress could mean that he is blaming her for

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<sup>12</sup> K. Sara Myers also explores the relationship between the *lena* and *poeta*. She writes, "By usurping his role as *praeceptor* [teacher], the *lena* threatens the poet with both sexual and literary impotence" (Myers 1). Tibullus commands the *puella* to disregard the advice of the *lena* hoping that she will follow his advice and teaching instead.

<sup>13</sup> In this poem, Tibullus assumes the role of *praeceptor amoris* and takes responsibility for teaching Delia to lie to men, by teaching her to cheat on her husband with him (Tib. 1.6.8-10). However, the word *callida* implies that she was taught by experience. By applying her skills to other men, she falls into the role of a *mala* even if she is not actually advised by a *lena*. She is now "experienced" enough to advise herself and other *puellae* about how to be "bad."

making his mistress greedy.<sup>14</sup> In that case, Venus is clearly portrayed as a participant in the practice of advice giving where she advises Tibullus' mistress to ask for presents from her lover, which he supposedly cannot afford. This situation firmly places Venus not only in the role of a *mala*, but more specifically of a *lena*. Blaming Venus for making his mistress *rapax* is especially interesting since the poet also used this adjective to describe a *lena* in Tibullus 1.5, when he advised Delia not to follow her advice (Tib. 1.5.59). This is the type of attribute that is ascribed to "bad" women. Tibullus continues to portray Venus as a *lena*, by including a violent threat in the very next clause, although it is not as extensive as the threats he leveled against Dipsas or Acanthis. Venus is, after all, still a goddess.

Immediately after this, Tibullus expands upon the idea of a greedy mistress a few lines later. He lists expensive objects such as precious gemstones and Tyrian purple fabric and says that they make girls greedy and *haec fecere malas* [these things make girls bad] (Tib.2.4.31). The objects that he refers to are examples of the types of gifts that these girls hope to obtain from their lovers. Learning to ask for such presents and then obtaining them is what turns women into *malae*. In other words, seeing the financial benefits that results from successfully following such advice is what makes women "bad." This statement again emphasizes that *malae* are made not born. A few lines later, Tibullus again calls these girls *malae*. He says, *heu quicumque dedit formam caelestis avarae,/ quale bonum multis attulit ille malis!* [Alas whatever heavenly being gave

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the concept of the "greedy girl" see Sharon James' article, "The Economics of Roman Elegy: Voluntary Poverty, the *Recusatio*, and the Greedy Girl." James points out that "The elegists describe their girlfriends as demanding not necessities but needless luxuries--in a word, as greedy rather than needy" (*Economics of Roman Elegy* 226). Tibullus will continue this pattern when he describes the type of extravagant presents that the girls seek to acquire.

beauty to a greedy girl, what a good thing he brought to those bad girls!] (Tib. 2.4.35-36). Here, the poet emphasizes how *malae* can use their physical attractiveness to profit more successfully from men. By talking about other beautiful, luxurious things directly before this, Tibullus creates a comparison between the *merx* that the women work for or hope to attain and the women themselves as beautiful objects that the men wish to possess.

*Amores* 1.8 provides another example of the role of the *lena* in the transaction of advice giving. This poem provides one of the fullest character descriptions of a *lena*, and from the beginning, Ovid says that this poem will be about the *anus*, Dipsas. In many ways, Dipsas is a stereotypical *lena*, who shares many other characteristics with other “bad” women. As was discussed above, she implies that she is *callida*, and like countless other *malae*, she uses language in a way that is harmful to men. The poet says that *nec tamen eloquio lingua nocente caret* [Nevertheless her tongue does not lack harmful eloquence] (*Am.* 1.8.20). The poet makes it clear that this “harmful eloquence” refers directly to the advice that she gives the *puella*. In fact, in the very next line, Ovid signals that the process of advice giving is about to start with the phrase, *illa monebat/ talia* [she was advising such things] (*Am.* 1.8.21-22). Dipsas’ advice is very typical of *lenae* and mirrors much of the advice given by other “bad” women.

Like many other bad women, Dipsas’ advice is economically motivated.<sup>15</sup> She advises the *puella* to take wealthy lovers and to have many of them (*Am.* 1.8.38,54-55). This advice has been given by many other *malae* such as Scapha and has been practiced

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<sup>15</sup> As a *lena*, it is expected that her advice is economically motivated since she has no other means of supporting herself. As James notes, “The first consequence is that many apparently individual character traits in an elegiac *puella* turn out to be professionally motivated behavior, as dictated by both Dipsas and Acanthis in *Amores* 1.8 and Propertius 4.5” (*Economics of Roman Elegy* 225).

by several women including Cynthia. Dipsas also says, *Nec nocuit simulatus amor; sine, credat amari/ et cave ne gratis hic tibi constet amor!* [Pretended love is not harmful; let him to believe he is loved and beware lest this love happen to you!] (*Am.* 1.8.71-72). This situation shares many parallels with the scene from Plautus' *Cistellaria* where Gymnasium's mother tells Selenium to only pretend to be in love Alcesimarchus (*Cist.* 95-97). The advice of Gymnasium's mother and Dipsas to produce fake emotions promotes a specific type of deception and fallacious language that only benefits women, while being to the disadvantage of men. In general, Dipsas promotes the use of deception in order to profit from men. She says, *Quin etiam discant oculi lacrimare coacti* [Nay, let your eyes learn to cry, having been compelled] (*Am.* 1.8.83). This type of deception and manipulation is a skill that must be practiced and learned.

Dipsas also advises her to deceive men through language, namely false oaths and by promising to pay back money when she borrows it (*Am.* 1.8.85,103). She says, *Quod numquam reddas, commodet, ipsa roga!/ Lingua iuuet mentemque tegat — blandire noceque* [Yourself ask him to lend, what you will never return! Let your tongue save you and conceal your intention—and do harm while speaking soothingly] (*Am.* 1.8.103).<sup>16</sup> Dipsas concludes her advice with the implication that she too has learned this type of deception through practice and implies that she is *callida*. She says, *Haec si praestiteris usu mihi cognita longo* [If you perform these things having been known by me by long practice] (*Am.* 1.8.105). Dipsas' advice takes up the vast majority of the poem and the

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<sup>16</sup> Dutsch comments on the relationship between soothing speech and manipulation. He writes, "A courtesan's *blanditia*, then, consists in presenting to her client an image (of him, of herself, and of the situation that has brought them together) that corresponds to his desires. Such indulgence is meant to divert his attention from the threat she poses to his property" (Dutsch 208).

advice is given in direct speech. Dipsas embodies every negative stereotype of *lenae* and gives every piece of advice that men fear she will give. This anxiety and fear is reflected in the ending of the poem. In the last five lines of the poem, the poet leaps out from his hiding spot where he has been secretly listening and attacks Dipsas. Once again we do not hear the response of the elegiac *puella* and the poet gets the last word.

As a whole, Roman elegy is a genre that focuses on women as the product of the process of advice giving. The elegiac poet often curses the *lena* for advising the *puella* to behave “badly” or complains that the *puella* has begun to follow that advice. The poet indirectly portrays the practice of advice giving through the character flaws which he ascribes to the *puella* and his representation of his girlfriend’s behavior throughout the text. The reader must learn from other poems whether or not the *puella* chose to follow the advice of the *lena*. Oftentimes, these character flaws amount to a willingness to act in a manner which will profit her and to follow the advice of a *lena* such as Dipsas or Acanthis.

## V. Greek Sources

While it may seem odd to compare such diverse works as *The Amores* and *The Dialogues of the Courtesans*, all of the works in this paper can be connected to Greek New Comedy. Plautus can be easily traced back to New Comedy since it is acknowledged that he adapted his plays from Greek originals (Anderson 30-31). Anderson even labels Menander a “prototype of Plautus” (Anderson 4). Strikingly, the influence of the Greek mimes can also be seen in Roman comedy (Hunter 21). Greek New Comedy clearly also influenced Roman elegy. This is widely attested in both modern and ancient sources, including Sharon James, who writes, “[elegy’s] characters

are recognizably based in New Comedy,” and Propertius himself (*Learned Girls* 27). Propertius explicitly references New Comedy in poem 4.5, when Acanthis advises the *puella* to emulate *mundi Thais pretiosa Menandri* or the expensive Thais of elegant Menander (Prop. 4.5.41). Wheeler also draws a further connection between the two genres by linking Roman elegy to Greek New Comedy through Roman comedy. He says, “The many agreements between Roman elegy and Roman comedy indicate that Greek new comedy is the ultimate source of the comic motives in Roman elegy” (Wheeler 442).

The Greek sources can also be traced back to Greek New Comedy. The Brill’s New Pauly Encyclopaedia unambiguously states, “Strongly influenced by the New Comedy are the ἑταιρικοὶ διάλογοι (‘Dialogues of the Courtesans’, D.Mer.) featuring *hetaeras*, their female servants and other comedic characters (lovers and soldiers)” (Brill’s New Pauly s.v. Lucian 841).<sup>17</sup> Herodas, on the other hand shares a more complex relationship with New Comedy since they are contemporaneous genres. In fact, “The mime thrived as a popular dramatic form alongside state-sponsored performances of tragedy and comedy in Athens, and elsewhere in the Greek world” (Konstan 267). Not only were these genres popular around the same time, but “New Comedy shared certain themes with sub-literary performances given by travelling entertainers (μῦμοι, ‘mime-actors’) at fairs and street corners” (Hunter 20). The fact that Greek New Comedy influenced all of these genres is represented in the subject matter. It is worthwhile to compare such diverse genres because they all contain explicit references to the process of

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<sup>17</sup> Wheeler also states that Lucian “used comedy directly” (Wheeler 442). He also specifically mentions Dialogue 3 and Dialogue 6 and says, “These are virtually scenes from comedy” (Wheeler 445).

advice giving and *malae*. The pervasiveness of this theme points to its importance for understanding specific anxieties surrounding women. Each of these works address the same process and the same general set of advice, but the specifics of each interaction are interestingly shaped by the genre and specific context of the work.

Despite the fact that Lucian's *Dialogi Meretrici* portrays the process of advice giving, it features some important differences to the Roman sources that have already been discussed. One main difference is the fact that there is not any male characters in the dialogues discussed in this paper, who have direct speech. Here, the women maintain control of the narrative, and the process of advice giving is presented entirely from a feminine perspective. However, in Dialogue 3, there is still the sense the male characters would label the women as “bad” if their voice were not suppressed through summarized speech. In this dialogue, the prostitute, Philinna and her mother discuss Philinna's actions at a symposium the night before. This conversation begins when Mother informs Philinna that her lover, Diphilos came to visit this morning and complain about Philinna's mistreatment of him the previous night. Mother says:

ἦκε γὰρ παρ' ἐμὲ Δίφιλος ἔωθεν δακρύων καὶ διηγήσατό μοι  
 ἃ ἔπαθεν ὑπὸ σοῦ...ἐαυτὸν δεῦρο πνίγεσθαι τούτων  
 γιγνομένων. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῆς νυκτός, οἶμαι, συνεκάθευδες μετ'  
 αὐτοῦ, καταλιποῦσα δὲ δακρύνοντα μόνη ἐπὶ τοῦ πλησίον  
 σκίμποδος κατέκεισο ἄδουσα καὶ λυποῦσα ἐκεῖνον.

For Diphilos, crying came to me this morning and described to me which things he suffered from you...he himself was choked with rage with these things happening, but not that night, I think, were you sleeping with him, leaving him weeping you were lying down alone on a nearby couch and causing that man pain.

(*Dialogues of the Courtesans* 3.1)

Not only does Diphilus show up, crying to speak to Philinna's mother, but he also emphasizes his own pain by mentioning that his anger and annoyance at the party.

He also accuses her of many of the behaviors that are labeled as "bad" by male characters in other works. For instance, when he accuses her of singing songs that grieve him, he is essentially claiming that she used language in a way that was detrimental to him. In addition, he accuses her of taking up with another lover, who is his friend, Lamprias (*DMeretr.* 3.1.6). Diniarchus makes a similar complaint in Plautus's *Truculentus*, when Phronesium takes Stratophanes as her lover.

As Philinna and her mother continue to discuss her actions, her mother gives her several pieces of advice. The most significant advice that Philinna receives comes after she admits that ἀντιλυπεῖν ἐβουλόμην αὐτόν [I was wishing to cause him pain in return] (*DMeretr.* 3.3). Philinna's use of the verb, ἀντιλυπέω echoes Diphilus' earlier accusation that she was paining him while she sang songs and he cried (*DMeretr.* 3.1). Philinna's mother reprimands her and says, οὐκ αισθάνη, ὦ θύγατερ, ὅτι πτωχαί ἐσμεν, οὐδὲ μέμῃσαι ὅσα παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐλάβομεν ἢ οἷον δὴ τὸν πέρυσι χειμῶνα διηγάγομεν ἄν, εἰ μὴ τοῦτον ἡμῖν ἢ Ἀφροδίτη ἔπεμψε; [Do you not perceive, Oh daughter, that we are beggars, do you not remember how many things we took from him or how we would have passed last winter if Aphrodite did not send this man to us?] (*DMeretr.* 3.3). The mother's advice emphasizes the economic motivations behind her actions. A few lines later, she expands on her advice and goes on to say that Philinna should be nice to Diphilus, so that he will continue to love her and provide them with financial stability (*DMeretr.* 3.3).

Dialogue 6 also provides useful insight into the process of advice giving where Corbyle has just convinced her daughter, Corinna to become a prostitute. Corbyle's advice has economic motivations similar to those of Philinna's mother's advice. She says, ἄκουε δὲ καὶ τᾶλλα παρ' ἐμοῦ ἃ σε χρὴ ποιεῖν καὶ ὅπως προσφέρεσθαι τοῖς ἀνδράσιν: ἄλλη μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν ἀποστροφή τοῦ βίου οὐκ ἔστιν [Listen to the other instructions from me, what it is necessary to do and how to deal with men: for there is not another means of livelihood for us] (*DMeretr.* 6.1). The fact that Corbyle's advice literally constitutes telling Corinna how to behave with men illustrates why the process of advice giving is so dangerous. Corbyle can dictate Corinna's every action in order to gain the most money from her lovers. As Corbyle says, they have no other means of supporting themselves, and their very survival depends on Corinna following her mother's advice about how to profit from men who will pay to sleep with her.

Corbyle goes on to use Lyra, another courtesan as an example of how to be attractive to men. She gives several examples of things that Lyra does including dressing nicely and being well behaved or εὐσταλής (*DMeretr.* 6.3). Essentially, Corbyle instructs Corinna about the things that are pleasing to men, so that she can use these behaviors to their economic benefit. By manipulating men without their knowledge, these women are acting in a way that could be labeled *mala* by men. Corbyle concludes her advice by reiterating that Lyra does these things to be pleasing to men. She says, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκεῖνοι φιλοῦσιν αὐτήν...ἀλλὰ ἐξ ἅπαντος ἔν τούτῳ θηρᾶται, ὡς ὑπαγάγοιτο καὶ ἐραστὴν ποιήσειεν ἐκεῖνον [And on account of this those men love her... but from all of this one thing is pursued, that she will bring him under her power and will make that man her lover] (*DMeretr.* 6.3). This situation shares many parallels with the scene from

Propertius 2.8, where the poet complains that Cynthia never said she loved him even though he gave her presents (Prop. 2.8.11-12). Cynthia's choices to either withhold her emotions or to present false emotions still succeeds in placing her in a position of emotional control over the poet. Likewise, Lyra is a woman who seeks to control the emotions of men without any intention of returning their emotions. This puts her in a position of power in relation to men, which is reflected in the verb ὑπάγω (LSJ s.v. ὑπάγω A2). A similar power dynamic is contained in the verb θηράω, which can also mean to hunt (LSJ s.v. θηράω). Lyra is a predator and she seeks to bring her lovers or prey under her power. To make matters worse, Corbyle is advising her daughter to practice the same behavior. She says, εἰ δὴ καὶ σὺ ταῦτα ἐκμάθοις, μακάριαι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσόμεθα [if you learn these things thoroughly, we too will be prosperous] (*DMeretr.* 6.3). This statement creates an association between the pedagogical aspect of advice giving and the economic benefits that this specific skillset can provide. If Corinna can learn and apply everything that Corbyle has told her, they will become wealthy, just like Lyra (LSJ s.v. μάκαρ).

The power dynamic that Corbyle encourages Corinna to employ is similar to the advice that Pardalisca gives Casinus (*Cas.* 816-823). Pardalisca's advice uses verbs of conquering such as *vinco*, although, in general her imagery involves surpassing men in power, instead of bringing them under her power. This is reflected in the verbs *supersto* and *supero*. However, in both cases, the women are in a position of power and control. After Pardalisca gives Casinus this advice, Olympio labels her *mala* and it is easy to suppose that if a man were around to witness Corbyle's advice, she would receive a similar label. However, unlike *Casina*, this dialogue places much more importance on

the economic benefits of advice giving. This added emphasis is to be expected since Corbyle and Corinna are in a madam and prostitute type relationship and as a result, are much more financially vulnerable. The economic motivations of the characters are further stressed a few lines later, when Corbyle says, *καὶ σοὶ δὲ μελέτω ἄει τοῦ πλείονος* [And let a larger fee always be an object of care to you] (*DMeretr.* 6.4). Corbyle even goes on to imply that becoming exceedingly rich or *ὑπερπλουτέω* should be Corinna's ultimate goal (*DMeretr.* 6.4). For these women, being pleasing to men is a means securing their own economic stability, and they are willing to deceive men and advise others to do the same in order to achieve this end.

Herodas' Mime 1 provides a final example of advice giving. This mime is especially important to examine since it is one of the few times that the advice is not taken. In general, Herodas is an important source to look at because of its connections to both Lucian and Greek New Comedy, as discussed above. In the first mime, an old woman named Gyllis advises Meretrice, "who is probably a former hetaira" to sleep with a young man who is infatuated with her (Zanker 20). Gyllis says that she should follow her advice because it will benefit Meretrice in two ways (Herod. 1.64-66). Tellingly, Gyllis focuses on the ways in which woman can benefit from participating in this process, even though she knows it is to the disadvantage of men, such as Meretrice's lover, Mandris. However, Meretrice rejects Gyllis' advice because she wants to remain faithful to Mandris. Meretrice says, *σύ δ' αὖτις ἔς με μηδὲ ἕνα, φίλη, τοῖον/ φέρουσα χώρει μῦθον· ὄν δὲ γρηῆσι/ πρέπει γυναιζὶ τῆς νέης ἀπάγγελλε* [My dear, do not come to me again, bearing such a tale: relate [a tale] to young women which it is fitting for old women [to relate]] (Herod.1.73-75). Not only does Meretrice reject

Gyllis' advice, but she explicitly references the process of advice giving. She implies that this pedagogical process should take place between an older woman and a younger woman. The use of the verb *πρέπω* emphasizes that these relative ages are appropriate for this didactic practice (LSJ s.v. *πρέπω*). By endorsing this age difference, Meretrice indirectly promotes a dynamic where one generation of prostitute educates the next about how to take advantage of men. In fact, Meretrice's rebuff could be interpreted as a way of saying that she resents Gyllis' advice because she is no longer of the age where she needs this type of advice or education and is almost at the age where she could advise another girl herself. Regardless, this passage is significant for the representation of this process that it provides.

Both the texts of Lucian and Herodas provide an interesting comparison to the texts of Roman comedy and elegy because they present the process of advice giving in the distinct context of Greek Literature. It is important that the essential elements of the practice of advice giving remain consistent in these texts, namely, that an older woman still advises a younger woman how to profit from a man that will pay to sleep with her. These examples provide thorough representations of this didactic practice from an entirely female perspective. Interestingly enough, the text of Herodas, which does not have a strong male presence, is the instance where a woman most emphatically chooses not to follow the advice of the madam. This decision is somewhat surprising since women very rarely decide not to follow the advice at all, although they certainly decide to use it to varying degrees. Perhaps this outcome conveys the anxiety of the male author, since there are no male characters in this mime to express their anxiety for themselves.

## VI. Conclusion

The process of advice giving whereby one woman advises another woman how to profit from a man who will pay to sleep with her is an incredibly complex and prevalent trope. Analyzing this pedagogical process and the instances where women are labeled as *malae* will help bring cultural specificity to the seemingly generic idea of “bad woman.” The fact that this process is present in such a wide variety of genres, including Roman comedy, Roman elegy, the Dialogues of Lucian, and the Mimes of Herodas, shows that this practice is an important vehicle for expressing these cultural anxieties surrounding women. The various representations of the process of advice giving vary greatly because each work adapts this didactic practice to best serve the needs of the genre. Roman comedy provides the most complete examples of the process of advice giving. Because of its dramatic format and the fact that both male and females participate in direct speech, the transaction of advice giving and the act of labeling these women as bad are both represented. Roman comedy presents the most thorough depictions of all aspects of this process. This trope is also the most diverse in comedy because a wide range of female characters participate in the practice of advice giving, not only prostitutes and madams. In the case of *Casina*, the process of advice giving is driven by an entirely new set of motivations, but the anxieties and the reactions of the male characters remain the same.

Elegy, on the other hand, is a genre that is dominated by the perspective of the male poet. In fact, the direct speech of female characters is often suppressed by the elegiac poet, which allows him to keep control of the narrative. As Sharon James writes, “In addition, another barrier lies between the *puella* and her own words: the lover poet himself. The historical author puts the words into the mouth of both the eponymous

lover-poet and the elegiac *scripta puella*, so that her represented speech is doubly ventriloquized through males” (*Ipsa Dixerat* 315-316). The control exerted by the poet means that the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid provide an opportunity to see process of advice giving entirely through the eyes of the male characters. Consequently, these poems focus on the anxieties of the male poets that are related to this didactic process. This anxiety is expressed in their enmity towards *lenae* and sometimes even their *puellae*. The fact that elegy is inherently preoccupied with the male gaze means that it more often portrays the result of the practice of advice giving instead of the process itself. Elegy focuses on labeling women as “bad” and how their behavior harms men, since the creation of new *malae* is the ultimate result of this process.

In its structure Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans* is parallel to Roman elegy. Just as elegy is ultimately presented from the perspective of the male elegiac poet and the direct speech of the other characters is suppressed, these dialogues present a similarly gendered perspective.<sup>18</sup> In the two dialogues of Lucian that deal with advice giving only female characters speak and the male characters that are mentioned are subject to the control of the female characters’ narrative.<sup>19</sup> The fact that only female characters participate in direct speech also means that the process of advice giving is not portrayed

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<sup>18</sup> Gilhuly raises the idea that genre itself is also gendered. When Lucian invents the comic dialogue, he takes the typically masculine genre of the philosophical dialogue and puts it in the mouths of courtesans, creating a blending of the male and female elements (Gilhuly 62). As Gilhuly states, “By transferring dialogue from the mouths of men espousing philosophy to the mouths of courtesans discussing their quotidian experiences, Lucian effects a social inversion” (Gilhuly 62). This structural choice allows women to gain complete control of a masculine form of expression.

<sup>19</sup> Not only do female characters overwhelmingly populate this text, but “Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans* differ from earlier Greek texts that include courtesans insofar as they put the experience of the *hetaira* center stage. While New Comedy also features courtesans with a voice and dramatic subjectivity, the plots do not revolve around their plights” (Gilhuly 61).

in the same negative way that it is in other genres. The women who participate in advice giving are not labeled as “bad” because men are not present to label them as such. This specific definition of “bad” is from an inherently male perspective because the women use language to the detriment of men and advise other women how to profit from them, often to the men’s disadvantage. Even though the women in comedy sometimes label themselves as *malae*, they use the same definitions and reasons that have been advanced by the male characters earlier in the text. They are still maintaining the male perspective. In Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, the transaction of advice giving is emphasized above the male character’s anxiety that such a process is taking place.

Despite all of these differences, the core elements of this process remain. Regardless of the genre or text, advice giving is still about control and the ability to act in a way that will benefit the character, oftentimes to the detriment of the other characters. The right to profit from others is what male characters give up when women can successfully implement the advice they were given and it is what the women gain. Ultimately, this didactic practice is about a series of exchanges from the exchange of advice between a *lena* and a *meretrix* to the exchange of power, words, and *merx* between men and women.

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