

In modern editions of Plautus' *Truculentus*, the leading courtesan is named Phrōnesium. This name is universally interpreted to mean 'Little Miss Sensible, Prudy' (Φρονήσιον, a name derived from φρόνησις 'intelligence, good sense'), but it is, I think, wrong. My presentation aims to make three points:—

- First, to argue that the text is corrupt, and that Plautus actually named this character Phr̄nesium (Φρῶν-ήσιον), '(Little) Phryne,' from the famous courtesan [Phryne](#), the Marilyn Monroe of 4th c. Athens. This Greek courtesan's great allure, phenomenal wealth, and mercenary character were the stuff of legend in the Hellenistic world, not least in Greek comedy, where she occasionally appears as a character. She was reportedly the model for both Apelles' *Aphrodite Anadyomene* and Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Cnidus*. And in a notorious episode celebrated by Greek comedians, she was put on trial for *asebeia* (blasphemy), but won acquittal when Hyperides, her lawyer and lover, [tore open her robe and displayed her naked body to the jury](#). As Phryne was nicknamed 'the Sifter' from the way she drained her clients' resources, she thus forms a very suitable namesake for Plautus' courtesan in *Truculentus*, his most cunning and dastardly and mercenary *meretrix* of all.
- Second, to show how restoration of the name throws a light on several points of detail in the text and literary interpretation of *Truculentus*.
- And third, to draw parallels between Phryne's trial and [Paculla Annia](#), a woman who was targeted by the Roman Senate during the 'Bacchanalian Affair' of 186 BC ([Livy 39.13](#)), when or shortly after *Truculentus* was first performed, in the course of which I explore the possibility that Plautus' play may even bear some responsibility for Paculla's treatment.

Evidence for these arguments is both textual and circumstantial-stylistic, the former proceeding from a manuscript reading not completely reported by any of the major 20th c. editions of *Truculentus* (photographs to be supplied), the latter including the rhetoric used of Phryne in Greek Comedy and in literature derived from it that parallels portions of Plautus' text. The corruption of the courtesan's name, which is systemic and probably pre-Varronian, can be traced to a misinterpreted jest in *Truc.* 77-78a.