

This paper investigates the tensions between speech and silence in the *Mother-in-Law*. These tensions are revealed in the prologue and continue to the play's "happy ending." The prologue's repeated appeals for silence from the audience focus on the problems of performance, and the need for silence, in particular the silence of women, to ensure a successful production. The producer, Ambivius Turpio, repeatedly calls for quiet from the audience (*silentium* 29; *date silentium* 55), and blames the failure of the first performance in part on the "noise of women" (*clamor mulierum* 35). At the drama's conclusion, the silence of the women within the play, specifically their promise to keep secret the fact that Pamphilus raped his wife, Philumena, before they were married, ensures the success and safety of the "hero." Indeed, the women's final conspiracy of silence allows Pamphilus to remain a "god" (*deu' sum* 843). Thus while the silence and complicity of the audience allows this version of the play to be performed, the silence within the play enables Terence to investigate dramatic conventions and to suggest other possible stories.

Terence's *Mother-in-Law* is a play with three beginnings and two endings. The two previous failed attempts at performance in 165 and 160BCE are outlined in the prologue. The play itself consists of two endings. It begins where the typical comedy leaves off, with the son, Pamphilus, submitting to the will of his father, Laches, and marrying the girl next door, Philumena (cf. Konstan 1983, 133). The audience is given access to the action that takes place after the ending of a stock comedy, and reveals a world where characters are unable to play their stereotypical roles, draw attention to themselves as characters, and suggest other roles they could play. Parmeno, the slave, is not allowed to be the standard *servus callidus*; Pamphilus's parents claim they will leave the stage and play the role of *senex atque anus* (621). Terence ends this play with an uncharacteristic metapoetic statement (Slater 1988, 259). Pamphilus commands the prostitute Bacchis to keep silent (865-6), and states that there is no need to end the play like a typical comedy and have "everybody learn everything" (866-7). This comedy ends by ironically claiming that it is not a comedy. Continuing on with his metapoetics, Pamphilus twice uses the technical term for recognition (*resciscunt, resciscere* 867; cf. Anderson 2002, 2) to ensure that this play does not end with a full recognition scene. Pamphilus's concluding claim of divinity is not as extravagant as it might initially seem. His unpunished rape of Philumena moves him to the realm of the gods of other dramas, such as Jupiter in *Amphitruo*, and Apollo in *Ion*. If Bacchis had not revealed only to the other female characters that Pamphilus had raped Philumena and is thus the father of her child, and if they had in turn revealed "everything to everybody", this play then would truly cease to be a comedy of "remarriage" and turn into a tale of rape, repudiation, illegitimacy, and revenge.