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Fetishes, Slaves, and Frustrated Women: The Representation of Kydilla in Herodas' *Mime 5*

This paper will (1) consider the mistreatment of slaves in connection with the gendered representation of frustrated desire in Herodas' comic *Mimiambi*, and (2) show how the representation of the slave Kydilla in *Mime 5* complicates this dynamic.

The *Mimes* usually depict the desiring subject as female, vainly seeking not only wayward husbands or lovers but also commodified fetishes, both in the narrow sense of a sexually desirable object (the popular *baubon* in *Mime 6*) and in the broad sense of a coveted symbol of some kind of potency, including aspects of social advancement such as education (*Mime 3*) or cultural sophistication (*Mime 4*). Central male characters, by contrast, tend to appear as purveyors of fetishes, like the prostitute Myrtale (*Mime 2*) or women's shoes (*Mime 7*).

Slaves are a common source of frustration for female characters and are regularly insulted as greedy (4.46), lazy (7.6; 8.1-15), or less than human (e.g., Kydilla the "crab," 4.44; Metro the "rock," 6.4). What is more, slaves who are treated as sexual objects are likely to be punished with physical violence (Myrtale, 2.24, 36-37, 68-71; Gastron, 5.25, 56-59). Thus, the treatment of the disenfranchised in the mimes posits a general distinction between verbal and physical abuse: subordinates who are close to or otherwise intimate with those in authority are paradoxically subject to greater humiliation and bodily harm (cf. Lampriskos' beating of Metrotime's son Kottalos, 3.81-86).

In *Mime 5*, "The Jealous Woman," the slave Kydilla resolves the disorder that has been introduced in the family by sexual relations between Bitinna and her slave Gastron. Bitinna angrily regrets her treatment of him "as a man" (*anthrōpos*, 5.15), for he has been unfaithful ("I am a man, I erred" 5.27). She has him stripped and bound, and threatens to flog and tattoo him publicly. Kydilla, another surrogate family member, has been raised by Bitinna, who loves her as much as she does her biological daughter, Batyllis (5.82). Kydilla intervenes by reminding her mistress of the sanction against punishment during a festival; she adds that tattooing Gastron might antagonize the gods and consequently jeopardize Batyllis' chances for marriage (5.69-73). Kydilla's motives are debatable, but she clearly frustrates Bitinna's transgressive sexual jealousy in transferring her attention to domestic concerns. Her unusual sensitivity to moral order thus provides a counterweight to Gastron's philandering, inasmuch as both characters act as comic substitutes for a *kurios*. This kind of inversion brings *Mime 5* more in line with themes associated with the comedies of Menander, which often place responsibility for the integrity of a household on the shoulders of a female slave (e.g., Habrotonon in the *Epitrepontes*, Chrysis in the *Samia*).