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FOOLS AND PHILOSOPHERS:
PICCOLOMINI'S COMEDIC RESPONSE TO LUCRETIVS

Drama of the Quattrocento was generally imitative of the tragedies of Seneca and comedies of Plautus and Terence¹. By the end of that century, the plays of these two playwrights were being performed and recited frequently. Yet until 1429, only eight plays of Plautus were known to Italian humanists². In that year Poggio Bracciolini and Nicolaus Cusanus' discovery of the codex Ursinianus, now housed in the Vatican library, added twelve more³. They were immediately popular and an *editio princeps*, edited by Giorgio Merula, was soon published in Venice⁴.

It was in this context that Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote his Latin comedy, *Chrysis*. Unlike his humanistic novel *Historia de Duobus Amantibus*, which remained in circulation despite being rejected by Pius II, *Chrysis* lay forgotten in a Prague library until the nineteenth century, but safe in its obscurity from Pius II's suppression of his erotic works. Composed between 26 August 1444 and the end of September the same year, the play provides a *terminus post quem*: it mentions in lines 160-163 the battle of St. Jakob an der Birs, which took place on 26 August 1444. A *terminus ante quem* is derived from the date (1 October 1444) of Piccolomini's letter to Michael Pfullendorf, the chief clerk in the emperor's court, in which he responds to Pfullendorf's criticism of that play: "You scorn not only the poem but also the poet. And accuse me, who wrote the comedy, of being cheap, as if Terence and Plautus, who also wrote comedies, had not been praised"⁵. Yet, this paper will show, comedic impulse is far from the only influence that Piccolomini found himself subject to: This paper will contextualize Lucretian echoes in a Renaissance play, one that narrowly escaped its own author's virtual *damnatio memoriae*, against such a comedic background, revealing not merely the future pope's debt to classical sources but his wry wit in adapting one genre in the midst of another.

¹ For an overview of fifteenth-century humanist comedy, see A. PEROSA, *Teatro Umanistico*, Milan 1965a, esp. pp. 9-52, and A. STÄUBLE, *La commedia umanista del Quattrocento*, Florence 1968. Both had relatively negative evaluations of humanist comedy. For introduction to goliardic theater, see V. PANDOLFI-E. ARTESE, *Teatro Goliardico dell'Umanesimo*, Milan 1965, pp. ix-xx.

² *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, *Captivi*, *Curculio*, *Cassina*, *Cistellaria*, and *Epidicus*.

³ Manuscript contains *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, and *Captivi*, along with *Bacchides*, *Menaechmi*, *Mercator*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria*, *Pseudolus*, *Poenulus*, *Persa*, *Rudens*, *Stichus*, *Trinummus*, and *Truculentus*. Currently, codex Vat. Lat. 3870. Codex Ursinianus clearly combined the texts of two other manuscripts: Cod. Heidelberg, Universitätsbibl. Pal. Lat. 1613 (once in the Abbey of St. Corbinian at Freising), which is the second of two tomes originally bound together, and Cod. Vatican City, Bibl. Apost. Pal. Lat. 1615 (from a monastery in Augsburg), possibly originally designed to carry only the first eight plays.

⁴ See F. DOGLIO, *Teatro in Europa*, Milan 1989, p. 446.

⁵ R. WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini. I. Abteilung: Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431-1445)*. I. Band: *Privatbriefe, Fontes rerum Austriacarum, Diplomataria et acta* 61, Wien 1909, pp. 439-442 (I, 1, 158); M. HOPPERUS (ed.), *Opera quae extant omnia*, Basel 1571, p. 586.

The lone surviving manuscript of the play remains in Prague⁶, where its presence was first noted in 1862 by Georg Ludwig Voigt in the second book of his work on Piccolomini⁷. The codex dates to the mid-fifteenth century (1447-1453)⁸ and contains the comedy along with some letters. It is written in gothic cursive (30-33 lines per page) in a rather clear hand, for the most part. Though there are some significant errors in the Latin, D.P. Lockwood's assessment of the copy as "a wretched one" seems overly harsh⁹. The scribe's identity is not certain but, inasmuch as the manuscript was bound with certain epistles, it seems likely to have been Wenzel von Bochow, a close friend and admirer of Piccolomini¹⁰. Although it was discovered in 1862, the *Chrysis* did not appear in print until 1939 when Andre Boutemy published the first edition¹¹.

The play follows the clever designs of two prostitutes, Chrysis and Cassina, and their two sets of lovers, one set consisting of two priests, Theobolus and Dyophanes, and the other involving two middle-aged men, Sedulius and Charinus. The play opens with the priests leaving the baths and heading to the brothels, rejoicing in their exploits. Meanwhile, Cassina and Chrysis are enjoying the company of their other lovers. Since they are otherwise occupied, the prostitutes arrive at the brothel much later than the clerics and, in an effort to obtain more affection, the priests pretend to shun the advances of their lovers. Distressed and abandoned, the escorts are free to entertain the other set of middle-aged lovers, but still pine for their priests. Through the machinations of Canthara, the brothel keeper, and another client, they eventually make peace with the very willing priests who cheerfully receive them again.

With such a plot, it is not surprising that it did not take long for the comedy to provoke a wide variety of responses. As we saw earlier, Piccolomini immediately found himself responding to the critique of his contemporary Michael Pfullendorf, among others. Much of the criticism arose from the play's bawdy plot and tawdry characters, concerns that have continued to influence critical reactions to the play even among modern scholars. To take but one example, as recently as the mid-twen-

⁶ Bibliotheque Lobkowitz 462, currently Bibliotheque nationale et universitaire de Prague XXIII F 112 ff. 191r.-204r.

⁷ G. VOIGT, *Enea Silvio de' Piccolomini, als Papst Pius der Zweite, und sein Zeitalter*, Berlin 1862, pp. 269-270. See also W. CREIZENACH, *Geschichte des neueren Dramas I*, Halle 1893; 2nd ed., Halle 1911, pp. 564-569; I. SANESI, *La Commedia I*, Milan 1911; 2nd ed., Milan 1954, pp. 102-109, 458-459. There are several spelling variations as follows: "e" for "ae" or "oe"; "y" for "i" or "i" for "y"; "ij" for "ii"; "w" for "u," "vu," or "vo"; "ci" for "ti"; "t" for "c" or "c" for "t"; "ch" for "h," such as *nichi* and *nichil*; "ph" for "f;" e.g., v. 782 *nephas*; Unnecessary "h," e.g., *hostium*, *baltbeum*, *sarthophbagum*; unnecessarily doubled letters, e.g., *Hii* for *hi* (682).

⁸ See A. BOUTEMY (ed. and trans.), *Chrysis. Comédie latine inédite*, Collection Latomus 1, Brussels 1939, p. 14; and E. CECCHINI (ed. and trans.), *Enea Silvio Piccolomini: Chrysis*, Florence 1968, pp. xiv-xix; also the records of the national library of the Czech Republic.

⁹ D.P. LOCKWOOD, *Reviewed Work. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, "Chrysis" by André Boutemy*, in *Classical Weekly* 33, 11 (1940), p. 130.

¹⁰ H.D. JOCELYN, *Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's "Chrysis" and the Comedies of Plautus*, in RPL 14 (1991), p. 101; SANESI, *op. cit.* (1954), pp. 28-30; G. BERNETTI, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini e la sua commedia "Chrysis"*, in *La Rinascita* 6 (1943), p. 53; also see records of the national library of the Czech Republic which notes that the contents include letters collected by Wenzel Bochow, in which is the comedy.

¹¹ BOUTEMY, *Chrysis*, cit.

tieth century, Gehart BÜRCK determined from the *Chrysis* that Piccolomini must have been a worldly womanizer¹².

Yet even critics of the play's moral content, such as Radcliffe-Umstead and Stäuble, acknowledge the value of the work for its demonstration of classical influence¹³, a debt that has received increasingly favorable attention. Obviously, Plautus and Terence provided the most direct models for Piccolomini's comedic enterprise, though, as we shall see, other literary forces are also at work. The most noticeable debt that the play owes to classical literature is its meter. Most plays of the Quattrocento imitated the aesthetics of Roman comedy, but the *Chrysis*, unlike almost all of its medieval predecessors, was composed using Plautine metrical patterns. While the early humanists drew heavily from the plots, characters, and style of Roman comedy, for the most part they did not imitate comedic metrical patterns¹⁴. Only two humanists attempted an imitation of the comic iambic senarii, Vergerio in his *Paulus* and Piccolomini in the *Chrysis*. Humanist playwrights were probably unfamiliar with comic meter because most of the manuscripts of Terence were copied without regard for line separation, as if it were prose¹⁵.

Chrysis, by contrast, was written in pseudo-senarians that echo the more developed iambic senarians of Plautus and Terence. While the *Chrysis* executes comic meter better than most plays of the Quattrocento, it still displays an abundance of irregularities. Each verse has between ten and sixteen syllables, and many show irregularities such as spondees or trochees in the final foot and pyrrhics or trochees in the beginning feet, though Piccolomini retains an iamb in the final foot of his

¹² G. BÜRCK, *Selbstdarstellung und Personenbildnis bei Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pius II)*, vol. 56, Basel 1956, p. 131: «Betrachtet man neben diesem ungezügelter Frauentyp noch Gestalten seiner Dichtungen aus der Basler Zeit (Komödie Chrysis), dann könne man sich berechtigt glauben, Eneas Frauenbild im Zeichen einer hemmungslosen Sinnlichkeit zu sehen». A. STÄUBLE, *Un dotto Esercizio Letterario. La Commedia "Chrysis" di Enea Silvio Piccolomini nel Quadro del Teatro Umanistico del Quattrocento*, in *GSLI* (1965), pp. 351-367 called the plot "insignificant" and the characters "superficial and hypocritical", and pointed out that the author of the play was very different from the pope he would later become. D. RADCLIFFE-UMSTEAD, *The Birth of Modern Comedy in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago 1969, argues that «there is no didactic purpose» and that «from the man who was to become Pope Pius II one might have expected a more edifying play» (p. 40). For a somewhat more euphemistic discussion of the topic, cfr. VOIGT 1862, cit.

¹³ RADCLIFFE-UMSTEAD, *Birth of Modern Comedy*, cit., p. 40; STÄUBLE, *op. cit.* (1965), p. 364: «un esercizio letterario, un dotto passatempo di umanista, un tentativo di far rivivere la commedia plautina».

¹⁴ For more details of fifteenth-century attempts to write senarii, see R. SABBADINI, *Il metodo degli umanisti*, Florence 1922, pp. 67-69; LOCKWOOD, *Reviewed Work*, cit., p. 130; M. LENCHANTIN, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini, "Chrysis"*, in *Athenaeum* 19 (1941), pp. 193-196 (pp. 193-195); BERNETTI, *op. cit.* (1943), pp. 63-64; and G. BERNETTI, *Saggi e studi sugli scritti di Enea Silvio Piccolomini Papa Pio II, 1405-1464*, Florence 1971, pp. 150-151; M. NIEDERMAN, *Deux éditions récentes de la comédie "Chrysis" d'Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in *Humanitas* 2 (1948), pp. 93-115 (pp. 114-115); S. MARIOTTI, *Sul testo e le fonti comiche della CHRYISIS di E.S. Piccolomini*, in *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Lettere, Storia e Filosofia* 215 (1946), pp. 118-130, in particular pp. 122-123; A. PEROSA, *Note e Notizie. Metrica umanistica*, in *Rinascimento. Rivista dell'istituto nazionale di studi di Rinascimento* 3 (1952), pp. 186-188; E. CECCHINI in M. & E. CECCHINI (ed.), *Leonardo Bruni, Versione del Pluto di Aristofane, introduzione e testo critic*, Florence 1965, pp. xi-xvii, *GIF* n.s. 2 (1971), pp. 65-67; L. BRAUN, *Scenae suppositiciae oder der falsche Plautus*, Göttingen 1980, pp. 74-82.

¹⁵ M. HERRICK, *Italian Comedy in the Renaissance*, Urbana, IL 1960, p. 15 n. 9; G. GRUND (ed. and trans.), *Humanist Comedies*, Cambridge, MA 2005, p. xxiii.

regular lines¹⁶. Occasionally he uses other metrical patterns, but only because they appear in the Plautine passages from which he is borrowing. For example, anapestic rhythms appear in Charinus' monologue in scene 8, bacchiac rhythms in scene 15, and the cretic (often found in comedy) in Canthara's monologue in scenes 5 and Dyophanes' lamentation in scene 6. Several scholars have attributed the metrical irregularity to Piccolomini's weak grasp of comic meter. Stäuble called the work «un maldestro tentativo di imitare il senario giambico delle commedie latine»¹⁷. Lenchantin points out several instances of metrical negligence near the end of the play, noting that humanists of the time were unfamiliar with any meter except dactylic hexameter and whatever they could reproduce by ear¹⁸.

Though clearly influential for Piccolomini, it was not meter that drew his and other humanists' attention to Roman comedy. Instead, they appreciated the quotidian plots of the comedies, through which they could critique contemporary life. The immorality of the Renaissance was a popular topic and seemed to characterize the humanists' time. In the comedies of Plautus and Terence, humanist playwrights found an abundance of characters from which to draw as well as frequent colloquialisms, especially in Plautus, who offers a variety of puns, satire, and wit that befit everyday situations. As we have already seen, the plot of the *Chrysis* features erotic intrigue similar to Latin New Comedy, set mostly in a brothel. Such scenes drawn from ordinary life, based in the universal actions and desires of normal men, made Plautus and Terence appealing to Renaissance humanists. The ancient comedies, therefore, could be quite easily adapted to life in contemporary Italy.

Combining lust, gluttony, and arrogance, Piccolomini produces a very Plautine tone for the comedy. Like the plays of Plautus, *Chrysis* concludes with a moral exhortation to the audience. But, as with Roman comedy, it was not the morals that his audience remembered. Some of Piccolomini's characters are inspired by Roman stock characters. The priests, Theobolus and Dyophanes, are similar to the *miles*, obscene and violent. Lybiphanes and Congrio are like the *parisiti*, aiding and abetting while looking out for their own appetites. Anthrax is a typical cook and Canthara a classic *lena*. Piccolomini also adapts and quotes several hundred lines from Plautine comedies.

In light of the play's questionable moral content, Piccolomini's indulgence in classical motifs has often met with disapproval among critics. In his first, hasty judgment in the nineteenth century, Voigt judged that the *Chrysis* was only an attempt at imitating classical comedy, a view that had far-reaching influence¹⁹. Barelli claims that the play did little more than contaminate a handful of Plautine comedies²⁰. Nuzzo describes it as «a ragged contamination of licentious tones; a plautine *piccante manicaretto* occasionally sprinkled with a bit of Terence»²¹.

¹⁶ See J.-L. CHARLET, *Les pseudo-vers iambiques d'Enea Silvio Piccolomini dans la "Chrysis"*, in *Studi umanistici piceni* 26 (2009), pp. 185-204; and J.-L. CHARLET (ed.), *Chrysis*. Paris 2006, pp. 31-36; J.-F. CHEVALIER, *Neo-Latin Theatre in Italy*, in J. BLOEMENDAL-H. NORLAND (eds.), *Neo-Latin Drama and Theater in Early Modern Europe*, Leiden 2013, pp. 25-95, in particular pp. 62-63, for a detailed discussion of the play's meter. 20 lines have 10 syllables and 1 line has 16.

¹⁷ A. STÄUBLE, *La commedia umanista del Quattrocento*, Florence 1968, p. 71.

¹⁸ LENCHANTIN, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, cit.

¹⁹ See also BERNETTI, *op cit.* (1943), p. 41 and STÄUBLE, *op cit.* (1965), p. 354.

²⁰ E. BARELLI (trans.), *Enea Silvio Piccolomini Criside*, Milan 1968, p. 386.

²¹ G. NUZZO, *La "Chrysis" di Enea Silvio Piccolomini. Note di lettura*, in M. BLANCATO et al. (eds.), *La Commedia latina. Modelli, forme ideologia, fortuna*, Syracuse 2009, p. 138.

Beginning with Sanesi²², however, a slow but steady trickle of praise for Piccolomini's classical allusions and intertexts began to flow²³. Verdone called it, «poetiche ed artistiche, imbevute di una ardente sensualità e di un crudo realismo»²⁴. In particular, the works of Henry David Jocelyn and Jean-Louis Charlet have rehabilitated the reputation of the *Chrysis*. While many scenes seem like patchworks of Plautine allusions, they in fact contain clever references that shed an ironizing light on the lines of the *Chrysis*, provided the audience knows their Plautine contexts.

Yet the rich web of allusions in the *Chrysis* shows that New Comedy alone is not the sole classical impulse propelling Piccolomini's play, for there are many echoes of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, as well²⁵. While scholarship has investigated Lucretian and Plautine elements separately in the *Chrysis*, there has yet to be any significant discussion on the interaction between the two in Piccolomini's work. The character of Charinus, one of the middle-aged lovers, yields an interesting case study as he exhibits clearly and distinctly these seemingly disparate elements within one person. We first meet him in scene 4 as he monologues about the ridiculousness of those who worry and fret about the "vain cares" of political and religious power. He espouses, instead, an Epicurean approach to life, to maintain a peaceful mind and to pursue only a life of simple pleasures. Concluding his speech, he claims that he does not mind that someone else is paying for and sleeping with his favorite prostitute, Cassina as well, but is satisfied to simply have had her first. Four scenes later we find him again, but this time in a drastically different state of mind, complaining that he is being tortured and driven about by love for Cassina and jealous because she is with someone else at the moment. He is inconsolable even when fellow-lover Sedulius reminds him that the job description of a prostitute entails having multiple lovers. It is only when Lybiphanes, the friend of Sedulius, contrives a plan for him to win his Cassina back from the priest whom she is entertaining that he calms down.

Though very different in tone, both scenes represent ideas and sentiments found in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. That scene 4 derives almost entirely from the second book of the *DRN* has already been discussed extensively in scholarship. Charinus' opening exclamation, "Oh stupid minds of men and overly empty! Oh blind hearts of mortals! (*O stultas hominum mentes et vanas nimis! / O mortalium ceca pectora!* 156-157)",

²² SANESI, *op. cit.* (1911), pp. 102-109, 458-459.

²³ For further details of Piccolomini's debt to Plautus, see S. MARIOTTI, *Sul testo*, cit., pp. 118-130.

²⁴ M. VERDONE, "Chrysis" di E.S. Piccolomini nel Teatro Umanistico e Goliardico, in *Annuario del ginnasio-liceo E.S. Piccolomini* (1965), pp. 129-138, in particular p. 138.

²⁵ Recently, the influence of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* and epicureanism has been discussed in detail by G. BOCCUTO, *Spunti Lucreziani in un Monologo della "Chrysis" del Piccolomini*, in L.R.S. TARUGI (ed.), *Pio II e la Cultura del suo Tempo*, Milan 1991; and E. O'BRIEN, *Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's "Chrysis": Prurient Pastime—or Something More?*, in *Modern Language Notes* 124 (2009), pp. 111-136. Though the allusions are noted by earlier scholars (MARIOTTI, *Sul testo*, cit.; V. GELSOMINO, *Per una nuova edizione della "Chrysis" di Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in *Giornale Italiano di Filologia* 17 [1964], pp. 162-175, in particular p. 174; STÄUBLE, *op. cit.* [1965], p. 356; S. DALL'OCO, *Sulla "Chrysis" di Enea Silvio Piccolomini*, in P. ANDRIOLI et al. [eds.], *Teatro, scena, rappresentazione dal Quattrocento al settecento*, Lecce 2000, p. 71), they are not discussed in detail. Boccuto concludes that Piccolomini is satirizing and commenting on the contemporary equation of epicureanism with hedonism, distorting epicurean ideals in the mouths of his characters. Building on Boccuto's work, O'Brien points up Piccolomini's purposeful misappropriation of philosophical allusions in decidedly unphilosophical situations, thus nullifying the effectiveness of such philosophical systems.

is clearly drawn from Lucretius' "O miserable minds of men, oh blind hearts! (*O miseris hominum mentes, o pectora caeca!* DRN 2, 14)". As the monologue continues, the pointlessness of worry over battle maneuvers and religious quarrels emerges (160-167):

*Vidi plures in foro
Nuper propter Armeniacos ire anxios;
Illos namque invasisse dolent imperium
Et occidisse quosdam Suicenses truces.
Hostem volunt alii externum propulsarier
Ulciscique suos. Tum post quidam togati
Non capio quid divisionis flebile
Inter pontifices aiunt esse maxumos.*

Just now I saw many people going about in the forum, anxious on account of the Armeniacchi; for they also lament that they invaded the empire and killed certain savage Swiss. Some wish to drive out the foreign host and avenge their own. Then afterwards certain toga-clad men say that there is some lamentable division between the greatest pontiffs²⁶.

The image of that the phrase "*vidi plures in foro*" is that of Lucretius' persona's gazer at the opening of DRN 2 (lines 9-13) who looks down from his perch at men wandering about aimlessly seeking to strive for glory (*despicere unde queas alios passimque videre errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae*, 9f.) and the general tone mirrors a description delineated also a few lines later in that same book, in which battle training and religious superstitions are dismissed along with riches and glories as inconsequential to bodily wellbeing (DRN 2, 37-46):

*quapropter quoniam nihil nostro in corpore gazae
proficiunt neque nobilitas nec gloria regni,
quod super est, animo quoque nil prodesse putandum;
si non forte tuas legiones per loca campi
fervere cum videas belli simulacra cientis,
subsidiis magnis et opum vi constabilitas,
ornatas armis statuas pariterque animatas,
his tibi tum rebus timefactae religiones
effugiunt animo pavidae mortisque timores
tum vacuum pectus lincunt curaque solutum.*

Therefore, since treasures profit nothing for our body, nor noble birth nor the glory of royalty, we must further think that for the mind also they are unprofitable; unless by any chance, when you behold your legions seething over the spacious Plain as they evoke war in mimicry, established firm with mighty supports and a mass of cavalry, marshalled all in arms and all full of one spirit, then these things scare your superstitious fears and drive them in panic flight from your mind, and death's terrors then leave your heart unpossessed and free from care.

²⁶ All translations are my own.

Piccolomini's Charinus also mocks the intellectuals who comment on the seriousness of religious dispute. One can also see in those lines an echo of Lucretius' criticism of *vates* and religion (DRN 1, 102-7):

*Tutemet a nobis iam quovis tempore vatum
terriquois victus dictis desciscere quaeres.
quippe etenim quam multa tibi iam fingere possunt
somnia, quae vitae rationes vertere possint
fortunasque tuas omnis turbare timore!*

You will yourself some day or other seek to fall away from us, overborne by the terrific utterances of priests. Yes indeed, for how many dreams can they even now invent for you, enough to upset the principles of life and to confound all your fortunes with fear!

Piccolomini bottoms the Lucretian dismissal of religion with his sarcastic *togati* and *non capio quid*.

When Charinus maintains that he follows the advice of a wise man to put empty cares behind him, ("I keep the word of the wise in my mind: it is fitting to send vain cares behind the back"; *Ego sapientis verbum mente teneo: / Curas post tergum decet inanes mittier*, 168-169), one can see references to a few Lucretian *sententiae* on the same subject, namely freedom from empty cares via sound doctrine: "But nothing is more delightful than to possess serene sanctuaries, well-fortified by the teachings of the wise (*sed nihil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere / edita doctrina sapientum templa serena*, DRN 2, 7-8)"; "Therefore mankind labors always in vain and to no purpose, consuming its days in empty cares. (*Ergo hominum genus in cassum frustra laborat / semper et [in] curis consumit inanibus aevom*, DRN 5, 1430-31)"; and, "There is yet something in us which at that time is agitated in many ways, and admits into itself all the motions of joy and cares of the heart, which have no meaning (*est aliud tamen in nobis quod tempore in illo / multimodis agitatur et omnis accipit in se / laetitiae motus et curas cordis inanis*, DRN 3, 114-16)".

Charinus also demonstrates a Lucretian view on the vanity of power struggles by comparing them to chickens fighting over food (170-173):

*Ut in cavea certant pulli gallinacii
Esce causa, quibus cras est decretum mori,
Sic propter imperium contendunt homines,
Quod quam diu tenere debeant nesciunt.*

Just as farm chickens, which are fated to die tomorrow, fight in their pen over food, so do men compete for honor, which they do not know how long they will hold.

The notion of the *commode vitae*, too, is drawn from Lucretius. *Stulta est cura que nihil parturit commodi* (177) evokes Lucretius' *e tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen / qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae. / Te sequor* (DRN 3, 1-3)²⁷. Charinus' phrase

²⁷ "O you who first amid so great a darkness were able to raise aloft a light so clear, illumining the benefits of life, you I follow".

“I follow him” (*hunc ego sequor*, 182) also echoes the poet’s laudatory words to Epicurus, (*te sequor*, DRN 3, 3). Finally, Charinus’ monologue concludes with the thoroughly Epicurean idea that nothing awaits him after death (*Chrysis* 185-189):

*Nil post obitum volo.
Nemo funera faxit mortuo nec mihi
Sarcophagum statuat. Quid gloria vanius
Sepulchrali? Seu me vermes edant vel aves,
Totidem facio.*

I want nothing after death. No one will make a funeral for me when I am dead nor erect a sarcophagus. What glory is more vain than a sepulcher? Whether worms eat me or birds, I consider it the same.

This echo of Lucretius’s conception of the soul and its dissolution at death would have found scant company during the Quattrocento. Piccolomini’s contemporaries preferred Lucretius’ moral philosophy to his discussions of atomism. The *Chrysis*, then, is rather unique even among humanist texts for its engagement with the entirety of its sources instead of seeking only moralistic, classical *bon mots*²⁸. And so, while his attention to scientific and philosophical aspects of Lucretius does not absolve Piccolomini of the charge of creating a mere patchwork of allusions, the novelty of such allusions demands that they receive careful consideration before being dismissed as mere slavish imitation.

Yet this is far from the only passage in the play where Lucretius figures prominently. For example, the idea of pain paired with pleasure in scene 8 recalls the sentiments at the end of Lucretius’ fourth book, sentiments that, in fact, permeate the entire play. The notion of the conjoined nature of sexual pleasure and pain is at the foundation of the plot; the priests and their prostitutes desire each other yet, at the same time, are furious with each other. Lucretius describes this conflation of pain and pleasure as advantages with penalties (DRN 4, 1073-83):

*nec Veneris fructu caret is qui nitat amorem,
sed potius quae sunt sine poena commoda sumit.
nam certe purast sanis magis inde uoluptas
quam miseris. etenim potiundi tempore in ipso
fluctuat incertis erroribus ardor amantum
nec constat quid primum oculis manibusque fruuntur.
quod petiere, premunt arte faciuntque dolorem
corporis et dentis inlidunt saepe labellis
osculaue adfligunt, quia non est pura uoluptas
et stimuli subsunt qui instigant laedere id ipsum
quodcumque est, rabies unde illaec germina surgunt.*

Nor does he who avoids love lack the fruit of Venus, but rather he takes the advantages which are without penalty; for certainly a pleasure more unmixed comes from this to the healthy than to the lovesick. Indeed, in the very time of

²⁸ See A. PALMER, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, Cambridge, MA 2014, p. 96.

possession, lovers' ardor is storm-tossed, uncertain in its course, hesitating what first to enjoy with eye or hand. They press closely the desired object, hurting the body, often they set their teeth in the lips and crush mouth on mouth, because the pleasure is not unmixed and there are secret stings that urge them to hurt that very thing, whatever it may be, from which those germs of frenzy grow.

The pains and annoyances of sexual relationships comes immediately to the forefront of the *Chrysis* as the play opens with a complaint from one of the priests about having to spend too much on his prostitute girlfriend (*Chrysis* 24-31):

[Theobolus]: Sed hoc molestum est mihi ...
Dyophanes: Quid istuc est?
Theobolus: "Antiqua est palla mea; novam
Faxo ut habeam: quattuor mihi da minas.
Baltheum nullum est mihi etiam; adiuva ut habeam".
Hec vox mihi semper sonat in auribus.
Talentum impertitus sum, sed quo plus do, magis
Expetit: "Hoc indigeo, hoc prebe, hoc volo.
Es quidem nullum in crumena superest mea".

Theo: But this is annoying to me ...

Dyo: What is it?

Theo: "My cloak is old; let me have a new one: give me four minas. I also have no belt; help me get one". This voice always sounds in my ears. I gave a talent, but the more I give the more she demands: "I need this, I beg this, I want this. No bronze remains in my purse".

Theobolus' lamentations over his expenditures on clothing and jewelry recalls DRN 4., 1121-40, where Lucretius includes having to spend money on one's girlfriend among the misfortunes of being in love (DRN 4, 1123-34):

labitur interea res et Babylonica fiunt,
languent officia atque aegrotat fama uacillans.
unguenta et pulchra in pedibus Sicyonia rident
scilicet et grandes uiridi cum luce zmaragdi
auro includuntur teriturque thalassina uestis
assidue et Veneris sudorem exercita potat.
 ...
nequiquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum
surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat.

Meanwhile wealth vanishes, and turns into Babylonian perfumes; obligations are left unfulfilled and a wavering reputation grows weak. Lovely Sicyonian slippers laugh on her feet; you may be sure too that great emeralds flash their green light set in gold, the sea-purple tunic is ever in wear and, in rough use, drinks up the sweat of Venus. ...but all is vanity, since from the very fountain of enchantment rises a drop of bitterness to torment even in the flowers.

Scene 8 brings these themes into sharp relief. Charinus' complaints about being tortured and dragged about evoke the Lucretius' description of dogs in heat pulling on chains, an image he uses to describe the madness of humans under the influence of lust (*DRN* 4, 1201-8):

*nonne uides etiam quos mutua saepe uoluptas
uinxit, ut in uinclis communibus excrucientur?
in triuiis cum saepe canes, discedere auentes
diuersi cupide summis ex uiribu' tendunt,
cum interea ualidis Veneris compagibus haerent;
quod facerent numquam nisi mutua gaudia nossent
quae iacere in fraudem possent uinctosque tenere.
quare etiam atque etiam, ut dico, est communi' uoluptas.*

Do you not see also, when mutual pleasure has enchained a pair, how they are often tormented in their common chains? For often dogs at the cross-ways, desiring to part, pull hard in different directions with all their strength, when all the while they are held fast in the strong couplings of Venus. But this they would never do, unless they both felt these joys which were enough to lure them into the trap and to hold them enchained. Therefore again and again I say, the pleasure is for both.

Excrucior appears only twice in Lucretius, including its current use to describe the mutual torture felt in sexual intercourse, in this case that of dogs. In *Chrysis* the verb appears as one out of a multitude of tortures, escalating Lucretian depravity to a ridiculous level. Lucretius says that even dogs would not suffer mutual torture if they did not also receive mutual pleasure. In scene 8 Charinus explicitly says he is willing to suffer the agonies of love, provided he still gets to enjoy the love, a sentiment repeated later by one of the prostitutes. These characters choose to suffer for pleasure because lust has numbed their faculty of reason.

Scene 8 is also indebted to Plautus' *Cistellaria*, a play that paradoxically now survives intact but in Piccolomini's own time was available only in fragmentary form. Let us consider but a section of the text that shows Piccolomini's debt; Charinus speaks about the painful nature of love (*Chrysis* 373-384):

*Charinus: Nil amor est apud homines nisi
Dura carnificina, aspera et teterrima.
Hoc ego in me sentio, qui omnes homines
Supero animi cruciabilitatibus.
Iactor, vorsor, agitor, stimolor, crucior
In amoris rota; miser exanimor.
Fero, differo, distrabor, diripior,
Ita meo nulla mens est animo,
Ita ingenium omne perdidit meum.
Quod lubet non lubet iam id continuo,
Ita me amor lapsum animo ludificat;
Fugat, agit, appetit, raptat, retinet;
Quod dat non dat, deludit. ...*

Love is nothing for men except hard torture, difficult and terrifying. I feel this in myself, who exceeds all men in the sufferings of the mind. I am led, turned, agitated, stimulated, tortured on the wheel of love; miserable I die. I am carried off, I am scattered, I am torn apart, I am pillaged, thus there is no mind in my soul, thus I destroyed my entire spirit. What it desires it now desires no longer, thus love toys with me, fallen as I am in my mind; it routes, drives, hungers, seizes, and holds; what it gives it does not give, it deceives...

While much of this passage is, of course, not surprising in a play with such emotional entanglements as its central theme, this description nonetheless echoes in many distinct ways a scene from the *Cistellaria* (*Cist.* 203-224):

*Credo ego Amorem primum apud homines carnificinam commentum.
hanc ego de me coniecturam domi facio, ni foris quaeram,
qui omnes homines supero [atque] antideo cruciabilitatibus animi.
iactor [crucior] agitor stimulator, versor
in amoris rota, miser exanimor,
feror differor distrabor diripior,
ita nubilam mentem animi habeo,
ubi sum, ibi non sum, ubi non sum, ibist animus,
ita mi omnia sunt ingenia;
quod lubet, non lubet iam id continuo,
ita me Amor lassum animi ludificat,
fugat, agit, appetit, raptat, retinet,
lactat, largitur: quod dat non dat; deludit ...*

I believe it was Love who first devised torture among us men. I draw this inference from home, from my own experience – no need to look outside: I outdo and surpass everyone in mental agony. I'm being thrown around, tossed around, pierced, turned on the wheel of love; poor me, I'm being destroyed, driven, driven apart, dragged apart, torn apart: so clouded is my mind. Where I am, there I'm not, where I'm not, there my heart is; all my moods are like this. What I like I dislike at once: this is how Love tricks me – I am mentally exhausted – how he puts me to flight, drives me off, lays hands on me, drags me back, holds me back, entices me, bestows on me. What he gives he does not give, he tricks me.

The echo is not merely the recycling of a topos, but rather seems to function on the level of literary allusion. In the *Cistellaria* one finds the comic combination of love and torture in the complaints of a Plautine *adulescens* about the abuse of an abstracted “Love.” It is upon this specific combination that Piccolomini draws. Charinus’ opening monologue in scene 8 comes from a monologue in *Cistellaria* (203-224). Particularly important is the personification of Love and the abundant and varied language of torture: *iactor*, *versor*, *agitor*, *stimulator*, *crucior*, *exanimor*, *feror*, *differor*, *distrabor*, *diripior*; then with Love as the actor: *fugat*, *agit*, *appetit*, *raptat*, *retinet*. Charinus continues to bemoan his torture, echoing the opening of *Cistellaria*, “My Gymnasium, I am tortured; I am sick, I am badly torn; I am sad in spirit, I am pained in my eyes, I am pained from faintness. What shall I say, except that my idiocy drives me to grief? (*Med*

excrucio, mea Gymnasium: male mihi est, male maceror; / doleo ab animo, doleo ab oculis, doleo ab aegritudine. / quid dicam, nisi stultitia mea me in maerorem rapi? Cist. 59-61”, especially because he blames his pain on being in love: “*Exedor, maceror et exenteror; / Amando miser perii, occidi, interii (394-395)*!” Though his lines do not repeat the “stultitia” of the Plautine source, nevertheless his stupidity is much emphasized by his interlocutors. “You are behaving absurdly” (*absurde facis*, 396), Sedulius retorts. Sedulius’ advice concerning prostitutes, which is drawn from the *lena* in *Cistellaria* (43-45 and 80-81), notes the necessity of many men for their profession (*Chrysis* 402-408):

*Nam scortum fortunati est oppidi simile,
Quod rem non servat sine multis viris.
Nubere vult meretrix quotidie
Novis maritis. Nupsit hodie mihi,
Hac noctu nubat ut aliis decet.
Nunquam vidua cubare vult domi;
Nam, si non nubit sepe, fame perit.*

For a whore is like a rich town, which does not maintain itself without many men. A prostitute wants to marry new husbands every day. Today she married me, tonight she will marry as it pleases others. She never wants to go home like a widow; for, if she doesn’t marry often, she will die of hunger.

The metaphor of the house can be found in the *Cistellaria*, where the *lena*, advising a prostitute not to get married, likens her profession to a flourishing town (*Cist.* 43-45, 80-81):

*haec quidem ecastor cottidie viro nubit, nupsitque bodie,
nubet mox noctu: numquam ego hanc viduam cubare sivi.
nam si haec non nubat, lugubri fame familia pereat.
...
verum enim meretrix fortunati est oppidi simillima:
non potest suam rem obtinere sola sine multis viris.*

She does marry a man, every day, and she married one today and will soon marry one tonight; I’ve never let her sleep alone. Yes, if she didn’t marry, our household would perish from sorrowful hunger... but a prostitute closely resembles a flourishing town: she cannot be successful alone, without many men.

Sedulius’ counsel does not have the intended effect, and Charinus, laughing bitterly, turns instead to Lybiphanes for help.

Combining the Plautine and Lucretian contexts of torture, Piccolomini creates here what can be called a conflated allusion or multiple reference. In an article on Virgil’s *Georgics*, Richard Thomas devised a useful schema to understand various types of references, one of which consists of conflation or multiple references, which subdivides into “correction” and “window reference”, the first being an occasion when the author corrects one source via another, the latter being when the author interprets one source via another²⁹. Thomas’ framework is useful for our pur-

²⁹ R. THOMAS, *Virgil’s “Georgics” and the Art of Reference*, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 90 (1986), pp. 171-198, in particular pp. 188-189.

poses as, in scene 8, Piccolomini conflates allusions to two different genres, comic and philosophical/didactic.

An important question, however, remains for our consideration, namely what the significance of this conflation of genres might be. I leave aside the possibility that such "Kreuzung" encompasses its own comedic aspects³⁰. Within an Epicurean framework, Charinus seems to move from stable Epicurean to object of Epicurean disgust. Along with this Lucretian devolution, Charinus also moves more firmly into the comic world, taking on definitively, in scene 8, the persona of the lovesick *adulescens*. In this shift of character, he manifests the mind-scattering effect of Love of Lust as discussed in Lucretius and emphasizes the stupidity and ridiculousness of it all in his comic role.

To this comic ridicule and mockery he adds philosophical gravity. Philosophically, Charinus clearly does not truly understand the Epicureanism he espouses because four scenes later he becomes that which his philosophy condemns. His lack of understanding is already betrayed at the end of scene 4 at the conclusion of his monologue. His statement that "as long as living I eat and drink what I want, so long will my soul be happy, (*dummodo vivens edam / et bibam quod placet, dummodo letus meus / sit animus*, 189-191)" is an «esplicita deformazione della dottrina epicurea in senso piattamente edonistico»³¹. Charinus does not find comfort in rationality, as Lucretius says one ought in the beginning of book 2, a peace in palaces built on sound doctrine. Rather, he finds his comfort in the machinations of a Plautine parasite, Lybphanes, and the promise of regaining his prostitute-love. Literarily, he ranges from a philosophizing character to a foolish *adulescens*. Between scene 4 and 8, Charinus is proven to be either a fool or a hypocrite, or perhaps some combination of both, though it seems he leans towards the former in his ignorance of true Epicureanism.

In addition to developing his characters through literary allusion, Piccolomini adds a layer of social commentary. Scholars have written on aspects of realism in the play, specifically as a reflection of contemporary society³². The contemporary setting is further established by an allusion to the battle of St. Jakob an der Birs in lines 160-63. The battle of St. Jakob an der Birs near Basel took place on August 26th. When Charinus mentions the battle, he also states that he is not bothered by the conflict between Germany and France or between political leaders, referring to the split in the church between Pope Eugene IV and antipope Felix V. Piccolomini himself commented on these events, though with more detached calculation than Charinus' dismissal³³. The

³⁰ W. KROLL, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur*, Stuttgart 1924, pp. 202-203.

³¹ BOCCUTO, *Spunti Lucreziani*, cit., p. 355.

³² CHEVALIER, *Neo-Latin Theatre in Italy*, cit., pp. 63-64; DALL'OCO, *Sulla "Chrysis"*, cit.; H.D. JOCELYN, *The Unclassical Aspects of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's "Chrysis"*, in L.R.S. TARUGI (ed.), *Pio II e la Cultura del suo Tempo*, 1989; JOCELYN, *op. cit.* (1991); PEROSA, *op. cit.* (1965), p. 186; BERNETTI *op. cit.* (1943), pp. 39-55. Both Jocelyn and Charlet have written on the play's originality, the former commenting specifically on aspects of reality and representation of fifteenth-century life and purposeful adaptation of classical material. Sondra Dall'Oco has also written on the comedy's realism. Dall'Oco's and Jocelyn's works are built on earlier investigations into the play as a reflection of Aeneas' experiences at the imperial court. See also I. SANESI, *Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini. Chrysis*, Nuova collezione di testi umanistici inedita o rari IV, Florence 1941, pp. 14-18; and SANESI, *op. cit.* (1954), pp. 140-46; CECCHINI, *Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini*, cit., p. ix.

³³ See his letter to Johann Gers on September 22nd, in which he discusses both the battle and the situation with the Church (WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., pp. 434-438 [I, 1, 157]) and a letter written on December 13th (WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 490 [I, 1, 167]). He comments on his relationship to the emperor, funnily enough as that of a comic parasite to a comic soldier, in a letter written on January 16th (WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 287 [I, 1, 119]).

city itself, in which the play is set, is definitely not the Athens of classical comedies. The social structure is fifteenth century as is the characters' way of life. Jocelyn notes places where Piccolomini adapts Plautine allusions to remove anything in the lines that would not fit in contemporary Europe³⁴. Not only does he take care to remove any anachronisms, he adds details that seem to hint that the scene is set in a contemporary German town. It is possible the setting is Nuremberg, where Piccolomini was when he wrote the *Chrysis*, or at least a similar German city³⁵. Scholars have pointed to various structures in the play as landmarks that would have been well known to contemporary audiences as well as references to coins stamped with the emperor's head, which confirm that the town is German. I would add, as further proof that Nuremberg is the intended setting of the play, that the baths mentioned at the beginning of scene 2 refer to the thermal baths that were well known in Nuremberg³⁶. In fact, one of Albrecht Dürer's earliest woodcuts is of one of these baths.

The characters of the priests also point to contemporary individuals. Dyophanes at one point disparages the French and later speaks of his (mis)deeds in Mains and Sienna. Perhaps he, and his companion Theobolus, are Italian foreigners in Nuremberg, much like those men who, like Piccolomini himself, came to Nuremberg for the Reichstag of 1444 in the service of princes, bishops, and the like³⁷. Some scholars have argued, convincingly, that certain initials appearing over the names of characters in scenes 2, 5 and 6 in the manuscript refer to specific individuals known to the author³⁸. Over the name of Archimenes is written "w t", possibly referring to Wilhelm Tacz, an official of the imperial chancery who had offended Piccolomini. In Pius II's *Commentaries*, Tacz is referred to as "a Bavarian who hated all Italians". Above the name of Sedulius is written "Eych", likely referring to Johan von Eich, who attended the Council of Basel as an ambassador of Albrecht V of Austria, befriending Piccolomini there, and later became bishop of Eichstätt. Above the name of Theobolus is written "Iacobus", perhaps a reference to Jacob Widerle, a chancery official. Above Dyophanes is written "offi". It is unclear to what this refers. If indeed these characters represented specific individuals in Piccolomini's life while he was at Nuremberg, it is probable that Charinus, at least, reflected a type of person with whom Piccolomini was familiar.

The surface level of the play puts it in the context of clerical life in the Quattrocento. Dyophanes and Theobolus then would represent the corruption of the clergy, which comes to the fore in their opening dialogue, in which they innumerate the various prurient advantages of their profession. Charinus seems to represent the

³⁴ JOCELYN 1989, pp. 102-103. Though he leaves in words such as *mina*, *talentum*, *pallium*, and *mu-raena*, which seem perhaps to be unique to ancient Greece or Rome, they were used in the Europe of Piccolomini's day. For *pallium* as the outer dress of a German aristocrat, see WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 344 (*Epist.* I, 1, 151); as the outer dress of a Florentine, see WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 439 (*Epist.* I, 1, 158); as the outer dress of Joseph, see WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 486 (*Epist.* I, 1, 166). For Greek wines, see WOLKAN, *Der Briefwechsel*, cit., p. 469 (*Epist.* I, 1, 166).

³⁵ JOCELYN, *op. cit.* (1989), pp. 222-226.

³⁶ See R.O. ALLSOP, *The Turkish Bath. Its Design and Construction*, London 1890, pp. 29-30; C. HEADLAM, *The Story of Nuremberg*, London 1901, p. 191.

³⁷ See JOCELYN, *op. cit.* (1989), p. 223.

³⁸ SANESI, *op. cit.* (1941), pp. 21-28.

pompous “learned” men at the Diet who did not actually understand what they professed. Piccolomini in effect was holding up a mirror to the problems of contemporary society as he saw it, blurring the lines between comedy and satire³⁹.

Charinus’ initial misrepresentation of Epicurean philosophy as unbridled hedonism belies both the hypocrisy and irrational nature of his character, which are revealed later in the play. He pursues pleasure, *voluptas*, which is the central tenant of Epicureanism, but seeks it without self-discipline and accepts it along with torture, an attitude in direct contrast to the self-control and elimination of pain that characterize true Epicureanism⁴⁰. As Boccuto and O’Brien rightly point out⁴¹, the parody of Epicureanism demonstrates not Piccolomini’s own misunderstanding of that philosophy⁴², but is rather his argument via absurdity against the contemporary equation of Epicureanism with hedonism and consequent condemnation thereof. I would add that his characters specifically represent the type of people and mindset that Piccolomini saw as problematic in clerical and religious life, namely that they espoused doctrines that they did not understand and therefore could not follow.

Some characters, like Charinus, do not understand what they say, resulting in hypocritical action. As seen earlier, the prostitutes repeat lines from Plautus without knowing the contexts and therefore inadvertently cast an aura of irony over their own statements. Cassina’s claims to innocence, “There is no woman of such small price who, if she admitted no guilt in herself, would not wish to retain her good name” (*Nulla tam parvi est mulier pretii / Que, si culpam in sese nullam admiserit, / Nomen non velit suum retinere bonum*, 549-551) and “May all the gods destroy me, unless I am truthful!” (*Dii me omnes, nisi sum veridica, perduint!* 570), are borrowed from two Plautine passages spoken by characters who were far from innocent: “No man who’s stained himself with guilt is so worthless that he wouldn’t be ashamed and wouldn’t apologize” (*qui homo culpam admisit in se, nullus tam parvi preti, / quom pudeat, quin purget sese, Aul.* 790-791) and “By Hercules! May all the gods destroy me!” (*Hercl istum di omnes perduint, Asin.* 467). The Plautine context indirectly reveals Cassina’s lack of innocence. Especially telling is another reference, this time to a Roman matron who does not know that she has committed adultery. Like Cassina, her words are, unbeknownst to the character, undermined by the allusive context. The contrast between the intended sincerity of Piccolomini’s characters and the duplicity of his Plautine sources infuses Piccolomini’s play with an ironic tone and underscores the hypocrisy of his characters, though it is a hypocrisy of which the characters themselves are unaware.

There are also characters who are hypocrites because they knowingly misappropriate lines. Lybiphanes is called “Cato”, by his friend Sedulius, setting him up as a sort of Stoic, rational character, “Why, rascal, do you come into a brothel to philosophize? The pimp, not Cato, speaks here (*Quid, malum, in fornicem venis / Philosophari? Leno hic, non Cato, loquitur*, 95-96)”. It quickly becomes clear, however, that Lybiphanes

³⁹ Cfr. RADCLIFFE-UMSTEAD, *Birth of Modern Comedy*, cit., p. 42. This satirical aspect further indicates the influence of the novella and also goliardic literature. After all, there are also abundant references to Juvenal throughout the *Chrysis*. See also PEROSA, *op. cit.* (1965), p. 185.

⁴⁰ See *Chrysis* 25-34; 67-75; 279-298; 334-486; 374-389; 391-392; 415; 529-541; 611-613; and 688-710.

⁴¹ See *Chrysis* 355-356.

⁴² For this view see MARIOTTI, *Sul testo*, cit., p. 120.

espouses such philosophical doctrine to immoral ends. His version of the Aristotelian mean is used to justify whoring: “I do not prohibit whoring, but rather too much whoring” (*Non veto scortari, sed scortari nimium*, 98). The abuse of the idea of moderation indicates an intentional misunderstanding and misapplication of moral philosophy. And later it is Lybiphanes who plays the role of a pimp – certainly not Cato – when he concocts a plan to reunite the prostitutes and their priests (418-439). The hypocrisy of Lybiphanes is not a product of ignorance, as it is for Charinus and the prostitutes, but rather of intentional misuse of maxims. Likewise, Archimenes in scene 13 mocks the misery of the priests and prostitutes whom he is trying to help, then resolves to take advantage of it. He begins by considering Lucretian ideas of pleasure, criticizing the foolishness of the lovers, priests, and prostitutes, but then himself decides hedonistically and maliciously to take advantage of the situation. These characters intentionally abuse philosophical ideas to justify their hypocrisy, undermining rather than bolstering morality via reason.

Archimenes’ closing exhortation of morality seems at first blush to be Piccolomini’s attempt to salvage some sort of moral from his comedy (*Chrysis* 806-812):

*Vosque iam valet et plaudite,
Spectatores optimi. Quid sibi fabula
Hec nunc velit, scitis. Nam virtutibus
Insudandum est; sint procul meretrices,
Lenones, parasiti, convivia.
Virtus omnibus rebus prestat; nihil
Illi deest, quem penes est virtus, viro.*

And now you bid farewell and applaud, best spectators. What this play now wishes for you, understand. For the virtuous ought to sweat; they should stay away from prostitutes, pimps, parasites, wild parties. Virtue excels all things; nothing is lacking for that man for whom there is virtue.

Archimenes concludes a play of sexual sins with the sentiment that prostitutes ought to be avoided, even though he has just aided in reuniting two prostitutes with their priests and indulged his own sexual impulses. Furthermore, he declares that one must sweat to be virtuous, though he himself (and the other characters) have been sweating from activities of a very different kind. But perhaps Piccolomini intended it to point up their espousal of a philosophy that they in fact simply do not understand. Combining Piccolomini’s ironizing allusions to Plautus and Lucretius, one can see that the author demonstrates a faulty system of morals in the society around him. Some fail to live morally and justify their failure by appealing to a distorted system of morality. Others simply do not understand moral philosophy and therefore fail to uphold a system based on it. If indeed the play points to a more wholesome conclusion, it would be in line with the drastic personal reform that took place shortly after *Chrysis* was written⁴³. The characterization of Charinus – and of

⁴³ See H.D. JOCELYN, *Three Less than Reverent Biblical Reminiscences in Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini’s “Chrysis”*, in C.E.J. GRIFFITH and R. HASTINGS (eds.), *The Cultural Heritage of the Italian Renaissance. Essays in Honour of T.J. Griffith*, Lampeter, Wales 1993, pp. 123-136, in particular, p. 136, for a contradicting sen-

other characters to varying degrees – as both philosopher and fool reveals how Piccolomini recognized problematic features in contemporary clerical and religious life. The *Chrysis* shows how stupid it is when one does not follow one's espoused doctrine. When one does not even understand the philosophy one recites and teaches, it is even more laughable.

ABSTRACT

La commedia *Chrysis* di Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Papa Pio II), a fronte di un background plautino, riecheggia Lucrezio, indicando non solo il debito dell'umanista nei confronti delle fonti classiche ma anche il suo brillante spirito nell'adattare un genere ad un altro allo scopo di commentare eventi contemporanei.

The comedy *Chrysis* of Enea Silvio Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, echoes Lucretius against a Plautine background, indicating not only the humanist's debt to classical sources but also his wry wit in adapting one genre in the midst of another for the purpose of commenting on contemporary events.

KEYWORDS: Piccolomini; Lucretius; Plautus; Reception; Genre.

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timent: «In 1444 Piccolomini still regarded the Church's literature with as much detachment as he did its moral teaching. Whether he suffered a genuine conversion during the next month or merely seized an opportunity to advance his career should remain an open question. Certainly, to look for a change in moral direction in the *Chrysis* seems misguided. The spirit of the comedy was thoroughly libertine».