Bromia’s *canticum* at *Amphitruo* 1053-1075 is a curious embellishment to an already strange comedy. What is the source for Bromia’s song? Is this element from Latin epic or drama? or perhaps a phlyax play? Is there a Greek prototype? or could this be a Plautine invention?

A summary of the elements found by surveying the fragments of Latin epic, drama, and vase paintings can be found in Zeph Stewart’s article. On the Latin side: Fraenkel dismisses epic influence for lack of evidence, but even so takes Sosia’s report of the battle against the Teloboae to represent the influence of Ennius. The most direct analogue in Bromia’s song comes from Latin drama. At line 1062 *strepitus, crepitus, sonitus, tonitus* recalls *strepitus, fremitus, clamor tonitruum*, from Pacuvius’s *Teucer*, or perhaps his *Telamon*. Phlyax vases reflect a tradition of farce which seems to be connected to this play, but perhaps the scenes once associated with the *Amphitruo*, may be more closely connected with the *Casina*. Although some of these possibilities

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2 E. Fraenkel, *Plautinisches in Plautus, Philologische Untersuchungen*, Heft 28 (Berlin 1922) 104: 2; see also Stewart, 362.


have more validity than others, nothing can be determined absolutely. There simply is not enough comparative material from fragments and vase paintings.

The Greek side has not been neglected. Wolf Steidle states emphatically that Bromia’s account of events within the house cannot be original, but that it must be borrowed from a Greek prototype.\(^5\) He argues that the radical change in intensity between the fourth and fifth acts of the Amphitruo results from a poor transition by Plautus from one original source to another.

Many of the Amphitruo’s elements do seem to be derived from tragedy. At line 59 Mercury calls the play tragicomoedia and again at 63: faciam sit, proinde ut dixi, tragicomoedia. Sosia’s speech at 203-262, which reports the events of a previous battle, parodies a tragic messenger’s speech.\(^6\) Robin Bond’s translation of the Amphitruo and the subsequent production play on the notion of tragicomedy as well.\(^7\) The last part of the Amphitruo imitates Euripides’ Bacchae.\(^8\) Additionally in notes to a student’s edition of the Amphitruo, when Bromia enters onto the stage at line 1053, she is introduced as:

... a comic burlesque of the tragic messenger; her language is an amusing blend of high-flown tragic diction and down-to-earth colloquialism.\(^9\)

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\(^6\) Robert C. Ketterer, ‘OMNIBUS ISDEM VORSIBUS: Sosia and Euripidean Battle Narrative’ (Paper delivered at the Eighty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South, April 1988 in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA).


\(^8\) Stewart 349.

In Thomas Cutt’s mind the point was clear, in case we as audience have any doubts. Indeed, certain components of Bromia’s song and the subsequent dialogue between Amphitruo and Bromia can be found in the crisis messenger speeches of Greek tragedy. My discussion focuses on how Bromia’s *canticum* and her dialogue with Amphitruo compare to the crisis messenger speeches of tragedy, specifically those in the *Bacchae*.

The *Bacchae* provides two examples of the crisis messenger speech: first the report of Dionysus himself after the earthquake and his epiphany, lines 604-641, and a later dialogue encompassing a speech with a concluding function, that of the attendant of Pentheus near the end of the play, lines 1024-1152. The whole exchange might be summarized as follows:

**Messenger—Death of Pentheus**

1. Address to chorus: 1024-1029
2. Crisis, death of Pentheus: 1030
3. Description of preliminaries: 1042-1087
4. Immediate aftermath, death & dismemberment: 1088-1147
5. Arrival of triumphant Agave announced: 1148-1152

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10 Irene J.F. de Jong, *Narrative in Drama: The Art of the Euripidean Messenger-speech*, Mnemosyne 116 (Leiden 1991) 121. My examples do not correspond precisely to de Jong’s BA 1, 677-774 & BA 2, 1043-1152; de Jong’s emphasis is on narrative and function within the narrative. My passages include both the exchange between the messenger and the chorus as well as the report of events off-stage. Of the first speech and exchange with the chorus de Jong classified lines 616-641 as a pseudo-messenger-speech, but the expanded passage does contain the elements of crisis messenger speeches. This exchange and speech do not meet her criteria, since the speaker, the stranger/Dionysus, is a major protagonist. She does consider the speech itself similar to a messenger speech however. I shall not consider her BA 1 as part of this analysis and example.

11 De Jong 123; App. A, 180-181. De Jong calls the complete section by the messenger, lines 1043-1152 (items 3-5), a *μηχανή μα* messenger speech, as it concludes and reports the results of an intrigue or *μηχανή μα.*
First at line 1024 the attendant or second messenger, who had accompanied Pentheus and Dionysus out to the mountain to see the bacchants in their secret rites, enters and addresses the chorus. Second at line 1030 after a very brief exchange (lines 1024-1029) the death of Pentheus is announced: Πενθεύς ὀλωλευν, παῖς Ἐξίονος πατρός. Third, in lines 1042-1087, the messenger gives a detailed description of the preliminaries: he describes the location and what several of the women were doing when the men arrived on the mountain; then he tells how the god bent down a tree for the king and placed him in it so that the king could see well; immediately after, the god disappears. In the fourth part his shout triggers the death of Pentheus: ἐπεκέλευσεν in 1088 and κελευσμὸν in 1089. The immediate aftermath is an explicit death and dismemberment scene which continues through line 1147. Finally, in lines 1148-1152, the messenger announces the triumphant arrival of Agave, and leaves the stage. She, most of all, will be affected by the death of Pentheus.

The first crisis messenger speech, which announces the freeing of Dionysus from his bonds, corresponds more closely than in the second to Stewart's observation that the last half of the Amphitruo particularly recalls the first half of the Bacchae.12 Bromia's name and appearance in the comedy of Plautus seems to recall that of Dionysus, or Bromius, as he is called twenty times in the Bacchae.13 Briefly:

Dionysus—Freedom from Bonds

1. Summons/Address to chorus: 604-607
2. Crisis/Divine intervention, freedom from bonds: 608-614
3. Description of preliminaries: 616-632
4. Immediate aftermath, Pentheus exhausted: 633-637

12 Stewart 349.
13 Stewart 351, n.9.
5. Arrival of Pentheus announced: 638-641

In lines 604-607, Dionysus summons the chorus, βδρβαροι γυναικεῖς, and tells them not to be afraid. Second, after an exchange with the chorus in lines 608-614 he announces at line 614 that he set himself free αὐτὸς ἐξέσως ἐμαυτὸν βαδίως ἀνευ πόνου—easily and without trouble. Next, in lines 616-632, Dionysus vividly details the preliminaries which have just transpired: Pentheus panting and sweating as he attacks the bull, the earthquake and fire at Semele’s tomb, and the appearance of Bromius. Fourth, the reaction of Pentheus to the freedom of Dionysus follows in lines 633-637; the king is completely exhausted after wrestling with the bull and rushing pointlessly about the courtyard after a phantasm. But he is not only exhausted; he is humiliated. The building has fallen to the ground, and Dionysus simply walks away not giving a thought about Pentheus. Finally in lines 638-641, Dionysus announces the arrival on stage of Pentheus, whose authority has been seriously compromised by the previous events.

Before examining the canticum and the dialogue in the Amphitruo, it might be useful to summarize the format of a crisis messenger speech in Greek tragedy. Episodes like the concluding speech of the attendant of Pentheus at the end of the Bacchae and the report of the palace miracles by Dionysus in the third scene follow a general pattern, which may be modified slightly as the situation requires: First, the messenger enters and summons the chorus. Second, in a brief exchange, he announces the crisis. Third, a detailed description of the preliminary events occurs. Fourth, the messenger then recounts the immediate aftermath. Finally, the scene concludes with another brief exchange between the messenger and the chorus in which he proclaims the arrival of the major characters most affected by the situation.

If, as the setting of the Amphitruo and her name suggests, Bromia’s canticum does recall features of the Bacchae, we would expect her report to contain elements of the typical crisis messenger speech, just as do those of Dionysus and the later
messenger in the Bacchae. Bromia, who has not appeared previously in the play, does come from the house, just as Dionysus/Bromius has come from the palace in the first crisis messenger speech. Her function is to describe and report the results of a μηχανήματα, just as the messenger/attendant does in the second crisis messenger speech in the Bacchae. Similarly to each, she describes the events which have transpired offstage. A few elements in Bromia’s Caniculum do follow the format of the crisis messenger speech. As is evident in his Bacchides expansion of Menander’s ΔΙΣ ΕΞΑΙΠΑΤΩΝ, however, Plautus exercises freedom in modifying his source material. This freedom appears here, although some changes in the dialogue could be attributed easily to a middle or new comedy source. For example, a variation such as the substitution of Amphitruo for the chorus could occur in any comedic parody of tragedy. Plautus is not responsible for every modification, but some Plautine inspiration is likely to occur. The components of the song and the dialogue following are perhaps Plautine adaptations of a speech ultimately derived from a crisis messenger speech of tragedy.

Two elements from crisis messenger speeches are present in the canticum proper:

Canticum Bromiae

3. Description of preliminaries: 1061
2. Crisis, miraculous birth: 1062-1071

When Bromia enters, as far as she is concerned, no one is present while Amphitruo is unconscious and she, in fact, does not see him until line 1072 sed quid hoc? quis hic est senex qui ante aedis nostras sic iacet? Thus, there is no exchange with a chorus nor with anyone else until the end of the song. The summons or address—i.e. the first feature of a crisis messenger speech, is replaced by her concern for her own survival and a catalogue of physical disruptions, lines 1053-1060. Both are standard comedic devices in Roman comedy as suggested by the words of the old maid Staphyla at the beginning of the Aulularia and the maid
Haliska appearing near the end of the Cistellaria. The third item, the preliminaries to the divine intervention, are shortened to one line at 1061 *ita eae meae hodie contigit. nam ubi parturit, deos [sibi] inuocat.* The crisis and divine intervention follows in lines 1062-1071—a thunderbolt and an extraordinary voice speaks while Alcmena gives birth miraculously:

**streptus, crepitus, sonitus, tonitus:** ut subito, ut prope, ut ualide tonuit!

ubi quisque institerat, concidit crepitum. ibi nescioquis maxum uoce ex clamat: 'Alcumena adest auxilium, ne time:
et tibi et tuis propitius caeli cultor aduenit.
exsurgite' inquit 'qui terrore meo occidistis prae metu.'

ut iacui, exsurgo. arderde censui aedis, ita tum confulgebant.
ibi me inicamat Alcumena; iam ea res me horrore adficit.
erilis praeuortit metus: accurro, ut sciscam quid uelit.
atque illam geminos filios pueros peperisse conspicor;
neque nostrum quisquam sensimus, quom peperit, neque proudimus.

The divinity is only heard, but the birth is silent and painless nonetheless. As in the Bacchae, the voice of the god is crucial. The order of the second and third elements of the crisis messenger speech, however, is reversed. Items 4 and 5 are missing as there is neither a description of the reactions to the birth (item 4) nor an announcement of the arrival of characters whom the birth would affect (item 5).

I suggest that the adaptation of the crisis messenger speech in Amphitruo immediately follows Bromia’s song. The subsequent dialogue repeats the contents of the song and expands it further. In addition, the dialogue contains all the elements of crisis messenger speeches:

**Dialogue, Bromia & Amphitruo:**

1. Summons/Address to Amphitruo: 1076
2. Crisis, birth: 1077-1090
3. Description of preliminaries: 1091-1124
4. Immediate aftermath, Amphitruo bustles: 1124-1129
5. Arrival of Jupiter announced: 1130

Once Bromia realizes that there is a body on the stage, the sequence begins. First, at line 1076, she physically as well as verbally summons Amphitruo—in place of a chorus. She says as she shakes him, Amphitruo. He responds astutely enough, perii. Bromia brusquely replies, surge, while Amphitruo groans, interii. Bromia takes no nonsense whatsoever, cedo manum, and finally Amphitruo reenters his realm of existence, quis me tenet? and the bandying begins. Second, in lines 1077-1090, a rather lengthy exchange follows in which we learn the names of the messenger in line 1077 tua Bromia ancilla and, at last in line 1087, the birth is announced Alcumena geminos peperit filios. Next, in lines 1091-1096, there is a brief set of preliminaries complete with a description of the symptoms of divine intervention—thunder and the house gleaming as if it were gold. This section is extended by lines 1096-1124 to include the miraculous birth and a whole series of wonders and marvels culminating in the uox clara of Jupiter, heard but not seen. Throughout, the tension of the description is relieved by Amphitruo’s constant interruptions at lines 1097, 1100, 1105, 1109, 1117, and 1121. The aftermath of the birth, however, is not described by the messenger, Bromia, as we would expect. Amphitruo himself picks up the fourth element; in lines 1124-1129 he describes what he plans to do as a result of the birth and intervention by Jupiter:

Pol me hau paenitet
si licet boni dimidium mihi diuidere cum Ioue.
abi domum, iube uasa pura actutum adornari mihi,
ut Iouis supremi multiis hostiis pacem expetam.
egi Teresiam coniectorem aduocabo et consulam
quid faciendum censeat; simul hanc rem ut facta est
eloquar.

Finally, in line 1130 he announces the arrival of Jupiter, sed quid hoc? quam ualide tonuit. di, opsecro uostram fidem.
Essentially all the elements of the crisis messenger speech are present in this parody. Moreover, the modifications in the Amphitruo allow Plautus both to suit his material to the conventions of Roman comedy and to recall several features of the Bacchae. The parody is elaborated in the first section by summoning Amphitruo physically as well as verbally. In the third section Plautus, and possibly his source, has great fun piling on event after event, multiplying miraculous moments. The change in speaker in the fourth and fifth sections from the messenger Bromia, to Amphitruo, allows Plautus to play with the Amphitruo-Jupiter doublet in this drama.

In tragic crisis messenger speeches the messenger describes how the crucial moment affects a character. In the Bacchae, for example, we are told how Agave relishes the glory of victory returning to Thebes as a mighty huntress with her trophy. Her arrival on stage is announced, and the audience can see the pride she has in her kill; they can hear her story and clearly see the results. In the dialogue with Cadmus, the audience watches and listens as the madness of the kill disappears; a realization of her actions, and their consequences, dawns. Similarly in this comedic dialogue, Amphitruo is enlightened, but he fusses afterwards. His bustling and desire to see the diviner Tiresias further recalls the Tiresias of the Bacchae. Amphitruo orders preparations for sacrifices, and he wants the seer Tiresias to be summoned—all to seek the favour of Jupiter. Throughout the play, however, Jupiter has been a doublet for Amphitruo. Hence, at line 1130, he announces his own arrival. In the final scene, which recalls the deus ex machina in the Bacchae, both Jupiter and Amphitruo are on stage. Plautus resolves the conflict of the doubles, and the audience can see and hear the results of the birth and divine intervention.

In conclusion, Bromia’s canticum contains a significant repetition. At line 1053, spes atque opes uitae meae iacent sepultae in pectore is echoed at the end of the speech in line 1074, sepultus quasi sit mortuos. In Plautus’ work repeated phrases or lines often suggest that the intervening vignette may be his own expansion of a scene. Although the repetition here is not exact,
the word *sepultus* is so singular that even Sedgwick felt obliged to comment at 1074.\textsuperscript{14} The idea is meant to be funny; the repetition emphasizes the humour in the situation.

Moreover, Plautus frequently includes a smug song or speech for a slave who appears on stage at the beginning of the final scenes of action. Examples include the soliloquy of Epidicus explaining what he plans to do, at *Epidicus*, 661-665; and *Bacchides*, lines 925-973, the long explication of Chrysalus as to how his plan to bilk old Nicobulus, rivals the epic events at Troy. Although Bromia does not manipulate subsequent developments in the *Amphitruo* but instead announces events which have transpired, the sequence of *canicum* followed by spoken dialogue further recalls the earlier situation in the *Bacchae*. A lyrical dialogue between the voice of Bromius offstage and the chorus, lines 576-603, precedes the actual crisis messenger speech in trochaic tetrameters, lines 604-641. Bromia's song allows Plautus to give a quick summary of what has happened in the house and to get in a few jokes—two catalogues and the alliterative line at 1062—before he continues with the adaptation of the crisis messenger speech. Plautus has no qualms about modifying a source, as he may have done here, to include jokes and slapstick routines when they work. Such expansions retain the spirit of the original but are adapted to his audience. Finally, this *canicum* captures the spirit of the whole play. Throughout the work, characters, especially Mercury and Jupiter, repeatedly recapitulate what has happened, both before and during the play. It is entirely in line, therefore, for this new messenger Bromia to state, then recapitulate and elaborate the events which have occurred offstage within the house during this *tragicomoedia*. Hence the song is a Plautine transition, and it contains elements of the parody of the crisis messenger speech which follows.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} W.B. Sedgwick (ed.) *Plautus AMPHITRUC* (Manchester 1960), *ad loc.*

\textsuperscript{15} Versions of this paper have been given at the CAMWS 87th Annual Meeting, April 1991 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and at the New Zealand Triennial Classics Conference, May 1993 in Christchurch, New Zealand. I am grateful to Robert Ketterer who read versions of this paper and made
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