

Plautine Corpus Revived: Metapoetics of Restaging in the *Casina*

Plautus' *Casina*, a play restaged (and possibly renamed) by a subsequent producer, exhibits elaborated imagery. G. F. Franko usefully divides it into four major groups: animal, including canine; fragrances, including herbal (cf. Connors); food, including wine; and military imagery. Franko provocatively ends his study by briefly observing: "This imagery is pervasive, interwoven, coherent, and meaningful. It provides ample testimony that Plautus, the poet with a barking name (34), was indeed one of the *flos poetarum* (18) and a purveyor of fine vintage plays (5-6) that defeated all rivals (17)."

For such a strongly metatheatrical play (Moore), these four metapoetic links would be fitting. But who wrote them? At least three of them belong to the part that mentions the play's revival, and is generally regarded as interpolated by a *retractator* (5-20 or 22; Abel; MacCary and Willcock). If we thus take these metaliterary references as the *retractator*'s contribution, the *Casina* prologue becomes the first known metapoetic reception of Plautus.

My basic thesis is that the revival producer of the *Casina* metaphorically identified this play with its eponymous heroine. Equation of *Casina* and the *Casina* would have many precedents: ancient authors routinely troped literature as a child and a woman. *Casina* is a girl abandoned and raised by foster-parents (45-6), an allegory which Aristophanes uses for another producer staging one of his plays (*Clouds*, 530-5). A related notion is the metaphor of giving birth to texts (Leitao), and the language of kinship found in Alexandrian catalogues of authentic and inauthentic works ('legitimate,' 'bastards;' Grafton). The *retractator*, I suggest, was familiar with the potential of this imagery. Renaming the play might be an additional expression of adopting the girl.

Similarly, poets such as Pindar, Old Attic comedians, Callimachus, and Latin elegists, conceived of poetry as a sexual partner, often a prostitute (Sommerstein; Hall; Myers). This tradition, I suggest, informs the *Casina*'s revival prologue. The audience is "keen on" (*expetere*, 12) Plautine plays, just like the slaves Chalinus and Olympio, in lieu of their masters, will be "keen" to marry Casina (*puellam expositiciam... uxorem expetunt*, 79-80). The spectators are "pleased" by old plays and old wine (*placere*, 8), while Casina the girl "grew mature enough to please men" (*adolevit ad eam aetatem, ut viris | placere posset*, 47-8), with *adolevit* possibly punning on the vintage 'aroma' (cf. *olent* 236, *subolet* 266, 277).

The revival prologue claims to presents an old Plautine play which the older members of the audience have already "tested" (*probastis*, 14), but the younger have not (15). This curiously coincides with the stage action, where the *senex amator* will try to obtain the brand new virgin bride before his son. The old man's proxy, Olympio, will strive but not succeed in having sex with Casina before the old man (cf. 882, 884, 890). The 'old' Plautine play (5-8) is analogous to the 'bride': Chalinus dressed as Casina complains that he is treated improperly for a "new bride" (*novae nuptae*, 1011; cf. 881)—which is only fitting since neither is he a bride, nor is the *Casina* a new play.

The analogy of old and young women and plays also significantly applies to money: new plays are more debased than new coins (*nummi novi*, 10). A seemingly unrelated advice to the audience not to worry about debts, lit. "someone else's money" (*alienum aes*, 23, if the text is sound) corresponds to using someone else's play: Plautus' original version. The triangle of women, poetry, and money, surfaces in the play's epilogue. Chalinus-Casina invites the audience to reward the *grex* duly for their "merits" (*meritis meritam mercedem dare*, 1015).

The effect of the polyptoton may be to evoke the noun *meretrix*: Chalinus, hired to play a female sexual partner, playfully alludes to the financial motivation of re-performing old plays.

Some of the above passages have not hitherto been interpreted as later interpolations. I end by discussing several possibilities.

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