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EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS

19 "Vested Interests" in Plautus' *Casina*: Cross-Dressing in Roman Comedy[†]

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Cross-dressing is a focal point at which the concerns of many contemporary fields of inquiry converge: gender studies, performance theory, gay/lesbian/bisexual studies, psychoanalysis, linguistics, anthropology, film theory, theater history and criticism, and feminism. In recent years, there has been intense interest in this subject, which calls into question the absolute binarism of male and female and highlights the potential biological, cultural, and psychological instabilities in the construction of gender.¹ Countless stories and anecdotes told by those exploring this theatrical and extra-theatrical act reveal its richness, complexity, and importance. I start with two dressing stories, each of which questions gender as a stable term. My essay will be concerned with the issues that these stories raise: gender and cross-dressing; the ways in which Plautus' *Casina* explores and defines these areas of debate; and the ways in which Roman comedy defines the construction of gender in ways similar to Roman elegy.²

One: Two small children stand in a museum, staring at a painting of Adam and Eve. One says to the other: "Which is the man and which is the lady?" The other child answers, "I can't tell—they don't have any clothes on."³

Two: A "womanless" beauty pageant is held annually in North Carolina to raise money for the fire and rescue departments. According to an account of this pageant, J. W., the deputy sheriff, was dressed in a "saucy little tangerine number with spike heels"; Ken, a school principal dressed in a tutu, performed a "hairy-chested rendi-

tion of *Swan Lake*." The male observers reportedly reacted with wild enthusiasm. Even more revealing than the actual costumes and talent events was the naively metatheatrical discussion that surrounded the pageant (a discussion that engaged the topics of sexual identity and ideology only accidentally). One wife worried that her husband was "enjoying dressing up a little too much." A group of gospel singers refused to perform for the pageant again because they did not want to appear to be endorsing "homosexual activity." Jeff, a fireman and fabric inspector at a local textile mill, said: "You have to be *very* sure of your masculinity to get up there and do that."⁴

The first story is a powerful piece of evidence for the social constructionist view of gender. The sex of Adam and Eve is not, for these youthful observers, based on their genitalia. These children recognize that gender might have more to do with outward appearance than with biological bodies, that gender is socially constructed, not simply determined by biology. The "womanless" beauty pageant is just the opposite: a story about cross-dressing that seems to show the importance of biology in determining how men and women think, dress, and feel. The men involved, both as participants and spectators, engage in cross-dressing as a way to gauge their degree of masculinity (perhaps without realizing the potentially disturbing effects). Their wives are more concerned than the men are about the ambiguities attendant on these activities and the possibly destabilizing effects of this annual homosocial acting-out on their heterosexual male identities. The gospel singers are more aware than anyone that this

⁴ *Wilmington (N.C.) Morning Star*, March 19, 1994. Cf. Irigaray 170–91 ("Women on the Market" or "Le marché des femmes,") esp. 170–72, where she discusses "the reign of hom(m)o-sexuality ("hom(m)o-sexualité")," an institution that uses women as a medium of exchange between men. This exchange ratifies the social bonds between men and thus carries a strong presumption of homosocial behavior, although not the actual practice of "hommo-sexuality." Irigaray says: "Reigning everywhere, although prohibited in practice, hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women, matter, or sign, and heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relationship with himself, of relations among men" (172).

There are countless other examples of such transvestite events. The Kate Kennedy pageant in St. Andrews, Scotland, is an all-male student festival reconstructing a piece of St. Andrews' history. Kate was reportedly the beautiful niece of a founder of St. Andrews University. Each year, an all-male contingent parades in costume, with Kate being acted by a male first-year student, a member of the elite Kate Kennedy club. The Mummer's Parade in Philadelphia, presented annually since 1901, features the spectacle of middle-aged men "prancing down Broad Street in spangles and feathered boas" (Epstein and Straub 1991b:1). Abissa, a celebration in Grand-Bassam, Ivory Coast, involves men dressed as full-breasted women and women dressed as men in neckties in a week-long celebration of loss of inhibition and revelation of truth (*New York Times*, November 3, 1995, A 4). We cannot, however, assume that all transvestite events serve the same cultural purpose. One common element in them, however, would seem to be the deep anxiety about human sexuality present cross-culturally, which is allowed to work itself out in a whole variety of different venues and circumstances. And, as we will see in Plautus' *Casina*, more than one goal can be accomplished in any one dramatic enactment of cross-dressing.

¹ Originally published in *Helios*, 25 (1998), 17–29.

² See Epstein and Straub 1991b: 2.

³ See also James' introduction and the essays of James and Janan in [James 1998].

⁴ Shapiro 248.

cross-dressing parade clearly calls socially-prescribed sexual identities into question.⁵

But the cross-dressing in this instance is not meant to destroy or confuse gender roles; quite the contrary, in its mockery of women's behavior and style, its intent seems to be to reconfirm both the traditional roles and attributes assigned to gender and, in the process, men's confidence in their superior position and power. Like such Greek rituals as the Bacchic rites, which allowed women in strictly controlled circumstances to "play the other,"⁶ or the male-to-female cross-dressing rites in the Oschophoria, in which two noble youths dressed in women's dress and carried grape clusters to the priestess of Athena Skiras in Phaleron,⁷ such boundary-crossing behavior serves to reinforce traditional roles rather than to question them institutionally. In these transvestive rituals, where someone always must play the role of the other in order to solidify the status and gender of the dominant male order, the Greeks used a controlled setting to try to ensure the rebirth of the perfect male. When cross-dressing was deployed in Greek initiation rituals, the effect was not meant to be seen as ambiguous, although the act itself indicated anxiety about those traditional roles. The act was a means of conjuring away the fear of just how unstable gender identities are.

The figure of Chalinus/Casina in Plautus' *Casina* reveals how practices such as drag and cross-dressing construct gender by undermining the notion of a coherently gendered self or of a stable identity that precedes the expression of an interest or point of view.⁸ Here we have a male actor (playing the male slave Chalinus) dressing up as Casina, the bride and a character after whom the play is named but who never appears on-stage except as played by Chalinus. The Chalinus/Casina figure interacts throughout with males and females in homosocial, homoerotic, heterosocial, and heteroerotic ways, creating gender slippage both within him/herself and between him/herself and the other characters.

⁵ On homosociality, see Irigaray 170–91; Sedgwick 1985: 1–15 *et passim*; Faderman (for women) 145–77 *et passim*.

⁶ For playing the other in Greek tragedy, a ritualized form, see Zeitlin 1996b: 341–74.

⁷ For the Oschophoria, see Ferguson 36–41, Simon 90–91. See also on cross-dressing in initiation rituals, Ackroyd 39–48, esp. 46; Rehm 13; Delcourt, chap. 1.

⁸ Drag and cross-dressing are not and should not be seen as synonymous. Performers in drag usually do not try to create an illusion or to make an attempt to mimic the behavior of the other gender in order to convince the audience of their authenticity. Their gender-switching is made transparent, and they call attention to the disparity between their off-stage and on-stage selves. Cross-dressers, especially if they practice cross-dressing for any sustained period and try to pass, make an effort to fit into their new gender and not to call attention to its performative aspects. See on this Bullough and Bullough, esp. 166–68, 226–52; Garber 90–91.

This cross-dressed Plautine character seems to question whether the terms *man* and *woman* can have any internal stability. The act of cross-dressing here, as elsewhere, represents genders as relational terms, social constructions that are created in the *practice* of relating to other people.⁹ Gender theorists, like Judith Butler, focus on the *production* of the seemingly foundational categories of identity ("the binary of sex, gender, the body," *Gender Trouble* viii) rather than accepting these categories as natural and inevitable. Butler (viii–ix) designates these traditional categories of identity as *effects* of practices and discourses rather than *origins* of them. For Butler, gender is an "ontological regime" (viii).

As the character Casina reveals, gender is something that is performed, that is, a matter of style, more a mode of presentation than a preexisting core identity. [. . .] When Casina performs her gender through dress, movement, gesture, and voice, the play of gendered symbols on the body creates, at least for the moment, an illusion of interior reality. But these performative acts make clear that this identity is a fabricated unity and that the reality projected is an illusion. Cross-dressing parodies the notion of gender, creating a temporarily unified picture of *man* or *woman*, while at the same time revealing the imitative, contingent, and heterogeneous nature of gender.

Any theatrical performance questions the supposition that the semiotics of gender is natural. When we see, for example, a cross-dressed performer in plays and movies like *Casina*, *Tootsie*, *Morocco* (with Marlene Dietrich), or *Hairspray* and *Female Trouble* (with Divine), we are seeing three genders represented: male, female, and a continually changing third gender. In *Hairspray*, for example, Divine moves back and forth from a clearly male character (Arvin) to a cross-dressed character named Edna Turnblad. Divine's Edna is in the business of producing gender at every moment. She is a mother, a slovenly housewife who spends her days ironing and trying to keep her daughter from wasting her life dancing along to a television dance show; she has long hair and wears dresses; but her physique and her contralto voice call constant attention to her fluid gender. In such a production, there is no question of believing the illusion that this is a female character; every dramatic device is calculated to call our attention to the fact that this is a cross-dressed performer. Similarly in

⁹ For discussions of the construction of gender, performance theory, and cross-dressing, see Butler 1990, esp. viii–ix, 128–41 and 1993, esp. 27–55, 93–119; Weston 1–21. See also on the social construction of gender, Foucault, Vol. 1; Halperin; Winkler. On the construction of sexuality, see Sedgwick 1985, esp. 1–20, and 1990, esp. 1–63.

the *Casina*, Plautus keeps us constantly aware that gender is being performed (by Chalinus/Casina and also by other characters).

As Marjorie Garber points out in *Vested Interests*, the cross-dresser is not a “third sex” or “third term,” indeed, not a term or a sex at all, but rather a “space of possibility,” which is defined only by what it does not do. This space of possibility does not belong to either of the two traditional genders.¹⁰ In this sense, it is a mistake to be influenced by gender binarism into trying to assimilate this figure to one pole or the other and thus to erase it. Rather, we should treat this third figure as a “disruptive act of putting into question” (Garber 13), which interrupts the text, reconfigures other relationships, and complicates identities previously considered stable (as Chalinus/Casina does). The power of the cross-dresser lies in his or her blurred identity, in the very act of his/her cross-dressing, not in either of his/her gendered identities (Garber 6).

One of Plautus’ aims in the *Casina* seems to be to parody the notion of a primary gender identity. There are in this play many possible layers of dissonance between gender and sex, sex and performance, and gender and performance.¹¹ Such a performance may point up the distinction between the anatomy of the performer (which itself is not a stable point of reference) and the gender that is being performed, or between the gender identity of the performer and the gender performance. Acts such as Chalinus’/Casina’s cross-dressing can be a deliberate attempt to disconcert the audience by denaturalizing gender through strategic mimicry. These acts mock both the performative model of gender and the idea of a true gender identity.

In the Roman theater of Plautus, theatrical performances operated under particular cultural conditions. First, since all the roles were acted by men, every actor who played the part of a woman was already a cross-dresser. Therefore, a distinction must be made between non-illusionary and illusionary cross-dressers, those who call attention to their performance as women and those who do not. Second, every aspect of the ancient theater was dominated by males. All the actors were male, the normative part of the audience was male, and all the writers of drama were male. Women were all but effaced on the ancient stage by the men who appropriated their roles, clothing, and dramatic power but could reject the actual conditions

¹⁰ Garber 9–13. Luce Irigaray’s description of women as the “sex which is not one” similarly portrays women as an unrepresentable, undesignatable, multiple third term not belonging to either of the two traditionally-defined sexes (1985: 23–33).

¹¹ Butler 1990: 137.

of being a woman.¹² Femininity was for them a mask, which they could put on or take off. As Mary Russo says, “To put on femininity with a vengeance suggests the power of taking it off” (224). In many contemporary forms of experimental theater, the feminine spectacle is subjected to the male gaze,¹³ but in the ancient theater, the audience knew that a male figure (man or boy) lurked beneath every alluring female character; thus the illusion of a consistent female character was never unbroken.

On Plautus’ stage, then, there was never a sustained female figure to receive the gaze. *Casina* did not exist, even for a dramatic moment. To complicate matters further, the gender of the ancient male viewer was equally open to question. If we accept a Foucauldian—or even a modified Foucauldian—view, gender is socially constructed. Roman men could slip in and out of women’s roles because their own sexuality and gender were fluid. Their masculinity was a function of their behavior in particular situations and with specific partners; it was not dissociable from their sexual preferences for active versus passive roles.¹⁴ A male viewer then might have been seen as “masculine” if he was the active member of a male–male relationship or if he was part of a male–female relationship, but “feminine” (*mollis*) if he was a passive member of a male–male relationship (*a cinaedus*).

The posture of such a male viewer opposite the cross-dresser Chalinus in Plautus’ *Casina*, then, would be complex. *Casina*/Chalinus is presented in a highly self-aware way as a fully overdetermined masculinized character (by the end at least) so that a Roman male viewer might vicariously interact with this character in one of several ways. This hypothetical viewer might participate with *Casina*’s male side (Chalinus) in a homosocial bonding; might take a passive, cinaedic pose opposite the aggressive, male posturing of the Chalinus/*Casina* character; or might even for a time adopt the posture of the ideal Roman male opposite *Casina*, the speechless and demure bride. The slippage from one gender performance to another depends both on how the characters on-stage are represented and on the focalizing of the viewer him- or herself.¹⁵

The ontological and epistemological uncertainty engendered by

¹² See Dolan 7. On the implications of male actors playing female roles in the Greek theater, see Rabinowitz 1998.

¹³ See Straub 143.

¹⁴ For a discussion and modification of the Foucauldian position and an examination of the *cinaedus*, see Richlin 1993. For a pro-Foucauldian view, see Halperin and Winkler.

¹⁵ See Bassi 3–22. She points out that “bodies viewed theatrically communicate ontological and epistemological uncertainty” (3). She discusses this in the context of the Greek theater, but this statement is equally applicable to Roman comedy.

theatrical bodies is increased by the further complicating factors of class and gender in the makeup of the audience as well as the characters on-stage. Slave males, who were always forced to take a passive role, would have reacted quite differently to the antics on-stage surrounding Chalinus, Olympio, and Lysidamus than would free males (who were not permitted to take the passive role if they wanted free status). Female viewers, who also took passive roles of varying degrees depending upon their class and status, would have had yet a different perspective on the dramatic action. Plautus brings the perspectives of these non-free, male groups to the forefront of our interpretation of the play when he highlights their interactions with the slave Chalinus as they make their own comedy out of both free and slave male sexual access to Casina.

In order to examine some of the possible effects of "Casina's" performance on the audience, in particular the predominantly and normatively Roman male audience, I would like to turn to the extraordinary transvestite wedding scene, which, when coupled with the homoeroticism among the three main male characters, makes the *Casina* unique in the Plautine corpus.¹⁶ In the play, Lysidamus, the main character, a "bisexual" lecher, has conceived a plan to have sex with Casina, his ward who was adopted in childhood and raised as a daughter by Lysidamus and his wife Cleostrata. His plan is for his slave Olympio to marry Casina and become a surrogate for his master, who will then enjoy the *ius primae noctis*. Cleostrata, Lysidamus' wife, knows about the plan and proposes in turn that her slave Chalinus marry Casina. A lot-drawing is held (thus the name of Diphilus' original version, the *Klêroumenoi*), with much manoeuvring and abuse on each side. Olympio and his master Lysidamus win. Cleostrata and her maid Pardalisca then set out to humiliate Lysidamus. Pardalisca enacts a mock-tragic scene in which she describes the bride Casina in the house, mad and brandishing two knives meant for Lysidamus and Olympio. Lysidamus, both terrified and titillated, pursues his goal hungrily; the false marriage takes place with Chalinus dressed as the bride Casina. Olympio is beaten up by Casina/Chalinus, and Lysidamus claims to

¹⁶ For an examination of such a combination of elements in Plautus or in his sources, see Cody. Atellan farce comes the closest to having the combination of transvestism, weddings, and homoeroticism, but there is no parallel for the character of Lysidamus, who is not effeminate but rather is both homo- and heteroerotic because of an excess of lust. There are, however, many examples of epicene creatures such as Casina throughout literature, from Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae* to Ben Jonson's *Epicene*. Several interesting seventeenth-century pamphlets focus on masculinized females or feminized males. Three published in 1620 were entitled *Hic Mulier, or the Man-Woman; Haec Vir, or the Womanish Man; and Muld Sacke, or the Apologie of the Mulier*; for a discussion, see Wright 465–507.

Cleostrata (who is enjoying the spectacle) that he himself has lost his *pallium* (cloak) in the sexual violence of a Bacchic orgy.¹⁷ The play ends with Lysidamus' repentance and Cleostrata's ungracious forgiveness. Only in the epilogue do we discover that Casina is indeed the freeborn daughter of the next-door neighbors and that she will be duly wedded to Euthynicus, the son of Lysidamus and Cleostrata. This detail, however, is not central to the plot of Plautus' play.

Casina is the main character, after whom the play is named, but, oddly, she never appears in the play in her own person. "She" is instead presented through the eyes and mouths of other characters in many guises, and her identity is entirely determined by them. Despite, or because of, her existential lack in the play, she casts a long shadow over virtually every scene, providing a convenient vehicle through which Plautus can negotiate the central issues in the play: border crossings, the paradoxes of gender identification, and the resistance of marginalized, hidden, and silent characters (women and slaves). Casina herself (if "self" can be used as an operative term here) is doubly marginalized and potentially transgressive, since both her sex (female) and her status (slave) ascribe to her the passivity and fluidity often predicated of women.¹⁸

Casina is made physically present by the dressing up of the actor who plays the slave Chalinus and then brings Casina to life through his performance of her. She is also present in the imagination of Lysidamus, who breathes life into his version of her with erotic imaginings and longings (II.3, II.7), and in Pardalisca's vivid description of the Casina within wielding knives and threatening death and destruction to her would-be husbands (III.5). In each reconfiguration, the gaze of the actor, and its verbal representation, are important, and each character breathes into Casina his or her own desires and fears. To the lusty old goat Lysidamus, an overdetermined male character who fears his wife and other potentially harmful women, Casina is erotic and desirable but also dangerous (II.3, 7). Through the language of Pardalisca, the wild panther-lady, feisty, rebellious, and on the unstable margins of her sex (female) and class (slave), Casina is

¹⁷ Lysidamus' free status is properly observed; only Olympio, the slave, is beaten up by Casina/Chalinus. Physical attacks by slaves on free *senes* [old men] never occur in Roman drama. See Arnott, forthcoming. The reference here to the *Bacchae* has been taken as a topical reference to the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*, which banned the worship of Bacchus in 186 BCE; if so, this would date the play and make it one of the last plays of Plautus, who died in 184 BCE. On this see MacCary 1975: 459–63; Hallett 1996: 410–11.

¹⁸ See Sissa, who "shows how the Aristotelian discourse concerning the female body is conducted around a polarity of 'more' and 'less,' so that the female is conceptualized, not as different from the male, but as a diminution of the male form" (Arthur-Katz 172).

masculinized, aggressive, wonderfully dangerous and exotic (III.5). To Olympio, himself a slave but male and able to see only from an erotically-aroused male focal point, Casina is fearsome, inscrutable, incomprehensible, and an impossible hybrid of sexual characteristics (V.2). Chalinus is the most interesting focalizer, being himself male and a slave, but identified in the play solely with the women. He is or becomes Casina and so sees her from the inside, and he is the only male who knows the secret of Casina. Never was a character both more and less present than Casina; never was a character's gender so constructed.

Whereas many depictions of cross-dressing orchestrate the play of gendered symbols on the body's exterior to create the illusion of an interior reality, Plautus uses cross-dressing on the stage with quite a different purpose in mind. We know—as do all the characters in the play except Olympio, Alcesimus, and Lysidamus—that Casina is a male character playing a female, but at no point in the play are we ever allowed to feel comfortable with the identification of Casina's gender.¹⁹ Chalinus plays her at first as demure, submissive, and cooperative—every Roman man's ideal bride—(IV.4), but the stage has already been set for her gender instability in scene III.5, where Pardalisca describes her as a fury rampaging with two swords within the house.²⁰

Shortly after Casina's appearance as the demure bride, she stomps on Olympio's foot and elbows him in the chest; Olympio describes her here as an elephant (*luca bos*, 846) and a battering ram (*pectus micit non cubito, verum ariete*, 849). By the time Olympio tries to rape the bride, she has become, through his eyes, a hodge-podge of genitalia, something both confusing and tantalizing for Olympio. When he reaches under her dress, he discovers there an object that he cannot identify because he thinks that Casina is female (V.2). He is unable to identify "Casina's" penis because he is limited by his prior assump-

¹⁹ Cf. the remark in the prologue (81–86) that Casina will not commit any *stuprum* ("lewd act") in this comedy, but once the play is done, she will be sexually available to anyone for a fee. Since the character Casina does not ever appear in the play and her double is played by a male actor, this opening joke must have been intended to signal the sexual availability of the male actor playing the role and to encourage among the male members of the audience (free and slave, active and passive) a lecherous male gaze mirroring the gazes of Lysidamus and Olympio.

²⁰ The metamorphosis of the demure, appealing bride into a shrewish, aggressive, or violent woman (or a man) is a popular theme in later literature and opera. Cf. Ben Jonson's *Epicene, or The Silent Woman* (where the "bride" turns out to be a boy) and Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* (where Norina/Sofronia first masquerades as a demure woman recently released from a nunnery, content with only her sewing, but then turns into a violent and unfaithful wife so that she might obtain a "divorce" from Pasquale [to whom she was never really married] and marry his nephew and heir, Ernesto).

tions about "Casina's" sex. He gropes for a simile to describe this foreign object: a sword hilt? (no, there is no sword, and it is not cold enough); a horseradish? a cucumber? (no, but something fully grown, 908–12).

Meanwhile, Olympio professes his profound embarrassment at his continuing inability to decipher this gender confusion: Pard.: "Then it's only fair you confess the whole thing. . . . What happened inside? What did Casina do? Was she obedient enough for you?" Ol.: "It's so embarrassing!" (*pudet dicere*, 897). Pard.: "Tell the whole thing in order, the way you started to." Ol.: "Oh, it's so embarrassing!" (*pudet hercle*, 900). Pard.: "What did you find?" Ol.: "Oh, the most enormous thing . . ." Pard.: "Do go on." Ol.: "But it's so embarrassing!" (*at pudet*, 911).²¹

The confusion of sexes is foregrounded throughout these tease scenes, in which both the audience and the characters are led on: the bridal gown, the demeanor, and the name identify Casina as a woman, but the rough behavior, the swords, the bearded lips (929), and the sword hilt-shaped genitalia all mark her as a man. Pardalisca, who is a partner to the joke from the start and orchestrates the wedding scene, sums up Olympio's and Lysidamus' gender troubles when she exclaims as the new bride enters: *iam oboluit Casinus procul* ("The scent of the male Casina has preceded him," 814).²²

This gender switching reflects other confusions which we find in this play, a typical Plautine feature: role-doubling (Chalinus/Casina, Lysidamus/Olympio as the two bridegrooms, Olympio/"Casina" as the objects of Lysidamus' desire²³) and the hybrid Greek and Roman wedding.²⁴ Further underscoring the confusion of Casina's gender is the blurring of other categories besides gender: age, class and status, sexuality, animal/human, lover/beloved, inside/outside. So, for example, Lysidamus, the free aristocratic master of Olympio and Chalinus, becomes at various moments the slave of (or to) his slave Olympio (III.6), to his wife Cleostrata (V.3), and to love (III.6), and he refers to himself as a *liber* [free man] when his wife disappears inside, leaving him to romp at will with his *corculum* [darling] (835–37).

Another and visual manifestation of the instability of identities is the

²¹ The translation used here is by Tatum [1983]. *Morigera*, the word used by Pardalisca in line 896 to describe Casina, is a standard term for a submissive wife, but it hardly suits Casina's behavior here. See MacCary and Willcock 199; Williams 19.

²² The speaker here is unclear; it could be Chalinus himself. See the discussion in MacCary and Willcock 186–87.

²³ See on this Cody, esp. 455–56.

²⁴ See MacCary and Willcock 188; Williams 16–29.

use of costumes and props, signs that help not only to heighten the hilarious confusions but also to mark transformations of characters as they glide from one role and status to another. So, Lysidamus' cane, a marker of his age and authority, becomes in turns a sword and a club (weapons aimed both at himself and at others) and a phallus. When Lysidamus is at his weakest and most vulnerable, he loses his staff (975), but, at the end, when Cleostrata reluctantly reinstates him to his place of authority in the household, she orders Chalinus to return it (*redde huic scipionem et pallium* [give this man back his cane and cloak], 1009).

Such blurring of identities, roles, and props is a common element in Plautus' plays, but the crossed-dressed, same-sex wedding scene is not. The standard Plautine upheavals here serve to highlight and contextualize the unusual confusion on which the entire plot hinges and to focus our attention on the figure of Chalinus/Casina, the always present but always absent eponymous character. Casina's identity, however, is never for a moment in doubt to the audience or to the "female" characters on stage—only to the obtuse male characters, Olympio, Lysidamus, and Alcesimus. The women seem to be in charge throughout. They engineer their own plot within the plot (860–61), and they alone are aware of Casina's true identity. They hold both genital and authorial power over the development of the play.

Unlike certain cross-dressers in other times and cultures who fully take on another identity at least for the duration of a performance, Chalinus and Plautus constantly remind us with self-conscious gestures, props, costumes, and language that this "she" (Casina) is a he. Plautus does everything to make clear "Casina's" true dramatic identity. Chalinus/Casina never really become a specularized female body for the audience as did, for example, Margaret Woffington, the famed eighteenth-century cross-dresser.²⁵ Chalinus' appeal is to men, both on- and off-stage. His main role on-stage is to create a homosocial bond between the master and slave, Lysidamus and Olympio, by acting the woman who is traded off between them.²⁶ Thus Lysidamus calls Olympio *meus socius, compar, commaritus* ("my ally, my equal, my fellow hubby bridegroom," 797).

²⁵ For a description of Woffington's effect on her audience, see Straub 144–45. She quotes a page of Woffington's 1760 memoir, which reports: "Females were equally well pleased with her acting as the Men were, but could not persuade themselves that it was a Woman that acted the Character."

²⁶ See Rabinowitz 1993 for a discussion of this use of the female in Greek tragedy. See also Irigaray 170–72. This trading of Chalinus/Casina between Olympio and Lysidamus nicely illustrates Irigaray's definition of "hom(m)o-sexuality," but the situation in the *Casina* is doubly complicated because the "woman" who is being traded here between men is really a man himself.

But there is also an explicitly homoerotic relationship both between the fellow bridegrooms (II.8, III.6) and between Olympio and Chalinus/Casina (V.2), which is packaged for the pleasure of the audience in a much more alluring way than any of the female or pseudo-female characters are.²⁷ In these various roles, Chalinus/Casina would have reinforced the traditional and unambiguous ideal of the dominance of men over women and slaves. But more to the point, Chalinus/Casina, a hypermalleable character, would also have undercut this ideal by doubling the ontological uncertainty that is always already present in theatrical settings.

Chalinus/Casina was there to set the traditional male Roman viewer on edge, to manipulate his sexuality, and to offer a choice of sexual posture to the male viewer along the male–male or male–female continuum. This viewer might first have bonded with Lysidamus and Olympio, taking an aggressive male over female posture as Lysidamus and Olympio traded the female "prize," fought against the phalanx of women opposing them, and swelled with desire for Casina.²⁸ The viewer would also have had a choice of taking the role of the pederast or aggressive male partner, associating himself with Lysidamus trying to rape Olympio (II.8), or of pathic *cinaedus*, becoming one with Olympio in that same scene or with Casina/Chalinus when Olympio is trying to rape her/him (V.2).²⁹ His worst fears might have been realized if he found himself in the thoroughly emasculated position of Olympio in V.2 or Lysidamus (*passim*). In such a posture, the viewer has fallen: from the aggressive male in a male–female relationship to aggressive partner in a male–male relationship to pathic partner in a male–male relationship to the degraded position of woman in a male–female relationship.³⁰

Thus, in the figure of Casina and in other ambiguous figures in the *Casina*,³¹ Plautus calls attention to the conditional nature of virility. This kind of figure posed a potential threat to the dominant, public form of masculinity and featured the disturbing specter of a castrating female. Cleostrata and Chalinus use their respective attributes of

²⁷ For a complete analysis of the homosexual scenes in the *Casina*, see Cody.

²⁸ This bonding is already set up in the prologue; see note 19.

²⁹ For a discussion of sexuality in Roman literature, see Richlin 1992, esp. 220–26.

³⁰ One could argue that the position of pathic and woman are equally degraded. It is not clear whether male pederasts in Rome would have been considered as lesser than the active partner in a male–female relationship, but there is some evidence that aggressive male pederasts were despised. See Richlin 1992: 221.

³¹ E.g., Cleostrata, who shifts back and forth from aggressive, dominant shrew to obedient wife. Her mythological comparanda, Juno, is a perfect analogue for Cleostrata (II.3, II.6), being both female goddess and subject to Jupiter's power but also frequently subversive, uncooperative, and aggressive towards her husband. As Anderson 180 remarks, Cleostrata is one of Plautus' "rogue-females."

anatomy and status to humiliate the dominant free male, Lysidamus. Lysidamus is reduced to slave-like status, both by his wife Cleostrata and by Cleostrata's slave Chalinus.

Both Chalinus, a slave, and Cleostrata, a woman, are given dramatic, and possibly even social, agency by the playwright, who allows them to intimidate and humiliate the free *senex* and to guide the action up until the very end.³² The characters representing the most powerless groups (slaves and women) rule the action and are even granted authorial direction (see Myrrhina's comment in lines 860–61). On the other hand, at the very end of the play, the male prerogative of sexual and social domination seems to be reaffirmed. Cleostrata's revenge depends partly on a borrowed phallus.³³ Lysidamus abandons his pathetic status, receives again his emblems of power (cloak and staff, 1009) and recovers his role of husband; he then reconciles with his wife, who undergoes a transition from *irata* [angry] to *lepidior* [more delightful] (1007–08).

Plautus' recuperative strategies seem here to allow him to resolve the situation at the end in favor of the normative heterosexual, male-dominant model. The cross-dresser's true dramatic nature is revealed, a heterosexual marriage is announced, slaves remain slaves, and free remain free. The "women" in the play, the only characters to understand the joke and the ones who claim to be masterminding the plot (V.1), also drop their cross-dressed roles and the audience comes to know them as the men they really are. The cross-dressing in the *Casina* seems to have been sanctioned play for men.³⁴ The audience would have seen that only the men cross-dressed and played the other. For women to take on male roles would have been too dangerous and unsettling, but men were able simultaneously to absorb and appropriate the powers ascribed to women, return to their normal place in society, and lose little or nothing of their masculinity in the process.³⁵ The adoption of female clothing, gestures, and voice—if indeed this happened—was "at once a revelation of weakness hidden in strength and a chance for strength to circumscribe the feminine contained within it."³⁶

³² See Hallett 1996: 423, who says that the older women in the *Casina*—Cleostrata, Myrrhina, and Pardaliska—are the most attractive, sympathetic, moral characters and assume Plautus' function of playmaker. She even suggests that Plautus might have acted the role of Cleostrata. See also Slater 126–45 and Hallett 1993: 24–26 for the suggestion that Plautus either closely identified with his character Pseudolus (Slater) or perhaps even acted the role (Hallett).

³³ See Annalisa Rei, "Gender, Status, and Comic Justice in the Comedies of Plautus," unpublished paper delivered at the American Philological Association, December, 1994.

³⁴ See Russo 216.

³⁵ On this see Loraux.

³⁶ Loraux 39.

But the Plautine resolution within the play itself is not where the story ends. The highlighting of strong, attractive, female characters throughout the play must give us pause, as should the assigning of authorial hegemony to these women. Plautus seems to be reassuring the free males in the audience that social and political control had been restored to Lysidamus while also reminding them that literary control of dramatic action can rest with individuals who represent the powerless groups (slaves, women, non-citizens).

Furthermore, the crepuscular effects of the play must have continued long after the play was over, after the performative acts on the stage had been viewed by, transmitted to, and absorbed by the spectators. The ontological and/or epistemological uncertainty,³⁷ which is generated by theatrical performance and which allowed the viewers to engage in role-switching throughout the play, was present both in the bodies on-stage and in the spectating bodies, and these spectating bodies would have left the theater full of the ambiguities that Plautus presents.

[. . .] Plautus' playing with gender, class, and other traditionally-established categories was quite possibly an attempt to disrupt and to question the formalized, hierarchical gender divisions that existed in Roman families,³⁸ to replace the plots of his Greek predecessors with his own scenes of "domestic anarchy,"³⁹ and to extend the performative ambiguities from on-stage to off-stage.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Bassi 3.

³⁸ Bullough and Bullough point out that "as gender divisions became more formalized . . . gender impersonation became a staple of the stage" (226). This is applied here to the nineteenth century, but could equally well be said of Plautus' time.

³⁹ Anderson 180. See also Joyce Penniston, "*Occisissimus Sum Omnium Qui Vivont: Death, Metatheatre, and Coherence in Plautus' Casina*," unpublished paper delivered at the American Philological Association meeting, December, 1993. She maintains that Plautus eliminated the Greek recognition and betrothal scenes in his play and thus focuses on the ruin of Lysidamus, which becomes the play's climax. The relationship of Plautus' *Casina* to Diphilus' *Klêroumenoi* is far from certain. Plautus makes clear in the prologue that he has both used and reworked his model, but the details are unclear. Plautus says that he eliminated the role of the son (64–66), and he perhaps indicates other deletions in lines 1005–06. Various scholars have pointed to the inclusion of homoerotic and transvestite motifs, the episodic plot, and oddities in the prologue and epilogue as unusual or unique in Plautine comedy and have surmised a source in Greek comedy (e.g., Diphilus) or in native Italian drama (Atellan farce or Phlyakes). For discussions, see Ladewig 179–205, 537–40, who posits a mixture of Diphilus with other sources including Atellan farce; see also Cody, who has a good discussion of previous work and postulates (475–76) that Plautus took the transvestite ceremony from Diphilus but cut off the ending including the recognition scene and added other elements—obscenity, farce, homoeroticism—thus placing his emphasis on role-reversal and social upheaval rather than on romance and recognition. See too MacCary 1973; MacCary and Willcock 36–38 n. 2, 188; O'Bryhim; and Arnott, who adds Aristophanes as another possible influence on Plautus.

⁴⁰ For role-playing in real life, see Goffman.

I would like to thank Judith Hallett and Paul Allen Miller for their perceptive and helpful comments on this essay.

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20 The Hippocratic "Airs, Waters, Places" on Cross-Dressing Eunuchs: "Natural" yet also "Divine"[†]

ELINOR LIEBER

In the ancient Greek world the medical practitioner was considered as a craftsman who worked for the good of the public (*δημοουργός*).¹ As such many were peripatetic: travelling to every part of this realm which, by the fifth century BC, extended from North Africa to the east of the Black Sea. In the Hippocratic *Περὶ ἀέρων* (PA)² the author lays down the principles whereby such a physician might obtain prior knowledge of the sickness endemic to any place. In this way he could familiarise himself with the prevailing situation as soon as possible after arrival (PA I–II).

To this end it was essential to determine the local customs (*νόμοι*) and way of life (*δίαίτια*) (including the dietary habits), as well as the many "natural" factors with which they were linked: particularly the climate and its seasonal changes (PA I–II). For, according to the author, these all affect the "seed" (*γόνος*) of each individual and hence the physical "form" (*εἶδος*) and the "nature" (*φύσις*) with which he is born

¹ Originally published in R. Wittern and P. Pellegrin (eds), *Hippokratische Medizin und antike Philosophie: Verhandlungen der VIII. Internationalen Hippokraties-Kolloquiums in Kloster Banz/Staffelstein vom 23. bis 28. September 1993* (Hildesheim 1993), 451–76.

I am indebted to Professor G. Strohmaier of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, for allowing me to see and use part of the draft of his unpublished translation of Galen's *Commentary on PA* (for which I am thus unable to provide page references), and also for drawing my attention to G. Harig's outstanding medical commentary on PA. I must also thank Dr. Stephanie West, Hertford College, Oxford, for her valuable comments and advice.

² This category excludes the "academic" physicians, see Aristotle, *Politics* 1282a 3–5. For the still earlier "healer", see Homer, *Odyssey* XVII 383ff.

³ E. Littré, *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, 10 vols., (Paris 1839–1861) (= L.) II 1–93 L.; H. Diller ed. and tr., *Hippocratis De Aere Aquis Locis: Hippocrates Über die Umwelt*, CMG I 1, 2 (Berlin 1970) (= D.). The translations below are my own.