

THE PROLOGUE OF PLAUTUS' *TRINUMMUS*

Abstract: It is disputed how much, if anything, of the prologue of Plautus' *Trinummus* derives from Philemon's *Thesaurus*. Wilamowitz's verdict that it is entirely Plautus' creation has convinced many scholars, but others see a resemblance to Eur. H.F. 833–874 as an indication that at least a nucleus of the Latin prologue derives from Philemon. It is here argued that Wilamowitz's thesis is supported by Merc. 929 ff., where it is probable that Plautus was inspired by Eur. H.F. 943 ff., whether in the original or in a Latin version. It is further argued that Plautus' introduction of Luxuria as prologue-speaker supports and is supported by a not generally accepted hypothesis of Lehmann that Plautus introduced or at least exaggerated *luxuria* as a facet of Lesbonicus' character.

Keywords: Plautus, prologue, Philemon, *Hercules Furens*

The principal speaker of the prologue attached to Plautus' *Trinummus* is the personified Luxuria, "Licentiousness". She is accompanied by her daughter Inopia, "Want", who speaks a single line and is then sent into a stage-house which will turn out to be that occupied by the young man Lesbonicus.<sup>1</sup> The prologue thus represents allegorically the state of impoverishment which has resulted from Lesbonicus' past extravagance (13 *is rem paternam me aditricem perdidit*). It is an unusual prologue in two respects. First, Luxuria provides only minimal information about the background of the plot (12 f.) and nothing that is not revealed in the following dialogue between Megaronides and Callicles. She explicitly declines to do more, 16 f. *sed de argumento ne expectetis fabulae: senes qui huc venient, i rem vobis aperient*. Although dramatically effective in visually representing a key theme of the play, this prologue performs no necessary function. All other extant divine prologues, such as those spoken by Tyche and Agnoia in Menander's *Aspis* and *Perikeiromene*, or by the Lar and Arcturus in Plautus' *Aulularia* and *Rudens*, contribute to the exposition, including that of Pan in Menander's *Dyskolos*, which, not containing an *anagnorisis*, does

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1) However it was represented, the *posticulum* (194) clearly had a door opening on to the stage; cf. R. L. Hunter, Philemon, Plautus and the Trinummus, *MusHelv* 37, 1980, 217 f.

not actually need a divine prologue. Secondly, the miniature dialogue between Luxuria and Inopia in 1–2 has no parallel in other prologues. These unusual features prompt the question whether Plautus has inherited them from his Greek model, the *Thesaurus* of Philemon (18 f.), or, as has seemed more likely to a number of scholars, they result from alterations by Plautus to his Greek model.

A certain resemblance to Euripides, H.F. 833–874, where Iris sends Lyssa into the house of Heracles, has encouraged the inference that the action of Trin. 1–3 derives from Plautus' Greek model and that the *Thesaurus* had a prologue spoken by a pair of divine figures, most likely Tryphe and Aporia.<sup>2</sup> The inference is not inevitable however. Plautus' powers of invention should not be underestimated. New Comedy provided plenty of precedents for a prologue spoken by a god or other super-human being and Plautus must have been familiar with them. It is well established that he could use Greek motifs in passages of his own invention.<sup>3</sup> In fact the *Trinummus* prologue differs from the Euripides passage in significant respects. The allegorical entry of Lyssa into the house of Heracles foreshadows the hero's future madness; the entry of Inopia into the house of Lesbonicus merely underlines the young man's already existing financial straits and is strictly speaking anachronistic. This distinction, noted by Wilamowitz,<sup>4</sup> has been played down as pedantic<sup>5</sup> but it at least weakens the case for supposing the motif derived from Philemon. Others have stressed the comic / ironic tone of the Plautine prologue,<sup>6</sup> or have seen in the personification of

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2) W. Frantz, *De comoediae atticae prologis*, diss. Aug. Trev. 1891, 57; F. Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*, Berlin <sup>2</sup>1912, 202; P.E. Legrand, *Daos: tableau de la comédie grecque pendant la période dite nouvelle*, Lyon / Paris 1910, 509; T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*, Manchester <sup>2</sup>1970, 140; F. Stoessl, *Prologos*, RE XXIII.2 (1959) 2401; G. Hertel, *Die Allegorie von Reichtum und Armut*, Nürnberg 1969, 45–48; E. Fantham, *Philemon's Thesaurus as a Dramatisation of Peripatetic Ethics*, *Hermes* 105, 1977, 407 f.; Hunter (as n. 1) 216–227.

3) Cf. e.g. E. Fraenkel, *Plautinisches im Plautus*, Berlin 1922, 59–100, 130–140; id., *Plautine Elements in Plautus*, Oxford 2007, 45–71, 89–95; N. Zagagi, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus*, Göttingen 1980, 105. In the prologue of the *Mercator* the play with a Greek dramatic convention (1–8) is probably a Plautine addition; cf. E. Lefèvre, *Plautus und Philemon*, Tübingen 1995, 21 f.; J. C. B. Lowe, *Notes on Plautus' Mercator*, *WSt* 114, 2001, 144–148.

4) U. von Wilamowitz, *Menander: Das Schiedsgericht*, Berlin 1925, 148.

5) Webster (as n. 2) 140.

6) K. Abel, *Die Plautusprologe*, diss. Frankfurt 1955, 23; R. Raffaelli, *Narratore e narrazione nei prologhi di Plauto: i prologhi pronunziati da divinità e l'an-*

inanimate objects which is a feature of Plautine style the precursor of the personification of an abstract idea as a speaking character.<sup>7</sup>

Some scholars who suppose that the *Thesaurus* had a prologue spoken by Tryphe nevertheless postulate other Plautine changes. To explain the lack of exposition in Luxuria's speech it has been suggested that Plautus pruned it of expository information contained in a monologue by Tryphe<sup>8</sup> or a dialogue between two divinities.<sup>9</sup> Since, however, the following scene contains all the exposition necessary, in default of any indications that Plautus has transferred exposition to this scene from Philemon's prologue, this hypothesis is not very attractive. To explain the unusual miniature dialogue between Luxuria and Inopia Benz<sup>10</sup> and Lefèvre<sup>11</sup> suppose the figure of Inopia Plautus' invention; and her essentially visual role is indeed comparable with the dumb show of the prisoners in the prologue of the *Captivi*, which was probably introduced by Plautus.<sup>12</sup> But if Inopia is a Plautine addition, little, if anything, of Luxuria's speech can derive from Philemon, since it presupposes the presence of Inopia, and if the content of her speech does not derive from Philemon there is no cogent reason to attribute the speaker to the Greek dramatist. Everything points to the solution

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tiprologo» del *Trinummus*, in: C. Questa / R. Raffaelli (edd.), *Maschere Prologhi Naufragi nella commedia plautina*, Bari 1984, 78–80 = R. Raffaelli, *Esercizi plautini*, Urbino 2009, 28–31; Lefèvre (as n. 3) 88; E. Hollmann, *Die plautinischen Prologe und ihre Funktion*, Berlin 2016, 32 f. Leo (as n. 2) 202 supposed Plautus' prologue cruder than Philemon's.

7) G. Petrone, *Personificazioni e insiemi allegorici nelle commedie di Plauto*, in: G. Moretti / A. Bonandini (edd.), *Persona ficta: la personificazione allegorica nella cultura antica fra letteratura, retorica e iconografia*, Trento 2012, 130–133.

8) Fantham (as n. 2) 408 “perhaps truncated”, Hunter (as n. 1) 226. Lefèvre (as n. 3) 41 also postulates for the *Thesaurus* an expository prologue by Tryphe, holding it necessary for the *anagnorisis* play he believes the *Thesaurus* to have been before Plautus rewrote it; but his bold reconstruction of the plot of the *Thesaurus* is highly speculative and very improbable.

9) Stoessl (as n. 2) 2401.

10) L. Benz, *Megarionides Censorius – Eine anticononische Konzeption im plautinischen Trinummus?*, in: J. Blänsdorf (ed.), *Theater und Gesellschaft im Imperium Romanum*, Tübingen 1990, 64.

11) Lefèvre (as n. 3) 88, followed by F. Hurka, *Die beiden προλογίζοντες der Cistellaria*, in: R. Hartkamp / F. Hurka (edd.), *Studien zu Plautus' Cistellaria*, Tübingen, 2004, 41.

12) G. Jachmann, *Plautinisches und Attisches*, Berlin 1931, 168 n.3; Abel (as n. 6) 51; K. Gaiser, *Zur Eigenart der römischen Komödie*, ANRW I.2, 1972, 1050; J. C. B. Lowe, *Prisoners, Guards and Chains in Plautus, Captivi*, *AJP* 112, 1991, 29–38.

proposed by Wilamowitz and widely but by no means universally accepted, that both *Luxuria* and *Inopia* are Plautine introductions: "Sie sagen über die Fabel nichts, nichts was von Philemon stammen könnte, sind also nur für Plautus da."<sup>13</sup>

Wilamowitz's thesis can be further supported. It may not be pure coincidence that Plautus' *Mercator* contains a link to the same Euripidean play. Leo<sup>14</sup> and others have plausibly seen Charinus' imaginary journey in *Merc.* 929 ff. as inspired by the raving Hercules' imaginary journey described in *H.F.* 943 ff. It has usually been assumed that in that passage Plautus is following his Greek model, Philemon's *Emporos*, and that Philemon was parodying Euripides.<sup>15</sup> The passage has, however, almost certainly been at least greatly expanded by Plautus, and the motif can at least as well be attributed to Plautus.<sup>16</sup> This provides some support for the hypothesis that Plautus was familiar with the *Hercules Furens*, whether in Greek or in a Latin adaptation, and borrowed another motif from it to use in the *Trinummus* as a sort of parody of the conventional divine prologue.

Further confirmation of Wilamowitz's conclusion is provided by consideration of the connection of the prologue of the *Trinummus* to the play itself. The figure of *Luxuria* prepares for the depiction in the play of *Lesbonicus* as a typically dissolute *adulescens amans*. E. R. Lehmann,<sup>17</sup> however, has persuasively argued that Plautus significantly altered the characterisation of *Lesbonicus*, turning him into the type of the dissolute young man who has wasted his money on amorous adventures, whereas his counterpart in the *Thesauros* was more like the Aristotelian ἄσωτος<sup>18</sup> and his

13) Wilamowitz (as n. 4) 148. So J. Brix / M. Niemeyer / F. Conrad, *Ausgewählte Komödien des T. Maccius Plautus I. Trinummus*, Leipzig / Berlin 1931, 38; Jachmann (as n. 12) 242; A. Körte, *Philemon* 7, *RE* XIX.2 (1938) 2142 f.; Abel (as n. 6) 20–23; E. Fraenkel, *Elementi Plautini in Plauto*, Firenze, 1960, 434; id., *Plautine Elements* (as n. 3) 419; J. P. Stein, *Morality in Plautus' Trinummus*, *ClassBull* 47, 1970, 7.

14) Leo (as n. 2) 37 f.

15) E. g. Webster (as n. 2) 133; Fantham, *Mania e medicina nei Menaechmi e in altri testi*, in: R. Raffaelli / A. Tontini (edd.), *Lecturae plautinae Sarsinates X. Menaechmi*, Urbino 2007, 36–38.

16) E. Stärk, *Die Menaechmi des Plautus und kein griechisches Original*, Tübingen, 1989, 105 f.; Lefèvre (as n. 3) 38 f.

17) E. R. Lehmann, *Der Verschwender und der Geizige*, *Gymnasium* 67, 1960, 77–83.

18) *Eth. Nic.* 1121a.

main fault excessive generosity to friends, a feature which is still a less emphasized part of Lesbonicus' problem in the Latin play (333, 425–431). Lehmann's thesis has not been generally accepted but is strongly supported by Gaiser<sup>19</sup> and I believe is essentially right. There are many references in the Latin play to love as the main cause of Lesbonicus' impoverishment: 131 *amanti homini adulescenti, animi inpoti*, 648 *praeoptavisti amorem tuom uti virtuti praeponeres*, 651 *in foro operam amicis da, ne in lecto amicae, ut solitus es*, 658 *vi Veneris vincitus, otio [c]aptus in fraudem incidi*, 666–668 *scio te sponte non tuapte errasse, sed amorem tibi pectus opscurasse . . .*, 751 *pleno amoris ac lasciviae*. None, however, is specific. Moreover, when in 406–431 the slave Stasimus recounts how the proceeds of selling the family house have been spent, expenditure on luxurious living, including prostitutes, is considerably exceeded by what was spent repaying a banker's loan on behalf of a friend. Lehmann's hypothesis that Plautus introduced, or at least greatly expanded, the love-motif is more plausible than that of Leo that Lesbonicus' counterpart in the *Thesauros* was involved with a particular *amica* and that Plautus completely eliminated her from the Latin play.<sup>20</sup> The postulated Plautine changes are in line with his predilection for the world of the *meretrix* as an aspect of *pergraecari*. Love is also the theme of the typically Plautine inflated *canticum* delivered by Lysiteles in 223–275. It is generally accepted that Plautus has at least expanded this *canticum* and introduced some typically Roman ideas.<sup>21</sup> Whereas, however, it is usually assumed that the *canticum* replaced a monologue of the *Thesauros*, it is more likely entirely Plautus' invention. In the first place, that Lysiteles should debate with himself whether to follow the path of *amor* or of *res* (230) bears no relation to his actual behaviour in the play.<sup>22</sup> It has to be interpreted, against its natural sense, as referring obliquely to Lesbonicus' enslavement to love. Secondly, Lysiteles' *canticum* is associated with a problem of staging: it is implied by Philto's entrance-line 276 that he is following his son from a stage-

19) Gaiser (as n. 12) 1097 f.; contra Fantham (as n. 2) 408 f., Hunter (as n. 1) 225 n. 62.

20) F. Leo, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, Berlin 1913, 117. Leo made too much of the singular *amorem* (648 etc.). So also Lefèvre (as n. 3) 80.

21) Zagagi (as n. 3) 90–104.

22) E. Burck, *Amor bei Plautus und Properz*, *Arktos* 1, 1954, 32–60 = *Vom Menschenbild in der römischen Literatur*, Heidelberg 1966, 45–66.

house, whereas elsewhere in the play it is implied that their house is off stage.<sup>23</sup> The probable explanation of this discrepancy is that in the Greek play the house was off stage, in accordance with the New Comedy norm that only two private houses are represented on stage, and that Plautus moved it on stage so that Lysiteles could enter in advance of his father and deliver his solo set-piece.<sup>24</sup>

If Lehmann is right about the characterisation of the young man in the *Thesauros*, Philemon's young man was not guilty of *luxuria* and there was no place for Tryphe as a prologue speaker.<sup>25</sup> Plautus' invention of the prologue speaker Luxuria can thus be seen as cohering with his recharacterisation of Lesbonicus. The statement in 8 f. that Plautus gave Luxuria and Inopia their names, if not conclusive, at least fits well with the hypothesis that they are his creation. The hypotheses of Wilamowitz and Lehmann support each other, providing a comprehensive and economical explanation of peculiarities both of the prologue and of the play itself. The possibility cannot altogether be ruled out that the *Thesauros* had a quite different prologue which Plautus replaced with his own. A divine prologue could have underlined the strong ethical dimension of the plot, like Pan in Menander's *Dyskolos* or Arcturus in Plautus' *Rudens*. There is no positive evidence, however, for such a prologue. It seems more likely that there was none and that the essential exposition was provided by an opening dialogue between the two old men, which was reproduced relatively faithfully by Plautus.<sup>26</sup>

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23) Hunter (as n. 1) 218.

24) J. C. B. Lowe, The Third Stage-house in Plautus and Terence, *Hermes* 144, 2016, 174–176. To the list of plays in which the Latin dramatist has added a third stage-house should be added Terence, *Andria*; cf. *And.* 712 *huc*, 957 *proviso* and the stage-directions of P. Brown, *Terence: the Comedies*, Oxford 2006, 10, 38.

25) Fantham (as n. 2) 409 recognised the incompatibility of Lehmann's hypothesis with acceptance of the Greek origin of Luxuria as prologue-speaker but adhered to the latter position.

26) That does not exclude some Plautine expansion, particularly the joking at the expense of wives in 42–66 and the generalised moralising before Megadorus finally comes to the point; cf. Lefèvre (as n. 3) 88–94. The attempt of Lefèvre, however, to attribute to Plautus the whole role of Megadorus is unconvincing. More plausibly the detailed analysis of Megadorus' entrance-monologue by J. Blänsdorf, *Archaische Gedankengänge in den Komödien des Plautus*, Wiesbaden 1967, 150 f., 203–205, shows how Plautine style can have transformed a Greek substratum.