

of Paulus, who is really Sardana. Querulus, who has been listening the whole time, emerges and pleads with them to give him access to Paulus.

SCENE IV (the house where Sardana is staying, then the house of Querulus): Gnatho and Clinia lead Querulus to Paulus. Querulus does not recognize that the soothsayer is Sardana, who pretending to speak from divine inspiration, states that Querulus's ill fate has been caused by an unlucky swelling in the ground of his house, where stands the old altar of the Lar. Sardana claims to have the power to exorcise the house.

Sardana is led by Querulus to his house in order to work his charm. Sardana orders a hole to be dug. Gnatho and Clinia assist. The pot is brought out and removed from the house.

Afterwards, Sardana meets up with Gnatho and Clinia to open the pot. However, when they see that the pot has a funerary inscription written on it, they are afraid of tampering with it. (The inscription, of course, was devised by Euclio to protect his gold.) Sardana decides that it is better to avoid a curse and to throw the pot back into Querulus's house. When the pot is tossed back into the house, however, it breaks into smithereens and the gold coins pour out!

SCENE V (at the house of Querulus): Pantolabus, the servant in charge of the rear of the house, calls Querulus to find the returned pot with the gold spilled out. Meanwhile, Sardana, looking through a crack in the wall of the house, sees what he has lost. Clinia and Gnatho begin to argue with him—it was Sardana's idea to return the pot.

Querulus hears the commotion and comes out. Sardana admits that he knew about the gold in the pot but decided to return it to its rightful owner. Querulus does not recognize Sardana (who is still made up as Paulus). Sardana claims that through fraud he has proven his loyalty to Querulus.

SCENE VI (at the house of Querulus): An Arbiter arrives to settle the matter. He judges in favour of Sardana—his fraudless fraud has benefited Querulus. Sardana's false faith has brought profit and the quarrels are at an end.

King's College London  
History Department  
Advanced Latin Group

# *Amulvaria*

(The Pot of Gold)

by Vitalis of Blois  
(French, Twelfth Century)

a dramatised reading

Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup>  
6.30 pm  
King's College Chapel  
Reception follows



## The Cast

### Argument

JACQUELINE GLOMSKI

### Vitalis

RICHARD CASSIDY

### Querulus

BENJAMIN WILD

### Lar

MARIGOLD WACE

### Euclio

MICHAEL CLASBY

### Sardana

ANNE ROBBINS

### Gnatho

MARTIN BOOTH

### Clinia

MARGARET COOMBE (KCL Classics)

### Pantolabus

JENNY WALSH

### Arbiter

STUART MORGAN (UCL History)

### Direction

LIISA SMITH (KCL / RADA)

The performance is based on the original Latin text edited by Ferruccio Bertini (*Commedie latine del xii e xiii secolo*, I, Genova, 1976) and the translation by Alison Goddard Elliott (*Seven Medieval Latin Comedies*, New York, 1984).

Many thanks to the King's College History Department, especially to Arthur Burns and Laura Clayton, as well as to our PhD student assistants, and to the KCL Dean's Office for use of the Chapel.

## Plot Summary

The ARGUMENT (plot) is given in English. In the PROLOGUE, Vitalis, the narrator, explains that he has adapted his play from the ancient Roman writer Plautus, hinting that he has improved on Plautus.

SCENE I (at the house of Querulus): Angered by fate, Querulus blames the authors of his ill-omened name. According to the Platonic school, says Querulus, he is destined to be wretched by necessity. He complains that the gods give no help in return for being worshipped, especially the Lar, who although he tries to alleviate Querulus's fate, is chased from his house.

SCENE II (in a country far away, then near Querulus's town): Querulus's father, Euclio, who has spent many years abroad, is now approaching death. He calls his faithful servant, Sardana, to him. Sardana hovers close to him, not out of affection, but because he hopes to cheat him. Euclio discloses a life-long secret—he has hidden a pot of gold back in the family house where Querulus now lives, in the corner where stands the altar of the Lar. The pot contains 1000 talents and Euclio has decided, in the end, that his ungrateful and foolish son Querulus should inherit it. Euclio grants Sardana his freedom, calling him 'Paulus'. For his role in revealing the existence and location of the pot to Querulus, Euclio tells Sardana to take 10 talents for himself.

Euclio dies and Sardana leaves the funeral early so that he can plan to cheat Querulus of his inheritance. Sardana disguises himself, dressing in new clothes (he robbed his master's corpse to buy them), and he summons his friends Gnatho and Clinia to assist him in his plot. They decide that they can gain entrance to Querulus's house and wrest the pot from him by having Sardana pose as a soothsayer who will tell Querulus that the pot is bad luck.

SCENE III (at the house of Querulus): Gnatho and Clinia take separate routes to Querulus's street. Gnatho arrives first and talking to himself, sings the praises of the soothsayer who has come to town. Querulus listens behind his half-opened door. Clinia arrives to lend assistance to Gnatho's ruse. He argues with Gnatho to convince him to tell him about the soothsayer. Gnatho gives in and describes the wonderful knowledge



## Notes on *Aulularia*

**Twelfth-century Renaissance** — classical culture assimilated and transformed into something new, something wholly medieval. *Aulularia* — classical plot as a vehicle for satirizing the medieval philosophical schools. Meant for a well-educated, sophisticated audience. Verges on the satiric. Strong element of the 'complaint'— influence of Ovid. Connection with the old French *fabliaux*. In the Middle Ages, satire was considered a form of comedy. *Aulularia* can be viewed as mime. Medieval theoreticians considered the elegiac couplet appropriate to 'comedy'. (It is even doubtful that medieval writers could imitate the complicated meters of Plautus and Terence.) *Aulularia* can be assigned to the period c. 1140–1170, by which date the first Latin religious drama had developed.

Did professional actors perform these Latin works (as mimes)? Only the reader needed to know Latin well; the mimes did not, or they needed to know only enough to pick up their cues. Should professional performers have been lacking, many clerics, even ordained priests, appear to have been sufficiently familiar with dramatic techniques to engage in amateur theatricals. Some of the Latin 'comedies', therefore, were intended to be presented, not merely read, for the entertainment of audiences composed of clerics, students, or courtiers. The Latin texts have survived because of their clever use of rhetoric, their debt to classical authors, and their parody of the schools endeared them to those with the means of preservation at their disposal, the clerical scribes.

**Vitalis of Blois** — from the Loire valley in France. Little more known about him than his name. Probably a cleric. From the mid-twelfth century, his works were read in the schools, and cited in the *florilegia* and in the writings of other authors. From such references to him, and from the style of language and motifs that he employs in his works, we should infer that Vitalis lived and wrote in the first half of the twelfth century. Indeed, his two plays *Geta* and *Aulularia* seem to have been composed during the period 1125–1145. All the allusions and references in them — in *Aulularia*, particularly, the parody of doctrine of Bernard Silvester (d. 1160?) and William of Conches (1080–c. 1145) — would have had contemporary significance, and their comic character, as in all satire, would have gone quickly out of date.

Vitalis is superior to many other poets of his age in that he wrote in a correct, elegant, and clear Latin, which, in *Aulularia*, especially, has the capacity to transform rhetorical artifice, through the use of irony, into a pleasant brand of humour. However, his verse is based on late-antique and medieval Latin metrical treatises, which allowed for much poetic licence. Although he is considered a learned writer for his times, Vitalis' verse itself contains many metrical errors.

***Aulularia*** — second comedy composed by Vitalis of Blois. Had already composed *Geta*, which seems to have been more popular; at least 60 manuscripts of *Geta* survive, while only two, plus a fragment, of *Aulularia* do. *Aulularia* was probably composed prior to 1145; its model was not Plautus's play, but an anonymous fourth-/fifth-century reworking, called *Querolus* (cf. Bertini, below)

Vitalis followed the late antique model closely, but shortened the play, modifying the names and functions of some of the characters, added philosophical elements to the dialogue, and formed it into a narrative version, writing in a Latin completely different from that of his model. The work cannot be considered genuine drama (because of the overabundance of narrative lines), but this does not preclude the possibility of a mimed performance the eavesdropping scene (ll. 383 ff.) (missing from the original *Querolus*) suggests this possibility strongly.

The text of *Aulularia* is full of philosophical 'in-jokes', having to do with the physical and astronomical sciences, as represented by such works as *Hexaemeron* of Thierry of Chartres, the



*De mundi universitate sive Megacosmus et Microcosmus* of Bernard Silvester, and the *Philosophia mundi* of William of Conches. The satire here appears to be aimed at the school of Chartres. Much of the wit of *Aulularia* derives from the elevated language of the philosophical schools being put in the mouth of fools and slaves who predictably bungle the complex terminology. The work is also full of quotations from classical authorities. To hear fools mangle them or use them inappropriately must have appealed to a medieval audience.

*Aulularia* is free of the sexual humour that enlivens the other medieval Latin comedies and it is the only one of the comedies in which no female character appears (the late-antique *Querolus* had already discarded the Plautine love plot).

The oldest manuscript of *Aulularia* dates from the twelfth century (*Lambacensis 100*) and is now housed in the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek*. The only complete manuscript of the play, dating most likely from the fifteenth century, is in the *Bibliothèque municipale* of Douai [*Duacensis 371 (ex 461)*]. *Aulularia* was first printed in 1595 by Hieronymus Commelinus at Heidelberg.

Bertini, Ferruccio, ed. *Commedie latine del XII e XIII secolo*. Vol. 1. Sassari, 1976.

Elliot, Alison Goddard, ed. *Seven Medieval Latin Comedies*. New York, 1984.

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