Scholars have remarked that the *Clizia* (circa 1525) is, in an oxymoronic fashion, an original rewriting of Plautus’s *Casina*. Indeed, in both plays, the plot and the behavior of the characters are similar. But important features of the *Clizia* nonetheless display unmistakable attributes that are in fact of a kind with what can be found in Niccolò Machiavelli’s non-fiction, such as *The Prince* and *The Discourses on Livy* (both published posthumously). Imitating the classics, then, is “not necessarily evidence of lack of creativity, as it is often alleged, but a viable approach to creating new works of art.”

The segretario at once rediscovered and simultaneously created a *sui generis* political theory that deployed the author’s knowledge of the ancient world and his own political, professional, and social experience as the basis for the creation of a set of guidelines for the new rulers of his time. From this perspective, one can convincingly argue that Machiavelli’s political and philosophical view of the world also “left other traces of itself” for us to unearth in his fiction, especially as particular works describe the behaviors of individuals large and small in his beloved Florence. Along these lines, and because Machiavelli

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1 See Salvatore Di Maria, “Nicomaco and Sofronia: Fortune and Desire in Machiavelli’s *Clizia*. *Sixteenth Century Journal*. 14, 2 (1983): 201–213. Di Maria provides us with a very detailed summary of the various verdicts of Machiavelli’s critics on the *Clizia*. Di Maria tells us that “Luigi Russo was one of the first critics to rescue *Clizia* from the imputation of mediocrity by pointing out major differences between the *Casina* and the *Clizia*,” 201. Plautus himself based the *Casina* on an earlier play by the Greek Diphilus. See Timothy J. Moore, *The Theater of Plautus: Playing to the Audience* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

2 Salvatore Di Maria, “From Prose to Stage: Machiavelli’s *Mandragola*.” *MLN* 121 (2006): 130–153, 130. Di Maria’s essay explores Boccaccio’s tale of Catella and Ricciardo as inspiration for *La Mandragola*. Di Maria goes in detail over the ways in which Machiavelli’s characters adopted and/or changed Boccaccio’s “cornice.”


4 Gallagher and Greenblatt explain that what moves New Historicism is “tracking the social energies that circulate very broadly through a culture, flowing back and forth
believed that individuals were responsible for half of their destinies, we shall see in the *Clizia* that the author deployed and revised Plautus’s text, refashioning it into a set of guidelines that underscored the political and social vicissitudes of the Florentines of his day. In particular, Machiavelli presented Nicomaco, the play’s protagonist, as a negative exemplum of a “ruler-prince” who fails to negotiate well with others and therefore suffers the consequences.

Like Plautus’s Lysidamus, Machiavelli’s Nicomaco is swept away in the *Clizia* by the alluring youth of an ephemeral girl and so enters into a battle with his wife from which he hopes to emerge victorious so that his sexual fantasies may come true. The distinctiveness in the battles between these two plays, however, is noteworthy. In the political “war” between Plautus’s Lysidamus and his wife Cleostrata, the two rivals learn early on (and in detail) about each other’s strategic plans, and so the struggle between them ends up being portrayed in a very straightforward fashion. By contrast, Nicomaco and his wife Sofronia both have hidden agendas in the *Clizia* and do not show their hands while they stage their own “war” to see who can outdo the other. Their battles, however, take place in the domestic realm, “‘behind the scenes,’ in private, in order to maintain her husband’s good name and social position” for the outside public.

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between margins and center, passing from zones designated as art to zones apparently indifferent or hostile to art, pressing up from below to transform exalted spheres and down from on high to colonize the low,” 13.

5 Lysidamus and Cleostrata compete to see whether Casina will marry Olympio, backed by Lysidamus, or Chalinus, who is supported by Cleostrata and her son. Cleostrata is a very strong woman who refuses to let her husband have his way in the affair of their maid, Casina. All quotations are from *Plautus: The Comedies Volume I. Complete Roman Drama in translation*. Ed. David R. Slavitt and Palmer Bovie (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

CLEOSTRATA: ...Why are you stuttering? And why are you so mad about this match?
LYSIDAMUS: Why, I’d like to see her go to a worthy servant instead of a rascal.
CLEOSTRATA: Supposing I persuade Olympio as a personal favor to let Chalinus have her?
LYSIDAMUS: And supposing I persuade Chalinus to give her to Olympio? (Aside) Which, I believe, I may just be able to do.
CLEOSTRATA: It’s a deal. Shall I call out Chalinus for you? You work on him, while I deal with Olympio.
LYSIDAMUS: Good idea!
CLEOSTRATA: He’s on his way. Then we’ll see which of us is more persuasive, (II.3).

6 Catherine H. Zuckert, “Fortune is a Woman—But So Is Prudence.” *Feminist