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0521651409 - Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession

Edited by Pat Easterling and Edith Hall

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## GREEK AND ROMAN ACTORS

This collection of twenty essays examines the art, the profession and the idea of the actor in Greek and Roman antiquity, and has been commissioned and arranged to cast as much interdisciplinary and transhistorical light as possible on these elusive but fascinating ancient professionals. It covers a chronological span from the sixth century BC to Byzantium (and even beyond to the way that ancient actors have influenced the arts from the Renaissance to the twentieth century) and stresses the enormous geographical range of ancient actors. Some essays focus on particular themes, such as the evidence for women actors or the impact of acting on the presentation of suicide in literature; others offer completely new evidence, such as graffiti relating to actors in Asia Minor; others ask new questions, such as what subjective experience can be reconstructed for the ancient actor. There are numerous illustrations and all Greek and Latin passages are translated.

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# GREEK AND ROMAN ACTORS

*Aspects of an Ancient Profession*

EDITED BY

PAT EASTERLING

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AND

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521651400](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521651400)

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First published 2002

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN-13 978-0-521-65140-0 hardback  
ISBN-10 0-521-65140-9 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2005

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## *Preface*

One of the most exciting developments within Classics over the last twenty-five years has been the rediscovery of the important truth that many of the masterpieces of ancient literature were originally designed to be appreciated not by isolated individual readers but by spectators grouped at performances. Scholars have been casting off the prejudices against the performative dimension of ancient literature which they inherited from Plato, the Christian fathers and (for different reasons) Aristotle. Interest in the ways in which arenas and modes of performance conditioned the forms taken by literary texts has penetrated even to the study of oratory, epic and choral lyric: recent publications have demonstrated the extent to which ancient authors were creating words whose meaning had to be realised and transmitted through the voices and physical movements of performers – orators, rhapsodes, chorus-members.<sup>1</sup> Dramatic texts, most of all, demand to be interpreted as scripts for players, which can show in often surprising detail how meaning was articulated and mediated through theatrical performance.

Alongside this growing interest in performance, several discrete trends are currently rendering the study of ancient theatre one of the most important avenues by which to explore ancient Mediterranean society, an approach pioneered in Eric Csapo and W. J. Slater's innovative source-book *The Context of Ancient Drama* (1995). Besides supplementing the evidence analysed in the fundamental works of A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, especially in *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (1st edition 1953, revised and updated by John Gould and David Lewis in 1968, re-issued with addenda in 1988), Csapo and Slater have cast new and thought-provoking light on the social and institutional history of ancient drama and have made it available to a wider public by translating previously inaccessible texts.

<sup>1</sup> See (e.g.) Scodel (1993), Goldhill and Osborne (1999).

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Another of these mutually complementary trends is towards a sharper awareness that new material finds not only supplement but significantly alter our picture of the place of theatre in ancient society, in a manner unprecedented except by the papyrus finds of the tragedians and Menander over the past hundred years. The evidence for the ever-increasing volume of empirical data is provided by the expanded 3rd edition (1995) of T. B. L. Webster's *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy* (1st edition 1961),<sup>2</sup> by the publication by L. Bernabò Brea and his colleagues of the hundreds of terracotta masks and masked figurines found since 1965 in a necropolis on the island of Lipari<sup>3</sup> and by Charlotte Roueché's work on new inscriptions of Asia Minor in *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (1993).

Closely associated with this acknowledgement of the importance of new finds is the emphasis on the impact of theatre on society. Richard Green, in *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (1994), has cogently argued that the depictions of actors and theatrical images on artefacts throughout antiquity reveal a much broader social enjoyment of theatre than is suggested by the written sources, whose consumers tended to come from more élite groups. For the Roman world the work of Richard Beacham and Shadi Bartsch has directed attention to audiences and the way they responded to very varied kinds of performance and spectacle.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, interest has been growing in the reception, influence and social role of individual 'classic' theatrical works and authors, showing their durability over hundreds of years of performance, adaptation and interpretation. Many articles in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* illustrate the artistic evidence for the popularity of particular plays, and scholars are now seeing the value of combining the visual data with evidence drawn from ancient commentaries, and from quotations, parodies and allusions in other authors.<sup>5</sup> The story is being extended far beyond antiquity to cover the after-life in performance of ancient plays from the Renaissance onwards.<sup>6</sup>

Yet although the theatre as institution and practice has found a place at the centre of classical scholarship, the ancient actor and acting techniques

<sup>2</sup> = *MNC*<sup>3</sup>. See Hall (1997b) for a review article noting Webster's 'dogged and precociously modern insistence on drawing interdisciplinary connections between what used to be called "art" and "life"'. The long-term influence of Webster's work can be traced in much contemporary research on ancient theatre practice, notably the Ancient Theatre Project at the Institute of Classical Studies in London.

<sup>3</sup> See Bernabò Brea (1981) and Bernabò Brea and Lavalier (1991).

<sup>4</sup> See Beacham (1991); Bartsch (1994).

<sup>5</sup> See (e.g.) for the *Oresteia* Prag (1986) and Knoepfler (1993).

<sup>6</sup> See (e.g.) Flashar (1991), Hartigan (1995), Hall, Macintosh and Taplin (2000).



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remain elusive and relatively under-appreciated phenomena. This is particularly surprising because the actor is a privileged figure in scholarly terms, standing at the intersection between the different sub-disciplines within Classics, and implicitly undermining the distinctions between them. There has been no full-scale exploration of actors in the Greek world since Paulette Ghiron-Bistagne's *Recherches sur les acteurs dans la Grèce antique* (1976). Although this was a fine attempt at synthesising diverse types of evidence into a broad historical overview, it is now outdated; for the Roman world Charles Garton's *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre* (1972) made a significant contribution, but it never set out to be comprehensive. More recently, I. E. Stephanis has brought together a vast amount of relevant material in his catalogue of ancient theatrical performers in Διονυσιακοὶ Τεχνῖται (*Artists of Dionysos*, 1988). This is a collection of testimonia rather than a work of interpretation, but besides admirably serving its intended purpose it has had the good effect of widening horizons, since it includes many types of theatrical performers in addition to tragic and comic actors. There have been other recent publications, usefully annotated in Richard Green's *Lustrum* bibliography for 1987–95 (published in 1998),<sup>7</sup> but we believe that there is a real need now for a more sustained study. As we went to press there was published a substantial new two-volume treatment of the evidence for the Hellenistic Artists of Dionysus (B. le Guen, *Les associations de technites dionysiaques à l'époque hellénistique*, Nancy 2001), revealing how much interest there currently is in our subject. Unfortunately the book did not appear in time for us to take full account of it.

Our aim in editing this volume has been to produce neither a comprehensive reference work nor an historical narrative but a series of complementary essays by experts in different areas – literature, archaeology, art, history – arranged so as to cast as much interdisciplinary light as possible on the diverse aspects of a fascinating social and artistic phenomenon. Now that scholars are no longer inhibited by the assumption that 'late' must mean 'decadent', or that only a few select types of artistic entertainment count as 'theatre', it is easier to gain a sense of the extraordinary staying power and adaptability of the acting profession over the whole period of Greco-Roman antiquity. We have been particularly interested in the light that evidence from the late antique and early Byzantine centuries can throw on these processes of continuity and change.

<sup>7</sup> Although this report covers only nine years it is over twice the length of its predecessor for 1971–86 = Green (1989).

Definitions are difficult to make, of course, when one is dealing with such a long period – nearly a thousand years – as well as with a great geographical spread and a wide range of different types of entertainment. By and large we have included under the heading ‘actors’ artists who played roles in public for (mainly) theatre audiences. This rather broad category is capacious enough to include performers of mime and pantomime, genres which have been too easily neglected in the past, largely because there is much less primary evidence to throw light on their content, but also because they have often seemed to be marginal in various ways: ‘post-classical’, ‘low’, or ‘sub-literary’. We have tried to avoid using very strict category distinctions so as to allow for significant changes in performance practice which are not necessarily reflected in vocabulary. Thus a solo singer in the Hellenistic period and a pantomime artist under the Empire might both be categorised as ‘tragic’ performers, though neither would function in the same way as actors who took part in tragic competitions in the fifth or fourth century BC.

Above all we have been concerned, through this ‘holistic’ approach, to look for the different kinds of illumination that evidence about actors and acting can offer to students of ancient society. Some of the ‘marginal’ genres, after all, can bring access to a wide range of social classes via the entertainments they enjoyed, and anecdotes about actors can suggest ways in which the experiences of spectators coloured collective awareness and imagination at different periods. A book of this size must also have its limits. Much work remains to be done on the figure of the performer and the acting metaphors that haunt genres of writing not investigated here: the novel, for example, or medical writers.<sup>8</sup> There are other large fields that we have also had to leave unexplored: comparative theatre studies, the theory of performance at its most general, and the anti-theatrical tradition in antiquity and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

The tripartite division of the volume is essentially thematic, although the chapters within each of the three Parts are arranged in broadly chronological order. In Part One the emphasis is on types and styles of ancient performance so far as they can be reconstructed or imagined from a variety of sources. The musical element in ancient dramatic performances is easily neglected in modern discussions, largely because the music has disappeared; we have deliberately chosen to begin with singing actors and with accompanying musicians in order to bring this

<sup>8</sup> See (for the novel) Paulsen (1992), (for medical writers) Lloyd (1979) 89–90, King (1998) 42.

<sup>9</sup> See (e.g.) Barish (1981), Barba and Savarese (1991), Goldhill and Osborne (1999).

important aspect into focus. Other chapters in this section study body movement, costume and acting style from different angles, using the play texts themselves (the nearest thing we have to scripts), vase paintings, and secondary evidence, such as Aristotle's writings on drama, to help recapture something of past experiences and traditions.

Part Two addresses questions of professional organisation, from the Hellenistic to the early Byzantine world. Cumulatively the papers in this section bring out the long-term resilience of some traditions and institutions as well as emphasising differences in social practice and perceptions. In predominantly Greek communities, for example, there was no history of translating ambivalence or anxiety about actors into legal categories like the Roman concept of *infamia*. And yet the growing mobility and cosmopolitanism of actors, and the spread of Roman imperial power, must have created new circumstances which performers had to learn to manage to their advantage, just as later the adoption of Christianity brought ideological challenges which could be met (to some extent, at least) by drawing on the public's deeply felt needs for what performers had to offer. The opening of the profession – some branches of it, at any rate – to women is another significant development which deserves attention. Two chapters in this Part contribute new evidence to the story of change and adaptation: Jory on representations of pantomime masks and Roueché on graffiti showing mime performers.

Part Three explores some of the many ways in which actors, acting and theatre acquired symbolic power in Greco-Roman culture. The sources here are mainly literary, but the focus switches from dramatic texts themselves to biography, scholarly commentary, oratory and history, and the final chapter begins to take the story forward, towards reception in the modern world, and the important role that ancient actors have played in the creation of more recent genres of theatre and literature.

Editing this book has taught us how much there is already to be learned and how much more still to be explored: a full and systematic account of the subject as we have defined it would have entailed many more years of preparation. We hope the twenty chapters offered here, juxtaposing material from different places and periods, will be a stimulus to further efforts to understand ancient acting traditions in all their diversity. The suggestions for further reading, attached, where appropriate, to individual chapters, and the consolidated bibliography, attempt to give both an overview of current scholarship and some flavour of its interdisciplinary nature.

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The perennial editorial problem of dealing consistently with Greek names has been particularly acute in a volume covering Greek, Roman and early Byzantine culture. We have identified performers by the Greek or Roman form of their names according to their origins, thus Polos not Polus, even though this actor became famous in Latin literary tradition. For well known authors and places we have chosen the forms most familiar in English, but otherwise we have generally followed the practice of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition 1996) and the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (1991). For epigraphical publications we have followed the conventions of LSJ, except where indicated in the list of abbreviations. All translations are the contributors' own unless otherwise indicated.

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## *Acknowledgements*

For help, advice and support of all kinds in the preparation of this volume we are grateful to the contributors, who have been cheerfully patient and co-operative, and to Nikos Charalabopoulos, Aidan Foster, Stuart Hall, Johannes Haubold, Pat Kelly, Fiona Macintosh, June McCall, Thalia Papadopoulou, Richard Poynder and the Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford. Our colleagues at Cambridge University Press have given us imaginative guidance and much practical help; we thank two Classics editors, Pauline Hire and her successor Michael Sharp, our scrupulous copy-editor Linda Woodward, our indexer Barbara Hird and our proof reader Henry Maas.

## *Abbreviations*

<i>AP</i>	<i>Anthologia Graeca Epigrammatum Palatina cum Planudea</i> , ed. H. Stadtmüller. 3 vols. Leipzig 1894–1906
Arnott	Arnott, W. G., ed. and trans. (1979–2000) <i>Menander</i> . 3 vols. Cambridge, MA and London
<i>ARV</i> <sup>2</sup>	Beazley, J. D. (1963) <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters</i> . 2nd edn. Oxford
<i>Beazley Addenda</i>	Carpenter, T. H. (1989) <i>Beazley Addenda: Additional References to ABV, ARV</i> <sup>2</sup> , <i>and Paralipomena</i> . 2nd edn. Oxford
<i>CEG</i>	Hansen, P. A. (1983/89) <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> . 2 vols. Berlin
<i>CHCL</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Classical Literature</i> . Vol. I: <i>Greek Literature</i> , eds. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, Cambridge 1985. Vol. II: <i>Latin Literature</i> , eds. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen, Cambridge 1982
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (1863–). Berlin
<i>DEA</i>	Pickard-Cambridge, A. W. (1953) <i>The Dramatic Festivals of Athens</i> . Oxford (2nd edn, revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis, Oxford 1968; 3rd edn with supplement and corrections, Oxford 1988)
DK	Diels, H. and W. Kranz, eds. (1951–52) <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , 2 vols. 6th edn. Berlin and Zurich
Edelstein–Kidd	Edelstein, L. and I. G. Kidd, eds. (1989) <i>Posidonius, The Fragments</i> . Vol. I. 2nd edn. Cambridge
<i>FD</i>	<i>Fouilles de Delphes</i> (1902–). Paris
<i>FGrH</i>	Jacoby, F. (1923–58) <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin
FR	Furtwängler, A. and F. Reichhold (1904–32) <i>Griechische Vasenmalerei</i> . Munich

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- GLP* Page, D. L. (1942) *Greek Literary Papyri*. Cambridge, MA
- IG<sup>2</sup>* *Inscriptiones Graecae<sup>2</sup>*, eds. F. H. de Gaertringen et al. Berlin 1924–
- IGD* Trendall, A. D. and T. B. L. Webster (1971) *Illustrations of Greek Drama*. London
- IGUR* Moretti, L., ed. (1968–90) *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae*. Rome
- IK* *Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*. Bonn 1972
- IMagn.* Kern, O., ed. (1900) *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*. Berlin (repr. Berlin 1967)
- KA* Kassel, R. and C. Austin (1983–) *Poetae Comici Graeci*. Berlin and New York
- Kaibel* Kaibel, G. (1899) *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Berlin
- K–T* *Menandri quae supersunt*, ed. A. Koerte (Leipzig 1938); ed. with revisions and addenda by A. Thierfelder. 2 vols. Leipzig 1957–59
- LCS* Trendall, A. D. (1967) *The Red-Figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily*. Oxford
- Marm. Par.* *Marmor Parium (IG 12(5).444)*, ed. F. Jacoby, *Das Marmor Parium*. Berlin 1904
- Michel* Michel, C. (1900–27) *Recueil d'inscriptions grecques*. Brussels
- MMC<sup>3</sup>* Webster, T. B. L. (1978) *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy*. London. 3rd edn, revised and enlarged by J. R. Green and A. Seeberg (*BICS* Suppl. 39). London
- MNC<sup>3</sup>* Webster, T. B. L. (1995) *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy*. 3rd edn, revised and enlarged by J. R. Green and A. Seeberg (*BICS* Suppl. 50) 2 vols. London
- MTS<sup>2</sup>* Webster, T. B. L. (1967) *Monuments Illustrating Tragedy and Satyr-Play*. 2nd edn (*BICS* Suppl. 20). London
- Nauck* Nauck, A. (1889) *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. 2nd edn. Leipzig (repr. with Supplementum by B. Snell, Hildesheim 1964)
- OGIS* Dittenberger, W., ed. (1898–1905) *Orientalis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae*. Leipzig
- Paralipomena* Beazley, J. D. (1971) *Paralipomena. Additions to Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters and to Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*. 2nd edn. Oxford

- Paroemiogr.* *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, eds. E. L. Leutsch and P. G. Schneidewin. Göttingen 1839
- Passion for Antiquities* *A Passion for Antiquities. Ancient Art from the Collection of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman*. Malibu 1994
- PG* Migne, J. P. (1857–1912) *Patrologia Graeca*. Paris
- PCG* Kassel, R. and C. Austin, eds. (1983–) *Poetae Comici Graeci*. Berlin
- PhV<sup>2</sup>* Trendall, A. D. (1967) *Phlyax Vases*. 2nd edn (*BICS* Suppl. 19). London
- PL* Migne, J. P. (1844–65) *Patrologia Latina*. Paris
- PMG* Page, D. L. (1962) *Poetae Melici Graeci*. Oxford 1962
- Powell, *Coll. Alex.* Powell, J. U. (1925) *Collectanea Alexandrina*. Oxford
- P Oxy.* *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (1898–). London
- RE* *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, eds. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa and W. Kroll. Stuttgart and Munich 1893–1980
- Robert, *OMS* Robert, L. (1969–90) *Opera Minora Selecta*. 7 vols.
- RVAp* Trendall, A. D. and A. Cambitoglou (1978/82) *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia*, 2 vols. Oxford
- RVAp* Suppl. ii Trendall, A. D. and A. Cambitoglou (1992) *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia, Supplement II* (*BICS* Suppl. 60). London
- RVP* Trendall, A. D. (1987) *The Red-Figured Vases of Paestum*. London
- RVSIS* Trendall, A. D. (1989) *Red Figure Vases of South Italy and Sicily*. London
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (1923–). Leiden
- SIG* Dittenberger, W. (1915–24) *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*. 3rd edn. Leipzig
- Studies . . . Trendall* Cambitoglou, A., ed. (1979) *Studies in Honour of Arthur Dale Trendall*. Sydney
- Suppl. Hell.* Lloyd-Jones, H. and P. Parsons, eds. (1983) *Supplementum Hellenisticum*. Berlin and New York
- SVF* von Arnim, H. (1903–) *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. 4 vols. Leipzig
- TrGF* Snell, B., S. Radt and R. Kannicht, eds. (1971–) *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Göttingen
- Vahlen Vahlen, J. (1854) *Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae*. Leipzig (3rd edn Amsterdam 1963)

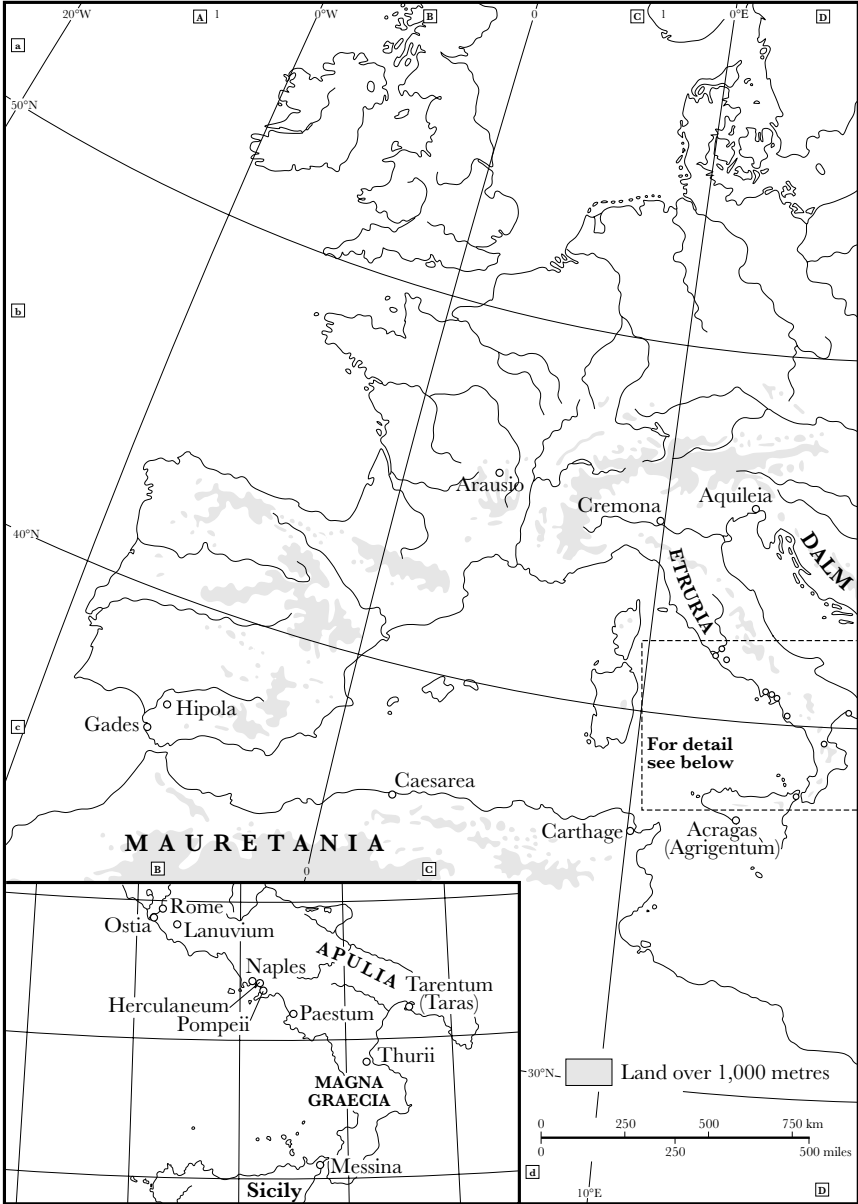




1. *The Aegean World*

Maps





2. The Mediterranean World

