

*Introduction:
 previous scholarship and present approach*

Roman drama was one of the earliest literary genres to be established in Rome, emerging against the background of Rome's contact with other cultures and its rise to being a major power in the Mediterranean. Thus the history of early Roman drama is not only of literary interest, but also of political, social and cultural relevance: for instance, the introduction of dramatic performances changed the set-up of public festivals with their specific religious rituals and their role within the political community; theatrical events gained relevance as a public institution. Within this framework a variety of dramatic forms were developed over time, which were shaped by individual playwrights according to their different styles and their respective historical situations. From the late Republican period onwards scholars started to discuss questions of dramatic history and terminology as issues in their own right.

Despite the inherent importance of this literary genre and its early reception, modern research into Roman Republican drama is confronted by the difficulty that evidence is scarce, since a large part of Rome's dramatic literature has not survived.¹ Names of playwrights, titles of plays, *testimonia* and fragments from a limited number of pieces are all that remains for some periods and/or dramatic genres. The only dramas preserved in their entirety are the comedies of Plautus and Terence from the Republican period as well as the tragedies of Seneca the Younger (including a possibly spurious one) and the anonymous praetexta *Octavia* (transmitted in the Senecan corpus) from the imperial era.

¹ Perhaps an initial word of caution on the term 'Roman' is in order: 'Roman drama' (or even 'Roman literature') might be regarded as a misleading term, since the early poets were not 'Romans' in a strict sense. But as they created works of 'literature' in Rome's language for Roman audiences (originally in the city of Rome), taking account of topics and conventions relevant to these audiences, the use of the established term 'Roman drama' can be justified. For the sake of convenience, the poets themselves will sometimes be referred to as 'Roman', as they were writing for Roman audiences in Rome.

Modern scholarship on Roman Republican drama, therefore, has virtually been split into two different routes: research on completely preserved dramas, analysed just like any other extant ancient text, and research on fragments, often concerned mainly with establishing text and meaning of individual verses or plays. While it is true that different types of evidence require different kinds of approaches, all this material concerns the same issue; yet the two methods and subject areas have seldom come together. Moreover, the (understandable) focus on complete plays, which are derived from Greek sources, has meant that Roman plays tend to be considered in comparison with Greek plays. Hence the view that Roman literature is 'secondary' and 'derivative', which had arisen since the period of enthusiasm for Greek culture from the eighteenth century onwards (yet has changed over the past few decades), particularly affected the assessment of Roman dramatic forms.²

These presumptions and this history of scholarship have long influenced the kind of resources produced. For instance, books on practical and archaeological aspects of 'ancient theatre' tend to devote considerably less space to the Roman than to the Greek side.³ The only attempt at a complete and concise overview of Roman Republican theatre (covering literary and practical aspects) is W. Beare's *The Roman Stage. A Short History of Latin Drama in the Time of the Republic* (1st edn., 1950; 3rd edn., 1964), which continues to be a widely used handbook, though its revision has been called for; for comedy there is also G. E. Duckworth's *Nature of Roman Comedy* (1952).⁴ In the 1950s there was apparently a desire to collect information on Roman drama: E. Paratore's *Storia del teatro latino* dates to the same period (1957); it was reprinted in the early twenty-first century as still being sufficiently relevant and up to date (2005).⁵ Useful though these

² On this issue see e.g. Lana 1947: 46; Lefèvre 1978b: 1–4; Goldberg 1981: 84; Forehand 1985: 37; Conte 1994: 7.

³ See e.g. Bieber 1961; Blume 1991 (cf. justification on p. 107).

⁴ For assessments of the two works see e.g. Segal 1981: 355; Fantham 1989a: 23 n. 1 (p. 31); Petrone 1992: 669; Anderson 1993: 3; Brown 2002: 237: 'Beare (1964) is still the basic English handbook on the history and staging of Republican Roman drama, though this too is out of date in a number of respects and could do with thorough revision.'; N. J. Lowe 2008: 95: 'Beare 1964, while outdated on Greek New Comedy and indifferent to archaeological evidence, remains unrivalled in English as a synthesis of the literary source material, particularly on lost genres, while, for the extant comedies, Duckworth 1952 still covers more ground than any other single volume in English.'

⁵ See the editors' preface (2005: x–xi); but see also Petrone 1992: 669. The 1970s saw another round of surveys, although some of them were rather brief and/or general (Butler 1972; G. Williams 1972; Jiménez Gazapo 1978; Lefèvre 1978a). In the 1980s Dupont provided a short introduction, apparently intended for beginning students (1988/1999), and a general study of Roman drama in its sociological context (1985). In the early 1990s this was followed by a broad survey of the Roman theatre by Petrone (1992). Some discussion of Roman theatre can now also be found in Seidensticker (2010: 82–122). An

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works continue to be, they are out of date on a number of points due to discoveries of new texts and further research in several areas.

As regards the literary side of Roman drama, playwrights whose plays have survived in their entirety (Plautus, Terence, Seneca) are well served by editions, commentaries and translations into various modern languages.⁶ Comprehensive and/or introductory works on aspects of Roman drama have also been devoted mainly to those poets.⁷ Since Plautus and Terence were active in the same dramatic genre (what is traditionally called *fabula palliata* or Roman [New] Comedy) and substantial remains of Greek New Comedy were unearthed in the course of the twentieth century, studies going beyond one playwright have often dealt with (Greek and Roman) New Comedy.⁸ More recently, studies on Roman comedy have started to look at the plays' relationship to the contemporary historical and social situation.⁹

By contrast, for Roman dramatic genres preserved in fragments very few general accounts exist, besides brief portraits in comprehensive works on Roman literature.¹⁰ The major Republican tragic poets have been given critical editions and commentaries,¹¹ but hardly ever have they received monographic treatment; overviews of the whole dramatic genre are only a recent development.¹² A similar situation applies to praetexta, the Roman

earlier collection of essays (Dorey and Dudley 1965) discussed selected aspects, but did not present an overview of Roman drama as a whole.

⁶ See the standard bibliographies: on Plautus, Hanson 1965/6; Gaiser 1972; Hughes 1975; Fogazza 1976 [1978]; Segal 1981; Bubel 1992; on Terence, Gaiser 1972; Goldberg 1981; Cupaiuolo 1984, 1992; Lentano 1997, 1998; on Roman comedy, also Hunter in Duckworth 1994: 465–71; for the Republican dramatists see also relevant sections in Suerbaum 2002; on Seneca, Hiltbrunner 1985; Seidensticker and Armstrong 1985; Motto and Clark 1989.

⁷ On Plautus see e.g. Leo 1912; Fraenkel (1922/1960) 2007; N. W. Slater 1985/2000; Segal 1987; Anderson 1993; Moore 1998a; Franko 2001; on Terence see e.g. Büchner 1974; Forehand 1985; Goldberg 1986; Cupaiuolo 1991; Moore 2001; Kruschwitz 2004; Kruschwitz *et al.* 2007; on Seneca see e.g. Lefèvre 1972; Boyle 1983, 1997; Dingel 1985.

⁸ See e.g. Arnott 1975; Sandbach 1977; Konstan 1983; Hunter 1985; Maurach 2005; Sharrock 2009. Other palliata poets of whose work a substantial number of fragments have been preserved have at least received critical editions (Caecilius: Guardi 1974; Turpilius: Rychlewska 1971).

⁹ See esp. Leigh 2004a.

¹⁰ For coverage in literary histories see the relevant sections in e.g. Kenney and Clausen 1982; Conte 1994; von Albrecht 1997; Harrison 2005.

¹¹ Livius Andronicus: Spaltenstein 2008; Naevius: Marmorale 1950; Ennius: Jocelyn 1967; Pacuvius: D'Anna 1967; Schierl 2006; Artigas 2009 (for the fragments transmitted in Cicero: Artigas 1990); Accius: D'Antò 1980; Pociña Pérez 1984; Dangel 1995.

¹² See Erasmo 2004; Boyle 2006 (comments on these books, with references, in Goldberg 2007b: 580–2). Cf. Boyle's introductory assessment of the state of research (2006: ix): 'This book requires little justification. Roman tragedy was at the centre of Rome's performative life, cultural and political, . . . , but until 2004 there was no monograph in English even attempting to address the evolution of Roman tragedy and its literary, theatrical and cultural importance. The standard book on (at least a

form of 'serious' drama.¹³ 'Light' dramatic genres¹⁴ other than palliata comedy, such as togata, Atellana and mimus, have been treated even less frequently, perhaps because farce and mime tend to be regarded as sub-literary and coarse, do not have proper counterparts in Greece and are attested solely by fragments and a limited number of *testimonia*.¹⁵ For these dramatic genres there exist at least editions and some overviews.¹⁶

The texts themselves are available for all dramatic genres. The surviving output of those Republican dramatists whose work has been transmitted in fragments was made accessible by the seminal work of O. Ribbeck in the second half of the nineteenth century: his collections of the comic and the tragic fragments respectively are still the only critical editions that cover all playwrights and dramatic genres; he also gave important information about his view of the plays in the introductions to the second version of his editions and in his book on Roman tragedy (1875).¹⁷ The fragments of the major Republican dramatists became more conveniently approachable

substantial part of) the subject was published 130 years ago in Leipzig: Otto Ribbeck's *Die Römische Tragödie im Zeitalter der Republik* (1875). . . . But Roman tragedy, despite its cultural importance and the increasing emphasis in Classical Studies on cultural history and analysis, still awaits a detailed theatrical and cultural account of its history and evolution.' The traditional reference manual for the contents of the tragedies and their relationship to Greek sources is O. Ribbeck's *Die römische Tragödie* (1875). Another early and more discursive attempt, focusing on particular aspects, is G. Coppola's 'Il teatro tragico in Roma repubblicana' (1940). A solid discussion of Republican drama with emphasis on tragedy is found in the introduction to Jocelyn's edition of Ennius' tragic fragments (1967).

¹³ For an overview of this dramatic genre see Manuwald 2001a; see also Zorzetti 1980; Zehnacker 1983; Flower 1995; Wiseman, e.g. 1998. The fragments of Republican praetextae are included in Ribbeck's editions of the tragic fragments (see n. 17 below); besides this there are special editions of the remains of this dramatic genre (Pedroli 1954; de Durante 1966; see also Ussani 1967/8: xxxv–lxiii).

¹⁴ The terms 'serious drama' and 'light drama' will be used throughout as descriptions of the two main forms of drama, each comprising various subtypes of elevated, possibly tragic drama and of entertaining, more mundane drama respectively. These terms rather than 'tragic drama/tragedy' and 'comic drama/comedy' have been chosen as the most neutral comprehensive labels, which minimize associations of specific dramatic genres or particular characteristics. Gratwick (1982a: 93, 127) also uses the terms 'serious drama' and 'light drama' to structure his account of early Roman drama (on the terminological problem see Halporn 1993: 197–8).

¹⁵ Denard (2007) makes a strong case for including 'lost theatre and performance traditions' in scholarly activities.

¹⁶ Editions of the togata fragments: Daviault 1981; López 1983; Guardì 1985 (see review by Jocelyn 1986); Atellana fragments: D. Romano 1953; Frassinetti 1967; mimus fragments: Bonaria 1965, Laberius: Panayotakis 2010. For a brief comprehensive treatment of all these genres and bibliography see Panayotakis 2005a.

¹⁷ Editions of tragic fragments: Ribbeck 1871 (2nd edn.)/1897 (3rd edn.); editions of comic fragments: Ribbeck 1873 (2nd edn.)/1898 (3rd edn.); study: Ribbeck 1875. The third edition presents Ribbeck's final view on the text, but its *apparatus criticus* is less detailed. Both editions contain a few inconsistencies in numbering. The more recent edition of the dramatic fragments by Klotz, of which only the first volume covering the tragic theatre has been published (1953), could be regarded as a replacement for the first volume of Ribbeck's edition; yet it is actually not very different from Ribbeck in many respects, while being less accurate and less comprehensive (see reviews: esp. Skutsch 1954).

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in E. H. Warmington's independent bilingual edition in *Remains of Old Latin* in the 1930s (Loeb Classical Library), because this multi-volume work includes English translations, provides short introductions to individual authors and plays and also gives indications of the context of each fragment (in the editor's view).¹⁸

In the realm of Roman dramatic fragments, researchers have traditionally focused on philological problems, such as the difficult establishment of the text of individual fragments or the reconstructions of plots (often in relation to supposedly corresponding Greek plays). Gradually, further issues are winning greater attention among literary scholars, which include the consideration of the background for the production of dramas, the role of performance and the choice of plots and themes as well as a new look at the relationship to Greek models and the 'Romanization' of the plays.

Among scholars who are more interested in cultural, historical and social issues, the Republican period has recently emerged as a vibrant field of research: it is asked, for instance, why the Romans developed a sophisticated literature, when 'Roman literature' started, what can be assumed about 'pre-literary' and 'oral' traditions at Rome, about their influence on subsequent centuries and their relationship to later written literature, what the cultural and political dynamics in Republican Rome were like, what function entertainment, performance, spectacle and theatricality played in Roman society and what the role of literature was within such a framework.¹⁹

Progress is also being made in the study of the material aspects of Roman theatrical culture. A recent monograph examines the archaeological evidence of Roman theatres, preceded by overviews of theatre buildings in Sicily and southern Italy.²⁰ Documentation of the physical outlines of Roman theatres all over the Roman Empire allows comparisons between their characteristic features and those of Greek theatres and hence inferences on performance conditions in the Republican period. However, although implications of archaeological findings directly bear on the study of the

¹⁸ The Budé collection has published the togata fragments (Daviault 1981) and the works of Accius (Dangel 1995), while both volumes have received criticism from reviewers (see esp. Gratwick 1982b; Jocelyn 1982, on Daviault 1981; Gratwick 2000; Jocelyn 2001, on Dangel 1995). There is also an Italian edition of *Poeti latini arcaici* (Traglia 1986), of which, however, only the first volume, covering Livius Andronicus, Naevius and Ennius, has appeared in print.

¹⁹ For an overview of these issues and some suggestions see Feeney 2005; on the changing approaches to early Roman literature see also Rossi and Breed 2006: 419–20.

²⁰ See Sear 2006; see also e.g. Mitens 1988, 1993; Courtois 1989, 1992; on the Roman stage on the basis of reconstructionist productions see Beacham 1991. For scholarship on theatre architecture see Frézouls 1982: 343.

literary remains,²¹ they still need to be taken fully into account by literary scholars of Roman drama. For matters of Roman comic staging and stagecraft there is now C. W. Marshall's *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy* (2006). Yet although there are numerous works dealing with the overall organization and background of theatrical performances in the Greek world, there are no comparable, comprehensive, up-to-date works for the Roman world.

In the area of theoretical approaches to Latin literature and also in theatre studies new concepts and terminology have been developed and defined, which, to a certain extent, can be usefully applied to the study of Roman drama to complement more traditional ways of analysing dramatic texts. For instance, Roman dramas have traditionally been interpreted in relation to Greek 'models', while views on this connection have changed over the centuries. As regards such potential relationships, useful categories and criteria concerning the issue of 'allusion' or 'intertextuality' have been presented by S. Hinds (1998). Hinds warns against one-sided 'philological fundamentalism' as well as 'intertextualist fundamentalism'; instead, he suggests combining both approaches with circumspection. In this context he challenges the complete 'death of the author' and calls for allowing for an intention-bearing authorial voice in constructing the deeper meaning of a poetic text.²² Also, Hinds is rightly critical of the unidirectional and non-dialogic reading of two related texts, especially when one of them, the incorporating text or the incorporated text, has been preserved in fragments.²³ Taking up this approach, other scholars have emphasized that, as a result of the particular forms of transmission of Latin dramatic fragments, modern readers see these poets through the eyes of other ancient writers; researchers therefore have to avoid adopting uncritically the portrait painted in those sources.²⁴

Without specific reference to the classical world, theoreticians of the theatre have applied methodologies such as performance criticism and semi-otic terminology to the theatre.²⁵ Even though not all those approaches

²¹ Cf. Goldberg 1998: 19: 'More certain is a general fact: the problems of dramaturgy and social history connected with Roman comedy cannot be entirely divorced from questions concerning the physical space in which these plays were performed.'

²² See Hinds 1998: 17–51, 144; also Conte 1994: 3. ²³ See Hinds 1998: 101–3.

²⁴ See contributions in Fitzgerald and Gowers 2007 (with particular reference to Ennius' *Annales*), esp. Zetzel 2007; also Goldberg 2007b: 573 and n. 8.

²⁵ Cf. Bennett 1997: 9–12: 'Since the 1980s, two areas of dramatic theory have given emphasis to the need for a more developed theory of audiences. The first of these to emerge was performance theory. . . . While performance theorists have broadened the scope of what we might consider theatre, a second area of dramatic theory has, in recent years, paid a new attention to the multivalent

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and theories can be applied fruitfully to an ancient dramatic literature largely surviving in fragments, some terminological descriptions provide helpful clarifications: these include, for instance, a distinction between 'theatre' and 'drama', the former referring to theatrical performances and the latter denoting the fictional text as a representative of a literary genre, or between what is produced in the theatre and what is written for the theatre, with their mutual interdependence.²⁶ Besides, concepts of theatre semiotics provide a theoretical model for situating the theatre of a past period as a meaningful system within the conditions and circumstances of its time²⁷ and performance venue²⁸ and thus for considering it within its historical setting, in addition to analysing features of the text. The notions of 'cross-cultural conversation' and 'intercultural theatre' help to describe the transfer of theatre and drama from Greece to Rome as one manifestation of processes that also happen elsewhere in theatre culture.²⁹

In view of this state of research in a variety of areas it is a necessary and timely step to combine and develop these various insights into an overview of Roman Republican drama. For the emergence of new approaches and methodologies, along with traditional philological criticism, provides an excellent basis for further study that goes beyond individual playwrights or dramatic genres.³⁰ A synthesis of evidence and approaches has not actually been attempted yet, though the production of up-to-date, comprehensive collections of data on Roman drama is under way, as handbooks, dictionaries and bibliographies demonstrate.³¹ For the literary genre of drama, progress in research on non-literary Roman issues is particularly helpful; for drama must be situated within the contemporary context of its

components of theatre. Semiology has considered these components (not simply what takes place on the stage, or even in the auditorium) and their interaction in the signifying process.' See e.g. Honzl (1940) 1976; Elam 1980/2002; Fischer-Lichte 2003; for a brief overview of the development of semiotic studies related to the theatre see Carlson 1989: 2–4.

²⁶ See Elam 2002: 2, 3, 191; Fischer-Lichte 2003: 3114. ²⁷ See e.g. Fischer-Lichte 2003: 3116.

²⁸ See Carlson 1989: 10. ²⁹ On these terms see G. J. Williams 2010: 551–64.

³⁰ A similar development and a corresponding outline of contemporary and possible future research have been described by Rossi and Breed (2006: 397–8) in the introduction to a special journal issue on Ennius' *Annales*.

³¹ For recent overviews of the lives and works of individual dramatists and full information on *testimonia* and bibliography see Suerbaum 2002; like most literary histories the handbook is divided according to genres and poets and rarely attempts more general conclusions on Roman drama (see reviews: Gildenhard 2003; Feeney 2005); for a 'dictionary' of the Roman theatre see González Vázquez 2004; for a collection of key texts on Roman drama see Manuwald 2010; for bibliography on Roman tragedy see Mette 1964 [1965]; De Rosalia 1989; Manuwald 2001 [2004]; on Naevius' comic output see Suerbaum 2000a; for a brief overview of important aspects of Roman Republican theatre see Boyle 2006: 3–23.

organizational background and of developments in Republican society, since by its very nature drama is a public genre produced in a diverse civic community.

Against this background the present work intends to look at Roman Republican drama and its background from a variety of perspectives both diachronically and synchronically, in order to provide a synoptic discussion of the whole complex of dramatic works in Republican Rome.³² It will be discussed, for instance, how Roman drama developed and altered over the Republican period in relation to changes in society, what the relationship between the various dramatic genres was like and what the place of drama was in the contemporary political and social context.³³

It is hoped that such a synoptic method will make it possible to present processes and mutual influences within Republican drama in contextualized form.³⁴ An awareness of how the various dramatic genres and their respective characteristics evolved, changed and interacted is essential for a proper understanding of the development of Roman drama.³⁵ This contributes to reconsidering the role of audiences and later recipients, identifying specific features of Roman drama and of each of its playwrights and genres as well as discerning potential cross-fertilization between the individual dramatic poets and different genres.³⁶

³² Investigating the origin and development of the major dramatic genres in Republican Rome might also contribute to increasing the number of studies of literary genres, whose lack was signalled by Cairns (2007: 49–50), even though the definition of a ‘genre’ is fraught with its own problems (see Conte 1994: 5–7).

³³ The present endeavour is thus in line both with Goldberg’s (2006: 446) call for sufficient attention to historical change and with Denard’s (2007: 139) view that all theatre and performance traditions should be included in one’s considerations as they will all have influenced each other.

³⁴ This study thus follows principles similar to those outlined in the introduction to Boyle’s recent book on Roman tragedy (2006: ix), but broadens its scope by encompassing Republican drama as a whole. Although it has rightly been called into question whether ‘literary history is possible’, an attempt at a comprehensive description of Roman drama has been made in view of the ulterior aim of literary history (as opposed to history), since it ‘subverts the appreciation of literature’ (see Perkins 1992; for discussion of the problems inherent in any attempt to write literary history see also Conte 1994: 1–10; Feeney 2002). The current approach also takes into account the notion that the inclusion of the perspective of reception, of intertextual aspects and of the historical position of literary works as well as the addition of a synchronic dimension to the traditional diachronic focus of literary history could contribute to meeting the challenge of writing literary history (see Jauffé 1967).

³⁵ On the importance of considering Roman traditions see also Goldberg 1981: 78, 1986: xii; Panayotakis 2005a: 133. An interesting, albeit controversial attempt to construct a tradition for *palliata* has been made by J. Wright (1974).

³⁶ Rüpke (2001) and, more forcefully, A. Barchiesi (2002) in his review have already made the obvious point (with reference to epic) that the poets Livius Andronicus, Naevius and Ennius were three individuals and lived in a time of massive social and political change. For Plautus and Terence see Duckworth 1952: 102. More generally, the inclusion of the study of fragmentary Latin texts is vital

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In order to establish such an overall picture, it will be necessary to place dramatists and plays in their historical, cultural and physical context and to regard dramatic performances as part of Roman festival culture.³⁷ For such an approach, ideally, all aspects mentioned should be considered together, but the need for a clear and readable exposition requires them to be divided among several subsections (with numerous cross-references). On their basis a tentative outline of the characteristics and development of Roman Republican drama, along with a brief outlook on subsequent processes in imperial times, will form the conclusion. The approaches, insights and theoretical concepts outlined will inform the presentation throughout, although they cannot be discussed as such.

Naturally, a comprehensive presentation of Roman Republican drama is confronted with the particular problem of scarce, scattered, ambiguous and partly unreliable evidence.³⁸ As the high number of festival days and the 130 plays later circulating under Plautus' name (Gell. *NA* 3.3.11) show, the period during which proper stage drama flourished at Rome must have seen a huge number of plays of which little has survived. Furthermore, it can be inferred that a great variety of dramatic entertainment on all levels of formality was popular in Graeco-Roman Italy during the Republican period. The surviving dramas have to be seen as one element within this culture even though specific details of influences and developments may be hard to determine.³⁹

But rather than despairing of the possibility of finding out anything at all,⁴⁰ an attempt to extract as much as possible from the extant sources – with the necessary caution applied – seems a worthwhile and sound approach. If all available information is scrutinized from a variety of angles,⁴¹ there will be a substantial body of material to work from, which will allow some conclusions.

for a proper appreciation of the emergence and characteristics of Roman literature (see Goldberg 2005b: 113–14, 2007a: 23–4; also observations in A. Barchiesi 2002 on early Roman epic).

³⁷ On the necessity to include the context in any consideration of early Roman drama or literature see Cancik 1978: 318; Gildenhard's criticism (2003) of Suerbaum 2002; Conte's (1994: 2–3) point in the introduction to his history of Latin literature that new literary approaches do not free interpreters from reintegrating the works within their historical contexts. More generally, from a theoretical perspective, see Carlson 1989: 2.

³⁸ On the particular methodological accuracy required by this situation and the need to distinguish between evidence and hypothesis see Gildenhard 2003; Goldberg 2006: 445–6.

³⁹ See also Hunter 1985: 20; N. J. Lowe 2008: 85.

⁴⁰ See Cancik 1978: 321–2; Dupont 1985: 311 (see 'Overview and conclusions').

⁴¹ This study will follow Hinds (1998: 21) in hoping that it will 'be able to do something to explore and to probe anew – through strategically chosen examples – the methodological pluralism which Conte's writing has established as an ideal'.

Yet it has to be borne in mind that only those types of dramatic performances, writers and plays can be discussed of which there is some record⁴² and that the uneven evidence may distort the picture. Thus one will have to accept that there are questions to which definite answers cannot be given (e.g. on details of dramatic structure for genres of which no example is extant in its entirety), but defining those issues and distinguishing between facts and assumptions or well-argued hypotheses are means to make progress in those cases.⁴³ There may also be the danger of generalizing too broadly, giving the surviving evidence undue weight or using arguments from silence for the purposes of a coherent and complete picture.⁴⁴ Again, cautious inferences on the basis of the available sources can be a way forward in such areas.

The overview of Roman drama and theatre presented in this book limits itself to the Republican period, covering the time from the first beginnings of theatrical performances in Rome to the deaths of Caesar and Cicero and the emergence of the Principate. Obviously, Roman drama continued into the imperial period in various forms, but the conditions influencing production and reception of dramatic scripts changed so significantly that another exposition of the political and social context would be required in order to outline the characteristics of Roman imperial drama, its position within the contemporary environment, and the similarities and differences in relation to Republican drama.⁴⁵ This would go beyond the intention and scope of this work, which is interested in evolution, development and interactions of the various dramatic genres in the Republican period. Also, the presentation focuses on the city of Rome as the place most important for literary drama in Latin and includes Magna Graecia where relevant. A history of theatre in the Roman Empire as a whole would require a separate volume with a slightly different approach.⁴⁶

As regards terminology, the poets and the period under discussion are called 'Republican' in preference to 'archaic'; for 'Republican' can be understood as a neutral, chronological term, whereas 'archaic' implies an evaluation from the perspective of later writers or literary historians, which does not apply to the time of the poets, since their writings were 'new' at the time.⁴⁷ Correspondingly, ancient authors commenting on Republican

⁴² See Dupont 1985: 311. ⁴³ See also Farrell 2005: 417 (on Roman epic).

⁴⁴ See W. Slater 2004: 144.

⁴⁵ On aspects of theatre in the imperial period see Bartsch 1994; Beacham 1999; Heldmann 2000; Duncan 2006: 188–217.

⁴⁶ Yet an attempt is made to overcome the criticism of Rawson ([1985] 1991: 469) 'that our view of Roman theatrical history itself is still far too Romanocentric'.

⁴⁷ See Hinds 1998: 55–6; Goldberg 2007a.