THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ROMAN COMEDY

The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy provides a comprehensive critical introduction to Roman comedy and its reception through more than twenty accessible and up-to-date chapters by leading international scholars. This book defines the fundamentals of Roman comedy by examining its literary and comic technique as well as its stagecraft and music, and then traces the genre's influence through the centuries. Roman comedy has served as a model for writers as well as artists ranging from Shakespeare to Molière and from Martin Luther to Cole Porter. Just as the Middle Ages spawned Christianised versions of Terence's comedies, in which harlots find God rather than a husband and young men become martyrs rather than never-do-well lovers, the twentieth century has also given us its take on Roman comedy with Stephen Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and numerous modern versions of Plautus' *Amphitryon*.

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ROMAN COMEDY

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To the memory of
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and
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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations *page* x
List of Contributors xii
Prologue xvii
Acknowledgements xxvii
List of Extant Plays by Plautus and Terence xxviii
Abbreviations Used for References to Fragments xxx

Introduction: Roman Comedy 1
ALISON SHARROCK

PART I THE WORLD OF ROMAN COMEDY

1 Plautus and Terence in Their Roman Contexts 17
GESINE MANUWALD

2 Native Italian Drama and Its Influence on Plautus 32
COSTAS PANAYOTAKIS

3 Roman Comedy and the Poetics of Adaptation 47
MARIO TELÒ

4 The Politics of Roman Comedy 66
ROBERT GERMANY

PART II THE FABRIC OF ROMAN COMEDY

5 Stage Action in Roman Comedy 87
C. W. MARSHALL

6 Music and Metre 101
TIMOTHY J. MOORE

7 Comic Technique 120
ISABELLA TARDIN CARDOSO

8 Metatheatre 136
DAVID CHRISTENSON

9 The Language of Roman Comedy 151
EVANGELOS KARAKASIS

PART III THE SOCIOLOGY OF ROMAN COMEDY

10 Fathers and Sons 173
MARTIN T. DINTER

11 Slaves and Roman Comedy 188
WILLIAM FITZGERALD

12 Mothers and Whores 200
DOROTA DUTSCH

13 Gods and Roman Comedy 217
ANNA CLARK

14 Legal Laughter 229
ANDREAS BARTHOLOMÄ

15 Family Finances 241
ELAINE FANTHAM

PART IV THE RECEPTION OF ROMAN COMEDY

16 The Reception of Republican Comedy in Antiquity 261
GESINE MANUWALD

17 The Manuscripts and Illustration of Plautus and Terence 276
BEATRICE RADDEN KEEFE

18 The Anti-Terentian Dramas of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim 297
MAREK THUE KRETSCHMER

19 Roman Comedy in Early Modern England 312
ROBERT S. MIOLA

20 Roman Comedy in Early Modern Italy and France 325
CÉLINE CANDIARD

21 Roman Comedy in Germany (from Humanism to Lessing) 339
FLORIAN HURKA

22 Roman Comedy on Stage and Screen in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries 350
CÉLINE CANDIARD

Bibliography 367
Index Rerum 407
Index Locorum 410

ILLUSTRATIONS

6.1 Roman mosaic showing a *tibia* and two comic masks. Musei Capitolini, Rome © Photo Scala, Florence – courtesy of Sovraintendenza di Roma Capitale *page* 103

6.2 Bell krater (Campanian red-figure ware) attributed to the Libation Painter, showing a scene from a comic performance. An actor appears to chastise a *tibicina* (a female player of the *tibia*), who accompanies the production. Late Classical/Hellenistic Period, 350–325 BC © National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1973 (D14-1973) 104

6.3 Roman bas-relief showing a scene from a comic performance. A father is held back by his friend as he prepares to accost his son, who is returning home drunk from a party with his slave and a *tibicina*. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy © Scala Archives/Art Resource, NY 105

17.1 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 3305, fol. 8 v, a recitation by Calliopius and illustrations of the comedy *Andria* © Vatican Library 281

17.2 London, BL, Burney 227, fol. 3 r, illustration of the comedy *Amphitruo* © British Library 283

17.3 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 3868, fol. 50 v: masks for the comedy *Adelphoe* © Vatican Library 286

17.4 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. lat. 3868, fol. 53 r, a scene from *Adelphoe* with Parmeno, Sannio, the nameless music girl, and Aeschinus (the figures have been mislabelled) © Vatican Library 287

17.5 Paris, BnF, lat. 7899, fol. 96 r, masks for the comedy *Adelphoe* © Bibliothèque nationale de France 288

17.6 Milan, BA, H. 75 inf., fol. 53 v, busts of characters in the comedy *Adelphoe* © Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana 289

17.7 Oxford, Bodl. Lib., Auct. F. 2. 13, fol. 100 v, a scene from *Adelphoe* with Parmeno, Sannio, the nameless music girl, and Aeschinus © Bodleian Library 290

17.8 Leiden University Library, VLQ 38, fol. 7 r, a scene from *Andria* in which only Glycerium's maid Mysis speaks © Leiden University Library 291
17.9 Tours, BM, 924, fol. 13 v, a performance of the comedy *Eunuchus* © Bibliothèque municipale de Tours 292
17.10 Lesbos, Archaeological Museum of Mytilene, mosaic panels with scenes from Menander comedies © Antike Kunst 294

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PROLOGUE

Martin T. Dinter

Prologues of Roman comedy occasionally drag the producer on stage. He then captures the goodwill of the audience and prepares the stage for the coming performance. He offers some details of the production history and instructs the audience to be quiet and pay attention, telling them how to enjoy the play. Other prologues simply give some idea of what is on offer, a guide for finding one's feet among all the cunning slaves, young men in love, old fathers, pimps, braggart soldiers, courtesans, virtuous maidens, parasites and well-meaning mothers that people Roman comedy. Unlike a handbook or introduction, this volume accompanies, rather than guides, those approaching Roman comedy. Thus, whilst the volume provides introductory material throughout, each chapter also aims to awaken the reader's curiosity and to be useful to 'think with' when pondering Roman comedy rather than to sound an authoritative and exhaustive voice on one particular subject. Nevertheless, readers completely new to Roman comedy will find that the chapters placed at the beginning of this volume such as Alison Sharrock's Introduction, Gesine Manuwald's 'Plautus and Terence in their Roman Contexts' and Costas Panayotakis' 'Roman Laughter: Native Italian Drama and its Influence on Plautus' provide a good entry point to Roman comedy. In addition, chapters with more technical content such as Toph Marshall's 'Stage Action in Roman Comedy' or Tim Moore's 'Music and Metre' will provide both introductory material and original research in order to showcase the depth and breadth of their respective fields. In the same vein, the chapters on reception alternate between broad overviews of what is out there and case studies with close readings, in the hope of whetting your appetite for more. À la comic prologue, I shall now briefly preview the comic reader's contents to provide orientation.

Sharrock first, then. Her introduction challenges the axiom that the primary purpose of comedy is the production of humour and the elicitation of laughter. Highlighting a number of possible ways to read Roman comedy today, she showcases different theories of laughter and provides a potted

history of scholarly approaches to the genre. Questioning a number of preconceptions about sundry supposedly near-universal motifs of Roman comedy, she points out that what we think we know about the genre must constantly be renegotiated and held up for comparison against what each instance actually provides.

Part I: The World of Roman Comedy

Manuwald provides valuable background and context for our exploration of Roman comedy by tracing the development of the genre of the *fabula palliata* (comedy in Greek dress). By tracing predecessors and contemporaries of Plautus and Terence, such as Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius, Caecilius Statius and Luscius Lanuvinus, she reconstructs the emergence of generic conventions. Sextus Turpilius, who follows Terence's (and Caecilius') 'Hellenised' version of *fabula palliata* in titles, models and themes, but remains closer to Plautus (and Naevius) in style, language and scene structures, forms the endpoint of the genre as we know it. Manuwald supplements her diachronic analysis of a succession of *palliatae* with a synchronic sweep across contemporary dramatic genres in Rome: in addition to dramatic genres such as the *fabula Atellana* or *mimus*, there was a fourfold conspectus consisting of two Greek and two Roman versions or two serious and two light varieties of drama. What is more, prose genres, such as oratory and historiography, and the poetic genres epic and satire, which were emerging and developing in Rome at the same time as drama, provide further context for Roman comedy. In addition, references to Roman conventions and explanations of customs which were common in Greece but not in Rome show how contemporary historical and social conditions framed the genre. Finally, contexts of reception, from the immediate effect of performance on audiences to the formation of a canon, complete the discussion.

Panayotakis paints a picture of long-standing and non-Romanocentric theatrical traditions in Republican Italy which existed independently from, and perhaps even before, the advent of the *palliata* in Rome. Scholarship has highlighted the influence of unscripted forms of Italian popular entertainment on Plautus' adaptations of Greek comedies and made a case for the formative influence of South Italian and Sicilian drama, Oscan farce, and Italian mime. Panayotakis surveys and re-considers the evidence for non-literary low drama in the early Republic and relates this evidence to the *comoedia palliata*, especially Plautine theatre. Although details concerning the influence of native drama and the combination process remain opaque, and the pre-literary forms of Italian comedy still present themselves as

shadowy and elusive, he nevertheless underlines that Plautus' scripts were the product of a dynamic and proud negotiation of living cultures. As such, they constitute the first literary specimen of a confidently emerging new civilisation.

Telò points to Roman comedy's acknowledged appropriation of the repertoire of Greek New Comedy, which transforms the stage into a site for meditation on literary inventiveness, repetition, and cultural transcoding, while also creating a field for self-reflexive narrative and theatrical practices. He investigates how the translation and adaptation of Greek comic models, so essential to the poetic workshop of the *palliata* and to the invention of Roman cultural identity, are manifested in the dramatic constructions of Plautus and Terence. Then he charts important ways in which the plots of Plautus and Terence provide commentary on the modes of literary transposition that shape their identities. In the process, he illuminates the distinctive strategies of authorial self-presentation that characterise Plautus' and Terence's positioning of their plays against Greek models.

Germany revisits the judgement that Plautus and Terence were notoriously 'apolitical', especially in comparison with Aristophanes. Today, however, we have grown accustomed to thinking of politics in more capacious terms, not simply as advocacy for or against specific public persons or programmes, but as a broader set of discourses pertaining to the mediation of power in society and to the very constitution of social life. Instances of political engagement can thus be plotted on a spectrum of abstraction, ranging from explicitly partisan activism to tacit and apparently unconscious implication in a system of values. Germany begins his study at the more concrete end of the spectrum, examining topical allusions (and their absence) in Roman comedy before venturing onto the more abstract terrain of cultural politics and the politics of everyday life. In the first section he offers a fresh reading of the famous allusion to Naevius in *Miles Gloriosus*, and in the second he extends the investigation of politics to embrace one of Roman comedy's most remarkable features: its propensity for metatheatrical play.

Part II: The Fabric of Roman Comedy

Marshall discusses the importance of stage action in Roman comedy. He emphasises that comedies were written to be performed, and so the physical dimension of a play is just as significant as its literary features. He supports his argument with examples from Plautus' *Mercator* and Terence's *Hecyra*. These plays reveal that stage sets often supplemented the urban landscape as backdrop. Meanwhile the soundtrack to each play was provided by a single *tibicen* (piper), who complemented and enhanced metrical verses and evoked

appropriate emotions by modulating his tune. However, Marshall also examines offstage space and the fluidity of the Roman stage, which was not flatly delineated but instead negotiated through actors' cues. This flexibility meant that audiences watched multiple scenes at once; while they enjoyed the onstage action, they also imagined what was happening outside the performance space. This dramatic technique is applied perfectly in *Hec.* 314–19: Philumena loudly gives birth offstage while Pamphilus and Parmeno discuss unrelated matters onstage. Indeed, Marshall challenges the idea of a single and visible 'stage'; spectators, sounds, and costumes combined into a multisensory environment during performances of Roman comedy.

Moore zooms in on music and metre in Roman comedy. He discusses the *tibia* in detail, noting that the instrument had a wide dynamic range and a murmuring tone. As pipes were constructed with double reeds, two (or three) tunes could be played at once, allowing for contrapuntal arrangements. Pipers also practised circular breathing, which enabled them to produce sustained musical accompaniment. While the pipe hummed on, actors complemented the music by singing along and performing gestural dances. Besides shedding light on the soundtrack of Roman comedy, Moore also discusses its metrical patterns. He shows how metre was not only a stylistic choice, but also an opportunity for characterisation. Accordingly, powerful characters, such as Pardalisca in *Casina*, dictate the metre in which their interlocutors speak. Similarly, determined characters opt for bacchiacs, two long syllables after a short one, which convey persistence and even insistence. As Moore concludes, music, metre, and meaning cooperated in Roman comedy, culminating in a sophisticated theatrical experience for ancient spectators.

A main goal for both Plautus and Terence was to elicit laughter from the audience. **Cardoso** outlines how they achieved this aim by discussing the comic technique of Roman comedy. She analyses both verbal humour, from puns to hyperbole, and non-verbal humour which includes gestures, vocal modulations, and costumes. In some instances non-verbal and verbal humour combine into a coherent and amusing whole, as in the *seruus currens* (running slave) routine. Some character types were more prone to slapstick humour than others; most notably, pimps were often involved in onstage fights, in keeping with their lower social status. Indeed, as written sources rarely include stage directions, much of the performative element in Roman comedy must be inferred from dialogue, characterisation, and plot. These clues are crucial in reconstructing the Roman stage and recreating the physical humour of performances in antiquity.

Metatheatre serves to remind us that plays are fictional and theatrical constructs. The crafty slave Pseudolus provides a definitive example of this

concept when he asserts that he will not give his plan away 'because plays are long enough as it is' (*Ps.* 388). **Christenson** explores instances of metatheatre in Roman comedy. On an individual level, each play employs metatheatre for a distinct purpose; while *Eunuchus* uses it to evoke discussions about masculinity and hierarchy, *Rudens* instead questions the role of morality in comedy and tragedy. More generally, however, metatheatre gained efficacy from the fact that Roman society was based upon festivals, pageants, and performances. Hence, by deconstructing theatrical spectacles, metatheatrical references encouraged the audience to reflect upon their own social lives. Indeed, metatheatre demolishes preconceptions about playwriting, smashes the invisible 'fourth wall' between the stage and spectator, and allows comedic messages to cross from fiction into reality.

Readers of Latin new to Plautus and Terence are often put off by their use of archaic language. **Karakasis'** chapter addresses this phenomenon by comparing the idiom of Roman comedy to the more standard forms of Classical Latin, as exemplified by the prose works of Caesar and Cicero. In doing so, he provides a full morphology of unusual word forms found in both Plautus and Terence. He argues that Early Latin was consciously channelled into Plautine comedy to create a colloquial tone, whereas Terentian verse was comparatively modern, in keeping with the playwright's taut style. He also demonstrates that Plautus and Terence did not reproduce real dialect, but instead created an artificial *Kunstsprache* for comic purposes. Finally, he provides a typology of linguistic characterisation, in which he differentiates between stock characters based on their speech patterns. In Roman comedy, speech indeed makes the man: while women use *amabo* for 'please', male characters tend to use the more forceful *quaeso*. These patterns recur throughout the Plautine and Terentian corpus with notable regularity, revealing that Roman comic diction was indeed meticulously planned and crafted.

Part III: The Sociology of Roman Comedy

Dinter discusses the morality of Roman comedy. He places special focus on moral relationships within families, and especially on interactions between fathers and sons. Often seen as the domain of the overly strict father who admonishes his wayward son, the household features other members, such as slaves and tutors, who participate in the wider struggle between what presents as Roman traditional morality and Hellenic *laissez-faire*. This chapter also draws upon *sententiae* – pithy maxims – as well as moralising passages, which regularly reveal the true values that motivate comic characters. These can, however, also be used rhetorically simply to win an argument or –

usually by slaves – as part of a play's comic technique. As postscript, the post-classical collection of *sententiae* 'Cato's *Disticha*' condenses the morality of Roman comedy for educational purposes.

Fitzgerald highlights the central role of slaves in Roman comedy. He notes that slaves were so closely linked to the genre that they constituted 'crucial ingredients' in Terence's recipe for laugher (Ter. *Eun.* 36). Accordingly, slaves feature in multiple ways for comedic effect: the *servus currens* ('running slave') contributed to slapstick humour, while the *servus callidus* ('cunning slave') advanced the plot by devising tricky schemes. Fitzgerald also outlines how slave characters interacted with other comic *personae*, such as the wayward son and disgruntled master, and highlights the metatheatricality of slave characters within Roman comedy. In addition, he asks how a free audience responded to running gags about beating, crucifixion, and torture, while examining the relationship between relatively mild onstage punishments and the grim reality that many Roman slaves endured.

At first sight, Roman comedy is bound by rigid sexual stereotypes. But **Dutsch** breaks new ground by comparing two antithetical character types – the mother (*mater*) and the whore (*meretrix*). She challenges this apparently direct polarity by observing that on the one hand mothers act as pimps, while on the other prostitutes proudly display strong maternal instincts. Indeed, while Roman playwrights were obliged to pay lip service to existing codes of female sexual behaviour, they often portrayed women in a sensitive and compassionate light. Plautus emphasised that women were forced into prostitution by financial pressures, and Terence's prostitutes are often upwardly mobile, ambitious workers looking to improve their social status. By portraying women with such profound nuance and ambiguity, Roman comedy invited its spectators to look beyond the inflexible social categories of 'mothers' and 'whores'.

Clark explores the intimate tie between gods and Roman comedy. Gods were celebrated during festivals, which doubled as performance opportunities for the plays of Plautus and Terence. Moreover, gods drive plot and action: at the end of Plautus' *Amphitruo* Alcmena gives birth to Jupiter's son, Hercules, along with her own mortal offspring. She thus attains the elevated status accorded to a god's companion, and averts her cuckolded husband's anger. Clark also compares Roman New Comedy with its Greek counterpart, concluding that Plautus and Terence reference the gods more often than Menander and Diphilus did. Furthermore, Clark relates intriguing patterns in divine invocations. Hercules is mentioned most often, and lovers naturally call upon Venus and Cupid, but even slave characters demonstrate a profound understanding of the full pantheon, including Jupiter, Minerva, and Ops.

Given the scarcity of extant sources on Republican Roman law, jurists have drawn heavily on fictional sources, such as the comedies of Plautus and Terence, for information on the pre-imperial legal system. **Bartholomä** assesses the extent to which Roman comedy constitutes a reliable source of information about Roman law. This question is complicated by the mixture of both Greek and Roman law codes in Roman comedy, which have been further contaminated by wholly imaginary 'stage laws'. These fictional legal concepts were concocted for entertainment purposes only, with no basis in reality. In the course of his analysis, Bartholomä summarises several key legal concepts, from the *mancipatio* (ownership transfer) to the *dos* (dowry). He concludes that there is no generic rule that governs whether a given comedic passage conformed to Greek or Roman law. Scholars must consider each passage on an individual basis in order to glean insights about classical jurisprudence.

According to Terence, 'old men become far too worried about money' (*Adel.* 955). **Fantham** reveals that this preoccupation was shared by young men, who sought funds with which to impress their love interests. She establishes that most adolescents in Greece and Rome depended on their fathers for money. If these fathers proved tight-fisted, the erstwhile lovers were obliged to earn their own allowance. This basic scenario, fuelled by financial tension, occurs in more than two-thirds of the Plautine and Terentian corpus. However, raising funds through legitimate means proves so difficult in Roman comedy that even married men resort to domestic embezzlement. Most notably, Chremes in Terence's *Phormio* steals from his wife's estates in order to support his mistress. Fantham concludes that financial and sexual misbehaviour are linked phenomena; comic denouements do not only ensure a happy ending for fictional lovers, but also include the fair restitution of ill-gotten gains. She ends her chapter with a glossary of financial and commercial terms, which helps readers to navigate the complex economics of Roman comedy.

Part IV: The Reception of Roman Comedy

Manuwald examines audience reactions to Roman comedy in antiquity. By drawing upon source material such as Cicero's *De Oratore* and Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*, she demonstrates that Roman audiences enthusiastically supported revivals of their favourite plays. Audience response was not, however, limited to passive spectatorship; it also entailed active engagement with comedic texts. From the first century AD onwards, grammarians such as Servius Clodius catalogued the plays of Plautus and Terence, whilst making an effort to distinguish between the authentic and the spurious. Scholars also

responded to Roman comedy by creating canons of plays or rankings of playwrights. In the hands of grammarians and scholars, comedy then transcended its original performative role and attained literary status. The editions they produced did not only further the transmission of the plays of Plautus and Terence, but also contributed to the prominence of Roman comedy up to the early Christian era.

Radden Keefe surveys the illustrated manuscript tradition of Plautus' and Terence's plays. By exploring the palaeographical features of surviving manuscripts, she reconstructs how Roman comedies were edited from Late Antiquity onwards. In her survey of textual transmission, she also points out that some illuminators painted unique scenes in each manuscript based on what they deemed crucial, useful, or interesting. Moreover, they also transposed Roman comedy into medieval settings. Most notably, the Tours manuscript of Terence's works includes drawings of Chaerea – originally disguised as a eunuch – in a monk's habit. Nevertheless, Radden Keefe emphasises that not all depictions were unique; scribes often worked from a set of model illustrations. These 'copying relationships' explain the similarities between the illustrations of the Vatican, Paris, and Milan manuscripts of Terence. However, these manuscripts also show the efforts of several artists to improve upon or update whatever model they worked from.

Hrotsvit of Ganderheim was a learned Saxon noblewoman who took the veil in the tenth century. As a medieval female writer and a composer of Latin drama, she was doubly unique. **Kretschmer** pays homage to the work of this enigmatic figure by exploring the relationship between her plays and those of Terence. He outlines the influence of both Terentian and biblical imagery on Hrotsvit's corpus. Numerous character parallels exist, such as that between Terence's Chaerea (from *Eunuchus*) and Hrotsvit's Calimachus; both *personae* resolve to rape the girls for which they have fallen in a misguided attempt at love. Kretschmer also explores the social and personal aspects of Hrotsvit's writing. Hrotsvit uses Terentian motifs and phrases, but moulds them into a Christian context; hence, her work represents the 'Christianisation of Terence'. Hrotsvit was no mere hagiographer, but an eloquent and enthusiastic adaptor of Roman comedy.

Early modern England proved fertile ground for Roman comedy. Revival performances of Plautus and Terence were staged at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where classical playwrights were celebrated as both didactic tools and sources of entertainment. **Miola** outlines how Roman comedy flourished in this environment, though in a sanitised form that would appeal to Christian audiences. He reveals that the originals were often adapted for early modern versions with new characters and settings. Thomas Heywood's adaptation of *Rudens* featured innovations such as

a monastic choir, offstage duets between heroines, and a ballad in praise of poverty. The resulting pastiche speaks volumes about the invasion of post-classical versions of Roman comedy by Christian themes. Miola also explores the close relationship between Shakespeare's Falstaff and the Roman stock character of the *miles gloriosus* (boastful soldier). Furthermore, he analyses *Hamlet* with reference to Roman New Comedy: Ophelia is the maiden, Hamlet the brash young man (*adulescens*), and Polonius the archetypal blocking father, a riled-up *senex iratus*. Early modern playwrights borrowed heavily from Roman comedy, which provided them with situations, characters, and dramatic codes.

Candiard discusses the reception of Roman comedy in early modern Italy and France. She focuses on the crucial role of schools and universities in disseminating ancient plays, and explores how educational systems encouraged the birth of national comedy. Indeed, Italian and French comedies, most famously those of Ludovico Dolce and Jean de Rotrou, were heavily influenced by Plautus and Terence. Nevertheless, it was not only *fabula palliata* (comedy in Greek dress) which provided inspiration for early modern poets. Atellan Farce, also spawned a key theatrical innovation in the form of the *commedia dell'arte*. Candiard outlines how Roman stock characters and scenes migrated into this new genre. Nevertheless, Roman comedy was not only adapted into French and Italian plays. It also stimulated the production of theoretical works and commentaries, used for teaching, translating, and interpreting ancient plays in an early modern context.

Following on from Candiard's chapter on Roman comedy in Italy and France, **Hurka** analyses the impact of Plautus and Terence in early modern Germany. In the Humanist era, plays were read for the purpose of moral instruction. It was not until the Enlightenment that an active reception occurred, and Roman comedies were adapted for the German stage. However, even as Latin comedies attained an apex of popularity, they were displaced in the intellectual climate by Greek texts. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing exemplifies this shift in attitudes. He began his career as an advocate for Plautine comedy, but later turned towards Greek literature. Indeed, by outlining the rise and fall of Roman comedy among German intellectuals, Hurka provides a comprehensive overview of early modern reactions – and rejections – of Roman comedy.

Recent scholarship has brought to the fore the performative aspect of Roman comedy. Plautus and Terence were not writing for readers, but for spectators. Comedic meaning is therefore not conveyed by the dialogue alone, but also through music, costumes, and sets. In her chapter, **Candiard** explores how auditory and visual effects help update Roman comedy for a modern audience. She explains how Amphitryon has been converted into

musicals and films, and outlines the new subplots and special effects that were introduced in the transposition process. These radical revisions helped to create blockbusters like Jean-Luc Godard's 1993 film *Hélas pour moi (Alas For Me)*. In addition, Candiard emphasises the remarkable comedic continuity from Plautus and Terence to Jeeves and Wooster: modern sitcoms, films, and musicals retain strong echoes of their Roman originals.

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EXTANT PLAYS BY PLAUTUS AND TERENCE

Those coming to Roman comedy through translations occasionally face the problem that the Latin titles of Roman comedy translate in more than one way. To avoid confusion this volume will refer to the plays by their Latin titles either in full or abbreviated as listed below. In brackets I give the English titles as used in the most widely available translations as an aid to locating references.

1 Plautus

Translations are given in brackets; the plays for which no translation is given have been named after one of their characters.

Amph.	*Amphitruo* (Amphitryon)
As.	*Asinaria* (The Story About the Asses; The Comedy of Asses; The One About the Asses)
Aul.	*Aulularia* (The Pot of Gold; The Concealed Treasure)
Bacch.	*Bacchides* (The Bacchis Sisters; The Two Bacchises)
Capt.	*Captiui* (The Captives; The Prisoners)
Cas.	*Casina*
Cist.	*Cistellaria* (The Story About the Little Box; The Casket Comedy)
Curc.	*Curculio*
Ep.	*Epidicus*
Men.	*Menaechmi* (The Menaechmus Brothers; The Two Menaechmuses; The Brothers Menaechmus)
Merc.	*Mercator* (The Merchant)
Mil.	*Miles Gloriosus* (The Braggart Soldier; The Swaggering Soldier)
Most.	*Mostellaria* (The Little Ghost Story; The Ghost; The Haunted House)
Persa	*Persa* (The Persian)
Poen.	*Poenulus* (The Little Carthaginian)

Ps. *Pseudolus*
Ru. *Rudens* (The Rope)
St. *Stichus*
Trin. *Trinummus* (The Three Pennies; The Three Dollar Day)
Truc. *Truculentus*
Vid. *Vidularia* (The Story About the Suitcase; The Tale of a Travelling-Bag)

2 Terence

Ad. *Adelphoe* (The Brothers)
And. *Andria* (The Girl from Andros; The Woman of Andros)
Eun. *Eunuchus* (The Eunuch)
Haut. *Heauton Timorumenos* (The Self-Tormentor)
Hec. *Hecyra* (The Mother-in-Law; Her Husband's Mother)
Ph. *Phormio*

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR REFERENCES TO FRAGMENTS

Acc.	Accius
Afr.	Afranius
At.	Atta
Atell.	Atellana
D.	Dangel (Accius)
Enn.	Ennius
FPL^{3}	*Fragmenta poetarum Latinorum*, third edition
Fr.	Fragment
Gram.	Grammatical works
Inc.	*incertum*
Lab.	Laberius
Liv. Andr.	Livius Andronicus
Mim.	mimus
Naev.	Naevius
Nov.	Novius
ORF	*Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (Malcovati)
Pac.	Pacuvius
Pall.	*palliata*
Plaut.	Plautus
Pomp.	Pomponius
Praet.	*praetexta*
R.^{3}	Ribbeck, third edition (dramatic fragments)
Sk.	Skutsch (Ennius' *Annales*)
Ter.	Terence
Tit.	Titinius
Tog.	*togata*
Trag.	*crepidata*
Turp.	Turpilius
V.^{2}	Vahlen, second edition (Ennius)
W.	Warmington (fragments of early playwrights and Lucilius)