SLAVE THEATER IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Roman comedy evolved early in the war-torn 200s BCE. Troupes of lower-class and slave actors traveled through a militarized landscape full of displaced persons and the newly enslaved; together, the actors made comedy to address mixed-class, hybrid, multilingual audiences. Surveying the extant fragments of early comedy and the whole of the Plautine corpus, where slaves are central figures, this book is grounded in the history of slavery and integrates theories of resistant speech, humor, and performance. Part I shows how actors joked about what people feared – natal alienation, beatings, sexual abuse, hard labor, hunger, poverty – and how street-theater forms confronted debt, violence, and war loss. Part II catalogues the onstage expression of what people desired: revenge, honor, free will, legal personhood, family, marriage, sex, food, free speech; a way home, through memory; and manumission, or escape – all complicated by the actors' maleness. Comedy starts with anger.

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Plautus and Popular Comedy

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For Sandra Joshel

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Preface

I wrote this book with a photograph of Eduard Fraenkel in front of me, a photograph that used to sit on the desk of my teacher, Gordon Williams, who was Fraenkel's friend. I thought of them as I worked; I wrote for them, a book they are not here to see. Apart from urging me to work harder, they reminded me daily of the vast wealth of earlier scholarship on the *palliata*. The Plautine corpus is a universe; every detail of it opens up questions examined by a long genealogy of scholars. A book that took all their remarks into account would be many times the length of this one, already long enough, but I am truly sorry for the omissions. Readers should note that the text itself upon which my arguments are based is a porous one; a century-old collection of actors' notes and performance transcripts assembled by scholars in the first century BCE has fascinated scholars ever since, so that our understanding today depends on two thousand years of scholarship, most of which is now in remote storage, but which still calls out to engage in the ongoing conversation. My goal is to understand what happened between actors and audiences in Latium in the 200s BCE, and in that pursuit I have had much help. It is a pleasure now to give due thanks.

First, to Lon Grabowski, who had to live with this all these years: for countless trips to the movies, for conversations about everything from Bugs Bunny to bread riots, and for a laugh so great it makes actors play to him.

To the readers for the press, for their manifold generosity: their time, their erudition, their tact, their thoroughness (it was clear that they read with the Latin text open beside them). Special thanks to the third reader, who, unpersuaded by the book's main argument, still fully supported publication while providing a detailed list of points of contention. This is a model few could live up to; I believe there is something about the spirit of Plautus that evokes a generous spirit in those who study him.

Hence many thanks to the generous community of scholars working on Roman comedy, especially Dorota Dutsch, C. W. Marshall, Timothy

Moore, Niall Slater, and above all Sharon James, whose own book was nearing completion simultaneously and whose lively emails sparked lively ideas. My thanks and love to Mary-Kay Gamel, David Konstan, and James Tatum, for whose help and support I have had occasion to be grateful many times over the years. Kathleen McCarthy has been ever gracious in the face of opposing argument, as has Peter G. McC. Brown, who very kindly sent me the text of his 2013 Glasgow conference paper.

Rebecca Langlands, luckily for me, spent two terms at UCLA in 2014–15 as Palevsky Visiting Professor, and I learned much from her about political culture and popular memory; she was good enough to send me early drafts of her forthcoming book on Roman exemplarity. Alex Dressler likewise sent me his essay on Plautus, property, and aesthetics, which appeared just in time for too-brief mention here, a token of some red-letter comic conversations.

Several eminent historians took the time to help with bibliography and advice, particularly John Bodel, Tim Cornell, Arthur Eckstein, Peter Garnsey, and Brent Shaw: giving directions, as it were, to a stranger in town, a most friendly deed. Jessica Clark shared her experience in the fields of Roman political culture and military history; Peter Holliday shared his expertise in the public art of the mid-Republic; David Lewis and Kostas Vlassopoulos both sent me copies of illuminating work in progress on ancient slavery and the writing of its history. I owe a special debt to Keith Bradley, who was a reader for the 2014 *Classical Antiquity* article that laid out this book's main argument and whose influence pervades the bibliography and, I hope, the argumentation.

Several experts read chapters and provided detailed comments: Timothy Moore read chapter 3 and saved me from numerous errors; Marilyn Skinner read chapter 5 with her usual acumen and care; Matthew Leigh read chapter 7 with insightful erudition, as always. I cannot thank him enough for his constant support and exchange of ideas throughout this project, not only as a reader for the *CA* article but back at least to 2006.

My UCLA colleagues provided essential consultation and support: Sander Goldberg, who read the first draft in 2009 with salutary stringency; Mario Telò, who shared his own work in progress on Plautus; and most of all Brent Vine, who read chapter 6 and answered endless questions. All points linguistic in this book depend on his tutelage; associated errors are obviously mine. I am thankful to the university for a sabbatical in the fall of 2015; UCLA also provided two excellent research assistants, Grace Gillies and Kristie Keller, who checked chapter 1, the whole bibliography, and the timeline (Appendix 1). Since I kept adding bibliography

until the manuscript was torn from my grip, I doubtless imported more errors, despite their best efforts: may they someday have assistants as good as they were. The students in several UCLA courses on comedy taught me a lot about what is funny and why, particularly Grace Gillies, with her love of the low, and Hans Bork, with his love of language – now both doctoral candidates: may they finish their dissertations and go on to glory.

Thanks to Dan-el Padilla Peralta for letting me read work in progress, and to my former students Caroline Cheung, Henry Gruber, and Katie Tardio, for help in understanding the historical significance of the distribution of pottery; also to my fellow panelists at the 2016 SCS meeting – Page duBois, Matthew Leigh, Ellen O'Gorman, William Owens, Dan-el Padilla Peralta – as well as to Peter Rose for trenchant comment from the audience and subsequent comments on chapter 1.

My old friend Thomas Fedorek helped me find Dr. Olivier Pansiéri when all academic channels failed. My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Pansiéri for writing to me about his father, who died, as he says, too young.

It took some doing to produce this book, and I am grateful to Gabe Moss for the map of the Trerus Valley, to Rachel Kamins for formatting the timeline, and to Michael Sharp and the team at Cambridge University Press for ever-ready help. Copy-editor Jane Robson made many tidy improvements. Special thanks to the peerless Jodi Haraldson for formatting and merging the manuscript in the autumn of 2016, a bad time for us all.

Thanks to fellow participants at the 2009 Langford Conference in Tallahassee: C. W. Marshall, Kathleen McCarthy, Timothy Moore, Niall Slater, John Starks, and especially Kenneth Reckford for his warm hospitality and his belief in the project. Thanks to fellow participants at the 2013 Glasgow conference on "Popular Comedy" organized by Costas Panayotakis and Ian Ruffell: a galvanizing experience. Thanks to Stavros Frangoulidis and Stephen Harrison for inviting me to the Eighth Trends in Classics conference in 2014 at Thessaloniki, and to Lawrence Tritle for including me in the 2013 conference on "The Many Faces of War" at Loyola, where I had the chance to speak with Peter Meineck and the poet Michael Casey. Thanks as well to Stephen Harrison and Sebastian Matzner for the invitation to participate in the "Complex Inferiorities" conference at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 2014, where I had the benefit of Ellen O'Gorman's comments on the levels of abjection in the plays.

This work has been presented on several continents and I am grateful to the audiences at all of them: at the American Philological Association Annual Meeting in 2011 (Timothy Moore's landmark seminar on the audience of the *palliata*), Boston University, Claremont Graduate

University, St Anne's College, Oxford, the Society for Classical Studies Annual Meeting in 2015 (panel on "The Other Side of Victory," organized by Jessica Clark), Stanford University (the great "Cargo Culture" conference in 2014), SUNY Buffalo, UNESP (Assis, Brazil, with special thanks to the members of my *minicurso*), University of British Columbia, University of California at Davis, University of California at Santa Barbara, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (the 2012 NEH Institute run by Sharon James and Timothy Moore), and the University of Southern California. I was honored by invitations to present this work in the Agnes Kirsopp Lake Michels Lecture at Bryn Mawr College in 2006; the Gail A. Burnett Lecture in Classics at San Diego State University in 2006; the Frank M. Snowden Lecture at Howard College in 2014; the Brackenridge Distinguished Visiting Lecture at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2014; the Lauritsen Lecture in History at the University of Minnesota in 2015; and a keynote lecture to the Classical Association meeting at Edinburgh in 2016. All these audiences asked questions that made me think.

Most of all, I learned from working closely with Plautus' words onstage, first as directed by Mary-Kay Gamel and performed by the casts of three productions of my translation of *Persa* in 2004–5; under the direction of Meryl Friedman in the 2007 Getty Villa production of my translation of *Rudens*; and in the 2016 performance of *Mostellaria* at the Getty Villa by the *commedia*-inspired Troubadour Theater Company. Special thanks to Shelby Brown, and to Ralph Flores not only for the invitation to consult but for sharing his great sense of theater with my 2015 class on ancient comedy.

This book is dedicated to Sandra Joshel, whose lifetime of work on Roman slavery has been an inspiration and a direct influence on me since we first team-taught Mythology in the spring of 1978, at Rutgers: a mythic friendship, and one that continues to make me think and laugh. She read the 2009 draft and commented on every page, and like a true friend told me that stringency was in order; she urged me always to think about Roman slavery in its own terms and times. Her own work, as will be seen, shaped this book's very structure, and so I offer it to her, a tribute to her knowledge, her wisdom, and her dedication to history from below.

Stillwell Point, California
July 2009–July 2017

Acknowledgments

Cover image: Statuette of a seated comic actor. Unknown artist; Greek (South Italian; Apulia?), 325–275 B.C. Terracotta; 4.5 × 1.75 × 2.5 inches. J. Paul Getty Museum 96.AD.164. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

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Note to Readers

For the convenience of general readers, the text used throughout is the Oxford Classical Text edited by W. M. Lindsay, or occasionally the Loeb text edited by Wolfgang de Melo (2011a, b, c, 2012, 2013), both readily available. The discussion of textual problems is kept to a minimum, but readers should bear in mind that the text we have is imperfect and that arguments based on any single word must be checked against commentaries and critical editions. I follow de Melo in numbering the fragments as in the edition of Salvator Monda (2004), which differs somewhat from Lindsay's numbering. References to Eduard Fraenkel's *Plautine Elements in Plautus* are to "Fraenkel 2007," as this useful and widely available volume is a combined translation of the text of *Plautinisches im Plautus* (1922) and the addenda of *Elementi Plautini in Plauto* (1960), so for "Fraenkel 2007" read "Fraenkel 2007[1922 + 1960]." Translations throughout are my own except as otherwise noted.

Appendix 1 is a timeline that lays out the lifespans of the comic playwrights alongside the major wars and incidents of mass enslavement through which they lived. It is hoped that historians of theater will look at the wars, that military historians will look at the playwrights, and that literary historians will take notice of the incidents of mass enslavement.

For the convenience of readers who might come to this book from fields other than Roman comedy, Appendix 2 has a list of all Plautus' extant plays with brief plot summaries geared to this book's focus, and, from Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Plautus, Ennius, and Caecilius Statius, the names of comedies with extant fragments (Caecilius Statius probably was not writing before the 190s at the earliest, however).

In addition, chapter 2 includes lists of the names of female prostitutes and boy slaves (table 2.1) and adult male slaves (table 2.2) in Plautus' plays, which will, I hope, help the reader overwhelmed by names.