

Mostellaria

A Stage Edition of the "Mostellaria" (Haunted House) of Titus Maccius Plautus
Plautus: Mostellaria
Bristol Classical Press

Plays in Latin with English translations on facing pages; introduction and introductory notes in English

Each number includes "Reviews and book notices."

Plautus was Ancient Rome's greatest comic playwright, Shakespeare drew heavily on his plots, and his legacy is prevalent throughout modern drama. In this expanded edition of his successful book, one of America's foremost Classical scholars introduces performance criticism to the study of Plautus' ancient drama. In addition to the original detailed studies of six of the dramatists's plays, the methodology of performance criticism, the use of conventions, and the nature of comic heroism in Plautus, this edition includes new studies on: * the induction into the world of the play * the scripted imitation of improvisation * Plautus's comments on his previous work * the nature of 'tragicomedy'.

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The book, *The Captivi* and the *Mostellaria*, has been considered important throughout the human history, and so that this work is never forgotten we have made efforts in its preservation by republishing this book in a modern format for present and future generations. This whole book has been reformatted, retyped and designed. These books are not made of scanned copies of their original work and hence the text is clear and readable.

This volume takes a new approach to Roman drama by looking at comic and tragic plays from the Republican and imperial periods in 'context'. By presenting a number of case studies and considerations of wider issues, the 33 international contributors explore the role of Roman drama in contexts such as the literary tradition, the relationship to works in other literary genres, the historical and social situation or the intellectual background.

Titus Maccius Plautus is better known in English as Plautus, a prolific Roman playwright of the Old Latin period. As can be expected little is known of his early life. Accounts are reconciled that he was born in Sarsina, a small town in Emilia Romagna in northern Italy, around 254 BC. He first worked in the theatre as a stage-carpenter or scene-shifter. It would take quite some time for his acting talent to develop and then to be recognised. Redolent of the characters he originally portrayed he adopted the names 'Maccius' (a sort of clownish stock-character popular in farces) and 'Plautus' (to mean "flat-footed" or "flat-eared", like a hounds' ears). In acting he appears to have met with some success and from it a regular income. An account now suggests that he then returns to manual labor and to have used his spare time to study Greek drama, especially the New Comedy of Menander. Whatever the impulse it is clear that he would, between c. 205 BC and the time of his death in 184 BC write a large and significant canon of plays. Indeed, his name became a byword of theatrical success. His comedies are, in the main, sourced from standard Greek models and this includes his reworking and adapting the plays of the earlier Greek playwrights for a Roman audience, adding local nuance and cultural aspects to ensure both their acceptability and understandability. These works are the earliest surviving intact works in Latin literature. Unfortunately, of the 130 plays which are attributed to him a mere 20 survive intact and a further 30 only in part or fragmented form. The historical context within which Plautus wrote can be seen, to some extent, in his comments on contemporary events and persons. In Plautus's lifetime Rome was becoming increasingly powerful, gathering influence and flexing its undoubted muscle to its greater good. The 17 year Second Punic War (218 BC - 201 BC) where for many years Italy itself was rampaged by Hannibal and his armies before his own final, crushing defeat back in Africa were seismic events in the Ancient world, with hundreds of thousands killed and entire regions of Europe overrun and devastated. Against this horrific backdrop Roman theater was at the early stage of development and still dependent on the earlier Greek classics for a supply line of stories and characters. Expanding empires tend to appropriate from other cultures and call it their own. Plautus was a popular comedic playwright, who along with his near-contemporary, Terence, was able to integrate these earlier works into the demands of a vast new cultural, economic and military power that was growing at an incredible rate. Plautus died in Rome in 184 BC.

"Plautus' *Mostellaria* is one of ancient Rome's most breezy and amusing comedies. The plot is ridiculously simple: when a father returns home after three years abroad, a clever slave named Tranio devises deceptions to conceal that the son has squandered a fortune on parties with his friends and purchasing his beloved courtesan. Tranio convinces the gullible father that his house is haunted, that his son has purchased the neighbor's house, and that he must repay a moneylender. Plautus animates this skeletal plot with farcical scenes of Tranio's slapstick abuse of a rustic slave, the young lover's maudlin song lamenting his debauchery, a women's grooming scene (played by male actors), a drunken party, a flustered moneylender, spirited slaves rebuffing the father, and Tranio simultaneously hoodwinking father and neighbor. This is the first book to offer an in-depth study of *Mostellaria* in its literary and historical contexts, and aims to help readers appraise the script as both cultural document and performed comedy. As a cultural document, the play a range of Roman preoccupations - from male ideologies of the acquisition, use and abuse of property, relations between owners and enslaved persons, and the traffic in women, to tensions between city and country, the appropriation and adaptation of Greek culture, and the specters of ancestry and surveillance - while as a performed comedy, it

celebrates the power of creativity, improvisation and metatheater. In *Mostellaria's* farce, sleek simplicity replaces complexity as Plautus aggrandizes his comic hero by stripping plot to the minimum and leaving Tranio to operate alone with no resources other than his quick wit. The enduring appeal of the genre is explored in a chapter on *Mostellaria's* reception, which reveals modernity's continuing fascination with farce and shifting engagement with Roman culture"--

"*Mostellaria*" is one of Plautus' most lively plays. Probably based on a Greek original, Philemon's "Ghost", it concerns the scheming slave Tranio's attempts (including the invention of a haunted house) to disguise from his old master the sexual and financial prodigality of the latter's son. The complex plot of deceit and confusion is, in the way of the genre, finally resolved in reconciliation and forgiveness. This edition, first published in 1968, was conceived as a first reader in Roman comedy. Its introduction includes sections on Plautus, on the genre, on the play and its plot, on Plautine language, style and metrics. Annotation and a full vocabulary aid the beginning reader.

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Reprint of the original, first published in 1869.

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"*The Captivi and the Mostellaria*" from Plautus. Roman playwright of the Old Latin period (254-184B.C.).

This 2006 book examines notions of *virtus* as it contributed to Roman ideas of manliness.

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