



Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus

Erich Segal

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"Mr. Segal has performed the by no means trifling task of making [Plautus's] achievement credible and understandable."--*Times Literary Supplement*. "It is refreshing to find Plautus examined for what he undeniably was--a theatrical phenomenon."--*Classical World*. "We certainly need in English a book devoted to Plautus alone and here we have it."--*Phoenix*. "Many readers will do as I have done: read *Roman Laughter* with enjoyment and profit."--*Classical Philology*. "Of all the Greek and Roman playwrights," Erich Segal writes, "Titus Maccius Plautus is the least admired and the most imitated." In *Roman Laughter*, the first book-length study of Plautus, Segal argues that this neglected writer, often denounced by scholars for such crimes as "barbarous clownery," merits our serious attention precisely because he was the most successful poet of the ancient world. He analyzes the reasons behind this success, placing the author in his social and historical context and observing that Plautus's wildly comedic flouting of Roman law and custom had a cathartic effect upon a people bound by rule in every aspect of their lives. This expanded edition contains a new preface that reconsiders the work of Plautus in light of recent scholarship and also contains essays on the *Amphitryon* and the *Captivi*.

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