

‘TITVS MACCIVS PLAVTVS’

THE ways of naming the comedian which happen to survive to us are *Plautus*,¹ *Macci Titi*,² *Maccus*,³ (*M*)*accius*,⁴ and *T. Macci Plauti*;⁵ the best attested of these names, *Plautus*, is twice adorned with curiously arch flourishes.⁶ The evidence as a whole presents two main problems: how do we interpret and reconcile *Macci Titi*, *Maccus*, and *Maccius*: and how do these names relate to the name *Plautus*? The purpose of this paper is to emphasize more strongly some known facts and relate them to a point not brought into the discussion before.⁷

¹ *Plautus* (-um, -o): Ter. *An.* 18 (166 B.C.), *Ad.* 7, 9 (160 B.C.); [Pl.] *Cas.* 12, 14, 34, 65 (160–150 B.C.?). These from within living memory of the author ('ob.' 184 B.C., Cic. *Brut.* 60), the rest problematic: *Men.* 3, *Po.* 54, *Tri.* 19, *Tru.* 1; [Pl.] ap. Gell. *N.A.* 1. 24; Aelius Stilo ap. Quint. 10. 1. 99; Accius *didasc.* ap. Varro *de comoediis Plautinis* i ap. Gell. *N.A.* 3. 3. 9; Volcacius Sedigitus ap. Gell. *N.A.* 15. 24. These attestations are all directly traceable to the second century B.C. In the first century B.C. (Varro, Cicero, Horace) and subsequently (grammarians, etc.), this is the regular name. N.B. The genitive *Plauti* is only attested for the second century B.C. once, Ter. *Eun.* 25.

² *Macci Titi*: *Mer.* 10 (*mactici* B, *mattici* CD); Accius loc. cit. (*m. accii titi* PR, *macticii* V), corr. F. Ritschl, *Parerga* i, 1844, pp. 1–43. (In printed editions before Ritschl's *Trinummus* of 1848, these passages were emended *Marci Accii* [and *As.* 11 *Marcus*] and the playwright was known as M. Accius Plautus. Renaissance scholars seem to have made false inferences from Varro *L.L.* 8. 36. On any view, *Accii* is impossible at *Mer.* 10 as the only available genitive of that name is a disyllabic *Acci*).

³ *Maccus*: *As.* 11, not to be changed (e.g. *Maccii* would give a split anapaest and false ecthipsis).

⁴ (*M*)*accius*: Varro *L.L.* 7. 104 ('*Maccius in Casina*' [267]); problematic, as Varro habitually refers to 'Plautus', as e.g. in the immediate context); Festus p. 274 L ('...*Jus poeta*') with Paulus p. 275 L ('*poeta accius*'); Fronto p. 162 N. ('*accius plautus*'); Pliny *N.H.* praef. lib. 14. (*maccio plauto*, *m. accio plauto*).

⁵ *T. Macci Plauti Casina explicit*, subscription to *Casina*, fol. 224a of the palimpsest; the only direct evidence for the writer's having had *tria nomina*, and not strong evidence either.

⁶ (a) *Cas.* 34 *Plautus cum latranti nomine*:

this remains enigmatic even if the traditional interpretation in the light of Paulus p. 259 L (*plauti appellantur canes quorum aures languidae sunt*, etc.) is relevant and the connection is 'dog'; see Leo ad loc., A. Ernout, *Plaute*, ii³, 1957, p. 157 n. 1. I have no better suggestion to make. (b) *Po.* 54 *Plautus patruus pulti-phagonides* (*platus* cod.) is possibly a periphrasis for *Maccius* (not *Maccus*: -ius = -ides, 'son of'). The missing links in this possible identification are (i) evidence that *Maccus* in Atellane Farce (see below) was an uncle; (ii) evidence that the word *maccum*, which occurs in a glossary as an explanation of *κοκκολάχανον*, i.e. *puls*, a concoction of grain and vegetables, and which maintains a tenuous survival in some Romance dialects (W. Beare, *Roman Stage*³, 1964, p. 139) would have been connected, whether by folk-etymology or rightly, with *Maccus*. (Lindsay's and Ernout's text is impossible, in spite of E. Pasoli, *Latinitas* xxviii (1960), 29–36. There is a lacuna between 53 and 54 [so Geppert, 1864], in which *graece* must have been expressed [cf. *Cas.* 32 ff., *Mer.* 9 f., *MG* 86, *Tri.* 18, Ter. *Pho.* 24 ff.; *Plautus As.* 10 f., *graece*/barbare = *graece*/latine]. One cannot make 'Patruus' the Latin title, because (a) one cannot supply *uocat* from *uocatur*, (b) *Patruus* cannot be treated as an indeclinable noun against all analogy [it is the object of the imaginary *uocat*], (c) the proposed hyperbaton *Plautus 'Patruus' pulti-phagonides* would be incredibly harsh and pointless, as well as quite alien to the style of dramatic verse used here. Leo's text is right.)

⁷ There is no comprehensive review in English; for useful summaries, see G. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 1952, p. 50; W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*³, 1964, pp. 45–7. See further Schanz–Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* i, 1927 pp. 55 f.; Sonnenburg, *R.E.* xiv. 95 ff. for a proper bibliography.

Let us begin by considering *Macci Titi*. The genitive in *-i* is ambiguous. There are, in theory, four possible conversions to the nominative:

(a) *Maccius Titius*. This may be ruled out: double *gentilicia*, representing the paternal and maternal *gentes*, do not occur before the time of Augustus.¹

(b) *Maccus Titius*. This is possible but improbable: *cognomen*+*gentilicium* (‘Caesar Iulius’), which first becomes common in Tacitus, is rare in the Republican period, and such examples as there are do not antedate the middle of the first century B.C.² This habit presages the decline of the *praenomen* in imperial times.

(c) *Maccus Titus*. This too seems improbable: *cognomen*+*praenomen* (‘Caesar Gaius’) seems very weakly attested in the Republic.³

(d) *Maccius Titus*. This is the most plausible conversion; *gentilicium*+*praenomen* is quite well attested.⁴

The trouble is that (d) cannot be reconciled with *Maccus* at *As. 11*; (b) and (c) on the other hand are compatible with *As. 11*, but are not intrinsically very likely. The suggestion that we should understand *macci* in *macci Titi* as the genitive of the noun *maccus* ‘clown’, a description and not part of the name, yet take *Maccus* (as we must) at *As. 11* as a name is artificial and involves an elaborate set of assumptions;⁵ so does the view that the writer was called *Titus Maccus Plautus* on an Etruscan pattern;⁶ we must also make the rather strong assumption that Varro, Paulus, Pliny, and Fronto are all wrong in having an ordinary patronymic in *-ius*. This is the main problem of the Plautine names, and it has not been satisfactorily resolved. Let us try a different approach, considering each name separately, since taking two, let alone three, of them together seems to lead to an impasse.

(a) *Maccius*. This is at once a real name⁷ and stands to *Maccus* as *Marcus* to *Marcus*, and recalls the *persona* of Atellane Farce called *Maccus*. This has long been recognized,⁸ and it seems generally agreed, partly because of the difficulty *Maccus*/*Maccius*, partly because it would be a remarkable coincidence if the

¹ e.g. P. Sulpicius Quirinius, cos. ord. 12 A.D., C. Terentius Tullius Geminus, cos. suff. 46 A.D.; see B. Doer, *Die römische Namengebung*, 1937, p. 105 f., pp. 174 ff.

² e.g. *C.I.L.* i² 2152 (end of Republic) *Fronto Iuncius C. f.*; 775 (Eleusis, 48 B.C.) *Pulcher Clau[d]ius et Rex Mar[c]ius*; Cicero *Att.* 13. 52. 1 (*Barba Cassius*), 8. 15. 3 (*Balba Cornelius*); *Q. fr.* 2. 4. 1 (*Macer Licinius*), 2. 13. 2 (*Pola Seruius*); *fam.* 13. 64. 1 (*Strabo Seruilus*), 6. 12. 2 (*Cimber Tullius*); Caelius ap. *fam.* 8. 12. 2 (*Pola Seruius*); D. Brutus ap. *fam.* 11. 1. 4 (*Bassum Caecilium*); id. ap. *fam.* 11. 9. 1 (*Pollione Asinio*). Cicero never does this in his speeches. *C.I.L.* i² 2509a (Pompeii, probably ca. 80 B.C.) *L. Sulla Cornelius* is different in an important respect.

³ The only strict parallel seems to be Varro *L.L.* 5. 83 *Scaeuola Quintus pontifex maximus*; Ennius *Ann.* 303 f. V² *Cornelius* . . . *Cethegus Marcus* (where metre groans under the stress) is not quite the same.

⁴ e.g. *C.I.L.* i² 1024 *Alfenos Luci(os)*, Enn.

Ann. 331 V² *Aeliu' Sextus*, Gellius *N.A.* 1. 24 *Pacui Marci* (2nd century B.C.), possibly Catullus 10. 30; *C.I.L.* i² 7 *Cornelius Lucius Scipio Barbatus* (third century B.C.) is not quite parallel.

⁵ So Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*², 1912, 84; but in his edition he writes a capital M at *Mer.* 10.

⁶ So W. Schulze, *Lateinische Eigennamen*, 1904, p. 298. The same objections will apply to believing he was really called Titus Maccus Plautus as to believing he was really called Titus Maccius Plautus: see below.

⁷ e.g., P. Maccius P. f. Melas, *C.I.L.* i² 1634.

⁸ See *T.L.L.* s.v. *maccus*; W. Kroll, *R.E.* xiv. 126–7; F. Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*¹, 1895, p. 75; *Plautinische Cantica*, 1897, p. 106; E. Cocchia, *L'origine del gentilizio plautino*, 1899, pp. 27 f.; F. Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*², 1912, pp. 82–6; W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*², 1964, pp. 139 ff.

comic playwright were to have been born a 'Foolson', that it is in some sense a nickname, or a pseudonym given to or adopted by the playwright for professional reasons.

(b) *Plautus*. Again, this is a real name;¹ it is an adjective meaning 'flat-footed', and as a *cognomen* belongs to that large class of *cognomina* which are taken from aspects of the appearance of the original bearer.² No doubt someone who had flat feet was the remote ancestor of the *gens Plautia*:³ but it is wrong to accept that part of the tradition in the note on *ploti* in Festus-Paulus that tells us that 'poeta Maccius' was given the nickname 'Plautus' because he happened to have flat feet, as does Leo. For it is arbitrary to accept this part of the note while rejecting its assumption that 'Maccius' was the comedian's real name; and we may well wonder how the writer of the note could possibly have known this detail of the comedian's appearance in the absence of any really reliable information about his biography.⁴ The writer is merely making an illegitimate inference from the name to the appearance of the comedian. It is, nevertheless, possibly of significance that the writer thought it necessary to explain the name Plautus as something acquired, not inherited, by the comedian himself, and needing therefore a special explanation.

There is indeed a more attractive explanation, first suggested, I believe, after the first edition of Leo's account, and not taken seriously until after the second edition appeared.⁵ *Plautus* is synonymous with *planipes*, literally 'flatfoot', which is a normal word for 'mime-actor'.⁶ This deserves to be taken seriously, as

¹ It is a rare but acceptable *praenomen* (*C.I.L.* i² 189 *G. Magolnio Pla. f.*; 34 *Pl. Specios Menervai donom port[at?]*; 204 [?]). as well as being quite a common cognomen (*C.I.L.* i² 1798 *L. Aufidio L. f. Plauto*; 2056 *L. Pomponius L. f. Plotus*, cf. 2055; the urban praetor of 200 B.C. was probably named G. Sergius Plautus, see T. R. S. Broughton, *Magistrates of the Roman Republic* i, 1951, p. 326 n. 2).

² See G. D. Chase, 'The Origin of Roman Praenomina', *HSICP* viii (1897), 109 ff., 116; this is the largest single class of *cognomina*, constituting more than a quarter of the examples in *C.I.L.* i¹.

³ Roman *gentilicia* are etymologically patronymic adjectives, cf. *Τελαμώνιος Αίας* in Greek. There are 16 Plautii and 6 Plotii in *C.I.L.* i², and 69 Plautii and 21 Plotii in *R.E.* xxi.

⁴ His supposed Umbrian origin, alleged in this same note (Festus-Paulus p. 274-5 L.), may only be an inference from *Mo.* 770 (so e.g. W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*³, p. 48); one thinks of the quality of the argument, based on passages of the *Parthenion*, about the provenance of Alcman (see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 1968, pp. 220 f., pp. 241 f.). The stuff in Gellius *N.A.* 3. 3. 14 about his career does not represent a reliable tradition, and such plausible material as it contains (e.g., that Plautus was an actor) is inference that we too could have made.

There is no other information about the writer's appearance, and that is no surprise: even in the case of Terence, there was no sound iconographical tradition. The specific-sounding information in Suetonius *Vita Terenti* 6 that he was 'of medium stature, slight physique, and dark complexion' is merely the stock physiognomy of Carthaginians, cf. Plautus' nurse Giddeus, *Po.* 1112 *statura hau magna, corpore aquilo*. See F. Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*³, pp. 69-78.

⁵ The suggestion was first made, as far as I know, by E. Cocchia, op. cit. p. 19, as something so absurd as not to warrant attention, a judgement characteristic of the poor quality of the book as a whole. G. Duckworth (*The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 1952, p. 50) and W. Beare (*The Roman Stage*³, p. 47) take the point more seriously, but do not emphasize it sufficiently.

⁶ Atta (*ob.* 77 B.C.) *Aedilicia*, tog. fr. 1 Ribbeck 'daturin estis aurum? exultat planipes . . .'; Juvenal 8. 189 ff. 'populi frons durior huius, qui sedet et spectat triscurria patriciorum, planipedes audit Fabios, ridere potest qui Mamercorum alapas'; Gellius *N.A.* 1. 11. 12 'quid enim foret ista re ineptius, si ut planipedi saltanti ita Graccho contionanti numeros et modos et frequentamenta quaedam uaria tibicen incineret'; Ausonius *ep.* 11 'nec de mimo planipedem nec de comoediis histrionem'; Macrobius *Sat.* 2. 1. 9 'planipedis . . .

we should be adding coincidence to coincidence if we were content to suppose that our comedian happened to have been born a Macc(i)us, 'Fool(son)', and subsequently acquired the name Plautus simply because he was flat-footed, and not because this name also happened to be specially applicable in his case in the sense 'Mime-actor'. To suppose he was actually born a Maccius Plautus is even more implausible.

(c) *Titus*. This is a common *praenomen*,¹ and it is generally supposed that this, at least, is the name given to the comedian by his father. Maybe so: but it has not been observed that this name too is suspiciously appropriate for a comedian, and can be interpreted with either or both the other names to complete the pattern of association with lowbrow comedy.

F. Bücheler established the existence of a sub-literary word *titus* meaning 'dove', 'pigeon'.² Words meaning 'dove', 'amorous bird' are often enough used by metonymy to mean 'penis' or 'lecher'.³ Persius *Sat.* 1. 19-21 writes:

tunc neque more probo uideas nec uoce serena
ingentis trepidare Titos, cum carmina lumbum
intrans et tremulo scalpuntur ubi intima uersu

The image in these disgusting lines is not straightforward *φαφάνωσις*: perverted sexual masochism is imputed to the victims, the *ingentes Titos*. The scholiast remarks *ingentis Titos dicit Romanos senatores aut a Tito Tatio rege Sabinorum aut certe a membri uirilis magnitudine dicti Titi*.⁴ Now whether the common noun *titus* is simply a homonym of the name Titus or is etymologically identical with it,

impudica et praetextata uerba iacientis'. *Excalceatus* was virtually a synonym for *planipes*: Seneca *ep.* 8. 7 '... quam multa Publi(i) non excalceatis sed cothurnatis dicenda sunt.' The opposition is between the bare feet of the nimble actors of farce or mime (see, e.g., A. D. Trendall, *Phylax Vases*² [B.I.C.S. Suppl. 19], 1967, no. 111 and *passim*; M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*², 1961, fig. 539 and *passim*), and the high-soled boot of tragedy.

¹ G. D. Chase, *op. cit.* p. 152, p. 135 gives the following league-table from *C.I.L.* i¹: Lucius (535 cases), Gaius (527), Marcus (404), Quintus (241), Publius (224), Gnaeus (110), Aulus (99), Titus (82). Much the same result is obtained from a cursory check of the magistrates for the years 250-180 B.C. (in Broughton, *op. cit.*): Gaius (59), Marcus (47), Lucius (39), Quintus (29), Publius (24), Gnaeus (11), Titus (9), Aulus (8).

² *A.L.L.* ii (1885), 118-20 = *Kleine Schriften* iii 77f.; *Σ* in Pers. *Sat.* 1. 19-21 'titi columbae sunt agrestes'; Isid. *orig.* 12. 7. 62 'palumbes . . . quas uulgus titos uocant'; cf. O. Skutsch, *Hermes* lxxviii (1933), 353, on *C.L.E.* 50.

³ *Plautus Ba.* 68 *turturem* = *penem* (and so too *palumbem* 51? cf. W. G. Arnott, *Gnomon* xxxix [1967], 139). In Greek, *στρούθος* = 'lecher' as well as 'dove' (Hsch. s.v.), cf.

στρούθιας 'lecher', *com. adesp.* 592, and the name *Στρούθιας* applied to a famous parasite in Menander (*Kolax* fr. 2), and Longus' characterization of the lustful Gnathon, 4. 11. 2. Whether Menander intended the name to have this implication we cannot tell, but it is worth observing that Plautus names three of his parasites in such a way as to indicate lechery as well as greed, which suggests that he at least took Strouthias to imply that vice (he knew and translated the play: Ter. *Eun.* 25). (a) *Scortum* in *Cap.*, also called Ergasilus, cf. *ἐργαστήριον* 'brothel' (*D.* 59. 67, etc.), *ἐργασία* 'prostitution' (*D.* 18. 129). (b) *Curculio* in *Cu.*, 'weevil', the true *para-sitos*, but also 'penis', cf. Persius *sat.* 4. 38 *inguinibus quare delonsus gurgulio* (the same word) *extat*. (c) *Peniculus* in *Men.*; the explanation in 78 is patently 'against expectation', and editors should print *ideo quia—mensam quando edo detergeo*. The parasite strolls in and raises a belly-laugh before beginning his speech proper (79 ff.), with which the opening couplet has no connection whatever. If the explanation were not 'against expectation', this couplet would be perhaps the worst-placed and feeblest joke in ancient comedy.

⁴ See further Festus p. 142 L, Paulus p. 143 L; Lucilius 78 Marx with his notes ad loc.; Vahlert *R.E.* xvi. 981-5 s.v. *Mutunus Tutunus*.

and whether the name Titus was felt (rightly or wrongly) to mean 'having a large penis' is not relevant here:¹ the combination of this *praenomen* with 'Macc(i)us' or 'Macc(i)us Plautus' invites interpretation in the light of the vulgar word 'titus' to be taken as a reference to the phallus worn in lowbrow Italian comedy. It was regular male garb in the Phylax comedies of Tarentum, as the vases show,² and was worn in Italian mime at least occasionally long after Plautus' time;³ this must reflect its use in the earlier period also, and it seems likely that Plautus himself used it at least sometimes even in the more sophisticated *palliata*.⁴

Suppose for the sake of the argument what cannot be demonstrated, that our playwright really did call himself T. Maccius Plautus, and that all three names are, as I have suggested, adopted. If so, he will have done so with urbane irony. For, on the one hand, it was pretentious to adopt a form of name proper at that time only for the more socially prominent Roman families.⁵ The spelling *Plautus* for *Plotus* will have been in tune with this, the reverse, as it were, of Claudius Pulcher's adoption of the popular form Clodius.⁶

The absurd contrast between the portentous shape and clownish associations of the *tria nomina* would have been in tune with the Saturnalian world of the *ludi* at which everyday values were stood on their heads. Moreover, aesthetically, there is an ironic contrast between the actual tone and style of the playwright's *palliatae* and the humble artistic implications of his pseudonyms. For in fact, his plays are much more polished and far less gross than the rude entertainments suggested by them.⁷

¹ Roman boys wore phallic emblems on necklaces as talismans, Varro *L.L.* 7. 97, F. Marx *Lucilius*, 1904, i. p. xlv, and his note on Lucilius 78. We ought not to rule it out as impossible that a Roman father might give his son the name Titus *ominis causa* (on the eighth or ninth day after birth, when *praenomina* were given: J. Marquardt, *Römische Altertümer*, 1886, vii. 10) as having a definite meaning, 'well endowed'. But it is unlikely that this was so in historical times, because no other *praenomen* was any longer given as having a definite meaning: they were just labels. For example, the relative frequency of the numeral-names Quintus, Sextus, Decimus, etc., shows that they can neither have indicated order of birth nor the month of the year in which the child was born. Moreover the very fact that the meanings of *praenomina* was already a research topic in Varro's time shows that they can no longer have been given according to a transparent system. The anonymous *de praenominibus* (attached to the end of Valerius Maximus) 6 tells us that Titus a Sabino nomine Tito fluxit, Appius ab Atto, eiusdem regionis praenomen, which ties in with the first part of the Persius-scholias's comment. The second part of his remark, which is clearly very pertinent to the full nastiness of the satirist's lines, is transmitted nowhere else, and was overlooked by G. D. Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 152,

but deserves credence all the same.

² See A. D. Trendall, *op. supra cit.*, p. 80 n. 6 *ad fin.*

³ See H. Reich, *Der Mimus*, 1908, i 258 n., citing the scholiast on Juvenal 6. 65 ('sicut in amplexu subito et miserabile longum'), sc. *penem ut habent in mimo*, mime being Juvenal's subject here; Arnobius *adv. nat.* 7. 33 'delectantur . . . Stupidorum capitibus salapittarum' (Scaliger: *salpinctarum*) 'sonitu atque plausu, factis et dictis turpibus, fascinorum ingentium rubore'.

⁴ *Ru.* 432 perhaps suggests that Sceparnio is wearing the phallus; there are other lowbrow elements in this play, e.g. the references to Atellane Farce at 535 f. There is no reason why Plautus' practice should have been uniform in this respect.

⁵ So Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen*² p. 83; some freedmen were beginning to adopt *cognomina* on manumission as well (e.g. L. Livius Andronicus), but these will have been distinguished by their humble or alien forms from the pure Roman or Italian *cognomina*, and in fact the great majority of *liberti* listed in C.I.L. i² p. 829 do not have *cognomina*. For a later period, see I. Kajanto, 'The Significance of non-Latin cognomina', *Latomus* xxvii (1968), 517-34.

⁶ See F. Sommer, *Kritische Erläuterungen zur lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre*, 1914, p. 22.

⁷ The Farce in Plautus' time was sub-

Moreover, on the assumption that *tria nomina* were used by or of the writer, there is no reason why he should have stuck to just T. Maccius Plautus, 'Phallus son of Clown the Mime-actor': he might equally well call himself T. Plautius Maccus, 'Phallus the son of Mime-actor the Clown' or even Plautus Titius Maccus, 'Mime-actor son of Phallus the Clown':¹ any of these would make the same points. Similar considerations will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, if he only ever used *duo nomina* at one time, and will put the question whether he called himself Maccus or Maccius in a new light: for it will cease to be a real question whether *Macci Titi* represents Maccus Titus or Maccius Titus.

This may help to explain the curious passage of Varro's *de comoediis Plautinis* reported by Gellius immediately after the citation of Accius' *didascalica* included by Varro. Apparently Varro asserted that there was a certain 'Plautius' who wrote comedies and that this was not the same person as 'Plautus'. This, said Varro, was one contributory factor in the confusion of the years subsequent to Plautus' death as to what were authentic Plautine plays: a script which contained a verse in the prologue with the ascription *Plauti* in the genitive could not be certainly attributed to 'Plautus' because it might be by 'Plautius'. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, no surviving Plautine play in fact presents the ascription *Plauti* in the prologue, and it looks as though all those which did have such an ascription were included mechanically by Varro in the 'doubtful' group. But, unless Varro was merely obfuscating the issue further than was necessary by inventing a hypothetical 'Plautius' (which cannot be put past him), he must have actually seen the trisyllabic name 'Plautius, -um, -o' somewhere in the context of comic authorship to justify his belief that there was such a separate playwright. Suppose that he had. The problem to which he is pointing, the apparent variation of Plautus/Plautius, is exactly parallel to the problem of Maccus/Maccius: he will have solved it by putting all 'Plautius' plays automatically in the dustbin of the 'spurious' group; whereas a more economical explanation of the variants would be that our writer sometimes called himself Plautius Maccus, sometimes Maccius Plautus, sometimes signed himself *Plauti*, sometimes *Macci Titi*, and so on, by the jocose combination of two or three real Roman names that had lowbrow comic resonances. The false premise from which the difficulties derive is that the names in question must in some sense be 'real' names. The one used of the playwright for the purpose of the didascalical records was presumably 'Plautus', the name by which his contemporaries remembered him: this acquired the status of a real name before scholarly work on the playwright began with Accius and Stilo.

The playwright is strictly anonymous. That the surviving twenty-one plays come from one hand, however, is beyond doubt. These are the plays whose authenticity no one had impugned in Varro's time: the subjective criterion of style used by Varro and others to determine the authenticity of other plays attributed to Plautus but doubted by some was not the prime criterion in

literary: no doubt a scenario would be worked out in some detail, but a good deal was improvised and depended upon the skills of the actors. The *commedia dell'arte* before Goldoni provides a parallel. A century after Plautus, the Farce and the Mime—genres which ought not to be thought of as clearly distinct—became 'literary', i.e., people began to write fixed scripts (Novius,

Pomponius, etc.). The fragments of literary Farce are exceedingly obscene, which is striking, seeing that the great majority of citations come from grammarians who cite these writers not to illustrate their tone, but to discuss odd words or forms.

¹ *Plautus* is a rare but acceptable *praenomen*: see above, p. 80 n. 1.

these plays. The idiosyncratic matters of surface style (e.g., the *anguillast: elabitur* expression so characteristic of Plautus) are, of course, precisely what a good forger can imitate: but an examination of certain aspects of the deep-level style of the plays—e.g. Plautus' treatment of final -s after a short vowel, wrongly thought at present to be a matter of metrical convenience—show conclusively not only that we are dealing with one man's work, but also that the state of the text is astonishingly good, considering that our tradition derives from an edition compiled in the second century A.D., some three hundred years after Plautus; as if the first folio of Shakespeare were first to have been printed about 1925, the manuscript tradition of each play having previously been *sui generis* and precarious.

Not to know a playwright's real name (still less anything about his life) is disconcerting; but our man is so powerfully individual that the Muses would indeed speak *Plautino sermone* if they wished to speak Latin,¹ and he does not need the name and biography which Accius, Stilo, Varro, and others have striven so hard to provide him.

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¹ Quintilian 10. 1. 99, quoting Aelius Stilo (through Varro, no doubt); see E. Fraenkel, *C.R.* lvii (1943), p. 109 for an

interesting note on the source and progeny of this remark.