

**DECEPTION IN PLAUTUS; A  
STUDY IN THE TECHNIQUE  
OF ROMAN COMEDY**

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Deception in Plautus; a study in the technique of Roman comedy by Helen E. Wieand

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**HELEN E. WIEAND**

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# DECEPTION IN PLAUTUS

A STUDY IN THE  
TECHNIQUE OF ROMAN COMEDY

*A DISSERTATION*

*Presented to the Faculty of Bryn Mawr College in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy*

BY

HELEN E. WIEAND



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## INTRODUCTION

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From the time of Ritschl's critical work upon the comedies of Plautus (1848) to the present, one of the chief desires of students of Plautus has been to solve the problem of the Plautine and un-Plautine elements in the comedies. The existence of un-Plautine elements is quite evident from the clear traces of revision which the parallel versions in the manuscripts show. Very little comparative study of all the plays has been made, combining minute internal analysis of the plot of each play and a study of all its features, internal as well as external, with a comparison of similar features in the other plays; for as Langen pointed out,<sup>1</sup> too often the conclusions as to Plautine technique have been drawn from the minute analysis of single plays, instead of from such comparative studies.

It is because we feel that such a study can make a definite contribution to the solution of the problem of the Plautinity of the plays that we have undertaken it. For this purpose even a very cursory reading of the plays suggested the element of deception as one occurring in a sufficient number of the comedies to serve as a basis for

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<sup>1</sup> *Plautinische Studien*, Preface.

the study. Moreover the prominence of that element in many of the comedies is striking.

An analysis, then, of the comedies from the point of view of the plot of deception, with a consideration of the general situation within that plot, of the characters involved in it, both the tricksters and the persons tricked and the assistants engaged to carry out the stratagems, of the object and nature of the deception, will, at least, be worth while for a surer appreciation of Plautus himself. A study of the technique of the plot of deception, the methods employed in carrying it out, and the interrelation of the plans laid for the trickery and the execution of those plans, naturally involves a study of the Greek originals of Plautus.

It is hoped that this investigation will help to determine whether it is true of this device, as of anagnorisis, that it "does not seem that a single element essential to an intrigue, a single feature of the physiognomy of a character is thoroughly, necessarily, irreducibly Roman."<sup>2</sup>

At least it is hoped that some light may be thrown upon Plautus' relation to his sources, the use that he made of those sources, and the fate of his plays at the hands of those who presented them in later times.

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<sup>2</sup> Legrand: *Daos*, p. 53.



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DECEPTION IN PLAUTUS

# DECEPTION IN PLAUTUS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROMINENCE OF DECEPTION AS AN ELEMENT IN THE COMEDIES OF PLAUTUS

**B**EFORE entering upon a detailed examination of the comedies of Plautus in order to study minutely the elements which make up the feature of deception it is necessary to state a fact which is evident from even the most cursory reading of the plays, namely, that deception appears in varying degrees of importance. In that respect the plays fall into three groups:

- (1) Those in which deception is the chief interest
- (2) Those in which deception is an important but not the chief feature
- (3) Those in which deception is almost or entirely lacking.

From the broadest point of view

Class 1 would include the *Asinaria*, *Bacchides*, *Captivi*, *Casina*, *Curculio*, *Epidicus*, *Mercator*, *Miles*, *Mostellaria*, *Persa*, *Poenulus*, *Pseudolus*,