

The Language of Slaves in Plautus' *Mostellaria*

The liveliness of Plautus' use of language has long been recognized: Aelius Stilo said that the Muses would speak the Latin of Plautus (Quintillian *Inst. Orat.* 10, 1, 99) and Aulus Gellius called Plautus 'the glory of the Latin tongue' (*Noctes Atticae* 19, 8, 6). Varro in his list of playwrights says that Plautus deserves the prize for his 'sermones' or the dialogues between the characters (Parmeno, fr.15). Slaves form the centerpiece of Plautus' comedies and have more lines than any other characters.

Plautus is known for using colloquial language, and that this language gets more colorful particularly among the lower classes, of which the slaves are members. This paper looks at the language of the slaves in Plautus' *Mostellaria* focusing in particular on the character of the 'servus calidus', Tranio, as well as other servile characters such as Grumio. The paper will examine Plautus' use of colloquialisms, archaisms, and pragmatics, as well as discuss the differences between the characterization of rural and urban slaves. In addition, the paper looks at a certain patterns in word order employed when these characters are frustrated or displeased with the person with whom they are speaking. The repetition of a precise word order no doubt points to an existing pattern, perhaps linked with the particular emotions of frustration and displeasure - emotions that color colloquial language specifically, as opposed to the more detached nature of standardized literature.

The paper explores the differences between Plautus' portrayal of servile language from that of his freeborn characters and seeks to show what features are characteristic of everyday language. Not only does this paper explore Plautus' use of language and characterization, but will also apply Plautus' depiction to the wider context of the portrayal of slaves in the second century B.C. and the evolution of everyday Latin that is the root of the later Romance languages.