PREFACE

Any study of Roman tragedy must begin with Otto Ribbeck's *Römisch Tragödie* (1875), which remains an important study of the myths ar Greek precedents of Latin plays. Equally important, and perhaps mo well known, is Ribbeck's *Scaenicae Romanorum Poesis Fragmenta*, vc 1: *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (3d ed., 1897), in which he a tributes the fragments of Roman tragedy to individual dramatists ar offers reconstructions of plot outlines. Since Ribbeck, monographs ha discussed each of the early dramatists individually, especially on que tions of Greek models and poetic style. These philological studies a important, in particular H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (1967 R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca: Agamemnon* (1976) and *Seneca's Thyestes* (1985 Elaine Fantham, *Seneca's Troades* (1982), and Michael Coffey ar Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra* (1990), for their attention to dr maturgical detail; but for the most part, the other commentaries tre plays as texts rather than as performance events.

Recent studies on the Roman theatre examine the dramaturgical, cu tural, and political contexts of performance: W. Beare's *The Roman Sta* (3d ed., 1964) remains an important general study of drama at Rome f the content and dramaturgical contexts of tragedies and comedies. A tonio La Penna's *Fra teatro, poesia e politica romana* (1979) is a colle tion of earlier influential articles on the content and reception of Roma tragedy. Richard C. Beacham's *The Roman Theatre and Its Audien* (1992) looks at the development of the Roman theatre and applies an e amination of a dramatic production of comedy to a study of audience e pectation. William J. Slater, ed., *The Roman Theatre and Society* (199 presents essays that address questions of dramatic reception througho the Roman Empire, but not the reception of tragedy exclusively. Sha

Bartsch's *Actors in the Audience* (1994) examines the theatricalized contexts of Nero's reign and the later historiographic tradition of his reign, which recognized the inherent theatricality of Neronian Rome. Most recently, Richard C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (1999) examines the role played by emperors as sponsors of and participants in spectacles. All of these studies provide valuable insights into the cultural contexts of tragedy, on and off the stage.

There has also been recent interest in the dramatic tradition and cultural context of historical dramas. Joining the influential study by Nevio Zorzetti, *La pretesta e il teatro latino arcaico* (1980), are the recent important studies of Harriet I. Flower, "*Fabulae Praetextae* in Context: When Were Plays on Contemporary Subjects Performed in Republican Rome?" (1995) and *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (1996); T. P. Wiseman, *Roman Drama and Roman History* (1998), which examines rituals and historiographic sources for the existence and production of preliterary historical dramas; and Gesine Manuwald, *Fabulae praetextae: Spuren einer literarischen Gattung der Römer* (2001), which provides texts, commentary, and extensive analyses of *praetextae*.

Performance criticism for Roman tragedy, however, lags behind studies in Roman comedy. Important are Niall W. Slater's *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind* (1985) and Timothy J. Moore's *The Theater of Plautus: Playing to the Audience* (1998), for their treatment of Plautus' plays as performance events. Important studies in Greek theatricality include Sander M. Goldberg's *The Making of Menander's Comedy* (1980) and M. S. Silk's *Tragedy and the Tragic* (1996).

The most important recent study on Seneca is A. J. Boyle's *Tragic Seneca* (1997), which considers the metatheatricality of Senecan tragedy and its later reception under the Renaissance. My work on tragedy began before the publication of Boyle's book as an attempt to synthesize the approaches taken by these textual, cultural, and performance-criticism studies, looking at the genre of tragedy as a whole, to consider the role played by theatricality in shaping Senecan tragedy. We arrive independently at the same conclusions about what Boyle terms "Seneca's actor audience," but from different routes. Boyle uses Seneca as a starting point for further discussion of the theatricality of Renaissance texts. Rather than work my way back from Seneca, I work forward, focusing on the process of how Roman tragedy became increasingly theatricalized and the role played by Roman culture in shaping the perception of theatricality on and off the stage. My approach seeks to put Seneca's plays within the dramatic tradition of Roman tragedy

rather than outside of it, contrary to the conclusion drawn by Beare (1964, 235):

> There is no evidence that Seneca (or whoever the author was) was imitating the old Latin tragedies; the Senecan tragedies are simply artificial imitations of Greek tragedy, worked up in the style of the Silver Age, and they are meant to be read or declaimed, not acted.

A word about the evidence. Reconstructing aspects of Roman culture can be difficult with the best of evidence, and the problem becomes magnified when dealing with scant production notices of plays and fragments from tragedies that survive because of chance references or due to their interest to lexographers. In essence, the evidence is a limited sample of the already partial extant fragments. I follow the evidence by examining those plays whose fragments are numerous enough for analysis or for which we have details concerning original or subsequent productions. I make cautious but informed attempts to reconstruct the cultural contexts of tragic performances for their significance to Roman culture in general, realizing the dangers involved in under- or overstating the available evidence. My analyses must remain suggestions that I hope will form the basis of further discussion, not conclusions.

My approach is diachronic: chapters 1 and 2 reflect the growing incorporation of a rhetoricized reality onstage, as plays begin to point to their own theatricality, and follow a chronological order of tragic production; chapters 4 and 5 analyze the reversal of this exchange—the permeation of theatricality first into the audience's reality as real-life events are viewed through a theatrical lens, and second, back into the theatre as offstage theatricality defines the dramatic action onstage, producing the metatragedies of Seneca. An analysis of the *fabulae praetextae* (chapter 3) separates these two discussions and provides a means of observing how the audience (re)interprets historic events in relation to the theatre.

Parts of this study took root in my dissertation at Yale University under the supervision of Gordon Williams, and I am grateful for his guidance. The following have read early drafts of parts of the manuscript, while I was still developing my ideas; I am grateful for their encouragement and criticism: James C. Anderson, Jr., James O'Hara, Michael Putnam, Guy Rogers, and Vasily Rudich. A special thanks to Niall Slater for his encouragement. I would also like to thank the anonymous referees from the University of Texas Press, who will readily see my debt to their generosity of time in providing remarkable guidance and astute

criticism. I have followed their advice closely, but all errors remain my own. Thanks, too, to Jim Burr, Sherry Wert, and the editorial staff at the University of Texas Press for their enthusiasm and guidance for this project. My thanks to Henry Schwab Publishers for allowing me to reprint, with changes, "Staging Brutus" in chapter 4, which originally appeared as an article, "Staging Brutus: Roman Legend and the Death of Caesar," in Elizabeth Tylawsky and Charles Weiss, eds., *Essays in Honor of Gordon Williams: Twenty-Five Years at Yale* (2001). Financial assistance for my research came from the Social Sciences and Research Council for the Humanities (SSRCH) of Canada and a Yale University Dissertation Fellowship, for which I am grateful.

This study is aimed at a diverse readership interested in the Roman theatre. All Latin citations in the main text, therefore, are translated into English, and I have tried to keep Latin citations in the notes to a minimum. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

THEATRE TO THEATRICALITY

In the *De finibus* (1.2.4), Cicer claims that Roman dramatists copied their Greek originals "word fc word." If we read further in the same passage, however, Cicero state that Romans did more than merely translate from the Greek:

> What strikes me first about [those who claim to despise Latin writings] is this: why does their native language not please them on serious topics when not unwillingly do they read Latin tragedies that have been translated word for word from the Greek? Indeed, who is so hostile practically to the name Roman that he would despise or reject Ennius' "Medea" or Pacuvius' "Antiope" because he claims to enjoy the very same plays written by Euripides, and hate Latin literature? "Am I to read," he says, "the 'Synephebos' of Caecilius or Terence's 'Andria,' rather than the corresponding plays of Menander?" I disagree with such people so much that, although Sophocles has written an "Electra" best, nevertheless I think the version by Atilius, however badly translated, ought to be read, whom Licinius calls an "iron writer," but all the same a writer, I think, and deserving to be read. To be sure, complete ignorance of our own poets is the sign either of total laziness or of extreme rare taste. In my opinion, no one seems sufficiently learned who is ignorant of our native authors. If we read the line from a Latin tragedy, "Would that in the forest . . .," no less eagerly than we do the same line in the Greek, would the same passages in which Plato discusses morality and happiness be less effective if translated into Latin? And what if we do not perform the mere task of translation, but taking care to preserve what was expressed in the original by those of whom we approve, we add to them our own opinions and style of com-

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