

In studies of animal imagery in Plautine comedies, critics have focused particularly on monkeys and have tried to explain the metaphor underlying the presence of *simiae* (McDermott, *TAPA* 1936; Lilja, *Arctos* 1980). Most recently, Connors has argued for the employment of such imagery in terms of Plautus' metapoetic anxieties: a monkey's critical ability to imitate relates to the playwright's "imitative" manipulation of his Greek models. The purpose of the present study is to examine the role of elephant allusions in the *Pseudolus* and their significance for the historical framework of the play (cf. Leigh's 2004 study of the impact of the Punic war on the plays). In the *Pseudolus*, the title character, in his effort to cheat the pimp Ballio of Phoenicium, his master's girlfriend, assumes the persona of Surus. While Surus is supposedly the name for one of Ballio's slaves, at the same time that name alludes to a famous animal, namely Hannibal's elephant, Surus. According to Pliny, Surus was the most important elephant in the war, so significant that Cato referred to him by name (*elephantum qui fortissime proeliatum esset in Punica acie Surum tradidit vocatum*, *Nat.* 8.5.11). Pseudolus, as Surus the elephant, aided by another slave, Simia, the monkey, causes immense fear for the protagonists and slaves alike and is able to achieve his goal. The implications of the name then are more subtle than has previously been recognized. Staged in 191 BCE, the play was part of the Megalesia, the festival in honor of the Magna Mater, whose arrival in Rome in 204 BCE brought about the end of the war. It is not coincidental, therefore, for a play staged to commemorate the completion of the temple of the Magna Mater to appeal to the public memory of the Second Punic War, arousing both fear and laughter.

Pseudolus' *dolus*, a well meditated plan, proves most significant for the denouement of the play. The main trick that Pseudolus employs to gain possession of Phoenicium for his master Callidorus is to cheat the slave Harpax of a letter that proves Ballio's transaction with a certain soldier, to whom the girl had been sold. Pseudolus' ultimate goal is to conquer Ballio, the pimp, like a fortress (*Ballionem exballistabo lepide...hoc oppidum admoenire ut hodie capiatur*, 583-9). Pseudolus' use of military language, a familiar feature in Plautine comedy, is justified when he pretends to be Surus and manages to retrieve the significant letter from Harpax. Then Simia, Pseudolus' accomplice, assumes the persona of Harpax, the soldier's slave, and deceives Ballio. The cooperation between the elephant and the monkey proves successful (*pace* Slater 1987). When Ballio realizes what has happened, he refers to Surus as a super-human being: *mihi quoque edepol iamdudum ille 'Surus' cor perfrigefacit* (1215); as soon as Harpax provides a physical description of Surus (*magno capite, acutis oculis... magnis pedibus*, 1219-20), the reference to big feet is sufficient for Ballio to grasp fully the extent of his deception (*perdidisti, postquam dixisti pedes*, 1220). Pseudolus as an elephant is a formidable foe, one who uses the animal's intelligence and gentleness (cf. Toynbee 1973) but also needs the monkey's cunning to perform his task.