Translating Plautus today
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In a few words
This work focuses on translating and staging an Ancient play by Plautus for a mainstream audience.

Ancient Drama is not old!
With its grotesque masks, weird choruses or obscure plots, Ancient Drama does not always seem mainstream. Apart from scholars, who still knows the Latin name Plautus? Yet, he was a very popular author of comedies in Antiquity and he has had a great posternity. His plays have inspired Molière, Shakespeare and even modern sitcoms owe him their narrative structures and dramatic motives. So if his work could still be funny and relevant today, why has he become so has-been? Because the translations of his texts are generally not accessible.

From page to stage
Due to its grammatical and literary value, Plautus’ work is now reserved to linguistic studies in academic circles. Outside of university, he is scarcely ever staged. Translated by A. Ernout, the standard French version of his plays is hardly stageable: obscure references, outdated language, unfunny jokes for who is not a specialist of Ancient comedy. Plautus needs to be modernized to become popular again.

Based upon one play, entitled Miles gloriosus, this project focuses on adapting the original Latin text through a new translation for a modern stage. With a new title, Le militaire Kislapet (from the phonetic transcription of the slang phrase “a la pêtre”), this French adaptation focuses on three elements:

Orality: colloquial register
Cultural References: modern equivalents
Humour: adaptation of jokes

Antiquity VS Modernity: an impossible relationship?
This project arises from the encounter of two opposite views: the Latinist and the Translator. How to offer a rigorous and scholarly approach while creating an entertaining and popular play is the main challenge of this two-part work.

Example of Modern Adaptation

PERIPLECOMENES
[..] da mihi, uir [...]: quod dem quinquatrus praecantrici, coniectici, hariolae atque haruspiciæ, flagitium'st, si nihil mittetur quo supercilio spectō!

Plautus, Miles gloriosus, 1693-694

PERIPLECOME

• Mon cher mari, donne-moi [...] : de quoi donner le jour des Quinquatres à la devinette, à l’interprète des songes, à la devinette, à l’haruspice. Ce sera un scandale si l’on n’envoie rien à la voyante qui lit dans les sourcils.
• Translated by A. Ernout, Le soldat fanfaron (1996)

Roulepatin

• Mec, file-moi [...] de quoi donner pour Noël à la voyante, la psy, la coach et la prof de yoga. C’est la honte si je paye pas l’esthéticienne qui m’a fait les sourcils !
• Modern adaptation, Le Militaire Kislapet (2017)

Bibliography: editions and translations

• F. DUPONT, La marmotte, suivi de Poudouli, Arles, Actes sud, 2001.
• M. HAMMOND et al. (ed.), Miles gloriosus, with an introduction and notes, 1963.

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I am a Ph.D student at Aix-Marseille University and I work on an interdisciplinary subject (Comparative Literature / Classics). Under a co-supervision shared between Sabine Luciani (Latin Language and Literature) and Francesca Mazzanti (Translation Studies), I have the opportunity to work in association with two research teams: Centre interdisciplinaire d’étude des littératures d’Aix-Marseille, AMU, and Centre Paul Albert-Février, Textes et documents de la Méditerranée antique et médiévale, AMU, CNRS, UMR 7297.