

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
Introduction: Thinking about comedy	1
First things	1
Play	3
What is comedy?	7
Something to make us laugh?	8
Happy endings	10
The world brought down to earth	12
Summing up before moving on	18
Chapter 1 Reading comedy	20
‘What kind of world is this?’	20
Formal and textual elements	23
Entering the world of comedy	26
Comedy in the end	35
Chapter 2 Comedy’s foundations	39
Back to (what we call) the beginning	39
The fingerprints of Old Comedy	42
Our old friend, New Comedy	50
New Comedy in Roman hands	58
Chapter 3 Comedy’s devices	63
Towards a study of comic traits	63
Humour and its mechanics	63

Humour and the dramatic text	69
Mine the gap: the reader's view	72
Mine the gap: the spectator's access	86
Chapter 4 Comedy in the flesh	93
Comedy for the stage of the mind	93
Performance fabric and outlining	95
Reading comic bodies and voices	96
The <i>commedia dell'arte</i>	102
The clown	110
Reading comic character (mask)	114
Reading comic dialogue (<i>lazzi</i>)	120
Comic metaphysics	127
Chapter 5 Comedy's range	131
Dramatic texture and the comic	131
The comic and the tragic	132
The deadly serious treated playfully	140
The comic beyond the 'realistic'	142
Comic latitude in production	161
Chapter 6 Comedy and society	171
Comedy's associates	171
Comedy's politics	190
<i>Notes</i>	207
<i>Further reading</i>	222
<i>List of texts</i>	224
<i>Bibliography</i>	227
<i>Index</i>	237