

BOOK REVIEW

A Companion to Terence. Edited by ANTONY AUGOUSTAKIS and ARIANA TRAILL. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World: Literature and Culture. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. xiii + 541. Hardcover, \$195.00. ISBN 978-1-4051-9875-2.

A Classics professor I once had used to lament just how little humor there is in Terence. Plautus is funny; Terence, not so much. The oft-cited parallel that Roman comedy resembles television sit-coms did not help Terence's cause, and merely led to us students shouting out analogous shows: Plautus was classic *Seinfeld* or *The Simpsons*, Terence the quickly-axed *Homeboys in Outer Space* or *Joanie Loves Chachi*.

The appreciation of Terence, however, is not measured by a laugh-track, and one indication of this is that Augoustakis and Traill's new companion only has one essay that really tries to explain Terence's humor. Instead, Augoustakis and Traill write that their volume aims to cover Terence's particular historical, socio-political, and literary contexts. The collection of scholars, from graduate students to professors emeriti, offer a wide-ranging view of Terence arranged around four primary areas of study: (1) Terence and Ancient Comedy, (2) Contexts and Themes, (3) the Plays, and (4) Reception. As a group, these scholars often focus on the subtle novelty of Terence's language and plots as well as the dark implications and troubling conclusions of these plays. This is a strong volume from a strong collection of scholars, which offers both the general information expected from a companion and moments of genuine surprise as well as challenging insights to Terence's conception of Roman comedy.

The opening essays consider Terence's *contaminatio*, prologues, and freedom in adapting Greek comedies with an eye to issues such as intertextuality (Alison Sharrock), his relationship with Menander (Peter Brown), and music/meter (Timothy Moore). The prologues should not be looked upon as autobiographical (George Fredric Franko), but rather as part of the strategy of developing his learned poetic persona (Allison Sharrock) and part of the "show-biz" of hawking the play. Heather Vincent offers persuasive readings of exemplary humorous passages, showing how Terence often signposts when something

“funny” is going on through devices such as homoioteleuta, onomatopoeia, and other sound effects. Timothy Moore’s examination of the meter of *Eunuchus* is eye-opening (personally, I will never look at Chaerea’s iambic octonarii the same way again), and he stresses that, when we read Terence’s plays, we must “attempt to hear them in our minds” (110).

Terence’s “humanism” often revolves around his supposed relationship with the *homines nobiles* of the 160s, and the following essays explore the political, religious, and social forces that impacted Terence. Daniel Hanchey surveys the evidence for a Scipionic *grex*, concluding that chronological inconsistencies cast doubt on such a connection, while John Starks finds that Terence’s comedic perspective “tends toward the aristocratic, top-down view, the way the literary world operates among the literati and the literate, and to a great degree the way Rome really was run” (154). The tensions within the Terentian family unit clearly mirror possible problems of the individual within his or her community and household, and, although such tensions are resolved with the scope of Terence’s plays, a bitter taste may still linger. T.H.M. Gellar-Goad, Sharon James, and Z.M. Packman find that Terence questions and often subverts issues of religion, gender and sexuality, and the stability of the family (respectively). This section concludes with a chapter on the role of the slave in Terence, especially those moments in which there appear to be Plautine antecedents (Evangelos Karakasis).

The third section consists of readings of the six plays individually. The essays that attempt to offer fresh interpretations of the plays are particularly convincing and lively. Robert Germany stresses how *Andria* pushes the envelope for what is possible in comedy, and how this play reifies “instabilities of gender and genre” (240). David Christenson’s excursions on metatheater, the costume of Chaerea, and Thais’s position as the main character of the *Eunuchus* are compelling. Ariana Trill’s use of Aristotelian “recognition” as a master narrative for *Adelphoe* indicates how Terence’s dramatic vision diverges from Menander’s *Dyskolos* and *Samia*. Eckard Lefèvre is especially good on the structure of *Heauton Timorumenos*, while Stavros Frangoulidis elucidates the literary imagery in *Phormio* and the titular character’s metapoetic and metatheatrical role in the play. In spite of what its prologue *may* lead you to believe, the *Hecyra* should not be viewed as a failure, and Ortwin Knorr’s interpretation emphasizes how dramatic irony and features of its performance would lead to laughs.

The final section discusses the reception of Terence. Benjamin Victor competently handles the history of the text and the scholia, specifying how useful and rich Probus and Donatus can be and how whimsically off-the-mark glosses could

be in the Middle Ages—read it to discover how one could think Flaccus’ pipes “are made from the right leg of the crane” (361)! Roman Müller, Andrew Cain, and Martine van Elk accentuate Terence’s place as a school author and how entrenched his works were from the Republic into early modern England. Andrew Cain’s intertextual investigations of Terentian echoes in Jerome and Paulinus of Nola indicate how later authors appropriated Terence in particularly creative manners. Hrotsvit of Gandersheim composed Christian didactic plays based loosely on Terence, and both Antony Augoustakis and Mary-Kay Gamel explore how she critiques Terence’s ideas. Mathias Hanses reviews how Thornton Wilder’s *The Woman of Andros* responds to *Andria* and highlights the tragic undertones Wilder found in Terence. John Barsby surveys translations of Terence in English from the 16th century to the present day and strikes gold when discussing the Restoration versions of Echard, which feature such lively translations as “I looked as if Butter would not melt in my Mouth” (*terram intuens modeste*) and “hanging his Jib like an old Horse, and groaning like a rotten Sheep” (*labiis demissis, gemens*). Performance, an issue underplayed in many of the essays, is given its due with Mary-Kay Gamel’s chapter on her experimental double production of Terence’s *Eunuchus* and Hrotsvit’s *The Conversion of Thais*.

In conclusion, the editors should be commended for their selection of topics and the usefulness of this volume. While it is impossible to offer more than a glance at the contributions, I found that many of the pieces contain suggestive syntheses of the material and most would be appropriate for undergraduate and graduate students interested in the topics.

CHRISTOPHER TRINACTY

Oberlin College, ctrinact@oberlin.edu