

BOOK REVIEW

Terence and Interpretation. Edited by SOPHIA PAPAIOANNOU. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. Pp. x + 307. Hardcover, £52.99. ISBN 978-1-4438-6385-8.

Terence and Interpretation is a collected volume of ten essays. As editor Sophia Papaioannou explains in her introduction, the book aims to “illustrate the various expressions of originality and individual creative genius that the process of interpretation entails” (3). It does just that, exploring Terence as an interpreter of the comic tradition he inherits in part 1, and the playwright’s interpreters (critics, translators *et al.*) in part 2.

The thematic focus of the first section (“Terence as Interpreter”) is Terence’s divergence from the conventional *palliata* that Roman audiences had come to expect. Six papers in this section nicely illustrate what Wright taught us over 40 years ago,¹ generating a rich picture of how Terence creatively deviates from the comedic norm.

Papaioannou contributes three papers, chapters 1, 4 and 6. Chapter 1 explores Terence’s polemical prologues, arguing that the poet uses them as a programmatic platform to advance his “new methodology of *palliata* composition” (46). The author surveys Terence’s use of loaded terms to qualify his literary ‘transgressions’, as well as his self-styling as a *novus poeta*. Chapter 4 unpacks Terence’s relationship with Menander, his main poetic model, arguing that the translator puts his Latin adaptations into direct competition with those of the Greek playwright by inviting the audience to notice his innovations. In chapter 6, Papaioannou takes up characterization as another mode of Terence’s *referre idem aliter*, suggesting that the dramaturge achieves a *para prosdokian* effect in his plots by subverting conventional comic *personae*. There are many very good ideas in Papaioannou’s contributions. Her insight that Terentian prologues insistently present the poet’s work “through the prism of a violation” in order to emphasize his literary originality (40) is particularly illuminating, as is her reading of the *Hecyra* as a play whose unusual characters do not allow it to develop into an “actual *palli-*

¹ John Wright, *Dancing in Chains: The Stylistic Unity of the Comoedia Palliata*. Rome, 1974.

ata plot” (165). But Papaioannou also advances a few questionable propositions. For example, although her hypothesis in chapter 4 that Terence’s *purus sermo* deliberately imitates Menander’s unadulterated Attic is attractive, Papaioannou’s notion that spectators would, on that basis, discern a “close and inventive intertextual kinship” (96) between model and translator fails, in my view, to convince.

Chapter 2 contains Jarrett Welsh’s learned discussion of Terence’s stylistic *variatio*. Welsh persuasively demonstrates that the playwright works within and interprets comic tradition by strategically exploiting conventional prosody, metre and vocabulary. Thus Terence’s *cantica* “irrupt” into the ancestral *sermo comicus* at moments of emotional intensity, to emphasize a Plautine intertext or, fascinatingly, to highlight a particularly *unconventional* plot twist such as Chaerea’s rape in the *Eunuchus* (70-2).

Evangelos Karakasis’ essay in chapter 3 examines Terence’s “meta-generic poetics” by taking up the playwright’s reception of tragedy and epic. The author cogently argues that intrusions of the *genera grandia* occur when a character is self-consciously acting ‘out of genre’. However, his idea that Geta’s “meta-dramatic ambivalence” as a failed *servus callidus* plays upon the “ambivalent figure of a victorious Pyrrhus” (92), Geta’s intertextual model by virtue of an Ennian allusion, is, to my mind, somewhat tenuous.

Alison Sharrock’s excellent contribution in chapter 5 brings out Terence as a critical reader of his comic forbears both Greek and Roman. She evinces the dramaturge’s engagement-*cum*-correction through close analysis of the manner in which Terence tweaks his models, often in the direction of greater realism. Sharrock effectively frames Terence’s intertextuality as novelty, adding to recent work on the playwright² by seeing his corrective re-readings as “early precursors of the Augustan method of intertextuality and poetic correction” (119).

The book’s second part, entitled “Interpretations of Terence”, is less thematically unified than the first, broadly treating various types of reception.

In chapter 7, Gesine Manuwald gives a very thorough review of Cicero’s Terentian quotations. She concludes that Cicero uses the playwright’s work paradigmatically to elucidate a point of style or philosophical precept, ultimately contributing to the comedies’ status as cultural artefacts.

² Michael Fontaine, “Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Comedy: Menander’s *Kolax* in Three Roman Receptions (Naevius, Plautus and Terence’s *Eunuchus*)”, in *Ancient Comedy and Reception*, ed. S. Douglas Olson, 180-202. Berlin, 2014.

Robert Maltby considers Donatus' discussions of stylistic *proprium* in chapter 8. By discerning the 'rules' for deviations from comedy's *medius* register with a wealth of textual examples, Maltby very usefully teaches us both how Terence 'read' comedy, and how Donatus read Terence.

Chapter 9 is a paper by Chrysanthi Demetriou which infers that the critic's conceptualization of comic *personae*, including their gestures, costumes, and demeanour, is stereotyped. Although fascinating *per se*, I thought that the author might have developed this conclusion further by looking into its source. For lack of a "definite answer", Demetriou deliberately eschews the thorny question of whether contemporary stagings influenced the commentator (225), although this seems to me to be the most interesting aspect of her topic. At the very least it would have been helpful to learn where the author stands in the debate instead of being redirected to another paper (225 n.10).

In chapter 10 Peter Brown investigates Terentian reception from the 10th to the 20th century, with a special focus on the *Andria*. He takes us through the Christian comedies written by Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim to a telegram exchange between Churchill and Roosevelt in which the former quotes a line by Terence. Ultimately, Brown demonstrates the continuing cultural relevance of Terence's oeuvre in a paper that is both enlightening and enjoyable.

In sum, there is much food for thought in this volume's diverse set of offerings. I found many ideas to reflect upon and yet others to disagree with; either way, I learned quite a lot about Terence and interpretation. This book will most certainly be useful to specialists of Roman Comedy, its target audience (vii), though it is also a worthwhile read for anyone wanting to know more about Terence's poetics and his *Nachleben*.

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