

SANDER M. GOLDBERG

Understanding Terence



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UNDERSTANDING TERENCE

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BY
SANDER M. GOLDBERG

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ABBREVIATIONS

The titles of periodicals appear in the abbreviated forms recommended by the *American Journal of Archaeology* 69 (1965) 201-06, supplemented as necessary by the list in *L'Année philologique*. The citation of Latin authors and works follows the practice of the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Some frequently cited books are abbreviated as follows:

Büchner, <i>TT</i>	K. Büchner, <i>Das Theater des Terenz</i> (Heidelberg 1974)
Denzler, <i>Monolog</i>	B. Denzler, <i>Der Monolog bei Terenz</i> (Zurich 1968)
Duckworth, <i>NRC</i>	G. Duckworth, <i>The Nature of Roman Comedy</i> (Princeton 1952)
Fraenkel, <i>EPP</i>	E. Fraenkel, <i>Elementi plautini in Plauto</i> (Florence 1960)
Garton, <i>PA</i>	C. Garton, <i>Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre</i> (Toronto 1972)
Goldberg, <i>MMC</i>	S. M. Goldberg, <i>The Making of Menander's Comedy</i> (Berkeley 1980)
Leo, <i>GRL</i>	F. Leo, <i>Geschichte der römischen Literatur I</i> (Berlin 1913)
Leo, <i>PIF</i>	F. Leo, <i>Plautinische Forschungen</i> , 2 ed. (Berlin 1912)
Norwood, <i>AT</i>	G. Norwood, <i>The Art of Terence</i> (Oxford 1923)
Wright, <i>DiC</i>	J. Wright, <i>Dancing in Chains</i> (Rome 1974)

TEXTS

Plautus and Terence are cited from the Oxford editions of Lindsay (1904-1905) and Kauer, Lindsay, and Skutsch (1958), except for *Casina* and *Adelphoe*, which follow the Cambridge texts of, respectively, Willcock (1976) and Martin (1976). Menander is cited from the Oxford text of Sandbach (1972). Except as noted, all translations are my own.

PREFACE

Shakespeare's name, you may depend on it, stands absurdly too high and will go down. He had no invention as to stories, none whatever. He took all his plots from old novels, and threw their stories into dramatic shape, at as little expense of thought as you or I could turn his plays back again into prose tales. That he threw over whatever he did write some flashes of genius, nobody can deny: but this was all.

—LORD BYRON TO JAMES HOGG
("The Ettrick Shepherd") 24 March 1814

It has been enough. Shakespeare's reputation has not gone down. Adherence to a different standard has made the truth of Byron's criticism somehow beside the point. Modern readers prize those flashes of genius, distinguish newness of content from artistic merit, and avoid judging the whole by the limitations of a part. Scholars use and value the insights of source criticism without ignoring other lines of inquiry and other dimensions of Shakespeare's art. Studies of imagery, theme, outlook, and background all have their place. The literary critic has free rein. Not all the resulting scholarship may be equally good, but a wide field of investigation inevitably broadens our understanding and deepens our appreciation.

As a group, we Latinists are not so eclectic, and the study of Roman comedy has generally followed a narrower path. Our philological training leads us to concentrate on the origins of things. Because Plautus and Terence derived their plays from a Greek comic tradition, we therefore wonder most about their originality. We try to reconstruct their lost Greek models from the Latin copies and then to compare the Roman comic tradition with its Greek forerunner. This is source criticism without the

sources, and we have not done badly at it. Close attention to the conflicting details of Terence's text—the minutiae of exposition, characterization, pacing and tone as measured against Greek practices—has produced rich and abundant results. We know much more about his dramatic technique than ever before. Yet the very success of this analytic approach has fostered a certain narrowness in the enterprise. We have learned so much that we more readily mistake one aspect of his achievement for the whole. Our focus on the “how” of Terence's art has slighted the “why.”

What Terence accomplished on the Roman stage is too often discussed primarily in terms of what his models Menander and Apollodorus achieved before Greek audiences. The comparison can be telling, but it is not complete. The picture of Terence that emerges is, like Byron's critique of Shakespeare, not so much wrong as inadequate. We need a broader base for our opinions. His debt to the Greek theatrical tradition must not distract us from another fact of equal significance: Terence's primary place is among the seminal figures of *Latin* literature. This book therefore approaches Terence through the Latin tradition of New Comedy and focuses on his contribution to the Romans' literary development. It will not deal directly with Menander and Apollodorus, and it will not engage in that analysis of structural incongruities so common in Terentian studies. “Terence” in the following pages will always mean the author of the Latin text under discussion, even when he is not necessarily its originator. We need not distinguish what is uniquely Terentian in these plays from what may also have appeared in his Greek models in order to demonstrate how they work on the stage and how they came to influence subsequent Roman literature. They are entirely Terentian in that the language, the action, and the characters are what the Roman dramatist himself chose to present to Roman audiences. I have therefore relegated to footnotes and parentheses problems of alterations and origins that are often central to schol-

arly discussion. Given the recondite convolutions, disagreements, and dead ends to which that scholarship so frequently brings us, most students of Terence and of drama in general will probably be relieved. A few specialists may be perplexed, though I hope not angered at my refusal to address their concerns. My reasons for slighting them are set out in detail in Chapters 1, 3, and 4. Readers can judge for themselves if the methods I substitute and the alternative questions I raise are any more helpful to their understanding of Terence.

Those methods and questions do not simply substitute literary for philological interests. My aim throughout is not to ignore philology, but to point it toward wider issues in the criticism of Roman drama. I have added to the literary interpretation of individual plays only as means toward this larger end, which is to understand the nature of the interpretative problem Terence presents to modern critics and to suggest new ways to approach it. How I prefer to read *Adelphoe*, what I think is wrong with *Hecyra* and right about *Eunuchus*, will no doubt come clear in the following chapters, but my goal is to encourage debate about individual plays rather than to end it.

This is, then, an opinionated, though I hope not a willful, book. Those opinions are my own, or at least my own responsibility, but the debts incurred in forming them are nevertheless both a duty and a pleasure to acknowledge. The work began and ended with fellowship support, an A. W. Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Stanford University that got it going in earnest and a research fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities that provided leave to complete it. I have also been helped by a generous travel grant from the University of Colorado's Council for Research and Creative Work, a fruitful and expedient alternative to interlibrary loan. Parts of the work have been read before a variety of audiences and improved by their comments. The bulk of Chapter 2 appeared in *Classical Philology*

for 1983; an early version of Chapter 8 appeared, albeit with a different conclusion, in *Comparative Drama* for 1982-1983.

Even more pleasant to recall because more personal are my debts to individuals. Special thanks go to Mrs. Lucy Walker and the members of Denver's EDEN Theatrical Workshop, whose invitation to advise their production of *Adelphoe* provided the most practical of tests for many ideas. The experience enables me to say with confidence that while details of the original productions of all six plays are beyond recall, the interpretations and stagings suggested here are indeed in the text and readily come to life in actual production. Among scholarly debts, the keenest is to scholars I never knew but wish I had, Friedrich Leo and Eduard Fraenkel, my greatest teachers and silent companions. Those who can and have quite often talked back include my former Berkeley colleagues William S. Anderson and Erich S. Gruen, who dealt firmly yet sympathetically with some of my wilder notions; Elaine Fantham of the University of Toronto, a rigorous but supportive critic; and especially James W. Halporn of Indiana University, who first posed on a doctoral examination the questions this book tries to answer. I hope he likes the book better than he liked the exam, but its dedication is in any case truly *pietatis causa, non ambitionis*.

UNDERSTANDING TERENCE

THE CONTEXT

The comedies that entertained Roman crowds at a festival like the *ludi Romani* bore only superficial resemblance to the Greek plays on which they were modeled. While the authors of Greek New Comedy had put the characters and situations of their own time on a stage and before audiences steeped in an old and respected dramatic tradition, playwrights and producers at Rome were adapting a foreign art form to quite different conditions. Roman theatre people had to be adroit and aggressive professionals, seeking contracts from public officials to perform plays on makeshift stages amid the bustle of large and diverse public shows.¹ To attract the necessary crowds, they turned the fourth-century Greece of their models into a comic fantasy land populated by absurd Greeks who spoke highly stylized Latin and whose broad comic effects and elaborate songs imposed native Italian tastes upon Greek dramatic structures. The resulting form of comedy was extremely successful. Between 240 B.C., when a Greek from Tarentum named Livius Andronicus first presented plays in Latin at the *ludi Romani*, and Plautus' death in about 184, a Roman theatrical tradition grew rapidly and well. The steady addition of new festivals and the growing tendency to include plays in the public celebration of military victories, temple dedications, and state funerals created more theatrical opportunities for Plautus than the dramatists of fifth-century Athens had known.² With this increase in quantity came a corre-

¹ E. J. Jory, "Association of Actors in Rome," *Hermes* 98 (1970) 224-253; Garton, *PA* 51-72.

² L. R. Taylor, "The Opportunities for Dramatic Performance in the Time of Plautus and Terence," *TAPA* 68 (1937) 284-304.

sponding increase in quality. Cicero found the plays of Livius not worth a second reading; Plautus' comedies quickly became objects of admiration, imitation, and study.³ They reflect a time of great creativity and growing technical skill. As a later producer of Plautus was to claim,

ea tempestate flos poetarum fuit,
qui nunc abierunt hinc in communem locum.
sed tamen apsesentes prosunt pro praesentibus.

That was a time when poets flowered,
poets now gone to their just reward,
but though absent they profit us as if present.

(*Casina* 18–20)

Yet the development of Roman comedy did not end with Plautus. As Rome learned more about Greece and as the Roman aristocrats who sponsored *ludi scaenici* learned more about literature, the character of Roman comedy and its performance changed.

Signs of that change show clearly in the six plays of Terence, which date from the 160's. The bold and brilliant style of Plautus and his successor Caecilius has been replaced by something calmer and less fantastic. The plays seem more recognizably Greek, or at least less blatantly Roman. Such a change in style and outlook presents special problems of interpretation, for these plays mark both a departure from the traditional values of Roman comedy and also the end of productive experiments on the comic stage. Neither Plautus nor Menander is exactly comparable, and the fragments of Roman comedy after Terence are too

³ Cic., *Brut.* 71: "Livianae fabulae non satis dignae quae iterum legantur." The tragic poet Accius (b. 170) was the first Plautine scholar; Cicero's older contemporary Varro worked to establish a corpus of authentic comedies from a mass of forgeries, fit testimony to the commercial value of Plautus' name. See A. Ronconi, "Sulla fortuna di Plauto e di Terenzio nel mondo romano," *Maia* 22 (1970) 19–37.

scanty to complete the perspective. Yet his plays are not isolated monuments. The cultural forces that worked upon Roman literature in the second century have left their mark, and the contrast with his predecessors can reveal how Terence modified familiar devices of his genre. A review of this social and literary context, along with some necessary reappraisal of traditional beliefs concerning them, will provide the perspective for forming our own understanding of Terence.

I

Back in 189 B.C., while Plautus still dominated Roman comedy, the development of Latin literature took a new turn. When Marcus Fulvius Nobilior, consul in that year, embarked on a campaign against the Greek city of Ambracia, he included the poet Quintus Ennius in his entourage. Hellenistic kings had long known the value of court poets. Alexander the Great took an epic poet as well as a historian with him to the east. Attalids and Seleucids had poems written in their honor. Nobilior's act, however, was unprecedented at Rome. As a group, the early Roman poets occupied the lower rungs of an increasingly class-conscious society and did not mix with the aristocracy. Their professional association, the so-called *Collegium poetarum*, was organized as an artisans' guild; Cato likened poets to vagabonds.⁴ Livius had in fact come to Rome as a slave and Plautus as an Italian provincial on the make. Caecilius was a Gaul. Naevius, from Campania, perhaps ranked higher on the social scale, but his legendary quarrel with the powerful Metelli is our only example, and that a negative one, of contact between a poet and a public figure.⁵ Roman

⁴ "Poeticae artis honos non erat. Si quis in ea re studebat aut sese ad convivium adplicabat, 'grassator' vocabatur," Cato, *Mor.* 2 (Gel. 11.2.5). The organization and function of the *collegium* is imperfectly understood, but see N. Horsfall, "The Collegium Poetarum," *BICS* 23 (1976) 79-95.

⁵ That quarrel, like most "facts" of early Roman literary history, defies sure interpretation. Naevius may have been imprisoned for slander, but the

comedy generally avoided specific political references; Naevius' epic on the Punic War is a poem without a patron. What favoritism influenced the award of contracts for the various *ludi* and the commissioning of public hymns has left no trace.⁶

With Ennius' career we can document an important development. He too was a foreigner, a Calabrian rather than a Roman, but he came to Rome in 204 at Cato's urging. He lived modestly but moved in high circles. Later tradition linked him not only with Cato and Nobilior, but with such other notables as Scipio Nasica and Servius Sulpicius Galba.⁷ He gave elegant recompense for the company he kept. The siege of Ambracia occupied a prominent place in Book 15 of Ennius' epic masterpiece, the *Annales*, and Nobilior's eventual claim to a triumph in the face of strong political opposition at Rome was perhaps aided by a second work entitled *Ambracia*, which was most likely a play.⁸ En-

circumstances are beyond recall. Recent discussions of the problem include H. B. Mattingly, "Naevius and the Metelli," *Historia* 9 (1960) 414-439, and H. D. Jocelyn, "The Poet Cn. Naevius, P. Cornelius Scipio, and Q. Caecilius Metellus," *Antichthon* 3 (1969) 32-47. On the general problem of interpreting such evidence, see J. H. Waszink, "Anfangsstadium der römischen Literatur," *ANRW* 1.2 (Berlin 1972) 869-927. W. Suerbaum, *Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter* (Hildesheim 1968), is the best modern study of Livius, Naevius, and Ennius.

⁶ Yet surely there was some. Compare the uproar when Cato, as censor, tried to regulate the awarding of contracts for public works (Plut. *Cat. mai.* 19.1-2, *Flam.* 19.3; Liv. 39.44.5-9) and the revolt of the corrupt *publicani* as described at Liv. 25.3-4.

⁷ E. Badian, "Ennius and His Friends," *Fondation Hardt Entretiens XVII: Ennius* (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1971) 151-199. Badian, 155-163, endorsed by J. S. Ruebel, "Cato, Ennius, and Sardinia," *LCM* 2 (1977) 155-157, questions the traditional association of Ennius with Cato, but his arguments have convinced few. See the discussion, pp. 200-202. M. Martina, "Ennio 'poeta cliens,'" *QFC* 2 (1979) 15-74, sees Ennius as a supporter of Nobilior's interests exclusively, a difficult position to maintain when so little of Ennius' poetry survives.

⁸ Only four unconnected lines of *Ambracia* survive. Ribbeck thought the work a *fabula praetexta*; Vahlen is less confident. It could conceivably have

nus also wrote a poem entitled *Scipio*, in honor of Africanus, and he extended the *Annales* beyond its original fifteen books in order to include the valiant deeds of more contemporary Romans. Sometime in the 170's, Cato attacked Nobilior for having taken Ennius to Ambracia, but his perception of poetry's political power had come too late.⁹

This patronage of Ennius belongs in the larger context of cultural developments in the second century. As Rome increased its meddling in Greek affairs and as Greeks increasingly found themselves drawn to Rome, cultural contact between them grew rapidly. Roman nobles, often bilingual and always confident travelers to the east, found themselves not simply with the power to appropriate Greek books, Greek art, and Greek tutors for their sons, but with the leisure to appreciate their appeal. Scipio Africanus, while commanding a Roman army at Syracuse in 205, walked about the gymnasium in Greek dress and read Greek books. Fulvius Nobilior used spoils from Ambracia to decorate a temple at Rome to Hercules of the Muses. After the battle of Pydna in 168, Aemilius Paullus put the royal Macedonian library at his sons' disposal.¹⁰ With this growing appreciation of Greek culture came an increased awareness of literature's power to influence public opinion. The first Roman historical writing dates from this period, originally in Greek but soon after in Latin, and

been performed as part of Nobilior's victory games in 186. For his political problems over the triumph, see Liv. 38.43-44.6 and 39.4-5.

⁹ Cic., *Tusc.* 1.3 (= Cato, fr. 149M) refers to an "oratio Catonis, in qua obiecit ut probum M. Nobiliori, quod is in provinciam poetas duxisset: duxerat autem consul ille in Aetoliam, ut scimus, Ennium." Malcovati identifies this with the speech *In M. Fulvium Nobiliorem* dated no earlier than 178. See H. H. Scullard, *Roman Politics 200-150 B.C.*, 2 ed. (Oxford 1973) 266-267, and Suerbaum (above, n. 5) 201-204.

¹⁰ Scipio at Syracuse, Liv. 29.19.12 and V. Max. 3.6.1; Nobilior's temple, Plin., *Nat.* 33.66; Paullus and the library, Plut. *Aem. Paul.* 28.6. For these and many other examples see "Philhellenism: Culture and Policy," Chapter 7 in E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, vol. 1 (Berkeley 1984), esp. 255-260.

the public entertainments expanded in number and scope. The two curule aediles, who had charge of the *ludi Romani* and the *ludi Megalenses* (established in 204, drama added by 194), quickly learned the political value of lavish entertainments. The festivals grew longer, which was certainly good for the acting profession, and the aediles grew popular. All of those identified between 217 and 187 went on to higher elected office. Victorious generals adopted the same course. As thanks to Jupiter for the victory at Ambracia, for example, Nobilior celebrated *ludi* for ten days in 186 and imported actors and athletes from Greece, as well as lions and panthers, for the occasion. The Senate found it necessary to limit the expense.¹¹ This aristocratic involvement in the sponsorship of literary activity, especially activity of the public sort, is crucial for understanding the next such documented case, the patronage of Terence.

The prologues to Terence's plays suggest a career dogged by hostile rumor and innuendo, and among these is the insinuation that his success owed more to friends than to his own talent ("amicum ingenio fretum, haud natura sua," *HT* 24). In *Adelphoe* he deftly turned such an accusation to his advantage.

nam quod isti dicunt malevoli, homines nobilis
hunc adiutare adsidueque una scribere,
quod illi maledictum vehemens esse existimant,
eam laudem hic ducit maximam quom illis placet
qui vobis univorsis et populo placent,
quorum opera in bello, in otio, in negotio,
suo quisque tempore usust sine superbia.

Now as to what the spiteful say, that certain
nobles help him out and always share the writing,

¹¹ Liv. 39.5.10. The same limit was imposed on the consul Q. Fulvius Flaccus in 179 (Liv. 40.44.10). For the growing political importance of *ludi*, see Scullard (above, n. 9) 23-25, and A. E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus* (Oxford 1967) 339.

this charge they think a powerful slander
 he deems an honor, since he pleases men
 who please you all and please the Roman people,
 whose deeds in war, in peace, in politics
 we all enjoy in need and without arrogance.

(*Adelphoe* 15–21)

Who were these *homines nobilis*? Since *Adelphoe* was performed in 160 at the funeral games of Aemilius Paullus, an association with his son Scipio Aemilianus, the most famous philhellene of the second century, has long provided an easy answer. Suetonius, whose earliest sources date from late Republican times, records this identification as fact, and Cicero mentions a rumor that the comedies had been written by Scipio's close friend Laelius.¹² It is all guesswork, though, and involves an awkward problem of chronology. Though Scipio distinguished himself at Pydna in 168, he was only seventeen at the time. He did not enter the Senate until 152, and his famous career *in otio, in negotio* can hardly date to the 160's.¹³ Laelius was scarcely older. Yet the presumed association with Scipio and Laelius has often colored critical thinking about Terence.

Belief in a philhellenic coterie surrounding the younger Scipio

¹² Suet., *Vit. Ter.* 11 (Rostagni): "Hic cum multis nobilibus familiariter vixit, sed maxime cum Scipione Africano et C. Laelio . . ." Cic., *Att.* 7.3.10: "Terentium, cuius fabulae propter elegantiam sermonis putabantur a C. Laelio scribi." Quint., *Inst.* 10.1.99, makes the rumored author Scipio. Suetonius actually reports conflicting accounts of Terence's relations with various *nobiles*, leading W. Beare, "The Life of Terence," *Hermathena* 59 (1942) 20–29, to doubt them all. Badian (above, n. 7) 185, discussing the Ennian biography, rightly warns of "how little was really known by the first century B.C., even where much was asserted." The fact of Terence's association with *nobiles* seems certain, but not their identity.

¹³ H. B. Mattingly, "The Chronology of Terence," *RCCM* 5 (1963) 12–61, redates Terence's career into the 150's, but his argument is not persuasive.

occasionally tempts scholars to see Terence as the first elegant spokesman for the enlightened *humanitas* with which this "Scipionic Circle" assailed a chauvinistic archaism often identified with Cato the Censor. At the very least, the dramatist's rhetorical polish has been read as the reflection of "Scipionic interests."¹⁴ Others have cast him as a poet with a mission and used that mission to explain certain oddities of his life and work. His break with the traditional comic style, for example, and the quarrel reported in the prologues with such older contemporaries as Luscus Lanuvinus became evidence for his adherence to a consciously philhellenic program. "Thus the hostility of Luscus," wrote one supporter of this view, "was motivated not so much by artistic concerns or by professional jealousy . . . as by a more profound social and political motive: the need to obstruct the re-evaluation on the stage of that Greek world which Plautus had known so well how to make ridiculous."¹⁵ The plays of Terence are thus read as the first systematic attempt to bring Greek values to rude Latium, and such critics see in him that wrestling with Greek form and content later manifest in the work of authors like Cicero and Horace.

A Scipionic *humanitas* also appeals to critics who would prefer apparent defects in dramatic technique to be thought virtues. There is, for example, Terence's handling of the specifically Greek references in his originals. He might have left them in place, perhaps with a joke about their oddity (e.g., Plautus' "licet haec Athenis nobis," *Stich.* 448), or he might have substituted Roman equivalents. Instead, he usually generalizes. A passage

¹⁴ Most recently advanced by G. Calboli, "La retorica preciceroniana e la politica a Roma," *Fondation Hardt Entretiens XXVIII: Éloquence et rhétorique chez Cicéron* (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1982) 41-99, esp. 50-71, but see the comments of Winterbottom and Stroh, 100-105.

¹⁵ I. Lana, "Terenzio e il movimento filellenico in Roma," *RFIC* 75 (1947) 44-80, 155-175. The quotation is from p. 59.