1

The Vatican Terence and its model

'The art of gesture', says Beare in his book on *The Roman Stage*, 'was carried in ancient times to a height which we can scarcely comprehend.'[1]

All scholars would agree on the importance of gestures to the Roman actor. The fact that he had to project his voice over the length and breadth of an auditorium in a theatre which was vast in size and was in the open air, meant that he could not indicate the age, sex, class or mood of the character he was portraying by any modulation of speech. In fact, he declaimed his words and did so, moreover, to the accompaniment of a flute. Nor could he use facial expressions to reveal feelings or moods, since his face was hidden behind a mask. This meant that he had to depend to a very considerable extent on gestures. Yet little is known about these – what they were or what they signified. It was a subject that interested a few scholars before the First World War, but it was one that fell out of favour before the beginning of the Second, and the aim of our present study is to take a new look at the subject, using a resource that has been known for a considerable time but which, for reasons that will appear, has been discounted for several decades. We shall attempt to identify the appearance and meanings of a number of the Roman theatrical gestures and later to show how some of them were adopted by artists in Anglo-Saxon England. And, as we shall end in the Middle Ages, so we shall begin there, for we shall initiate our investigation with the consideration of a specific work of art of the Carolingian Renaissance.

The Carolingian Renaissance began in the late eighth century and continued into the late ninth, and one of its characteristics was a pronounced interest in classical literature. Even a prominent church

[1] Beare, *The Roman Stage*, p. 183.

reformer, sending a letter to an abbot asking him to bring relics of saints back with him from Rome, could append to it a quotation from Ovid's *Ars amatoria*,[2] and the Carolingian writers themselves were looking to Rome for their models. So, Einhard, one of the statesmen of the time, wrote a biography of Charlemagne in imitation of Suetonius' *Vitae Caesarum*,[3] and Carolingian poets, such as Alcuin, Angilbert, Modoin, Hrabanus Maurus, Florus, Paul the Deacon and Sedulius Scotus, based their styles on those of Virgil, Ovid, Horace and Lucan.[4] There was also an occasional interest in classical art, a good example of which is a verse account, written in the style of Ovid by a bishop[5] who was also one of Charlemagne's travelling administrators. Along with other inducements to point his judgement in the right direction, he had been offered at Narbonne a Roman bowl having on it a number of scenes from classical mythology (some of them badly rubbed and difficult to discern), and the detailed description and identifications he gives of them would do credit to any scholar of today.[6] Occasionally, the Carolingian arts themselves displayed close links with those of the classical past. Although not in its original condition, a surviving bronze statuette of a real, or ideal, Carolingian emperor[7] is obviously based on a larger-scale equestrian statue of a Roman emperor, and we have a sketch for a triumphal arch[8] which clearly owes much to the Roman arches of antiquity.

Carolingian miniaturists could occasionally reproduce Roman originals, and do so with such fidelity that their own pictures might easily pass as classical ones. Indeed, if they so wished, historians of late antique art could make use of such Carolingian copies in the same way that historians of Greek art have tried to take advantage of Roman reproductions. A tenth-century Carolingian copy (now lost) of a late classical calendrical manuscript included personifications of the months and other illustrations that are believed to have been virtual duplicates of the fourth-century originals,[9] and the painting of a seated figure, made at a

[2] This was Alcuin; see Duemmler, *Epistolae Karolini aevi* II, 141.
[3] For which see Pertz and Waitz, *Einhardi vita Karoli Magni*.
[4] See Raby, *A History of Secular Latin Poetry* I, ch. V *passim*, and Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry*, ch. VI *passim*.
[5] This was Theodulf. [6] See Duemmler, *Poetae latini aevi Carolini* I, 498–9.
[7] Hubert, Porcher and Volbach, *Carolingian Art*, pl. 206.
[8] See *ibid*., pl. 29, for a reconstruction.
[9] The lost Carolingian copy is known from two copies made in the late sixteenth and

studio within Charlemagne's own court circle,[10] is so remarkably antique in style that it has actually been claimed by one distinguished scholar to be itself a late Roman original.[11] Again, the portrayal of Perseus in an astronomical collection at Leiden[12] could easily be mistaken for a classical work of art, while the representation of the head of Eridanus, now in London,[13] is in a style indistinguishable from that of the classical period. Some of this accurate copying resulted in works that I once described as facsimiles,[14] and the most famous, and indeed the most extensive, example of these is a cycle of illustrations of the plays of the second-century BC playwright, Terence, which is now in the Vatican Library (Vat. lat. 3868).[15]

Although his comedies were variously received by his contemporaries – on the one hand, the first performance of one was deserted in favour of such trivial attractions as a boxing match and a tightrope walker,[16] and on the other, the appeal of another was such that it was performed twice in a single day[17] – they were such models of clear and elegant Latin and so perceptive in their comments on the human condition that they came to be highly esteemed by the discerning of almost all succeeding

early seventeenth centuries: Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 7524–55, fols. 190–211; and Vatican, Barb. lat. 2154 and Vat. lat. 9135. Stern concluded from his study of these that the Carolingian copy so faithfully reproduced the original that it 'n'a laissé aucune trace dans la tradition des images. Cette copie a dû être l'un de ces manuscrits illustrés dont les dessinateurs reproduisaient trait pour trait leurs modèles antiques.' See Stern, *Le Calendrier de 354*, p. 11; and cf. also Gaspar and Lyna, *Les Principaux Manuscrits à peintures de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique* I, no. 1. For a reproduction of one of the illustrations in the sixteenth-century Brussels copy, see Dodwell, *Painting in Europe*, pl. 11.

[10] Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 18723.

[11] Swarzenski, 'The Xanten Purple Leaf', esp. pp. 22–3.

[12] Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. Lat. Qu. 79, 40v; see Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne*, pl. 46.

[13] BL Harley 647, 10v; see Dodwell, *Painting in Europe*, pl. l2, and Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts*, pl. 34.

[14] *Painting in Europe*, p. 23.

[15] The complete manuscript is reproduced in photographic facsimile in Jachmann, *Terentius. Codex Vaticanus latinus 3868*.

[16] This is stated in the two Prologues of *Hecyra*: *Prologus (I)* 1–5 and *Prologus (II)* 25–8. The same play later lost its audience to the counter-attraction of a gladiatorial show: *Prologus (II)* 39–42.

[17] Suetonius says this of *Eunuchus*. See Radice, *Terence: the Comedies*, Appendix A, p. 390.

generations; not least by those of the Middle Ages, who have bequeathed to us the earliest surviving copies of his complete works. Some are illustrated, and all students of the subject are indebted to Jones and Morey for publishing a corpus of all the related miniatures made before the thirteenth century.[18] Although, as we shall see in a later chapter, we shall find another illustrated Terence, now in Paris, to be of considerable importance, it is to the one in the Vatican that we shall direct most of our attention in this study.

THE ARCHETYPE OF THE VATICAN TERENCE

According to the generally accepted view of Bischoff,[19] the Vatican Terence was made at Corvey, although it probably later passed to the parent house of Corbie from which Corvey was colonized. He dates it to the period 820–30.[20] It has the unusual distinction for a Carolingian manuscript of providing the name of the scribe (Hrodgarius) and of one of the three artists (Adelricus), who gives us his name on fol. 3r, associating with it a prayer for God's mercy. (It was by no means unusual for the scribe of a theological work in the Middle Ages to associate his endeavours with a petition to God, yet, curious as it may seem to us today that an artist should suppose that God would look favourably on a secular and pagan work, this may have something to tell us about attitudes to Terence within medieval monasteries.) The script is Carolingian but the pictures – and, excluding prefatory material, there are no less than 144 of these – are accepted as being remarkably accurate copies of classical originals, characteristic comments being that the cycle represents an 'unusually careful rendition of an antique model',[21] and that it is 'a most faithful copy' of a late classical original.[22] No one will dispute that the pictures are so close to their prototypes that they can be virtually treated as Roman works themselves, although the date of those prototypes is very much a matter of controversy. Indeed, in tracing the numerous scholarly

[18] Jones and Morey, *The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence*.

[19] Bischoff, 'Hadoardus and the Manuscripts of Classical Authors from Corbie', p. 54 n. 3. Koehler and Mütherich, however, prefer to leave open the question of the place of origin of the manuscript: see *Die karolingischen Miniaturen* IV, 76.

[20] Bischoff, *ibid.*

[21] J&M II, 36.

[22] Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 13.

pronouncements about the archetype of the Vatican Terence, we are sometimes reminded of the remark made by one of the lawyers in Terence's play *Phormio* that 'quot homines tot sententiae'.[23]

If we leave on one side the wildly differing dates suggested in the nineteenth century, we can point to the fact that, in the first two decades of the twentieth, proposals varied from the first century BC, which had the support of an art historian as eminent as Carl Robert,[24] to the fifth or sixth century AD put forward by Engelhardt.[25] Later, in 1924, Jachmann favoured the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, chiefly on literary evidence,[26] and in the following year, on art-historical data, Rodenwaldt sought to prove that the pictures could not have been made before the second half of the fourth century.[27] In 1939, Bieber suggested a date in the fourth or fifth century,[28] and in the same year, Byvanck more positively, but on remarkably limited evidence, declared for the years 410–20.[29] In 1945, Bethe noted similarities with works of the first century,[30] and since then, Weitzmann and Koehler and Mütherich have declared for the fifth century.[31] These are not all the opinions given, and I have left to the last the most influential of all, which was that of Jones and Morey.

In 1931, they argued for a date in 'the latter part of the fifth century or even *c.* 500',[32] basing their conclusions partly on an art-historical

[23] 'There are as many opinions as there are men to give them' (*Phormio* 454).

[24] Robert, *Die Masken der neueren attischen Komoedie*, pp. 87–108, esp. p. 108.

[25] Engelhardt, *Die Illustrationen der Terenzhandschriften*, esp. pp. 57 and 90–1.

[26] Jachmann, *Die Geschichte des Terenztextes*, p. 119.

[27] Rodenwaldt, 'Cortinae', esp. pp. 47–9.

[28] Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, p. 153.

[29] Byvanck, 'Das Vorbild der Terenzillustrationen', p. 135: 'Man wird ihn also etwa zwischen 410 und 420 datieren dürfen.'

[30] Bethe, *Buch und Bild im Altertum*, p. 61, where he compares the Terence illustrations with the wall-paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Bethe's book was posthumously edited by E. Kirsten.

[31] Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 13; Koehler and Mütherich, *Die karolingischen Miniaturen* IV, 75.

[32] J&M II, 45. Earlier, Morey had said much the same in 'I miniatori del Terenzio illustrato della Biblioteca Vaticana', pp. 50–3. A few pages on (p. 58) Morey remarks (as he does in his later publication) that the cylindrical headgear worn by Thraso in *Eunuchus* is first found used by the military in the porphyry imperial statuettes of St Mark's, Venice. However, it was already in use by civilians in the second century AD as we see from the second-century funeral stele of a merchant from Aquileia in which the

analysis (which, incidentally, led them to claim that the artist was 'one schooled in the Greco-Asiatic manner, and presumably a Greek'),[33] and partly on a textual criterion, namely on the fifth-century date that Craig had earlier proposed for Calliopius,[34] the recensionist of the version of the text to which belong all the surviving medieval manuscripts of Terence, including the illustrated ones. They were here influenced by the view of Jachmann, which had won general acceptance, that the illustrations had been created for a branch of the textual tradition designated as γ, which itself derived from the Calliopian recension. However, in recent years Grant has argued that anomalies in the relationship between the miniatures and the Calliopian recension and its γ branch indicate that the illustrations were created for a non-Calliopian manuscript, and subsequently imported into the γ branch at an undetermined point in its development.[35] If this is correct, it would mean that the date of origin of the illustrations need not be later than that of Calliopius, which itself remains a matter of debate. In any event, it is the view of the present writer that there is enough art-historical evidence to establish the date of the miniatures in the third century AD. Two of the indications for this are to be found in the very first picture (pl. I).

Dates of hair-styles, etc.

This is an author 'portrait' – a portrayal of Terence[36] – in a format which follows a familiar classical formula going back to embossed or painted shields described by Pliny[37] and known as the *imago clipeata*,[38] in which a bust is presented in a roundel held by two supporters. These could either be centaurs, as on the Dionysiac sarcophagi,[39] or winged Victories, as on

latter is shown wearing a fez-like hat: see Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 105. Webster, *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy*, p. 210, thinks that it may be 'a restylization of the Macedonian *causia*'.

[33] J&M II, 40. On p. 198, they say that he was 'probably a Greek'.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 200. [35] Grant, *Studies in the Textual Tradition of Terence*, p. 21.

[36] A good colour reproduction of it forms the frontispiece of J&M I; see also Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts*, pl. 33.

[37] *Naturalis historia* XXXV.iii.4 (ed. Mayhoff V, 232).

[38] The standard work on which is now Winkes, *Clipeata imago*.

[39] Matz, *Die dionysischen Sarkophage* IV, pls. 286 (nos. 268 and 269), 290 (nos. 270 and 272) and 291 (nos. 267 and 273).

the sarcophagus of the Seasons in Washington,[40] or winged Cupids, as on a sarcophagus from Roman Gaul,[41] although appropriately enough in the Terence, the supporters are two actors, who hold up a placard resting on a small column and with a portrayal of Terence on it. This is clearly an imagined likeness, and one which no doubt reflected the trends in portraiture of the day. Ovid has an amused reference to the rapidly changing fashions of ladies' coiffures (*Ars amatoria* III.152), but the hair-styles of men in the Roman period also had their vogues. They were presumably set by the ruling class, especially the emperors, and an examination of these will be a positive help in any dating procedures. With this in mind, we might consider those of the third century AD.

The century began with an emperor who boasted flowing locks, which are shown in surviving representations of him. He was Septimius Severus (193–211).[42] After the much reduced style of his immediate successor, Caracalla (211–17),[43] however, the others favoured quite different styles and opted for a very much shorter haircut, which was perhaps better suited to the new race of soldier-emperors – those raised from the army to the purple. Contemporary likenesses show that they set a fashion that dominated the rest of the first half of the third century: one which was a gentler form of the style that we would today describe as *en brosse* – very short without being shaven, and with a pronounced peak at the front. We see it first taken up by Macrinus (217–18),[44] and – after the rule of the boy-emperor, Elagabalus (218–22)[45] – resumed in turn by Alexander Severus (222–35),[46] Maximinus Thrax (235–8),[47] Gordian III (238–44)[48]

[40] Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 72.

[41] Espérandieu, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs* II, pl. on p. 117 (no. l057).

[42] Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pls. 64 and 247.

[43] See Wiggers and Wegner, *Caracalla, Geta, Plautilla*, pp. 9–92 and pls. 1–23; and Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pl. 290.

[44] See Wiggers and Wegner, *Caracalla, Geta, Plautilla*, pp. 131–40 and pls. 30–3; and Poulsen, *Les Portraits romains* II, 138 (no. 138) and pls. CCXX–CCXXI.

[45] See Wiggers and Wegner, *Caracalla, Geta, Plautilla*, pp. 146–52 and pls. 38–41; and Kent, *Roman Coins*, pl. 117 (nos. 414–15).

[46] See Wiggers and Wegner, *Caracalla, Geta, Plautilla*, pp. 177–99 and pls. 44–56*a* and 65*a*.

[47] *Ibid*., pp. 223–8 and pls. 64*b*, 66–9, 70*b* and 72*f*; and Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pl. 291*a*.

[48] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 13–29 and pls. 1–9; and Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pl. 292. A good comparison with the portrait of Philip can be made

and Philip the Arab (244–9).[49] With the turn of the half-century, this particular style went out of fashion and both Decius (249–51)[50] and Trebonianus (251–3)[51] had quite different, heavily cropped hair, while their successors, Gallienus (253–68)[52] and Claudius II (268–70),[53] had longish hair. Within a specific period, then – from *c.* 217 to *c.* 249 – there was a well defined style – the *en brosse* one – and the significance of this is that the Terence portrayal shows him following this fashion. During the course of its vogue, there were small variations, although both Gordian III and Philip the Arab had exactly the same haircut and we may note that Terence's is remarkably similar to theirs. This we shall see if we compare a marble portrait-bust of Philip in the Vatican (pl. II*a*) with the representation of Terence in the Vatican manuscript (pl. II*b*). What is more, Philip also had a beard and sideburns resembling those of Terence, although this comes out less clearly in the life-size marble head of him that we illustrate in order to show him full-face as in the miniature than in a profile likeness on a silver medallion now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.[54] On the basis of these comparisons, we might reasonably suppose that the picture of Terence was made in the first half of the third century and probably in its second quarter.[55]

In the full perspective of history, fashions can, of course, recur and it is therefore important to see that the suggested dating of our Terence picture by reference to the hair-style of Philip the Arab is given some

from the side-by-side reproductions in Van der Meer and Mohrmann, *Atlas of the Early Christian World*, figs. 25 and 26.

[49] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 30–41 and pls. 10–14; and Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pl. 293.

[50] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 63–9 and pls. 26–8; and Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 8.

[51] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 83–91 and pls. 29 and 34–5. The identification of the New York statue as Trebonianus is here rejected by Wegner (pp. 89–90), but it is tentatively accepted by Wood, *Roman Portrait Sculpture*, pp. 43–5. See also Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 21.

[52] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 106–20 and pls. 40–7; and Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pl. 298.

[53] See Wegner, *Gordianus III. bis Carinus*, pp. 135–8 and pl. 52; and Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 390.

[54] BN, Cabinet des Médailles, no. 88; see Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, pl. 382.

[55] We find the Terence style also in the portrayal of Macrinus cited above, but I presume that, at this stage, it had not yet become a fashion.

support when we compare the facial expressions of playwright and emperor.

Before the third century AD, the demeanour and expression of the sitter had tended to be conventionalized or ritualized, by which I mean that they were intended to indicate a frame of mind considered appropriate for the profession or status of the sitter. So, representations of poets had shown them projecting feelings or taking up postures that were considered proper for literary figures. As early as *c.* 380 BC, therefore, a figure, thought to be that of Aristophanes, was represented in meditation before theatrical masks,[56] as was Menander much later. The painting of the latter in the House of Menander at Pompeii shows him in a contemplative mood,[57] and a poet in the mosaics of Sousse[58] is characterized in the same way. The famous portrayal of Virgil, also at Sousse,[59] presents him, too, with the air and posture appropriate for poets: namely looking outwards, as if for inspiration, as he sits between two Muses, a scroll containing an extract from the *Æneid* on his lap. There is nothing as stereotyped as this about the image of Terence. He is simply presented as a human being with ordinary human feelings and, indeed, is made to look quite lugubrious, like a sculpted head made a few years earlier and described by Vagn Poulsen as a 'portrait d'un homme mélancolique'.[60] The same is true of the portrait of Philip the Arab in the sense that his expression is not one that the world would associate with a powerful emperor but rather that of a human being with all his strengths and weaknesses. Hekler, indeed, sees chiefly his weaknesses and claims that the 'false look of the eyes and the choleric expression tell us much more of the Emperor's disposition than do the scanty records of the texts'.[61] He claims that the period when the inner feelings of a man could be exposed in this way seems to bridge the years between *c.* 215 and *c.* 250,[62] and he contrasts the portrayals made then with 'the nerveless refinement of the Antonine portraits' that came before, and also with the anti-individual,

[56] Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, fig. 201.
[57] Maiuri, *La Casa del Menandro* I, frontispiece and pp. 106–21, and II, pl. XII.
[58] Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, fig. 131.
[59] *Ibid.*, fig. 130.
[60] Poulsen, *Les Portraits romains* II, 178 (no. 181) and pls. CCXCIII–CCXCIV.
[61] Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, p. xl.
[62] *Ibid.* Hekler actually says from the bust of Caracalla (211–17) to *c.* 250. For the continuing influence of the images of Caracalla on those of his successors see Wood, *Roman Portrait Sculpture*, pp. 27–48.

rigidly symmetrical portraits that came after.[63] Certainly, as the third quarter of the century began, so portraitists dropped the idea of revealing the human qualities of their imperial sitters and chose instead to present them as the recipients of divine inspiration.[64]

It is not only the image of Terence, but also the depiction of the actors who hold the placard on which it is painted, that offers evidence of a third-century date and we can see this if we compare them to the carvings on a small sarcophagus in the Ince Blundell collection of the Merseyside Museums.[65] Its lid is ornamented with six stage masks. On the two ends are depicted a comic and a tragic mask, each on a table. The main carvings, on the front, present us with two figures standing on either side of a central door and gesturing towards it. They are dressed as actors, and behind each is a flute-player playing his instrument to accompany them. Clearly, the sarcophagus was intended for the remains of someone associated with the theatre, perhaps a writer, and if we compare the left-hand figure here (pl. III*a*) with the left-hand figure in the miniature (pl. III*b*), we shall see some close resemblances, as Webster has already noted.[66] There is, in each, exactly the same positioning of the right arm, and surprisingly enough, exactly the same concealment of the left arm behind the back so that it is lost to view below the elbow. There is also the same backward inclined stance of the body and the same type of chiton. In each, this falls down to the ankles, is decorated near the hem, is bunched up over the stomach, and is gathered at the waist with a sash which falls in folds at the back. Each chiton, furthermore, is decorated with a medallion on the chest. These comparisons are very close indeed, and difficult to reconcile with the remark of Jones and Morey that the style of the Terence miniatures is 'wholly un-Latin'.[67] Webster dates the sarcophagus between 250 and 300.[68]

One very unusual feature of the Vatican manuscript is that, before the texts of five of the six plays, there is an illustration in which the various masks that will be required by the different actors are displayed on

[63] Hekler, *Greek & Roman Portraits*, pp. xl–xli.
[64] Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: the Late Empire*, p. 27.
[65] Ashmole, *Catalogue of the Ancient Marbles at Ince Blundell Hall*, p. 89 (no. 232) and pl. 50. We should, nevertheless, note that doubts have been cast on the authenticity of this sarcophagus by Koch and Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, p. 123.
[66] Webster, *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy*, IS 50 (p. 218).
[67] J&M II, 198.
[68] Webster, *Monuments Illustrating New Comedy*, p. 219.