INTRODUCTION

1. TERENCE AND ROMAN COMEDY

Although there is evidence of dramatic entertainment in Rome and
other Italian towns from an early date,[1] formal literary drama came
to Rome only in the third century B.C., when in September of the year
240 at the *ludi Romani* there was performed a Latin play,[2] translated
from the Greek by Livius Andronicus, a *semigraecus* from Tarentum.
Rome had just brought the First Punic War to a successful conclusion,
and the *ludi Romani* of that year were celebrated on a grander scale to
mark the nation's pride and joy at that success. The inclusion of a
dramatic entertainment in the games is noteworthy, for it was to remain
the Roman practice that the performance of plays, both comedies and
tragedies, should take place on important public occasions – this is
true no less of performances at funeral games (*ludi funebres*) than at the
annual *ludi scaenici*. The fact that Andronicus presented Latin versions
of Greek plays chosen from the repertory of New Comedy is also
significant. A Roman audience, while recognising the unchanging
human traits portrayed on the stage, could – like an English audience
watching French farce (or even Molière) – observe with amused superi-
ority the foibles and weaknesses of characters who were not Romans.
Livius not only established the translation into Latin of Greek New
Comedy as a new genre, the *fabula palliata*:[3] in an important matter
of technique he took a decisive step. The metres he chose were essen-
tially those of Greek drama, modified to the needs of Latin, above all
in the freedom with which he admitted long syllables where the Greek
metrical scheme demanded a short.[4] The example that Andronicus
set in this respect was followed by all subsequent writers in the genre.

[1] See especially Livy 7.2 (under the year 364 B.C.).
[2] Whether it was a tragedy or a comedy is not known, for Livius wrote
both forms of drama; he also produced, in Saturnian verse, the first Latin
translation of Homer's *Odyssey*.
[3] 'Comedy (lit. play) in Greek dress' (*pallium* = Greek cloak, ἱμάτιον).
[4] He also made no distinction between the metres of tragedy and comedy,
in this respect too breaking away from Greek practice.

[1]

Within a quarter of a century war against Carthage was resumed
and continued unbroken, for the most part on Italian soil, until
Hannibal was defeated at Zama in 202 B.C. and the Carthaginians
sued for peace, which was granted in the following year. The period
of the Hannibalic war might seem to be scarcely conducive to the
development of organised dramatic entertainment, but it was during
this time that Plautus, another non-Roman (he was a native of
Sarsina in Umbria) established himself as the foremost writer of the
fabula palliata. Unlike Livius, Plautus confined himself to this one
genre and, although many of the 130 or so plays attributed to him
a century later were not genuine, his literary output was considerable;
the twenty plays that survive, together with fragments of a twenty-
first, may well be identical with the twenty-one plays whose authen-
ticity Varro[1] declared to be generally acknowledged, but Varro
makes it clear that there were a number of other genuine plays. Only
two of Plautus' plays can be firmly dated, the *Stichus* (200 B.C.) and
Pseudolus (191), but internal evidence suggests that some at least[2] of
his plays were written before the end of the Second Punic War, and if,
as a statement of Cicero seems to imply (*de Sen.* 14.50), Plautus was
an old man when he wrote the *Pseudolus*, his earliest plays might go
back to the first years of the war. The plays of Plautus are drawn
from a wide range of Greek authors – Demophilus, Diphilus,
Menander,[3] and Philemon are attested – and they also show a wide
range of plots and characters. But though their ultimate parentage
is Greek, plot, language, and metre are handled with such freedom
and self-assurance that the result cannot be regarded as mere transla-
tion. The extent to which Plautus departs from his Greek models
seems to vary considerably from play to play,[4] but at times his

[1] Quoted in Aulus Gellius 3.3.3.
[2] E.g. *Miles Gloriosus, Cistellaria*.
[3] It is significant, in comparison with Terence, that only four (*Aulularia*
(?), *Bacchides, Cistellaria, Stichus*) of the twenty or twenty-one surviving plays
of Plautus come from Menander.
[4] The seminal work is E. Fraenkel's *Plautinisches im Plautus* (1922); the
Italian translation (by F. Munari), *Elementi plautini in Piauto* (1960) has
almost fifty pages of *Addenda*. The discovery of fragments of Menander's
Δὶς 'Εξαπατῶν corresponding to Plautus' *Bacchides* 494–562 provides the
longest passage where a direct comparison can be made between Greek
original and Latin adaptation. Since their partial publication by E. W.
Handley in 1968 (*Menander and Plautus: A Study in Comparison*) the fragments

relationship to his models is certainly no closer than is Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* to its model, the *Menaechmi* of Plautus.[1] From the viewpoint of a more sophisticated age Plautus might be justly criticised for insufficient attention to careful construction and artistic finish, but, whatever their shortcomings, his plays were a success. For into the carefully organised structure of Greek New Comedy Plautus infused just that degree of native vigour that a Roman audience required. The gusto that Plautus contributed to his plays is matched by the range and vividness of the characters and themes he encompassed. Major roles are given to such characters as the braggart soldier, the unsavoury *leno*, the dinner-seeking parasite, and the scheming slave, while the comic potential of scenes, and even whole plays, involving mistaken identity is fully exploited. In part this reproduces characteristics of the Greek originals – though the choice that Plautus made is itself indicative of the breadth of his interests – but in part too the Latin plays show a new emphasis that has been contributed by Plautus himself. Certainly the manner in which the role of the *callidus seruus* is emphasised is demonstrably the result of Plautine addition or alteration. The fact that the society that was being depicted was Greek may have made such comic exaggerations more acceptable to a Roman audience, but it should be remembered that the native Italian *fabula Atellana* had already accustomed them to grossly exaggerated stock characters.

The period of about twenty years that elapsed between the death of Plautus and the first play of Terence was bridged, in the realm of comedy, by Caecilius Statius, an Insubrian Gaul from Milan or nearby. Although only fragments of his plays survive, he is a writer of some importance. It is to him, not to Plautus, that a Republican critic, Volcacius Sedigitus, gives first place in a list of writers of Roman comedy, while Varro (*sat. Menipp.* 399) writes 'in argumentis Caecilius poscit palmam'.[2] What survives of Caecilius does not allow us to make

have been much discussed; see, for example, K. Gaiser, *Philologus* 114 (1970) 51–87, C. Questa in *Entretiens Hardt* 16 (1970) 183ff., V. Pöschl, *SB Heidelberg*, 1973, 4. Abh.

[1] The motif of the two pairs of twins is derived from the *Amphitruo*.

[2] 'In respect of plots Caecilius claims the crown'; the quotation continues *in ethesin* (= 'characters') *Terentius* (sc. *poscit palmam*), *in sermonibus Plautus*.

any judgement on his plots,[1] but a chapter of Aulus Gellius (2.23) permits us to compare three passages (in total just over thirty lines) of Menander's Πλόκιον with Caecilius' Latin version. The technique is very similar to that of Plautus. Instead of literal translation there is compression, addition, substitution; a monologue in iambic trimeters is converted into a polymetric monody. Alliteration and assonance are freely employed – not only in the polymetric section. The affinity that Caecilius shows with Plautus in language and style is all the more notable, since he markedly differs from him in some other respects. We know the titles of more than forty of his plays, and over a third of them are based on Menandrean originals, a significant increase over Plautus and a step in the direction of the later practice of Terence. It is probable that he did not adopt the practice of so-called *contaminatio*,[2] which Plautus certainly used in some of his plays, for the praise that Varro gives him for his plots seems to imply that the structure of his plays closely adhered to that of their Greek originals.

Between Caecilius and Terence there are two direct links. Suetonius' life of Terence, which is quoted almost in its entirety by Donatus, records a touching incident. After Terence had written his first play, the *Andria*, he submitted it to the aediles, who were to be responsible for the conduct of the *ludi* at which Terence hoped his play might be produced. The aediles instructed him to take his manuscript and read it to Caecilius, who, presumably, would give the aediles an expert opinion on whether the play deserved to be produced. Terence found Caecilius at dinner, and, being himself poorly dressed, was asked to sit on a separate bench. But after he had read only a few lines, Caecilius asked him to join him at table as his guest, whereupon Terence read the rest of the play *non sine magna Caecilii admiratione*. Since Caecilius died in 168 B.C. and the commonly accepted date for the production of the *Andria* is 166, the story may be apocryphal, but, if so, it is *ben trovato*, for there is a real sense in which the young poet, who was to draw four of his six plays from Menander, continues the tradition of Caecilius. Another link between Caecilius and Terence

---

[1] Merit in plot construction would, one might think, derive largely from the Greek models Caecilius followed, but one must assume that he both chose well, and had the sense to leave well alone.

[2] The combination in one Latin play of ingredients from more than one Greek play; for the term *contaminatio* see below, p. 8 n. 2.

is certain. The second prologue of Terence's *Hecyra* is spoken by
L. Ambivius Turpio, the actor-manager (and producer) of all
Terence's plays. Now an old man, he recalls his younger days, when
his vigorous efforts were needed to secure a hearing for Caecilius' plays
in the face of attempts by adversaries to prevent the plays being
performed. The unnamed *aduorsarii* are those professional rivals whose
hostility to Terence is a recurring theme of his prologues. Professional
jealousy might show itself in many ways, but its underlying cause was
economic. The number of occasions on which comedies could be
publicly performed was limited, and playwright and actor-manager
had a common interest in having a play accepted, and in carrying
through its successful performance. Certainly in the case of Terence,
as probably in the case of Caecilius, at the outset of his career
professional jealousy came from 'established' writers, who saw their
livelihood and position threatened by a new and younger talent.[1] The
similarity of language of *Hec.* 21–3 (referring to Caecilius) and *Ph.* 16–
18 (referring to Terence) is striking:

> ita poetam [sc. Caecilium] restitui in locum
> prope iam remmotum iniuria aduorsarium
> ab studio atque ab labore atque arte musica.
>
> (*Hec.* 21–3)
>
> is sibi responsum hoc habeat, in medio omnibus
> palmam esse positam qui artem tractent musicam.
> ille ad famem hunc [sc. Terentium] a studio studuit reicere.
>
> (*Ph.* 16–18)

In the case of Terence the battle was fought largely under the banner
of literary and aesthetic principles, and it is possible that those who
opposed Caecilius used similar tactics. But if this is so, our sources
tell us nothing of it. What is clear is that ultimately Caecilius won
both popular success in the theatre and the approval of qualified

---

[1] When in 207 B.C. – as a mark of gratitude to Livius Andronicus – the
temple of Minerva on the Aventine was officially established as the meeting
place for *scribae* and *histriones* (note the community of interest of writers
(both creative writers and notaries?) and actors), it provided a meeting-
ground for writers of the 'establishment' and doubtless encouraged them to
combine to keep unwanted newcomers out of the charmed circle. The out-
look of such a group would naturally be conservative, though this meant,
not that their tastes never changed, but that they tended to band together
to perpetuate the currently prevailing fashion.

critics; so, in Volcacius Sedigitus' canon (see above, p. 3) he was
ranked higher than Plautus. And if there is any truth in the story of
his meeting with Terence, the aediles must have referred Terence to
him because they regarded him as the doyen of comic playwrights.

By the time that Terence began to write, the cultural climate
had changed considerably from what it had been in Plautus' day.
A number of factors in this change can be identified. In the period
immediately after the end of the Second Punic War there was a con-
tinuing increase in the number of occasions on which dramatic
performances were given. This affected both audience and play-
wrights. The former became more demanding and more sophisticated
in their expectations, the latter were compelled not only to select their
models with greater care, but also to consider how to handle those
originals, particularly whether translation was to be freer or more
literal. A decision on this problem might involve theoretical con-
siderations, but an important factor was the fact that other forms of
entertainment were available at the *ludi*; the prologues to the *Hecyra*
tell how the competing attractions of tightrope walkers, boxers, and
gladiators caused Terence's audience to vanish. Since the *ludi* were
occasions for conspicuous display by those who gave them, they too
had an interest in seeing that only such plays were chosen as would
make a good impression on the audience at large. Such a considera-
tion need not necessarily lead to an appeal to the lowest levels of
taste, but the desire to avoid exhibiting a failure – ancient Roman
audiences seem to have been as vocal in showing their disapproval as
modern ones – must have influenced the choice of author and play.
But there is one factor above all that affects the generation after
Plautus' death: the increasing influence of Greek culture on Rome
as a result of Rome's military and political involvement with Greece.[1]
That influence could be welcomed or opposed: it could not be ignored.

Two figures illustrate the opposing views. M. Porcius Cato ('Cato
the Censor') denounced the luxury and moral enervation he observed
in contemporary Rome, and proclaimed that Rome would be ruined
by Greek culture and education.[2] Cato, himself a *nouus homo*, was
a particularly vigorous opponent of the philhellenic policy and

[1] Hence the well-known passage of Horace (*Ep.* 2.1.156–7) *Graecia capta
ferum uictorem cepit et artes | intulit agresti Latio.*
[2] Plutarch, *Marcus Cato* 23, esp. §§ 1 and 2.

sympathies of many of Rome's hereditary aristocracy, especially
Scipio Africanus. This philhellenism was equally conspicuous in
L. Aemilius Paullus, who brought to an end the war against Perseus,
king of Macedon, by his victory at Pydna in 168 B.C. – the year of
Caecilius' death. One result of the Roman victory in Greece was the
deportation from Achaea of one thousand of its leading citizens, who
included the historian Polybius. Polybius had the good fortune,
though a hostage, to become the close friend of the sons of Aemilius
Paullus, one of whom, after his adoption by the son of Scipio Africanus,
bore the name of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus. Associated
with Scipio Aemilianus was a group of *nobiles* who are generally
referred to as 'the Scipionic Circle'.[1] These men shared a common
interest in Greek culture, especially its literature and philosophy.
Their interest in literature extended to its patronage, and Terence is
the earliest writer to be linked with the names of Scipio and his friend,
C. Laelius. From details concerning the life of Scipio Aemilianus,
including those recorded by his contemporary and intimate friend,
Polybius, we get the fullest picture of a philhellenic aristocrat of the
time during which Terence wrote his plays. Our concern, however,
is not with details of Scipio's life, but with him as an outstanding
representative of philhellenism.

So, when Terence began writing, the prevailing taste among writers
of the *palliata* was markedly different from what it had been in the
days of Plautus. Terence was bound, in any case, to face opposition
from established writers, since his success might endanger their liveli-
hood. But it is clear from his prologues that they also took issue with
him on the proper way to 'translate' Greek plays. It is important to
gain some understanding of their respective views. Caecilius had
taken a significant step in the direction of showing preference for

[1] Appendix VII (pp. 294–306) in A. E. Astin's *Scipio Aemilianus* (1967)–
briefly summarised in *OCD²* s.v. – marshals the evidence and enjoins
appropriate caution both in the use of the phrase and in ascribing to the
Circle a new concept of *humanitas*. But the philhellenism of Scipio is not in
doubt; cf. Astin (op. cit. 15–16), who quotes Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus*
6.8f. 'He brought up his sons in accordance with the traditional native
type of education...but also, and more zealously, on the Greek pattern.
For the young men were surrounded not only by Greek teachers, scholars,
and rhetoricians, but also by Greek sculptors, painters, overseers of horses
and hounds, and instructors in hunting.'

Menander in his choice of Greek plays, but his manner of translating
seems to have remained essentially Plautine. But after Plautus' death
there had clearly been a definite move towards a theory of greater
fidelity to the Greek original, and with the death of Caecilius the
advocates of this type of translation might have hoped to come into
their own. To the realisation of this hope Terence's advent posed
a threat. Though at times he speaks of his adversaries in the plural,
there is one, described by him as a *maleuolus uetus poeta*, to whom we
can give a name, and about whose writing we have some detailed
information. This is Luscius of Lanuvium,[1] already an old man in 166
and, quite possibly, hoping to inherit Caecilius' position as the
acknowledged leading writer of *palliata*.

The charges that were levelled against Terence are those of
plagiarism (*furtum* 'literary theft'), the practice of *contaminatio*, feeble
writing, and dependence on noble patronage. As regards the last
charge (for which see note on *Ad.* 15), it was easy for the suspicion to
arise – whether justified or not – that Terence's plays were not ac-
cepted for production simply on their merits. If production was linked
to a public occasion, who could say what might be achieved if an
aristocratic patron dropped a word in the ear of the officials who
were to preside over the games? And when, as was the case with the
Adelphoe, Terence was on friendly terms with the heirs responsible for
giving the *ludi funebres* in memory of L. Aemilius Paullus, the choice
of him as playwright must have seemed to many to have been pre-
arranged. The allegations of plagiarism and *contaminatio* to some
extent hang together, for the plagiarism which is complained of con-
sists of incorporating into the *Eunuchus* and *Adelphoe* scenes taken from
other Greek plays already translated into Latin, and it is to this
combination of elements from different plays that the word *contami-
natio* is traditionally applied.[2] Behind these accusations lies the feeling

---

[1] For Luscius' life and works see chs. 2–5 of C. Garton's *Personal Aspects
of the Roman Theatre* (Toronto, 1972).

[2] Terence uses the verb *contaminare* twice in his prologues (*An.* 16, *Ht.* 17),
and once in the body of a play (*Eun.* 552); he does not use the noun *contami-
natio*. The verb has a pejorative meaning, 'sully' 'spoil by admixture'. Terence
admits that he has done what his opponents call *contaminare*, but denies that
what he has done 'spoils' the plays. Modern scholars have found it convenient
to use the word *contaminatio* as though it had no pejorative tone, and meant
no more than 'combine'. Cf. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* 202–8.

that the integrity of the Greek original should be respected in translation, at least as far as the unitary nature of the plot was concerned. Whether Luscius also advocated close fidelity to the Greek cannot be demonstrated conclusively,[1] since we possess at most three lines from his comedies. But it seems to be implied by Terence's jibe (*Eun.* 7–8) that Luscius *bene uortendo et easdem scribendo male | ex Graecis bonis Latinas fecit non bonas*, where *bene uertere* (apparently 'faithful translation') is said to produce bad plays.

Luscius' other objection is to Terence's style. In *Ph.* 4–5 Luscius has said (according to Terence) that in Terence's plays 'the language is thin and the writing slight' (*tenui esse oratione et scriptura leui*).[2] To this Terence answers that at least he has never written a play in which a young man sees a deer in flight, pursued by hounds, and earnestly imploring his aid. Clearly Terence is describing a scene in one of Luscius' plays and criticising it on the ground that situation and language are out of keeping with the tone of comedy. What emerges from these exchanges is that Terence and Luscius have one thing in common: in keeping with the spirit of the times they both sought to provide Latin comedy that was more deeply hellenised than in preceding generations. But on the way in which that objective was to be achieved they differed radically. Luscius believed in the maximum fidelity to his Greek originals, but welcomed originals that gave scope for the melodramatic, including apparitions[3] and semi-tragic incident: Terence was prepared to handle Greek originals with some freedom,[4] but he selected those originals in such a way as to exclude themes that seemed inconsistent with his conception of comedy. In one vital respect we may be sure that Terence proved his superiority over his adversaries; refusing to adhere to a principle of over-exact transla-

[1] See C. Garton, *Personal Aspects of the Roman Theatre* 71–2.
[2] For the interpretation of the phrase see my edition ad loc. What follows makes it certain, in my opinion, that *oratio* and *scriptura* cover both language and subject matter, for Terence clearly objects in Luscius both to the situation and to the pathetic language in which the hind (= the young man's beloved) makes her entreaty.
[3] As in his translation of Menander's *Phasma* (cf. *Eun.* 9).
[4] It is necessary to emphasise the point. Compared with Plautus (and even Caecilius) Terence is obviously more 'Attic', but he achieved this without the pedantically close adherence to the original that Luscius advocated.

tion, he had the genius to perfect a pure Latin style that was, not a replica, but a masterly equivalent[1] of the Attic elegance of Menander. In the list of the 'top ten' Latin writers of comedy compiled by Volcacius Sedigitus about 100 B.C. we may be surprised to find Terence placed only sixth. Luscius, however, fares still worse: he is placed last but one.

There is no Latin verse writer before Virgil about whose life we are so well informed as we are about Terence. In addition to information that can be extracted from the prologues to the plays and the *didascaliae*[2] (production notices), which are an integral part of the manuscript tradition of Terence, we possess a brief, but important, life of the poet by the imperial biographer Suetonius.[3] According to this life Terence was born at Carthage *c.* 185 B.C.,[4] though he seems not to have been of Punic stock. He was brought as a slave to Rome, where his master was a senator, Terentius Lucanus; by him he was educated and manumitted, whereupon he took the name P. Terentius Afer. Subsequently he gained the friendship and patronage of Scipio Aemilianus and Gaius Laelius. After writing six plays, of which the *Andria* was the first, he left for Greece, and died either there or on the return journey in 159 B.C. The date and occasion for the production of each of his plays can be established with reasonable certainty[5] from the *didascaliae*:

[1] Latin has an innate tendency to be more rhetorical and flamboyant than simple Attic idiom. As a result, though there are in Terence passages of sustained simple elegance, a Latin equivalent to Menander must necessarily at times resort to a more figured style.

[2] See note on these in Commentary p. 96.

[3] Suetonius draws on the work of earlier, Republican critics. The material varies in trustworthiness and is for the most part simply aggregated without much apparent attempt to assess its worth critically.

[4] Terence left for Greece (in 160 or 159) *nondum quintum atque uicesimum egressus annum* (para. 5). Since this would mean that the *Andria* was written when he was about nineteen, many scholars accept a less well attested variant *tricesimum* (for *uicesimum*). There is little doubt that Suetonius wrote *quintum atque uicesimum*, but his information may not have been correct.

[5] The *didascaliae* are not free from suspicion, for they certainly include information from later productions. For a discussion of the chronology of the plays see Marti, *Lustrum* 8 (1963) 20–3; the most sceptical views are those of Gestri, Blum, and Mattingly (to Marti's bibliography add *R.C.C.M.* 5 (1963) 12–61). I accept the traditional dates, believing that on internal evidence the order *Andria, Hautontimorumenos, Eunuchus, Phormio, Adelphoe* is inherently probable; the position of the *Hecyra* cannot be so determined.