

# Reviews

## I. LITERATURE AND RECEPTION

MARTIN T. DINTER (ED.), *THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO ROMAN COMEDY* (Cambridge companions to literature). Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xxx + 412. ISBN 9781107002104. £79.99/US\$105.00.

Interest in Roman comedy is on the rise. The twenty-first century has seen collected volumes like the *Blackwell Companions* to Terence (2013) and Plautus (2020), the *Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy* (2014) and important monographs such as M. Leigh's *Comedy and the Rise of Rome* (2004), C. W. Marshall's *Stagecraft and Performance* (2006), D. Dutsch's *Feminine Discourse* (2008), A. Sharrock's *Reading Roman Comedy* (2009), T. Moore's *Music in Roman Comedy* (2012), R. Stewart's *Plautus and Roman Slavery* (2012) and A. Richlin's *Slave Theater* (2017), with several more individual works, series and translations in progress. Each directs itself at a different audience, from novice to expert. Dinter's *Companion* walks a middle road, as its prologue notes: 'Whilst the volume provides introductory material throughout, each chapter also aims to awaken the reader's curiosity and to be useful to "think with" when pondering Roman comedy rather than to sound an authoritative and exhaustive voice on one particular subject' (xvii). So what framework does this volume offer to 'think with'?

D.'s *Companion* is divided into four parts, covering the 'world', 'fabric', 'sociology' and 'reception' of Roman comedy. Each part invites the reader to explore, through representative examples, an important aspect of Roman comedy studies. Alison Sharrock's Introduction challenges the modern notion that Roman comedy is not 'funny'. She reminds the reader that a literary text is not a script and that comedy represented different things over time. In arguing the playwrights' subversion of canned plots and stock characters, Sharrock often defines them reductively, but she finds wider variation than the repetitiveness generally claimed.

In Part I 'The World of Roman Comedy', Gesine Manuwal examines the 'contexts' of Roman comedy: *palliata*, Republican drama and literature, the historical and social background and its audiences. Of note is the inclusion of lesser-known comic playwrights and precursors to Plautus and Terence. Costas Panayotakis surveys native and non-native Italian drama, such as mime, *fabulae Atellanae* and Fescennine verses, concluding that these 'low dramas' influenced Plautus, though the details are unclear. Mario Telò, in his jargony 'Poetics of Adaptation', asserts that the process of adaptation allowed the playwrights to create their own cultural identities, examining Plautus' *vortit barbare* and Terence's defence of *contaminatio*. Finally, the late Robert Germany argues that since we have come to understand politics as a 'broader set of discourses pertaining to the mediation of power in society and to the very constitution of social life' (66), Roman comedy was not apolitical.

C. W. Marshall opens Part II 'The Fabric of Roman Comedy', examining the hypothetical staging of *Mercator* and *Hecyra* and the ways in which Plautus and Terence used eavesdropping scenes, descriptions of travel, and entrances and exits to build verisimilitude for the audience. Timothy J. Moore is tapped once more for his lucid explanation of metres in Roman comedy and what they have to do with characterisation and sympathy building, using the *Casina* as an example. Isabella Tardin Cardoso sketches the repertoire of non-verbal techniques available to the actor and speculates as to their deployment in *Amphitryo*, *Miles* and *Eunuchus*, an admittedly difficult task, given the ephemerality of non-verbal action. David Christenson muses on metatheatre, which he limits to the playwrights' reflections on the genre of Roman comedy within their works, through *Pseudolus*, *Rudens* and *Eunuchus*. Finally, Evangelos Karakasis surveys the performatively archaic 'early Latin' elements in Roman comedy's grammar, vocabulary and syntax.

In Part III 'The Sociology of Roman Comedy', D. begins with the moralising aspects of relationships between fathers, sons and tutors. William Fitzgerald briefly examines the figure of the *servus callidus* and topic of slave torture. Dorota Dutsch interrogates Freud's 'mother/whore' dichotomy by connecting the ways in which *meretrices* and *lenae* perform both sex labour and

mothering, asserting that the playwrights themselves break this binary. Anna Clark reminds us that it is impossible to extricate the comedies from their religious contexts, highlighting the festival, funeral and ritual frames for the plays, as well as their invocation of various gods, sacrifices and portents. Andreas Bartholomä establishes four fascinating truisms of law in Roman comedy, and there follows an examination of *Phormio's epiklerate* law and *Rudens' mancipatio*. The late Elaine Fantham outlines the sources of income in historical Athens, comparing them to financial sources in the *palliata*.

Manuwald returns in Part IV 'The Reception of Roman Comedy', outlining how Plautus and Terence went from performed plays to read texts, complete with commentators, editors and literary criticism, from the late Republic to the late antique period. Beatrice Radden Keefe's excellent survey of the manuscript tradition for Plautus and Terence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance naturally follows, with links to newly digitised manuscripts. Marek Thue Kretschmer succinctly outlines Hrotsvit of Gandersheim's 'anti-Terentian' dramas and demonstrates the ways she adapted Terence's motifs of lustful disguise and deception into those of spiritual redemption. Robert S. Miola revisits the subject of his 1995 monograph, tracing the performance history and adaptation of Roman comedy in early modern England, and its influence on Shakespeare, Jonson, Chapman, Heywood and Ford. Céline Candiard traces similar developments in Italy and France, while Florian Hurka does the same for Germany. Candiard returns to examine the popularity of *Amphitryo* and the Plautine musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* in the twentieth century, arguing that Roman comedy is a major archetype for and indirect influence on the so-called Western tradition.

There are notable strengths of this volume. It is rare to see Terence treated equally alongside Plautus in a volume on comedy, as here. With his subdued action, unhappy endings and complicated social commentary, Terence stymies most scholars. Laudable is the lack of interest in comparing Plautus and Terence to lost Greek originals, a kind of literary necromancy still too common in Roman comedy studies. Bartholomä, Dutsch and Kretschmer are stand-outs, living up to D.'s promise of material to 'think with'. Moore, Karakasis and Keefe impress by sheer volume of information.

The structure is less successful. Chapters range from twelve to nineteen pages, giving specialised topics equal space with major subjects that have bodies of literature in their own right. The result is an off-balance impression of the landscape of Roman comedy studies. The organisation also has the unfortunate effect of relegating 'slaves' and 'women' into discrete chapters that belie their integration throughout Roman comedy. One also sees a repetition of the same few examples in the discussion (*Asinaria*, *Casina*, *Miles*, *Pseudolus*, *Rudens*, *Eunuchus*) rather than the full spectrum of the twenty-six plays.

Unfortunate, too, are insensitive choices of terminology occasionally found in the volume, 'dumb-show' being the most egregious. The volume as a whole is extremely Eurocentric; there are missed opportunities to address receptions of Roman comedy in Asia, Africa and South America, especially as the rallying cry for intersectionality and less focus on dead white European men grows louder by the year. Apart from Hrotsvit, there are no women in the 'Reception' section. Perhaps these are concerns for the next generation of Roman comedy scholars. On the whole, the *Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy* is a serviceable collection of essays by notable scholars that makes good on its claim to offer a framework for further study of Plautus and Terence.

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BRIAN WALTERS, *THE DEATHS OF THE REPUBLIC: IMAGERY OF THE BODY POLITIC IN CICERONIAN ROME*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv + 158, illus. ISBN 9780198839576. £60.

Brian Walters' concise work examines imagery of the body politic in late republican Roman literature, in particular the rhetorical uses to which such imagery was put by political actors. As