Presentation: Hellenism and Cultural Milieu in Terence

- Rome’s Involvement with the Greek World:
  - 206: First Macedonian War.
  - 200-196: Second Macedonian War.
    - Philhellenism might have influenced the Senate’s decision to go to war, or at least helped sell it to the people.
    - Spring of 196, Flaminius announced ‘Freedom of the Greeks’
  - 191-188: War with Antiochus of the Seleucids.
    - Treaty of Apamea Signed 188
      - Power of Pergamum increased substantially at the expense of the Seleucid Empire.
  - 171-167 Third Macedonian War.
  - 146 Destruction of Corinth

- Productions of Terence’s Plays:
  - Andria –166
  - Hecyra -165
  - Hauton timorumenos -163
  - Eunuchus -161
  - Phormio -161
  - Hecyra (2nd time) -160
  - Adelphoe -160
  - Hecyra (3rd time) -160

- Scipionic Circle:
  - 19th century conception
  - Group of intellectuals around P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (Scipio Africanus)
  - Advocates of philhellenism in Rome.
  - Supposedly contrasted the ‘Traditionalists’ around M. Porcius Cato (The Elder)
  - Terence was one of them.
  - Idea comes from two works of Cicero:
    - *De Republica*: Scipio’s friends gather to discuss government
    - *De Amicitia*: Scipio’s friends named.
  - Terence was purportedly part of this group.
• Terence’s faithfulness to his Greek models:
  o Considered more faithful to the Greek setting than Plautus.
    • Use of distinctly Athenian concepts as plot points:
      o “lex est ut orbae, qui sint genere proxumi, is nubant, et illos ducere eadem haec lex iubet.”
      “the law is that widows/orphans must marry whoever their closest relation is, and this same law commands those men to marry her.”
      (Phormio 125-126)
  • Contrasts Plautus’ use of Roman concepts in Greek settings:
    • Use of ‘conceptis verbis’ in the Pseudolus.
• Bilingual Humor
  o A level of humor only speakers of Greek would appreciate:
    • « color veru', corpu' solidum et suci plenum. »
    « She has a real color, a body that is solid and full of juice »
    Eunuchus 317
    • Sucus, i (juice) sounds like Greek συκον, which means ‘fig’ but in Greek iambics and Old Comedy it was slang for vagina.
    • Gnatho the parasite in Eunuchus
      • γναθων means ‘jaw’ in Greek.
• Robert Maltby’s Positivist Study of the Use of Greek Loan-Words in Terence’
  o Maltby attempts to isolate the Greek loan words that are used to give a distinctly Hellenic flavoring to the language.
  o He excludes:
    • Words that were sufficiently naturalized into Latin:
      • Lacrimare
      • Gubernare
    • Monetary terms without a Latin equivalent:
      • Mina
      • Talentum
    • Theatrical terms restricted to the prologue:
      • Comoedia
      • Musicus
      • Poeta
      • Etc...
• Words specifically linked to the plot of play:
  • *Eunuchus* in the play by the same name.

  o After removing these words there are 86 occurrences of 42 Greek loan words that are simple transliterations from the Greek
    ▪ *Apage*
    ▪ *Bolus*
    ▪ *Gynaeceum*
    ▪ Etc…
  o Low-status male characters use these words most frequently.
  o Female characters use these words less frequently than male characters.
    ▪ Cicero claims in *de Oratore* that women’s speech is more conservative.
    ▪ Among the female characters, *ancillae* use these words more often than other female characters
  o “Greek loan words in Terence occur more frequently in the mouths of those characters who, in reality, would be more likely to use them.” (Malthy, 119)

• Conclusion:
  o The plays of Terence are marked by respect for the Greek originals and a desire to preserve the Greek setting rather than fully Romanizing it.
  o This is evidence for the increased pervasiveness of Hellenism within the cultural *milieu* of Rome at all levels as Rome became more politically and culturally engaged with the Hellenic world during the first half of the 2nd century BC.
  o Although references to Greek culture and language were frequent, they do not seem to be affectations.
  o **Hellenism was pop culture rather than high culture in Rome during the 160s BC**
Bibliography


