CHAPTER 3

Illustrating the Manuscripts of Terence

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Of the illustrated Terence manuscripts that survive, the earliest, a ninth-century work now in the Vatican, is the best known and most closely studied.1 With its large cycle of 150 miniatures, showing lively, gesturing figures wearing ancient theatrical masks, this manuscript has long held the fascination of those looking at these scenes or their many reproductions. How close are the scenes to actual performances of the comedies, it has been wondered, and on what model, now lost, did the artists of this manuscript rely? Close interest in these illustrations is suggested by their repeated copying; already in the early tenth century, an attempt was made to replicate the miniatures in another manuscript of the comedies.2 But for reasons unknown, this illustrator did not complete the task (a daunting one if he intended to copy every miniature of the earlier work), and he stopped work after painting twenty-six illustrations.

Many centuries later, the antiquarian Fulvio Orsini included an engraving of the Vatican Terence’s frontispiece in his collection of portraits of famous men from antiquity, Imagines et elogia virorum illustrium, first published in 1570.3 The engraver here carefully replicated not only the bust portrait of the author, but also the square frame painted around the portrait, and the two masked figures holding this frame.4 Not long after, in the 1630s, watercolours of scenes and character masks were painted for the collector Cassiano dal Pozzo’s Museo Cartaceo, while Christoph von Berger included engravings of every miniature in his 1723 study of character types and masks, Commentatio de personis vulgo larvis seu mascheris.5 These engravings, made by F.G. Wolfgang, closely follow the arrangement of figures in the original manuscript, as well as their masks, gestures and postures.

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1 This manuscript is BAV, Vat. lat. 3868 (see no. 46 in the catalogue below).
2 This is BAV, Archivio di San Pietro, H 19 (no. 38 in the catalogue).
3 Orsini 1570 42.
4 For a discussion of the frontispiece, see Gaunt 1964.
Von Berger’s eighteenth-century work remained the only publication to reproduce all the miniatures in the Vatican Terence until Günther Jachmann’s facsimile of 1929.\(^6\) Jachmann’s monochrome photographs were quickly followed, in 1931, by Leslie Webber Jones and Charles Rufus Morey’s two-volume corpus, *The Miniatures of the Manuscripts of Terence prior to the Thirteenth Century*.\(^7\) The first of Jones and Morey’s volumes contains a series of small-format monochrome plates of every scene not only from the Vatican Terence, but also from twelve other illustrated Terence manuscripts. This monumental work, which remains an important visual resource, was the culmination of about five years of examining and writing on these thirteen manuscripts.\(^8\)

The plates of illustrations are gathered by Jones and Morey according to play and scene, useful for comparative study of the imagery, but less conducive to a thorough understanding of each manuscript. Moreover, the photographs are of the illustrations alone, with only a few lines of text visible above and below the scene, giving little sense of the manuscript as a whole, and how the scene fits into and relates to the text and nearby scholia and glosses.

For the past eighty-five years, the illustrations of Terence have been seen and studied mostly through this collection of photographs. And save for a few important studies of individual works, many of the manuscripts examined in Jones and Morey’s corpus, and indeed the broader illustrated tradition, have only rarely been returned to as a subject.\(^9\) As David H. Wright put it in a 1993 article, the illustrated manuscripts of Terence have been “entombed” in these volumes.\(^10\)

At the end of their text volume, Jones and Morey describe two lost Late-Antique illustrated manuscripts, which they propose served as models for some of the works in their corpus. This interest and approach have been, and remain, a predominant theme in most art historical studies of Terence illustration.\(^11\) Jones and Morey also name nine later illustrated manuscripts at the end of their text volume, and suggest that more await discovery.\(^12\)

The following summary catalogue, though still provisional with forty-eight

\(^{6}\) Jachmann 1929.
\(^{7}\) Jones and Morey 1931.
\(^{8}\) Morey first wrote on the Vatican Terence in 1926 (Morey 1926a and Morey 1926b).
\(^{9}\) See, for example, Wright 1993; and Wright 2000.
\(^{10}\) Wright 1993 183.
\(^{11}\) See Weston 1903; Jones 1927; and Wright 2006.
\(^{12}\) Jones and Morey 1931 1. 225. These later illustrated Terence manuscripts are: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Phillips 1800; Florence, *bml*, Plut. 24 sin. 2; Florence, *bml*, Plut. 38.34; Escorial, *rbme*, D IV 4; Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 664; Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, 1135; Paris, BnF, nouv. acq. lat. 458; Paris, BnF, lat. 7907 A; and Paris, BnF, lat. 8193.