

M. J. PERNERSTORFER, *Menanders Kolax: Ein Beitrag zu Rekonstruktion und Interpretation der Komödie*. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte, Bd 99, Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 2009, pp. x + 188, 2 p. of plates, ISBN 978-3-11-022127-5.

Just enough of this badly preserved play survives to raise tantalizing questions. The *Kolax* was widely read in antiquity: Athenaeus cites it, Timachidas of Rhodes wrote a commentary on it, and Plutarch may have used it to compose *De adulatore et amico*. The figure of Strouthias, mentioned by Aelian and the *Suda*, had a firm place in the ancient pantheon of yes-men. What is less clear is whether he represents a new type, a variant of the parasite, or possibly even an antecedent of it. Terence borrowed him in the *Eunuchus* and gave him the play's best lines – a pseudo-philosophical lecture on the lucrative art of professional flattery. Yet these lines have no counterpart in the extant *Kolax* fragments, virtually none of which can be securely attributed to the title figure. It is not even clear that the two parasite names they do preserve belong to two separate parasites. Despite considerable efforts over the past century to identify the dramatis personae, reconstruct the plot, and determine Terence's changes, there is still fundamental disagreement about most of the major issues in this play. It has, consequently, attracted relatively little attention among Menander scholars.

M. J. Pernerstorfer has been working to change this. Since 2005, he has published a series of articles on the *Kolax* and now this fine new text, translation and commentary, a revised version of his dissertation in Theater Studies from the University of Vienna. His text is framed with a succinct but informative overview of scholarship since 1903, when the first fragments were published. He rightly faults early scholars for their preoccupation with justifying the low value generally placed on Terence's artistry. His description of the papyrus sources and Roman comic evidence is fuller than Arnott, though largely in agreement. The most noticeable difference from Arnott's 1996 text is the new line numbers, adopted to leave more space around the excerpts that make up the longest source, P. Oxy. 409 + 2655. There can be no argument that traditional line numbers serve the *Kolax* especially badly, but it is hard to welcome a fifth numbering in five major editions, especially with the uncertainties that surround this play. The author himself concedes its limitations (excerpt A, for example, probably does not lead directly to B, although he numbers them continuously). This numbering is unlikely to be definitive.

Pernerstorfer's text is as inclusive as possible: virtually everything for which a case for attribution can be made is printed, along with a generous selection of conjectures from earlier editions, fragments which other editors print as dubious, Gnatho's speech at *Eun.* 232–64, tentatively inserted after line 46, and a papyrus

scholion on the pancratiast Astyanax, printed after line 125. The total text is a little under 200 lines, although many are poorly preserved. There is a chapter exploring possible overlap between the *Kolax* fragments and monostichs. Although nothing conclusive emerges, the author raises some interesting possibilities and it is valuable, and typical of the book's thoroughness, to have all this material collected in one place. The same may be said of the survey of criteria that have been proposed to date the play. Pernerstorfer reasonably concludes that references to various prominent individuals and a campaign in Cappadocia do not narrow the window (316–303) much beyond the known dates of the playwright's career. Nothing rules out this play as the Greater Dionysia victory attested for Menander for 315 but the evidence is insufficient to prove it.

Unlike earlier editors, Pernerstorfer prints the dicola from the papyri – useful information, given the many uncertainties about speaker attributions. He is cautious about incomplete letters, dotting far more than earlier editors. His boldest decision may be to include a new fragment (printed as fr. 10) which he reconstructs from Plutarch *Mor.* 61C, a short interchange on flatterers: “What is the most dangerous (*χαλεπώτατον*) animal? Among wild beasts, the tyrant; among tame, the flatterer”. Plutarch attributes this to a “Bias”, usually taken as the sage from Priene. Pernerstorfer sees an additional reference to the soldier Bias in the *Kolax*. The remark indeed fits the plot as he reconstructs it (the flatterer proves disloyal to the soldier, and thus dangerous), while the following paragraph, where Plutarch subdivides flatterers into ἥμεροι, who hang around baths and dining rooms, and ῥγητοί, who obtrude on bedrooms and women's quarters, fits Pernerstorfer's comic typology (parasites and flatterers are separate types). Both arguments hinge on disputed points (and Plutarch's bed-room invaders sound rather more like adulterers than go-betweens), but the proposal certainly merits discussion. The interchange would have to fall between the point Bias discovers the disloyalty and when Strouthias helps resolve his love affair by negotiating a time-share arrangement, as in the *Eunuchus*, if Pernerstorfer is correct about both of these. The remark also seems uncharacteristically trenchant for a figure whose conversation otherwise consists of bragging and threadbare jokes, who overpays ridiculously for a hetaira, and whose ἀναισθησία (fr. 3) and ἀλαζονεία are well attested (frs. 7, 9).

The prose translation – indeed, the only reasonable choice for such a lacunose text, as the author notes – gives priority to providing clear, intelligible sense. It meets very well the needs of readers who are more likely to consult it for the author's views on the Greek. Lines 103–4, where a relative clause is substituted for a Greek participle, is a good example of the author's preference for clarity over preserving ambiguities or obscurities in the original. There are some deft close renderings. The play's most quotable line, οὐθεὶς ἐπλούτησεν ταχέως δίκαιος ὅν, is translated “Niemand wurde reich schnell als Gerechter,” which actually matches the Greek more neatly than Arnott's “by honest means” and certainly Balme's “no one who's honest gets rich fast”. Some expressions are a bit pedestrian (“Korporal” for [διμοιρίτης] 29, which the author wants to be ironic slang for *nouveau riche*, p. 87 n. 49, and “vorführte,” for κατορχούμενος fr.

3); others are a bit off (*νεκρός* 50 is probably closer to “looking like a skeleton, walking death, etc.” than “mausetot”, the *τί* in *τί διδάσκεις κακά?* 53, is probably “why,” not “what”, and *δοίδυ[κ]* 107 should be “pestle” rather than “mortar”—a far less convenient object to bring crashing down on someone’s nose).

The commentary itself addresses issues of dramaturgic interest: who is speaking with whom, about what, and in what context. Linguistic and textual issues receive attention when they impinge on dramaturgy but this is not primarily a philological commentary. Pernerstorfer brings a wide range of evidence to bear on the issues he treats. Speaker attributions receive considerable attention. In arguing that Daos speaks lines 1-13, for example, he considers dramatic circumstances (the father’s absence suggests that a pedagogus was needed, which Daos might well be), stock traits (*τί διδάσκεις κακά*, 53, is appropriate for a pedagogus – although the plural *διοικηταῖς τισιν*, 7, still needs explanation), and genre parallels (Lydus in the *Dis Exapaton* also dines with his charge, something the speaker of line 11 clearly expects to do). Not all will be convinced, but Pernerstorfer’s positions are too well argued and carefully considered not to be taken seriously.

Of greatest interest are his arguments for deriving *Eun.* 232-64 from the *Kolax*. Pernerstorfer is not the first to question the traditional attribution to Philemon on the strength of a passage in Erotian or to reject the weak argument that Terence’s Latin is too expansive here for Menandrian *οἰκονομία*, but he also makes the important new points that Gnatho’s *hodie adveniens* (234), a notorious “Unstimmigkeit” in the *Eunuchus*, fits the *Kolax* well (Bias’ annoying presence is clearly recent and his flatterer has presumably arrived in tow), Terence’s metaphorical use of *abligurrire* (235) is not only Greek (cf. *καταφαγεῖν*) but also Menandrian (*Epitr.* 1065, 247K-A), and Gnatho’s *πρῶτος εὐρέτης* claims have ample New Comic precedent (admittedly, this does not exclude Philemon). More provocative is the suggestion that the newly wealthy figure complained of at 34-54 is Strouthias, not Bias, since the latter was evidently rich enough to take the former on campaign. This may be implied, although none of Strouthias’ flattery (fr. 2, fr. 3, fr. 8) actually requires him to have been an eyewitness, and it entails dismissing the statement that Bias had to carry his own equipment (29-30), as well as taking *πλουτεῖν* (43, 51) to refer to gaining a wealthy supporter, rather than to gaining wealth. This is odd, though perhaps not impossible Greek, as is interpreting *σκωπ[τ]ομένου* 37 (if the singular is the correct reading) to refer to a symposium parasite – who, after all, earned his welcome by *telling* the jokes.

The close analysis of cues to speakers and situations in the commentary is the basis for a reconstruction of events offered in a separate chapter. After squandering his inheritance, Strouthias became a parasite to the young man Pheidias but soon switched to the rich soldier Bias, serving him under the pseudonym Gnatho while he went on campaign in Cappadocia. Recently returned, Strouthias secretly renewed his allegiance to Pheidias, now the soldier’s rival for a slave hetaira owned by a pimp. Comparatively little happens in the extant fragments, which come largely from the beginning of the play and focus on character exposition: Daos counsels Pheidias by lambasting the newly rich

Bias and roundly condemning flatterers, Strouthias explains his newly invented craft and plays advisor to Pheidias, and an angry pimp calculates the risks of refusing to sell a high-earning hetaira who is probably abducted, as he predicts she will be, later in the play. The soldier may also have attacked Pheidias' house in order to retrieve the hetaira and, failing in this, agreed to share her time and pay her expenses, as his counterpart does in the *Eunuchus*. Because Bias is very likely the ξένος mentioned at line 136, Pernerstorfer traces Thraso's foreign status to him, rather than to the soldier in Menander's *Eunuchus*, but it seems unlikely that Thais' counterpart sought a *prostates* in a soldier (who must therefore, argues Pernerstorfer, have been a citizen) rather than just a sugar daddy. She is not "finanziell abgesichert" in Terence and her efforts to restore a lost citizen seem a more reliable route to protection than the infatuation of a braggart soldier.

Pernerstorfer's reconstruction is coherent and internally consistent. Its limitations are those of the evidence, which is meager, as far as the play's major events are concerned. There is strong evidence, however, for an important argument he advances about the play's political content. Pernerstorfer emphasizes that the scathing attacks on flatterers cast them as a public menace, and not just the sort of private nuisance to which New Comedy, were it really apolitical, might be expected to confine itself. The language is, in fact, so explicitly political as to fall under even the most restrictive definition of the term. There would be no discussion of the political import of a line such as πόλις[ιν προδούς τι] γ' ἡ σατράπην (41) in Aristophanes, or of a speech blaming flatterers for overturning cities and destroying civic and military leaders – tyrants, founders, phrourarchs, generals. Pernerstorfer shows convincingly that the play is aware of the multiple meanings of the word κόλαξ, with the least benign coming from the political sphere and evoking the influential figures who thrived in the courts of Philip, Alexander and their successors. This is surely as specific as was likely to be prudent, or even possible, in 316–303 BCE. It was clearly the flatterer, not the soldier, who commanded attention in this play, apparently for skills with acknowledged civic repercussions. It is not just that he disturbed a few households by fostering the disruptive behavior of a would-be Alexander (fr. 2), but that he had begun to disseminate his craft throughout the city (Ter. *Eun.* 260–4). Pernerstorfer's insights into the civic implications of κολακεία must be taken into account in any evaluation of Menander's political engagement.

The book's other major argument is that the play contained one, not two, parasites. This is a long-standing question for which all manner of evidence has been adduced, from terra cottas to later prose authors. The problem is simply that the fragments include two names in the vocative, both suitable for parasites, and more than enough obsequious dialogue to divide between them. The "Palaestrio" solution Pernerstorfer adopts, first suggested by Kuiper, has a single character serving Pheidias under his real name and Bias under a false one. Pernerstorfer cites examples of parasites who use pseudonyms in Plautus (to which one might add Menander, if the "friend" in the *Aspis* who plays a fake doctor also adopts a fake name), the play's title (singular), and the single parasite in Terence (presented

as a transplant from the *Kolax*, not an amalgam, although the precise meaning of *colax parasitus* is far from clear). Perhaps the most compelling argument is that the title figure otherwise has no speaking part in the extant fragments – a bizarre silence, given his later fame and the apparently deliberate selection in the main papyrus of excerpts relating to κολακεία.

Absent a clearly marked exchange between Gnatho and Strouthias, the question cannot be settled decisively, but Pernerstorfer's proposal is certainly possible. It helps to explain the apparent blandness of Gnatho's role, which poses a problem for any two-parasite interpretation that casts him and Strouthias as foils. Pernerstorfer sees the *kolax* and *parasitus* as separate types with distinct masks, costumes, and functions (mocking foolish patrons vs. helping young lovers). In this, he follows Nesselrath and more recently Gil, but does not accept Nesselrath's theory that the parasite type is always positive and the flatterer always negative. The chapter on this "Begriffspaar" weighs a conflicting welter of evidence carefully and judiciously. The author reasonably concludes that Athenaeus, the Suda and Plutarch provide the least solid evidence for consistent behavioral differences and are not strict or consistent in their use of the two terms. Particularly insightful is Pernerstorfer's careful distinction among linguistic registers: παράσιτος and κόλαξ meant one thing in popular usage, probably echoed in on-stage dialogue, another (perhaps) as a comic technical term, and yet another when used by philosophers or historiographers. The semantic distinction between the two words was always available to be exploited but παράσιτος, in general, was more closely tied to the theater than κόλαξ. This is surely the fullest, and probably most cogent, case for a distinction in usage that can be made from the available written sources.

We are, unfortunately, missing Greek comedies from the period in which the type(s) would have developed, while the Roman comic poets faced pressures to minimize the kind of distinction they may have reflected, not to mention the political overtones that seem to have made Strouthias, at least, so interesting. The iconographic evidence is tricky. Pernerstorfer interprets two terra cotta figurines from the National Museum in Athens and three of the Lipari masks as evidence of visual differences: the *kolax* is dark and well-fed, with a crooked nose and angry raised eyebrows; the *parasitus* is happier, with battered ears from post-symposium fights, an oil flask and a single raised eyebrow. Like most attempts to apply this material to Menander, this relies heavily on the testimony of Athenaeus and Pollux. Pernerstorfer admits that the Lipari finds show Pollux working from a later "mask cabinet" than Menander's (p. 129), which makes the masks intriguing, but uncertain, evidence for the *Kolax*.

The production quality of the book is high. There are color plates of P. Oxy. 409 + 2655 and P. Oxy. 1237, both extremely legible, and perfectly adequate black and white photos of P. Oxy. 3534, the figurines, and the masks. There is one major misprint (the Greek line numbers on p. 50, correct in the German, and some minor ones (Astaphium for Phronesium, p. 88 n. 52, an accent in fr. 7, a restored εμ] missing from the Greek but included in the translation, line 68, ὄντα (line 113) and some small restorations omitted from the translation (lines 119, 121,

123, 138) or not bracketed (106). It would make sense to attribute lines 1-13 to Daos in the text, since the author rejects the *communis opinio* (Pheidias) in the commentary. Lastly, an index or two would have been useful, particularly an index locorum, since the commentary is not organized by lemmata.

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