SUPPLEMENTA

HUMANISTICA LOVANIENSIA

XXXII

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THE EARLY MODERN CULTURES
OF NEO-LATIN DRAMA

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THE *TERENTIUS CHRISTIANUS* AT WORK: CORNELIUS SCHONAEUS AS A PLAYWRIGHT

Among the authors of school drama Cornelius Schonaeus stands out for various reasons. Where most schoolmasters wrote only one or two plays, he wrote seventeen, and where most school plays have come down in a single edition, his work knew a lasting success until the end of the 18th century, a success which is suggested by the honorary title of his collected plays: *Terentius Christianus*. In view of this situation it is to be wondered that the dramatic and literary aspects of his work have been neglected almost entirely.

Cornelius Schonaeus was born in the small town of Gouda in the county of Holland in 1541.[1] He studied at Leuven University before returning north, where he was appointed rector of the Latin school of Haarlem, where he died in 1611. An important fact in his otherwise rather unremarkable biography is that he remained a Catholic throughout his life. Although he witnessed the transformation of his town and region into a Calvinistic bulwark, he continued as rector of the school. His reputation as a schoolmaster and an author probably saved his career.

Most of his seventeen plays were on biblical themes.[2] As a playwright he stood in a venerable tradition. Since the third decade of the sixteenth century schoolmasters in the Low Countries had written plays with the double pedagogical aim of instilling moral lessons and teaching good

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[1] On Schonaeus, see: H. van de Venne, *Cornelius Schonaeus Goudanus (1540-1611).* Part 1 *Leven en werk van de Christelijke Terentius. Nieuwe bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Latijnse Scholen van Gouda, 's-Gravenhage en Haarlem* (Voorthuizen: Florivallis, 2001); Part 2 *Vriendenkring* (2002); Part 3 *Bibliography* (2004; also published as nos. 15.1, 15.2 and 15.3 in the *Haarlem-reeks*). The bibliography has also been published previously as 'Cornelius Schonaeus 1541-1611. A Bibliography of his Printed Works', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 32 (1983), 367-433; 33 (1984), 206-314; 34B (1985), 1-113; 35 (1986), 219-283. See also M. Verweij, *Het thema Tobias in het Neolatijnse schooltoneel in de Nederlanden in de 16de eeuw. De* Tobaeus *van Cornelius Schonaeus (1569) en de* Tobias *van Petrus Vladeraccus (1598)* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Leuven, 1993), pp. 66-281.

[2] The titles of these dramas are: *Tobaeus*, *Nehemias*, *Saulus*, *Naaman*, *Iosephus*, *Iuditha*, *Susanna*, *Daniel*, *Triumphus Christi*, *Typhlus*, *Pentecoste*, *Ananias*, *Baptistes*, *Dyscoli*, *Pseudostratiotae*, *Cunae* and *Vitulus*. The last four plays are not religious. Full bibliographical details can be found in Van de Venne (see n. 1).

Latin speech. If school drama played a role in the discussion of the reformation in contemporary Germany, this was not the case in the Low Countries. Most schoolmasters were decent Catholics in the service of decent Catholic, though tolerant and certainly not fanatic, city govern-ments. The religious discussion took place on other levels. Moreover, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Protestants in the Low Countries were not so much Lutherans as Calvinists, and the Calvinist preachers were opposed to theatre in all its forms. It is then not to be wondered that Schonaeus's successors in Haarlem avoided anything relating to dramatic performance.

From the beginning of the production of Neo-Latin school drama in the Low Countries two main principles have been central to it. First, language was based on Plautus and Terence. Secondly, most subjects were borrowed from the Bible. The main reason for this choice of contents was arguably the additional pedagogical use found in the biblical texts, not so much an attitude of criticism towards classical literature, as has been sometimes suggested.[3] There is, however, a marked difference between the way earlier playwrights handled these themes, and their treatment by Schonaeus and his contemporaries: the earlier authors like Guilielmus Gnapheus (1493-1568) and Macropedius (1486-1558), Schonaeus's most important predecessor in the Low Countries, were far more liberal, including scenes set in taverns and brothels, seemingly without hesita-tion; the overall atmosphere was freer, somewhat more optimistic, more joyful, funnier, whereas school drama from the latter half of the sixteenth century was far more serious. The tone typical of a secondary school that is so prominent in an author like Macropedius is almost absent in Scho-naeus: besides the growing importance of moralisation, the general tone became more tragic than comic. This was undoubtedly due to the general religious and political atmosphere of the time.

In this article I should like to discuss two aspects of Schonaeus's work. First the influence of Terence on his language and metre. Then the struc-tural devices Schonaeus used to construct his plays: the latter perhaps show less Terentian influence. In doing so, I hope to shed some light on the actual way Schonaeus made use of Terence and of the classical tradi-tion to write his plays, as well as on the differences between his plays

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[3] Cf. J.A. Parente, *Religious Drama and the Humanist Tradition. Christian Theater in Germany and in the Netherlands 1500-1680*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 7.

and this classical tradition. I will illustrate both aspects through a short analysis of Schonaeus's first play, the *Tobaeus*, from 1569.

When looking for Terentian or classical reminiscences, one should distinguish between two major categories, the true quotations on the one hand and formulas from comic language on the other. However, it is not always easy to make an exact distinction. Schonaeus probably knew Terence by heart; if not, he must have had a sort of notebook which he was able to consult with an almost improbable degree of efficiency. In the *Tobaeus*, a piece of 1828 lines, I have recognised 337 true quotations, which is roughly one in every five lines. Apart from these quotations, one finds many short expressions and formulas, which may very well have been borrowed from ancient comedy, but which occur more frequently in Plautus and Terence, so that an exact location is hard to give. To this category belong expressions such as: *curabitur* (*Tobaeus*, l. 145), *occidi*, *quid ni?* (l. 351), *habeo quod mandem* (l. 159), *plane periit* (l. 495), and so on. Moreover, many of these expressions consist of only one word. To the same class belong some typical grammatical phenomena, such as the use of diminutives: for example, *actiuncula* (*Tobaeus*, l. 2 and 39), *corpusculum* (l. 235 and 1439), *constitutiuncula* (l. 290), *adulescentulus* (l. 33, 757, 1101, 1175, 1619, 1654 and 1807), *pauxillulum* (l. 1412); similarly the replacement of the simple future by the *futurum exactum*, passive infinitives ending on *-ier* (e.g. *epularier* (*Tobaeus*, l. 250), *ominarier* (l. 370), *conviciarier* (l. 527), *tergiversarier* (l. 1062), *obliviscier* (l. 483) etc.), the use of archaic forms like *siem*, *siet*, *faxit*, *ipsus*, etc. All these forms, as well as the frequent use of interjections, belong to comic language, in the sense that they are archaic. Indeed, sixteenth-century humanists, in recognising them as occurring mostly in Plautus and Terence, read them as comic, so that most authors of school drama used these forms and expressions essentially with the intention of giving their text a certain comic flavour.

Schonaeus is somewhat different in the sense that apart from using these expressions he employs many more elaborate quotations, which by their size and special character are clearly recognisable as such. In that sense, many passages of his work have a distinctly Terentian flavour. Of course, the main problem here is the definition of the term 'quotation': I would suggest that that term should refer to a combination of words borrowed from a distinctly identifiable passage, that can or cannot have been adapted to the new semantic or grammatical surroundings. There is yet another problem for the identification: Schonaeus did not use our

standard critical editions dating from the ninteenth or twentieth centuries. In a number of cases it is clear that he quotes from a different state of the text.[4]

While many passages have a clearly Terentian outlook, there are scenes which have almost no comic allusions. In fact, and this may be of some importance, most Terentian expressions occur in scenes of a lighter, more mundane character, whereas monologues which serve to sketch a character or to develop a moral consideration have a far more classical appearance. Apparently, Schonaeus used his Terentian supply for specific dramatic occasions, so that his style became adapted to the contents and the purpose of the scene. This adaptation to *decorum*, with the general characteristics of refinement, purity and charm, is exactly the qualification critics have always attributed to Schonaeus's model, Terence. Puns and other linguistic toys are to be found far less in Schonaeus than in, for example, Macropedius, who looked more at Plautus: in his quotations, but also in the general atmosphere of his language and style, Schonaeus is a Terentian.

The same Terentian vein can be seen in Schonaeus's metrics. In general, school drama can be divided into two categories: those with choruses and those without. A chorus permits a larger number of pupils to participate, to the potential gratification of both their parents and the school. In ancient Roman comedy, however, the genre did not exist in its Neo-Latin form, although the Plautine *cantica* may furnish a suggestion. Nevertheless, many Neo-Latin playwrights, like Macropedius, used them. Schonaeus is strictly Terentian in excluding choruses from his plays. Metre has a second dimension. Neo-Latin playwrights had two options: either they tried to imitate and use classical Roman metres or they replaced them by a more simplified scheme, using iambic trimeters instead of senarii. The latter was done by Macropedius, who wrote his pieces essentially in iambic trimeters. The difference rests mainly in the substitutions of the short syllables. Macropedius seems to have permitted a substitution of the short syllable in an iambus only in the odd feet, thereby creating a scheme of three double iambi, the last of which normally has to be a pure iambus.[5] Schonaeus, however, has substitutions in all cases. His metre

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[4] I would strongly recommend that editors of modern critical editions also pay attention to branches of manuscripts that do not seem important from a purely critical point of view and to early printed editions. Most editions tend to focus on an approach of the original text or on a *manuscrit de base*, but in cultural history it is the text in the form in which it actually circulated that counts.

[5] Cf. R.C. Engelberts, *Georgius Macropedius. Bassarus* (Tilburg: H. Gianotten, 1968), pp. 45-48; H.P.M. Puttiger, *Georgius Macropedius' Asotus*, Bibliotheca Humani-

is less regular than that of Macropedius, but more in line with classical Roman comedy. Once again, he is more orthodoxly Terentian. Apart from iambic senarii, one finds a number of different iambic and trochaic feet, although there are some minor differences, such as the use of σκάζοντες or the fact that Schonaeus's iambic septenarii are not, as in Roman comedy, catalectic octonarii, but real septenarii.

By way of an example I will analyse a fragment of Act II, Scene 4 from the *Tobaeus*, a scene which shows a concentration of Terentian quotations. As some scenes abound in these and other scenes do not, this scene is not entirely representative of every aspect of Schonaeus's style, but it will serve to give an idea.

AN   Quid consolare me, fili? An quaequam usquam gentium
     mulier aeque misera est?   590

TI   Bono animo esto. Misera
     non est nisi quam sua culpa miseram facit.

AN   Eheu, nulli ego plura acerba esse arbitror
     ex coniugio feminae unquam oblata quam mihi.

TI   Mater, lachrymas mitte et quoniam id fieri quod vis, non potest,
     velis id quod possit.   595

AN   Non possum aedepol.

TI   Ah, potes:
     in Deo omnis spes sit nobis.

AN   Recte tu quidem:
     si modo qui nos respiciat, quisquam Deus est uspiam.

TI   Ah, non te cohibes, mater? Tene istud loqui!
     Nonne grave crimen atque summa impietas est?

AN   Nisi
     Deo invisi essemus, non nos ad hunc afflictaret modum.   600

TI   Atqui hinc ego nos illi curae esse auguror.

AN   Eandem quoque tuus pater mihi saepe cantiunculam
     occinit. At pol quidem non adeo stulta sum
     ut facile patiar id mihi persuaderier.

TI   Tamen hoc, mater, verum est et ipsa re experiere propediem.   605

stica et Reformatorica, 42 (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1988), pp. 129-132; M. Verweij, *Petrus Vladeraccus. Tobias (1598)*, Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia, 17 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), pp. 59-60.

AN Ridiculum. Quid mihi nunc adfers, cur expectem aut sperem hoc
    malum
    aliquando in melius posse commutarier?

AN Why are your trying to console me, my son? Or has there ever
    been somewhere a
    woman as miserable as me?   590

TI   Be of good cheer. Only she is miserable
    who is so of her own fault.

AN Oh, I don't think that ever woman had more bitterness
    from her marriage than I had.

TI Mother, stop your tears and as things cannot be as you want,
    want them as they can be.   595

AN   I cannot, really!

TI   Oh yes, you can:
    all our hope is in God.

AN   You're right:
    if there is a God who looks at us.

TI Oh, pull yourself together, mother! stop talking like that!
    Isn't this a grave sin and utter impiety?

AN   If God
    didn't hate us, he would not afflict us in this way.   600

TI But I think that just for that he takes care of us.

AN You sing the same singsong as your father.
    But I am not that stupid
    that I let myself be persuaded that easily.

TI But that, mother, is true and you will see so for yourself very soon. 605

AN Ridiculous. What can you offer me why I should hope or expect
    that this bad luck
    can ever be changed into something positive?

This scene gives a lively conversation between Anna, the wife of Tobit, and her son Tobias, who is to leave home to retrieve some money which had been given in deposit in Media. Tobit had become blind when fulfilling his religious duties. Anna, his wife, has been thrown into doubting everything, and the fact that she will be deprived of her son drives her

to the blackest despair. At first glance, such a scene does not seem very fit to make use of comic material. However, apart from the two passive infinitives on -*ier*: *persuaderier* (l. 604) and *commutarier* (l. 607) and the diminituve *cantiunculam* (l. 602), one finds various expressions which fall under the category of 'comic language' identified earlier in this essay: *bono animo es* (l. 590) is a very frequent expression, both in Plautus and Terence;[6] *recte* is found very frequently in Roman comedy;[7] *ridiculum* is more of a problem, as it does occur twice in Terence *(Phorm.*, 901 and *Ad.*, 676),* but not in Plautus. In the last case we are hovering on the distinction between a proper quotation and a more general use of formulas, but a large part of the problem is created by questions of definition, not of contents. The same holds true for *In deo omnis spes* (l. 596), which has two Terentian equivalents (*Phorm.*, 139 and *Ad.*, 455). In addition to these observations, it should be noted that this passage literally abounds with unequivocal Terentian quotations. *Quid consolare me* (l. 589) quotes Ter., *Hec.*, 293: 'quid consolare me? an quisquam usquam gentiumst aeque miser?'; *plura acerba* (l. 592): Ter., *Hec.*, 281: 'nemini plura acerba credo esse ex amore homini umquam oblata'; *mater, lachrymas mitte* (l. 594): *Ad.*, 335: 'era, lacrumas mitte'; *id fieri quod vis* (l. 594): *An.*, 305-306: 'quaeso edepol, Charine, quoniam non potest id fieri quod vis, | id velis quod possit'; *non te cohibes* (l. 598): *Heaut.*, 919: 'non tu te cohibes?'; *tene istud loqui* (l. 598) matches exactly *Heaut.*, 921; *eandem cantiunculam occinit* (l. 602): *Phorm.*, 495: 'cantilenam eandem canis'; *verum est et ipsa re* (l. 605): *Ad.*, 888: 'atqui, Syre, hoc verumst et ipsa re experiere propediem'; and lastly, *quid mihi nunc adfers* (l. 606): *Phorm.*, 1025: 'quid mi hic adfers quam ob rem exspectem aut sperem porro non fore?'. Although this scene is not strictly representative of the play as a whole, and is not found in the first edition of 1569, but occurs only from 1580 onwards, it demonstrates extremely clearly the Terentian interest; most scenes are less rich in Terentian quotations.

If Schonaeus's work gives the impression of being relatively classical with regards to its language, the same can be said, in a way, of its structure. It is well known that ancient drama preferred not to show much

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[6] Plautus: *Am.*, 671 and 1131; *As.*, 638; *Aul.*, 732 and 787; *Cist.*, 73 and 591; *Merc.*, 531; *Mil.*, 1143, 1206 and 1342; *Rud.*, 679; *Pseud.*, 322. Terence: *Heaut.*, 822; *Eun.*, 84; *Phorm.*, 965; *Ad.*, 284, 511, 543 and 696.

[7] Cf. G. Lodge, *Lexicon Plautinum*, 2 vols (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962 = Leipzig: Teubner, 1901-33), II, 536-537; P. McGlynn, *Lexicon Terentianum*, 2 vols (London and Glasgow: Blackie, 1963-67), II, 122-23.

action on the stage. Most events have already taken place and if some-thing of importance occurs – better known, perhaps, in tragedy, but also true for comedy – it is generally a messenger who tells the story. Thus in Terence, most real action has taken place before the actual play begins: the action on the stage limits itself to the dialogues of the actors. It is in the field of human relations, of expectations, deceit, and deceptions that Terentian comedy exists. This is different in Plautus, who is concerned more with dramatic action. Whereas most of the earlier Neo-Latin school drama, such as the early pieces of Macropedius, does not hesitate to include some action in the scene, Schonaeus, in keeping with the general influence of Terence, shows himself rather reluctant to do so. The problem is, however, that unlike classical comedy where the dialogues *were* the action, in a certain way, the Bible story is not essentially made up of witty dialogues, but either of the story itself (that is, of action) or of moralising and pious conversations and monologues. This results in the plays' rather static quality, which closer study and scrutiny reveals as, at least, partly intentional. Schonaeus seems to represent a classical dramaturgy in which the accent is on words, not deeds. In this, he is arguably far more modern than both Macropedius and most of his contemporaries. This may partly explain the longevity of Schonaeus's appeal, which waned only towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The most salient example in the *Tobaeus* of Schonaeus's unwillingness to present real action on the stage is the end of the play. The biblical book of Tobit illustrates the reward of two persons who, despite their devotion and observance of religious duties, have been victims of fate. Tobit has become blind while burying a dead Jew, who had been murdered in the street. He sends his son off to retrieve some money from an old friend in Media. His son is accompanied by the archangel Raphael, who has been sent by God to solve Tobit's problems and Sara's, a young woman of Media whose seven bridegrooms have all been strangled by the demon Asmodaeus. Raphael suggests that Tobias marry Sara. Through his chastity Tobias finds a way to vanquish the demon. At the end of the story Raphael reveals himself and all ends happily. Schonaeus omits this last scene, which includes the healing of Tobit, and the revelation and ascen-sion of Raphael into heaven. The play closes with the announcement of what will happen within (that is, offstage), but the actual fulfilling of this prophecy is not shown – the play misses its end. Perhaps this was done partly to avoid religious problems in view of the Calvinist minority and the delicate situation of Haarlem in those days, but when the play was

presented for the first time, Haarlem was officially still a Catholic town. In the original edition of 1569 there is a final scene which disappeared in subsequent editions (1580, 1592 and 1598), in which a servant relates Tobit's final healing and Raphael's revelation. But even there, nothing is shown, and the play ends with a messenger's tale. In the later editions, and that has become the state of the text as it spread over Europe, the play ends lacking even this tale, but only with the prophecy of Tobit's healing.

A similar situation is seen in the defeat of Asmodaeus in the beginning of Act IV. Schonaeus shows the young couple praying just before they go to sleep (IV, 1). Then Raguel, Sara's father, makes his appearance and bewails his decision to give his daughter to young Tobias (IV, 2), whereas in the following scene Raguel's wife sends a servant to see if all is well (IV, 3). Asmodaeus does not appear in the play. When Petrus Vladeraccus (1571-1618) dramatised the same story thirty years later (*Tobias*, 1598), he presented this part of the story in a very different manner. In Vladeraccus's play, Asmodaeus is shown three times in the guise of a hideous monster and his defeat is shown vigorously, with Raphael binding him with chains. Clearly, Schonaeus's reluctance to present anything so dramatic seems a deliberate choice.

Instead of this captivating action, Schonaeus attempts to build his story on the characters of his protagonists. In the *Tobaeus*, he stresses three figures using two techniques. To begin with the techniques: a third of the *Tobaeus* consists of monologues, an indication of its tendency to more static drama. These monologues are sometimes dramatically motivated, as the story of a messenger or a protagonist who relates (rather than acts) an event from the story. In other cases these monologues serve to develop a point of moralisation or to develop a character by giving his or her inmost thoughts and feelings. It is not always easy to draw a clear line, as these thoughts may serve for moralisation as well. A second technique used by Schonaeus is what one could call a discussion scene, in which two protagonists stand opposed to one another and have a fierce argument about the situation. In these scenes elements of moralisation are often part of the purpose: the articulation of contrasting views allows the author to develop various issues linked with them and to enliven this development through the debate. These scenes are among the most enjoyable for us, but sometimes Schonaeus lightly modified the characters of the various figures to make them more suitable for his purpose.

One of the characteristics of Terence's plays is that the action emerges from the characters of his dramatic figures. Schonaeus is at least partly

successful in his imitation of this. However, it often seems that the deve-
lopment of the character tends to replace any real action, an effect, no
doubt, in part due to one-third of the play being monologue. Consider
that of Raguel during the night after the wedding of Tobias and Sara, for
example: here, Raguel, who often delivers monologues, utters his doubts
and his sense of guilt for having permitted the wedding which is bound
to have a bad end. Raguel appears to be of a rather weak disposition,
doubtful and grief stricken because of what happened to his daughter
(who is on stage far less). It is through his complaints that we see the deve-
lopment of this element of the biblical story, while the countering of this
complaint gives fuller weight to the successful end of the bridegroom's
night. Raguel creates a kind of suspension in his monologues, which is
then relieved by the real end. In the same way we see Tobaeus (the father)
offering his devout monologues, which not only have a moralising end in
themselves but also function structurally to sharpen anticipation of the
outcome in the audience – it knows that God never punishes the good
and rewards the bad. These moralising monologues are a proper starting
point for the story, just because they reflect the high moral and religious
standards of the protagonist.

   In contrast, the character of Tobaeus's wife, Anna, has been deve-
loped in a different way. Like Raguel, she is less significant in the biblical
account, but Schonaeus has seized on her dramatic potential, although he
changes her character slightly. In the Bible, Anna goes out to work after
Tobit has been blinded; one day she brings back a little he-goat which
she has received, but Tobit reproaches her for it, as he thinks it had been
stolen. Then Anna pours forth her anger, reproaching him that he is only
righteous in other men's eyes. In the *Tobaeus*, however, the episode of
the little he-goat has been dropped: Anna is a negative counterpoint to
Tobaeus, whom she reproaches for the apparent fruitlessness of his devout
conduct. If Anna could be said to be right in some respect in the Bible,
in the *Tobaeus* she certainly is not. Even if one could argue that her main
drive in the rest of the story is the love for her son, Tobias, this is not
presented as unequivocally positive. This is reflected very clearly by the
fact that Tobias junior, on his return home, runs to his father and almost
completely neglects his mother. The character of Anna is developed either
in her monologues, when she is heaving deep sighs for Tobias's return, or
in sharp dialogues with her son or her husband.

   In this way, Schonaeus manages to use certain figures as central
elements in his play and, what is still more important, as structural devices.

Tobaeus is the central figure of Act I, whereas the continuous presence of Anna unifies Act II and parts of Acts I and V, and Raguel dominates Acts III and IV, as well as other parts of Act V. Such unifying figures are essential in a play that dramatises a biblical story lacking the three classical unities. The book of *Tobit* relates a journey, which by that fact alone transgresses the unities of place and time, whereas the double thread of the stories of Tobit and Sara violates the unity of action. Although it is true that these unities were not strictly observed in the sixteenth century, my point is that the story of the book of *Tobit* is so opposed to any dramatisation of classical inspiration that Schonaeus had to make some serious efforts to preserve any form of theatrical unity. It pleads in favour of his talent that he succeeded to any degree in this, his first play.

The *Tobaeus* was to be followed by 16 more plays. Schonaeus would continue to work along the same lines, combining good Terentian Latin with moralising content in plays built on the development of characters rather than action. Sometimes the story he chooses is insufficiently dramatic, but in the *Tobaeus* this is no problem. Schonaeus was known then, as now, as the *Terentius Christianus*. That he earned this title mostly on account of his systematic use of Terentian phrases and expressions, both in the form of more or less typically comic expressions and real quotations, has been understood for some time. However, an analysis of the means he used to attain his dramatic ends shows that he was a classicist in other fields of the art of drama as well. His use of character, his reluctance to show fervent or vigorous action on the stage, his preference for words, both in monologues and in sometimes vehement dispute, show him equally to be a Terentian playwright who shared many more of his model's characteristics. The difference essentially lies in the moralising trend and in a more static nature of his plays. In comparison with his predecessors in the field of Neo-Latin school drama, he can even appear remarkably modern, and was considered so for a long time.

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