



Sebastiana Nervegna: Research

BOOKS

My main research interest is in the ancient afterlife of Greek plays and playwrights. My first book, *Menander in Antiquity: the Contexts of Reception* (forthcoming with Cambridge University Press), answers a simple question—why was Menander so widely popular throughout antiquity?—by focusing on the three social institutions that appropriated Menander and his drama: public theatre, dinner parties and schools. My approach to reception goes beyond the influence that Menander exerted on later authors to include a variety of sources such as artefacts illustrating Menander's comedies, papyri preserving their text and inscriptions recording their revivals in public theatres. My book shows that performance remained a key medium whereby later Greeks and Romans approached Menander. They saw Menander's plays performed in public theatres well into the second century AD and staged in the dining rooms and gardens of wealthy house-owners across the Empire. It is also very likely that pupils in the Greek East performed Menander's drama to foster their delivery skills.

My current project, *Canonizing Poets and Plays: Classical Greek Tragedy in the Hellenistic Period*, gathers and analyses all our sources for the reception of classical Greek tragedians and their works from the fifth to the first century BC, in both the textual and material record. My main goals are: (i) to determine the media whereby knowledge of plays was transmitted (performance, books, oral communication) and (ii) to outline the specific shape of this reception, especially questions of the canonisation and omission of specific authors or genres. The canonization of Greek works is traditionally tied to the Library of Alexandria, where scholars collected Greek texts and reportedly selected the 'best' authors and the 'best' works by concentrating on specific dramatists and plays. My intention is to test this assumption against our evidence for the reception of classical Greek tragedy before and after the establishment of the Library. Our sources, which are rich and often hard to assess, include honours lavished on poets, interest in their biographies and public reperformances of their plays both in and outside Athens. Equally important is the reception of specific tragedies outside theatres, in other institutions (*symposia* and schools), literary works (dramatic, historical, philosophical, and rhetorical texts) and artistic media (vase-painting). My preliminary findings show that a selection process was already in place well before the Library of Alexandria: almost 75% of our tragedy-related vases from fourth-century South-Italy, for instance, reproduce scenes from the canonical tragic trio, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. We can also identify a fairly consistent pattern between the plays illustrated on South-Italian vases and the Greek models for several Roman tragedies staged in the Republican period. Although current scholarship has often debated the value of our tragedy-related vases, Roman tragedy has never been considered as a source for reconstructing actors' repertoires on South-Italian stages.

ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

- "Graphic Comedy," forthcoming (2012) in M. Fontaine and A. Scafuro eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy*. Oxford University Press
- "The Reception of Fifth-Century Tragedy in the Fourth Century BC," forthcoming (2012) in H. Roisman ed., *Encyclopaedia of Greek Tragedy*. Wiley-Blackwell
- "Contexts of Reception in Antiquity," forthcoming in M. Revermann ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Comedy*
- "The Tragic Canon in the Fourth Century BC," forthcoming in E. Csapo, R.J. Green and P.J. Wilson eds., *Death of Drama or Birth of an Industry? The Greek Theatre in the Fourth Century BC.*"
- "Illustrating Menander's Comedies in the Roman West and in the Greek East," forthcoming in W. von Hasse ed., *Ancient Comedy and its Reception. Essays in Honour of Jeffrey Henderson*. Boston
- "Menander's *Theophoroumene* between Greece and Rome," *AJP* 131 (2010) 23-68.
- "Menander," *The Literary Encyclopedia*
- "Staging Scenes or Plays? Theatrical Revivals of 'Old' Greek Drama in Antiquity," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 162. 14-42

REVIEWS

- Ariana Traill, *Women and the Comic Plot in Menander* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2008).
The Classical Review 60 (2010) 54-5
- Simonetta Grandolini ed., *Lirica e Teatro in Grecia. Il Testo e la sua Ricezione* (Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane: 2005). *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2006.08.56

SELECT CONFERENCE PAPERS

- "Actors, Readers and Learned Guests: Greek Drama and Private Entertainment," Classical Association of Canada, Annual Meeting. Montréal, 2008
- "Menander's *Theophoroumene* between Greece and Rome," American Philological Association, Annual Meeting. Chicago, 2008 "Actors' Papyri and Rhetorical Schools," American Philological Association, Annual Meeting. Montréal, 2006
- "The Reception of Menander during his Lifetime," American Philological Association, Annual Meeting. Boston, 2005
- "Menander and the Athenian Polis," Classical Association of Canada, Annual Meeting. Québec City, 2004

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