

TERENCE, *EUNUCHUS* 189–206

THE closing lines of Act I, Scene II of Terence's *Eunuchus* (189–206) pose certain difficulties; in particular it is far from clear when Phaedria and Parmeno leave the stage—if indeed they do so at all.¹ Taking this small difficulty as a starting-point, I wish to examine the text of *Eunuchus* at this place in order to see what information can be gained about the structure of the play and about any alterations Terence may have made in adapting his Greek original. In this I shall mainly be confining myself to Terence's adaptation of Menander's *Eunuchus* at this one point, and shall not re-examine the well-trodden ground concerning the introduction of the parasite and the boastful Captain from Menander's *Colax*.

Webster, speaking of this whole scene (81–206), says:²

The dialogue [of the preceding scene (46–80)] slides perfectly naturally into the scene between Thais and Phaedria; Parmeno is not needed in this scene and his dismissal (189) is a doublet of the opening line of the next act (207); his presence while Pamphila's citizenship is discussed (110) is undesirable in view of his future role. The complicated past history of Pamphila, the state of the negotiations between Thais and Chremes (203), and the innovation of a kindly disposed *hetaira* need explaining in a divine monologue.

This implies that most, if not all, of the scene, which is 126 lines in length, has been inserted by Terence to take the place of a divine prologue, which will have stood in the Greek version either at this point, that is, after the opening scene or scenes, as in, for example, Menander's *Perikeiromene*, or before the start of the play proper, where Terence's literary prologue now stands. But it is unlikely that Terence would have inserted so long a passage, and there seems no reason to suppose that Parmeno's presence would be an embarrassment while Thais mentions to Phaedria the possibility that Pamphila is a free-born citizen in 110.³ Parmeno would regard such talk merely as an embellishment to a story designed to make Phaedria more willing to retire to the country and make room for his rival; he would not take it seriously, certainly not seriously enough to prevent him substituting Chaerea for the eunuch later. What Parmeno clearly must not hear, however, is Thais' affirmation of the genuine nature of her tale and the account of her negotiations with Chremes (197 ff.); so even if he is on stage at that point, he must clearly be out of earshot.

Webster's statement, implying that almost all the meat of the scene was in

¹ See G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, Princeton, 1952, p. 121 and n. Don. on *Eun.* 197, implying that the two men do not leave the stage, says: 'recte Thais nunc partem argumenti exsequitur tacitam apud Phaedriam propter praesentiam servi, quem poeta vult ita nescire, ut audeat ad vitandam virginem subornare Chaeream.' Drexler, *Hermes* lxxiii (1938), 82, takes the opposite view and says of Phaedria

and Parmeno: '196 gehen beide ins Haus.'

² *Studies in Menander*, 2nd edition, Manchester, 1960, p. 70.

³ At this juncture Thais admits no more than that it is a possibility: 'arbitror; certum non scimu' (110–11); cf. Don. on *Eun.* 110. 2: 'bene 'arbitror' et nihil certi: quomodo enim ausurus esset Parmeno adornare Chaeream ad vitandam virginem, si praescisset civem esse?'

the divine prologue he postulates in the original, is made even less likely by the fact that it is possible to indicate a much shorter passage within defined limits at the end of the scene which is more clearly an insertion by Terence. It corresponds exactly with the problem passage mentioned at the beginning of this article, and does in fact contain 'the state of the negotiations between Thais and Chremes and the innovation of the kindly disposed *hetaira*', two of the points which Webster mentions as the content of the prologue—though whether they both actually appeared in the prologue is another matter. The passage is bounded by the two phrases *tu, Parmeno, huc fac illi adducantur* (189) and *fac, ita ut iussi, deducantur isti* (207) which starts Act II, Scene I. Of these, the second is, as has often been noticed, a doublet of the first, apart from the obvious addition of *ita ut iussi* to explain the repetition of the order;¹ this fact should at once arouse suspicion. I believe that everything between these two lines was inserted by Terence, and that, although some of it was information which was necessary for the audience's understanding of the play and which had appeared in the prologue in the Greek version, much of it is purely Roman in origin.

When Terence dispensed with the expository prologue,² he was faced with the problem of including elsewhere in the body of the play such of the information contained in it as he considered 'necessary' in this sense. Moreover, if the prologue he removed had been spoken by a divinity of some sort, he lost the opportunity of presenting at one time all the relevant facts as they applied to all the parties in the plot. Hence some of the information would now have to be put into the mouth of someone who was out of sight, or at least out of earshot, of other characters upon whose ignorance of those facts the action of the play depended. Elsewhere, in *Andria* 215–25, Terence uses a slightly different technique; there, one of those whose conduct might be affected by knowledge of the facts to be related relates them himself, but rejects them as a fabrication.³ Davos' attitude in *Andria* to the information he gives might be a model for the reaction of Parmeno to the suggestion of Pamphila's citizenship in *Eunuchus* 110, already mentioned.

In the passage of *Eunuchus* under discussion it is probable that only 203–4 contain information taken from the prologue. Terence has put this information into the mouth of Thais, and to do so has had to interrupt the action of the play and write in such material from his own head as will enable her to give the facts more or less naturally; having done so, he brings the action back to the point in the original where he left off, resuming with the device of the reiterated command by Phaedria to Parmeno.

The whole inserted passage falls naturally into two sections, 190–6 and 197–206. Of these the first is almost entirely padding by Terence; to start with, it contains Phaedria's humorous literal interpretation of *numquid vis aliud?* (191)—a joke of a type which is possible only in Latin, and which occurs only once elsewhere in Terence, at which point it is worthy of comment by Donatus.⁴ More importantly, there is something strange about the appearance of the phrase *numquid vis aliud?* as it now stands in our texts; on every other occasion

¹ See, for example, the passage of Webster quoted, Duckworth, *op. cit.*, p. 121 n., and Drexler, *Hermes* lxxiii (1938), 82.

² I am assuming throughout that such a prologue did exist in Menander's *Eunuchus*. This cannot, of course, be proved, but such

evidence as we have from other plays by the same author makes the assumption of its existence reasonable.

³ See Oppermann, *Hermes* lxxix (1934), 262–9.

⁴ *Ad.* 432 and Don.

that it occurs in Terence, it is used by the person who is about to, or trying to, depart,¹ a fact upon which Donatus often comments.² Here, however, it is used by someone who is anxious for her interlocutor to leave while she herself stays behind.³ This would seem to indicate one of two things: either that Terence has introduced the phrase into a passage of his own construction, but has used it quite differently from the way in which he has elsewhere consistently used the same phrase to translate one particular form of words; or that he was still adapting his Greek original here, and that at this point Thais left the stage. If the latter is the case, then we have still further evidence for the Terentian nature of what follows, but we will have to mark the beginning of the inserted passage about a line and a half later than I have done above, and agree that it is not exactly bounded by the two similar commands. This will not, however, affect the essence of the argument, since it is not vital to it that the command which is reiterated at the point where the original is resumed should have first appeared immediately at the start of the inserted passage—though it is the obvious and tempting suggestion; it will be sufficient to say that Terence picked on the device of reiterating something which he found at or just before the start of his own contribution.

The remainder of the first section of the inserted passage is entirely taken up with further characterization of the love-sick Phaedria (192–6). There is incidentally, and perhaps significantly, no final word of parting from Phaedria at the end of his speech, and the speech itself has a Roman solemnity about it.

The second section starts with Thais' avowal of the genuine nature of her intentions and of the truth of the story which she has just told to Phaedria. We have Donatus' testimony for the Terentian origin of the kindly *meretrix*, and this must presumably mean that he could find no such characterization in Menander.⁴ Therefore it seems most likely that 197–201, and possibly also 202–3 *feci*, are similarly Terentian in origin. These lines, after all, contain the most express statement of this novel characterization, from Thais' own lips, and contrast sharply with the earlier description of her as *nostrī fundi calamitas* (79).⁵ Of the rest of the scene, 206 is clearly merely a device to remove Thais; in the Greek original she most probably left the stage at the end of 186 of the Latin version or, if we believe the words *numquid vis aliud?* to be a direct translation of the Greek as suggested above, at 191. 205 gives the reason for the action stated as an intention in 206, and is to that extent closely connected with it;

¹ *Eun.* 341, 363; *Phorm.* 151, 458; *Hec.* 272; *Ad.* 247, 432.

² On *Eun.* 341, 363 ('hoc dicere abeuntes solent'); on *Hec.* 272 ('discedentis verbum'); on *Ad.* 247.

³ I am indebted to Mr. I. M. Barton for drawing my attention to this point.

⁴ On *Eun.* 198: 'hic Terentius ostendit virtutis suae hoc esse, ut pervulgatas personas nove inducat et tamen a consuetudine non recedat, ut puta meretricem bonam cum facit, capiat tamen et delectet animum spectatoris.' Webster, by suggesting in the passage quoted that the innovation is a Menandrian one to be explained in a monologue, seems either to overlook Donatus' comment, or to regard his testimony as worthless; his view on this point appears

even more clearly in his *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*, Manchester, 1953, pp. 117 and 124.

⁵ 79 may only be a slave's typical and prejudiced reaction to his master's lover, particularly if she is a *meretrix*, and need not be truly at variance with the portrait at 197. But there is a further indication of more 'normal' characterization of Thais at 739 ff. On the other hand, Thais' actions in the latter half of the play do seem to bear out the good intentions she stated at 197 ff.; therefore if we are to understand from Don. on *Eun.* 198 that not only the passage of kindly sentiment on which he is commenting but also all references to a Thais of good character are an innovation by Terence, it might mean that the Roman poet has considerably altered the last part of the play.

moreover, it seems attached as an afterthought to what has gone before (*et is . . .*), and seems, with 206, designed to bridge the gap between 203-4 and the reiterated command of 207. This leaves us with 203 *nam*-204 (and possibly 202-3 *feci*, which might, however, belong instead to 197-201, as already mentioned); it is these lines which contain the only really vital piece of information in the whole passage 197-206, and to which everything from 197 has been leading; further, the information is of just that sort which would have appeared in a divine prologue. By omitting that prologue Terence set himself the task of including this information elsewhere, and wrote a further 17 lines in order to do so.

It is, of course, also possible, as Webster suggests, that some of the information concerning Pamphila which occurs earlier in the scene also comes from Menander's prologue; certainly the facts given in 203-4 would have needed some preliminary explanation there. But, although proof is impossible, I think it very unlikely that any great amount of the earlier part of the scene is to be accounted for in this way, or that it does not stand in the Latin reasonably much as it stood in the Greek original. It runs smoothly and, even after close inspection, does not seem to show any signs of insertions or patching, while the contribution of Parmeno is an integral part of the dialogue and action, even if, as Webster points out, it is not an essential one. It would seem, then, that the earlier part of the scene containing information on Pamphila is genuinely Menandrian, but that we should nevertheless have expected similar information to have appeared in the prologue as well in order to introduce the facts transferred in Terence's play to 203-4; it is by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that there was such repetition, the circumstances related at length in 107-43 being briefly sketched out in the prologue. The same argument which postulates repetition between prologue and play cannot, however, be used in the case of the latter part of the scene which is the main subject under discussion. Here the case for Terentian workmanship is much stronger, since our examination of the passage has revealed clear signs of patching and insertion.

We are now in a position to understand the reason for the lack of any stage direction implicit in the text concerning the whereabouts of Parmeno after 189 and of Phaedria after 196. It seems that, in the Greek play, Thais retired into her house and that Phaedria, left alone with Parmeno, expressed his resolve to leave for the country and ordered his slave to take the eunuch and the Ethiopian slave-girl to Thais' house. Terence prolonged Thais' period on stage to speak 197-206 and repeated the order of 189 at 207, but he omitted to indicate what the two men were doing in the meantime. If we attempt to make good this omission, we should, of course, attach no importance to the act-division in the modern text between 206 and 207,¹ though it seems probable that this division has in fact carried too much weight with some of those who would remove Phaedria and Parmeno from the stage; the scene division, however, if it can be called a division at all, remains. But if we do try to reach a decision on the whereabouts of the two, we are bound to content ourselves with one that is inconclusive, for the very good reason that Terence had never worked the matter out himself and therefore never had the picture clear in his own mind. To be dogmatic in our answer would thus be to base it on evidence which simply is not there. Phaedria and Parmeno must be out of earshot of

¹ See Don. on *Eun. Praef.* 1. 5*.

Thais; they might therefore leave, but they could equally well stay, since, on the long stage with its well-known dramatic conventions, they could still be out of range without their actual retirement into one of the houses or into the wings. Admittedly, the actors would need to overplay the convention rather heavily, but this does not seem to have worried Terence and need not worry us; indeed, elsewhere in Terence the convention is even more strained.¹

If this analysis of the passage is correct, it may help us to understand how there occurs later in the play another passage which contains a statement incompatible with 203–6. In Act III, Scene III (507 ff.) Chremes enters, and in the course of a monologue of some 24 lines, gives *his* version of the state of the negotiations between himself and Thais. It appears that he is on his way to his *second* meeting with her, and that they have already met previously on an occasion when Thais questioned him closely about his family history. This seems quite incompatible with Thais' words at 203–6. Drexler² suggests that the inconsistency was caused by alterations to Act III, Scene III and thinks that the questions which Chremes says were asked at the first meeting come either from the prologue of the Greek original, or from a point corresponding to Act IV, Scene VI of the Latin play, which was the first meeting in the Greek. In either case, the object of transferring them was to ensure Chremes' presence at the Captain's dinner. More frequent, however, have been attempts to rationalize away this inconsistency, but they have not met with any conspicuous success. Drexler, who, after revising his view that there was an incompatibility, came to regard Act III, Scene III as a genuinely Menandrian scene with which 203–6 could be reconciled,³ and Knoche⁴ both engage in a careful study of the possible meanings of various words used in the crucial passage 203–6, but arrive at opposite conclusions. Drexler suggests that Thais has already made contact with Chremes by messenger, but does not actually meet him for the first time until he arrives at the Captain's dinner, while Knoche thinks that by *iam reperisse* Thais means that she has found and seen her man already and is therefore looking forward to a second meeting. However, it seems to me that such subtle nuances of meaning as are relied upon in these and similar theories could not possibly have been picked up by Terence's audience, and I find it hard to imagine that they ever occurred to the poet himself; moreover, both these theories oddly involve Thais in a wait of 300 lines until Chremes actually does arrive. Marouzeau, clearly worried by this long wait, thinks that 203–6 refer to the first meeting and supposes that we must assume that it takes place off stage sometime between 206 and 507;⁵ but, despite his statement that this is in accordance with the scenic conventions, it seems quite impossible that such an important event can be assumed to have taken place without any explanation or reference whatsoever.

It is interesting to note that no theory which attempts to regard the two passages as compatible seems to be able to explain this long wait without having recourse to some such solution as that of Marouzeau. Moreover, there is more that is peculiar about that wait than merely its length, because in fact

¹ See, for example, *And.* 236–66.

² *Hermes* lxxiii (1938), 75.

³ *Ibid.* lxxvi (1941), 75 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* 252 ff. Knoche's views are accepted by Webster, *Studies in Menander*, p. 72.

⁵ Térence, ed. J. Marouzeau (Budé edn.), i, Paris, 1947, p. 259 n. 1: 'depuis le moment où Thais a indiqué qu'elle attendait Chrémès chez elle (v. 205–206), il s'est écoulé assez de temps pour que, suivant les conventions scéniques, l'entrevue ait pu trouver place.'

Thais does *not* wait for Chremes' arrival as she says she will in 206. Instead, after she has already got Pamphila safe in her own house, she goes to dinner with the Captain, and leaves orders about what is to be done if and when Chremes comes. These orders do not seem to betoken any great eagerness on her part, which is odd when now for the first time her theories about Pamphila's identity can be confirmed or denied. In the first instance Chremes is *to* be asked to wait; if he will not, he is actually to be asked to go away and come back some other time; only as a last resort is Pythias to arrange for him to be taken to Thais at the Captain's house.¹ Now while it is understandable that Thais might not want Chremes to appear at Thraso's dinner, the lack of urgency in the arrangements that she makes and the fact that she ever goes to the dinner in the first place contrast strangely with the categorical statement of 206 *concedam hinc intro atque exspectabo dum venit*. It may be that we have here further evidence for the earlier suggestion that this line is merely a device to remove Thais from the scene.

It therefore appears that attempts to explain the mutual incompatibility of 203-6 and Act III, Scene III do not succeed; this is not surprising, for, like the obscurity about the whereabouts of Phaedria and Parmeno towards the end of Act I, Scene II, it is a difficulty of Terence's own making, caused by his introduction of 203-6. Having prolonged Thais' presence on stage in order to speak 203-4, and being faced with the necessity of removing her afterwards on some more or less plausible pretext, he saw a point of connection between those lines and the later arrival of Chremes in 507, and so invented the reason for Thais' retirement from the stage which she gives in 205-6. It may not have been the best of pretexts, but it clearly satisfied Terence, who does not appear to have been worried by the wait of 300 lines as much as do some subsequent commentators; and in this connection it is only fair to point out that the wait would not have appeared so long to an audience watching the play being produced as it does to a modern commentator carefully studying the written text. However, Terence seems to have failed to notice that on his arrival at 507 Chremes was to say that he was on his way to a second meeting with Thais; or alternatively, he may have noticed the fact but considered it unimportant; whichever it was, the result is the two incompatible statements in our text. I should like to think that the passage in the prologue of the Greek original which Terence retained and adapted as 203-4 made it quite clear that Chremes had already met Thais once; thus in the Greek play Chremes' entry on his way to his second visit would have appeared perfectly natural, without even the slight awkwardness of Thais' long wait before it.

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¹ *Eun.* 500-3.