

THE THEME OF PLANLESSNESS IN TERENCE'S *EUNUCHUS*

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Terence's *Eunuchus* is unique among his plays as a study of planlessness vs the planned and logical, the planlessness manifest as chance coincidence in events, as unplanned, instinctive conduct in human action. The contrast shows planlessness successful and the logical self-defeating, a development characteristic of high comedy which minimizes farce in order to focus on frustration of intellect and rational thinking.¹ In particular, the play appears to satirize the planning and calculation prevalent in New Comedy and its Roman offspring.² No pale rival of the *Miles Gloriosus*, the *Eunuchus* in this way presents its own significant, unified issue.³

The play's concentration on the theme of planlessness is evident in three of its major characteristics, all characteristics found only in this

¹ On high comedy, see Walter Kerr, *Tragedy and Comedy* (New York 1968) 167, 227-48.

² I am indebted to one of the journal's anonymous referees for pointing out the good case for this idea which is treated at the conclusion.

³ For the conventional comparison of the *Miles Gloriosus* and the *Eunuchus*, often focusing on Pyrgopolynices and Thraso, see G. Norwood, *The Art of Terence* (Oxford 1923) 66-68; Tenney Frank, *Life and Literature in the Roman Republic* (Berkeley 1930) 121-23; J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome: Golden Age* (New York 1958³) 152-53; E. de Saint Denis, *Essais sur le Rire et la Sourire des Latins* (Paris 1965) 95-108. Other discussions of the *Eunuchus* provide valuable insights on various aspects of the play but do not recognize any theme. Cf. E. K. Rand, "The Art of Terence's *Eunuchus*," *TAPA* 63 (1932) 54-72; P. W. Harsh, *A Handbook of Classical Drama* (Stanford 1944) 386-89; C. W. Amerasinghe, "The Part of the Slave in Terence's Drama," *G & R* 19 (1950) 66-67; G. E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton 1952) 156, 173-74; G. K. Henry, "The Characters of Terence," *SPhNC* 12 (1915) 92-98; O. Bianco, *Terenzio* (Rome 1962) 133-68; G. M. Pepe, "The Last Scene of Terence's *Eunuchus*," *CW* 65 (1972) 141-45; Walther Ludwig, "Von Terenz zu Menander," *Philologus* 103 (1959) 1-38, and "The Originality of Terence and his Greek Models," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 172-73. In the earlier article Ludwig remarked (31, 36) that *Tychê*, *Eros*, and *gnomê* appeared to be powerful forces in Menander's original.

play, and coordinated to produce a conflict of unplanned and deliberate which makes appropriate and meaningful the conclusion. The first of these is (1) development of planlessness, which is given a quasi-philosophical significance, as the play's theme. This development is marked by repetition of *consilium*, dominates the play's first 400 lines, and is then succeeded by significant references to *consilium*, thinking and planning, which extend the theme through the play.⁴ In essence, the first third of the play (1-391) forms an exposition of two different kinds of behavior, *consilium* and its opposite, as rational and planless ways of dealing with things. The play opens with Parmeno's advice to Phaedria on love which is described as something not able to be managed by any rational method. The word used is *consilium* (twice, 57-58) in context with *ratio* (twice, 62-63). The irony is that it shows Parmeno, who might be expected to contrive for his master, acquiescing in planlessness before the problem of love's irrationality. This is immediately demonstrated in the following scene with Thais where any logical approach is frustrated, and in practice master and slave follow no plan at all. Phaedria, obeying instincts, reacts with anger, sarcasm, and frustration to Thais' request that the soldier Thraso temporarily be allowed first place with her. He retreats from apparent rational resistance in 153 to jealous unreason with the false accusations of 159-61.⁵ Parmeno, realizing that the situation is hopeless, can offer no recommendations.⁶ These reactions constitute the planlessness for which Parmeno could earlier propose no rational approach, and this is the chief function of the scene which some have considered otiose.⁷ Parmeno's speech is now revealed as foil, an exposition in word, to this planlessness in spontaneous action.

⁴ Since the *Eunuchus* is an adaptation of Menander's play, the Greek original was apparently characterized by this theme and thus dealt with rational decision vs planlessness. I am indebted to one of the anonymous referees for the observation that New Comedy emphasized the antithesis of chance and planning (e.g., Menander fr. 213; *Pk.* 382; fr. 714.8; *Aspis* 411), and that 55 f. in this play has a distinctly Greek character. For the relationship of the *Eunuchus* to its Greek model, see the reexamination of the problem by Ludwig, "Von Terenz. . ." (above, note 3).

⁵ Cf. 89-90; 222. References are to the text of R. Kauer and W. M. Lindsay, *P. Terenti Afri Comoediae* (Oxford 1958).

⁶ Cf. 66; 84; 87-88; 101-06; 154; 178; 226-27.

⁷ Norwood 64-65 complains about the lengthy discussion of yielding to Thais when the concession turns out not to be required. S. G. Ashmore, *The Comedies of Terence*

So much is not entirely new, but it has not been considered that Chaerea's scene with Parmeno (292-390) extends and refines the illustration of 1-231. In contrast to Phaedria who tries to proceed by deliberation, Chaerea is impulsive and irrational, seeming to act in concert with an irrational course, or planlessness, in things, as the odd configuration of events immediately characterizing him suggests. For in contrast to the initial deliberation of Phaedria's scene, it is purely by chance that Chaerea glimpses his girl, loses sight of her, and is then delayed by a garrulous *senex*. The result is the chance meeting of Chaerea and Parmeno at exactly the right moment because Parmeno has been detained at Thais' door for the same amount of time by the talkative parasite Gnatho. Parmeno met informs Chaerea about the girl sought; Thais, having departed moments before, does not see Chaerea, and so his pose as eunuch in her house is possible.⁸ From one accident to another, Parmeno only in fun suggests that dressed as a eunuch Chaerea could be near the girl, and Chaerea seizes upon the joke as a plan, claims that he has never seen a better *consilium* (376).⁹ Chaerea, that is, literally adopts no plan as a plan, no *consilium* as *consilium*, in a scene complementing the Parmeno-Phaedria scene as a reversal. Phaedria in the first case wants some rational policy but gets none, Chaerea actually adopts no plan but thinks of it as a plan. The first scene starts with deliberation and proceeds to unplanned, impulsive actions, the second starts with impulsive actions and proceeds to the accidental securing of a successful plan. The symmetry is enhanced by making love the common problem, the advisees brothers, and Parmeno the adviser in both. The two scenes with their crossing of plans and purposes dramatize planlessness which emerges as the unplanned and accidental series of events through both scenes in general

New York 1908²) 128, follows Donatus in criticizing 207-31 in particular. Harsh, however, 388, notes that the scene illustrates the irrationality of love.

⁸ The neatness of the coincidence is pointed out by Donatus on 322. Rand 61-62 called attention to the symmetrical arrangement of the two coincident acts as a configuration for suspense and supposed that the *senex* was created or elaborated by Terence for this purpose.

⁹ Parmeno is unaware of what he is doing until it is too late. Cf. Ashmore 132; Amerasinghe 66-67; Duckworth 174; Norwood 54, 145; and Donatus on 292, 356, 365, who admires the gradual, unwitting involvement of the *consilium*. It is again praised as a "plan" by Chaerea in retrospect at 1045.

but the course of Chaerea in particular. Lack of *consilium* as a quasi-philosophical definition of unplanned action seems to have been noted by other Roman poets, Horace and Propertius, who used it in significant contexts. *Nullo consilio*, a phrase never found in the *Eunuchus*, appears in Propertius with special meaning.¹⁰ Within Terence, the concept of planlessness is unique; no other play has the context for developing the meaning of *consilium* and its opposite given by the Phaedria and Chaerea scenes, nor the peculiar dramatic focus on the term itself.¹¹ The development forms the statement of theme for the *Eunuchus*, proposing that thinking and planning fail while impulsive, unplanned action succeeds.

It is easier to see now that this development is completed by a presentation of pure *consilium* in the intervening scene of the parasite Gnatho. For Gnatho presents the best plan for a parasite, or more than that, a philosophy, *disciplina* (263), for those who have lost their *consilium* or their ability to plan (241). Preoccupation with thinking is emphasized in Gnatho's posturing as philosopher, and by play on

¹⁰ Although there are other similar passages on love's *vitia* like Plautus *Merc.* 18 ff., Horace takes *Eun.* 46 ff. verbatim in *S.* 2.3.265-71 where the context is philosophical. Lucretius' account of love's irrationality is thematically related to lack of *consilium*, and Propertius applies the term *nullo consilio* to his irrational love and life style. Cf. A. W. Allen, "Elegy and the Classical Attitude toward Love," *YCS* 11 (1950) 262-66; J. Fontenrose, "Propertius and the Roman Career," *CPCP* 13 (1949) 371-81; Brooks Otis, "Propertius' Single Book," *HSCP* 70 (1965) 10 and note 14; J. P. Sullivan, "*Castas Odisse Puellas*: A Reconsideration of Propertius I.1," *WS* 74 (1961) 107.

¹¹ In sheer numbers, the *Andria* shows twenty-one occurrences of *consilium* in all cases, each of the other plays eight, to the eleven of the *Eunuchus* according to P. McGlynn, *Lexicon Terentianum* (London and Glasgow 1967). Inspection of context, however, shows that *consilium* has none of the special conditions of the *Eunuchus* in that the slave is frustrated by the character and purpose of his opponent, not by a series of coincidences which bring his master success despite him; contrivers lose not because of a lack of *consilium* in things, but because they cannot best other characters at contriving, and this accords with the central interests of the plays as given by Norwood and Amerasinghe. In the *Andria*, for example, where the interest lies in the duel of wits between Simo and Davus, *consilium* reflects this and refers merely to the scheming of one side or the other without any special conditions (e.g., 159; 170; 320; 390; 404; 608). In the *H. T.*, because of interest in the relationship between father and son, *consilium* refers to the complex schemes of Syrus or to the plans of Chremes for his son (e.g., 86; 209; 327; 709; 922). The *consilia* of the *Phormio* are nothing more than the plans of the play's parasite (e.g., 124; 321; 578; 773; 934). Similar relationship of the use of *consilium* to theme holds true in the *Hecyra* and *Adelphoe*.

the names *Gnatho*, *Plato*; *Gnathonici*, *Platonici*,¹² In accord with this, the name *Gnatho*, the "Jaw," stresses the plentiful, facile talk of his philosophizing rather than the typical, hungry parasite of comedy.¹³ The whole characterization makes *Gnatho* like *Parmeno* in his concern with planning, but a more systematic, professional thinker than the amateurish *Parmeno*: a mouthpiece for deliberation at its extreme, most purely practical. The diatribe is not a random, isolated piece inserted for decoration as has been thought, but *Gnatho* provides the link, development and contrast for the theme of planning in the preceding and subsequent scenes, and introduces the mode of planning that prevails at play's end.¹⁴

Proceeding from this exposition in 1-391, the word *consilium*, sometimes *ratio*, and occasionally other whole segments concentrated on thinking and planning sustain the theme of planned vs unplanned through the play.¹⁵ Within the portion surveyed, *Thais* speaks of her plans (*consilia* 128) which depend upon *Phaedria*, ironically, when *Phaedria* himself is victimized by planlessness in the same scene. Given the context, there is humorous irony in *Parmeno*'s asking *Chaerea* how he lost sight of *Pamphila* (*qua ratione amisisti* 322). *Gnatho* returns in 393-453 as thinker and adviser to *Thraso*, offering a practical scheme to control *Thais*. *Consilium* does not appear in context here, but it seems that the scheme is alluded to at 1025 where *Gnatho*'s advice has failed and he is asked for another plan (*quo consilio huc imus*). The plan (1026-27) amounts to total surrender, which is like *Phaedria*'s planlessness at the play's beginning (74-76) and signals

¹² Cf. J. C. Austin, "The Significant Name in Terence," *Univ. of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 7 (1921) 112.

¹³ Among Terence's characters, *Gnatho* rivals *Phormio* in vividness and facility of speech. Cf. W. G. Arnott, "*Phormio Parasitus*," *G & R* 17 (1970) 53.

¹⁴ This feature integrating *Gnatho* with the play has not been perceived. Cf. Rand 61-62; Norwood 64; Arnott 35; H. R. Clifford, "Dramatic Technique and the Originality of Terence," *CJ* 26 (1930-1931) 612 ff. Ludwig, "Von Terenz . . .," 26, and "The Originality . . .," 172 (above, note 3), takes the view that Terence has changed his original by substituting the parasite for a slave in Menander and augmenting the role with an entrance speech borrowed from the *Kolax*. *Gnatho* thus upstages the silent *Pamphila* who according to Ludwig was appropriately the center of attention in Menander's play. Not perceiving the significance of *Gnatho*'s speech, Ludwig considers the change a mistake by Terence.

¹⁵ Only *consilium* at 784 seems not to participate in the play's thematic tension between plan and planlessness.

the reduction of Thraso, at least temporarily, to the position of his rival. This *consilium* (1025) also looks forward to the final plan of the play, the scheme of Gnatho whereby Thraso and Phaedria will share Thais. Perhaps the best line of the play is Chaerea's remark to Antipho (614) that he wishes now to consider some plan (*consilium volo capere*) to secure Pamphila: this after Chaerea has managed through many obstacles to find and violate the girl not by plan but sheer accident and impulse. Both *consilium* and *ratio* are used at 867 and 869, where Thais tells Chaerea, who has behaved with no plan, that she does not know what to do (*quid nunc consili capiam*) now that he has upset all her plans (*rationes omnes*). Finally, in a scene without *consilium* (629-41), "thinking" words suffuse the context to characterize Phaedria with deliberation on his return from the country after his plan to be resolute has collapsed.¹⁶

In correlation with the focus on planning and no planning, the second characteristic is (2) displacement of the potential manager of plot, Parmeno, by planlessness to allow its clear operation as the play's central interest and decisive force. It has been observed that Parmeno's actions are accidental or nearly ruin his master's love affair, and that he is not so much outwitted or suppressed, but simply has the plot taken out of his hands by Chaerea. The reason given is Terence's desire to overturn fully in this play the traditional role of the *versutus servus*, or alternatively, his interest in a kind of drama turning not on mechanical intrigue but on personal emotions and social issues which necessarily diminished the role of the contriving slave.¹⁷ From the point of view of theme, however, the displacement of Parmeno fits the play primarily as a means of reinforcing planlessness as the dominant force. This is especially evident when Parmeno's displacement is compared with others in Terence. For the contriving slave is excluded from management of plot in other plays, but regularly in order to let the adult citizens take full responsibility for the final solution. No comparable interest has been found to pervade the *Eunuchus*.¹⁸ The play is unique

¹⁶ 629-41: *cogitare* 631; *puto* 632; *imprudens* 633; *sensi* 634; *cogitare* 636; *sciens* 641.

¹⁷ Norwood 66, 68; Amerasinghe 66-67; Duckworth 174, 250-51, who denies that any regular trend towards this kind of drama can be shown through the plays overall, remarks on the unusual form of trickery in the *Eunuchus*.

¹⁸ Cf. note 11 above. The *Andria* tells a love story with focus on the duel of wits between Simo and Davus. Davus is partially displaced by Simo, and most of the play's

in that its displacement seems designed to allow operation of nothing other than planlessness, or accident and impulse, and remarkable too because the same force does the displacing. The displacement is carried out in two steps as a process: in the first case with Phaedria, Parmeno is disillusioned, shown acquiescing in no plan, then in the second case, with Chaerea, fully displaced when he unwittingly becomes its proposer. The displacement in the scene with Chaerea, which critics have treated as an impressive but independent event interesting only in itself, is really the last phase of a process which is in turn integral to the development of theme in 1-391. In reaffirmation of Parmeno's exclusion from the role of contriver, Act V shows him duped by a common slave, Pythias, into informing on Phaedria and Chaerea to their father.

Characteristic (3) is that the play's plot is designed primarily as a conflict of planned and deliberate action. It is commonly observed that the plots of Phaedria and Chaerea, and the subplot of Thraso, are not well integrated, and the criticism is justified if the criterion of good integration be that one love affair helps to resolve the other as usual

comedy comes from Davus' frenzied attempts to control the plot (Norwood 33-34, 142). The *Hecyra* is preoccupied with a study of married life, and consequently whatever management it shows is done by its "women of great humanity." Parmeno, the potential manager, is totally and emphatically displaced, repeatedly ordered offstage to make room for the main, interpersonal interests (Norwood 92; Amerasinghe 69, 71). Parmeno in the *Adelphoe* is only somewhat less displaced while it is always clear that Micio and rival systems of bringing up sons are the central interests (Norwood 113 127; Amerasinghe 71-72). Of the heavily managed plays, the *Phormio* is virtually run by the parasite in accord with its interest. The *H.T.* is unusual because it focuses on theories of educating sons while allowing Syrus full, complex management (Norwood 44, 77; Amerasinghe 65-68). In the *Eunuchus*, Chaerea is an outstandingly vivid character as an impetuous youth (Henry 92-98), but as there is no strong, central theme of social interest, so there is no character of human interest like Simo, Micio, or Bacchis to displace the slave from his role as *deus ex machina*. The two main characters are Phaedria and Chaerea, and they are contrasted through the theme of *consilium*, Phaedria's inability to follow a plan and Chaerea's witless course of action without plan. This was perhaps the main character in the Menandrian *Eunuchos*, but not in Terence, and this is the principal point of Ludwig's criticism of Terence's adaptation, especially the conclusion. Cf. Ludwig, "Von Terenz . . .," 3, 28, 36-37, and "The Originality . . .," 172-74 (above, note 3). Rand 58 considers Thais the next main character after Chaerea, but she is peripheral to most of the first four Acts, and not even Pepe, who makes most of her lot in the conclusion, names her the primary interest of the play. Rather, critical attention is usually limited to the excellent characterization of Thais as a good-hearted whore (Norwood 60-61, 127; Duckworth 156).

in the duality method. Chaerea with Parmeno does nothing to help Phaedria's affair with Thais, but actually threatens to worsen it; only some limited interaction is perceptible at the play's end; Thraso seems unrelated to the fortunes of Thais, Phaedria, Pamphila, and Chaerea.¹⁹ If, however, the principle of design is to contrast planned and unplanned, *consilium* and no *consilium*, while providing foil and relief, then the plots depend upon one another and interact effectively. Although there is no tightly organized structure, four-fifths of the play first develops planlessness (up to 391) as outlined, then shows how planning and no planning fare in the actions of Chaerea and Phaedria (up to 816) with Thraso as foil. The middle phase of the intrigue from III 4 to IV end is a group of three generally homogeneous sequences of Chaerea's adventure (539-614), Phaedria's encounter with the eunuch (629-716), and Thraso's attack on Thais' house. They have vigorous action in common, a rape in the first, the beating of the eunuch in the second, and the mustering of Thraso's "troops" in the third. The first two deal with the fortunes of the two principals directly concerned earlier with planlessness, Chaerea and Phaedria, form the thematically significant body of this groups of scenes, and are united by the brothers as agents and by the eunuch, either the real eunuch or his assumed identity, who in this part replaces Parmeno as the principal figure with the brothers. Thraso, although he acts out the plan given him earlier by Gnatho, is not closely aligned with *consilium* like Phaedria and Chaerea, and so plays a tertiary, farcical role as foil and relief to the brothers who are formally and emphatically characterized as planner and no planner. The purpose of this group of scenes is to show through action the success of planlessness and the ineffectiveness of *consilium*, paralleling but augmenting the illustration of the same in words in 1-391.

In the first sequence Chaerea demonstrates planlessness, and as before he is immediately characterized by chance circumstances working to his advantage, this time in the person of Antipho. Antipho, who happens along at the right moment, who opportunely provides Chaerea the interlocutor he desires, and whose name happens to mean "the answerer," seems too blatantly fortunate for Chaerea, as if Terence were using him to develop the theme and at the same time make fun of

¹⁹ Norwood 146, 64-69; Amerasinghe 66-67; Duckworth 187.

the theatricality of such neat, conventional accidents.²⁰ This appears to be the point of 553–56 where Chaerea catalogues the questions to be asked him, all the while stressing his need of an interlocutor, before Antipho appears.²¹ Then, as Chaerea tells his story, it becomes apparent that in assuming his pose as eunuch in Thais' house he has followed Parmeno's plan intended as no plan, as we expected. From that point on, events have taken unexpected turns, so that the only pattern perceptible in things throughout has truly been lack of *consilium*. For, as Donatus observed, Chaerea has not entered the women's apartments with the design of violating Pamphila, but, as accident would have it, once in the chamber he is confronted by an erotic picture of Zeus and Danae which moves him to the act and its silly, theme-significant rationalization. He adopts the pose of a thinker and reasons *a fortiori* that as a mere man he should follow Zeus' example.²² Planlessness is conspicuously displayed in the series of Chaerea's paradoxical actions: the chance violation of a virgin by a eunuch in the disreputable house of Thais inspired by an erotic picture. As cap to this, the scene's emphasis on planlessness is expressed in the tension between Chaerea's concluding remark earlier noted about planning now (613–14) after the fact, and unplanned chance in the violation (604–06).²³

What happens to Phaedria in the second sequence shows by contrast the frustration of *consilium* by planlessness in the person of the true eunuch. When Phaedria returns from the country all new plan and deliberation as emphasized by the concentration of "thinking" words, he incurs the trouble centering on the eunuch, and held to explaining things, he is forced gradually to retreat from one rational account after another until he must maintain against all reason that the true eunuch, his eunuch, violated Pamphila. In accord with the play's theme, the

²⁰ On the name, cf. Austin 117 (above, note 12). Interpretations vary, and Antipho is perhaps not Terence's creation. Cf. Harsh 389, 491 and note 34; Ludwig, "Von Terenz . . .," 32 and note 1.

²¹ Rand 62–63 thinks Chaerea is initially unwilling to tell his story, then changes his mind on meeting Antipho, but see Donatus on 554, Ashmore on 557.

²² Cf. 574, and Donatus on 584–85; Norwood 63. The harsh criticism of the scene by Elder Olson, *The Theory of Comedy* (Bloomington and London 1963) 83, is based on a complete misunderstanding of the relation of events to theme here.

²³ *an ego occasionem / mi ostentam, tantam, tam brevem, tam optatam, tam insperatam / amitterem?*

misunderstanding typical of comedy forms a display of the thinker made sport of by the same unplanned events Chaerea has followed to success. Even more, the thinker is compelled to acknowledge the existence of the chance, non-rational in things and his relationship to it while, significantly, he himself appears irrational to others. This defeat of the rational passes through these gradations: confronted first (653 ff.) with the charge that the eunuch who raped Pamphila is his, Phaedria is certain that the guilty eunuch is not his; now the possibility is forced upon him that the eunuch is his (668), now that it is not his eunuch but Chaerea dressed as one (697 f.); he maintains foolishly at last that the guilty eunuch is indeed his (705 ff.). In all of this, the eunuch bears a significance that has not been commented upon. For the true eunuch, seen as the identity Chaerea assumes, an incarnation of the *consilium* of Chaerea that is in fact no plan, and the imbroglia that falls upon Phaedria, appears as a central symbol of the comic irrational, or planlessness, in the play.²⁴ Comic theorists beginning with Aristotle considered ugliness, or physical incongruity, to be the basis of comedy, while higher comedy is thought to depend upon abnormal, incongruous events that confound normal structures of thought rather than sense of physical form.²⁵ On one level, consistently described as ugly, neither man nor woman, on another the manifestation of Chaerea's haphazard plan, the eunuch symbolizes physical, farcical comedy, but more importantly the drama's higher comedy of confounded

²⁴ The identification of Chaerea and the eunuch is reinforced by change of clothes, a significant symbolic act as often. Cf. Brooks Otis, *Virgil* (Oxford 1963) 329; S. G. P. Small, "The Arms of Turnus," *TAPA* 90 (1959) 243; D. A. Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare* (New York 1956) 199.

²⁵ On physical ugliness and incongruity, see Aristotle *Poet.* 5.1449a.31-36; Coislinian Tractate in Lane Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy* (New York 1922) 228; Greek text in G. Kaibel, *CGF* I.i.50; Cicero *de Orat.* 2.58.236 (*turpitudine et deformitate*); Lucio Giraldi, "Reasoning in Defense of Terence," in B. Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago 1961) 289; L. Castelvetro, "Commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*," A. Riccoboni, "The Comic Art," W. Congreve, "Concerning Humour in Comedy," in Paul Lauter, ed., *Theories of Comedy* (New York 1964) 88-89, 106, 208; J. Addison, in D. F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator* (Oxford, 1965), No. 47, pp. 200-201; H. Fielding, "Author's Preface to Joseph Andrews," in I. Williams, ed., *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* (New York 1970) 255. Cf. Kerr 167-68, 187-88. On the incongruous and irrational manifest in the chance events of higher comedy, Duckworth 151-59; Kerr 189-209; Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Wylie Sypher, ed., *Comedy* (New York 1956) 123-27, and Sypher's essay, 196-201, 204-05, 209, 236-39.

intellect based on planlessness.²⁶ Thus it is appropriate that the eunuch gives his name to the play in spite of his brief appearance.

The characteristics discussed give meaning to the finale, for the play's conclusion presents a final extension of the sustained contrast of planned with unplanned and frustration of the former. Despite attempts to minimize its impact, the ending is much criticised as a logical, psychological and aesthetic contradiction because Phaedria agrees to a plan to share Thais in order to have enough money to keep her securely in her accustomed style.²⁷ For those rightly unwilling to take the arrangement as purely financial or to put the ending down as a mistake by Terence, explanations advanced to make it seem fitting are less than satisfactory.²⁸ It will not answer the objections to say that the soldier's acceptance by the brothers is an expression of Terence's *humanitas* when the nature of the acceptance mocks that quality.²⁹ Harsh has said that the arrangement should not be judged by moral standards other than the author's or those of the society about which New Comedy was written. He cites precedents for the arrangement, but then adds that sharing of sweethearts was doubtless unusual and scandalous in Attica; this aside from the consideration that it is a question of a *Eunuchus* acted before a Roman audience whose comedies on the whole exhibit a fair moral tone.³⁰ As for comparison with two similar arrangements in Plautus, beside the fact that it is comparing two different playwrights, one arrangement is never actualized, while

²⁶ On the ugliness of Dorus, *monstrum hominis* 696; *os . . . detorsit* 670; *foedus* 684; *vietus vetus veterosus senex, colore mustelino* 688; *decrepito* 231; *inhonestum hominem . . . senem mulierem* 358.

²⁷ Norwood 64; Ashmore 152; Pepe 145; Olson 83; Ludwig, "Von Terenz . . .," 36-38, and "The Originality . . .," 172-73; Giorgio Pasquali, "Un personaggio e due scene dell' Eunuco," *SIFC* 13 (1936) 129.

²⁸ Rand and Duckworth, perhaps taking the arrangement as financial only, do not comment. In any case, Rand's assertion (70) that the ending is appropriate because Thraso suffers a "ludicrous penalty" does not relieve the difficulty. H. Lloyd-Jones, "Terentian Technique in the *Adelphi* and *Eunuchus*," *CQ* 23 (1973) 283-84, concerned chiefly with maintaining that the conclusion is substantially true to Menander, denies that the arrangement would be an offence to Thais or that a Greek audience would see it as such.

²⁹ Pepe 142 against Bianco 162.

³⁰ Harsh, *Handbook* . . . , 386 n. 32, and "Certain Features of Technique Found in Both Greek and Roman Drama," *AJP* 58 (1937) 286. Cf. Ludwig, "Von Terenz . . .," 37-38 n. 5. On moral tone, Duckworth 300-304.

the second is planned by a courtesan very different from Thais.³¹ Finally, the arrangement of the *Eunuchus* is made remarkable by two strong artistic features within the play. Phaedria is never shown as anything but intensely jealous of sharing Thais with anyone, and then the agreement, which cheats Phaedria, is presented against the contrasting fortune of Chaerea, who seems to win all his desire, so that it is made to stand out clear and conspicuous. The reason for this ending and its appropriateness to the play lies in something not perceived by critics, namely the drama's conflict of planning and not planning, thinking and not thinking, *consilium* and its opposite. According to the trend of this conflict, Phaedria goes on as before acting by plan and deliberation but meeting frustration, except that the conclusion presents a final, striking instance of this theme to cap the whole. The nature of the ending, its concentration into one issue of the play's various aspects of the conflict of plan vs no plan, is evident in the part played by each of the main characters. For his part, Parmeno, earlier failing both ways to advise Phaedria and Chaerea, is excluded from any contriving in the arrangement or in Act V generally because he is duped by Pythias into needlessly informing on the brothers to their father. In this way, the earlier displacement of this potential manager of plot is given a final representation, and Parmeno earns his name, "Faithful," with full irony.³² This last exclusion must hold added frustration for Parmeno, who dislikes courtesans in general and Thais in particular (926-40), because his informing brings about the meeting of Thais and the brothers' father which proves advantageous for Thais. Thraso extends his earlier role by being formally installed as an ostensible favorite, in fact as a dupe. Thais succeeds in her plans for Pamphila in a way she did not plan because of Chaerea's *consilium* which is really no plan. In spite of her self-serving designs elsewhere, she seems destined in Act V to transcend by character her social station; her calm,

³¹ Harsh, "Certain Features . . .," 286, adduces Plautus' *Asinaria* which shows a son and father intending to share a courtesan, and *Truculentus* where Phronesium plans to have two lovers. On the uniqueness of Thais, Duckworth 156; Norwood 58; Rand 58, after Fabia; Pepe 142-45.

³² For this development, see the references in n. 17 above. On the name, cf. Austin 108, who sees no irony in it as a typical name for slaves "too dull or timid or lazy" to contrive well for their young masters. Parmeno, however, tries; the point is that lack of *consilium* in things is too much for him.

understanding attitude to Chaerea makes her in actuality a patron to him and the family, and an extraordinary prostitute for all of comedy. Then, however, the arrangement ironically and poignantly fixes her in her formal social status and binds her to the conventional significance of her name.³³ Chaerea, true to form, is impelled by chance back to an unplanned meeting with Thais as opportune as his failure to meet her earlier. Thais is the one member of the household self-possessed enough to discuss the violation with Chaerea, so that his honorable intentions are brought out in his fatuous explanation, and instead of facing an adulterer's punishment he reaches an accord with Thais that will secure him Pamphila.³⁴ Next, because it is wrongly thought that Chaerea is to be punished, his father enters the house of Thais with the result that she wins his approval. The event, immediately and ultimately accidental, and the only point in the play where the two plots meet dynamically, removes the obstacles to Phaedria's union with Thais.³⁵ Chaerea's last act in the play is to take the initiative with Gnatho and urge Phaedria to follow Gnatho's plan. That Chaerea, who has succeeded as the agent of no plan and whose attempts at reasoning have been only comical, advises Phaedria here should warn that the plan is defective. Gnatho's function then confirms it. For Gnatho, already established as the play's mouthpiece for intense, practical thought, characterized as one whose logic transforms fools into madmen, appears as the proponent of the plan. Significantly, he begins his persuasion with "Only calculate . . .," (*cogita modo* 1073). Phaedria, prone as ever to reasoning, takes Gnatho's plan and cheats himself: for the security of possessing Thais he takes an arrangement compromising that possession. On the one hand, the decision is an extremely rational, practical means of keeping Thais in accord with Phaedria's characterization as thinker, on the other, it is a sure defeat for Phaedria who is never shown as anything but intensely jealous, and in this regard it is consistent with the frustration he meets throughout

³³ Cf. the references concerning Thais in n. 31 above, especially Pepe. Bianco's realistic appraisal of her (161-62), however, makes Thais a less sympathetic character than Pepe asserts, and cf. Lloyd-Jones 283-84. On the conventional name, cf. Austin 110-111.

³⁴ On these events, cf. Rand 67; Austin 110. Chaerea in explaining the violation says finally (875), *quid si hoc quispiam voluit deus?*, at which Thais, perceiving the mentality she is dealing with, gives up, agrees, and tries to make the best of things as they are.

³⁵ Cf. Amerasinghe 67; Norwood 146; Duckworth 187; Austin 113.

as the thinking one of the two brothers. This is the purpose of the final plan, to show the frustration of the extremely rational even as it is finally realized.

Some consider the sharing of Thais a wrong done chiefly to Thais and make it the most important thing in the conclusion. Clearly, the disposition of Thais makes the ending remarkable, lends poignancy, and emphasizes the defectiveness of the arrangement. First and most significantly, however, it is a wrong done Phaedria by himself if Thais is not to be oversentimentalized and if the play's perspective is to be kept. Phaedria's frustration, his defeat as the central event, is put into focus by the conspicuous circularity of plot for him in particular as one of the two primary characters: the final arrangement reasserts and formalizes his dilemma over sharing Thais at the play's beginning, and it is magnified by the happy issue of things for Chaerea. This aside from the fact that the formal, main conflict of plan and no plan is developed thematically between the brothers and subsumes Thais as a third party. Similarly, with the appropriate qualifications, Thraso too has a tertiary role. Like Phaedria, he is a loser at the end but with less significance since he is not systematically aligned with *consilium* or its opposite.

It has been maintained by some that comedy's ideal format describes a circle, that it comes back finally to reality, prudence, and orthodox thinking in keeping with its low, earthbound profile beside tragedy.³⁶ The *Eunuchus*, seeming to obey this convention, comes back to reality with a vengeance, disclosing with its harsh yet technically correct ending the frustration in practical thinking, or *consilium* finally achieved for Phaedria, against the benevolent issue of Chaerea's planlessness. Thus planning comes under a double assault, on the one side from the example of Phaedria, on the other from the adventure of Chaerea, and it is difficult to extract from this any profound practical lesson for

³⁶ Although in the course of the play comedy may envision a better world and become completely fanciful in doing so. Endings return to reality either overtly or with such contrived, transcending resolutions as to affirm the reality they escape. Cf. Kerr 57-59; Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter* (Cambridge 1968) 141, 147, 161, 168-69, after Northrop Frye. The ultimate concern with reality appears normal if, as Meredith maintained in "An Essay on Comedy" (Sypher 13-18, 45-46), comedy reflects the middle class mind and standards, or as von Schlegel observed in "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature" (Lauter 339), comedy unlike tragedy adopts the law of existence as it manifests itself in experience.

life. Phaedria, eager to plan and think rightly, fails to manage things and loses through *consilium* when it matters most. On the other side, Chaerea's course self-evidently represents what is not normally viable and cannot be thought to recommend planlessness so much as merely to ridicule planning. A few men might be able to act unwittingly and successfully in tune with chance, but such a course by its very nature cannot be planned by any amount of right thinking. Consequently, instead of moralizing, the play's theme of planlessness seems designed to score an esthetic point by making fun of comedy itself. Through comedy generated by the tension between *consilium* and no *consilium*, Terence (or Menander) uses the genre against itself, satirizing the planning, calculation, and intrigue which often dominated New Comedy and its Roman offspring.