

THE INTRIGUE OF TERENCE'S *HEAUTON TIMORUMENOS*

The intrigues of the slave Syrus in Terence's *Heauton Timorumenos* are complex and occupy a prominent position in the plot. Any reading of the play as a whole must take into account the role which intrigue plays in it. Different views of the play have been put forward, and these have recently been surveyed by E. Lefèvre by way of introduction to his own radical theory¹. The most recent editor of the play, A. J. Brothers, sees it as essentially a play of intrigue and as having been so conceived by the author of its Greek model, Menander². Lefèvre, however, believes that Terence has transformed a Menandrian play in which intrigue had a much more modest role. Lefèvre's first adumbration of his theory in 1973³ provoked a response from W. Steidle, who argued at

1) E. Lefèvre, 'Terenz' und Menanders Heautontimorumenos, München 1994 (Zetemata 91).

2) A. J. Brothers, *Terence: the Self-tormentor*, Warminster 1988, 18–22.

3) E. Lefèvre, 'Der „Heautontimorumenos“ des Terenz', in: id. (ed.), *Die römische Komödie: Plautus und Terenz*, Darmstadt 1973, 443–62 (rev. P. G. McC. Brown, *Gnomon* 48 [1976] 244–9).

length that the structure of the play is “einheitlich und gut menandrisch”⁴. Lefèvre, however, dismisses Steidle’s article as a “Rückschritt”. In this paper I offer a new analysis of the intrigue of the play, since I believe it has been misunderstood, in differing degrees, by both Brothers and Lefèvre, amongst others; like Steidle I shall emphasize its fundamental unity of design. Steidle recognized that the key to understanding is to distinguish between Syrus’ real schemes against Chremes (“die im Ernst . . .”) and his pretended schemes against Menedemus (“die nicht im Ernst verfolgte” [sc. Intrigue])⁵. Whereas the slave’s ‘schemes’ against Menedemus are necessarily spelt out for Chremes’ benefit, he is secretive about his real schemes; and this has led to some confusion.

Syrus’ initial scheme, devised before his first entrance, involves bringing Bacchis to Chremes’ house together with Antiphila, who has been sent for by Clinia (191). His intention is to pass her off instead of Antiphila as Clinia’s girl (332 f.), taking advantage of the fact that Chremes would not know the difference. His purpose is to secure for his young master Clitipho the company of Bacchis, really his mistress (321 f., 328), and somehow to obtain money with which to satisfy her demands (329 f., 584). He has managed to persuade her to come with the promise of 10 *minae* (724). Antiphila is to be kept out of the way with Clitipho’s mother Sostrata; the underlying dramaturgic reason for this is to bring about her recognition as Chremes’ daughter, but a superficial reason is that, unlike Bacchis, she is not a *meretrix*, even if thought to be a non-citizen, and therefore belongs in the women’s quarters⁶. Clinia, fearful of his father’s anger and uncertain what to do (188 f.; cf. 433–5), apparently feels he has no alternative but to go along with Syrus’ plan (359 f. *in eum iam res rediit locum ut sit necessus*). Obviously Syrus must have some story to explain why Antiphila has come with Bacchis, but he does not at first reveal it (335 f. *longumst, Clitipho, si tibi narrem quam ob rem id faciam*). This is the first instance of a technique which is used several times in the play, to avoid repetition, to keep the audience in suspense and to emphasize the cleverness of the scheming slave; Syrus declines to give details of his plan and

4) W. Steidle, Menander bei Terenz, RhM 117 (1974) 247–76, esp. 258, 263–5, 270.

5) Steidle 270. So implicitly S. G. Ashmore, The Comedies of Terence, New York 1910, on 611; contra Brothers 20 f. with n. 16.

6) Steidle 268, who further suggests that in the Greek original a divine prologue-speaker may have inspired Syrus to initiate his fateful scheme.

invests it with an air of mystery⁷. Nor does he give any hint of how he means to obtain the needed money, but it is clear that his intended victim is Chremes. It is normal in New Comedy that money needed by a young man in love is extracted from his father through the machinations of a slave; Syrus would not think of Menedemus as a potential source of money, and neither he nor Clinia knows of Menedemus' new willingness to disburse money for his son (189, 402, 526), because Chremes has deliberately suppressed this fact (199, 436). When Syrus soliloquizes in 513 *intendenda in senemst fallacia*, this can only refer to Chremes⁸. *Senex* without qualification in the mouth of a slave naturally refers to his master (cf. 690, 697, 746); and Syrus' expression of fear in 516 that Chremes may have overheard him is confirmation enough (cf. 530 f.). Syrus' preceding words indicate, however, that he has not in fact yet devised a way of tricking Chremes out of the required 10 *minae*: 512 f. *hac illac circumcursa; inveniendumst tamen argentum*⁹.

Chremes observes early on that Syrus is up to something; he notices Syrus and Dromo whispering together with their young masters (471–4, 514–16). Since, however, he believes that it is Clinia who loves the expensive Bacchis and knows nothing of his own son's affair, he naturally assumes that any intrigue on the part of the slaves is aimed at Clinia's father Menedemus. Having conceived the devious notion that Menedemus should not follow his instinct and lavish money on his restored 'prodigal' son but rather allow himself to be tricked out of it (466–89), Chremes accordingly encourages Syrus to use all his ingenuity to help the dull Dromo (515, 545) to bring this about. The result is a highly amusing scene (512–58) in which Syrus, who is planning to deceive Chremes, is surprised and delighted to be lectured on how it is sometimes the duty of a slave to deceive his master. From now on Syrus is playing a double game, pretending to Chremes that he is scheming against Menedemus but in reality scheming against Chremes himself.

After a diversion in which Clitipho nearly gives the game away by allowing Chremes to see him fondling Bacchis (562–94), Syrus expounds to Chremes a 'scheme' to extract money from Menedemus (596 *fallacia*). He begins with what he claims to be a statement of the facts regarding Antiphila's relationship with Bac-

7) Cf. 611 f., 676–8, 787–90, Steidle 262, K. Büchner, *Das Theater des Terenz*, Heidelberg 1974, 205, 210, Brothers 20 with n. 15.

8) Büchner 199, Lefèvre 75.

9) Brothers on 513.

chis, related 'in order' (598 *ut aliud ex alio incidit*). This is presumably the 'long story' which Syrus declined to reveal to Clitipho in 335 f. How far this is Syrus' fabrication is not entirely clear. It is based on fact; Antiphila's reputed mother was an *anus Corinthia* and she had recently died (96 f., 271 f.). It is at least partly false, however, since Syrus knows that the Corinthian was not in fact Antiphila's mother (270); and Bacchis' alleged shameless request to Clinia for a loan on the security of Antiphila is clearly fiction, based on the pretence that Clinia is Bacchis' lover (519 f., 605 f.). What then of the loan which Bacchis is alleged to have made to the Corinthian and for which Antiphila is said to be the security (603 *arrabonist*)? The legality in Athens of a loan on the security of a person has often been questioned¹⁰, but in the present argument this is a side-issue, since, whether fact or fiction, Syrus' story should not blatantly conflict with Athenian law; it is possible that the law only applied to Athenian citizens, or that Terence has slightly altered the wording of his Greek model in speaking of an *arrabo* (in 791, after her recognition as a citizen, Syrus speaks simply of a debt owed by Antiphila, *argento quod ista debet Bacchidi*). It is conceivable that Bacchis had in fact lent money to the Corinthian¹¹, but it is much more likely that the 'debt' is entirely fictitious¹²; it cannot be accidental that the sum involved exactly coincides with the 10 *minae* Syrus has promised Bacchis. In any case the important point is that Chremes is expected to and does accept all this story as fact, and this crucially affects the development of the plot¹³. Only after this introductory account of what purport to be the facts of the situation does Syrus proceed to offer his 'scheme' to extract money from Menedemus; he proposes to tell Menedemus that Antiphila is a captive from Caria, of rich family, and that her purchase would be a profitable investment (608 f.). To this proposed 'scheme' Chremes objects that Menedemus would not agree to pay for the girl (610 f.); Chremes knows this to be untrue but it accords with the negative conception of Menedemus' attitude which he encourages in Syrus (cf. 535 *difficilem . . . senem*). Syrus replies that this does not matter, implying that he has other strings to his bow (611 f.); once again the

10) Cf. Brothers on 603.

11) W. E. J. Kuiper, *Grieksche origineelen en Latijnsche navolgingen*, Amsterdam 1936, 254 f., and Lefèvre 88 f. suppose that this was the situation in Menander's play, but not Terence's.

12) Steidle 270, Brothers on 599 ff.

13) Steidle 267, Büchner 205.

slave exudes confidence, but mysteriously refuses to give details (612 *iam scies*). Now the dramatist knows that the recognition of Antiphila as Chremes' daughter will in the event wreck this 'scheme' but will present Syrus with new opportunities. At this point, however, the audience is surely intended to understand Syrus as hinting that the 'scheme' to deceive Menedemus is unimportant because he is really scheming to extract money from Chremes, even if he does not yet know how¹⁴ this will then be another example of the irony which constantly characterizes Syrus' exchanges with Chremes.

The discovery of Antiphila as Chremes' daughter completely changes the situation. As Syrus listens to the dialogue between Chremes and Sostrata in 614–67 he expresses mounting alarm at the new development (654 *hem*, 659 *interii*, 663 *perii*). After the others have gone inside, he reflects on the problem now facing him. He fears that he will be in serious trouble unless he can devise some way of preventing Chremes from finding out that Bacchis is Clitipho's mistress (670 *nisi aliquid video ne esse amicam hanc gnati resciscat senex*; cf. 690 *nequid de amica nunc senex*). He correctly anticipates that, if Antiphila is discovered to be a citizen, the way will be open for Clinia to marry her and he will be unwilling to maintain the pretence that Bacchis is his girl. In the following scene, after the recognition has been confirmed, the overjoyed Clinia is intent only on approaching his father and arranging a marriage as soon as possible (691, 699, 713 f.); he is with difficulty persuaded by Syrus temporarily to maintain the pretence and to allow Bacchis and her entourage to move over to Menedemus' house. Syrus further fears that he now has no hope of achieving his ultimate object of obtaining money for Bacchis, but will be lucky if he can escape a beating (671 f.); he laments the cruel fate that has suddenly snatched 'such a haul' from his grasp (673 *crucior bolum tantum mi ereptum tam desubito e faucibus*), but he does not explain precisely how his plans have been thwarted. Obviously the story about the Carian captive cannot be maintained after the recognition of Antiphila, but, as argued above, that belongs to the pretended 'scheme' to obtain money from Menedemus, not Syrus' real (though unspecified) scheme to obtain money from Chremes¹⁵. Thus it appears that the one thing Syrus fears as a direct result of the recognition of Antiphila is that

14) Ashmore on 611.

15) Lefèvre 80 "Der Verkauf war ... nur zum Schein geplant."

Chremes should learn of Clitipho's affair with Bacchis, the thing he explicitly mentions in 670; his hopes of obtaining money, by whatever means, depend on maintaining the deception of Chremes.

Syrus continues his soliloquy by exhorting himself to think up a new plan to meet the new situation (674 f.). After rejecting three unspecified ideas (676 f.), he finally thinks of one with which he is more than satisfied (677 *euge habeo optumam*) and by which he is confident of capturing the elusive money (678); what this plan is emerges in the following scene. Clinia has to be persuaded, in the interests of his friend, to maintain the pretence that Bacchis is his girl, not to leave her in Chremes' house but to take her with him to his father's (695–8). To Clinia's inquiry as to what he is to say to his father Syrus replies that he should tell him the entire truth (709–12). The brilliant feature of Syrus' new scheme, as he himself proudly boasts, is to deceive by telling the truth (709–11). Chremes will not believe it when Menedemus tells him the truth, because he will take it as a *fallacia* concocted to extract money from Menedemus; Menedemus will be persuaded, at least temporarily, that Chremes is right and thus both will be deceived (711 *vera dicendo ut eos ambos fallam*). If the immediate object of transferring Bacchis to Menedemus' house is to maintain the deception of Chremes, Syrus' ultimate object is still to obtain money for Clitipho and Bacchis, as he tells Clinia in 717 and assures Bacchis in 737 f. and 740 f., without giving any details; and his intended victim is still Chremes, as he makes clear in 746 f., where he predicts that the removal of Bacchis and her entourage, apparently a relief, will in fact cost Chremes dearly¹⁶.

On meeting Chremes again Syrus proceeds to put his plan into effect. He presents Clinia's statement that Bacchis is Clitipho's girl and request that he should himself marry Antiphila as all a *fallacia* designed to obtain from Menedemus money for Bacchis. Since Chremes has been urging Syrus to devise a scheme against Menedemus, he readily accepts this as a new scheme and thus, as Syrus predicted in 709–12, takes to be fiction what is really fact. Chremes raises an objection to Syrus' second 'scheme' to deceive Menedemus, as he had done to the first (610 f.): as Clinia had anticipated, he has no intention of agreeing to the marriage of his newly discovered daughter to Clinia, whom he believes to be attached to Bacchis, and he is unwilling even to co-operate with

16) Lefèvre 109 n.101 against Brothers on 747.

the new 'scheme' by pretending to agree (779–85). Syrus expresses mild regret but accepts Chremes' decision and agrees to think up something else (788–90)¹⁷. He now suddenly changes tack and reverts to the supposedly factual account with which he had prefaced his first 'scheme' against Menedemus, the story of the money owed Bacchis by Antiphila. Although abrupt, his new proposal follows naturally enough from Chremes' rejection of the second 'scheme'; if Bacchis is not immediately to receive money by the deception of Menedemus, it is only reasonable that Chremes should make himself responsible for the repayment of a supposedly genuine debt owed to Bacchis by his newly discovered daughter. Some have criticized the gullibility with which Chremes agrees without question to Syrus' suggestion and thus allows the wily slave to achieve his aim¹⁸. Perhaps by some standards Chremes is implausibly gullible, but this is a comedy, not real life. One psychological factor which can perhaps be seen as contributing to Chremes' deception is a certain sense of guilt with regard to the daughter he had rejected in infancy; he speaks of the 10 *minae* he pays on her behalf as in lieu of what it would have cost him to rear her (835 f. *minas ... decem ... quas hortamentis esse nunc duco datas*). Moreover Syrus' flattery of him as one who would not use the letter of the law to escape a moral obligation to pay his daughter's debts would have its effect (792–8)¹⁹. Above all, however, we should observe the care with which the dramatist has depicted Chremes as caught off guard. Thanks to Syrus' ingenuity, Chremes still has no inkling of his son's affair with Bacchis; and his preoccupation with 'schemes' to deceive Menedemus makes it more plausible that he should fail to recognize that Syrus is really scheming against him. It also provides excellent comedy that "Chremes, in aiding, as he imagines, the deception of Menedemus, is himself the real dupe"²⁰.

The final touch in Syrus' deception of Chremes is to persuade him to give the money to Clitipho so that he can personally give it to Bacchis; Chremes believes he is furthering a 'scheme' against Menedemus, adding verisimilitude to a *fallacia* (799–802), whereas he is in fact furthering Syrus' scheme against himself. The irony of

17) Brothers' translation of 787 f. *istuc, Chreme, aequi bonique facio*, "I regard your stand as fair and right", gives good sense, flattering Chremes; but, as Brothers' note indicates, this idiomatic expression merely denotes acquiescence.

18) Kuiper 254, Lefèvre 78 f.

19) Steidle 266.

20) Ashmore on IV 1.

the situation is expressed in Syrus' ambiguous comment, 803 *et simul conficiam facilius ego quod volo*. Pace Lefèvre 128, this provides a direct link between the 'scheme' against Menedemus and Syrus' real scheme against Chremes. The 'scheme' against Menedemus is the essential background which makes possible the real scheme against Chremes. In hiding the true situation from Chremes under the guise of fiction it achieves its purpose. It is wrong to describe it as a separate, real scheme to obtain money from Menedemus which "founders on the rock of Chremes' refusal to co-operate" and has to be replaced by a new scheme²¹. Rather, Syrus' real scheme against Chremes is cunningly embedded in the 'scheme' against Menedemus; the whole forms a single complex scheme, conceived in 677, of which the key feature is *vera dicendo fallere* (711).

It will be clear by now that the intrigue of the *Heauton Timorumenos*, for all its complexity, shows a unity of design that argues strongly for a single author, and that was surely Menander, creator of the original plot. Further confirmation is provided by the crucial role of the *vera dicendo fallere* motif. In two other Menandrian plays the same or a similar motif occurs. In *Bacch.* 692–912 Chrysalus' second scheme against Nicobulus is based on a letter which he gets Mnesilochus to write informing Nicobulus of his true intentions but then persuades Nicobulus to regard as Mnesilochus' fabrication²². In *And.* 459–513 the excessively suspicious Simo takes the signs that Glycerium has given birth to a baby to be a *fallacia* of Davos; Davos then exploits Simo's misunderstanding for his own ends (507 *referetur mox huc puer ante ostium*; cf. 721 ff., 834 ff.)²³. There seems no reason to doubt that Menander conceived his *Heauton Timorumenos* as primarily a play of intrigue, of which the principal character was not Menedemus but Chremes²⁴; the anagnorisis strand is secondary, which explains

21) Brothers on 779; cf. J. H. Gray, *Terenti Heauton Timorumenos*, Cambridge 1895, on 790. Steidle 265 suggests that Syrus hoped to obtain money from Chremes as father of the bride, but the equanimity with which he accepts Chremes' refusal to co-operate suggests that he never expected him to (cf. Clinia's prediction in 714).

22) Cf. A. Primmer, *Handlungsgliederung in Nea und Palliata*, SAWW 441 (1984) 51 f. on "Lügen mittels Wahrheit", *Bacch.* 697–700 *quem si orem ut mihi nil credat, id non ausit credere*, etc. E. W. Handley, *Menander and Plautus: a study in comparison*, London 1968, 15 f.

23) Büchner 215 also compares 829, where Clitipho is coached by Syrus in a role he does not understand, with the situation in *And.* 740 ff.

24) Steidle 254 n. 36, 263. On Chremes' character see E. Fantham, *Heauton*

why it occurs unusually early in the play²⁵. That is not to say that Terence did not make changes to his Greek model; but a drastic transformation of the basic plot such as Lefèvre supposes is highly improbable.

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timorumenos and *Adelphoe*. A study of fatherhood in Terence and Menander, *Latomus* 30 (1971) 979–83.

25) A. Dieterle, *Die Strukturelemente der Intrige in der griechisch-römischen Komödie*, Amsterdam 1980 (*Heuremata* 6), 28 n. 143, Büchner 209.