1. Initial considerations

When one first considers any dramatic text with a performance in mind, certain rather obvious questions must be confronted and answered. It is useful, to say the least, to have some notion of the particular dramatic genre to which the text belongs. Is it a tragedy, a tragicomedy or farce? This may seem a naively simple statement to make. However, each individual genre arouses certain expectations in the minds of audience, performer and director. The director must be at least aware of these expectations, when he actively confronts the text. It may well be that his directional approach will be in broad agreement with these expectations. Not many people would direct *Hamlet* as a farce - intentionally, I mean. On the other hand, in terms of the blow by blow consecutive detail of a production, the director may wish to contradict those expectations for specific dramatic effects.

Accordingly, the director needs working definitions of the major dramatic categories, either explicit definitions - or intuitive. In terms, however, of communicating his ideas about a play to his production team and, through them to an audience, intuition is less than useful, being notoriously hard to verbalise and so communicate. The director should have some clear and communicable idea of the nature and function of, say, comedy, therefore, by reference to which he can categorise usefully an individual text and identify its individual nature and function. For example, with reference to comedy and a comedy, such as the *Self-Tormentor* of Terence, it is essential to have some idea whether one wishes simply to delight, or also to instruct - or, indeed, both. This basic idea will subsequently colour every individual facet of the proposed production. Only by consistent reference to such a policy, consciously arrived at and clearly communicated to the team, can any production achieve the necessary and satisfying unity of purpose which emerges from the harmonious exploitation of any drama's remarkably divergent elements - plot, character, diction, theme, spectacle and so on. In short, the director should ideally be a theoretician and communicator, as well as practical man of the theatre, wet-nurse to performers...

It is equally essential to know how to relate the chosen text and the author in question to the ongoing cavalcade of dramatic literature. While it is certain that a text must be understood on its own terms, in terms of its own inner unity and
diversity of plot, theme and character, it is also necessary to know how Terence, for example, relates to Plautus, to Menander and to the later western comic tradition, upon which his influence is so often and so rightly said to have been immense. For certain members of an audience - and hopefully, but not necessarily, the critic - will enjoy the performance more deeply and understand it more clearly, if an intelligent and intelligible connection is made with the comic tradition, even if the connection is the connection made by innovation or, possibly, the rejection of tradition. This necessary intelligibility of identity and purpose relates, of course, both to the text, as a literary and historical object, and to the manner of presentation in relation to current and past philosophies of direction.

Some thought will also have to be given, when dealing with an ancient text, to the question of how the ancient audience's expectations of comedy will have been different from those of a modern audience. Dover suggests, for example, with more than a hint of cultural and intellectual snobbery, that, "To judge from the extant citations, the comic poets of the fifth century were unanimous in their adoption of what seems to their modern readers", that is, to men like Dover, "a reactionary and philistine persona, and in this respect they resemble modern music-hall comedians rather than modern writers of comedies". Whether this statement is true or false or, if true, whether the comment applies equally to Rome in the second century, B.C. is a matter for debate. What is true and is, in fact, implied by Dover's patronising tone is that live theatre, and certainly this is true to a large extent in New Zealand, is no longer part of the popular culture. This may mean that Terence's more subtle comedy would work well in the bourgeois environment of, for example, the professional theatre in Christchurch, better, say, than the more robust style of Plautus. Having said that, however, the modern audience in Christchurch, bourgeois or not, has recently responded best to the questionable subtlety and charm of Footrot Flats. That being a matter of record, maybe Terence's greater sophistication and subtlety, and his attempts to insert into comedy a certain moral seriousness, the burden of which the genre, as it then existed and as it exists here, in the here and now, was and is unable to sustain, would condemn the Self-Tormentor to a rather cool reception. As Sander M. Goldberg puts it "Terence's addition of a certain seriousness to the Roman tradition would come only at the expense of its most fundamental appeal." Yes, but appeal to whom?

All such considerations should be in the mind of the director, as he or she grapples with the problems and details of presentation; even before that, when the decision is made as to whether an individual text is worth the energy that will need to be expended.

I suggested earlier that the text must also be interpreted, in whole - and in part also, on its own terms; but what of its place within the development of the actual

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playwright's skills, his changing concerns? What characteristics does the Self-Tormentor share with Terence's other plays, how does it relate to those of Plautus? For such information, as, for example, that the Self-Tormentor and the Brothers share an intelligent interest in the relationship between fathers and sons, will suggest to the director what aspects of the drama should with profit receive special emphasis. The director must be, therefore, ideally a theoretician of dramatic genre, theatre and literary historian, also literary critic; his role combines all three of these skills, along with a knowledge of acting theory and performance skills, and at least a nodding acquaintance with design - in terms of set, costume, lighting, properties and sound. It is certain that a text must have considerable quality, if it deserves such attention.

The next question is simple - could Terence's text of the Self-Tormentor ever be considered worthy now of such commitment, be considered likely even to "succeed" in a modern performance?

2. Towards a Definition of Comedy

It is a commonplace among the drama teacher's repertoire of tutorial gambits that comedy is much harder to discuss and, indeed, successfully perform than tragedy. By nature comedy seems more disparate, less consistent, more flirtatious than its tragic elder sister. Also the theoretician of tragedy still owes a considerable debt to Aristotle and the Poetics - if all Else fails. Despite Umberto Eco, we don't know a great deal about what Aristotle said on the subject of comedy, although some, notably Elder Olsen² have attempted a reconstruction of Aristotle's views on comedy, working by analogy from his discussion of tragedy. Others such as W.D. Howarth³ are not optimistic about the prospects of achieving an all embracing theory of the comic and of comic drama. Howarth works towards a minimalist definition, contenting himself with indicating the properties and recurrent accidents of comic drama. My intention, following the lead of Howarth, Elder and others, is to essay a working description of comedy in terms of plot, themes, character, function and so on, so that the Self-Tormentor can be considered in the light of such a description or working definition.

First of all let us remove from consideration and contention the dramas of Aristophanes and his spiritual successors, not that there were many of those, until relatively recent times. I mean, for example, Jarry in France and Dario Fo in Italy. I would prefer to class the work of such as these as political farce or satire, animated cartoons presented on the stage. The mainstream of the European comic tradition in drama begins, to all intents and purposes, with Menander and continues with Plautus and Terence in Rome, Molière and Beaumarchais in France, even

³ W.D. Howarth, Comic Drama: European Heritage (New York, 1978)
Scribe and Sardou, to Oscar Wilde and, finally, Chekhov. Genres blend and definitions break down somewhat in the twentieth century, where tragicomedy becomes the norm, as stressed by Dürrenmatt, reflecting the tragic-comical nature of the century itself.

We can, in fact, start with the notion of "reflection" and Cicero's statement that comedy is a mirror of life, a *speculum vitae*. Comedy is an imitation, or reflection, on stage of an action or actions of individuals like (or worse than) ourselves, involved in civic and/or private concerns (according to Donatus), concerns which involve the individual's quest for money or sex/love or both, or for one as the means to the other. Despite various complications and difficulties a happy outcome is almost inevitably achieved, to the satisfied relief of the audience; this resolution is achieved either through trickery, an unexpected *anagnorisis*, or both - one leading, but not necessarily so, to the other. In general, all the events in a comedy should be possible, if not likely, the major improbability being, as Duckworth puts it, "statistical". Also, the laughter and relief is more pleasurable, if the happy resolution coincides, in point of time, with the *anagnorisis* - of, say, the long-lost child. As Scott Cutler Shershow puts it "The *nodus erroris*, the knot of complication, is unfastened and, usually, a different sort of knot is tied for at least two of the younger characters."

Clearly, the Self-Tormentor, with its combination of star-crossed lovers, Clinia and Antiphila, its scheming slave, Syrus, its emphasis upon money and, of course, curmudgeonly old men, its discovery of the long-lost daughter and its happy ending, fits this particular playbill rather well.

3. **The Function of Comedy**

What then is the aim and function of this bourgeois comedy of manners with its habitual happy ending? *Aut prodesse aut delectaret*? Or both? First things first: it is self-evident that all comedies seek to give delight. As Howarth says, "Any comedy, even one whose 'comic' content is minimal, should take us out of ourselves, entertain us and delight us; and, whether we laugh immoderately or not at all, we may well smile with anticipation as we identify with the sympathetic characters, with relief as we applaud the discomfiture of their opponents, or with relaxed well-being as we enjoy the happy ending." However, some comedies do seek also to instruct. I would, in fact, take issue with Howarth's term "sympathetic" in the context of a discussion of character in comedy and the didactic comic purpose. It is *not* the intention of comedy to produce

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6 Howarth, 17.
characters with whom we sympathise, or for whom we have or can develop empathy. Rather, the eye of comedy is objective, we laugh with the author at the characters. It is through this objective eye that the audience is induced to observe, mock, learn and inwardly digest. We laugh at, feel superior to - and these are rational not emotional, responses. Indeed, the authors of comedy standardly break the dramatic conventions, by commenting upon them, both to amuse and also to obviate any chance of the audience becoming involved with the actors on an emotional level. The audience is not allowed to forget that they are watching actors in performance.

Terence does not, of course, exploit the comic or tragic conventions for the purposes of comic alienation as boldly as does Plautus with, for example, his comment put into the mouth of Tranio in *Mostellaria*, "Tell you what - if you happen to know the comic writers, Diphilus or Philemon, you might give them the story of how your slave put it across you; you'd be giving the finest plot of cross-purposes ever seen on the stage". However, the whole of the prologue of the *Self-Tormentor* could or should be considered as an extrinsic alienation device, especially with its insistence that the elderly L. Ambivius Turpio isn't up to the *servus callidus et currens* any more - an ironical apology, mock apology, for Terence's more gentle style.

In the body of the play itself, at vv. 213-229, Clitipho's melancholic soliloquy exerts a subtle form of alienation. The *adulescens* claims that he will never be an *iratus senex* himself, while, of course, it is a "given" of comedy that young men must grow into *irati senes* - if only to provide material for future comedies. It is also true that ultimately Clinia and Antiphila will metamorphose into another Chremes and Sostrata; yet they will marry despite the forbidding and foreboding evidence before them. It is, moreover, in this subtle and ironical form of alienation, replete with implicit comment or sub-text, that Terence most excels, especially, in the *Self-Tormentor* in the gradual delineation of Chremes.

Consider Menedemus' thematically important little speech at vv. 502-507: Menedemus declares that it always seems to be the case that others, that is, in this instance, Chremes, are wiser and more perspicacious than oneself in dealing with and understanding one's affairs. By now the audience already know of Clitipho's exploits with Bacchis and of Clinia's honourable devotion to Antiphila. Accordingly, they are invited to smile with indulgence upon Menedemus' naivety, and to laugh with satisfaction at the prospect of the smug Chremes' inevitable undoing.

Terence again exploits a given of comedy to good effect in vv. 514ff. Here Chremes is inordinately pleased that his slave, Syrus, is smarter than Clinia's man.

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He acknowledges the role of the *servus callidus* in facilitating affairs of the heart. Simultaneously, but mistakenly, as things turn out, Chremes congratulates himself on being too sharp to be taken in by a slave. This is the implication. The alienation effect comes into play once more when Chremes, at vv. 524ff., suggests that Clinia's slave is actually at fault for not hoodwinking Menedemus. One should note too Syrus' ironically self-deprecatory description of himself as *stultus* (stupid), precisely when he is being his most Machiavellian.

"Much has been made", writes Elder Olsen, "of Brecht's *Verfremdungsaffect*, or alienation effect, but it is merely a modified form of comic alienation. The point is that the extreme comic is produced by making the observer so indifferent to the fortunes of the persons that he is observing that he can concentrate on the absurdities of action and fortune as such, without emotional commitment"8, and so, I would suggest, be instructed, learn.

Yes, but learn about what? Put quite simply, the audience will learn, or be expected to learn, how to avoid the banana skins of life. Put more seriously, we as audience are expected to learn about ethics, those traditionally accepted norms of behaviour, occasionally rationalised by philosophers, according to the dictates of which our family lives and various other social relationships are supposed to be conducted. These plays, of New and Roman comedy, do give, within limits, a reasonably accurate reflection of the comedy of life. As Henri Bergson put it in 1900, "in fact, there are scenes in real life so closely bordering on high-class comedy that the stage might adapt them without changing a single word."9 The reverse is also true.

Accordingly, the plays are capable of being used to investigate the relationships which exist between the generations, between the sexes and the different social strata. By so doing the plays can demonstrate the pitfalls common to badly managed relationships, badly managed in terms of the traditionally accepted norms of behaviour. Further, the more adventurous playwright, such as Terence or Chekhov, Shaw or Wilde, may demonstrate actual shortcomings in those traditional beliefs, in, what was called by Marxist critic Mikhail Bakhtin, "the people's unofficial truth". This was, I believe, most certainly Terence's aim, to amuse and instruct.

That striking phrase, "the people's unofficial truth" is worth some comment. It bears on the question of whether comedy is, like superannuation, "portable", from one period of history to another. The obvious answer is "yes", because we still do enjoy performances of Shakespeare, of Molière or Wilde, if only, in part, because

8 Olsen, 78.
we are expected to. However, how much do we lose, simply because comedy, even more than tragedy, is by nature topical in its reference, not only in terms of political events, but more insidiously (and so more importantly) in terms of "the people's unofficial truth'? Are some comedies more "portable" than others? What of the Self-Tormentor?

It is clearly recognised that tragedy both in its form and content is supportive of the political and social status quo. So also comedy, far from being a disturbing influence, itself reinforces traditional moral values. Thus Albert Cook in The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean:

"Comedy, violating the stage conventions, says, 'Ah, but this is only a play; these characters are abnormal; or if the license of their abnormality is our secret desire and these sins our foibles, they are to be ritually expelled by our social laughter...' Basically comedy is approval not disapproval, of present society, it is conservative not liberal."

Dealing for a moment in specifics, we cannot really understand Menedemus' guilt, or the reason why a Roman audience would take delight in Chremes' undoing in the Self-Tormentor, without a clear grasp of Roman attitudes to education and filial piety. It may be that Menedemus' harshness towards Clinia was excessive, but it was an excess of a proper attitude towards education and Clinia is, by Roman standards, a more proper young man than Chremes' son Clitipho, whose moral education was apparently neglected, because of his father's meddlesome interest in the affairs of others, of people outside his family. The dual result has been that Clitipho is involved with the mercenary professional, Bacchis, Clinia with Antiphila, a model of maidenly virtue.

In brief, the moral platform of comedy tends to the conservative; it relates closely to specifics of time and place. Of some plays this is more true than others. They are potentially less "portable", less capable of being successfully received by a modern audience, let alone an antipodean one.

4. Terence in the Context of Comedy

Certainly the Self-Tormentor is a comedy of manners, which presents for our entertainment and edification a humorous view of family life, recognisable to us as such and to which we can in some degree respond. It deals with bourgeois concerns - money and marriage, communication between the generations and so with education, with friendship, with self-knowledge and self-deception. The problems which enmesh the characters in the play arise from either a deviation from the then accepted standards of polite society, or from an inhumane and too strict adherence to those traditional moral standards. The question of how precisely relevant and communicable these problems as framed are to us, in the here and now must await exploration of the text as a blueprint for dramatic performance.
However, it can be said that Terence's comedies are less directly topical than some. As Goldberg puts it:

"...the plays seem to lack a sense of period. Terence makes no reference to living people, Greek or Roman. His language is not rich in the vocabulary of Roman law, nor does he play on the political significance latent in such words as gloria and virtus..."\(^\text{10}\)

This fact, along with other more positive attributes, may make the plays of Terence more rather than less accessible, less esoteric rather than more.

We can now state categorically what was never actually in doubt. Terence is a writer of comedy. His aims are to amuse, to instruct and, presumably, to make a living.

What, then, are his particular strengths and weaknesses, the correct assessment of which is so central to successful presentation? And, as we attempt to answer this question, it is essential to bear in mind Goldberg's warning that, "We must measure the plays against his own goals, limiting our reference to reconstructed Greek standards", with which I would agree, "or", he goes on, "to a modern sense of dramatic excellence", with which, of course, in the context of the present discussion, I cannot afford to agree. I would add too that comparisons with Plautus are necessary and fruitful.

It is a commonplace of Terentian criticism that Terence is more subtle than Plautus, especially in his handling of character, that his relating of character to plot is more intricate with the result that, on the one hand, important themes emerge with a skilfully concealed art, but, on the other hand, Terence lacks the vis comica of his great predecessor. Walter E. Forehand in his relatively recent book, entitled simple Terence, reminds us that this was the result of conscious policy on Terence's part, "He bemoans the current practice calling for considerable wild action on the stage and alerts the audience that the upcoming play will rely heavily on purity of dialogue",\(^\text{11}\) this in the prologue, of course. Comment is made in Forehand's book and elsewhere that Terence plays down extraneous elements, does not expand comic "routines" at the expense of plot. As in most commonplaces there are elements of truth here, especially regarding the evocation of theme through the skilled interplay between character and plot. Forehand again:

"Dryden is right. The plots of New Comedy are too predictable and the dramatic roles too uniform to be interesting in themselves. The appeal of

\(^{10}\)q.v. Goldberg, 12.  
\(^{11}\)Walter E. Forehand Terence, (Boston, 1985) 18.
a Menandrian play comes instead from the interplay of the two, as the dramatist uses the twists of the plot to challenge his characters in unexpected ways and forces them to grow before our eyes."

For our purposes we must change Menandrian to Terentian, and also consider how the twists of the plot consistently expose the true nature of Chremes.

However, as Goldberg points out, neither should we think of Terence merely as the prototypical creator, along with his model Menander, of the well-made play. That is the type of crafted bourgeois drama brought to a peak of popularity in nineteenth century France by Scribe and Sardou; the latter of which pair's work earned the nickname "Sardoodledum" from George Bernard Shaw. So that, while it may be true that, "By avoiding fantasy and exaggeration, Terence freed himself to present characters rather than caricatures and to develop rather than obscure the genuine problems of family relationships and social obligations", (Goldberg) and true that the plays are "well organised", (Goldberg on the Phormio), nevertheless they "lack the complexity and exoticism that Scribe and his successors valued so highly", (Goldberg again). "...To call it well-made is thus inexact and unhelpful". The intrigue, then, is not Terence's major concern in the Self-Tormentor.

In fact, there is a certain arbitrariness in the handling of Syrus' machinations in the earlier part of Self-Tormentor. "The plot of the Heautontimoroumenos", as Forehand puts it, "is certainly not among the simpler story lines of Roman comedy". I do not believe that the audience was intended to be able to follow the convolutions and intrigue. The rather inconsequential and truncated handling of Syrus' machinations in vv. 311-380 should be seen to be the result of Terence's realisation of the need to maintain, by means of the slave's antics, the moment by moment momentum of a plot which was primarily designed to expose Chremes for what he is, by confronting him with a series of situations dedicated to that end. Since complexity of plotting in terms of servile trickery is not of central importance in the Self-Tormentor, it is developed no further than is strictly necessary to reveal the actual nature of Chremes, along with those matters of thematic importance the exposure of which is contingent upon that revelation. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a much more satisfactory scene of servile intrigue is that between Syrus and Chremes in vv. 512-561. This passage of arms sets up the eventual discomfiture of Chremes and, as mentioned, exploits the effects of a subtle comic alienation, variously contrived. Similarly, the settling of Clitipho's love life, in a matter of half a page of rather unlikely dialogue after the major

13 Forehand, 90.
14 Forehand, 56.
denouement, shows that the romantic element is of little concern to Terence. The inessential is subordinated to the essential.

A perfect parallel in Shakespearian comedy is the setting up and resolution of intrigue in the most arbitrary fashion imaginable in As You Like It, simply because Shakespeare concentrates his energies on the essential matter of the play, the different types of love demonstrated by Orlando, Rosalind, Celia, Oliver and the rest.

Chremes, then, is the most interesting figure in the play. We learn about him in detail as he interacts with various other characters - Menedemus, his own son Clitipho and, not least, his wife Sostrata. That Chremes and Menedemus are more vital to the life of the play than their love-sick sons has long been recognised. For example, E. Fantham, "The characters of the fathers ... are far more complex and clearly the real focus of interest for playwright and audience."15

Similarly, Goldberg:

"The character of each old man is carefully drawn. Menedemus, though well-off, works hard and keeps to himself. He barely knows his neighbour Chremes, speaks simply ... Chremes is perplexed by such unsociability. His long-winded opening speech reveals the gossip's observant eye and insatiable curiosity. Like most busybodies, he is also a slick talker."16

The question, then, is how to deal with the role of Chremes in particular, so that what Forehand recognises as the two major themes "the relationship between father and son ... and self-knowledge versus self-ignorance"17 can emerge. As to dealing with Chremes on stage, Forehand passes the buck squarely to the director:

"The solution to the problem of Chremes' characterisation may lie ultimately in the hands of the director, who must either create in us enough sympathy for Chremes to be viewed kindly in the face of the play's irony, or bring his character methodically to his final, ironic unveiling."18

I have already given some indications of how I would approach the character of Chremes. Without having directed the play I would still say that the

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16 q.v. Goldberg 137.
17 q.v. Forehand 66.
18 q.v. Forehand 66.
unsympathetic approach to Chremes is more likely to succeed. Such an approach also seems to be in tune with Terence's attempts to raise comic drama to a new level of seriousness and sophistication. The themes identified by Forchand would also emerge better if the audience were encouraged to take an objective or alienated view of the meddlesome Chremes.

5. **Approaching the exposition.**

Is Chremes intended to appear initially as a meddling busybody or as an humanitarian? The play will prove more interesting from any point of view, and especially in performance, if the depiction of Chremes' shallowness, hypocrispy and actual lack of humanity emerges gradually through the play. The later scenes with Clitipho and Sostrata ultimately show him up to be shallow, hypocritical and so on. However, in the opening scene with Menedemus enough is done by Terence to ensure that our attitude to Chremes is at the least ambivalent. It will be more satisfying if the revelations about Chremes do not come as a complete surprise. In the same way the presentation of Menedemus as unsociable and curmudgeonly is soon tempered with understanding. For we realise, little by little, as Chremes' personality is revealed in parallel, that Menedemus now has a genuine humanity and humility, born out of suffering - *pathei mathos*.

How then are the two old men, the *senes*, to be presented by the actors, working with the director, in the crucial first scene? And crucial it is because it quite simply colours the expectations of the audience for the remainder of the play. The first appearance of Clinia and Clitipho at vv. 175ff. will also be of critical importance for reasons indicated earlier. The audience must be made to realise that they have both been shaped by paternal guidance, or lack of it.

In approaching the play's opening the first essential is to visualise the set and how it should be lit. Are we going for a naturalistic set, or one that is more stylised - a recreation, maybe, of the Roman stage in terms of size and all-important proportions? How do the old men look in terms both of physique and of costume? What does the body language of each tell us about the individuals before even a single word is spoken? What are their positions on stage relative to each other and the audience, in other words what are the spatial dynamics? Presumably Menedemus is "discovered". Is Chremes also on stage or does he enter? Which of these latter alternatives is the most useful and why? What properties are required? Does the audience realise the weight, for example, of Menedemus' grubber before Chremes takes it off him, or not until then? All these questions and a multitude of others must be answered in or before the first rehearsals, since each one - and others, sound effects, for example (although one wouldn't want a Stanislavski corncrake) - each one of these diverse elements will speak tellingly to an audience before any actual words are uttered. These elements will only be satisfactorily realised, if the basis of a coherent plan for the interpretation of the play and the realisation of the different characters exists in the director's mind. Nothing,
however, must be set in concrete in the first instance. The input of individual
performers and their varying abilities will inevitably modify direction.

Without an actual empty space in mind it's difficult to address these problems. However, it is possible to analyse the actual words of, for example, Chremes' opening speech.

6. **The opening speech of Chremes**

(A) **Its Structure**

(i) vv. 53-60 - an apparently embarrassed and halting approach by Chremes to Menedemus, broken by a parenthesis (v. 54).

(ii) vv. 61-66 - an outburst, possibly tinged with indignation, because Menedemus has either made no response or, through body language, a mute but clearly negative response.

(iii) vv. 67-74 - Chremes forces himself upon Menedemus' attention, possibly by physically intruding between Menedemus and his work.

The director and actor must be together to structure the speech so that the whole makes a total sense. Each part, from the pace and inflection, line by line, down to the volume and emotive inflection of individual words, must contribute to the total effect, this is combination with gesture, facial expression, eye contact and physical and psychical responses between the performers, if we assume masks are not to be used.

(B) **Approaches to delivery**

In approaching the Latin text one has to work at first around the concessive clause, the parenthesis (v. 54) and the delayed main verb to achieve an effect of embarrassment and hesitation. The latter could be accomplished by the actor playing Chremes making it clear, demonstrating to the audience, by a shift of demeanour, demonstrating the basic "gest", in the Brechtian sense, that his attitude to Menedemus is not one of genuine altruism.

However one deals with the physical side of performance, the first line should be hesitant. The explanatory parenthesis - in effect mainly for the benefit of the audience - should be delivered swiftly. Then Chremes must make a point of searching out such key words as *virtus* and *vicinitas*; a certain self-satisfaction would be manifested in the achievement of an effective alliteration. There follows
a plunge towards the conclusion of the sentence with emphasis upon *audacter* ("boldly"), delivered with simulated diffidence. There should be warmth in the enunciation of the comfortable *familiariter*, also on the key *amicitiae* in the previous line. The delivery speeds up on the rhetorical flourish of the repeated *praeter* (vv. 59f.); there follows a lengthy pause which shifts from self-satisfaction on Chremes' part at the eloquence of his appeal, to a state of frustration and possible embarrassment at its being almost totally ignored. The echoing silence is filled only by the sound of Menedemus' grubber thumping into the ground.

The silence provokes an outburst of short sentences, and even an oath, from Chremes, indicative of his lack of patience, symptomatic of a man used to getting his own way. First, then, we have an indignant expostulation and question; secondly (with more vital information for the audience) comment on Menedemus' age, the quality of his land, the number of his slaves.

The continuing lack of response provokes another tactic. Chremes stresses that he is a witness to Menedemus' tormenting of self. A telling contrast is implied between Chremes' comfortable *domum* and Menedemus' self-imposed torment, although the audience soon realise that Chremes' domestic setup is far from ideal. This comes across most clearly for a modern audience in the scene with his wife Sostrata, when the rediscovery of the long-lost daughter, Antiphila is announced to Chremes. I assume that the fact of exposure, as a mechanism of plot, would not have had any real emotional impact upon the sensibilities of the ancient audience, although Oedipus was miffed that his parents were willing to abandon him on Cithaeron. In a modern production of the *Self-Tormentor*, however, a director would be able to exploit the inevitable revulsion at the very thought of exposure, so that Chremes' initial concern for Menedemus would ultimately ring hollow, because of his perceived harshness to his own family.

The three infinitives in v. 69 deserve emphasis; there is a hint of kindly remonstration in v. 70. Then, I would suggest, a half pause; Chremes attempts irony on the predicative dative *voluptati*. Impatience finally must issue in physical intervention. This could be as little as a hand on a shoulder, on the handle of the grubber, or the intervention of Chremes' body between Menedemus and his work.

This response of Menedemus is curt to the point of rudeness, especially as it answers Chremes' speech of twenty two lines:

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ME. Chremes, tantumne ab re tuast oti tibi
aliena ut curas ea quae nil ad te attinent?19
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19 *Me.* Chremes, have you so much leisure from your own affairs, that you pay attention to the affairs of others that have nothing to do with you?
Although the audience could/should have been induced to have reservations about Chremes' motives, the abruptness of this couplet, coupled with intelligent use of body language, gesture and tone of voice, would swing their favour towards Chremes. However that may be, Menedemus' charge is that Chremes is afflicted with *polyupragmosyne*. This charge will be stored in the audience's subconscious as the play develops. Consciousness of the charge will resurface when Chremes busies himself with the affaires of his other neighbours.

Menedemus' curt response is pointed up in its opening line by a neat chiasmus. There is also a bitter use of alliteration and assonance. In v. 76 the contrast between *aliena* and *ad te* is emphasised as they pivot around the demonstrative/relative *ea quae*.

But, am I expecting to perform this play in Latin today? Hardly, although I did direct the *Heckyra* of Terence in Latin in Christchurch some twenty years ago. Well, then, what can we do with a readily available English text of the *Self-Tormentor*?

In fact, what is clear from even a relatively cursory comparison of the Latin text, with, for example, Betty Radice's Penguin version, is that so much of Terence's reputation, deserved as it is, rests upon the elegance, clarity and dramatic suppleness of his Latin verse. This is not to say that his subject matter is uninteresting, rather that it is saved from any danger of banality by the excellence of the language into which it has been cast.

Examining Radice's text we immediately ignore all her stage directions. We realise also that the English syntax, straightforward as it is, does not in itself evoke the embarrassment, real or simulated, of Chremes. Accordingly, compensation must be made through hesitancy of delivery, pauses, facial expressions and all the "tricks" of acting method, whether Stanislavski's Brecht's or awful English "ham", of which I hope I have been cured. Let's see:

CHREMES I know it's not long since we became acquainted, in fact it all started with your buying the farm next to mine, and this is the first time we've really had much to do with each other .... All the same, there's something about you - or maybe it's the fact that we're neighbours, which I always think is the next best thing to being friends - which makes me feel that I ought to speak out. ... To be quite frank, your behaviour doesn't seem to me to be right for a man of your age and circumstances.

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20 *Terence, Phormio and Other Plays* tr. Radice (Harmondsworth, 1967).
In short, whereas the language of the original sustains the interest, through a happy blend of form and content, the English version depends almost entirely on content and the form, I would argue, throughout the play is incapable of sustaining audience interest. In production the danger would lie in the direction of ruining the subtlety of Terence through over-acting to compensate for an apparent banality. Plautus' more muscular and active plays respond well to such treatment, not, I suspect, those of Terence. I could imagine Terence objecting to a modern director's attempts to enliven his text in the same manner that Chekhov always objected to the naturealistic exuberance of Stanislavski's direction of *The Seagull* or *The Cherry Orchard*.

*The Cherry Orchard* is, in fact, one of the most subtly amusing and moving comedies of modern times. It has a certain amount in common with the *Self-Tormentor*. However, despite Chekhov's own reservations (he couldn't conceive of it surviving translation), it has been translated well, by Michael Frayn. The *Cherry Orchard* has the power to move and amuse us in Frayn's version precisely because, although it is set in pre-revolutionary Russia, its concerns anticipate, through Chekhov's affectionately objective and prophetic eye, the social tragi-comedy of the twentieth century. It speaks to us in the here and now. I'm not sure that the *Self-Tormentor*, stripped of its chief excellence, its language, can speak to us in any worthwhile way in the here and now. It's not that the play is by any means a failure, taken on its own terms. It's simply that I don't believe Terence in translation to be "portable" - the elegance of language is gone and the subject matter superficially too familiar, because of the comic tradition, and, yet, also inescapably alien, because of the different ethical background, which is an interesting paradox.

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