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TERENCE
PHORMIO
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW
THE BROTHERS



Edited and Translated by
JOHN BARSBY

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藏书章



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PHORMIO

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Phormio, one of two of Terence's plays based on a Greek original by Apollodorus, is essentially a lighthearted play of intrigue, in which an engaging trickster outwits two fathers in order to further the love affairs of their two sons. It depends for its effect on the neatness of its construction, the delineation of the major antagonists, the comic justice of the ending, and, for connoisseurs of the genre, the skilful way in which the conventions are exploited and varied.

During the absence of Demipho and Chremes on separate trips overseas, their sons Antipho and Phaedria have both fallen in love. Phaedria has fallen for a music girl owned by a pimp, Antipho for a poor orphan named Phanium. Antipho has moreover actually married his beloved, thanks to the machinations of the hanger-on Phormio, who, posing as a friend of the young woman's family and alleging that Antipho was her nearest male relative, had obtained a court judgment compelling him to do so. Demipho, who is the first of the fathers to return, is predictably furious at Antipho's marriage; he summons Phormio, and a spirited confrontation ends with Demipho threatening to expel the girl and Phormio threatening to take Demipho to court if he does. Phaedria then appears arguing with the pimp, who is about to sell his girl to a soldier if Phaedria cannot himself produce the purchase

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price. Next Chremes returns from his overseas trip. It transpires that he has been to Lemnos to trace an illegitimate daughter there, and that the two fathers have agreed to marry this daughter to Antipho to cover up the situation; it is imperative therefore that they undo Antipho's marriage to Phanium. Phormio now offers, through Demipho's slave Geta, to marry Phanium himself if they will provide him with a large dowry. Demipho refuses, but Chremes eagerly accepts the offer, and the money is duly handed over. At this stage Phanium's nurse recognises Chremes as Phanium's father, which means that the marriage planned by the two fathers has actually taken place, and they hasten to cancel their agreement with Phormio. But Phormio refuses to give back the dowry money, which he has used to buy Phaedria's girl from the pimp, and moreover reveals Chremes' guilty secret to his wife Nausistrata. The play ends with Nausistrata brushing aside Chremes' objections to Phaedria's affair, and refusing to forgive her husband until she has consulted her son.

This summary will serve to make clear the neatness of the plot and its morally satisfying dénouement. As with most of Terence's plays, the plot is double, involving two fathers and two sons; the two halves are united by the close associations of all of the characters (Demipho and Chremes are in fact brothers as well as neighbours) and by the figure of Phormio, who confronts both fathers and solves the problems of both sons. The characterisation of Phormio is unusual and impressive. He is not the standard parasite of Roman comedy, who is typically either a flatterer accompanying a soldier (like Gnatho in Terence's *The Eunuch*) or a wit earning free meals from a patron by his conversational skills (like Peniculus in Plautus' *The*

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Menaechmus Twins); he is a master schemer and plotter, and his two confrontations with the old men give a vivid picture of his audacity and his argumentative skills. The third confrontation, in which Phormio offers to marry Phanium in return for a dowry, is carried out for Phormio by proxy through the slave Geta, who might otherwise have played the tricky slave role in the play but is reduced to being Phormio's right-hand man. It was a bold move on Terence's part to split the trickery in this way, and it is interesting that Molière in his imitation *Les Fourberies de Scapin* recombined the two into a single role. The two fathers are well contrasted and individualised. Demipho is by no means the typical gullible angry father, but proves a good match for Phormio, showing both determination and a detailed awareness of the legal situation. Chremes, though terrified that his wife may find out his secret, is also concerned to do the best for his daughter, and, though humiliated in the end, is treated rather more gently than the typical old lecher of Plautus. Nausistrata too is an interesting character, not the usual unpleasant dowried wife, but a much more sympathetically drawn figure.

One interesting aspect of the play is the element of surprise. The audience does not find out the reason for Chremes' trip to Lemnos until the play is almost half over; and the true identity of Phanium is not confirmed until three quarters of the way through. This means that much of the irony of the first half is lost, or at least enjoyable only in retrospect. The audience will begin by assuming (wrongly) that Demipho's opposition to the marriage is based on the common rich father's aversion to a poor daughter-in-law; they will not appreciate at the time that Phormio's fiction is actually very close to the truth

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(Antipho and Phanium are in fact cousins) or that Demipho is opposing a marriage which he has already agreed to promote. It is often claimed that it was Terence who created the surprise element by omitting an expository divine prologue from the Greek original, but this must remain a matter of conjecture. The suggestion that Terence expanded the part of Antipho in the middle of the play is rather more plausible; if so, he was filling out the double plot by giving more prominence to the sons, and at the same time (since Antipho among other things takes Phaedria's side against the pimp) emphasising the ideal of mutual helpfulness which is part of the general humanity of his plays.

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DIDASCALIA

INCIPIT TERENTI PHORMIO

ACTA LVDIS ROMANIS

L. POSTVMIO ALBINO L. CORNELIO MERVLA AEDILIBVS
CVRVLIBVS

EGERE L. AMBIVIVS TVRPPIO L. ATILIVS PRAENESTINVS

MODOS FECIT FLACCVS CLAVDI

TIBIIS IMPARIBVS TOTA

GRAECA APOLLODORV EPIDICAZOMENOS

FACTA IIII C. FANNIO M. VALERIO COS.

C. SULPICI APOLLINARIS PERIOCHA

Chremetis frater aberat peregre Demipho
relicto Athenis Antiphone filio.

Chremes clam habebat Lemni uxorem et filiam,
Athenis aliam coniugem et amantem unice
fidicinam gnatum. mater e Lemno advenit
Athenas; moritur; virgo sola (aberat Chremes)
funus procurat. ibi eam visam Antipho
cum amaret, opera parasiti uxorem accipit.
pater et Chemes reversi fremere. dein minas
triginta dant parasito, ut illam coniugem
haberet ipse. argento hoc emitur fidicina.
uxorem retinet Antipho a patruo agnitam.

¹ This festival was by far the oldest of the Roman festivals, going back probably to the 6th century B.C., and took place annually in September.

² For Ambivius Turpio see Introduction. Atilius was probably the

PRODUCTION NOTICE

Here begins the *Phormio* of Terence, acted at the *Ludi Romani*¹ in the curule aedileship of L. Postumius Albinus and L. Cornelius Merula. The producers were L. Ambivius Turpio and L. Atilius of Praeneste.² Music composed by Flaccus, slave of Claudius, for unequal pipes throughout. Greek original *The Claimant* of Apollodorus.³ The author's fourth play, performed in the consulship of C. Fannius and M. Valerius.⁴

SYNOPSIS BY C. SULPICIUS APOLLINARIS

Chremes' brother Demipho was absent overseas, having left his son Antipho at Athens. Chremes secretly had a wife and daughter on Lemnos; at Athens he had another wife and a son who was devotedly in love with a music girl. The girl's mother comes from Lemnos to Athens and dies; in Chremes' absence the girl takes care of the funeral by herself. Antipho sees her there, falls in love, and with the help of a parasite takes her as his wife. On their return his father and Chremes are furious. Presently they give thirty minas to the parasite to take the girl as his wife himself. This money is used to purchase the music girl, and Antipho retains his wife, who has now been recognised by his uncle.

coproducer, or second actor of Ambivius' troupe, though some have seen him as the producer of later revivals.

³ Apollodorus is generally supposed to have been a pupil of Menander's, though few fragments of his plays survive. He provided the model also for Terence's *The Mother-in-Law*, as Donatus makes clear.

⁴ That is, in 161 B.C., which was the same year as the performance of *The Eunuch*.

PERSONAE

DAVOS servos
GETA servos
ANTIPHO adulescens
PHAEDRIA adulescens
DEMIPHO senex
PHORMIO parasitus
HEGIO advocatus
CRATINUS advocatus
CRITO advocatus
DORIO leno
CHREMES senex
SOPHRONA nutrix
NAUSISTRATA matrona

Scaena: Athenis

CHARACTERS

DAVUS, a slave

GETA, slave of Demipho

ANTIPHIO, a young man, son of Demipho, lover of Phanium

PHAEDRIA, a young man, son of Chremes, lover of a music girl

DEMIPHO, an old man, brother of Chremes, father of Antipho

PHORMIO, a parasite and trickster

HEGIO, CRATINUS, CRITO, friends and advisers of Demipho

DORIO, a pimp

CHREMES, an old man, brother of Demipho, father of Phaedria and (as it turns out) of Phanium

SOPHRONA, a nurse of Chremes' family

NAUSISTRATA, a matron, wife of Chremes, mother of Phaedria

Staging

The stage represents a street in Athens. On it are three houses, belonging to Demipho, Chremes, and the pimp Dorio. The exit on the audience's right leads to the forum and to the house of Phormio;⁵ that on their left leads to the harbour.

⁵ The location of Phormio's house is conjectural.

PHORMIO

PROLOGUS

- postquam poeta vetus poetam non potest
retrahere a studio et transdere hominem in otium,
maledictis detertere ne scribat parat.
qui ita dictitat, quas ante hic fecit fabulas
5 tenui esse oratione et scriptura levi,
quia nusquam insanum scripsit adolescentulum
cervam videre fugere et sectari canes
et eam plorare, orare ut subveniat sibi.
quod si intellexeret, quom stetit olim nova,
10 actoris opera magis stetisse quam sua,
minus multo audacter quam nunc laedit laederet.
nunc si quis est qui hoc dicat aut sic cogitet,
“vetus si poeta non laccessisset prior,
nullum invenire prologum potuisset novos
15 quem diceret, nisi haberet cui male diceret,”
is sibi responsum hoc habeat, in medio omnibus
palmam esse positam qui artem tractent musicam.
ille ad famem hunc a studio studuit reicere;

¹⁴ potuisset *codd.*, posset *Bentley edd.* ‘prologum’ anapaestum scandere contra Terenti normam nolentes

⁶ The reference is to Luscius of Lanuvium (see Introduction).

PHORMIO

PROLOGUE

Since the old playwright⁶ cannot drive our playwright from his calling and force him into retirement, he is trying to deter him from writing by the use of slander. He keeps on saying that the plays our author has previously written are thin in style and light in content, just because he has nowhere portrayed a lovesick youth who sees a hind in flight with hounds in pursuit, begging and beseeching him to come to its aid.⁷ But if he realised that, when one of his own new plays once succeeded, its success was more due to the producer than to himself, he would be much less brazen in his attacks than he is now.

Now if there is anyone who is saying or thinking that, if the old playwright had not provoked him first, the young one would not have had the material for a prologue, not having anyone to abuse, let him take this as an answer, that the prize is freely available to everybody who practises the dramatic art.

He set himself to drive our author from his calling and force

⁷ This must be a reference to a recent play by Luscius, which Terence is criticising for an overblown tragic style inappropriate to comedy; the details of the plot can only be conjectured, but it may have involved a delirious young man who had mistaken his beloved for a hind and pursued her with his own hounds (as in the Cephalus and Procris story).