

## Why Shouldn't Greek Barbers Weep? (Ter. *Ph.* 85–108)

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The two *senes*, Demipho and Chremes, go abroad on a business trip, leaving their sons in Athens under the care of a slave (*Phormio* 72). Immediately after their departure, the *adulescens* Phaedria becomes infatuated with a young and talented slave citharist. With no money to purchase the lady or her services — the *senes* have seen to that — he has to content himself with such free pleasures as feasting his eyes (*oculos pascere* 85) upon her as he follows her to and from the music school to which her owner sends her. While she is there, he waits, accompanied by his cousin Antipho and Geta the slave, in a nearby barbershop, a notorious meeting place for idlers (cf. *otiosi* 87), where gossip is always welcome and any distraction is sure to receive more than its share of attention. Such a distraction is afforded by the moving story of a recently orphaned girl, poor but beautiful, told by a weeping youth (*adulescens lacrumans* 92), who drops by the barbershop (*intervenit* 91). The story prompts the idlers to abandon their lounging place and see the girl for themselves. They find her as desolate and beautiful as described, despite her unkempt hair (*capillus passus* 106), bare feet, and other signs of poverty and grief.

In his comment on v. 91 Donatus remarks that in the play of Apollodorus on which the Terentian *Phormio* is based, it was the barber himself who told the story of the beautiful girl whose hair he had cut, according to the Greek custom of cutting the hair in mourning. However, as Terence did not wish to burden his Roman audience with the details of a custom not practiced by themselves, he refrained from such a description and changed the narrator (*Apollodorus tonsorem ipsum nuntium facit, qui dicat se nuper puellae comam ob luctum abstulisse, quod scilicet mutasse Terentium, ne externis moribus spectatorem Romanum offenderet*). Now that the girl's hair was not shorn, the

barber could not tell the story of the cutting. Consequently, a new figure had to be introduced into the narrative, that of a passing youth. This Terentian element in Terence, which had been noticed already by Diatzko-Hauler, is elaborated upon by Williams, who sees in the *capillus passus* "the reshaping mind of the Roman writer," who supplies this detail in order to indicate the proper behaviour, according to Roman standards, of a girl in grief.<sup>1</sup>

This alteration has been criticized on several grounds. Schadewaldt found the feeling of the youth towards the girl too profound and out of place in the context, for his attitude arouses too much interest in himself and his emotions towards the girl, and this interest is not satisfied later. Schadewaldt's criticism is reiterated by Ludwig, who also criticizes the sentimentalization of the scene ("The barber will probably have told the story without tears"), and Gaiser, who adds that the barbershop in Terence is no longer as necessary as it had been when the girl's hair had been shorn in Apollodorus' play. Büchner rejects Donatus' explanation of the alteration, and following Ludwig's lead, sees in the change a manifestation of Terence's desire to enhance the emotional impact of the scene, a goal achieved by transferring the story from the garrulous barber who unemotionally relates a story of the past, to a youth who relates a more recent and therefore more immediately moving event.<sup>2</sup>

The above criticisms rest on several tacit assumptions: a. in comedy persons cannot be incidentally mentioned, or at least, they should not be mentioned in such a way as to arouse undue interest in their whereabouts; b. in Apollodorus' play the girl's hair was cut in the barbershop; and c. barbers do not weep.

- 1 P. Wessner, *A. Donati Commentum Terenti* (Leipzig 1902); on barbers, cf. F.H. Nicolson, "Greek and Roman Barbers," *HSCP* 2 (1891) 41ff., and A. Man, *Barbier*, *RE* 3,1 (1897) 4; on cutting the hair as a sign of mourning cf. e.g. *Eur. Iph. in Aul.* 1416; *Helen* 1087; and also *Plut. Mor.* 267B; See also A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1968) 192. K. Diatzko-E. Hauler, *Terenz: Phormio* (Leipzig 1913)<sup>4</sup> 101 ad v. 92 "...vgl. 106 *capillus passus*." G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968) 289.
- 2 W. Schadewaldt, "Bemerkungen zur *Hecyra* des Terenz," *Hermes* 66 (1931) 1 n. 2. *pace* G. Arnott, "Phormio Parasitus," *G&R* 9 (1968) 33 n. 3. Schadewaldt's strictures are not answered by H. Marti, *Untersuchungen zur dramatischen Technik bei Plautus und Terenz* (Winterthur 1959) 81; W. Ludwig "The Originality of Terence and his Greek Models," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 176; K. Gaiser, (who follows Arnott) in *ANRW* I, 2, p. 1087 n. 187; K. Büchner, *Das Theater des Terenz* (Heidelberg 1974) 309.

Schadewaldt's postulate that persons must not be mentioned in passing is arbitrary, as if invented on the spot for the sake of evaluating this one instance, and quite divorced from actual dramatic practice. Had such a dramatic norm really existed in practice or in theory, other dramatic writers and other passages in Terence should have been criticized for not conforming with it. It could have been argued, for example, that the interest aroused by the mention of Chrysis' three lovers, Phaedria, Clinia, and Niceratus (*And.* 86–88), is not satisfied at all, for we are left to guess the practical details of this *ménage à quatre*, or such questions as who loved Chrysis best, whom did she prefer, and other interesting and piquant information which is denied us. In fact, however, had there been more elaboration, as Schadewaldt requires, the result would have been a digression which would merely have diverted the attention from the main issue. Like other dramatic writers, Terence did not refrain from mentioning persons in passing and indeed such a restriction is unheard of in dramatic theory. He did refrain, however, from elaborating a casual reference into a digressive story in its own right. Schadewaldt, moreover, seemingly fails to distinguish between the appearance of a character on stage and reference to a person in a narrative. Yet their mode of dramatic existence is entirely different. The weeping youth and Chrysis' lovers are mentioned in an expository narrative; they do not appear on stage at all and, therefore, do not exist as dramatic characters, or, to put it differently, they do not form a part of the dramatic action. Consequently, the audience's interest in them is limited and may be termed secondary, whereas the interest in the whereabouts of dramatic characters actually appearing on stage is primary, and contributes directly to the element of suspense in drama. On the other hand, a narrative which recounts events not enacted on stage must be vivid. The tears of the youth in Geta's narrative should be seen, therefore, as a means of heightening the effect of his description of the girl. They do not indicate the possibility of a deeper amorous relationship between the youth and the girl, but are an expressive literary device for conveying the extent of her grief and desolation by describing its effect on others, as the beauty of Helen is described indirectly by the impression it makes on the watching Trojan Elders (*Hom. Il.* 3, 154ff).

In Athens, barbershops were a favourite male meeting place. As we hear from Lysias (24, 20), the Athenians passed their time by making the rounds of the shops in the vicinity of the agora: "For each of you is in the habit of paying a call at either a perfumer's or a barber's or a shoemaker's shop, or wherever he may chance to go... for you are all in the habit of paying a call and passing

your time at some shop or other.”<sup>3</sup> No respectable Athenian female would have dared to frequent such “wineless symposia” as Theophrastus jokingly called that males-only institution, the barbershop (Plut. *Mor.* 679A, and cf. also 716A). Therefore, it seems inconceivable that in Apollodorus’ play Phanium should have gone into the barbershop to have her hair cut, and that the barber should have related the event in an unemotional, gossipy manner to Phaedria, Antipho and Geta when they enter the shop after the girl’s departure. It is more probable that the barber was asked to come to her place of residence, where he performed his task, after which he returned to his shop, where he told — according to Donatus — the story of cutting the hair of a girl in grief.

Lastly, the Greeks did not feel that weeping was unmanly. Even Achilles wept, not to mention Odysseus who spent years shedding tears on the shore of Calypso’s island. Why, then, should a Greek barber be denied such right and pleasure?

To sum up: We know no more than what Terence writes and Donatus tells us. There is no justification for concluding on the basis of the above tacit assumptions that further changes were made by Terence, nor can we attempt to reconstruct Apollodorus’ play in the absence of evidence. Accordingly, any evaluation of Terence’s text through comparison with a non-existent but arbitrarily reconstructed passage of Apollodorus must be invalid.<sup>4</sup> Donatus’ testimony, and a consideration of other sources enable us to assume only minimal changes: instead of the weeping barber entering the barbershop from the girl’s place of residence, Terence introduces the weeping youth. Since the girl’s hair was untouched, it is described as unkempt (*capillus passus* 108). If in Apollodorus’ play the girl’s hair was cut in her place of residence, it is reasonable to assume that the barber shop was introduced into the narrative as a meeting place. As such it is no less important in Terence than it has presumably been in Apollodorus.

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- 3 W.R.M. Lamb’s translation in the Loeb series (1930); cf. also Ar. *Av.* 1440–1; idem, *Plut.* 338; Lysias 23, 3; Demosth. 25, 52; Theophr. *Char.* 11; cf. R.E. Wycherley, “The Market of Athens,” *G&R* 3 (1956) 2–23, and esp. p. 3 n. 3, and 5, and p. 4.
- 4 Cf. Büchner (above n.2) 309, who claims that the story in Apollodorus was less moving but more consistent; Ludwig’s criticism (above n. 2) 176, of sentimentalization; Gaiser’s and Arnott’s statement that the barbershop is spurious (above n.2).