

Handout for February 11; Readings for February 18 to accompany Terence *Phormio*
Please bring handout to class with text

1. Prologue from Terence' *Mother-In-Law*

HECYRA¹ is the name of this Play; when it was represented for the first time, an unusual disaster and calamity² interrupted it, so that it could not be witnessed throughout or estimated; so much had the populace, carried away with admiration, devoted their attention to some rope-dancing. It is now offered as though entirely a new Play; and he who wrote it did not wish to bring it forward then a second time, on purpose that he might be able again to sell it.³ Other Plays of his⁴ you have seen represented; I beg you now to give your attention to this.

1 **Hecyra**: The Greek word ἠκυρα, a "step-mother," or "mother-in-law," Latinized.

2 **And calamity**: "Calamitas." This word is used in the same sense in the first line of the Eunuch. This is evidently the Prologue spoken on the second attempt to bring forward the piece. On the first occasion it probably had none. "Vitiium" was a word used by the Augurs, with whom it implied an unfavorable omen, and thence came to be used for any misfortune or disaster. He seems to mean the depraved taste of the public, that preferred exhibitions of rope-dancers and pugilists to witnessing his Plays.

3 **Again to sell it**: See the last Note to the Second Prologue.

4 **Other Plays of his**: Madame Dacier informs us that Vossius was of opinion that the second representation of this Play did not take place till after that of the *Adelphi*. In that case, they had already seen the rest of his Plays.

[1] *THE SECOND PROLOGUE.*
1

Prologue

I COME to you as an envoy from the Poet, in the character of prologue-speaker; allow me to be a successful pleader, that in my old age I may enjoy the same privilege that I enjoyed when a younger man, when I caused new Plays, that had been once rejected, to come into favor; so that his writings might not die with the Poet. Among them, as to those of Caecilius,² which I first studied when new; in some of which I was rejected; in some I kept my ground with difficulty. As I knew that the fortune of the stage was varying, where the hopes were uncertain, I submitted to certain toil. Those I zealously attempted to perform, that from the same writer I might learn new ones, and not discourage him from his pursuits. I caused them to be represented. When seen, they pleased. Thus did I restore the Poet to his place, who was now almost weaned, through the malevolence of his adversaries, from his pursuits and labors, and from the dramatic art. But if I had at that period slighted the writer, and had wished to use my endeavors in discouraging him, so that he might live a life of idleness rather than of study, I might

have easily discouraged him from writing others. Now, for my sake, hear with unbiased minds what it is I ask. I again bring before you the Hecyra, which I have never been allowed to act before you in silence; such misfortunes have so overwhelmed it. These misfortunes your intelligence will allay, if it is a seconder of our exertions. The first time, when I began to act this Play, the vauntings of boxers,³ the expectation of a rope-dancer,⁴ added to which, the throng of followers, the noise, the clamor of the women, caused me to retire from your presence before the time. In this new Play, I attempted to follow the old custom of mine,⁵ of making a fresh trial; I brought it on again. In the first Act I pleased; when in the mean time a rumor spread that gladiators were about to be exhibited; the populace flock together, make a tumult, clamor aloud, and fight for their places.⁶ meantime, I was unable to maintain my place. Now there is no confusion: there is attention and silence--an opportunity of acting my Play has been granted me; to yourselves is given the power of gracing the scenic festival.⁷ Do not permit, through your agency, the dramatic art to sink into the hands of a few; let your authority prove a seconder and assistant to my own. If I have never covetously set a price upon my skill, and have come to this conclusion, that it is the greatest gain in the highest possible degree to contribute to your entertainment; allow me to obtain this of you, that him who has intrusted his labors to my protection, and himself to your integrity,--that him, I say, the malicious may not maliciously deride, beset by them on every side. For my sake, admit of this plea, and attend in silence, that he may be encouraged to write other Plays, and that it may be for my advantage to study new ones hereafter, purchased at my own expense.⁸

1 Second Prologue: --Eugraphius informs us that this Prologue was spoken by Ambivius Turpio, the head of the company of Actors.

2 Caecilius: Colman has the following Note: "A famous Comic Poet among the Romans. His chief excellences are said to have been, the gravity of his style and the choice of his subjects. The first quality was attributed to him by Horace, Tully, etc., and the last by Varro.

3 Vauntings of boxers: Horace probably had this passage in his mind when he penned the First Epistle in his Second Book, 1. 185 ; where he mentions the populace leaving a Play in the midst for the sight of a bear, or an exhibition of boxers.

4 Of a rope-dancer: The art of dancing on the tight rope was carried to great perfection among the ancients. Many paintings have been discovered, which show the numerous attitudes which the performers assumed. The figures have their heads enveloped in skins or caps, probably intended as a protection in case of falling. At the conclusion of the performance the dancer ran down the rope. Germanicus and Galba are said to have exhibited elephants dancing on the tight rope.

5 The old custom of mine: He says that on the second representation he followed the plan which he had formerly adopted in the Plays of Caecilius, of bringing those forward again which had not given satisfaction at first.

6 **Fight for their places:** This was in consequence of their sitting indiscriminately at the Amphitheatre, where the gladiators were exhibited; whereas at the Theatres there were distinct places appropriated to each "ordo" or class.

7 **Gracing the scenic festival:** Madame Dacier remarks that there is great force and eloquence in the Actor's affecting a concern for the sacred festivals, which were in danger of being deprived of their chief ornaments, if by too great a severity they discouraged the Poets who undertook to furnish the Plays during the solemnity.

8 **At my own expense:** It is generally supposed that "meo pretio" means "a price named as my estimate;" and that it was the custom for the Aediles to purchase a Play of a Poet at a price fixed by the head of the company of actors. It is also thought that the money was paid to the actor, who handed over the whole, or a certain part, to the Poet, and if the Play was not received with favor, the Aediles had the right to ask back the money from the actor, who consequently became a loser by the transaction. Pareus and Meric Casaubon think, however, that in case of this Play, the Aediles had purchased it from the Poet, and the performers had bought it of the Aediles as a speculation. What he means at the end of the First Prologue by selling the Play over again, is not exactly known. Perhaps if the Play had been then performed throughout and received with no favor, he would have had to forfeit the money, and lose all right to any future pecuniary interest in it; but he preferred to cancel the whole transaction, and to reserve the Play for purchase and representation at a more favorable period.

2. **The Schemings of Scapin by Moliere(1671)** is a hilarious farce set in Italy, about a schemingservant who brilliantly tricks two fathers out of money that their respective sons need to support their lovers. The way he pulls it off is a tour de force which cannot be captured in a single scene here, but the show is being planned for the Stage Two theatre at the Cuneo Museum in Vernon Hills this June. The attached further develops our theme of trashing the professions. In this instance it was the legal profession that Moliere cut loose on, as Scapin tries to frighten the father from initiating a divorce proceeding.

The Schemings of Scapin Translation by Dan Mooney

Act II, Scene 5
ARGANTE, SCAPIN

SCAPIN
That's just what I told him. "You cannot hope
To bluff with such a silly proposition,
You'll have to moderate your rash position.
The father's not one of those simple souls,
Whom you might dupe from six hundred pistoles."

And thus, he slowly started to be shaken
From thinking you would be so simply taken.
At last, he says to me, "I now aspire,
To join the army, and I will require
Equipment which will set me back a bit.
And though what you propose brings on my fit,
I have to have a horse to reach my goals.
A good one is at least sixty pistoles."

ARGANTE
Sixty pistoles? I might supply those funds.

SCAPIN
"I'll need a harness, and a set of guns.
Just twenty more pistoles should be enough."

ARGANTE
Add twenty to the sixty for this stuff,
We're up to eighty to fill his demand.

SCAPIN
That's right.

ARGANTE

That's more than I at first had planned,

But if it will get this out of the way ...

SCAPIN
"I also need a horse for my valet.
I've found one for just thirty more pistoles."

ARGANTE
The devil! Let him walk! The servant strolls!
I shall not give the man a single sou!

SCAPIN
Oh, sir!

ARGANTE

No that's too much.

SCAPIN

But, really, you

Don't think the servant ought to tramp and trudge?

ARGANTE

What I think is I'll take this to the judge.

SCAPIN

Oh, sir, don't stick at such a silly sum,
You must do what you can to keep this from
The court.

ARGANTE

All right! Tack on those thirty more.

SCAPIN

"I also need," he said, "a pack-mule for --"

ARGANTE

The devil take the man and take his mule!
Does he think me some simpleton or fool?
That's it! We'll take this matter to the judge.

SCAPIN

But sir --

ARGANTE

No, that's enough! I will not budge!

SCAPIN

Sir, just a little pack-mule that may pass --

ARGANTE

No mule, no donkey, not the smallest ass!

SCAPIN

But think about --

ARGANTE

I'd rather go to court.

SCAPIN

Oh, sir! If you think this man may extort,
Give thought to all the law's great machinations
Which frustrate men of endless wealth of patience.
Think of appeals and writs of jurisdiction
Rapacious beasts with wicked predilection

At every stage you pass another thief
Who look to give your pocketbook relief.
These bailiffs, lawyers, counselors, and clerks
Reporters and the judges; each one shirks
The fairness that they owe for slightest perqs,
And then you'll know just how the system works.
A bailiff serves a false writ on the case,
And you may disappear without a trace!
Your lawyer may be got at by your foe
And sell you out for bits of ready dough.
Your counsel might be won out that same way
And fail to make appearance on that day,
Or else he'll argue everything obscurely
And see to it you lose the case securely.
These court reporter's clerks find ways to hamper
By stealing the transcription which they tamper.
That is, assuming that the court reporter
Transcribed it all as said in proper order.
And even having made it past them all,
The judge himself might rather make you crawl;
Some pious folk solicit him against you,
Or else some woman that the man intends to ...
Signeur, I must beseech your sense of worth:
Do not get caught inside this Hell on earth!
To be at law is to be damned alive,
And I would sooner find ways to contrive
A trip to take me to the most remote
Location on the earth by fastest boat.

ARGANTE

So how much does he reckon for the mule?

SCAPIN

Sir, for the mule, the horse, the harness tool,
The pistols and to settle something weighty
Between the man and his supposed landlady,
He asks in all for two hundred pistoles.

ARGANTE

Two hundred?

SCAPIN

Yes.

ARGANTE

The greediest of trolls!

Come on, we'll take this matter to the court.

SCAPIN
But think --

ARGANTE

I'll go to court.

SCAPIN

Do not resort--

ARGANTE
I want to go to court!

SCAPIN

But it will cost

you trust me, frighten anybody, but must use

At least as much, or case will be quite lost.
You'll pay out for the writ, the registrations,
The power of attorney, consultations,
The time your lawyer spends upon your case,
And time the advocates spend face to face,
Engrossing of the documents in piles
Will cost you long before you see the trials.
The substitutes reports, the judge's fees,
The signatures, provisional decrees,
The registrar, the warrants, verdicts, stamps,
Upon your pocketbook will place their clamps.
And while each honest player you subscribe
That doesn't count the folk you have to bribe!
And here's a matter straining all beliefs:
You even pay for your attorney's briefs!
If you pay out the money now, at first,
It's only once you'll be so badly cursed.

ARGANTE
But two hundred pistoles ...

SCAPIN

You'll end on top,

On all the little costs of getting justice
And find the process will quite quickly bust us.
By giving that two hundred as a giftie,
You save yourself at least a hundred fifty!
Which doesn't count the worries and the trouble

You'll find in getting through this awful rubble.
If all that you avoided was the snide
Remarks in which these lawyers take some pride,
Which they express for all the world to hear ...
I'd pay three hundred just to *not* appear!