

Terence's comedies contain many brilliant visual jokes that have escaped the notice of previous scholars who were more interested in Terence's Greek models than in his own dramatic artistry. In this talk, I will select three examples in which Terence plays with an old comic routine, the so-called *servus currens* ("running slave") act, in unexpected ways that make for great visual humor.

The "running slave" act is a slapstick routine typical for Greco-Roman New Comedy (e.g., Schild 1917; Duckworth 1936 and 1952; Denzler 1968; Csapo 1993). In it, a slave frantically rushes onto the stage to convey an important message. In Terence, the addressee of the message is always already on stage. The slave, however, is so busy running around excitedly that he often does not notice this at once.

Terence ingeniously varies this pattern twice in his *Eunuchus*. In the first scene (292–322), Chaerea, a young ephebe, rushes onto stage in hot pursuit of a beautiful girl with whom he has fallen in love at first sight. Just like a *servus currens*, Chaerea runs aimlessly back and forth and curses someone who earlier slowed him down. Only after a while does he notice his slave, Parmeno, and tells him the good news that he is in love. This scene is a visual spoof on the typical "running slave" act: It comically mirrors the usual layout in that the master is breathlessly running around, while his slave waits for him to calm down. Chaerea's military costume, a short black cloak or *chlamys* (Poll. 10.16) probably also reminded the audience of a *servus currens*: Ancient illustrations show running slaves wearing a *chlamys* that they have thrown up over their left shoulder (Csapo 1993:47, cf. also Plaut. *Capt.* 778-79; Ter. *Ph.* 844-45).

Chaerea's disgracefully slave-like entrance foreshadows his later disguise as a eunuch, i.e., a slave (472-78). When Chaerea then escapes from Thais' house, he does this as a "running eunuch" (549-56). In a comic inversion of his earlier curse (302-3), he actually wishes for someone to stop him so that he can tell him that he has just had sex with his girl (553-56). The dialogue and Chaerea's treatment at the end also emphasize his "servile" role (McCarthy 2004, 113-14).

The *Hecyra* offers a different, but no less ingenious take on the *servus currens* routine. Here the slave Parmeno appears as a "reverse *servus currens*" (Goldberg 1986:158; cf. Gilula 1979–1980:148) who constantly runs off instead of onto the stage. The visual parody of the *servus currens* act is highlighted by the words *curre* (359) and *transcurso* (431) and by Parmeno's lament: "I've spent the entire day running (*cursando*) and walking" (815). The usual scheming slave is visually marginalized. Instead of him, the young lover, the old men, and their wives try their hand more or less successfully at scheming.

The *Adelphoe*, finally, offers a visual parody of the running slave act that is almost a mirror image of Parmeno's role in *Hecyra*. Here, a free man, old Demea, acts like a running slave. Several times, he enters the stage with news about the shocking behavior of his brother's son, Antipho. As an old man, however, he can only walk, not run. In the end, he gives an old man's version of Parmeno's complaints in *Hec.* 815, "I'm exhausted from walking" (713) and "I've crawled (*perreptavi*) around the entire town" (715). Moreover, while Pamphilus sent Syrus on fool's errands in *Hecyra*, *Adelphoe* shows a slave, Syrus, sending a master, Demea, on wild-goose chases (400-402; 433-34; 569-85). All this illustrates that Demea behaves *illiberaliter* for most of the play except for the last scene where he acts like a master again.