

## TERENCE'S EUNUCHUS AND JEROME

In the spring of 384, while Jerome was still living in Rome, he addressed to Eustochium his famous *Libellus de virginitate servanda* (epist. 22)<sup>1</sup>). The central portion of the work contains a theoretical justification of virginity (chs. 19–21). After it Jerome reaffirms that his object is not praise of virginity but its preservation (chs. 22 f.). He thereupon resumes his medley of precepts. First he instructs his addressee to stay indoors (ch. 23). Eustochium is then told that she must at all costs eschew geniality (ch. 24). Here Jerome has chosen to express himself in the following terms:

- Ne declines aurem tuam in verba mala. saepe indecens*
- 10 *aliquid loquentes temptant mentis arbitrium. si libenter audias, virgo, quod dicitur, si ad ridicula quaeque solvaris, quidquid dixeris, laudant; quidquid negaveris, negant. facetam vocant et sanctam et in qua nullus sit dolus, 'ecce vera Christi ancilla' dicentes, 'ecce tota simplicitas, non ut illa horrida,*
- 15 *turpis, rusticana, terribilis et quae ideo forsitan maritum invenire non potuit'. naturali ducimur malo: adulatoribus nostris libenter favemus et, quamquam nos respondeamus indignos et calidus rubor ora perfundat, tamen ad laudem suam intrinsecus anima laetatur (24,1 f.)<sup>2</sup>.*

It would appear that here we have a piece of direct observation from life. In this connection Wiesen has spoken of Jerome's 'power keenly to observe the minute details of human behavior'<sup>3</sup>). Wiesen finds abundant exemplification of this capability in the *Libellus de virginitate*. He points among other passages to Jerome's depictions

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1) Citation of works follows the method of *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index Librorum Scriptorum Inscriptionum* (Leipzig 1904) and its *Supplementum* (Leipzig 1958). For the Fathers the editions used are those given in H. J. Frede, *Kirchenschriftsteller: Verzeichnis und Sigel* (Freiburg 1981, *Vetus Latina*, 1/1) and in the same author's *Kirchenschriftsteller: Aktualisierungsheft 1984* (Freiburg 1984, *Vetus Latina*, 1/1A) and *Kirchenschriftsteller: Aktualisierungsheft 1988* (Freiburg 1988, *Vetus Latina*, 1/1B).

2) The line numeration is taken from Hilberg's text.

3) D. S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist. A Study in Christian Latin Thought and Letters* (Ithaca 1964, *Cornell Stud. in Class. Philol.* 34) 46.

of loose-living and hypocritical virgins (chs. 13 and 27), of worldly widows (ch. 16), and of exhibitionist monks and foppish, gallivanting clerics (ch. 28)<sup>4</sup>). It might seem therefore that in the lines quoted above Jerome is providing a further specimen of this talent for observing contemporary social *mores*.

On the other hand Jerome also possessed an unusually intimate acquaintance with classical literature<sup>5</sup>). Accordingly his works are 'soaked in echoes of, or borrowings from'<sup>6</sup>) the Latin classics. Already in 401 Rufinus had declared that there was not a single page of Jerome's writings which did not contain some reference to Cicero or Horace or Vergil<sup>7</sup>). Over the past century and a quarter Jerome's citations of classical authors have been the object of intensive scrutiny. The foundation was laid in 1872 by Luebeck's monograph<sup>8</sup>). Further allusions were identified in Hilberg's edition of the letters<sup>9</sup>). The most thorough investigation of classical borrowings in Jerome has been provided by Hagendahl's masterly study<sup>10</sup>). An appendix to the section of the work dealing with Jerome was supplied by Hagendahl himself in 1974<sup>11</sup>). As far as the comic poets are concerned, Hagendahl's article does no more than enumerate three reminiscences of Terence which have come to light as a result of Jürgens' very careful enquiry<sup>12</sup>). Jerome himself remarks that the function of the comic poet is *humanos mores nosse atque descri-*

4) Wiesen (op. cit., n. 3) 70 ff., 119 ff.

5) Cf. most recently J.-M. Poinsotte, Jérôme et la poésie latine chrétienne, in: Jérôme entre l'occident et l'orient: XVI<sup>e</sup> centenaire du départ de s. Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem, ed. Y.-M. Duval (Paris 1988) 302: 'Jérôme porte en lui le souvenir toujours vivace et émouvant des innombrables vers de la poésie profane qu'il a lus, expliqués, appris à aimer auprès de Donat, qui ont contribué à former son intelligence, à éveiller sa sensibilité, à imprégner son langage'.

6) J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies (London 1975) 12.

7) Apol. adv. Hier. 2,7.

8) A. Luebeck, Hieronymus quos noverit scriptores et ex quibus hauserit (Leipzig 1872).

9) I. Hilberg (ed.), S. Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae (Vienna-Leipzig 1910-8) (CSEL 54-6). Additions from classical authors were made to the *apparatus fontium* of Hilberg's first volume in the reviews by C. Weyman, Wochenschr. f. klass. Phil. 27 (1910) 1003 ff. and A. Souter, Journ. Theol. Stud. 13 (1912) 148 ff.

10) H. Hagendahl, Latin Fathers and the Classics. A Study on the Apologists, Jerome and other Christian Writers (Göteborg 1958, Stud. Graec. Lat. Gothoburg. 6). Hagendahl says he is 'fully convinced that there are still many hidden treasures awaiting a successful explorer' (p. 97).

11) H. Hagendahl, Jerome and the Latin Classics, Vig. Christ. 28 (1974) 216 ff.

12) H. Jürgens, Pompa diaboli. Die lateinischen Kirchenväter und das antike

bere<sup>13</sup>): such observation of life is certainly what we find in the passage from Jerome's *Libellus de virginitate* quoted above. However the efforts of all the afore-mentioned scholars have failed to detect an 'echo or borrowing' of any classical author in this particular passage.

Hagendahl notes that Jerome took an unusually strong interest in Terence<sup>14</sup>). He is coupled with Vergil in *Letter* 58,5,2: *poetae aemulentur Homerum, Vergilium, Menandrum, Terentium*. He of course occupied a central position on the school curriculum as part of the *quadruga* alongside Vergil, Sallust and Cicero. Moreover Jerome had been a pupil of the eminent *grammaticus* Donatus, who produced commentaries on Terence's plays. In his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (1 p. 390) Jerome refers to an observation which Donatus had made in the course of his exposition. The remark cannot have formed part of Donatus' published commentary<sup>15</sup>): accordingly Jerome must have read the play in question under Donatus' personal direction. The work to which Jerome's anecdote refers is the *Eunuchus*. It was one of Terence's most popular plays<sup>16</sup>). Only the *Andria* is quoted by Jerome with greater frequency<sup>17</sup>).

A quotation from Terence's *Eunuchus* has already been identified in the *Libellus de virginitate*. It occurs several chapters after the warning against geniality referred to above (32,2). This time Jerome is describing a curmudgeonly noblewoman whom he observed 'recently' as she distributed alms in St. Peter's: when an old lady returned for a second coin, the alms-giver punched her instead. The unfortunate recipient is described as *annis pannisque obsita*. Luebeck noted that the phrase was borrowed from *Eunuchus* 236: *pannis annisque obsitum*<sup>18</sup>). The borrowing is duly recorded by Hagendahl and Jürgens<sup>19</sup>). Hagendahl then proceeds to enquire how the presence of such a classical reminiscence is to be explained

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Theater (Stuttgart 1972, Tüb. Beitr. z. Altertumsw. 46) 112 ff. Hagendahl deals with the comic poets on p. 217.

13) Epist. 54,9,5.

14) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 11) 217.

15) Cf. F. Lammert, *De Hieronymo Donati discipulo* (Leipzig 1912, Comm. Philol. Ienens. 9,2) 20; G. Brugnoli, *Donato e Girolamo*, Vet. Christ. 2 (1965) 141, n. 13.

16) Cf. Jürgens (op. cit., n. 12) 122 ff. It may still have been performed in Jerome's day (ib. 229 f.).

17) Cf. Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 413.

18) Luebeck (op. cit., n. 8) 112.

19) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 110; Jürgens (op. cit., n. 12) 124.

within the very work which describes Jerome's famous dream, in which he swore to stop reading the classics (30,5). The answer which Hagendahl gives relates to the stylistic character of the work: its style is 'as refined and rhetorical as ever it can be'<sup>20</sup>).

It is perhaps open to question whether Jerome's choice of this particular phrase from the *Eunuchus* is a sign of 'refinement'. No one has as yet referred to Donatus' commentary on the line in question. There we read the following: '*pannis et annis' morologiae parasitorum sunt ... parasitica vernilitate κατὰ τὸ δημοσιότευτον dictum*<sup>21</sup>). The phrase occurs at the start of the opening speech of Gnatho, who is a particularly bumptious parasite. Donatus is therefore making the point that these words characterize their speaker perfectly. It is clear that Jerome had read Donatus' commentaries on Terence<sup>22</sup>): he did not simply listen to his teacher's exposition in the classroom. Nonetheless 'the sort of silly thing a parasite would say' had an irresistible appeal for Jerome. He repeats the phrase nine years later in his commentary on Zephaniah<sup>23</sup>). There he is describing how the Jews congregate at the site of the Temple on the anniversary of its destruction: *videas in die quo capta est a Romanis ... Hierusalem ... confluere decrepitas mulierculas et senes pannis annisque obsitos*<sup>24</sup>). It would seem that Jerome was alone in his partiality for these words: no one else appears to use them. Jerome on the other hand could never resist a flashy and meretricious phrase: its provenance was unimportant.

The speech in the *Eunuchus* from which this phrase comes is an exposition of Gnatho's novel and remarkably successful technique of toadyism. Gnatho concludes his speech with the smug observation that just as philosophical sects are named after their founders, so parasites will be called 'Gnathonites' after himself (264). Jerome imitates this passage of the speech in a letter written in 394<sup>25</sup>): the imitation was correctly identified by Hilberg<sup>26</sup>). Here Jerome puts into the mouth of his opponent Jovinian an attack on their mutual enemy Pelagius which ends thus: *ut,*

20) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 111.

21) Don. Ter. Eun. 236.

22) Adv. Rufin. 1,16; cf. Lammert (op. cit., n. 15) 7.

23) In Soph. 1,15 p. 692.

24) It may be noted how in the same passage Jerome stresses that his description is based on autopsy: *nobis praesertim qui nunc in ista sumus provincia licet videre ...*

25) Epist. 50,4,4.

26) Hilberg (op. cit., n. 9) ad loc.

*quomodo ego discipulorum gregem ducto, sic et ex huius nomine Gnathonici vel Formionici vocentur.*

Finally Luebeck has suggested that a further echo from the same section of the *Eunuchus* is to be found in Jerome<sup>27</sup>). The words in question this time do not come from Gnatho's actual speech, but occur in the ensuing dialogue between Gnatho and Parmeno which concludes the scene. At 284 Parmeno says: *mibi nunc uno digitulo fores aperis*. In his *Altercation of a Luciferian with an Orthodox* Jerome uses the same phrase: *uno, ut aiunt, digitulo*<sup>28</sup>). Hagendahl and Jürgens did not recognize these words as an echo of the *Eunuchus*. It is true that Otto classifies them as proverbial<sup>29</sup>). On the other hand it is perhaps significant that of the instances cited by Otto and Häussler<sup>30</sup>) only Jerome's *Altercation* reproduces the exact wording found in the *Eunuchus*<sup>31</sup>). Two other borrowings from this scene of the *Eunuchus* have already been identified in Jerome: it will be argued below that there is also a third. Perhaps it is not therefore unreasonable to regard *uno ... digitulo* as a fourth<sup>32</sup>).

Jerome was obviously very well acquainted with the scene in which Gnatho sets out his new system of sycophancy. As he does so, Gnatho expresses himself as follows:

*ego adeo hanc primus inveni viam.  
est genus hominum qui esse primos se omnium rerum volunt  
nec sunt: hos consector; hisce ego non paro me ut rideant,  
250 sed eis ultro adrideo et eorum ingenia admiror simul.*

27) Luebeck (op. cit., n. 8) 112.

28) C. Lucif. 13. The work is variously dated between 379 and 387.

29) A. Otto, Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer (Leipzig 1890) 115, s. vv. *digitus, digitulus*, 4.

30) R. Häussler, Nachträge zu A. Otto, Sprichwörter und sprichwörtliche Redensarten der Römer (Hildesheim 1968) 156, s.v. *digitus*, 4.

31) The other passages adduced are: Cic. Scaur. 10 *digitulis duobus*; Mart. 5,12,6 *uno ... digito vel hoc vel illo*; Ps.-Cypr. rebapt. 19 *unico articulo* (it would seem however that here *articulus* does not mean 'a finger', but rather 'a conjuncture'); Alan. Insul. lib. parab. 3 (PL 210, col. 587A) *digito ... uno*.

32) While he repeats Terence's precise wording, Jerome qualifies it with *ut aiunt*. The same procedure may be observed at c. Ioh. 37: *in portu, ut dicitur, naufragium*. Otto (op. cit., n. 29) 284 f., s.v. *portus*, 1 and Häussler (op. cit., n. 30) 318, nr. 1454 give eighteen further examples of this proverbial expression. However Jerome has adopted the precise form of words found in Ps.-Quint. decl. 12,23: *in portu naufragium*. None of the other seventeen cases exhibits this particular phrasing. In the fourth century the *declamationes maiores* circulated under Quintilian's name and it is clear that Jerome was thoroughly familiar with them: cf. Luebeck (op. cit., n. 8) 218 ff. Accordingly c. Ioh. 37 is duly recognized as an echo of decl. 12,23 by Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 168 (following Luebeck 219).

*quidquid dicunt laudo; id rursus si negant, laudo id quoque; negat quis: nego; ait: aio; postremo imperavi egomet mihi omnia adsentari. is quaestu' nunc est multo uberrimus.*

The lines were famous. When Cicero is discussing flattery in the *Laelius de amicitia*, he refers to the Terentian passage:

*quid enim potest esse tam flexibile, tam devium quam animus eius qui ad alterius non modo sensum ac voluntatem, sed etiam vultum atque nutum convertitur?*

*'Negat quis, nego; ait, aio; postremo imperavi egomet mihi omnia adsentari',  
ut ait idem Terentius, sed ille in Gnathonis persona. (93)*

Clearly Gnatho's *quidquid dicunt laudo ... negat quis: nego* (251 f.) is the source of Jerome's *quidquid dixeris, laudant; quidquid negaveris, negant* (11 f.) in the passage from the *Libellus de virginitate* with which the present article began. Accordingly we have here a case of literary reminiscence, not of observation from life.

It may be noted further that both in Terence and in Jerome these words are immediately preceded by a reference to laughter. Accordingly Jerome's *si ad ridicula quaeque solvaris* (11) corresponds exactly to Gnatho's *hisce ego non paro me ut rideant, / sed eis ultro adrideo* (249 f.). On the other hand Jerome has compressed and streamlined Gnatho's description of his sycophancy in the interests of greater rhetorical impact. In Jerome's version the largely pleonastic clauses *id rursus si negant, laudo id quoque* (251) and *ait: aio* (252) have been omitted. Jerome has also introduced a striking anaphora by repeating Terence's *quidquid*<sup>33</sup>). As a result Jerome achieves two very succinct and powerful clauses with exactly parallel structure.

The initial impression created by Jerome's condensed version of Gnatho's words is dazzling. Closer scrutiny however reveals an important defect: the words in question do not fit their new context. In Terence Gnatho is describing how to be an effective sycophant. Whereas the old method had been to entertain with buffoonery, Gnatho now achieves far greater success by simply agreeing to everything his patrons say: *omnia dominis consentiendo*<sup>34</sup>). Accordingly the Terentian passage is no more than a characteriza-

33) The anaphora is all the more impressive since it matches the anaphora of *si* in the first half of Jerome's sentence.

34) This is the paraphrase given by Eusebius' commentary on line 232.

tion of the successful parasite. Jerome on the other hand is talking about indecent language and the appropriate way to react to it. He acknowledges that it is hard for the virgin to turn a deaf ear. If she unbends and is amused by others' jokes, people will like her and say she is 'nice': *si ad ridicula quaeque solvaris . . . facetam vocant et sanciam . . .* (ll. 11 ff.). This argument is perfectly clear and reasonable, if somewhat unremarkable. However Jerome has intruded into it Terence's arresting description of successful toadyism. While this insertion unquestionably heightens the rhetorical level of the passage, it has no place in it. When Jerome argues that, if Eustochium laughs at indecent jokes, people will agree with whatever she says, he is really perpetrating a *non sequitur*. The point of such obsequiousness is to make people like the person who practises it. As Eugegraphius conveniently paraphrases: *est hominum genus . . . quos sectando et consensu his commodando facile in amorem tuum possis inducere*<sup>35</sup>). Jerome however is describing exactly the opposite situation. He is telling Eustochium how by being relaxed and genial she could make other people like her; the way in which they could make her like them is irrelevant here. Gnatho's brand of mindless toadyism is accordingly not *à propos* in this passage. Jerome's argument only becomes properly coherent when it is left out.

It is true that Jerome speaks later of flattery: *adulatoribus nostris libenter favemus* (ll. 16 f.). Here however he is clearly referring to the handsome compliment which immediately precedes this statement: '*ecce vera Christi ancilla . . .*' (ll. 13 ff.). Only this kind of praise would justify the embarrassed reaction which accompanies the reference to *adulatores nostri: quamquam nos respondeamus indignos et calidus rubor ora perfundat* (ll. 17 ff.). Jerome argues quite properly that flattery of this sort is people's instinctive response to geniality in the virgin: hence it is so hard to resist. However such spontaneous praise of someone who is popular differs radically from the indiscriminate and calculated hypocrisy which Jerome has imported from Terence. In this connection it is noteworthy that Donatus' commentary on the *Eunuchus* points out how Terence's choice of *quidquid* underlines the absurd and moronic character of Gnatho's sycophancy: *non 'quod dicunt', sed 'quicquid dicunt', id est bene maleve, ut, vel si interclusa fuisset assentatio, non se impediverit, quod contrarium*

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35) On line 244.

*laudaverit*<sup>36</sup>). Terence had used *quidquid* only once. It was noted above that on rhetorical grounds Jerome deliberately duplicates this expression: he employs it twice within the space of four words. Accordingly Jerome has not merely taken over a passage which does not fit the context: he has in fact gone out of his way to accentuate its absurdity.

The inconcinnity which Jerome's depiction of unconditional toadyism entails is convenient verification that it has been borrowed from elsewhere. At the same time this imperfection is a serious indictment of Jerome's compositional method. Here we do not have a case of the author's thought finding natural and spontaneous expression in the language of the classics. Instead Jerome's craving for something clever and striking to say has been allowed to get the better of his thought and in consequence has produced an incongruity.

By way of conclusion it will be appropriate to consider how the identification of this echo in the *Libellus de virginitate* affects the overall picture of Jerome's citation of Terence during the early part of his career. In *Latin Fathers and the Classics* Hagendahl asserted that in Jerome's works prior to 386 "Terence is neither mentioned nor quoted, except for a few slight reminiscences in the letters"<sup>37</sup>). The first of these "slight reminiscences" is *Letter 1,14 (o vere ius summum summa malitia)*, which is taken as an allusion to *Heautontimorumenos* 796 (*ius summum saepe summast malitia*). The phrase is however a commonplace<sup>38</sup>). The second of Hagendahl's echoes occurs in the *Libellus de virginitate* (32,2): *annis pannisque obsita* comes from *Eunuchus* 236. The final reminiscence listed in *Latin Fathers* is found at *Letter 28,7 (cuius nos maluimus... dumtaxat inperitiam sequi, quam stultam habere scientiam nescientum)*. Hilberg compared *Andria* 20 f.; however Jerome has remodelled his source so thoroughly that the only word the two texts have in common is *quam*. Hagendahl explained the paucity of such references in the period down to 386 as due to the effect of Jerome's dream<sup>39</sup>). He assumed that Jerome had then resumed his reading of Terence "from about 387"<sup>40</sup>).

In his supplementary article Hagendahl was obliged to add a

36) On line 251.

37) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 273 with n. 1.

38) Cf. Otto (op. cit., n. 29) 179 f., s.v. *ius*, 1 (citing Cic. off. 1,33: *tritum sermone proverbium*).

39) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 320.

40) Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 274.



citation of Terence which belongs to the period before 386<sup>41</sup>). The quotation comes from the scene in the *Eunuchus* which immediately follows the one containing Gnatho's speech. The present article has added a further citation from this play. It might therefore be thought that such evidence amounts to more than just a few slight reminiscences. On the other hand there is no need to assume that Jerome had already started reading Terence again: the point has been made elsewhere that Jerome's memory was unusually retentive, especially where flashy phrases were involved<sup>42</sup>). Nor is there any need to be surprised that Jerome quotes a classical author in the same work which describes his dream<sup>43</sup>). The modifications which Jerome makes to Terence's wording not only enhance its rhetorical effectiveness: they also help to conceal the fact that it is a quotation. In consequence it appears to be a clever and original formulation of Jerome himself. Jerome might of course be thought guilty of inconsistency in going to such lengths to incorporate a rhetorically striking phrase in the very treatise that warns the virgin against 'wishing to seem particularly eloquent': *nec tibi diserta multum velis videri* (29,6). It can however be shown that he does the same thing repeatedly throughout the present work<sup>44</sup>).

Lincoln (University of Nebraska)

Neil Adkin

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41) Hagendahl (art. cit., n. 11) 217. The passage in question is epist. 10,2,2: *corpus solidum et suci plenum*. The words are taken straight from *Eunuchus* 318.

42) Cf. the present writer, Gregory of Nazianzus and Jerome: Some Remarks, in: Georgica. Greek Studies in Honour of George Cawkwell, ed. M. Toher (London 1991) 22. There is of course no reason why Jerome should not have reread Terence. He makes clear that the result of his dream was an intensive study of scripture once he was able to conquer his aversion to the uncouthness of its language: he does not say that he abandoned the classics (epist. 22,30,2; 22,30,6). At in Gal. lib. 3 praef. on the other hand Jerome does report that he has not read a pagan author 'for over fifteen years': he has been too busy with Hebrew.

43) As is Hagendahl (op. cit., n. 10) 111.

44) It is proposed to document Jerome's habit of introducing striking second-hand phraseology in a future article. The warning against eloquence was of course traditional; cf. the present writer, Some Notes on the Dream of St. Jerome, *Philol.* 128 (1984) 119, n. 1.