VULGATA IN DIALOGUE • 10 (2026) 137–151

# Is all the world a comic stage?

## The epistles of Jerome, the *theatrum mundi*, and the *seruus callidus* as a Terentian intertextual character

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**ABSTRACT** • This paper discusses the reception of comic festivals and performances in Jerome's works, comparing them to Greek authors like Plato and Aristotle, and to the Christian author Tertullian, showing how controversial Roman comedy can be, mostly considering the pleasure of music and the actor's performance. We then want to show that the *theatrum mundi* topic discourse is used by Jerome to discredit his rivals, intertextually arguing that they are, like actors, playing ridiculous comic parts in the real world. Among them, one of the most important typical *fabula palliata*'s characters is the *seruus callidus*, the clever slave that creates schemes. Through the analysis of three case studies, we demonstrate that there is a clear border between Jerome and his rivals, since he refuses playing the part of a *seruus* (allusion to *Heaut.* 761-762 in *Ep.* 112.2), but accuses other people of being like Parmeno, the slave in *Eunuchus* (*Ep.* 133.11) or Geta in *Phormio* (*Ep.* 143.2). We then seek to demonstrate that we can see a connection between the two allusions to *serui callidi* in his letters about Pelagianism, describing their leader and followers as ignorant people who do not dominate discourse or ideas, but who can be dangerous to less prepared minds anyway. It would be a task for Jerome to teach his contemporaries how to deal with heresies and repute them as ridiculous but dangerous ideas.

**KEYWORDS** • Jerome – Terence – intertextuality – theatrum mundi – seruus callidus – Roman comedy – Pelagianism.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG** • Der Beitrag untersucht die Rezeption komischer Feste und Aufführungen bei Hieronymus im Vergleich mit Platon, Aristoteles und Tertullian. Im Mittelpunkt stehen die umstrittene Stellung der römischen Komödie, die Wirkung von Musik und Schauspiel sowie der Topos des *theatrum mundi*. Hieronymus nutzt diesen Topos, um seine Gegner als Darsteller lächerlicher Rollen in der realen Welt abzuwerten. Eine zentrale Figur ist dabei der *seruus callidus*, der listige Sklave der *fabula palliata*. An drei Fallstudien zeigt der Beitrag, wie Hieronymus durch terenzianische Intertexte eine Grenze zwischen sich und seinen Gegnern zieht. Er verweigert in Epistula 112,2 die Rolle eines Sklaven und vergleicht in Epistula 133,11 sowie 143,2 Vertreter des Pelagianismus mit Parmeno aus dem *Eunuchus* und Geta aus dem *Phormio*. Die beiden pelagianischen Gegenspieler erscheinen dadurch als Menschen, die weder den Diskurs noch ihre Ideen beherrschen, für wenig vorbereitete Adressaten aber dennoch gefährlich sein können. Hieronymus weist seinem Publikum schließlich die Aufgabe zu, solche Lehren als zugleich lächerlich und gefährlich zu erkennen und zurückzuweisen.

**SCHLAGWORTE** • Hieronymus – Terenz – Intertextualität – theatrum mundi – seruus callidus – römische Komödie – Pelagianismus

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https://doi.org/10.25788/vidbor.v10i1.1616

## 1. Introduction

The idea that human life can be compared to an experience of scripted actors on a stage is not only ancient but also seems constantly renewed. Indeed, we can immediately remember the verses *all the world is a stage, and all the men and women are merely players* spoken by Jacques in *As you like it*, from Shakespeare, but, as any Shakespearean reader (or spectator) might know, the actor's profession is portrayed in controversial ways throughout his works. To Brutus, for example, in *Julius Caesar*, the *liberatores* should behave as actors, that is, as people capable of completely disguising their real intentions. At the same time, however, Ofelia, in *Hamlet*, comments to Queen Gertrudes that they are soon going to understand the plot of the play that they were about to witness, since actors were not able to keep secrets (specifically in the function of a *prologus*): they tell everything. Of course, the concept that actors are not reliable was not created by the Bard but has strong parallels with the Ancient Greece and Rome, that bring us several examples of how actors could be sometimes respectable or even despised persons.

Aristotle's *Poetics* (1461b25 – 1462a10) tries to defend the hypothesis that tragedy is superior to the epic, even arguing that, when the dramatic genre is accused of being vulgar and too exaggerated, this problem is not something related to the poet's technique, but to the excesses of bad actors and musicians. Socrates in Plato's *Republic* (605d), too, warned about the risks of listening to a tragedy, since the music and performance could transform the audience and weaken his judgment. Considering only these two philosopher's appointments, we could wrongly assume that the performance was a huge problem for the audience and sometimes for the writer. On the other hand, we cannot deny that, for a comic writer like Terence, discussing his rival's poetry in the prologue of *Phormio* (v. 9-10) a good actor's company can make a bad poet look better, or, in his personal case, make him justice. In short, actors and performances were ambiguous: sometimes allies to the writers, sometimes rivals. It seems, however, that overacting is more acceptable in comedy (especially when the text has not very much to offer) than in tragedy.

Indeed, returning to *Poetics* (1449a 30), Aristotle defends that comedy is the representation of people with lower moral standards, even if not in a too serious way. Being a comic character means acting in an inappropriate way not only in terms of values, but in performance too, since the body and voice needed embarrassingly moving and dancing, at least according to a Roman audience's imagination. Even a prestigious comic actor like Ambivius Turpius complains in Terence's *Heautontimorumenos* (v. 40-45) that he is no longer able to perform roles that demanded shouting and quick movements, thus considering his career and advanced age, he deserved better. In short, being dishonest (in a soft way) and physically ridiculous in a play can be tolerated and even useful, however how should we interpret people acting in the real world as a comic character?

It is clear, then, that the idea that the whole world is a stage is far removed from having a unique interpretation, and not exclusively in Antiquity. In this sense, although the *topos* of *theatrum mundi* received its specific name only in the twelfth century by Policraticus, it appeared many times in Greek and Roman authors, pagans and Christians. According to Isabella Tardin Cardoso, it is "[...] the representation, mostly metaphorical, of the human being as playwriter, actor, director or spectator in his life, his job, in society or History, in a textual mechanism that can explore different meanings".[1] In this sense, proposing that a passage in a text is a possible *theatrum mundi* is the starting point for exploring possible effects of this comparison.

As we will try to demonstrate here, the clash between being or not being a character, or rather, a comic one, also did not escape the authors of Latin patristics, in a context of establishing one's own *auctoritas* before the interlocutor. The central idea of this paper is to discuss the presence of this commonplace in Jerome's works, or, more specifically, that in three of his letters, we can see a pattern of exploring Terence's comic characters for rhetorical purposes, mostly the *seruus callidus*, one of the most important prototypical characters in the Greek new comedy and in the *fabula palliata*.

## 2. Jerome, the *theatrum mundi* and the problem of comic performance

Before we start discussing the intertextualities with Terence, we can quote a passage that is one of the most intriguing examples of Jerome probably knowing the *theatrum mundi* concept. Wiesen[2] suggests that Jerome was quite familiar with the idea of the world being a stage and, more specifically, as a corrupt stage, since he criticizes how much citizens loved extravagant robes, and changed them as quickly as actors who needed to perform a different character. We could assume that, for Jerome, the way one dresses should be coherent with one's own life, that would only be saintly if it is simple and ascetic. This is not, we defend, an isolated case: usually, in Jerome, being in a play in the real world is something to be criticized and condemned, which is being ridiculous in front of other people's eyes.

Nonetheless, we could ask: if theater and comedy are such a bad thing, why does Jerome quote poets like Plautus and mostly Terence? First, we should get back to the problem of musical and acting performance and their relations with the written text. Jerome presents a crystal-clear distinction between reading (and quoting) Roman comedy and watching, listening and enjoying the show. In *Aduersus Jouinianum* (*Adv. Jov.* II.8.337b), for example, his ideas are similar to Plato's about how the music and the singing can

[1] Cardoso, Isabella, "*Theatrum mundi:* filologia e imitação", Classica - Revista Brasileira De Estudos Clássicos, *33*(2) (2020), 121–149, here 127.

[2] Wiesen, David S., Saint Jerome as a satirist: a study in Christian Latin thought and letters (CSCP), Cornell University Press, New York 1964, here 27.

effeminate a man: *Rursum auditus uario organorum cantu, et uocum inflexionibus delinitur: et carmine poetarum et comoediarum, mimorumque urbanitatibus et strophis, quidquid per aures introiens, uirilitatem mentis effeminat* ("Eventually, one hears the varied sounds of instruments, punctuated by vocal inflections. Also through the verses of poets and comedies, through the jokes and tricks of mimes: whatever enters the ears, effeminating the manliness of thought.").[3] It is not necessary to remember, we think, that all the actions mentioned by Jerome belonged to actors and singers, and he is not interested in performing that.

In Jerome, the border between the scene and the real world, especially when someone is watching a comedy, is strong. In *Ep.* 52.5, writing to Nepotianus about the duties of monastical life, he teaches how to behave among women and society, not to cause any scandal. One piece of Jerome's advice is quite simple: do not act like a comic character in love.

> *Caueto omnes suspiciones, et quidquid probabiliter fingi potest, ne fingatur, ante devita. Crebra Munuscula et sudariola, et fasciolas, et vestes ori applicitas, et oblatos ac degustatos cibos, blandasque et dulces litterulas sanctus amor non habet. « Mel meum, meum desiderium: omnes delicias, et lepores, » et risu dignas urbanitates, et caeteras ineptias amatorum, in Comoediis erubescimus, in saeculi hominibus detestamur: quanto magis in Monachis et in Clericis, quorum et Sacerdotium proposito, et propositum ornatur Sacerdotio?*
>
> Be careful of anything suspicious and avoid anything that could cause a scandal. Holy love does not allow frequent little gifts, garters, handkerchiefs and napkins already touched by the mouth, offerings of food that has already been tasted, notes full of sweet and delicate words. "My honey, my beloved, my source of love and affection," these and other laughable niceties, like so many silly things lovers do that make us blush in comedies, we detest in men of the real world and even more so in monks and clergymen, who adorn the priesthood with their purpose, and their purpose with the priesthood.[4]

Jerome's hierarchy assumes that ridiculous behaviors are acceptable in the genre they were meant to be part of but are despicable for people in the real world, and unacceptable for members of the church. That is the key, we argue, to understand how the comic *theatrum mundi* works in Jerome: acting like an *adulescens* in love, as a *senex auarus* or as a *seruus callidus*, is an absurdity that can only be tolerated on the real stage, not in the metaphorical one. It does not seem a coincidence that Jerome uses the image of blush for describing the shame one feels while observing a comic actor playing a ridiculous part: again, this works against the actors, since, according to an ancient idea, blushing is the only thing that an actor cannot imitate. In this sense, reality should judge comedy, not imitate it.

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[3] *PL*, XXIII, 297. Augustine goes further and, dealing too with the idea that music and performance are dangerous ways of hypnotizing people, writes that the *ludi*, the Roman festivals, were a perfect opportunity for diabolical spirits to take control of people's minds and to weaken the morality. Again, here, the *histriones* are a symbol of actions that can distract and corrupt: [...] *ludi scaenici, spectacula turpitudinum et licentia uanitatum, non hominum uitiis, sed deorum uestrorum iussis Romae instituti sunt.* [...] *(quod incredibile forsitan erit, si a nostris posteris audietur) Romana urbe uastata, quos pestilentia ista possedit atque inde fugientes Carthaginem peruenire potuerunt, in theatris cotidie certatim pro histrionibus insaniren.* Cf. Augustinus, *De Ciuitate Dei* I, XXXII, 1 ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47, Turnhout Brepols, 1955.

[4] Hieronymus, "*Epistularum Pars I: Epistulae I – LXX*", Recensit Isidorus Hilberg, In: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vol. LIV, Vindobonae, Lipsiae 1910, I, 424, 07–16.

Naturally, then, having pleasure with the comic spectacle is something problematic in Jerome too, and a tool for accusing his rivals: in *Ep.* 147.3, for example, he tells Sabinianus, a deacon who kind of had a love life, that his ascetic ideals might sound absurd to him, since he feels well represented by literary genres in which a man is conquered by desire: *Haec tibi ridicula forte videantur, qui comoedis, et lyricis scriptoribus, et mimis Lentuli delectaris (quamquam ne ista quidem tibi prae nimia cordis hebitudine intellegenda concesserim)* ("All this must seem ridiculous to you, a man who delights in comedies, lyrical writers, and the mimes of Lentulus (even though I cannot grant you even the same clarification as these, due to the abysmal stupidity of your heart)").[5] The problem here is platonic again, if we consider that in the *Republic* (605e – 606a), Socrates condemns poetry for making public – and, therefore, natural – emotions that should be condemned or, at least, kept in private. Sabinianus' pleasure lies in the sense of identification, because watching a man performing such a ridiculous part in front of everyone's eyes made him believe that his behaviors are acceptable. Indeed, Sabinianus is even worse than the protagonists of such forms of art, since an intelligent person could extract valuable lessons from comedy, lyrical poetry and mimes, but nothing good could come from the luxurious deacon, he is worse than a ridiculous character. We follow here, in fact, the interpretation of Labourt for the *Belles Lettres* edition that states, as we have been doing here so far, that, to Jerome, the useful things in these genres of poetry come from the textual basis, not from the performance.[6]

These ideas of Jerome are not, of course, exclusive to him (or to the non-Christians): two centuries earlier, probably in 197, Tertulian, in *De Spectaculis* (I-IV), warned that Christians living in a pagan society should refuse idolatry, what included avoiding spectacles like theater, since they were created as rituals in honor of false gods. Under a possible platonic influence, he declares that the pleasures of the *ludi* incite the passions and destroy the Christian morality (specially *De Spectaculis* XV.98ss): [...] *quam Atellanus gesticulatur, quam mimus etiam per muliebres res repraesentat, sensum sexus et pudoris exterminans, ut facilius domi quam in scaena erubescant* [...] ("[...] the gestures of the actor of Atellanas, when the mime actor represents a woman, destroying the pudor of the sense of sexes in a way that people would blush more easily in home than in the stage [...]" XVII.99). Quoting Tertulian again:

> *Et est plane in artibus quoque scaenicis Liberi et Veneris patrocinium. Quae privata et propria sunt scaenae, de gestu et corporis flexu mollitiae Veneris et Liberi immolant, illi per sexum, illi per luxum dissolutis. Quae vero voce et modis et litteris transiguntur, Apollines et Musas et Minervas et Mercuries mancipes habent.*
>
> Clearly, in these performing arts there is also the patronage of Liber and Venus. They sacrifice to Venus and Liber what is particular and proper to the stage: knowledge, gestures, and the supple flexibility of the body; one for sex, the other for dissolute luxury. This, in turn, is accompanied by

[5] Jérôme, Lettres (VIII) Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1963, VIII, 122, 5 – 8.

[6] Labourt, *Jerome's Lettres*, 1963, p. 121.

> voice, instruments, and lyrics that have Apollos, Muses, Minervas, and Mercuries as their authority (*De Spectaculis*, X.96).[7]

In this sense, Jerome's function in his *theatrum mundi* is to observe, to point and criticize, he is as the poet with his sharp eye, in concentrated silence away from music, voice modulations and dancing, creating his imitation of reality that can be used for moralizing purposes, and, if necessary, he can cut off everything that might be problematic in the *litteris*. At least, that is how Jerome sees Terence: according to the *church father*, before quoting one of his lines, the main function of a *comicus* is to know and describe human behaviors ([...] *cum etiam Comicus, cuius finis est humanos mores nosse atque describere* [...] *Ep.* 54.9).[8] Aristotle (*Poet.* 1448a), one last time, says that poets can imitate reality in a way that people look worse (or better) than they really are to achieve the expected effects. How absurd would it be to act *like* a comic character, and not *better* than one?

We must not forget that Jerome was Donatus' student, the *grammaticus* who wrote several *commentarii* to Vergil and Terence. And, according to him, quoting Evantius: *Comoedia est fabula diversa instituta continens affectum civilium ac priuatorum, quibus discitur, quid sit in uita utile, quid contra evitandum [...] comoediam esse Cicero ait imitationem vitae, speculum consuetudinis imaginem veritatis* ("Comedy is a story containing different habits, the particular passions of citizens, through which one learns what is useful for life and what, on the other hand, should be avoided [...] Cicero says that comedy is an imitation of life, a mirror of customs, a portrait of reality").[9] A former student of Donatus should, of course, take several valuable lessons for life from comedy, but that is a task for the poet (and for Jerome), not for actors, players and singers.

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[7] Tertullianus, *De Spectaculis*, *Corpus Christianorum Latinorum Series Latina*, 1954, Volumes I and II. Tertullian, however, seems to condemn even the creators of this kind of experience (*auctores quorum in nominibus exsecramur*), cf. *De Spectaculis*, X.96. So, to him, there is no sensible difference between the poet and the performer, the acts and the words as we propose in Jerome (*De Spectaculis*, XVII.100). He does comment, nevertheless, as we have been pointing here, that actors, dancers, gladiators, fighters and performers of his time were idols when on the stage but are daily treated like social outsiders (*De Spectaculis*, XXII.102). We must consider, finally, that he is alluding to plays performed on his own times, not exactly the texts of Plautus or Terence, however he still uses the words related to tragedy and comedy as main entertainments of the *ludi*.

[8] Hilberg, *Epistularum I*, 476, 07–09.

[9] Wessner, "*Donatus Commentum Terenti*". Vol II, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, Stuttgart, 1963, *Excerpta de Comoedia* 5.1, here 22, 19.

## 3. Three Terentian *serui callidi* in three polemical letters from Jerome

It is worth recalling that most of Jerome's writings belonged to a polemical[10] context. As Andrew Cain writes,[11] our author aims constantly to build an authority as a champion of orthodoxy not only to his contemporaries, but also to posterity, and his letters were a very appropriate space for this construction. In general terms, the Christian polemic in the period is based on the need to establish a hierarchy between the envoy, the holder of Truth, and, on the other hand, the heretic with bad intentions, or just a useful innocent. In this sense, laughing is an important tool for separating the one who makes people laugh and think, and the one who, in an inferior position, is the target of mockery and excluded from a pact signed between the author and his supposed audience. According to Elaine Sartorelli,[12] polemical texts lie on the fact that the author:

> [...] present themselves foremost as interpreters [...] in other words, as legitimate or legitimized readers of the Scriptures. It is part of the *ethos* of each of them, therefore, to prove, first and foremost, that they are the target audience or the audience capable of receiving the Word; that their reading and interpretation is not only better than others, but the only correct one; and that this passage from reader of the Scriptures to preacher of the Truth can only be a mission.

As we seek to demonstrate here, Jerome's practice illustrates that, following Sartorelli again,[13] in a polemical context, it is only possible to construct an *auctoritas* by deconstructing or destroying an opponent's image. At this point, our interest is clear to demonstrate how humorous devices operate as mechanisms for the self-promotion and delegitimization of others. In this paper, we shall discuss, then, two aspects: the constant intertextuality with Terence's comedies (and his *serui callidi*), and its connection with Pelagianism.

Among all the characters that integrate the Latin comedy's *dramatis personae*, few deserve as much attention as the *seruus callidus*, a deceptive slave who uses his intellect, through deceit, to achieve the goals of his masters, or perhaps, small benefits for himself. The god Mercury, in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, for example, remembers that slaves were *par excellence* characters suitable to comedy (v. 61-62), to the point that he would have to disguise himself as one, so the play could continue (and be considered a *tragicomoe-*

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[10] As Carpinetti reminds us, "controversial" comes from the Greek *polemikon*, carrying the notion of war or combat. It is no coincidence, according to the author, that Jerome's Apology is one of the texts whose vocabulary best reflects this fact, metaphorically, in cases such as *iacula venenata* ("poisoned projectiles"), *tela* ("darts"), *sagittae* ("arrows"), *hastae* ("spears"), *scutum* ("oval shield"), *clipeus* ("shield in the shape of a ridge tile"), etc. Cf. CARPINETTI, Luis Carlos, "O recurso à autoridade dos clássicos e o retrato do adversário como estratégias discursivas na Apologia contra Rufino, de Jerônimo", In: Clássica, v. 15/16, 203–213, São Paulo, here 203, 204.

[11] Cain, Andrew, The letters of Jerome: ascetism, biblical exegesis, and the construction of Christian authority in late Antiquity, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, here 19.

[12] Sartorelli, Elaine, *Estratégias de construção e de legitimação do ethos na causa veritatis: Miguel Servet e as polêmicas religiosas do século XVI*, tese de doutorado apresentada à Universidade de São Paulo 2005, here 8.

[13] Sartorelli, *Estratégias de construção e legitimação*, 9.

*dia*). And Terence, in his prologue to *Eunuchus* (v. 39), says in a long list of examples that having an old man tricked by a clever slave is something central to the *fabula palliata*. Like Gian Biaggio Conte[14] perfectly exposes (about the Plautine comedy): "In the maturest works the center of the action is occupied by a true demiurge, an artist of fraud, a poet who stages the event before everyone's eyes". Typically, then, the *seruus callidus* is like a lower representation of the poet inside the play, since both know other characters profiles and create narratives where they are in control. What meanings could this character have when presented in a intertextual event in Jerome's works?

### 3.1 Jerome's Ep. 112 to Augustine and Terence's Heaut. 761-2: the refusal of being a 'kind of clever' comic slave

Although Jerome and Augustine shared, in general terms, a prestigious reputation as *patres ecclesiae*, their relations were not always cordial, especially on the part of the translator of the Vulgate. It was on the initiative of Augustine, still a priest (he would become bishop of Hippo the following year), that the correspondence between him and Jerome began, with the current *Ep.* 56 of the Jeronimian *corpus*. Jerome's reputation as an exegete had reached Africa,[15] but Augustine proposed a dissenting interpretation about Gal. 2:11-4 in a letter to the monk of Bethlehem. For him, his interlocutor's interpretation that Peter and Paul had agreed on as a dissimulation to preach to the pagans was incorrect.[16] The letter, however, never reached its recipient, as the traveler who carried it took a detour and, by accident, made it circulate in Rome, but not in Bethlehem, where Jerome was then living. Rumors then reached Jerome about a supposed book in Rome by Augustine that denounced him and demanded a retraction. This situation created a misunderstanding permeated by several attacks by Jerome, both in the personal field and in exegetical differences. More than once, for example, Jerome indicated that Augustine was a promising young man, but petulant in his views (on this subject, see in the Jeronimian corpus, *Ep.* 101, 102, 112, 115 and 116).

The Brazilian researcher Felipe Guarnieri noted[17] that *Ep.* 112 could bring a possible allusion to Terence, specifically to Heaut. 761-2: *non possum pati / quin tibi caput demulceam. Accede huc, Syre* ("I can't help but pat you on the head. Come here, Syrus.").[18]

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[14] Cf. Conte, Gian Biaggio, *Latin Literature: a History*, Trans. By Joseph B. Solodow, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1994, here 55.

[15] Jerome was more than twenty years older than Augustine, and, at least during the first moment of their correspondence (394/395 – 405), it seemed that stablishing a connection between them would be more useful to the second one Cf. O'Donell, James, "The authority of Augustine", *AugSt* 22, p. 7–35 here 14.

[16] Cf. Solimeo, Gustavo and Solimeo, Plínio, *O Leão de Belém - São Jerônimo: sua vida, sua obra, sua época*, São Paulo Petrus, 2012, here 78–79.

[17] Cf. Guarnieri, Felipe, *A correspondência entre São Jerônimo e Santo Agostinho: tradução e estudo*, Dissertação de mestrado apresentada à Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2016, here 333.

[18] Terence, "*Heauton timorumenos*", in *Comoediae*, Edited by Robert Kauer and Wallace Lindsay, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, 55–110, here 94.

Jerome writes: *Pratermitto salutationis et officia, quibus meum demulces caput: taceo de blanditiis, quibus reprehensionem mei niteris consolari. Ad ipsas causa veniam*. ("I leave aside all the greetings and protocols with which you pat me on the head: I will be silent about the politeness with which your trust can mitigate my reprehension". *Ep*. 112.2).[19] The pat on the head would thus be a discreet, or even insignificant, reward in the face of a context of greater suffering. Precisely, the act of non-acceptance seems to reveal, paradoxically, a greater proximity between this passage and the comic context.

Our writer, on *Ep*. 112, responds to Augustine's question about their aforementioned disagreement. Jerome felt challenged and positions himself, in our understanding and that of Guarnieri,[20] as a soldier of Christ fighting Augustine in the field of Scripture, supported mainly by the Greek authorities, since his interlocutor, already a bishop, occupied a position superior to his.[21] Jerome felt unfairly questioned by the bishop of Hippo, thus using the metaphor of a pat on the head to refer to the respectful formalities that Augustine addressed to him, but which would be vain attempts to conceal aggressiveness. There would be a clear situational hierarchy, in which a superior, in a condescending posture, is able to give small treats and caresses to console the trajectory of the inferior constantly attacked by himself.

This situation into which Jerome refuses to be part seems to be taken directly from the comedy evoked by the textual allusion. In fact, *Heaut*. 762 is a speech given by Chremes, an elderly character who compliments his slave because his usual tricks had already had the expected effect: *videre egisse iam nescioquid cum sene* ("It seems that you have already dealt with the old man, I don't know how" v. 759). Ultimately, the parodic refusal of Terence's verse would allow us to interpret the reading as denying here, that the relationship between Jerome and Augustine is like that between a *dominus* and a *seruus* in comedy. That is, the person in a superior position – that is, Augustine, the bishop – could offer small privileges and caresses as a way of minimizing inequality, an attitude that can only show that he is a generous master faced with a creative but inferior slave – that is, Jerome.

New layers of understanding are added to this proposal for reenactment when we remember, following Rebenich,[22] that Augustine's main weapon would be the friendly tone he used in controversies, which would be in direct opposition to the intensity of Jerome, "the famous master of polemics" (*ibid*.), who claimed to have an adversary wielding *litum*

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[19] Cf. Hieronymus, "*Epistularum Pars II: Epistulae LXXI – CXX"*, Recensit Isidorus Hilberg, In *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vol. LV Vindobonae Lipsiae, 1912, II, 369, 18 – 20.

[20] Guarnieri, *A correspondência entre São Jerônimo e Santo Agostinho*, 298.

[21] Cf. Williams, Megan, *The Monk and the Book. Jerome and making of Christian scholarship*, Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2006 here 199.

[22] Rebenich, Stefan, "Jerome", *The Early Church Fathers Collection*, Ed. by Carol Harrison, New York Routledge, 2002, here 46.

*melle gladium* ("a sword coated with honey" *Ep*. 105.2).[23] The refusal of the Augustinian friendly tone seems to us to be in line with the questioning of the comic scene of the *seruus callidus* who receives a caress after presumed acts of violence, whether physical, in the comedy, or verbal and intellectual, in the exchange of letters about exegetical affairs. As pointed out in this paper, this first case study reinforces the proposal that the comic characters in Terence's plays have a negative function on the world stage. More than that, every time that we find a *theatrum mundi* event in Jerome's works, the author never accepts to be an actor playing a laughable role, so Augustine is not allowed to assume that he has a superior position that would make him able to use kindness to disguise authority and aggressiveness. In another words: Jerome is not a tool for Augustine to achieve success; he is not a *kind of clever* slave in the real-world comic stage.

### 3.2 Jerome's Ep. 133 to Ctesiphon and Terence's Eun. 24: Pelagianism and the first failed *seruus callidus*

In the previous case study about intertextuality, we showed that being like a *seruus callidus* in the plots of *palliata* can suggest the idea of marginalization, immorality, or intelligence capable only of mobilizing conflicts, but which will not solve them like a real intellectual. However, the clever slave is a more complex figure in Roman comedy that we can consider at the first moment, so the possibilities of intertextual relations are also more diverse.

If we consider the idea that a prototypical *seruus callidus* is a central character for the *fabula palliata*, we must remember that his role as a trickster, besides being immoral, is also originally quite useful for the plot and for performance: usually, he is the one that make people laugh and the *fabula* go on, since he is responsible for removing from the way characters like the *pater iratus* or the *leno* and making fun of them. However, as we previously discussed, creating laughter is a role for Jerome, and not for other people associated with comic characters, so, to our Christian author, his rivals must be like *serui callidi* who only have the bad parts. In other words, we can see a pattern of failed *serui callidi* that are not even capable of doing what was expected of them. And there are two examples of this kind of character from Terence's plays: Parmeno in *Eunuchus* and Geta in *Phormio*. Let us discuss the first one here.

*Ep*. 133 was written to Ctesiphon about the vices of Pelagianism and motivated a response from Annianus later. Here, we have another allusion to Terence, specifically at the end of paragraph 11 of the letter, to *Eun*. 1024, part of a speech by Parmeno, a character who acts close to a *seruus callidus*.[24] The plot of the play was one of the most

[23] Hilberg, *Epistularum II*, 243, 19–20.

[24] The possible allusion was noted in Luebeck, Aemilius, *Hieronymus quos noverit scriptores et ex quibus hauserit*, Leipzig Teubner, 1872, here 113.

famous in Antiquity (Terence's greatest success),[25] and quoted by the same Augustine in his *Confessions* (I.16.26) as a pernicious school reading, mostly because of the scene where Chaerea, disguised as Dorio, a eunuch given to Thaís as a gift, abuses Panfila, her unknown sister. In its Terentian context, Parmeno is reminded by Pythias (*Eun*. 1020-2), a maid in Thais' house, that he will pay a high price for having suggested the plan that Chaereas put into practice. The slave then realizes that his "big mouth" (to adapt the expression) had gotten him into trouble: *egomet meo indicio miser quasi sorex hodie perii* ("Poor me, today I have destroyed myself with my ideas, just like a little mouse").[26] According to Barsby,[27] Donatus (Jerome's *praeceptor*) comments on this passage, explaining that the mouse would be an animal that makes noise when eating, revealing itself to its pursuers even in the dark. The analogy is clear: by talking too much, by overindulging, Parmeno exposed himself to danger.[28]

In Jerome, the adaptation of the verse clearly refers to Pelagius. We then read: *Adversus magistrum perversi dogmatis locuti sumus. Qui si iratus fuerit atque rescripserit, suo quasi mus prodetur indicio, ampliora in uero certamine uulnera suscepturus* ("We speak against the master of these perverse dogmas. If he becomes angry and responds, he will reveal himself, like a mouse, in this true clash and expose himself to new injuries" *Ep*. 133.11).[29] Pelagius would therefore be the one who, by presenting his absurd ideas, would produce evidence against himself, allowing to be attacked. In this sense, more than just the animalization of the rival, there is also the association of him with a scheming and talkative slave, but who cannot sustain himself intellectually and will inevitably be punished.

In this intertextual event, there is, then, a clear parallel between the perverse idea that Parmeno supposedly gives to Chaerea and the dangerous heresies of Pelagius. However, it is even more interesting if we remember that Jerome's rival and the comic slave are not clever villains, but ignorant people saddled with bad intentions. For example, if we take the scene in which the slave and the young man talk to each other, we will see that Parmeno never really wanted to give that suggestion to the *adulescens* in love. The clever slaves discuss the idea of disguising as an absurd joke (*Eun.* 380), but Chaerea had already thought that this idea was brilliant and starts with the plan (*Eun.* 376). Parmeno, indeed, main concern is not to be considered responsible for that (*Eun.* 388).

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[25] According to Suetonius in *Uita Terentii* (II), *Eunuchus* had the honor of being reenacted in the same day and was sold by the greatest amount so far: *"Eunuchus" quidem bis die acta est meruitque pretium quantum nulla antea cuiusquam comoedia, id est octo milia nummorum*.

[26] Terence, "*Eunuchus*", in *Comoediae*, Edited by Robert Kauer and Wallace Lindsay, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, 111–169, here 164.

[27] Cf. Terence, *The Woman of Andros*, *The Self-Tormentor*, *The Eunuch*, Ed. and Transl. By John Barsby, Harvard University Press, London, 2001, here 432.

[28] Regarding the use of expressions equivalent to this in Greco-Roman literature, highlighting Ausonius, Jerome (the case analyzed here), Diogenes, Philemon and Aelian, the citation made by Augustine of this passage, as well as authors later than those discussed in the thesis, cf. Otto, Andreas, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Teubner, Lipsiae in aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1890, here 328–9.

[29] Labourt, VIII, 66, 23 – 26.

The proof that Parmeno is not a master of manipulation (as a good trickster in *fabula palliata* should be) lies precisely in the metaphor with the mouse quoted by Jerome. In that scene, Parmeno was fooled by Pythias, the maid of Thais, a woman who directly wanted to deceive him as a form of personal pleasure and vengeance against the slave. According to her lie, Chaerea was captured because the girl was an Athenian citizen and her father was an influential and violent man who (probably) wanted to castrate the boy as an adulterer: finally, Parmeno was being considered – as he feared – responsible for all of this (*Eun.* 941-970). Due to that lie, Parmeno then tells his old master everything that Pythias invented and made the old man burst into Thais' house and see his son dressed as a eunuch. The maid is quite satisfied laughing at Parmeno and commenting that now he was going to be punished by Chaerea for exposing his secret (*Eun.* 1004-1023). Parmeno has no control over the speech and over the laughing either: indeed, in those scenes, Pythias uses words related to *rideo* five times specifically against him.

So, intertextually, if in Terence's play Parmeno proposes bad plans that stupid people like Chaerea believe, in the Jeronimian *theatrum mundi*, Pelagius creates heresies followed by ignorant people like Annianus. There is an important paradox here, well represented by the functions of Parmeno in Terence's *Eunuch*: he is talkative and stupid, but he does have influence over other people's minds and can make them act in horrible ways, like Chaerea. A failed clever slave can be easily outsmarted by an intelligent person, but the readers should be close to Jerome so they can side with the Truth, and not to some random and weak comic character.

### 3.3 Jerome's Ep. 143.2 to Augustine and Terence's Phorm. 780: a second failed seruus callidus to the Pelagianism

We can reinforce our previous interpretation by comparing it to another reference to the Pelagianism made by Jerome, but here in a letter sent to Augustine (again). Indeed, as time went by and with the fight against Pelagianism, Jerome and Augustine came closer together. In the first case study, we propose an intertextuality when Jerome and Augustine were on opposite sides (at least, if we follow the monk of Betelhem's point of view), In this one, we propose that Augustine is promoted to the position of an ally or a spectator of the comic *theatrum mundi* that Jerome presents.

Still, once again, the image of a not so clever slave is evoked to represent a member of this religious group who must be ridiculed by Jerome. It is Guarnieri,[30] again, who noted that in *Ep.* 143.2 (our author's last letter to the bishop of Hippo), Jerome incorporates a metaphor created by Terence and which had become topical before the Christian author's use of it. It is the expression "to sink in the mud", which is found in *Phorm.* 780, the oldest literary record in Latin: *in eodem luto haesitas* ("You are stuck in the same

[30] Guarnieri, *A correspondência entre São Jerônimo e Santo Agostinho*, 512.

mud").[31] Jerome quotes the verse directly, with a small change in the verb conjugation, since, in the comedy, *haesitare* is conjugated in the second person singular, but in the epistle, it is in the third: *In eodem enim luto haesitat, et exceptis verbis tinnulis atque emendicatis, nihil aliud loquitur* ("He is stuck in the same mire, and except for some shrill sounding and incorrect words, doesn't add anything new").[32] Like in this previous case study, the phrase brought by Jerome is metaphorical (or comparative) and uttered by a creator of deceptions who speaks alone, when he sees himself at risk.

That third person refers to the aforementioned Annianus, translator of St. Chrysostom's homilies into Latin and of a refutation of Jerome's *Ep*. 133, who, in this letter, alludes to a possible connection between him and Pelagianism.[33] Jerome's argument is that responding to Annianus' follies was quite simple. In this way, the metaphor consecrated by Terence in *Phorm*. about being stuck in the same old mud is evoked, in a way that seems to ridicule a rival who continues to insist on habitual errors. Jerome, in this sense, reinforces his strategies, including comparing Pelagius and his follower as failed *serui callidi* and with an interesting demonstration of the principle of *variatio*, finding Geta, an even more boring slave than Parmeno, almost completely deprived of a function as trickster. Clearly, there is an intensification, since Annianus is like his leader, but even less funny.

As one would expect, a brief comparison of the contexts of Terence and Jerome reveals the adaptive process, so that, despite the proximity between the meanings, there is a significant semantic deviation in the second case. Firstly, more than a change in verbal conjugation, we must remember that, in *Phorm*., there is a slave, Geta, talking to himself. So, we have a character analyzing his behavior and what he should do for the future, since immediate concerns have not allowed long-term thinking:

> *GE. argentum inventumst Phaedriae; de iurgio siletur;*
> *provisumst ne in praesentia haec hinc abeat: quid nunc porro?*
>
> *780 quid fiet? in eodem luto haesitas; vorsuram solves,*
>
> *Geta: praesens quod fuerat malum in diem abiit: plagae crescunt,*
> *nisi prospicis. Nunc hic domum ibo ac Phanium docebo*
>
> *ne quid vereatur Phormionem aut eius orationem.*[34]
>
> **Geta:** We've found the money for Phaedria, there is nothing about a lawsuit, and we've arranged things so that the girl can stay for the present… but what of the future? What is going to happen? You are stuck in the same mud, Geta. You're putting off the evil day. The immediate problem has been postponed, but the beatings are multiplying if you don't look out. Now I'll go home and ex-

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[31] Terence, "*Phormio*", in *Comoediae*, Edited by Robert Kauer and Wallace Lindsay, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, 55–226, here 212. According to Barsby, the expression was already proverbial before Terence, cf. Terence, *Phormio*, *The mother-in-law*, *The Brothers*, Ed. and Transl. by John Barsby, Harvard University Press, London, 2001, here 100.

[32] Labourt, VIII, 99, 1 – 3.

[33] Guarnieri, *A correspondência entre São Jerônimo e Santo Agostinho*, 515.

[34] Terence, *Phormio*, 212.

> plain to Phanium that she's not to be afraid of Phormio or anything he says (*Phorm.* 778-783. Transl. by Barsby, 2001, p. 101)

The passage above is a short monologue by the slave Geta. His attitudes are really like the behavior of a typical *seruus callidus*. Thus, "being stuck in the same mud" is analytical (and not condemnatory) of his situation, since Geta feels that, despite his efforts, the problems are not solved. In this sense, Annianus is portrayed as a *seruus callidus* to Pelagianism, his *dominus*: tricky but stuck in a pathetic aporia. The question is that Geta's actions do not cause problems, like Parmeno's: he is just not an intelligent person.

*Phormio*, in fact, is a play by Terence where the function of trickster does not belong to a *seruus callidus* but to the parasite that gives the play its name. It is important that, in Geta's first appearance, he discusses with Davus that he tried to protect his old master's interest during his absence, but suffered violent consequences from his son and nephew, what put him under their services (*Phorm.* 71-79): he will not surpass his interlocutors and will not make the audience laugh about the others, or at least, not as much as Phormio can do, because he is, in many moments, the ridiculous character. Terence, in this sense, opens the play by showing that Geta is not the protagonist, breaking the audience's expectations: he is not the worst, but he is not our ideal trickster either. He can only do what Phormio tells him, that is the reason why he has no idea about what is going to happen latter, as a true *seruus callidus* would claim to have. Terence stresses that idea making the parasite enter the scene a couple of moments later and declares that he has such control of the situation that he can take a break and have some fun:

> ***Phorm.*** *Argentum accepi, tradidi lenoni, abduxi mulierem,*
>
> 830 *Curaui propria ut Phaedria poteretur. Nam emissast manu.*
>
> *Nunc una mihi res etiam restat quaest conficiunda, otium*
>
> *Ab senibus ad potandum ut habeam. Nam aliquot hos sumam dies.*[35]
>
> **Phorm.** I got the money, paid the pimp, took the girl away and made sure that Phaedria can have her all to himself; she's now a free woman. Now I've only one more thing to do: get away from the old man to do some drinking. I'm going to take a few days off.
>
> (Ter. *Phorm.* 829-832. Trans. Barsby, 2001, p. 109)

In this sense, Jerome quotes a specific scene that in the original comedy makes a clear distinction between the characters, in a play that since its beginning, showed that Geta is not a protagonist. Comparing Annianus to this specific *seruus callidus* is a way to show that they are, indeed, both slaves to someone (or some doctrine), but they are not clever at all, since Geta and Jerome's rival cannot add anything by themselves. They are not jokers but simply jokes, and not even the best ones in their concrete or metaphorical contexts. As in our first case study, Jerome's text explores again the idea that a comic clever servant is a role for those unable to be protagonists, intensifying that if Pelagius (like Parmeno) is ridiculous but somewhat dangerous, Annianus (like Geta) is just a secondary character not that funny.

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[35] Terence, *Phormio*, 215.

It is clear, then, that the intertextual events with *serui callidi* are about protagonism, since he is a comic character that attracts more attention than a usual slave in *fabula palliata*. However, this does not happen in the situations brought in this paper: Jerome's rivals are not protagonists in their beliefs, but only tools, or, like Varro once wrote, *instrumenta uocalia* (*De Re Rustica*, I, 17, I), since they can speak, but they make no sense and they are not funny. Surely, this does not mean that they are not dangerous, like Parmeno and Cherea demonstrate. However, as we discussed in this paper, the comic laughing and performance are the most hypnotic resources of a comedy, but unfortunately for Jerome's rivals, they cannot offer even that. If a proper *seruus callidus* is a distorted image of a poet inside a comic plot – as Conte said –, this does not happen in Jerome's intertextual events: if they try to do what he does, that is, to criticize and question, they will fail and be forgotten. As Tertullian wrote before (*De Spectaculis*, XXV.103), the main intention of people who go to theater is to see and be seen, but in this *theatrum mundi*, there is no place for another director, not even a smaller or parodic one: they are simply (bad) examples to be seen by Jerome's audience, who is supposed, on contrary, to be considered better than them.