Reflections on Gestures and Words in Terence's Comedies

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The methodology that has been adopted in the present study is based on an adaptation of communication pragmatics (that has been identified in the field of cybernetics and psychiatry by G. Bateson and more broadly recalled by P. Watzlawick, J. Helmick Beavin, and D.D. Jackson)¹ to classical texts.² Studies based on such a method have also enabled the in-depth study of gestural representation, where gestures are often endowed with the most explicit and intense expression of the quality of the relation at hand, while words more clearly express the content of the interaction itself. This re-elaboration revealed its particular relevance in the field of theatre studies, as its analysis is focused on the systemic dimension of interaction.

This method, starting from certain specific gestural indications that may be found in the written text, allows scholars to retrace the Roman audience's high level of competence in relation to gestural categories as well as their appropriateness and value around Terence's time. Without such competence, comedy playwrights would not have been able to use gestures to create comic effects through precise strategies that will be identified in the course of the present study in the paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2.

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- 1 Watzlawick et al. (1967). Since 1982, such adaption has been carried out by our research group (Licinia Ricottilli, Renata Raccanelli, and Evita Calabrese), which has published a series of studies that re-elaborated the methodological tools of pragmatics of human communication and provided new ones in order to make them more functional in relation to the analysis of literary texts and, in particular, those of ancient Greek and Latin cultures. This re-elaboration has been successfully tested in analysing Greek and Latin authors (e.g. Menander, Plautus, Terence, Virgil, and the philosopher Seneca). This method was easily integrated into the present study, given its shared pragmatic framework with the speech act theory of J.L. Austin.
 - 2 For more on this, see Ricottilli (2009) and a preliminary review of contributions relating to theatre in Ricottilli (2010). The results of the research group until 2009, composed by Licinia Ricottilli, Renata Raccanelli, and Evita Calabrese, have been analysed in the two previously mentioned contributions; as far as the group's publications since 2009 are concerned, providing further confirmation of the validity of such a methodology, along with in-depth analyses that assist in improving and extending its possible applications, see the following selected bibliography: Ricottilli 2018c (including contributions by R. Raccanelli and E. Calabrese); Calabrese (2017a, 2017b, 2018); Raccanelli (2010, 2012, 2016); Ricottilli (2013, 2018a, 2018b).

In paragraph 2.1, the analysis demonstrates how gestures significantly contribute to outlining the profound and noble qualities of the *amicitia* that Chremes offers to Menedemus and that the latter decides to reciprocate. In other words, the study of *humanitas* in Terence's works is enriched and perfected if one considers the characters' gestures as well as their linguistic expressions within a systemic dimension of interaction.

As today, in ancient Rome, face-to-face communication included the use of gestures—both in terms of body language and facial expressions—as well as words. Such gesturing accompanied verbal language in order to prepare, enhance, and emphasise certain specific aspects or to correct and adjust it. Sometimes gestures even substituted verbal messages in order to express something that could not be explicitly voiced, that words were incapable of expressing, or that simply could not be expressed with the same force. In this last case, we may speak of 'doing things with gestures' in the same way things can be done with words.

Unfortunately, recent definitions of gestures do not concur: in the present study, I shall adopt a definition that I elaborated in my book on gestures and words in the *Aeneid*: a definition which is well suited to aid the study of interactions with verbal language. With the word 'gesture', I refer to bodily or facial behaviour that takes on a communicative, informative, or interactive value in relation to a direct addressee or possible observer and that may be controlled by a sender.³

In Terence's comedies, interactions among characters present both cases: doing things with gestures and doing things with words and gestures.

3 Ricottilli (2000: 16). Since the present study provides examples of gestures that are more effective and suitable for the context than words, it carries forth the approach adopted by Corbeill (2004) and Aldrete (2017), who studied the importance and power of gestures in the ancient Roman cultural system and interactions, respectively. Nevertheless, the pragmatic framework that recalls the theories of speech act of J.L. Austin and that of agency of A. Duranti (which have already been used for "powerful words" in Bettini [2004]) and applies them to the gestures that may be found in Latin literature decisively differentiates the present contribution from those by A. Corbeill and G.S. Aldrete, which quote neither J.L. Austin (or J.R. Searle), nor A. Duranti. Another distinguishing element lies in the author's definition of gesture, in that it is narrower than that proposed by Aldrete (2017: 151) but has the advantage of facilitating the comparison between gestural communication and linguistic communication, and therefore that of consolidating the application of "agency" (and more specifically Duranti [2007: 87–122]), which is typical of words, to gestures. Moreover, all of the studies on gestures in ancient Rome are indebted to the pioneering research of Sittl (1890); further useful information has also been provided by numerous more recent studies, among which Brilliant (1963) regarding the fine arts, Maier Eichhorn (1989) and Graf (1991) on orators and actors, Aldrete (1999) on gestural acclamations and Corbeill (2005) on Roman law.

1 Doing Things with Gestures

1.1 Comical Limitations Regarding the Comprehension of Gestures

[1] Terence *Eunuchus* 735–737

- Pyth. nil dixit tu ut sequere sese? Chr. nil, nisi abiens mi innuit.
 Pyth. eho nonne id sat erat? Chr. at nescibam id dicere illam, nisi quia
 correxit miles, quod intellexi minus; nam me extrusit foras.
- Pyth. Didn't she suggest you should follow her?
 Chr. No, except that she nodded to me as she left.
 Pyth. Hey, wasn't that enough?
 Chr. Well, I didn't know what she meant, but the soldier set me straight
 by throwing me out.⁴

The situation is the following: the courtesan Thais, who had brought the young Chremes to the soldier Thraso's home for dinner after a fight with Thraso, leaves while signalling to Chremes to follow her. The young man, who is rather naive, does not understand what Thais is trying to tell him with such a gesture but is given a hint by Thais' maid Pythias.

Innuere has the meaning of 'signalling' that is well known among Terence's contemporaries, precisely as other gestures pertaining to the same family: *adnuere* means 'to say yes, to consent' and *abnuere* 'to say no, to refuse'. According to the classification of Ekman and Friesen, they are emblems that correspond to immediate verbal translation ('Emblems are those nonverbal acts which have a direct verbal translation, or dictionary definition, usually consisting of a word or two, or perhaps a phrase'⁵) and are therefore gestures that could easily attain the value of a speech act.⁶

4 Texts and translations from Terence are taken from Barsby (2001).

5 Ekman and Friesen (1969: 63). From a different perspective, Poggi (1983) classifies these as lexical gestures that correspond to a single word of a language, like pointing to the ground near oneself instead of saying 'here' or rotating one's wrist loosely to say 'very' in modern Italy. On the contrary, holophrastic gestures are the equivalent of a sentence carrying out a performative: for instance, brushing the back of one's hand under one's chin with an outwards movement, in modern Italy, corresponds to the sentence 'I don't care at all'. It contains an informative performative (i.e. an 'expositive act' according to Austin [21975: 161–163]), consisting in my informing someone that I do not care about something or someone at all. Facial expressions are usually holophrastic: for example, a happy face expression conveys the message 'I am happy', while a sideways glance (see Homeric ὑπόδρα ἰδών or Latin *acerba tuens*,

In Aelius Donatus' comment to Terence's comedies, Chremes' comical naivety is underlined, and, above all, the perfect comprehensibility of Thais' gesture is confirmed:⁷

[2] Donatus *ad Eunuchum* 736.1

EHO NONNE ID SAT ERAT adeo simplex hic inducitur adulescens, ut a Pythia reprehendi possit. Nam quid opus fuit dicere, si innuit?

'Hey, wasn't that enough?'] Here the young man [scil. Chremes] is portrayed as being so naive that he is scolded by Pythias. In fact, what need was there for Thais to speak if she had sent him a signal?⁸

Such a scholium provides explicit recognition of the fact that gestures, compared to verbal language, sometimes have the ability to express messages that are directed at the addressee more efficiently or in accordance with the needs of the context at hand. At that time, like nowadays, communicative competence required the ability to decode gestures that, among other things, were preferable to verbal messages in delicate situations such as the conflict between Thais and the soldier. Such gestures are often signs of understanding that the addressee must not miss: Chremes is a foreigner to the ways of life in the city so that he does not understand them, just as he does not understand the situation he finds himself in. Naturally, all of this has the effect of making the audience laugh.⁹

Once inserted in the context, a gesture like *innuere* acquires a specific value as a speech act (according to Poggi [1983], lexical gestures or emblems do not contain a particular performative value like holophrastic gestures, so they draw

lumine toruo) corresponds to the sentence 'I am angry with you' or 'I despise you'. In these cases, we have an informative performative as well.

- 6 Other emblems, along with the ones that have previously been seen, consist in gestures used to greet when meeting or leaving someone. See, for example, Capponi in this volume.
- 7 As is known, this is a comment in which the reflections of earlier scholars, e.g. Valerius Probus and Aemilius Asper, converged. For a comment by Donatus on Terence, see in particular Ferri (2016: 256): 'Donatus comments on another use of deictic pronouns and adverbs, in which the speakers use deixis to form elliptical, highly idiomatic sentences which need an accompanying gesture to acquire meaning for an interlocutor'; see also Basore (1908); Madyda (1953); Thomadaki (1989).
- 8 The translations of the *Commentum Terenti* are mine.
- 9 Some commentators explain that Chremes' inability to comprehend the nod was due to his drunkenness, but such a theory does not conform to his own words (736 *at nescibam id dicere illam*) or to the scholium quoted as text [2].

it from the context in which they appear). In this case, the performative value of the gesture appears to be the requestive ‘follow me’ gesture, which corresponds to *sequere me* in Latin. Austin (201975: 155–157) speaks of ‘exercitive acts’.¹⁰

From a relational point of view, the agreement on the action to be carried out, which is necessarily conveyed by Thais as not to be immediately grasped by the *miles*, does not take place right away, due to Chremes’ comical inability to understand the language of gestures. Nevertheless, in the course of the comedy, such an agreement between the courtesan and the young man will be gradually instated and attain the relationship of *amicitia* that Thais desired: naturally, in this case, it consists of a clientele form of *amicitia* between *patronus* and *cliens*, with the *meretrix* taking on the role of *cliens* and young Chremes that of *patronus*.

Overall, the verb *innuere*, which recurs in Plautus and Terence, does not appear often in prose and even less frequently in poetry.¹¹

In Terence’s plays, the verb *innuere* occurs three times—one of which has already been examined—and in all three cases, there is a requestive performative (i.e. an exercitive act in the terminology of Austin [201975: 155–157]). Thus, in Ter. *Ad.* 170, young Aeschinus commands a slave to beat the *leno* Sannio by means of a gesture.

[3] Terence *Adelphoe* 170–171

caue nunciam oculos a meis oculis quoquam demoueas tuos,
ne mora sit, si innuerim, quin pugnus continuo in mala haereat.

Now make sure you don’t take your eyes off mine. If I nod, don’t wait. Plant your fist in his jaw instantly.

This passage represents, quite well, the need for the slave to be attentive to his owner’s slightest gesture and ready to obey. The nod (*nutus*), which is generally executed with the head or sometimes with the eyes or eyebrows, conveys the order in precisely the same manner as verbal language and, not by coincidence the term *nutus* may also mean ‘command’.

The confirmation of this other meaning is offered by

10 For more on this, see also Sbisà (1989: 113–130).

11 The use of the verb *innuere* in Plin *Ep.* 7.27.9 is also noteworthy.

[4] Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 5.61

tum ad mensam eximia forma pueros delectos iussit consistere eosque
nutum illius intuentes diligenter ministrare.

Then he told chosen slave-boys of exceptional beauty to stand by the
table, watch for his nods, and wait on him attentively.¹²

In its third appearance in Terence's plays, the value of *innuere* is the same as in
the second, which may be found a few verses earlier:

[5] Terence *Adelphoe* 173–174

Aes. geminabit nisi caues. San. ei miseriam!

Aes. non innueram, uerum in istam partem potius peccato tamen.

Aes. He'll do it again if you don't look out.

San. (*as Parmeno strikes him again*) Ow! That hurts! (*he loosens his grip
on the girl*)

Aes. (*to Parmeno*) I didn't nod. But it's a fault in the right direction.

1.2 A Singular Language of Courtship

[6] Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 369–373

sed heus tu, uide sis ne quid imprudens ruas.
patrem nouisti ad has res quam sit perspicax.
ego te autem noui quam esse soleas impotens.
inuersa uerba, euersas ceruices tuas,
gemitus, screatus, tussis, risus abstine.

But listen, please make sure you don't spoil everything by being careless.
You know how keen-scented your father is for this sort of thing; and I
know how headstrong you can be. None of your double meanings, side
glances, sighs, throat clearing, coughs, laughs.

12 Text and translation are taken from Douglas (1990); this is the famous episode of Damocles' sword.

Here the slave Syrus, while leading Bacchis, the courtesan beloved by Clitipho, to his owner's home while pretending that her lover is the young Clinia, reminds his young owner to not betray himself before his father, Chremes, with communicative behaviour that could reveal that he is the *meretrix*'s lover.

Gestures of courtship and seduction appear, for instance, in the famous verses of Naevius' *Tarentilla*:

[7] Naevius *Tarentilla* 74–76¹³

quasi pila
in choro ludens datatim dat se et communem facit.
alii adnutat, alii adnctat, alium amat, alium tenet.

As though she were playing at ball, give-and-take in a ring, she makes herself common property to all men. To one she nods, at another she winks; one she caresses, another embraces.¹⁴

It seems to pay homage to such verses by emphasising the furtive nature of the gestures:

[8] Plautus *Asinaria* 784

neque illa ulli homini nutet, nictet, annuat.

She shall not nod, wink, or make any signs to any man.¹⁵

This is one of the clauses of the comical contract that the parasite drew up for young Diabolus; in exchange for twenty silver *minae*, this contract granted exclusive possession of the courtesan Filenia for one year.

If we compare the two preceding examples with Terence's verses, we may notice that in Syrus' list of prohibited behaviours there are certain comical modifications having the intent of highlighting Clitipho's excesses, like *euertere ceruices*, which indicates an unnatural position of the neck that is so unexpected and exaggerated that it made the audience laugh.

13 For more on this, see the excellent analysis in Traina (⁵2000: 34–35); for more on the complexity of the problems related to these verses, Barchiesi (1978: 67–150) is of fundamental importance.

14 Text and translation are taken from Warmington (²1961).

15 Texts and translations of Plautus are taken from de Melo (2011–2013).

While the context specifies that this gesture has the intent of making his beloved notice him, the ancient commentator's various explanations do not clarify whether this entails tilting one's neck backwards which, by analogy with the term *abnuo*, could indicate a proud refusal, or pride in general, as Eugraphius asserted in his comment to *Heautontimorumenos*:

[9] Eugraphius *ad Heautontimorumenum* 372

EVERSAS CERVICES TUAS quod iactantia et superbia est.

YOUR SIDE GLANCES (gesture) that indicates exhibitionism and pride¹⁶

and is partially confirmed in

[10] *Scholia Terentiana ad Heautontimorumenum* 372 Schlee

EVERSAS dissolutas et supinas, huc illucque reuertentes.

SIDE the (neck) is relaxed, tilted backwards, and turns here and there.¹⁷

In this scholium, exhibitionism is associated with a sideways turn of the neck, which also has the aim of drawing attention.

Another possible interpretation refers to the opposite movement of the neck, i.e. downwards, as confirmed by

[11] *Scholia Bembina ad Heautontimorumenum* 372 Mountford

EVERSAS infractas, inflexas, amatorieque deiectas.

SIDE the (neck) is loose, bent, and directed downwards as is typical of a person in love.¹⁸

16 The translations of Eugraphius' *Commentary* are mine. An analogous use is present in Sen. *Ben.* 2.13.2 *libet itaque interrogare, quid se tanto opere resupinet, quid uultum habitumque oris peruertat, ut malit personam habere quam faciem?* 'And so I feel like asking why a donor is so stuck up, why he contorts his facial expression so much that he seems to prefer a mask rather than a normal face.' (the translation is taken from Griffin and Inwood 2011).

17 My translation.

18 My translation.

More recent studies translate it with 'storcere il collo' ('to twist the neck') Ronconi (1960) and similarly: e.g. 'tes contorsions du cou' ('your contortions of the neck') Marouzeau (1942–1949 11); Lietzmann (1974) translates *euertere* with 'umdrehen, verdrehen'; Barsby (2001) recurs to the expression 'side glances', and Bianco (1993) 'storcere la testa' ('to twist the head').¹⁹

It is very difficult to recreate with certainty a gesture that is executed in a singular and comical manner, even when it is located within a verbal context (although we do not have clear indications about the context, which could have been a banquet imagined by Syrus) and in the presence of a clear intent, i.e. drawing the attention of the woman one loves. The fact that the term *euersas* is chosen, among other things, in order to achieve a *paronomasia* with *inuersa uerba*, must be taken into consideration. After all, one must keep in mind that a gesture is never a perfect equivalent of words.

In this case, the performative is requestive along the same lines as saying 'look at me' or 'pay attention' to his beloved.

Moreover, if *risus* indicates laughter and not smiles, then this facial gesture would also be too obvious to be part of a sort of knowing and refined courtship that must only be understood by its addressee.

The series of paralinguistic behaviours that Syrus imagines could be attributed to Clitipho include *gemitus*, *screatus*, and *tussis*; however, while *gemitus* could be considered appropriate should it be executed with scarcely any sound, the other two (*screatus*—a *hapax legomenon*— and *tussis*) have a comical effect because they are more readily associated with an old phlegmy man than an *amans ephebus*.

Eugraphius (*ad Heautontimorumenum* 373) proposes a different explanation: *GEMITUS SCREATUS TUSSIS haec omnia adolescentuli faciunt, quotienscumque uidere aut uideri uolunt ab his, quos desiderant, ita sub quodam metu, ut, quasi dum aliud necessitate conficiunt, sic impleant uoluntatem*: 'young men do all this whenever they want to see or be seen by the people they care about, if they are under the influence of a certain fear, so they may satisfy their desire while, so to say, executing "something else" out of duty'. The mention of a secret sort of communication between the *adulescentuli*, despite their fear while they are compelled to accomplish something else, seems to be a scholastic situation, rather than a courtship that must remain a secret.

19 Different translations: Wagner (1872) compares it to Ov. *Her.* 16.233 *uersa ceruice recumbo* 'I stretch by turning my head in the opposite direction' and observes that 'dem gegenüber *euersae* komisch klingt beinahe "aus dem Gelenke gedreht"'. Brothers (1988) interprets it as 'those over-the-shoulder glances of yours', while Gray (1902) chooses 'to crane his neck in the hope of catching sight of her'.

The *scholia Bembina ad loc.* refer to the furtive convening between the lovers *GEMITUS*—*RISUS quae faciunt amantes ad conuertendos in se oculos eorum quos amant ut significare furtim aliquid mutuo nutu possint*: 'things that lovers do to make their beloved's eyes turn towards them, so that they may communicate in secret by means of a mutual nod'. Interestingly enough, three paralinguistic notations (*gemitus*, *screatus*, and *tussis*) and one gesture (*risus*) are summarised and explained with a mutual nod (*mutuus nutus*). The situation is thus enriched with elements that are not present and defer to common forms of communication between lovers. The *scholia Terentiana ad loc.* have: *SCREATUS screare est spuere et phlegma purgare* 'coughing up phlegm involves spitting and eliminating moist humour', which is more faithful to the comical tone of the context.

We cannot exclude the possibility that the actor who personified Syrus could have emphasised these bodily and paralinguistic singularities in his reciting, thus increasing the audience's entertainment.²⁰

The enjoyment of the spectators at seeing how Clitipho betrays himself before his father must have been even greater, surpassing the comical expectations that had been triggered by the slave. In fact, instead of the inappropriate and ridiculous use of gestures and paralinguistic behaviour, the young man, who is even more incapable of controlling himself than Syrus had foreseen, directly takes action and is discovered by his father, Chremes, while slipping his hand over the courtesan's breast. This obviously is an action rather than a gesture:

[12] Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 562–564

Chr. quid istuc, quaeso? qui istic mos est, Clitipho? itane fieri oportet?
 Clit. quid ego feci? Chr. uidin ego te modo manum in sinum huic meretrici inserere?

Chr. Tell me, what are you up to? What sort of behaviour's this, Clitipho?
 Is this the proper way to act?

Clit. What have I done?

Chr. Didn't I see you just now putting your hand inside that woman's bosom?

20 For more on the margin of freedom that actors enjoyed when performing, see Panayotakis (2005).

Clitipho is *impotens*, as Syrus claims (371), and incapable of controlling his amorous desires, but there is probably an anthropological factor in this sequence of behaviours that is relevant for that time, i.e. the possibility that simulating could be disreputable for an *adulescens*. In comedies, simulation is often naturally part of comical games based on successful or unsuccessful deceptions, and as such may also involve free characters (see, for example, Ter. *Phorm.* 210). Nevertheless, there may be reflections of the negative value that it had at the time—especially in political, judicial, and commercial contexts—and that was destined to be expressed efficiently by Cicero.²¹ In the same comedy, Clitipho's father, Chremes, refuses to actively participate in the scam weaved by the slave Syrus:

[13] Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 781–784

Syr. ... non ego dicebam in perpetuom ut illam illi dares,
uerum ut simulares. Chr. non meast simulatio.
ita tu istaec tua misceto ne me admisceas.
egon, quoi daturus non sum, ut ei despondeam?

Syr. ... I wasn't suggesting that you should give her to him permanently,
but just pretend.

Chr. Pretence is not my way. You do your stirring but keep me out of the
pot. Engage her to a man I don't intend to marry her to?

The fact that gestures of seduction are typical of courtesans in Naevius' *Tarentilla* does not seem to be a coincidence; likewise, the simulated seduction is only in Syrus', the slave's, mind, while his young free owner, Clitipho, is not pretending and reveals himself bluntly and directly.

The mentality of Ovid's time seems to have greatly changed and, in his *Amores*, the poet personally plays with the furtive gestures of hidden courtship:

[14] Ovid *Amores* 1.4.17–19

me specta nutusque meos uultumque loquacem;
excipe furtiuas et refer ipsa notas.
uerba superciliis sine uoce loquentia dicam.

21 In Cicero, the act of simulating damaged the credibility of a person and the accusation of simulating was used as a weapon to strike an adversary: see Cic. *Pis.* 1; *Clu.* 72; *Rab. Post.* 35; *Red. Sen.* 15; for more on this in general, see also *Off.* 2.43, 3.61; see also Sall. *Cat.* 31.7.

Keep your eyes on me, to get my nods and the language of my eyes; and catch my stealthy signs, and yourself return them.²²

2 Doing Things with Words and Gestures

2.1 *Gestures That Intensify the Expression of a Feeling*

In the opening scene of the *Heautontimorumenos*, Menedemus bursts into tears during his exchange with Chremes, who invites him to stop crying and confide in him and promises to help him.

[15] Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 83–86

Men. eheu!

Chr. ne lacruma atque istuc quidquid est fac me ut sciam.
ne retice, ne uerere; crede, inquam, mihi.
aut consolando aut consilio aut re iuvero.

Men. (*sobbing*) Oh dear, oh dear!

Chr. Don't weep. Whatever your trouble is, tell me all about it; don't keep it to yourself. Don't be afraid; trust me, I say. I'll help you whether you need consolation or counsel or money.

A *senex* who sheds tears on the stage amounts to a situation that is very different from those in Plautus' works due to the role of the character who is crying and Terence's respect for him.²³ The different portrayal of the *senex* in Plautus is particularly evident in the case of the *senex amator* who becomes his son's rival over desire for a woman and, on the basis of the anthropological context, is destined to be defeated and even punished or at least mocked.²⁴ At the end of this first scene, the two elderly men, who have become friends, take their leave and Chremes, now alone, speaks in a brief monologue of his profound compassion for his neighbour, one so intense that it made him cry. At this point, the audience learns that Chremes has also shed tears:

22 The translation is taken from Showerman (1963); analogous examples may be found in Ov. *Am.* 2.5.15–20; *Her.* 17.79–92.

23 See Dutsch (2008: 96–97) who, in referring only to *flere* and *plorare*, observes how Terence, as opposed to Plautus, avoids presenting characters who cry loudly on stage.

24 See Bettini (1982: 72–77).

[16] Terence *Heautontimorumenos* 167–168

lacrumas excussit mihi
miseretque me eius.

He made me shed a tear, and I'm sorry for him.

The gesture of crying is holophrastic and generally presents an informative performative (a 'behabitive act' in the terminology of Austin [21975: 160–161]).

In this case, as opposed to the previous one, the mention of tears does not occur simultaneously, but in retrospect. The old man's emotional involvement before his neighbour's suffering was already perceivable from the conversation between the two. Then why does Terence have the *senex* say something that could have been understood by what preceded the monologue? In truth, there are various reasons for this.

One of these consists in a peculiar feature of Terence's monologues, which appear, from a communicative point of view, like a dialogue between one part of the 'Ego' that expresses its feelings, reflects on what has happened, informs on the facts, and another part of the 'Ego' that may be a silent speaker that only listens or an active conversant who asks, comments, and contests (e.g. in *Phorm.* 185–190).²⁵ For this reason, what a character says in the absence of others in a dialogue with one's self is conventionally considered a sincere expression of their feelings. In other words, the compassion that Chremes feels for Menedemus is not a ruse to gain something from the conversation but rather a true sentiment that Chremes perceives in himself and is therefore presented by the poet as sincere compassion.

In particular, the effect that is obtained by Chremes' tears, i.e. the intensification of mercy, is a valid reason for this retrospective mention. The gesture, in this case, is therefore a display of affection, or proof of emotions.

The third reason may be found in the author's desire to add an element that integrates and confirms the portrayal of the two *senes* as well as their relationship. In this case, in fact, we have contagious tears (or a contagion of tears): the fact that the friendship between the two *senes* had already been instituted is attested precisely by their mirroring one another's gesture of crying and is confirmed in the course of the comedy by the way in which the events unfold.²⁶ The

25 For more on Terence's monologues, see Haffter (21969: 55, with the comment of D. Nardo, 129); Denzler (1968); Minarini (1995).

26 See Lefèvre (1994). An important anthropological investigation on friendship in Plautus'

contagion of tears reveals not only Chremes' emotional involvement before his friend's suffering but especially the intensity and nobility of such involvement.²⁷

The presence of painful situations that are indicated by tears must not be excluded in comedies: the expectation, however, is that situations of suffering are concentrated at the beginning of the comedy and gradually decrease as problems are solved by fate or the characters' intervention and reach a peaceful ending. In *De comoedia*, Evanthius underlines such a feature:

[17] Evanthius *De comoedia* 4.2

illic [scil. in comoedia] prima turbulenta, tranquilla ultima, in tragoedia contrario ordine res aguntur.

[In comedies] the opening scenes are turbulent, the final serene; in tragedies, the order of the scenes is the contrary.²⁸

Such an expectation is confirmed by positioning tears in the initial scenes of the comedy and rigorously eliminating them in the final scene.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the most relevant findings of the present analysis, consisting of specific cases from Terence's works, include the following:

1. The significant knowledge of the second century BC Roman audience in relation to the use of gestures during face-to-face exchanges is confirmed. On the basis of such competence, comic playwrights may entertain the audience by emphasising, e.g., young Chremes' comical limitations in his ability to understand the meaning of gestures (1.1).

comedies may be found in Raccanelli (1998). For further details on contagious tears in Terence, see Ricottilli (2018a: 154–166).

27 Some critics do not seem to have paid much attention to the elements that reiterate the character's positive portrayal: as a result, an unjustified tradition of antipathy in relation to it has emerged. For example, Perelli (1973: 51) sustains that Chremes 'viene sempre fatto sentenziare a vanvera', while Brothers (1988: 20, 168) portrays Chremes as a busy body.

28 My translation.

2. Specific types of relations, e.g. courtship, featured distinctive and appropriate gestures: the comical plot twists created by such gestures were an excellent opportunity to entertain the audience and were employed by the slave Syrus to underline young Clitipho's inability to control his passion for the *meretrix* Bacchis. The enjoyment of the spectators at seeing how Clitipho betrays himself before his father must have been all the greater, surpassing the comical expectations that had been triggered by the slave (1.2).
3. Small clues emerge from the written text by means of which it is possible to reconstruct some of the comical plays on gestures that were, for the most part, improvised by the actor during performances and otherwise would have been irretrievable (1.2).
4. The way in which interacting characters influence each other's behaviour may be studied in light of the methodology of communication pragmatics. Such a close connection between different characters' behaviour clearly surfaces in the course of the exchanges between Chremes and Menedemus (2.1).²⁹
5. Gestural notations represent necessary keys to understanding the quality of the relationships that are established among characters in Terence's theatrical works, as well as Chremes' profound nobility, which is revealed by his contagion of tears (2.1).

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²⁹ See Ricottilli (1994: 191–205).

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