

Body-text in Herondas' mimes

It is not surprising that in Herondas' mimes there is a strong concentration on terms referring to the corporal anatomy in passages where slaves are involved, especially when realizing that they have to do with scenes in which body punishment -a usual social practice and a typical farce routine- is executed or threatened. The selection of anatomical details is inspired by the type of torture. Human body is pictured as a series of parts (mostly front, head, neck, belly and ankles) –instead of a complete unit- where the eloquence of the punitive action remains inscribed. The body of slaves is no longer an expression of their self-definition but a witness of their master's emotions or interests. Their humanity status being reduced due to mutilation or disability, the idea assigning to the slave body the value of an object of exchange is reinforced. Metaphorically, the corporal appearance is associated to animal features: slaves have snouts in the place of noses and eyes as big as those of crabs, deformities that turn them vulnerable to comic ridicule.

But there are other implications in this. These extremely short but frequent passages where the body of slaves takes the control of the action -I will argue- could be taken as an evidence of the effective theatricality of these mimes. Words seem to stand in the second place, preceded by gesture. It is the physical situation of the static body of the slave which forces the character to say what he/she says. Besides, it is worth considering how, by means of acting, the painful body experience of slaves becomes something comic.

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Panel: Language of the body
Length: 20 minutes