RAPE IN TERENCE
BECAUSE WHAT’S FUNNIER THAN RAPE?
LATIN 501 REPORT, AARYN BREWER

I. Rape in Greek and Roman New Comedy
   a. Rape as a standard plot
      i. Typical motifs
      ii. Motivations for the use of rape as a theme
   b. Roman law regarding rape

II. Rape in Terence
   a. Rape appears as a theme in four of Terence’s six known comedies
      i. The rape is particularly striking in Hecyra and Eunuchus
   b. Eunuchus specifically
      i. Is Chaerea accountable for his actions?
      ii. Violence of rape vs. violence of Thraso’s attack
      iii. Rape as marriage?
   c. Audience response
      i. In modern times
      ii. In ancient times
   d. Terence’s depictions of rape differ to some extent from the norm
      i. Discusses rape through the mouths of female characters
      ii. Fails to show perpetrators as remorseful
   e. How does Terence view rape?
      i. James (1998) suggests that Terence has a very negative view of rape, seeing it as a threat to society

III. Conclusion
   a. The question of how T views rape is moot; these differences represent neither one perspective or another on the matter, but rather seek to enjoin his audience to reflect
   b. So what does he want them to reflect on?
      i. The use of the rape theme in New Comedy
         1. Applied antithetically to Plautus’ version of metatheater; here used to create a more sober and serious attitude toward the work
         2. As a criticism (or perhaps merely discussion) of the inherent artificiality of the typical motifs of his own genre, while nevertheless working within the recognized themes of that genre.
   c. Terence is not trying to make the rape more or less palatable to his audience, but rather trying to offer them either:
      i. the opportunity to take this at face value and be satisfied with a happy ending by operating within the genre, OR
      ii. the means to question the broader themes—rape, masculinity, self-control, etc.

BIBLIOGRAPHY