

## A Philosophical Stage: Cicero's Use of Terence in the *De Senectute*

In recent years, Cicero's philosophical corpus has received increasing attention (Atkins 2021, Gilbert 2023). Topics of inquiry have ranged from Cicero's engagement with his hellenistic influences to his attempts to establish a Roman philosophical discourse (Fantham 2004, Lévy 2021). However, a significant source of inspiration for Cicero's philosophical works has yet to be thoroughly addressed: Roman comedy. By the time of Cicero, the Roman Republic had an established theatrical tradition (Manuwald 2011). Of the complete texts surviving from that time, Terence's *fabulae palliatae*, "plays in Greek attire", have the reputation of being more metatheatrical and philosophical than those of Plautus (Manuwald 2019). This philosophical streak in Terence's *palliatae* can be traced through Menander and Greek New Comedy (Fantham 1984, Papaioannou 2015). In this paper, I will examine how Terence as Roman playwright functions as a Latin interlocutor for Cicero's philosophical works.

Some study has been given to the disciplinary exchange between Roman theater and Ciceronian oratory given their mutual need for skilled speech delivery (Connolly 2007, Hall 2014). However, Cicero's own interest in theater stretches beyond rhetorical training. Given the popularity of Roman theater, it is hardly surprising that Cicero references plays as a cultural touch point in his oratory and philosophy, but he also defends the actor Roscius and mentions theater in his letters (Sharrock 2009, Schierl 2015, Hanses 2020). Perhaps surprising to modern audiences is Cicero's attention to comedy. We might expect a serious orator like Cicero to be most concerned with the serious matters in historical and mythological plays. However, the moralizing of ancient comedy was not an uncommon practice (Freydberg 2008, Billings 2021). At their most basic level, *palliatae* have the potential to teach moral lessons with stock characters

functioning similarly to exemplary figures (Papaioannou 2018). I will argue, however, that Cicero's use of Terentian reference in the *De Senectute* is not only a retroactive moralization, but an assumption of Terence as a Roman poetic and philosophical authority to which the dialogue is a deliberate intertext.

This paper will narrow its scope to Terence's *Andria* and Cicero's *De Senectute*. I will first look at Cicero's explicit engagement with Terence. Then, I will compare their similar textual structures, beginning with their prologues, and trace common themes between the two works. The most noticeable shared theme between the texts is old age which is the very topic of Cicero's dialogue and the defining characteristic of Roman comedy's *senex*. This analysis will provide a basis for engaging Terence as source for Roman philosophical thought and shed light on the Latin literary tradition in which Cicero situated his philosophical works.

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