

Jerome's *persona satirica* and the Reception of Terence's Comedy

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG • In diesem Beitrag wird die traditionelle Bezeichnung *satiricus* erörtert, die der literarischen *persona* des Hieronymus im Laufe der Jahrhunderte aufgrund seiner neugierigen und moralisierenden Haltung, die er in vielen Texten durch Lachen zum Ausdruck bringt, verliehen wurde. Wir schlagen eine alternative Interpretation vor, die besagt, dass seine gutgelaunten Kritiken, die die Gesellschaft moralisieren sollen, oft ein anderes literarisches Genre widerspiegeln: das der Komödie. Durch die Analyse dreier Fälle von Hieronymus' Rezeption von und Intertextualität mit Terenz zeigen wir, dass der Vergleich mit einem komischen Autor und mit dem spezifischen Modell von Terenz durch Texte des Hieronymus gestützt werden kann. Terenz gilt nämlich als Moralapostel und einer der vier größten Dichter der Antike. Nach der Rezeption in anderen christlichen Texten scheint die spezifische „terenzianische Schreibweise“ in der Tat erhabener und sanfter zu sein, um die Gesellschaft zu korrigieren, als der Ansatz eines Satirikers, der übertrieben und verletzend sein könnte. Der Gemeinplatz des *theatrum mundi* ist in vielen Texten des Hieronymus präsent: Die Welt wird als eine bössartige komische Bühne dargestellt, die von einem Autor moralisch korrigiert werden muss, der, obwohl er Christ ist, den Mechanismus der lächerlichen Komik nachstellt, um seine Meinung zu verteidigen und seine Leser zu provozieren, damit sie nicht so lächerlich werden wie die komischen Figuren.

SCHLAGWORTE • Hieronymus, Terenz, Satiriker, Komiker, Rezeption

ABSTRACT • This paper discusses the traditional label of *satiricus* that has been applied to Jerome's literary *persona* through the centuries because of his inquisitive and moralizing posture through laughter in many texts. We propose an alternative interpretation that suggests that his well-humoured criticisms, intended to moralize society, often reflect another literary genre: that of comedy. Through the analysis of three cases of Jerome's reception of, and intertextuality with, Terence, we show that being compared to a comic writer and to the specific model of Terence can be supported by Jeromian texts. Terence, in fact, ranks as a moralizer and one of the four greatest poets from Antiquity. Indeed, according to its reception in Jerome's texts, the specific "Terentian way of writing" seems more elevated and softer for correcting society than the approach of a satirist who might be excessive and hurtful. So, the *theatrum mundi* commonplace is present in many works of our writer: the world is pictured as like a vicious comic stage that must be morally fixed by an author who, despite being a Christian, recreates the ludic comic mechanism to defend his opinion and provoke his readers to avoid being as ridiculous as comic characters.

KEYWORDS • Jerome, Terence, satirist, comic, reception

The idea that Saint Jerome was a Christian satirist author has often been discussed. In many of his letters, for example, Jerome himself reports that his rivals called him a satirist, mainly to disqualify his thinking. More than ten centuries after Jerome, in a much more favorable perspective, Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote in the preface to his *Praise of Folly*¹ that Jerome was a Christian author who used humor and sarcasm, like Juvenal, the ancient satirical poet, to fight against human vices; accordingly, based on Jerome's example, one would be allowed to do the same thing, though Jerome was somewhat more excessive than Erasmus.

Even in the Academy, the association of Jerome to the satire is something common, as we are going to demonstrate in this paper: for that, we want to discuss three important researchers who dealt with the question of St. Jerome as a satirist: David Wiesen, Kennett Abott and Paul Carroll. As we shall see, generally, their approaches defend that the *pater ecclesiae* used humour in his texts to make criticisms of his own time and tried, like a satirist, to reform society, even taking commonplaces from the genre to do so. However, despite this consecration, our intention here is to propose a different and complementary perspective to interpret that vision: what if we can see in Jerome not only a new satirical writer but a new comic one? More than that: how precisely can we trace the borders between these two genres which influenced our author?

We must start by trying to define what "satire" meant in Antiquity. Diomedes in the 1st century AD declared that it was *dicitur carmen apud Romanos nunc quidem maledicum et ad carpenda hominum uitia archaeae comoediae caractere conpositum, quale scripserunt Lucilius et Horatius et Persius* ("Satire is told to be a poem that circulates among the Romans to imprecate and contain the human vices. It was composed on the characters from the old comedy. Lucilius, Horace and Persius wrote it", Diomedes, III. 485,30)². "Satire" is here presented as a substantive that names a specific poetic genre descending from old comedy, dedicated to fight against human vices and that was founded and cultivated by a small group of writers. Apparently, since Diomedes, satire is conceived as a poetic genre dedicated to reform society: if that was truly its "literary mission", it is tempting to connect Jerome to the genre, in those excerpts in which he makes criticisms to his times. However, we would like to point out that, according to the ancient author, characters and situations of satire were built upon comic models. Then it is possible to propose that even the stock situations and characters apparently taken by Jerome from satire can be

¹ *At enim qui uitas hominum ita taxat, ut neminem omnino perstringat nominatim, quaeso utrum is mordere uidetur, an docere potius, ac monere? Alioqui quot obsecro nominibus ipse me taxo? Praeterea qui nullum hominum genus pretermittit, is nulli homini, uitii omnibus iratus uidetur. Ergo si quis exstiterit, qui sese laesum clamabit, is aut conscientiam prodet suam, aut certe metum. Lusit hoc in genere multo liberius ac mordacius diuus Hieronymus, ne omnibus quidem aliquoties parcens* ("And to criticize men's lives without mentioning any names – I ask you, does this look like sarcasm, or rather warning and advice? Again, on how many am I not my own self-critic? Furthermore, if every type of man is included, it is clear that all the vices are censured, not any individual. And so, anyone who protests that he is injured betrays his own guilty conscience, or at any rate his apprehensions. St. Jerome amused himself in this way with far more freedom and sarcasm, sometimes even mentioning names", Erasmus, *Moriae enc. Praef.* 52–57). Erasmus, "Moriae encomium id est stultitiae laus", in *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Tomus Tertius), Ed. Clarence H. Miller, Amsterdam 1979, 68. For the English translation, see Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, translated by B. Radice with an introduction and notes by A. H. T. Levi, London 1993, 5.

² Diomedes, *Ars grammatica*, (GL 1), Ed. Henrici Keili, Leipzig 1857, 485.

found in comedy as well³. Why cannot we connect Jerome to this other genre? This interpretation, as we previously mentioned, is not predominant in Jeromian studies⁴.

To further develop this discussion, we would like to define what the adjective "satirical" could mean in other times, following here the ideas of Kenneth Abbott in *Satire and Satiricus in late Latin literature*, from 1979. According to him, the general use of this word embraced an expansion of its meaning, a change that could evolve (or hide) the idea of Jerome acting like a *comicus* too, consistent with our interpretation. For the scholar, "satire" and "satirical" became different concepts along time, and the works of Jerome in the 4th century are one of the most interesting examples of that⁵. To Abbott, satire and *satira* could not be understood as equivalent terms⁶: the former refers to a perception that was present in texts that preceded and followed those poems, while the latter nominates a specific literary genre relatively well situated between Lucilius and Juvenal. In this sense, following the narrow conceptualization from the 1st century, Jerome could not be considered a satiric poet, but he had this "satirical posture" that was recognized by writers, scholars and even by some of his contemporaries. In short, what we want to

³ Indeed, the main two examples provided by studies like Kenneth Abbott's, from 1979, are present in comedy, as well: critics to drunkenness and to the incontinent desire. Cf. Abbott, Kenneth, "Satire and *satiricus* in late Latin", ICS (1979), 192-199, here 193. Furthermore, we must remember that Lucilius, considered the founder of Roman satire, has several aspects in common with Plautus, in form and content: "Indeed, among the literary genres of the later period it is satire that inherits many of the qualifying features of comedy, such as verbal humor and aggression, caricature, lively dialogue, and the use of colorful language, even mixtures of Latin and Greek". Cf. Ferri, Rolando, "The reception of Plautus in Antiquity", in Fontaine, Michael and Scauro, Adele (eds.), *Oxford handbook of Greek and Roman comedy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, 767-781, here 775. Something similar happens with Varro's *Menippean Satire*: "Varro's *Menippean Satires* are a literary hybrid of prose and verse in various meters, including dramatic. They were probably narratives with much dialogue, perhaps sometimes even fully dialogic, in the manner of Horace's *Sermones*. We do not know if Varro had a marked preference for Plautus over all other comic writers. However, in the *Menippeans*, his debt to Plautus is certainly relevant. Varro quotes Plautus explicitly as a linguistic source, usually for made-up, inventive vocabulary (*ut ait Plautus*, 522. Cf. Varro, *Saturarum Menippearum Fragmenta*, Edidit R. Astbury, [BSGRT], K. G. Saur, Monachii 2002, 87). In the satire *Agatho*, set at a symposium, a servant is addressed in iambic senarii: *quid tristiozem uideo te esse quam antidhac, / Lampadio? numquid familiaris filius / amat, nec spes est auxilli argentaria, / ideoque scapulae metuunt virgidemiam?* "Why do I see you so much sadder than you were wont to be, Lampadio? Is it that the young gentleman is in love, with no hope of finding help in money, and therefore your shoulders fear a harvest of flogs? ". Cf. Ferri, "The reception of Plautus", 775.

⁴ Maybe the clearest example of this question lies in Kennett Abbott's article *Satire and satiricus in late latin*, from 1979. At some point, the scholar declared that, following a habit from satire, Jerome uses pseudonyms for his rivals aiming to suggest that he is speaking openly, not to someone. We agree with his observation, but his example is taken from the *Apology against the books of Rufinus*, specifically from an excerpt in which his rival is called "Luscium Lanuvinus". Besides being a false name used to criticize not only a specific person but a general behavior, there is an intertextuality to Terence's prologues that cannot be ignored, since this person acts like Lanuvinus did, according to the comic writer. Cf. Abbott, "Satire and *satiricus*", 193.

⁵ For Kenneth Abbott, Diomedes's definition illustrates that the satire was originally conceived as a poem, but this "literary limitation" (if we can use this expression) gradually disappeared. The author claims also that the conversion of the satire from a specific poetic genre to a more generalist literary posture will become clearer in Jerome's writings. Cf. Abbott, "Satire and *satiricus*," 198. Furthermore, on this point, see: "Thus in later antiquity the word *satiricus* began to be used without regard to form in a sense approximating that our word 'satiric' ", Wiesen, David S., *Saint Jerome as a satirist: a study in Christian Latin thought and letters* (CSCP), Cornell University Press, New York 1964, 2. Moreover, Wiesen himself seems to treat with liberty (or imprecision?) the adjective "satirical", associating it to the verses of Vergil (*idem*, p. 49)

⁶ Cf. Abbott, "Satire and *satiricus*", 193.

propose in this paper is that Jerome's satirical posture is built upon intertextual events⁷ with comedy as well, not exclusively – in fact, not mainly – with satirical poetry. Through this literary procedure, we would argue that this well-humoured critical posture, generically considered "satirical" in our patristic author, can be, instead, a comic and a Terentian one.

We should look closely to an example offered by the same Abbott about this satirical posture in Jerome. Writing about *Ep.* 22,32, the scholar quotes an excerpt to illustrate that *nomina taceo ne saturam putes* ("I will pass in silence over names, so you don't think this is satire", Hieronymus, *Ep.* 22,32)⁸. According to the scholar, when Jerome denies, he is, in fact, affirming, because that was the only detail that could differentiate their literary practices⁹. However, we can discuss this passage more closely. Jerome's allegation that quoting specific names is a central part of the satire is curious, since many poems by Juvenal or Horace, for example, do not point their critics to a person or to a group. It is therefore tempting to assume that Jerome is, indeed, like Abbott proposed, mentioning satire in a broader sense, that is, classifying it as a literary posture and not a poetic genre with its specific commonplaces and practices. We can even compare it to what Jerome writes in the preface to *Comm. in Sof.*: [...] *quorum nomina taceo, ne quemquam laedere uidear* ("[...] whose names I shall pass in silence, so I do not look like I am offending someone", Hieronymus, *Comm. in Sof.* I,III,14)¹⁰. The structures are close, and the variation of terms *saturam* and *laedere* ("attack") reinforce the hypothesis of a negative value judgement over the satiric posture (or genre) in Jerome, involving personalism and excess. It is important to recall that, already in Diomedes's definition, the idea of *maledicum*, that is, to offend or attack with words, is present.

A final, but not less interesting, case about the refusal of satire appears in *n Ep.* 40,2. Here, Jerome writes about a certain Onaso (probably a pseudonym based on this man's big nose) that took personally the criticisms the Christian author wrote generally, and even considered taking legal proceedings against Jerome: *Quicquid dictum fuerit in te dictum putas. In quodcumque uitium stili mei mucro contorquetur te clamitas designari, conserta manu in ius uocas, et satiricum*

⁷ Here we are following the terminology proposed by Alessandro Barchiesi in 1997 to designate the intertextuality: "L'intertestualità non è un oggetto ma un evento; è un rapporto in movimento, una dinamica, una destabilizzazione persino, e non un dato fisso da analizzare, una cosa". Cf. Barchiesi, Alesandro, "Otto punti su una mappa dei naufragi", *MDADTC* 39 (1997), 209-226, here 210.

⁸ Cf. Jérôme, *Lettres* (I) Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1949, I, 147, 20.

⁹ It must be pointed out that Jerome does not only use the comparison to satire to claim that he does not make personal criticisms. He also refuses the model of ancient comedy. In 125,5, we have: *ego enim neminem nominabo, nec ueteris comoediae licentia certas personas eligam atque perstrigam* ("I won't drop names, neither will adopt the liberty of the ancient comedy for attacking someone specifically", Hieronymus, *Ep.* 125,5. Cf. Jérôme, *Lettres* (VII) Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1961, VII, 117, 16-18). Jerome seems to echo the old interpretation that satire, mainly the Lucilian, is a descendent from ancient comedy and its imprecations. This makes it harder, once again, to distinguish the influence of these poetic genres upon Jerome's works. We can see similar ideas in Hor. *Ars* 281-283 and Cic. *Republ.* 4,10-12. As we noticed, despite the similarities between Horace and Jerome, the latter stressed the differences and considered the first "excessive".

¹⁰ San Jerónimo, *Comentario a Sofonías*, (OC IIIb *Comentarios a los Profetas Menores*), Introducción traducción y notas de A.D. GARCÍA. Texto latino tomado del *Corpus Christianorum* de Ediciones Brepols, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 2003, 358.

scriptorem in prosa stulte arguis ("Whatever I say, you think that was against you. Any vice I point my feather against, you shout that it was directed to you. You drag me to courts, and, stupidly, claim that I am a satirical writer in prose", Hieronymus, *Ep.* 40,2).¹¹ Jerome refuses again to be seen as a satirical writer who aims at one specific person, he is only a clever observer of customs, a point that we are going to stress again in this paper¹². Indeed, Jerome's text reinforces here Abbott's interpretation about the differences between satire and *satiricus*, and uses it to ridicule Onaso's accusation.

In short, Jerome seems to recognize that his practice has similarities with satire but has the important difference of not being too aggressive and specific: in this sense, being called a satirist could put him in an unfavorable position, like someone whose critics are dangerous or motivated by unfair reasons¹³. Even considering that this is a *pro forma* attitude¹⁴, it might show us how Jerome refuses an idea that, ironically, is going to be popular throughout the next centuries, and in a broad sense as well¹⁵. Therefore, if the satirical laughter is somewhat dangerous, according to Jerome's reception, is there an alternative genre for making social criticism in an anodyne way? As we shall demonstrate, Terence and his comedy will occupy this position as an intertextual author to the *pater ecclesiae*.

So, as we shall defend, for Jerome, comedy and comic writer are related ideas, but not equivalent, because they do not share the same vices, unlike the satire and the satirical poet, as we tried to

¹¹ Cf. Jérôme, *Lettres* (II) Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1951, II, 86,18-22.

¹² *Ep.* 50,5 also provides a noteworthy example to satire in the writings of Jerome. The Christian author reflects in it about how easy it is to embrace a position away from society and then proclaim empty accusations against others, like Juvenal and Horace did, according to him. Once again, it seems that we are dealing with evidence that Jerome is not favorable to the satiric posture.

¹³ We must consider though that the satiric idea does not occur only associated with an excessive approach. We may quote, for example, Hieronymus, *Ep.* 127,6, where Jerome is not affirming this understanding. Moreover, it is important to remember that when Horace is the specific satiric poet quoted by him, his criticisms about excess are not so present. Cf. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 133,1 and Hieronymus, *In Is.* 12,18).

¹⁴ Years ago, we published a paper on how Horace traced the genealogy of satire in his *Sermones* 1,4. There, we discussed how the poet, like Jerome, considered the Old Comedy excessive and personalist, just like the style of satire practiced by Lucilius, founder of Latin satire, and who was almost a direct continuation of the way comedies were consecrated by Aristophanes, at least, according to him. On the other hand, Horace wants to differentiate his satire from Lucilius', and for that reason he connects his practice to the comedy of Terence. Cf. Zanfra, Marcello Peres, "Horácio Sat. 1.4, a comédia de Terêncio e a filiação do gênero satírico", *PHAOS* 17 (2017), 221-238, here 223-224.

¹⁵ We can quote here the selection and translation of Jerome's letters published by Paul Carrol in 1956. The book's objective was to present a selection of 16 letters that would be able to reveal the "real man" Jerome, how firm his doctrine and moral principles were, and thereby to justify his canonization. For Carroll, Jerome writes a responsive "vigorous and matchless satire" applied only when his truths are unfairly attacked. In his preface, Carroll claims that Jerome has a "literary gift for satire" but does not describe it. He also presents an interpretation that extends to Jerome's biography the literary characteristics found in his texts, defending that his combative posture was kind of natural, instead of emulated from poetic commonplaces in his texts. Cf. Carrol, Paul, *The Satirical Letters of Saint Jerome*, Chicago Gateway Editions, Chicago 1956, ix, x. Wiesen, in his *Saint Jerome as a satirist*, tries to define what a satirical posture is, even in a generalist way: the texts must demonstrate irony and criticism through exaggeration in details. Cf. Wiesen, *Saint Jerome as a satirist*, 13.

demonstrate previously. The comedy deals with bad behaviors, bad attitudes, bad speeches, and bad thinking, but in an impersonal and maybe ludic way, so the writer does not have an active and aggressive voice specifically aimed at his characters, as in the satire.

In this sense, Jerome can be connected to what his *praeceptor*, Donatus, wrote about comedy, as being a private and lower literary genre, and whose characters, thoughts and actions can be used as a moral guide for the spectator: *Comoedia est fabula diuersa instituta continens affectum ciuiliū ac priuatorum, quibus discitur, quid sit in uita utile, quid contra euitandum [...] comoediam esse Cicero ait imitationem uitae, speculum consuetudinis imaginem ueritatis* ("Comedy is a story built in a different way, containing the particular emotions of the citizens: through it, one can learn what is useful for living and what, on the contrary, should be avoided. Cicero says comedy is an imitation of life, a mirror to the customs, a portrait of reality" Donatus, *Excerpta de Comoedia* 5.1)¹⁶. We do not know this Ciceronian statement but we do know that in *Pro Roscio*, he claimed that, sometimes, he thought the comic poets had written their plays to show people who they really are, as in a distorted mirror ([...] *etenim haec conficta arbitror esse a poetis, ut effictos nostros mores in alienis personis expressamque imaginem nostrae uitae cotidianae uideremus* Cicero, *Pro Rosc.* 47). As we wish to demonstrate, Cicero, Donatus and Jerome can provide an understanding of comedy as something educative, laughable but anodyne in comparison to satire, the genre that involves the *maledicum*: Jerome, indeed, allows to be associated to the comic literary posture. However, if we have been saying that, in Jerome's reception of Comedy, the poet does not belong to his comic world, that is, he is not someone equally reprehensible, we are not talking about any comic writer, but about a specific one: Terence.

Indeed, Terence is, according to Jerome's works, a noteworthy example of poetry and moralizing, and such a positive profile will legitimize the association between them, in opposition to what we explored about him and satire earlier. In *Ep.* 54,9, Jerome makes an important change of meaning in the function of a comic writer, and uses Terence as the paradigm for that, since the Dalmatian writer declares that the main objective of authors like him was *humanos mores nosse atque describere* ("to know and to describe human mores", Hieronymus, *Ep.* 54,9)¹⁷. Jerome designates Terence as the greatest moralizer among other comic writers, since in this context he quotes *Eun.* 732: *sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus* ("without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus cools down", Terentius, *Eun.* 732)¹⁸. Some changes are remarkable here: first, Terence, as the main *comicus*, does not explore vices exclusively, but all kind of *humanos mores*, observed by this wise man who does not take part in the vicious world; second, describing human behavior becomes, in Jerome, the main function of the creator of the plays, and not something secondary, or that must be noted by the readers; finally, from this point of view, laughing is only a tool for reaching the main goal of examining society and correcting it.

¹⁶ Cf. Wessner, Paulus, *Donatus commentum Terentii* (BSGRT 1), Teubner, Stuttgart 1966, 22,14-21.

¹⁷ Hilberg, *Epistularum*, I,476,7-9 and Labourt, *Lettres*, III, 33, 6-8.

¹⁸ Terence, "Eunuchus", in *Comoediae*, Edited by Robert Kauer e Wallace Lindsay, Oxford University Press, New York 1910, 111-169, 149.

Moreover, Jerome writes, in another letter, that Terence is one of the four greatest poets from Antiquity, turning him into a model for anyone who wished to write poetry (*Poetae aemulentur Homerum, Virgilium, Menandrum, Terentium* [...] "let the poets emulate Homer, Vergil, Menander, and Terence [...]." Hieronymus, *Ep.* 58,5)¹⁹. Terence is more than a comic writer: he writes great poetry, and, curiously, if Jerome counsels the young poets to imitate him, he is going to do something close to that, despite being a Christian and a religious writer of prose. In this sense, if, according to our author, Terence uses laughter to describe human habits and to correct vices, Jerome does the same, through some intertextual events.

As we shall explore, the reception of Terence's works in Jerome do not occur only through a good evaluation of his profile or plays, but also through the recreation of specific comic situations. Thus, we can say that Jerome is exploring the topic of the *theatrum mundi* ("the world as a stage")²⁰, like his own time could be seen as a vivid representation of the vices from comedy²¹. The scenic aspect is going to be recreated like this: he can be compared to Terence; his rivals are like other comic writers who hated the poet; the vicious persons are like the *personae dramae* from a comedy, and his readers can choose, like the Terentian audience could, if they are siding with good or evil, with virtue or vice, acting badly or questioning vicious behaviors.

We can discuss now three cases of intertextuality between Jerome and Terence to illustrate this connection between the Christian author's role as a moralist and the African poet as a *comicus*. Starting with the *Ep.* 117 and a possible allusion to *Haut.* 222, we read Jerome acting as the counselor of a mother and a daughter living in Gaul in 405 AD. A monk asked him to make the women change their attitudes and live harmoniously, since they lived separated, but with monks – who were their lovers – pretending to be their moral advisers²². According to Jerome, the man who asked for his intervention wished to see the old Lucilian combative vigour, but (again) our writer refuses, saying that this posture has caused him enough trouble. In this sense, if he is going to moralize, he is not doing so by being a new Lucilius, but a new Terence.

¹⁹ Cf. Jérôme, *Lettres* (III) Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1953, III, 79,6–16.

²⁰ The verses 140-145 of Shakespeare in *As You Like It* are, maybe, the most famous representation of that idea in the 16th century: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players; / They have their exits and entrances; / And one man in his time plays many parts, / his acts being seven ages [...]". This example is given in Cardoso, Isabella Tardin, "Theatrum mundi: filologia e imitação", *Clássica* 33 (2) (2020), 121-149, here 124.

²¹ Jerome suggests some level of familiarity with this topic in his texts, because, as David Wiesen reminds us, when criticizing the luxury that corrupted Rome, he writes about the extravagant clothes as an example of that. For Jerome, the Roman people changed their clothes easily, like actors who changed their costumes according to the roles they were going to play. Cf. Wiesen, *Saint Jerome as a satirist*, 27. Cf. too "*theatrum mundi* designates the representation, ultimately metaphorical, of the human being as a dramatist, as an actor, as a stage director, as a spectator in his life, in his job, in the society or in History" (Cardoso, "Theatrum mundi", 127).

²² Wiesen presents the hypothesis that this epistle was not motivated by a real situation. He partly alleges that the case was too awkward to be real, and partly that the topic discussed was taken from a declamation exercise, conceived to reach a wider audience than just the letters' recipients. Being a "real situation" or not, it is easily noticeable that Jerome's letters cannot be thought of as mere private writings. In this sense, the intertextual events with Terence, for example, could offer more variable opportunities. Cf. Wiesen, *Saint Jerome as a satirist*, 84.

*Primum scire uos cupio, soror et filia, me non idcirco scribere, quia aliquid de vobis sinistrum suspicer; sed ne caeteri suspicentur uestram orare concordiam. Alioquin (quod absit) si peccatorum uos aestimarem glutino cohaesisse, nunquam scriberem; sciremque me **surdis narrare fabulam**.*

First, I want you to know, mother and daughter, that I'm not writing this because I have any suspicions at all against you. On the contrary, I'm doing so to beg you to live in harmony so the others can't raise any suspicions. Indeed, if I assumed that you lived in sin – away with that from you! – I wouldn't write to you, knowing **that I was directing my words to deaf ears**. (Hieronymus, *Ep.* 117, 2)²³.

"Talking to deaf ears" sounds like a formula, used indeed by at least three authors from Antiquity with variations²⁴, which could mean that we do not necessarily have an allusion to Terence here. Although, the similarity between the excerpt above and the ending of verse 222 from *Heautontimoroumenos* is clear: *ne ille haud scit quam mihi nunc surdo narret fabulam* (Terentius, *Haut.* 222)²⁵. After the *mihi nunc*, the words are the same, and in identical positions: the mere presence of the term *fabulam* in the ending of the period confirms that parity, when we compare it to similar uses of the excerpt by other writers²⁶. Finally, we have the presence of the verb *scio* ("to know") in both passages and in the same line (or verse) of the expression: *sciremque* in Jerome, and *scit* in Terence.

Let us now explore the clear proximity between the context of the Terentian comedy²⁷ and the situation presented by Jerome. Turning now to the *Haut.*, we see that Clitipho, the *adulescens*, is the character responsible for verse 222. He says *ille haud scit* ("he doesn't know"). Jerome, in turn, declares that *nunquam scriberem sciremque*, as we quoted before. The Christian author here is not only using the same verb "to know", but he also puts the phrase in a negative form, attested by the adverb *nunquam*, pointing to a parodic reception of the verse that we want to

²³ Jérôme, *Lettres*. Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt, Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1958, vol. VI, 77, 23–28.

²⁴ We find an adaptation of that in Vergil's Tenth Eclogue, when the poet claims that he does not sing to those who cannot hear, but to the woods that pay attention to him: *Non canimus surdis, respondent omnia sylvae* (Virgilius, *Eclog.* 10,8) Cf. Vergil, *Eclogues*, edited by Robert Coleman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, 68. See also Lucretius 5, 1052: *nec ratione docere ulla suadereque surdis, quid sit opus facto, facilest*. Cf. Lucretius, *De rerum natura* V, edited by C.D.N. Costa, Oxford University Press, New York 2001, 34.

²⁵ Terence, "Heautontimoroumenos", in *Comoediae*, edited by Robert Kauer and Wallace Lindsay, Oxford University Press, New York 1910, 55–110, here 66.

²⁶ As the works from Otto and Tosi can attest, the general idea of talking to the deaf is used by several authors of Greek and Latin literature, though with variations in form and content. However, we would like to underline the presence of the word *fabulam*, because, despite all the occurrences of the expression pointed out by Otto and Tosi, this precise formula occurs only in Terence, Jerome (as we previously discussed) and Horace, *Ep.* 2, 1,99, cf. Nikolaus August Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Teubner, Lipsiae 1890, 48 and Renzo Tosi, *Dizionario delle sentenze latine e greche*, Bur, Milano 1991, 426.

²⁷ Here we follow Barchiesi's proposition that, when dealing with intertextuality, we cannot interpret the previous text as something hermetic, whose meaning is given without any discussion, and that only the new one should be interpreted as something that preserved or changed the original senses. On the contrary, the interpretation of both can increase our understanding. Cf. Barchiesi, *Otto punti*, 211. Hagendahl commented on this passage in "Jerome and the Latin Classics," *VCHR* 28 (1974), 216 – 227, here 217. Fonseca maintains that there is a direct intertextuality between these passages, and not a recreation of a dictum, but he offers no further explanations. Cf. Antonio López Fonseca, "San Jerónimo lector de los comicos latinos: cristianos y paganos", *CFCEL* 15 (1998), 333–352, here 217.

discuss. In the opening of the second act, Clitipho is talking about his father, who judges him unfairly and seems to enjoy imposing on him teachings about life, like the importance of learning from other people's virtues and vices. Still, the father does not know that the boy ignores his advice (as is usual in comedy), being interested only in what his lover wants²⁸.

Indeed, the parallel is too obvious to be ignored: in the comic scene and in the epistle of Jerome, we have an adviser speaking to someone who is taken by desire and who puts everything else aside. The paternal relationship itself is reenacted in the new text, since Jerome treats the younger female as his spiritual daughter. We also have a third element, public opinion, in both: the Terentian character claims that he has no interest in guiding his own life according to the behaviors of others, and Jerome suggests that he does not want others to suspect them.

What we have in Jerome's epistle, however, is a parodic recreation of the original scene, in which the values are inverted²⁹. The Christian author refuses what Terence affirmed: mother and daughter *are not* like the comic *adulescens* and his *pater*, because they do not keep their ears covered for moral advice. In addition, Jerome himself refuses the role of a comic father, since this one does not know, while the Christian doctor claims to do that. He only speaks because he is sure that his words are going to be welcomed. Yet, the parodic scene does not end here: while Clitipho alleges that his father invites him to look at the world and to be inspired by it to make better choices, Jerome invites his audience not to be observed by society. In this sense, the logic is the same in both texts, like a mirror that could inspire people's behavior.

Finally, we must observe that there is a clear split between the author and work in this reception of Terence by Jerome. The comic characters belong to a vicious scenario, so they act badly, while the comic writer is a noble person who observes human habits and criticizes them. But what happens when a comic character decides to observe and instruct, both things that are proper to a comic writer, according to Jerome? There arises a pathetic figure who imagines himself as a wise man but is ignorant and makes speeches for nobody. Jerome then refuses to be a character of Terence: he is a new version of the poet, the one who has the moralizing power. A provocation is being offered to the mother and daughter to whom *Ep.* 117 is addressed: are they going to act like lustful comic characters and become negative examples to others, or are they going to observe someone else's vices, signing a pact with the Terentian Jerome, who is inviting them to learn from other people's mistakes? Even the statement of

²⁸ *Nunc ait "periculum ex aliis facito tibi quod ex usu siet"/ astutus! Ne ille haud scit quam mihi nunc surdo narret fabulam. / magis nunc me amicae dicta simulant, "da mihi" atque "affer mihi"* ("Now he says 'learn from other people's mistakes what is the best for your life'. How clever! He only doesn't know that he is talking to a deaf man. Right now, I'm only concerned with that my lover tells me: 'give me this', 'bring me that' ", Terentius, Haut. 221-223. Cf. Terence, "Heautontimoroumenos", 66.

²⁹ As Gian Biagio Conte points out, the allusion can involve the notions of opposition and overcoming, rather than merely paying a tribute. Cf. Gian Biagio Conte, "Memoria dei poeti e arte allusiva (a proposito di un verso di Catullo e di uno di Virgilio)," in *Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario: Catullo, Virgilio, Ovidio, Lucano* (LCL 23), Einaudi, Torino 1974, 5-14, here 11.

believing in their innocence is a provocative call for help. He refused to be a *senex comicus* defending morality in vain and hopes that the mother and daughter do the same. Like a comic writer, or even like a dramatic director, Jerome is offering to these women a choice for different roles in this reenactment of Terence's comedy³⁰.

We can highlight two other examples to illustrate this pattern when Jerome's works offer us intertextual effects with Terence's comedies. To discuss this, we are following here some aspects from Andrew Cain's article where he argues that Jerome has alluded twice to *Eun. 579*³¹ which is *ut maneam solu' cum sola* ("[...] in order to be completely alone with her", Terentius, *Eun. 579*)³². The first case occurs in *Ep. 52*, in which the Christian author writes about the best monastic virtues to Nepotian, who was starting his career as a monk. As usual, Jerome defends asceticism to the members of the church, prescribing orientations for daily practice. According to Cain³³, in the letter's fifth paragraph, Jerome alludes to *Eun. 579*, a verse in which Chereas narrates to his friend Antiphus that Thais, the courtesan, instructed him, while he was wearing the robes of a eunuch, how to protect his younger sister, Pamphila, from young men. She was unaware, however, that she was confronted with a young man who had changed his identity with Dorio, the eunuch, and who planned to have free access to the girl's room and body. Cain also states³⁴ that the *Eunuchus* scene in which Chereas recounts his sexual antics was widely condemned by Christian authors for its immoral character, so almost everyone would quickly recognize the use of the passage and its larger vicious context³⁵. Jerome's writing is revealing:

*Si propter officium Clericatus aut uidua tibi uisitatatur aut uirgo, nunquam domum solus introeas, talesque habeto socios quorum contubernio non infameris. Si lector, si acolythus, si psaltes te sequitur, non ornamentur vestibus sed moribus: nec calamistro crispent comas, sed pudicitiam habitu polliceantur. **Solus cum sola secreto** et absque arbitre non sedeas.*

If, by virtue of your clerical office, you must visit a girl or a widow, never enter her house alone. Choose the company of those whose presence will not be dishonorable. If you are accompanied by a reader, an acolyte, or a singer of psalms, let them adorn their manners, not their garments; let them not use tools to wave their locks

³⁰ Discussing the Christian polemics in the 16th century, but with ideas applicable to the time of Jerome, Elaine Sartorelli claims that humour is a powerful instrument of satire and pamphlet speech, since it ridicules the adversary. So, the envoy of Christ can make fun of others, but never being laughed at, since this would cancel the authority and the truth of the writer. Cf. Elaine Cristine Sartorelli, *Estratégias de construção e legitimação do ethos na causa veritatis: Miguel Servet e as polémicas religiosas do século XVI*, Tese de Doutorado apresentada à Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo 2005, 54.

³¹ Andrew Cain, "Two allusions to Terence, *Eunuchus* 579 in Jerome", *TCQ* 63.1 (2013), 407–412, here 408.

³² Terence, "*Eunuchus*", 140.

³³ Cain, "Two allusions to Terence", 409.

³⁴ Cain, "Two allusions to Terence", 410.

³⁵ According to Suetonius, *Eun.* was the most successful Roman comedy of all times, earning a huge price and being reenacted on the same day (Suet. *Vita Terentii*, II). Augustine, for example, writes against this passage in at least two different works: *Conf.* 1,16,26 e *De civ.* 2,7.

either, but let modesty be a sign of their habit. You don't seat alone with a woman, **just the two of you, where no one can see**: the judgment of a witness must always be close by. (Hieronymus, *Ep.* 52,5)³⁶

Cain goes on to note the similarity between the contexts of the Terentian verse and the Jeronimian passage, since they use similar forms to discuss the same topic: the control over the feminine³⁷. However, given the difference between the motivation and the nature of the characters, the scholar assumes that there is an intentional reversal on the part of the Christian: his "pupil" should not imitate what Chereas did when he had the chance. Finally, Cain's hypothesis³⁸ proposes an intertext with other Jeronian works, in which, despite recognizing that monks should live as spiritual eunuchs, many disguised themselves as such, just to obtain sexual favours. Thus, the scholar claims that Terence's false eunuch is brought up as a vicious paradigm of what happens among unchaste pseudo-religious people. To represent a false monk is essential in his construction of legitimacy, because by suggesting that there were "infiltrators" in the faith – in the same way as happened in Roman comedy – he does not appear as someone who fights Christianity, but someone who defends it from the evil-intentioned who pretend to be part of it.

The other incidence of an intertextual effect between *Eun.* 579 and Jerome's works is located, according to Andrew Cain, in *Ep.* 128,3, two decades later. The author here writes to Gaudentius about the best way to preserve his daughter's virginity, who was consecrated at birth. In the passage below, Jerome poses questions about a pernicious proximity between men and women:

At non habitas in eodem hospitio, in nocte dumtaxat? Caeterum totos dies in huius confabulatione consumens, quare solus cum sola, et non cum arbitris sedes? Ut cum ipse non pecces aliis peccare uidearis, ut exemplo sis miseris, qui nominis tui auctoritate delinquant? Tu quoque uirgo, uel uidua, cur tam longo uiri sermone retineris? Cur cum solo relicta non metuis?

You'd say you don't live in the same house as her, but only at night? For you spend all your days in confabulations with her, why do you sit alone with her, **just the two of you**, and not accompanied by a witness? Even if you do not sin, you will appear sinful to others, you will serve as an example to the unfortunate who will do wrong under the authority of your name? Why do you, as well, young woman or widow, stay so long with a man? Why aren't you afraid to be alone with him? (Hieronymus, *Ep.* 128,3)³⁹

Jerome's argument recovers the *solus cum sola* in an interrogative way, questioning the practices of men who have an excessive interest in beautiful young slaves and who gather with them completely out of sight. Cain does not elaborate his reading, but it is noticeable that regardless of who the letter is addressed to, Jerome alludes to the comic scene of intimacy between a man and a woman as a form of warning about the dangers of carnal desires. We would like to point out that, again, still under the *theatrum mundi* logic, Jerome resorts to a Terentian verse and quotes popular opinion, that is, the way a person is considered by others. From this intertextual point of view, enjoying too much being alone with a woman or a man is something vicious and

³⁶ Labourt, *Lettres*, II, 179, 22-28.

³⁷ Cain declares that the *solus cum sola* structure is found only in Jerome and Terence, being a strong indication of their connection. Cf. Cain, *Two allusions*, 409, 410.

³⁸ Cain, "Two allusions to Terence", 410.

³⁹ Labourt, *Lettres*, VII, 151,12–20.

comic, and will cause indignation to this imaginary audience. Indeed, Cain's analysis in both cases converges with our interpretation. Once again, we see the split between the author and his work, that is between Terence and his characters, which we have proposed here. Whereas is a negative example, the recipients of letters 52 and 128 should look at their attitudes and distance themselves. In this sense, we have a pact of observation here, like that of a comedian and his audience, based on superiority and condemnation in the face of the vices of the world.

In the case of *Ep.* 52 Jerome modifies the comic writer's verses and, by adding the negation adverb *non*, explains what should be avoided. In *Ep.* 128, counseling is redirected to the girl's father and to herself, so they see the risks of trusting those who act like the comic character. In any case there is a fundamental aspect we have defended so far: good qualities are attributed to the comedian, while vices are attributed to the characters. Good thinking belongs to Terence (and Jerome) but bad acting belongs to his characters (and to Jerome's contemporaries).

Therefore, as we have been discussing, satire is not the only literary source to moralize through laughter in Jerome. The case studies above show for example how much of the so-called "satiric commonplaces" found in Jerome's writings can in fact have their genealogy connected to comedy as well, like the reprehension to the incontinent desire that the young woman and her mother are supposed to have. It is important to stress another interesting point that we have commented on in this paper: despite the historical label of "satirical" applied to Jerome, the author himself refused, ironically or not, to being approximated to it. However, through intertextuality, we can make an association of his name to Terence's, his absolute model of a *comicus*, a writer whose main function, according to him, is to know and describe human behaviour. In short, Jerome refuses the idea of being a satirist, but prefers the comparison of him to a comic writer, specifically to Terence. In this sense, in Jerome, the title of *comicus* sounds lighter, anodyne, and seems to embrace the idea of moralizing without excesses, while the *satiricus* is somewhat problematic, like a punitive figure that incites people to avoid vices but who should be avoided as well. Like Jerome said in *Ep.* 117,1 when he had the old satirical (and Lucilian) strength in accusing crimes, he turned himself into a criminal in people's opinion (*[...] ubi illa quondam constantia, in qua multo sale orbem defricans, Lucilianum quippiam rettulisti? Hoc est, aio, quod me fugat, et labra dividere non sinit. Postquam enim arguendo crimina, factus sum crimosus [...]*). Hieronymus, *Ep.* 117,1).⁴⁰ Why should he not try to moralize with a laugh in another way, a Terentian way?

Finally, we do not want to propose that the title of satiric must be completely abandoned or substituted by the idea of Jerome as a comic: any reception phenomenon is too wide to be summarized into one exclusive approach. Perhaps this paper helps us to shed new light on how much of this general idea of him as a satirist can be credited sometimes to an intertextuality with another lower but educative (and less controversial) poetic genre: comedy⁴¹. Jerome can make

⁴⁰ Labourt, *Lettres*, VI, 76,22-24.

⁴¹ Paul Carroll's work offers a good example of how many times the modern studies that considered Jerome a satirist (in a broad sense) did not take into consideration the importance of comic passages or *loci communes* in the building of that *persona*. Carroll gathered 11 letters under the label of "satirical letters", out of chronological order and

a comparison between the comic *persona* and an unnamed person, avoiding being a satiric (and excessive) author, while he can still sound different from a general moralist: in a dramatic way, the comic mask without pain, that is, the *persona*, works like a good way of presenting criticisms to vice, and not to the vicious one who wears it. If the criticisms are made to *comic personae* and not to specific persons, those who feel directly affected by them – like Onaso did – are the only responsible ones for unmasking themselves in front of everyone.

After all, portraying Jerome as a satirist could be useful for his rivals: they could call attention to the way he writes, and not to his critics. However, when Jerome, an author who presents himself as someone who does not attack unless someone strikes first (him or his faith), associates himself to Terence, that is, the clever, elegant, moralist and persecuted author, he can value his writings in content and in form.

organized by similar themes: *Ep.* 9; 14; 22; 31; 38; 40; 45; 50; 52; 102; 147. The aspect that motivates the classification of these letters as satirical is the presence of terms connected to satire, some of them already commented on in this paper. At this point, two considerations must be highlighted: firstly, as we have demonstrated, the allusion to satire usually happens in an unfavorable perspective, and Jerome never allows himself to be linked to this genre or posture; second, creating this satirical atmosphere that Carroll sees in this letter selection, we have a couple of intertextual events related to the comedy of Terence: indeed, four of those letters have direct allusions to comedy or to verses from comic poets. Cf. Carroll, Paul, *The Satirical Letters*, xxxi.