

Persona as Connection: Decorum in Cicero's De officiis and Horace's Ars Poetica

The word *decorum* is used in Cicero's *De officiis* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* to express the seemly, fitting, or appropriate (Brink 2011, 228). Some scholars maintain that the conceptions of *decorum* found in *De officiis* and the *Ars Poetica* are fundamentally different (Brink 2011; Golden 1995, 34-6); others suggest various connections between the two conceptions (Oliensis 1991; Grant & Fiske 1924; Dyck 1996). However, this paper argues that the *decorum* of Cicero's *De officiis* and that of Horace's *Ars Poetica* are most closely related to each other by the concept of the *persona*.

The paper begins by investigating the two authors' conceptions of *decorum* and the potential links between them, based on the original Latin texts of *De officiis* and the *Ars Poetica* and drawing from commentators including Brink, de Jonge, and Trimpi. Cicero's *decorum* in *De officiis* is identified as the seemliness of behavior contingent upon one's *persona* as a moral agent within society (*De officiis* 1.96; Trimpi 1978, 62), while Horace's *decorum* is defined as the consistency between characters and their *persona*, or the artist and his *persona*, best calculated to please and benefit an audience (*Ars Poetica* 335; de Jonge 2019, 245; Brink 2011). When compared, the concept of *persona* emerges as what brings these two constructions together, uniting Horace's 'man as artist' with Cicero's 'man as a moral agent.' This paper then engages with the secondary literature dealing with the connection, or lack thereof, between Cicero and Horace's *decorums*, including the contributions of Oliensis, Grant & Fiske, Dyck, and Golden on the subject. Ultimately it concludes that, notwithstanding the objections of some scholars to the 'persona-as-connection' thesis, the concept of *persona* remains the strongest link between the *decorum* of Cicero's *De officiis* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

Keywords: *decorum*, *persona*, conception, art, artist, seamliness, connection, link, moral agent

Bibliography

- Brink, C.O. *Horace on Poetry: the 'Ars Poetica.'* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Cicero. *De Officiis*. Translated and edited by Walter Miller. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913.
- Dyck, Andrew R. *A commentary on Cicero, De Officiis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Golden, Leon. "Ars Poetica by Horace." In *Horace for Students of Literature: the "Ars Poetica" and Its Tradition*, edited by O. B. Hardison and Leon Golden, 4-88. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.
- Grant, Mary A., and George Converse Fiske. "Cicero's 'Orator' and Horace's 'Ars Poetica'." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 35 (1924): 1-74, <https://doi.org/10.2307/310709>
- Horace. *Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*. Translated and edited by H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- de Jonge, Casper Constantijn. "Dionysius and Horace: composition in Augustan Rome." In *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome: Rhetoric, Criticism and Historiography*, edited by R.L. Hunter and Casper Constantijn de Jonge, 242-266. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Oliensis, Ellen. "The Construction of Horatian Decorum." PhD diss., Harvard University, 1991. ProQuest <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/construction-horatian-decorum/docview/303928288/se-2?accountid=11424>.
- Trimpi, W. "Horace's ut pictura poesis. The argument for stylistic decorum." *Traditio* 34 (1978): 29-73 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27831040>

