Dialogue form in Cicero’s *Academica*

_Puto fore, ut, cum legeris, mirere nos id locutas esse inter nos, quod numquam locuti sumus; sed nosti morem dialogorum._

I think that when you read it you will be amazed that we have said to each other things that we have never said; but you know the convention of dialogues.

_Cic. Ad Fam. 9.8 (Dedicatory Letter to the 3rd Version of the Academica)_

**Introduction**

Given the typical scholarly characterisations of Ciceronian dialogue, it might come as some surprise to find the late Republican philosopher and orator selected for inclusion in a conference on dialogue form. Even the staunchest defenders of Cicero as a philosophical author tend to have rather negative views of his proficiency in the dialogue form. Malcolm Schofield, who gives the most sympathetic recent analysis of Ciceronian dialogue as a genre, argues that, although Cicero successfully employs one feature typical of dialogue – namely, the balanced presentation of opposing philosophical perspectives – he fails to deliver on the “dramatic elements” that we are familiar with from the work of Plato. Rather than the back-and-forth of an authentic conversation, Ciceronian dialogue is instead characterized by extended speeches in support of competing philosophical positions (“*in utramque partem perpetua oratio*” (*Fat.* 1)). This represents, Schofield argues, Cicero’s “negation of the dramatic in the interests of the exposition of systems” and he suggests that we follow Paul MacKendrick in considering the Roman philosopher’s works to constitute a new genre of “dialogue-treatise” rather than being dramatic dialogues in the Platonic mold.¹

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¹ Schofield, 2008: 66. For a similar view, see Brittain 2006: xii-xiii, who argues “the primary purpose of his use of the dialogue form is thus to allow Cicero to present a rather complicated series of philosophical debates stretching over 250 years” in a way that treats all sides even-handedly.
This analysis is correct in a number of important ways. The dramatic elements of characterisation and setting that we find in the dialogues of Plato just do not seem to be an essential part of Ciceronian dialogue form. To take the most extreme example, the *Tusculan Disputations*, although it purports to reflect the content of a conversation that took place at Cicero’s house in Tusculum, is stripped of all characterisation and narrative action “so that our arguments be set out more conveniently.” In this work, we see a clear privileging of exposition over dramatization – though, as Gildenhard has argued, this does not imply a failure of the dialogue form. Rather, the reader may be able to assimilate himself more easily to the role of the student in this dialogue precisely because of the lack of characterisation offered.

Schofield’s analysis, then, is certainly useful for Ciceronian dialogue as a whole: as a generic form it does not seem to rely on the dramatisation of its speakers and settings in the same way that Platonic dialogue does, and the *TD* shows us that Cicero felt able to write a philosophical dialogue without any of the conventional “dramatic” features expected of this genre. But, the fact that the *TD* is unique in being so denuded of the dramatic elements of place and character should make us pause and consider why other dialogues place such an emphasis on these features. Clearly, this was not something that Cicero felt was essential to philosophical exposition. Indeed, works such as the *De Officiis* and the *Topica* show us that Cicero was more than happy to treat philosophical subjects in literary forms other than dialogue. When looking at the way in which Cicero constructs his dialogues, then, we should consider why he chooses a particular literary form for particular subject matter.

One of the dialogues that *does* exhibit a surprising interest in constructing a dramatic backdrop for its philosophical discussion is the *Academica*, and this is going to be the focus of our attention today. Over the course of this paper, I am going to argue that Cicero’s presentation of this work as a dramatically vivid recreation of a past conversation is a deliberate choice on the part of the author, and that it is one which helps to reinforce the epistemological message of the dialogue. By creating a dramatically convincing account of a conversation which, it will turn out, never actually took place, Cicero is providing us a further example of the difficulties

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2 *TD*. 1.8: *quo commodius disputationes nostrae explicentur*
3 Gildenhard, 2007
inherent in differentiating between the true and the false, or, in this case, fact and fiction. So, I will argue, the form of the dialogue itself serves to reinforce the Academic claim that we have access to no clear criterion of truth: the best we can do is to judge something to be “similar to the truth” (veri simile).\(^4\)

To support this argument, I am going to rely not only upon the evidence of the dialogue itself, but will also consider how the ideas of “evidentness”\(^5\) (ενάργεια, evidentia, perspicuitas) in Antiochian/Stoic epistemology relate to those of Hellenistic rhetorical theory and how Cicero’s concerns about the persuasiveness of his fictional account in this text emerge from his letters to Atticus. Finally, I am going to make use of the dedicatory letter to Varro which seems to have prefaced the third and final version of the Academica. This programmatic letter draws the reader’s attention to the status of this work as a dialogue at the outset and, in particular, to ability of philosophical dialogue to present as if true an account of events which are, in fact, fictive - the mos dialogorum of the epigraph to this paper.

The Two Editions of the Dialogue

The first obstacle in our attempt to understand the dramatic elements of the Academica and their relationship to the epistemological claims of the dialogue, is the rather mutilated state of the text as we have it. We currently possess sections of two Ciceronian books depicting discussions of Hellenistic epistemology by Roman statesmen, and in which the character, “Cicero”, takes on the role of the defender of Academic Scepticism. However, each of these books originates from a different version of the work. Before we can discuss the contents of the text more fully, then, we need to consider how these two books fit together, and whether we can posit a single explanation for the dialogue form of this work that can apply to the entirety

\(^4\) E.g. Luc. 128
\(^5\) For the English translation of this difficult term, I am going to use “evidentness” throughout. Other translators have used different terms, for example “perspicuity” (e.g. Brittain, 2006), “vividness” (e.g. Innes, 1995), or “evidence” (Görler, 1997).
of the text as we now have it. At the same time, a consideration of this multi-stage process of composition and revision will also allow us an insight into Cicero’s interests and aims in selecting a final dramatic setting for the final version of his work, and reveal the high level of importance that the dramatic elements of the text held for his project.

The history of the composition of the text, as can be reconstructed from the existing textual remains and from letters sent by Cicero to his friend and publisher Atticus, is dealt with in detail by Miriam Griffin. Griffin marshals the evidence for three different versions of the dialogue (two of which were sent to Atticus for publication, and so can be called “editions”). Each of these versions seems to have covered the same philosophical content, but they each differed in their choice of character and setting. The first version of the text was written in early 45BCE, had a dramatic setting of some time in the mid 60sBCE, and was comprised of two books, known as the Catulus and the Lucullus respectively after the main speaker in each. This original version was sent to Atticus, who seems to have begun the process of publication. Of this original edition, the second book has been preserved for us, and is commonly referred to either using its original name, Lucullus, or as Academica II. On the 26th of June 45BCE, however, Cicero wrote to Atticus saying that he had rewritten the dialogue (which he now calls the Ἀκαδημικὴ σύνταξις). In this second version, which was never sent to his friend for publication, the dramatic date seems to have been moved closer to the date of composition. The philosophical content of the dialogue has been retained (Cicero says he uses eosdem illos sermones), but Brutus and (the recently-deceased) Cato have been chosen as the new speakers. In this same letter, however, Cicero says that he has already adopted Atticus’ suggestion of rewriting the dialogue to produce a third version, in which the speakers will be himself, Atticus, and Varro. The dramatic date for this third version, which is eventually sent to Atticus for publication and so constitutes the second edition of the dialogue, appears to be near-contemporaneous with

7 Att. 13.32
8 Att. 13.16; c.f also 13.12 for the use of the term Ἀκαδημικὴ to refer to the older edition of the book. This seems to speak against Griffin’s (1997: 33) claim that there was no collective term for both books of the first version of the text. Retrospectively, at least, they seem to have been referred to as the Ἀκαδημικὴ.
the date of revision in early summer 45BCE.9 For this third version, Cicero tells Atticus, he has cut out many things (multa detracta) and transferred the contents from the original two books into four books (duobus libris contuli in quattuor).10 The opening of the first book of this second edition has come down to us, and is known as Academica I.

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<td>Characters</td>
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Table 1: Summary of Versions of the Academica

Some of the evidence that I will appeal to in the remainder of this paper will apply only to our understanding of the second edition of the Academica – in particular, the dedicatory letter to Varro which prefaced this final version of the text. However, Cicero consistently talks about these various editions as being different versions of the same text, in which the same content is “transferred over” (conferre) from one version to the next, even if the account is somewhat pared down.11 Consequently, I am going to help myself to arguments from the Lucullus in order to reconstruct the content of the second edition of the Academica. I am also going to argue that, in spite of the fact that we do not have a prefatory letter directing our reading for the first edition of the work, the form of the text itself, as well as the way in which Cicero describes its shortcomings, suggests that the aim of establishing a convincing dramatic representation of a real-life conversation was present, too, in the original version of the text.

The importance that Cicero attributed to the dramatic elements of the dialogue in both editions is apparent from a consideration of the motivations given for the revision of this work in his

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9 At Ac. 1.1 the discussion is described as having taken place nuper (“recently”).
10 Att. 13.13
11 Ibid.
letters to Atticus. Throughout these letters, two themes emerge explaining Cicero’s decision to change the dramatic setting. The first is political: Varro has dedicated a treatise to Cicero, so Cicero wishes to pay him back “in the same measure and even better” (Att. 13.12)\(^\text{12}\) by adding Varro as a character to his dialogue. But the decision to add Varro as a character only comes after Cicero has already changed the dramatic setting of the dialogue, moving it from the late 60s BCE to the late 40s BCE, and changing the speakers from the elder statesmen, Lucullus, Catulus, and Hortensius, to Cicero’s contemporaries, Cato and Brutus.\(^\text{13}\) The original change seems, rather, to have been motivated by Cicero’s concerns about the credibility of his dialogue in its original form. He tells Atticus, variously, that he has rewritten his dialogue because: a) his original characters “being in no respect men of learning are made to speak with a subtlety beyond them” (Att. 13.12),\(^\text{14}\) b) “there seemed a lack of appropriateness, because those men were notoriously - I don’t say ill-educated, but unversed in those particular subjects” (Att. 13.16),\(^\text{15}\) and c) “it was quite inappropriate to their characters [i.e. those of Catulus, Lucullus, and Hortensius]: for it was more learned than anything they would appear likely to have ever dreamed of” (Att. 13.19).\(^\text{16}\) The primary motivation for the changes made to the dialogue, then, and one which was present even before the issue of a literary repayment to Varro was raised, is that the original version failed to meet the author’s aims, in that it did not provide a convincing account of a plausible conversation – the historical figures initially selected for this discussion were simply not credible in these roles.

The production of a credible dramatic dialogue, then, seems, from these letters, to have been an essential part of Cicero’s literary project in constructing this text. And this appears to be the case not only for the revised versions of the text, but also for the original version, which fails, Cicero tells us, precisely because it fails to meet the standards of plausibility he had set for it. Having, then, noted the importance of the dramatic features of this particular dialogue and the

\(^{12}\) αὐτῷ τῷ μέτρῳ καὶ λύϊον
\(^{13}\) Att. 13.16
\(^{14}\) nullo modo philologi nimis acute loquantur
\(^{15}\) deinde quia parâ τὸ πρέπον videbatur, quod erat hominibus nota non illa quidem ἀπαίδευσια sed in iis rebus ἀτριψία
\(^{16}\) sane in personas non cadebant; erant enim λογικῶτερα quam ut illi de iis somniasse umquam viderentur
value placed by Cicero on the credibility of his fictive account, it is now time for us to consider why Cicero privileges these features in this particular dialogue, dealing, as it does, with Hellenistic epistemology.

The Rejection of “Evidentness” ($\varepsilon\nu\alpha\rho\gamma\iota\nu\alpha\zeta\alpha$) as an Indicator of Truth in the Academica

The contours and controversies of the epistemological debate in the Academica have been well-documented, so I will take them up only briefly here. In each version of the dialogue, the character “Cicero” argues for the position of the New Academy (called simply the Academia by “Cicero” in the Lucullus e.g §103, but Academia nova in the second, e.g. §13, §46) against representatives of the Old Academy of Antiochus/the Stoa (whose epistemological theory is presented in this work as being essentially the same). That the views of the character, “Cicero,” reflect the views of the author, can be seen not only in the assimilation of the character of “Cicero” to the historical figure in the dialogue (e.g. the reference to Cicero’s role in the Catilinarian conspiracy at Luc. 62), but also in the way in which this dialogue is represented in later works. On multiple occasions, this work is presented as Cicero’s defence of Academic epistemology: in the Tusculan Disputations, for example, it is described as presenting everything that could be said on behalf of the Academy (pro Academia, TD 2.4). Cicero’s retrospective assessment of this work, then, was that it constituted not only a valuable exposition of the positions of these opposing philosophical schools to a new, Roman audience, but also that it conveyed the superiority of his own favoured sceptical system – an idea further supported by the ending of the Lucullus in which “Cicero”’s speech in support of scepticism wins the day.

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17 See, Inwood and Mansfield (eds) 1997 for a complete bibliography.
18 E.g. Ac. 1.42 Quae cum dixisset, “Breviter sane minimeque obscure exposita est,” inquam, “a te, Varro, et veteris Academiae ratio et Stoicorum”; Luc. 69 eadem dicit [sc. Antiochus] quae Stoici. Which passages of Cicero’s text might derive from a Clitomachean interpretation of Carneades, and which from the Metrodoran/Philonian interpretation should not affect our discussion in this paper (see e.g. Burnyeat, 1997: 301-5 for a fuller discussion of this distinction).
19 Cf. also ND 1.6; and Div 2.1 on the defence of Academic Scepticism as a primary aim of the dialogue.
Cicero’s defence of his sceptical system in this text (at least as can be reconstructed from the *Lucullus* and the limited evidence of the opening of *Academica* I) revolves around the rejection of the Stoic/Antiochian theory of the φαντασία καταληπτική, or “cataleptic impression.” According to Cicero’s character “Lucullus”, Antiochus and the Stoics are in agreement in defining the cataleptic impression as: “an impression... stamped and molded from its source in a way that it couldn’t be from what wasn’t its source.” Such an impression, the Stoics and Antiochians claim, is necessarily true, and so can form a solid basis for human knowledge. “Cicero”, however, following his sceptical forerunners Arcesilaus and Carneades, rejects the possibility that there exists any impression that is molded by its source in such a way that it could not come to be from anything else. He describes the outline of the dispute as follows:

But, to narrow down our debate, please note how small our disagreement is. There are four premises to the conclusion that nothing can be known or apprehended [i.e. be the subject of a cataleptic impression], which is the only subject at question here. They are that:

1. there are some false impressions;
2. those [i.e. false] impressions aren’t apprehensible [i.e. they are not cataleptic impressions];
3. when two impressions don’t differ at all, it’s not possible that one is apprehensible, while the other isn’t;
4. there is no true impression derived from the senses that may not be paired with another impression that doesn’t differ from it at all but isn’t apprehensible [i.e. is not a cataleptic impression].

Everyone concedes the second and third of these four premises. Epicurus doesn’t grant the first; but you, our current opponents, concede that one, too. So **the battle is entirely over the fourth premise** (*omnis pugna de quarto est*).

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20 *Luc. 18*: tale visum... impressum effictumque ex eo unde esset quale esse non posset ex eo unde non esset.
21 This and subsequent translations adapted from Brittain 2006. *Quattuor sunt capita quae concludant nihil esse quod nosci percipi comprehendit possit, de quo haec tota quaestio est. e quibus primum est esse aliquod visum falsum, secundum non posse id percipi, tertium inter quae visa nihil intersit fieri non posse ut eorum alia percipi possint alia non possint, quartum nullum esse visum verum a sensu profectum cui non adpositum sit visum alid quod ab eo nihil intersit quodque percipi non possit. horum quattuor capitum secundum et tertium omnes concedunt; primum Epicurus non dat, vos, quibuscum res est, id quoque conceditis; omnis pugna de quarto est.*
The “battle over the fourth premise,” around which Cicero builds his defence of Scepticism, focuses on the Stoic/Antiochian claim that we can distinguish cataleptic impressions from false impressions because the former come with “a mark distinctive of a true impression, not common to true and false alike” (Luc. 34). The mark is the ἐνάργεια, or “evidentness” of the impression – a feature which Cicero translates into Latin variously as declaratio, perspicuitas, evidentia. The cataleptic impression is, then, under the Stoic/Antiochian system, self-verifying: there is a qualitative difference between impressions that accurately represent the world and those which do not, in that the former exhibit “evidentness” while the latter do not.

Cicero emphasises the centrality of this claim as to the evidentness of the cataleptic impression for the Stoic/Antiochian position in both editions of our text. In the Lucullus, at §17, the feature of ἐνάργεια is discussed in the very opening passages describing the Stoic/Antiochian position. In Academica I, meanwhile, it is introduced as the essential feature of the cataleptic impression as first described by “Varro”:

‘... visis non omnibus adiungete fidem sed is solum quae propriae quandam haberent declarationem earum rerum quae viderentur; id autem visum cum ipsum per se cerneretur, comprehendibile – feretis haec?’

‘nos vero’ inquit; ‘quonam enim alio modo καταλημπτόν diceres?’

[Varro speaking:] “He [Zeno] held that not all impressions are trustworthy but only those that have an “evidentness” (declaratio), peculiar to themselves, of the objects presented; and a trustworthy impression, being perceived as such by its own intrinsic nature he termed “apprehensible” (comprehendibile) – will you endure these coinages?” “Indeed we will,” said Atticus, “for how else could you express katolêmptôn?”

Cic. Ac. 1.41

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22 propria veri, non commune veri et falsi nota
23 Ac. 1.41 for declaratio; Luc. 83 for perspicuitas and evidentia
The “battle over the fourth premise,” then, which Cicero claims separates the Stoics and Antiochians from his own school, is the battle over the claim that true impressions come with this evidentness, which allows us to recognise them as true, and which cannot be found in any false impression.

“Cicero’s” response to this Stoic/Antiochian position in the revised, second edition of the text is, unfortunately, lost to us. It does, however, survive in the *Lucullus*, where we can see that his rejection of the Stoic/Antiochian claim that true impressions and only true impressions exhibit evidentness is built around the use of a number of (for the most part standard) counter-examples. We find familiar optical illusions, including the straight oar that appears bent when seen in water; the pigeon’s neck, whose iridescent colouring appears different depending on the viewer’s position; and the sun, which, although it appears to us as a small dot in the sky, is, in reality, incredibly large. In addition to these optical illusions, “Cicero” also appeals to the false impressions created by altered states of consciousness: madness, drunkenness, and dreaming. In each of these cases, it is argued, there is no way of telling from the quality of the impression itself that it does not accurately represent reality.

Clearly, then, the purpose of these counter-examples is to claim that false and true impressions possess the same level of evidentness, and, consequently, that this feature cannot function as a reliable “mark” distinguishing the false from the true (as “Cicero” says: *nulla nota verum distinguebat a falso* (*Luc*. 84)). But is the idea here that no impressions exhibit evidentness? Or are we supposed to think that some impressions do exhibit evidentness, but it is not exclusively true impressions that do this? In other words, is the claim that impressions can possess evidentness being rejected wholesale, or only the claim that such evidentness is an infallible marker of truth? The key passage in this debate is *Luc*. 34, where “Lucullus”, the

24 *Luc*. 79
25 Ibid.
26 *Luc*. 82
27 *Luc*. 88-90
28 E.g. *Luc*. 90: *inter visa vera et falsa ad animi adsensum nihil interesse.*
29 “no mark distinguishes the true from the false”
proponent of the Stoic/Antiochian position in this edition of the text, attacks one branch of his sceptical critics, saying:

“They make the same mistake when, under pressure from the truth itself, they try to distinguish ‘evident’ (perspicua) from ‘apprehensible’ (percepta) impressions. Their idea now is to show that there are evident impressions that are true and stamped on the mind or intelligence but still aren’t apprehensible. But how could you say that something is evidently white when it’s possible that something black is giving rise to the impression that it’s white? And how are we going to say that such impressions are evident or accurately stamped when it’s unclear whether the mind is moved in response to something true or vacuously? That leaves you with no colour, body, truth, argument, senses, or anything evident at all.

James Allen (1997) argues that this passage is referring to the position of Carneades, whose views (or, perhaps more accurately, the Clitomachean interpretation of whose views) “Cicero” explicitly presents as matching his own in this text. Reading this passage alongside Sextus Empiricus M 7.402ff, which attributes to Carneades the position that false possess the same evidentness as the true, Allen claims that we have sufficient evidence to believe that Carneades held the view that impressions could be “evident” (perspicua) without this feature necessarily indicating their truthfulness; instead, the evidentness of an impression was indicative of its plausibility or, in the more common terminology of the school, probability. So, Allen argues: “we have good grounds, then, to conclude that Carneades, as it were, detached the subjective side of evidentness from the objective relation to the truth from which the Stoics had claimed it was inseparable. To be evident was to be probable, or probable in a certain way.”

It is possible that this is also the position taken by “Cicero” in the Lucullus. There is a difficult passage at Luc. 99, describing a Carneadean distinction between the apprehensible and the probable, and claiming that arguments against senses and evidentness apply only to the

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30 E.g. Luc. 98: “But let’s abandon all these barbed arguments and the dialecticians’ twisted approach to debate altogether, and show who we are. Once Carneades’ view has been thoroughly explained, all your Antiochian objections will collapse.”
31 Sextus M 7.403: καὶ τεκμηρίον τῆς ἀπαραλλαξίας τὸ ἐπ’ ἱσης ταύτας ἐναργεῖς καὶ πληκτικάς εὑρίσκεσθαι, τοῦ δὲ ἐπ’ ἱσης πληκτικάς καὶ ἐναργεῖς εἶναι τὸ τᾶς ἀκολούθους πράξεις ἐπιζεύγνυσθαι. “And an indication of their indistinguishability is their being found equally plain (ἔναργεῖς) and striking, while an indication of their being equally striking and plain is the fact that the corresponding actions are connected with them.” (Trans. Bett 2005)
32 Allen, 1997: 242 (I have slightly adapted this quote to maintain my vocabulary of “evidentness” for perspicuitas).
apprehensible, not to the probable. This has been taken to be a reiteration by the “Cicero” character of the Carneadean view given at Luc. 34 that impressions can be *perspicua* without being *percepta*, so opening the door to false, yet evident, impressions (though the Latin provides little support for this reading).\(^{33}\) If this were the case, it would fit neatly with Cicero, the author’s, apparent reliance on rhetorical evidentness in generating convincing, yet fictitious, literary products – a reliance we will explore in the upcoming sections. There is, however, very little evidence for this reading in the Latin text, and it seems more likely that “Cicero” is here focused exclusively on rejecting the Stoic/Antiochian claim that evidentness of the kind they argue for is present in true impressions, than that he is also, with little to no argumentation, advocating for a different kind of evidentness that can be held by both false and true impressions. The claim at Luc. 105 that “Lucullus”’ “defence of evidentness” (*perspicuitatis patrocinium*) has collapsed under “Cicero’s” argumentative onslaught also seems to make more sense if “Cicero’s” speech is aimed at rejecting the Stoic/Antiochian formulation of evidentness, rather than supporting a revised, Carneadean version. “Cicero’s” goal in his speech, then, is to show that evidentness of the kind envisaged by the Stoics/Antiochians which acts as a *guarantee* of the truth of an impression, is indefensible, rather than to argue for the possible evidentness of false impressions. However, just by having “Lucullus” raise the possibility of a sceptical system in which evidentness is unyoked from truth at Luc. 34, the door is left open for the kinds of evident yet false impressions that, as we shall see, we find in Hellenistic rhetorical theory, and under which category the dramatically vivid yet fictional account found in a dialogue such as the *Academica* might fall. If this is the case, then the entirety of the *Academica* could be read as yet another counter-example to the Stoic-Antiochian formulation of evidentness, in that it is itself a fictional account which displays the

\(^{33}\) Allen 1997 (Brittain 2006: p. 58 n 148 seems to be in agreement: “[Cicero’s] interpretation of Carneades draws on the distinction between the ‘unclear’ and ‘inapprehensible’ in Ac. 2.32, which allows for the identification of inapprehensible but persuasive impressions as Carneades’ ‘practical criterion’ in Ac. 2.33–36.” The main problem with reading the Latin in this way is that there is no explicit reference to the role which the “evident” plays in the second of Carneades’ two divisions, in which we find the probable and the improbable: *duo placet esse Carneadi genera visorum; in uno hanc divisionem, alia visa esse quae percipi possint <alia quae non possint, > in altero autem, alia visa esse probabilia alia non probabilia. itaque quae contra sensus contraque perspicuitatem dicantur ea pertinere ad superiorem divisionem, contra posteriorem nihil dici oportere. quare ita placere, tale visum nullum esse ut perceptio consequeretur, ut autem probatio multa.*
The qualitative feature of evidentness that is reserved by the Stoics/Antiochians exclusively for true impressions.

An objection could be raised at this point that the impressions produced by reading a literary dialogue are simply not the right *kind* of impressions to form successful counter-examples to the Stoic/Antiochian position, as described in this text. The text emphasises repeatedly that the type of cataleptic impression that the Stoics/Antiochians are most interested in defending is the cataleptic impression generated by sense perception – the reliability of which can, consequently, confirm the reliability of our senses themselves.34 While the sound or appearance of the words that make up the *Academica* may produce in us this kind of sensory impression in the reader or listener, the impressions that we get in regard to the speech and activities of a character such as “Cicero” when we read the *Academica* are of a different kind. Works of literature certainly *do*, on the Stoic/Antiochian account, generate impressions in their audience: Epictetus famously describes the *Iliad* as “nothing but impression (φαντασία)”;35 the plays *Atreus*, *Oedipus*, and *Phoenix*, meanwhile, are described as φαινόμενα of the kind believed only by madmen.36 The kind of impressions caused by the descriptions of events found in literature, however, are non-sensory impressions, which, according to the Stoics, were generated by the mind itself.37 How, then, would the kinds of non-sensory impressions generated by a literary account form a relevant counter-example to the accounts of the unique evidentness of true sensory impressions found in the Stoic/Antiochian sections of the *Academica*?

Significantly, the New Academy appeals to precisely this kind of non-sensory impression when attacking the Stoic/Antiochian claim that true impressions are qualitatively distinct from false

34 E.g. Luc. 19
35 Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.28.12-13
36 ibid. 32-33
37 DL. 7.51 Τῶν δὲ φαντασιῶν κατ’ αὐτούς αἱ μὲν εἰσὶν αἰσθητικαί, αἱ δὲ οὐ· αἰσθητικαὶ μὲν αἱ δι’ αἰσθητηρίου ἢ αἰσθητηρίων λαμβανόμεναι, οὐκ αἰσθητικαὶ δὲ αἱ διὰ τῆς διανοίας καθάπερ τῶν ἀσωμάτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν λόγω λαμβανομένων. “According to them some presentations are data of sense and others are not: the former are the impressions conveyed through one or more sense-organs; while the latter, which are not data of sense, are those received through the mind itself, as is the case with incorporeal things and all the other presentations which are received by reason.”
impressions by virtue of their evidentness. The counter-examples of the madman, the inebriated man, and the dreamer, exploited frequently by the sceptical Academy, are introduced precisely because the non-sensory impressions produced by the minds of those who are in these atypical states seem to them to exhibit the same level of evidentness as true impressions resulting from sense perception. The fact that these impressions appear to be qualitatively indistinguishable from true impressions, despite having no external origin in the real world, is precisely what makes them powerful counter-examples to the Stoic/Antiochian formulation of the cataleptic impression. Consequently, the non-sensory nature of these impressions is emphasised by Cicero throughout the text. When they are first introduced by “Lucullus,” these impressions are described as “produced by the imagination (cogitatio)” and “fabricated (fingere) to ourselves and invented (depingere) by the imagination (cogitatio)” (the use of the terms fingo and depingo here, interestingly, being taken from the field of artistic or literary production).38 When the examples of the madman, inebriated man, and the dreamer are raised again by “Cicero” at Luc. 88-90, he concludes his discussion by once more pointing out the non-sensory nature of these counter-examples, ending his account with the words “but I am departing from the senses.”39

The sorts of non-sensory impressions experienced by the reader of a dramatic dialogue would, then, seem to be of roughly the same kind as those experienced by the dreamer, drunkard, or madman, in that our minds create for us impressions of the characters and events described in the text. Indeed, it is significant that Epictetus attributes to someone under the grip of a dramatic illusion an error similar to that of the madman.40 As such, then, the impressions created by the literary representation of the conversation which takes place in the Academica seem to be precisely the kind of impressions that could be employed as a counter-example against Stoic/Antiochian epistemology – provided, that is, that the impressions created from

38 Luc. 51
39 Luc. 90: sed abeo a sensibus.
40 Epictetus, Discourses, 1.28.32-33 (see above ftnt 34)
this text have a level of evidentness similar to that exhibited by impressions formed from true events (a possibility that is certainly present in the pre-Ciceronian tradition).\textsuperscript{41}

Now, then, it is time to turn to a consideration of the role of “evidentness” in Hellenistic rhetorical theory. This will confirm for us both that “evidentness” is a feature that can be extended to literary texts, and that it can be imparted to dramatic dialogues like the Academica. We will then look at the ways in which Cicero works to foster this “evidentness” in his own text, before, finally, considering how he plays with the convincing, or “evident”, nature of his fictional representation in his dedicatory letter.

The Role of “Evidentness” in Hellenistic Rhetorical Theory

As already mentioned, the concept of ἐνάργεια (or “evidentness”) is employed not only in Stoic/Antiochian epistemology, but also in Hellenistic rhetorical theory.\textsuperscript{42} Graham Zanker (1981) provides a comprehensive overview of the use of this term in Greek criticism, as well as the transmission of these ideas into Latin. Most relevant for our purposes are the accounts of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (writing a century after Cicero, but emerging from the same intellectual tradition) and Ps-Demetrius, the author of On Style (who seems to have been active some time between the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE and the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, and likely predated Cicero).\textsuperscript{43}

Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes the following claim about the presence of ἐνάργεια in the work of the early 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE speech-writer, Lysias:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{41} See, e.g. Sextus Empiricus M. 7.216-7: “But Aristotle and Theophrastus and in general the Peripatetics also allow the criterion to be twofold (the nature of things being, at the highest level, twofold, since, as I said before, some things are perceptible, others intelligible): sense-perception for perceptible things, intelligence for intelligible things, and common to both, as Theophrastus said, what is evident (ἐναργές).”
\textsuperscript{42} This connection has previously been noted, but not explored further, by Vassaly, 1993, in her work on Ciceronian oratory.
\textsuperscript{43} See De Jonge, 2012 for a full bibliography regarding the dating of Ps-Demetrius.
\end{flushleft}
The way in which the quality of “evidentness” is conceived of in the rhetorical theory of Dionysius is, then, remarkably similar to what we have seen in our discussion of Hellenistic epistemology. Dionysius claims in this passage that, although Lysias’ audience do not experience the events described by the orator at first hand, the evidentness of his style means that they, nevertheless, experience the things spoken about “through their senses” (ὑπὸ τὰς αἰσθήσεις). The average reader feels like he “sees” (ὁρᾶν) the events described, and that he himself stands face-to-face with the characters of the narrative. So, just as in Stoic/Antiochian epistemology, the quality of “evidentness” is associated with those kinds of impressions that we obtain through our senses (the focus in this passage being upon the sense of sight). The difference here is that the audience have, in fact, no first-hand sensory experience of the events which appear to them to be so evident; instead, the convincing, sensory quality of the impressions that they receive comes from Lysias’ rhetorical skill in imparting ἐνάργεια to his

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44 Trans adapted from Usher, 1974.
45 Admittedly, this is a very unusual use of ὑπὸ + the accusative, but I am here following the loeb translator.
speeches. To put this in terms of Stoic/Antiochian epistemology, the evidentness of these impressions would come not from the fact that they have the particular causal history associated with the cataleptic impression (i.e. coming from what is true in such a way that it could not come to be from anything that is false), but by virtue of the vivid style in which Lysias relates his narrative. Moreover, Dionysius even gives us some of the features of this vivid style: Lysias’ ability to produce this quality of evidentness in his speeches is attributed to the inclusion of dramatic details into his narrative, including circumstantial detail (τῶν παρακολουθοῦντων) and appropriate characterisation (τὰ προσήκοντα ἐκάστοις ἀποδοῦναι πάθη τε καὶ ἡδὴ καὶ ἔργα).

Pseudo-Demetrius, in his account of ἐνάργεια, further emphasises the importance of detailed scene-setting for the production of this effect, and also draws our attention to the fact that this sort of quality is associated with the philosophical dialogues of Plato.

(209) Πρῶτον δὲ περὶ ἐναργείας· γίνεται δ’ ἡ ἐνάργεια πρῶτα μὲν ἐξ ἀκριβολογίας καὶ τοῦ παραλείπειν μηδὲν μηδ’ ἐκτέμειν, οἶον “ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἄνηρ ὄχετηγὸς” καὶ πάσα αὐτὴ ἡ παραβολή· τὸ γὰρ ἐναργὲς ἔχει ἐκ τοῦ πάντα εἰρήσαται τὰ συμβαίνοντα καὶ μὴ παραλείπειν μηδέν... (217) Γίνεται δὲ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τὰ παρεπόμενα τοῖς πράγμασι λέγειν ἐνάργεια, οἶον ώς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀγροίκου βαδίζοντος ἔφη τις, ὅτι “πρόσωθεν ἠκούετο αὐτοῦ τῶν ποδῶν ὁ κτύπος προσιόντος,” ὡς οὐδὲ βαδίζοντος ἂλλ’ οἶον γε λακτίζοντος τὴν γῆν. (218) ὅπερ δὲ ὁ Πλάτων φησίν ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἡπποκράτους, “ἐρυθριάσας [ἤδη τῇ νυκτὶ], ἤδη γὰρ ὑπέφηνεν τι ἡμέρας, ὅτε καταφανὴ αὐτὸν γενέσθαι,” ὅτι μὲν ἐναργέστατὸν ἔστι, παντὶ δὴλον· ἢ δ’ ἐνάργεια γέγονεν ἐκ τῆς φροντίδος τῆς περὶ τὸν λόγον καὶ τοῦ ἀπομνημονεύσαι, ὅτι νόκτωρ πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰσῆλθεν ὁ Ἡπποκράτης.

(209) First, evidentness: it comes first from the use of precise detail and from omitting and excluding nothing, for example the whole simile beginning “as when a man draws off water in an irrigation channel.” This comparison owes its evidentness to the fact that all accompanying details are included and nothing is omitted... (217) Evidentness also comes from the use of circumstantial detail, as in someone’s description of a countryman walking along, “the clatter of his feet was heard from far away as he approached,” just as if he were not just walking along but virtually stamping the ground. (218) Plato too has an example when he is describing Hippocrates: “He was blushing, for there was already a first glimmer of daylight to reveal him.” (Pl. Protag. 312a) This is extremely evident, as anybody can see, and the evidentness
is the result of his careful use of words and keeping in mind that it was night when Hippocrates visited Socrates.\textsuperscript{46}

Ps-Demetrius, \textit{On Style}, 209 and 217-18

Again, then, this rhetorical theorist emphasises the inclusion of accompanying detail as being key to the production of \textit{ἐνάργεια}, and the passage from Plato’s \textit{Protagoras} provides us the kind of accompanying details which produce this effect in the context of a philosophical dialogue, namely the inclusion of an incidental detail which can reinforce for the reader the dramatic setting of the work.

When the concept of \textit{ἐνάργεια} is taken up in Roman rhetorical theory, we find, again, the claim that it is this feature of an oratorical work which accounts for the fact that literary texts can give us the kind of vivid mental impressions that we would expect to derive only from direct sensory contact with the characters and events in question. In his dialogue, \textit{De Partitione Oratoria}, which purports to be a Latin language account of Greek rhetorical theory, the character “Cicero” describes this feature of rhetorical style (which he here calls \textit{inlustris oratio}) as the part of oratory “which almost sets the event before the eyes,” with the effect “that we seem to see” (\textit{ut videre videamur}) the events in question.\textsuperscript{47} The idea that this effect (here called \textit{inlustris explanatio}) is produced by the inclusion of a detailed narrative account, meanwhile, is found in Cicero’s \textit{De Oratore}, where the character “Crassus” states:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Nam et commoratio una in re permultum movet et inlustris explanatio rerumque, quasi gerantur, sub aspectum paene subiectio; quae et in exponenda re plurimum valent et ad inlustrandum id, quod exponitur, et ad amplificandum; ut eis, qui audient, illud, quod augebimus, quantum efficere oratio poterit, tantum esse videatur.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} Trans adapted from Innes, 1995.

\textsuperscript{47} Cic. \textit{Part. Orat.} 6.20: \textit{illustris autem oratio est si et verba gravitate delecta ponuntur et translata et superlata et ad nomen adiuncta et duplicata et idem significantia atque ab ipsa actione atque imitazione rerum non abhorrentia. Est enim haec pars orationis quae rem constituat paene ante oculos, is enim maxime sensus attingitur: sed ceteri tamen, et maxime mens ipsa moveri potest. Sed quae dicta sunt de oratione dilucida, cadunt in hanc illustrem omnia; est enim pluris aliquanto illustre quam illud dilucidum: altero fit ut intellegamus, altero vero ut videre videamur.}
“For dwelling on a single circumstance often has a considerable effect, and is a clear illustration (\textit{inlustris explanatio}) of matters, almost placing them under the gaze of the audience as if they were happening. This has wonderful power for representing an event, both to illustrate what is represented, and to amplify it, so that the thing we amplify may appear to the audience to be as great as our speech is able to make it.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsc{Cic. De Orat. 3.202}

So, then, Cicero himself adopts in his own rhetorical theory the Greek idea that narrative accounts of events, can, if described with sufficient rhetorical flair, create an impact on the audience as if they had experienced them first-hand, through their own senses.

In the passages that we have seen, and, indeed, in all the surviving passages in which Cicero deals with this idea of rhetorical evidentness, the terminology of \textit{illustratio} is used. Quintilian, however, writing a century and a half after Cicero and drawing heavily on his work,\textsuperscript{49} speaks of: “\textit{ἐνάργεια}, which is called by Cicero “illustration” (\textit{inlustratio}) and “evidentness” (\textit{evidentia}) (Quint. Inst. Or. 6.2.32).\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Evidentia}, is, of course, one of the technical terms used by Cicero to translate the Greek \textit{ἐνάργεια} in the \textit{Academica} (e.g. Luc. 83). Quintilian here, then, attributes to Cicero a rhetorical theory of evidentness that employs the same terminology as that used in the epistemological context of the \textit{Academica}. Quintilian also describes the effect of this rhetorical evidentness on the mind using the psychological terminology of the \textit{Academica}: these texts produce vivid “\textit{φαντασία}” (impressions) in our minds, which Quintilian translates into Latin using the Ciceronian \textit{visiones} (e.g. Luc. 33 and \textit{passim}).\textsuperscript{51} We cannot, unfortunately, know for

\textsuperscript{48} Translation adapted from Watson, 1895.
\textsuperscript{49} The passage of the \textit{De Oratore} just quoted is, for example, cited by Quintilian at Quint. \textit{Inst. Or. 9.2.40.}
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{ἐνάργεια, quae a Cicerone inlustratio et evidentia nominatur}
\textsuperscript{51} Quint 6.2.30-1: Quas \textit{φαντασίας} Graeci vocant (nos sane visiones appellemus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur, has quisquis bene ceperit is erit in affectibus potentissimus. Quidam dicunt \textit{εὐφαντασίωτον} qui sibi res voces actus secundum verum optime fingat: quod quidem nobis volentibus facile continget; nisi vero inter atia animorum et spes inanes et velut somnia quaedam vigilantium ita nos hae de quibus loque imagines prosecuntur ut peregrinari navigare proeliori, populos adloqui, divitiarum quas nos habemus usum videamur disponere, nec cogitare sed facere, hoc animi vitium ad utilitatem non transferemus [ad hominem]. Occisum queror: non omnia quae in re praesenti accidisse credibile est in oculis habebo? non percussor ille subitus erumpet? non expavescent circumventus, exclamabit vel rogabit vel fugiet? non ferientem, non concidentem videbo? non animo sanguis et pallor et gemitus, extremus denique expirantis hiatus insidet? “The
sure whether the terminological connection between rhetorical and epistemological
evidentness attributed to him by Quintilian was actually made by Cicero in passages now lost to
us: it could, instead, be the case that Quintilian’s words represent an interesting moment in the
early reception of Cicero where his works on rhetorical theory and epistemology are read
together in the search for a unified account of ἐνάργεια. Cicero does, however, make use in the
Academica of the illustratio vocabulary that we find in his discussion of evidentness in the De
Oratore and Part. Or. An evident impression is described as inlustris by “Cicero” throughout
Luc. 94. In the summary of Stoic epistemology at DND 1.12, meanwhile, the cataleptic
impression is described as insignis et inlustris. This shared vocabulary in the passages which
survive for us should, I think, suggest that Cicero’s use of the shared technical term evidentia
to describe evidentness in both epistemological and stylistic contexts in a lost section of the text is
eminently plausible. What is clear from this discussion, however, is that Cicero is aware of and
subscribes to the Greek rhetorical theorists’ views on ἐνάργεια, and agrees with their account
of the ability of literature to convincingly produce a scene in the “mind’s eye.” Moreover, this
rhetorical feature is discussed by Cicero precisely because of its utility in oratory, in that it can
be used to convince the audience of a political or forensic speech of the truth of an account.52

So, then, as Zanker has observed: “the ancient testimonia [in which he includes that of Cicero
himself]... demonstrate that ἐνάργεια and its Latin equivalents denote that stylistic quality of
descriptive representation which makes a vivid appeal to the senses, in particular to sight; a

person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed
what the Greeks call phantasiai (let us call them “visiones”), by which the images of absent things are presented to
the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us.
Some use the word euphantasiōtas of one who is exceptionally good at realistically imagining to himself things,
words, and actions. We can indeed easily make this happen at will. When the mind is idle or occupied with wishful
thinking or a sort of daydreaming, the images of which I am speaking haunt us, and we think we are travelling or
sailing or fighting a battle or addressing a crowd or disposing of wealth which we do not possess, and not just
imaging but actually doing these things! Can we not turn this mental vice to a useful purpose? Surely we can.
Suppose I am pleading the case that someone has been murdered. Am I not to have before my eyes all the
circumstances which one can believe to have happened during the event? Will not the assassin burst out on a
sudden, and the victim tremble, cry for help, and either plead for mercy or try to escape? Shall I not see one man
striking the blow and the other man falling? Will not the blood, the pallor, the groans, the last gasp of the dying be
imprinted on my mind?”

52 C.f. De Orat. 3.215 sed ea [sc. veritas] si satis in actione efficeret ipsa per se, arte profecto non egeremus; but if
truth were efficient enough in delivery of itself, we should certainly have no need for the aid of art.
number add the consideration that it will be produced by detailed description of the attendant circumstances of an action. If a literary work were to exhibit this kind of evidentness, then, it would have precisely the qualities that would make it an ideal candidate as a successful counter-example to the Stoic/Antiochian theory of the cataleptic impression: this kind of literary account would produce in its reader all of the qualitative features typically associated with true impressions produced by sense perception, despite that fact that the reader has had no sensory contact with the characters or events depicted by the text at all. The reader of a well-crafted literary account could, then, be seen by the Academic sceptic to be in the same position as that much-used figure, the dreamer: just as the dreamer has impressions which appear to derive from sense perception, but are in fact produced by his mind, so too the reader of a dramatically successful text has impressions which appear to derive from sense perception but are instead produced by the mind’s response to the stylistic features of the work.

What remains, before we turn to a discussion of the features indicative of rhetorical evidentness within the Academica itself, is to note that a dramatic dialogue of this type is precisely the kind of text to which this rhetorical theory should apply. In the first place, as discussed at the beginning of this paper, both editions of the text are structured as a series of competing speeches (orationes). We ourselves may have a tendency, as expressed by Schofield, to look at these extended speeches and think they provide less opportunity for dramatic impact than the more conversational back and forth of some Platonic dialogues. In Ciceronian terms, however, the use of extended oratio allows him to employ all of the tricks of the orator’s trade (as he tells us at TD 1.7, his goal in writing his philosophical texts is to combine prudentia with eloquentia), and so provides him with precisely the right kind of material for producing inlustris oratio and the vivid dramatic impact that goes with it. Moreover, this is exactly what Cicero tells us he is doing in this work. The character “Cicero” tells us at the very beginning of Academica I that the author’s project of writing Greek philosophy in Latin is an attempt philosophiamque veterem illam a Socrate ortam Latinis litteris

53 Zanker 1981: 299-300:
54 See p.1 of this paper.
**illustrare** ("to make evident" in Latin literary form the old system of philosophy which arose from Socrates).\(^{55}\)

The Production of “Evidentness” in the *Academica*

So, then, can we find evidence of attempts to impart a rhetorical “evidentness” in the *Academica* itself? If we take the attempt to impart ἐνάργεια to a text to involve those stylistic features described by Cicero and our other Hellenistic rhetorical theorists in the preceding section (namely, description of circumstantial detail and realistic characterisation), then a brief glance at the text will show us that we can.

In addition to the introductory scene-setting of each of the editions (which, in the case of the *Lucullus*, involves a lengthy, 10-paragraph discussion of Lucullus’ biographical details to convince us that he might realistically have been the author of his upcoming speech on Antiochus), we find repeated references to the dramatic frame of the dialogue, even in the midst of philosophical exposition. In *Academica* I, for which we have less extensive evidence, the nods to the dramatic frame are accomplished by frequent interjections and encouragement from “Cicero” and “Atticus,” as they listen to “Varro’s” speech. “Varro’s” speech, which starts at Ac. 1.15, is interrupted at Ac 1.18, 25, 26, 33, 35, and 41, before our text breaks off at 1.46, so the reader goes no more than a few paragraphs without being reminded that this speech is depicted as part of a real-life conversation. In the *Lucullus*, we find repeated references to the dramatic setting of the conversation, which is imagined as taking place in the garden of Hortensius’ house at Bauli, overlooking the Bay of Naples.\(^{56}\) “Cicero” appeals to the dramatic setting of the conversation in order to make a point about the imperfect nature of eyesight, saying:

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\(^{55}\) Ac. 1.4

\(^{56}\) Luc. 9
Looking from this spot straight ahead, I can see Catulus’ house in Cumae, but not the one in Pompeii, although there is nothing interposed to hinder my sight—it’s just that my vision can’t stretch that far. What a wonderful view! I can see Puteoli! But I can’t see my friend Gaius Avianius, though he may be taking a stroll in the Portico of Neptune.

Cic. Luc. 80

He then goes on to talk about the fish that are in the bay just a short distance away from them, although they cannot see them (*qui neque videntur a nobis et nunc quidem sub oculis sunt, Luc. 81*). This seaside setting is invoked by “Cicero” again at *Luc. 100*, where he introduces the question of whether the wise man would hold any opinions if he set out by boat from their current location to Puteoli. It is raised once more at 125, when talking about Democritus’ theory of multiple worlds (“just as we are now at Bauili and have a view of Puteoli, so there are innumerable other groups of people with the same names and distinctions and record, minds, appearances and ages, discussing the same subjects in similar places”).

We find this frequent invocation of the dramatic setting of the text alongside repeated mentions of the views and biographies of the characters, and the regular use of exclamation and direct address to remind us that these speeches are presented as being delivered to a particular group of Roman statesmen. Indeed, Cicero’s integration of setting and argument is such that, in his second edition of the *Academica*, he retains this waterfront setting (now, though, with the action transported to Varro’s villa in Cumae) to accompany what seems from our fragments to be a continued reliance upon aquatic examples.

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57 I am here using Reid’s text.  
58 *et ut nos nunc simus ad Bauilos Puteolosque videamus sic innumerabiles paribus in locis esse isdem nominibus honoribus rebus gestis ingeniiis formis aetatibus isdem de rebus disputantes.*  
59 E.g. the reference to Cicero’s foiling of the Catlinarian conspiracy at *Luc. 62*  
60 E.g. the vocatives *Luculle* (*Luc. 87*) and *Catule* (*Luc. 89*).  
61 See Griffin, 1997: 24. The fragments in question are fr. 3 and 7 (Reid) from Book 2 and fr. 13 (Reid) from Book 3. Fr. 13 is particularly striking for its employment of the visual features of the dramatic setting: “right now we are sitting by the Lucrine Lake and see the little fishes jumping out of the water” (*et ut nos nunc sedemus ad Lucrum pisciculosque exultantes videamus*).
To turn now to characterisation, we have already observed in our discussion of Cicero’s letters to Atticus the emphasis placed by the author upon the selection of plausible characters for his dialogue. Further evidence of Cicero’s concern with credible characterisation in his production of this can be found in the text as we have it. In the introduction to the *Lucullus*, Cicero ties himself in knots trying to provide a suitable backstory for his character, “Lucullus,” which will provide him of the necessary knowledge of Antiochian philosophy which, as the letters to Atticus tell us, his historical model probably did not have.\(^{62}\) In the second edition of the text, meanwhile, there are repeated references to the intellectual biographies and current literary interests of the characters, in order to support the plausibility of their engaging in the kind of discussion described in the text. Finally, the conversation between the characters in both editions is full of the familiarity and respectful disagreement that we are meant to believe typifies a real conversation between a group of elite Roman friends.\(^{63}\)

All of these features, then, when taken together, indicate that Cicero’s text was produced with an eye to imbuing it with dramatic credibility and rhetorical evidentness, and so that it was intended to effect the reader in such a way that he experienced the depicted speeches as if they were real and taking place in front of his very eyes. Instead of exhibiting the “negation of the dramatic in the interests of the exposition of systems,”\(^{64}\) then, in the *Academica* Cicero takes care to employ the very rhetorical tropes that are designed to bring the scenes he depicts to life in the mind of his reader. This is not, of course, to say that these tropes necessarily have the desired effect (I think it would be very difficult to find a reader today who is blown away with the dramatic realism of the *Academica*) - but this apparent failure will have as much to do with the reader’s own cultural background, sensitivity to oratorical style, and literary expectations, as with the text itself.

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\(^{62}\) See *Luc.* 5, where Cicero raises the fact that some readers will not believe his claim that Lucullus knew the doctrines of Antiochus.

\(^{63}\) E.g. “Lucullus’” gentle mockery of Cicero at *Luc.* 62; “Hortensius’” jokes and praise at *Luc.* 63 etc.

\(^{64}\) Schofield, 2008 (see p.1)
The Dedicatory Letter as a Guide to the Function of the Dialogue Form

So far, then, we have examined the ways in which Cicero works to maximise the “evidentness” of his *Academica*, and have developed a tentative hypothesis that, in producing this kind of credible but ultimately fictitious account, he may be providing his reader with a large-scale counter-example to the Stoic/Antiochian claim that cataleptic impressions are uniquely evident. I am now going to suggest that this kind of reading may be further authorised and endorsed by the programmatic dedicatory letter which accompanied the second edition.

While we have lost the larger part of the second edition of the *Academica*, we are lucky enough to have both a letter dedicating the dialogue to Varro, and a letter to Atticus which discusses this dedicatory letter. This letter to Atticus tells us that the dedicatory letter was appended to the copy of the text sent by Cicero to his friend and publisher, and so, presumably, was included within the edition of the *Academica* made by Atticus’ copyists and distributed to a general audience. The dedicatory letter, which Cicero tells Atticus he laboured over at length (“let me be damned if I ever take so much trouble about anything again!”), displays all the expected features of the genre, dedicating the work to Varro and outlining the social obligations that arise from this act. It also, however, contains an unexpected comment concerning the anticipated impact of the text on its reader. At the end of section 1, Cicero writes:

\[ Puto fore, ut, cum legeris, mirere nos id locutos esse inter nos, quod numquam locuti sumus; sed nosti morem dialogorum. \]

I think that when you read it [i.e. the 2nd edition of the *Academica*] you will be amazed that we have said to each other things that we have never said; but you know the convention of dialogues.

*Cic. Ad Fam.* 9.8

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65 *Ad Att.* 3.25: *sed, quaeso, epistula mea ad Varronem valdene tibi placuit?*
66 Ibid. *male mi sit si umquam quicquam tam enitar*
The reader’s amazement (mirere) is presumably the result of the mismatch described here between the events as represented in the text (nos id locutos esse inter nos) and the way in which they actually happened (numquam locuti sumus). So this letter, which prefaces the work as a whole, asks the reader to turn his attention to the generic identity of the Academica as a dramatic dialogue, and points out the key feature which it shares with other examples of this genre: namely, that it provides a credible and convincing account of a conversation which is entirely fabricated. The reference to this mos dialogorum, then, works before the dialogue even begins to draw the reader’s attention to its status as a convincing account of a real-life conversation, while simultaneously revealing it to be a literary fiction. The difficulty in differentiating the real from the unreal, which will turn out to be the main philosophical theme of the text as a whole, is first encountered, then, as a problem exhibited by the literary form of the philosophical dialogue: the mos dialogorum is to portray events so realistically that we are astonished when we realise that they did not, in fact, occur. The dramatic illusion of the Academica itself, then, may very well be the first example that we encounter of the epistemological uncertainty that will be Cicero’s main message in this dialogue.

That Cicero considered his text itself to be emblematic of the epistemological problems it described can perhaps be confirmed by a further comment in the letter to Atticus in which he discusses the dedicatory letter to Varro. Here he says: O Academiam volaticam et sui similem (“Oh the Academica, so changeable and similar to itself!” Ad Att 13.25). The point here seems to be that, following the numerous revisions he has made to the text, the form of the Academica itself now reflects the philosophical method of the New Academy, in that its proponents constantly flit from one argumentative position to another, testing the plausibility of each before adopting (albeit provisionally) any particular view. In writing the Academica, then – or, at least, in the final stages of its revision – Cicero seems to have been thinking about the significant similarities between the literary form of his dialogue and the philosophical

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67 Indeed in the Greek rhetorical tradition ἐνάργεια is associated with ἐκπληξία, “astonishment”: see e.g. Longinus, 15.2
68 The term “Academia” here referring to the text in which Cicero defends the Academy, i.e. the Academica.
position for which it argues.\textsuperscript{69} It would not, then, to be too much of a stretch to think that Cicero may be asking his reader to do the same in his dedicatory letter.

If we do adopt this reading, we are rewarded with a plausible explanation for the particular emphasis on characterisation, scene-setting, and dramatic embellishment in the \textit{Academica}, which fits in with the remains of the text as we have them: namely, that these all work together to produce a literary \textit{ἐνάργεια} which creates in the mind of the reader vivid impressions that have the same quality as those produced through sense perception, and so undermine the Stoic/Antiochian reliance upon evidentness as a criterion for distinguishing false from true impressions. Failing that, our discussion of Cicero’s emphasis upon characterisation and use of oratorical devices should at least go some way to dispelling the pervasive opinion that Cicero’s dialogue form is mere window dressing which the reader can safely ignore without doing any disservice to the text. In the \textit{Academica}, at least, the employment of the \textit{mos dialogorum} seems to be an essential part of Cicero’s project.

\textsuperscript{69} The two editions of the \textit{Academica} may also add to its attraction as an illustrative example in support of Cicero’s epistemological scepticism. Another important counter-example used by the Sceptic to attack the Stoic/Antiochian account of the cataleptic impression is the indistinguishability between twins (Cic. \textit{Luc.} 84). There are now two “twin” editions of the \textit{Academica}, and there seems to have been some confusion as to which was the “real” \textit{Academica} among Cicero’s readers: see Gurd, 2007.
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