Contextualizing the Decontextualized: Social Tensions in the Fragments of Lucilius

Work on fragmentary authors is in vogue; a recent conference even included two separate panels dedicated to this subfield. Meanwhile, an edition of the *Fragments of the Roman Historians* (2013, edited Cornell et al.) has appeared to replace Peter's *HRR*, and a multi-volume collaborative series is underway to update Ribbeck's editions of the fragments of Roman drama. Such endeavors are eliciting introspection amongst our broader community of scholars, who are questioning how the indirect transmission of fragmentary authors—in particular those of the Roman Republic—affects our understanding of their literary projects. Calls for editorial caution have been sounded by Jackie Elliott (2013, esp. 18ff.; on Ennius) and several others.

The object of this paper is Lucilius, an author preserved almost exclusively through a later—4th century AD, perhaps—lexicographer, Nonius Marcellus, who, coincidentally, is responsible for a large portion of the total extant corpus of fragments from Roman drama. In great detail, Lindsay elucidated Nonius' operating practices and the sources he used to compile his dictionary, including Lucilius, and thereby greatly aided efforts at reconstructing our lost author. Yet even six years after the ground-breaking opusculum of Lindsay, and three after Marx's edition of Lucilius, Housman could write (poetically, as was his wont):

> Cautious men do not edit Lucilius; they leave him to be edited by bold and devoted men, whose heroism they admire with that mixture of pity and self-congratulation which a Roman may be supposed to have felt as he saw Curtius descend into the gulf... (Housman: 1907:54).

Anna Chahoud's promise of a new commentary will surely improve matters, however.

Despite the textual problems, I will advocate for a return to the fragments for interpretive guidance. Much of current thought on Lucilius is dependent on later satirists' reconfiguration of their putative predecessor, where he is simultaneously canonized and archaicized as the *inventor* figure of the genre. Horace is largely the culprit for this rebranding. Gowers notes Lucilius' role as "father-figure" (Gowers 2011: 8) in the *Sermones*, while Freudenburg stresses how much Horace manipulates the image of Lucilius for his own rhetorical ends (Freudenburg 2001: 17–20).

The extant Lucilian corpus, however, paints a rather different picture. Instead, we can observe that markedly Archilochean stamp of invective and poetic voice that blurs author and persona—likely for the first time at Rome. In fact, our poet appears fixated on contemporary social, political, and intellectual currents. Take for example his thrashing of a pair of upstart auctioneers, Granius and Gallonius, and their luxurious feasting habits. Lucilius' treatment of the latter was memorable; Horace references the *mensa infamis* to borrow its savage critique (*Serm.* 2.2.46–8), while in *De Finibus*, Cicero frames the episode as a model of Stoic diatribe (*De Fin.* 2.24). Moreover, the targets of Lucilius' wit ranged widely, from the *nouveau riche* to the traditional landed aristocracy, even the censors themselves—e.g. Lupus' trial before a *concilium deorum*, which opened Book One of the *Satires.*

As a member of the upper classes, Lucilius was a novel entrant into the Roman poetic scene. Book 3, for instance, was dedicated to the poet's journey to visit grand estates in Sicily and Southern Italy. In its retelling, the poet remarks on the nickname of Puteoli as the "lesser Delos" (fr. 123 Marx). In fact, the inscriptions from that island

corroborate the notion that fellow Campanians (like Lucilius himself) were deeply involved in commerce there (Durrbach 1937). The above comment, read in combination with the rest of the fragments and testimonia, suggests that Lucilius had a knack for business and was well aware of the opportunities that Rome's new empire afforded. But Lucilius also kept himself within the socially proscribed limits for men of his social standing, perhaps following the lead of his friends Laelius and Scipio Aemilianus; tax farming in Asia was completely off the table (*publicanus vero ut Asiam fiam, ut scripturarius, / pro Lucilio, id ego nolo*; frr. 671–2 Marx).

Such exploits were only made possible by Gaius Gracchus' *lex Sempronia de provincia Asia*, and this leads us to a final important observation: by dealing closely and systematically with the fragments of Lucilius—i.e. dealing with the corpus synoptically and identifying broad trends—we may have a rare opportunity to access the artistic, social, and political discourse of the tulmultuous Gracchan period.

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