

Configuring Contrasts: Lucilius' Caricatures of Ennius and Accius

Lucilius' *Satires* are unlike the Latin literature that came before. With a range of poetic meters, often mundane or personal subject matter, and contemporary scenes and figures all featuring in the fragments that remain of early Roman satire, the poet Lucilius set his novel genre apart in many ways from the poetry published and circulating in the second century BCE. And yet another means by which this author differentiated his works from that of his peers and predecessors is through explicit literary criticism—or even open attacks—upon the other well-known authors of his time. Editors of Lucilius and authors of literary histories alike remark upon Lucilius' vitriolic attacks on the works of Ennius and the ideas of Accius in particular (see Marx 1904-5, Warmington 1938, Schmidt 1977, and Conte 1999 as typical examples).

And yet, as Brian Breed has recently argued, the harsh critiques that may be found in what remains of the *Satires* are not indicative of Lucilius' personal distaste for the works of these other poets (Breed 2020; pace Barr 1965), but rather reflect the generic requirements of Lucilius' nascent poetic field—one perhaps most easily described by what it is not: epic meter, but not epic content; elevated poetics, but one mixed with mundane subjects. The triangulation of Lucilius, Accius, and Ennius is one reinforced by later quotation habits of figures such as Cicero (as Hannah Čulík-Baird 2022 notes; see also Shev 2009), but it is prefigured in the words and works of Lucilius himself. Accius in particular looms large as an apparent straw man in the grammatical quibbles and syntactical satires of Lucilius' Book 9, while Ennius' *Annales* feature as verbatim quotations and tongue-in-cheek paraphrases throughout Lucilius' works.

The question then remains: why is it, of all the second century authors available for critique, these two poets and their works that Lucilius so often caricaturizes? Are Ennius and

Accius simply stand-ins for the respective genres that were their fortes, or are there additional motivations to be seen in Lucilius' choice of contrasting content? In this paper, I will examine the Lucilian fragments that target Ennius and Accius in order to determine what common threads can be analyzed and to discover how the satirist effectively goes about building a Latin literary canon, even while nominally tearing down his closest contemporaries.

Works Cited

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