

THE INFLUENCING ROLE OF LUCILIUS' SATIRE ONTO THE ROMAN REPUBLICAN SCENE

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Abstract: The present paper seeks to examine how Lucilius' individual instances had functioned in the socio-political context of his satires. In the time of Roman Republic Lucilius developed the poetical genre of satire into a socio-political tool capable of entertaining and harm. The bidirectional target is reached by using a harsh tone in the poetical intention of mocking the current state of the society and its individuals. Satire's predilection for choosing individuals has become a Lucilianic label, where the critical approach is regarded by the use of poetical irony, persona-construction, rhetorical posturing, and thinly veiled autobiography. Lucilius' directness is defined through a clear demarcation between enemies and friends, a literary strategy used to demarcate the auctorial position in relation with the political environment and also to persuade the audience in a desired direction. Literary patronage or a close friendship of the poet may lead to a critical investigation of satire's role into the contemporaneous political environment. Therefore, the satirical fragments of Lucilius are meant to be analyzed in accordance to the poets' political position in order to demonstrate that early Roman satire had the intention to influence the public perception. A more nuanced understanding of satire's incipits will facilitated the involvement of mocking literature into the branch of influencing literature.

Keywords: satire, mocking, influence, politics, Lucilius.

The fundamental aim of this paper is that the early Roman satire has a bivalent role, composing its poetical discourse for public or private entertainment, emerging to influence this auditorium. Satirical attacks on targets, even if we refer to general, human characteristics, or to more individual critic, are constructed in relation with the auditorium according to poetic and political principles. Lucilius' satires were long-time acknowledged as harsh pieces of poetical discourse, appreciated for its freedom of speech. But was this Roman *libertas* really a free speech or it followed a direction set previously by literary circle governed by a powerful man? It is difficult to assess such an inquiry based only on the current archeological and cultural knowledge known from the time of Republican Rome, but to analyze the literary evidence that has been preserved in a contextualized frame could be efficient for later investigations regarding satire.

Lucilius' individual instances are traceable into his satirical discourse to which we can refer as historical and political testimony of Republican Rome. The poetic phenomenon should, therefore, be observed in a relation to its political context, the construction of the literary *persona*, its own terminology, and its use of irony. Hence, Lucilius could be considered one of the first Latin poets who addresses *ad hominem* to an audience that he wants to influence. The object of influence should not only be considered the education and correctness of quotidian life, but the approbation of a powerful political man along with his public actions. A first concern is the use of individual criticism in a public, literary speech. The loud voice of Lucilius could be easily connected to his willingness to deter particular public figures. Reasoning it's questionable, while we take under consideration the position of an author into the socio-political life. Therefore, we must observe Lucilius social position, his network of friends and if he had an active political life. His origins are debatable, but

according to Velleius Paterculus (*Historia Romana*, II.9.4) Lucilius served as an eques in the army of his friend Scipio Aemilianus, a military role which attesters the Roman citizenship¹ of a civil, and justifies his intimacy with Scipio². Despite the little knowledge on Lucilius` life, some valuable information can be recalled from his autobiographical confessions found in his own literary compositions.

Friendship is a key theme in the Lucilian satires, numerous hexameters evolving around the concept of *amicitia* and its derivatives: acquaintances and enemies. Metaphors, symbolic languages, and comparisons add a plus of irony to Lucilius` discourse. Ian Goh³ (267-8) identifies in Lucilius *text corpora* an important passage about a cook who cares only for the practical aspects and seeks his own interest:

Cocus non curat cauda insignem esse illam, dum pinguis siet:
Sic amici quaerunt animum, rem parasiti ac ditias (XXVII :761-2)

A cook care not that yonder bird [*sc.* a peacock] is remarkable for its tail, provided that is a fat bird. So do friendshave an eye to a man`s mid, and parasites to his wealth and money.⁴

Lucilius` analogy stresses on the opposition friends-parasites, where the congruency of body and tail reflects the lower-status of a cook⁵, preoccupied by the peacock`s flesh, nor its tail, a jewelry in its beauty. Even though these hexameters seem to be interpreted only as a poetical remark on luxuries, the satirical discourse implies finer subtleties and analogies. A second hermeneutical read approaches the idea of false friendships and superficial social criteria, a subject that has permanency and could hide various messages depending on given context and the moment of reading. Sander M. Goldberg suggests that Lucilius is seeking for a comparison between him and Homer. The assumption is made by connecting the verses with the literary and philosophical pretensions of Ennius, a predecessor who ``claimed to inherit Homer`s souls from a peacock: memini me fieri pavom (*Ann*, II Sk)`` (Goldberg, 2018, 55). The multiplicity of terms and analogies observed in Lucilius` verses, demonstrate the complexity of his ideology and satire`s capacity to hide meanings from a non-desired audience, to provoke a target, and to entertain. It is tempting to see only the moralizing aspect of satire`s discourse, but the socio-political implications go further on, securing satire`s role in the process of influencing opinion. Lucilius position is clear, he is a friend of Scipio Aemilianus, and due to this connection we assume that his message is to be constructed against common adversaries. To seek for a personal vengeance is not a plausible consideration while we cannot identify poetical or biographical reasoning. A second possibility will be a manifested poetical intention to instruct or to correct vices, which also isn`t a stable assumption while we observe the direct form of address or the naming of the target. If Lucilius` would have had the intention to instruct or to correct he would have had referred only to general examples, not insisting on the bad example of certain public figures. L. Cornelius Lentulus Lupus is one of them. Against the Roman consul some disjointed lines

¹ F. Marx sustains that Lucilius didn`t have Roman origins, being only attested as a Latin poet: F.Marx. 1904-5. *C. Lucilii Carminum Reliquiae*, 2 vols., Leipzig: Teubner.

² Some scholars consider Lucilius an independent writer, without a close relationship between him and Scipio Aemelianus: B. Zucchelli, *L`indipendenza di Lucilio*, Istituto di lingua e letteratura latina, Parma: Università di Parma, 1977, 81-141; Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, London: Duckworth, 1882, 272-317.

³ Ian Goh, 2018. *Pikes, Peacocks, and Parasites*, p. 268 in B. W. Breed, E. Keitel, R. Wallance, 2018, *Lucilius and Satire in Second-Century BC Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ The quotations from Lucilius` work are from the Loeb edition: T.E. Page; E. Capps, W.H.D. Rouse. 1938. *Remains of Old Latin. III. Lucilius. The Twelve Tables*, London: William Heinemann Ltd.

⁵ Cf. Ian Goh, 2018, p. 268.

survive⁶, but they are addressed directly: His countenance is like his face – it's death, jaundice-disease, poison (I.37) and we are able to understand Lucilius' lampoon. The poetical technique used to deteriorate the image of Lupus, even after his death, is to target greediness and extortion:

Occidunt, Lupe, saperdae te et iura siluri! ...piscium nomina sunt, corumque in Graecia origo.

O Bass, juices of the salt herring and the sheat-fish are the death of you! ...these are names of fish and their origin is in Greece (I.46).

At least two mocking methods are followed here. The first is the identification of Lupus with the bass fish (a perch-like fish), known for its largemouth. Further on, the critique is constructed by comparison with the bass-herring and the sheatfish, similar to a reduction to good-bad. The second level of critique is identified in the dual meaning of *ius, iura* - term that contextually refers to *sauce ori soup*. In the Roman juristic language, *ius* has different meanings, broadly describing the whole spectrum of law. This particular homonymy is used by the satirist to conduct the auditorium towards the legal crime of which Lupus was accused of in 154 BC⁷. Corruption is also suggested while putting Lentulus Lupus in the company of L. Hostilius Tubulus, a famous corrupt praetor:

Cicero: What shall we say about the sacrilegious, what about the impious and the oath-breakers?

If ever Lucius Tubulus, if Lupus or Carbo – or Neptune's son,
as Lucilius says –
had thought that there are gods, would he have been such an oath-breaker,
or-
a man so foul? (Unassigned Fragments: 1138-41)

Behind this particular invective a political rivalry between Scipio Aemilianus and Lentulus could be observed. No direct testimony on the attitude of Scipio is recorded, except from Lucilius satirical fragments, an indirect recollection of events which conduct to the censor's elections in 131 BC. Consequently, Lucilius might have been determined by this political competition to deter the image of the enemy, and to represent the Scipionic viewpoint⁸. Even though Lentulus Lupus and Scipio are not anywhere else mentioned in connexion, being one major and constant target in Lucilius' invective proves a political animosity between them. Lentulus' case isn't singular in the political sphere touched by the ironies and critiques of Lucilius' satires. Political targets are often found, as it is the famous attack on Gaius Metellus Caprarius, Roman *praetor designates* in 117BC who made a speech to the Senate eulogizing marriage's virtues. The first two books of satires contain political mocking, satires written to deter the enemy and sustain a friend, as the cases of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, a Roman censor whom Lucilius attacked to please Scipio; Lucius Opimius, consul that was accused of bribery in the Jugurtha's process, or C. Papirius Carbo, a supporter of Tiberius Gracchus and a suspect in Scipio's murder. Verse invective becomes a used tool in deterring an enemy after *Lucili exemplum* and a various number of writers claim him as predecessor, as it was the case of Pompeius Lenaeus, Cicero, Horace or Persius.

⁶ The surviving lines must have been part of an elaborate lampoon.

⁷ After Lupus was convicted of extortion he made a rapid recovery and became a moral exemplum. As an elected censor in 147, he made a successful career as *princeps senatus* until 126/5 BC, the year of his death. On the prosecution, see Val. Max. 6.9.10. For the career of Lupus, see Broughton, *Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, vol I, 442, 463, 473, 500.

⁸ Lupus and Marcius were appointed for the position of Princeps Senatus, and their rivalry with Scipio Aemilianus is grounded on this political competition, Cf. A.E. Astin, *Scipio Aemilianus*, 53, 73, 92-4.

The second aspect to which we may recall in determining the role of Lucilius` satire into the socio-political Rome is the poetical construction of me/us against them, of virtues against vice. Therefore, Lucilius` rhetorical discourse offers a dichotomist poetical perception of society, defined in accordance to its constituents. Virtue and vice are the main characteristics that permit a differentiation between good and bad, us and them. Falsity of friends, another favorite target of Lucilian invective, sustains this opposition. Albucius is one of the eloquent examples, mainly because he is a public figure that becomes an enemy by reflecting a hypocrite attitude in the forum. In a public appearance, Albucius neglected his Roman roots and stressed on a desired Greek origin:

You have preferred to be called a Greek, Albucius, rather than a Roman and a Sabine, a fellow-townsmen of the centurions Pontius and Tritanus, famous and foremost men, yes, standard-bearers. Therefore I as praetor greet you at Athens in Greek, when you approach me, just as you preferred. `Good-cheer, Titus`, say I in Greek, `Good cheer` say the attendants, all my troop and band. That`s why Albucius is foe to me; that`s why he`s an enemy! (II.87-93)

Hellenomaniac behavior is observed as a quality of a foe. Lucilius` directness is justified by his position of a Roman culture supporter. This attitude may seem contradictory with Scipio`s Greek education⁹, but on a contextualized reading, we can identify the traditional aristocratic tendency to switch from Greek culture and learning to what Schmekel¹⁰ was referring to as Roman Enlightenment. In this historical period, the ruling classes promoted literature and arts to express national values and to detach from other cultures by creating a medium of refinement that would be appreciated by the populace. As Erich S. Gruen (1993:272) states, two major corollaries are to be identified in this cultural aim: 1. testimony is given to Roman culture for various purposes that could enrich the nation, and provides a medium for the elite to control the shape, 2. the evolution of Latin culture into an original composition. Therefore, for this sustainment, regardless of its purpose (financial gains or literary fame), patrons of art could influence the content of literary compositions. Lucilius earned a high reputation in antiquity, several later authors quoting or referring to his satires.

Lucilius` satirical remarks frequently allude to personalities or controversies of his contemporaneous time, making out of his verses a mirror of the Roman society and a tool capable of influencing his auditorium. Rome was in a time of political turmoil and social disorder. The late years of the second century BC was a period of reforms, resistance, violence, intensified external relations, and animosities. The generation of Gracchi was suitable for a satire`s subject and Lucilius covered a large variety of offenses: theft (II:57, 58-9), assault (II:54-5) gluttony (II:67-9, 70)-93, Hellenic affectation (I:12, 15-6; II:87) and obscene allegations (II:71-2). Vices are connected with the lack of integrity, becoming an interesting medium for denigrating and propagating, by means of laughter and mocking, personal interests. Opposition, directly or indirectly suggested, reaches a great effect in almost any auditorium and the intention could be reached more easily¹¹. Hypocrisy is another vice-target of Lucilian invective which is satirized in order to prejudice the image of an opponent. False appearances are for Lucilius a proof of a poor quality, demonstrating that if they are capable of lying for obtaining public benefice, they would also be open to sacrifice a

⁹ Scipio Aemilianus grew in a household of Greek culture and philosophy by his natural father, L. Aemilius Paullus, a philohellenic consul and general (see Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius*, 6.5; Plinius, *NH*, 3.135).

¹⁰ A. Schmekel, *Die Philosophie der mittleren Stoa in ihrem geschichtlichen Zusammenhange*, Berlin, 1892, 439-60.

¹¹ Without implying that satire or literature in general, has the power to change attitudes. Satire takes only a small part in the big process of influence.

friendship for gaining personal interests. According to this judgement, Lucilius condemns the vicious activities of the forum:

But, at it is, from morning till night, on holiday and workday, the whole commons and the senators too, all alike go bustling about in the Forum and nowhere leave it; all give themselves over to one and the same interest and artifices – those of being able to swindle with impunity, to fight cunningly, to strive, using soft words as weapons, to act the `fine fellow`, to lie in wait, as though all men were enemies of all men. (Unassigned Fragments, 1145-51)

In this run for gaining benefices, popularity was sought by some, and Lucilius didn't let them aside, parodying their methods. Crowd-pleasing devices continued to be used by orators and senators, decreasing the quality of public speech. C. Gracchus (Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 2.2) is one of the nobles addressing to his *publicum* in a denigrating manner for a true educated urban man: All this, I say, will he roar and yell from the platform, running to and fro like Ancarius and hallooing loudly (VI: 273-4). The Gracchi family was a controversial one in Lucilius' time, Plutarch (Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 19.2) recording also the intention of Gaius elder brother to seek for a monarchial crown. The context is opaque, but we are able to observe Lucilius' attitude towards Gracchi. In the aftermath of Tiberius Gracchus' agrarian law, civic and political tensions occurred in Rome and in the Italian countryside. Poverty¹², along with a bad distribution of the lands was in contrast with the luxurious life of the *nobiles*. The satirist used this discrepancy to support and express Scipio's policy, suggesting that in the late Republic *aurum* and *ambition* were destroying the Roman society and were defrauding the state treasury. Electoral campaigns, personal gains, and the cupidity for wealth became topics of criticism and mocking: But if you take a look at the fellow, how he ventures for his interest and for his realm (XXVII:774); Gold is a rascal; it goes the rounds of our ears, demanding our votes more earnestly than anything (Unassigned Fragments: 1193) etc.

Lucilius had enough material to satires nobility's intentions and methods. Language was at his hand so he used no more than current phraseology for developing a political invective: Wickedness and wantonness and prodigality takes hold of these men (VI:269) or Says someone, ``you old dotard, you fool of a quibbler`` (Unassigned Fragments: 1210). The vast number of subject treated, along with the great diversity of targets, and the big number of people criticized by Lucilius proves the existence of a large auditorium. Notoriety was gained by Lucilius and this is sustained by numerous later recollections and quotations. Freedom of speech and harshness in language are usually connected to Lucilian satire, and his friendship with Scipio Aemilianus often remembered. Therefore, we may conclude that Lucilius found in his satire more than a common socio-political ideology with Scipio, but an increased interest to serve his cause and interests. Freely or not, the satirical discourse has the tendency to follow a precise line towards the influence of public opinion in the personal interest of one person. Social and moral aspects arose from contemporary circumstances and they quickly connect with current political affairs¹³.

¹² Lucilius mentions a complaint on the poor stack of grain and the *plebs* deficiencies in obtaining grains: The nurturing grain runs short, and the common folk get no bread. (V:214). Plutarch also recalls a lowering of the grain stack in the time of Marius, 119 BC (Plut. *Mar.*, 4).

¹³ Lucilius' political affiliation is debated, some researchers found him a *popularis* (Krenkel, W., F. Della Corte, I. Mariotti. *L'età di Lucilio*, in *Maia* 20, 1968, 254-270), some as conservative (Wendy J. Raschke, *The virtue of Lucilius*, in *Latomus*, T.49, Fasc. 2 (AVRIL-JUIN 1990), 352-369), and some as an independent poet, without any political affiliation (Zucchelli, 1977: 96-98; Gruen, 1992:297). The conservative viewpoint of the aristocratic class valued the traditional Rome and considered the contemporaneous time as weakened and declined by the luxury obtained from the foreign warfare, therefore we are inclined to consider Lucilius as being a Roman conservative.

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