

## Isidore of Seville and *comici ueteres*. Ad Isid., *Orig.* VIII 7.7

Krzysztof Rzepkowski

Institute of Classical Studies, University of Warsaw  
rzepkowski@uw.edu.pl

### Isidoro de Sevilla y los *comici ueteres*. Ad Isid., *Orig.* VIII 7.7

*Abstract:* In chapter 7 of book VIII of *Etymologies* dedicated to Roman poets (*De poetis*), Isidore draws a dividing line between the so-called *ueteres* and *noui comici*. Among *ueteres* he counts Plautus, Accius, Terentius, although Accius, according to our knowledge, composed only tragedies and can hardly be considered a comic playwright. In this paper I try to prove that all the palaeographic, phonetic, historical, and literary arguments speak in favour of emending in the discussed passage the peculiar «Accius» to the expected «Caecilius» (i.e. Caecilius Statius).

*Key words:* Accius; Caecilius Statius; Isidore of Seville; comic playwright; *comici ueteres*; *comici noui*.

*Resumen:* En el capítulo 7 del libro VIII de *Las Etimologías*, dedicado a los poetas romanos (*De poetis*), Isidoro de Sevilla separa *ueteres* de *noui comici*. Son Plauto, Luccio Accio y Terencio los que integran la nómina de los *ueteres*, aunque Accio, según nuestro conocimiento, compuso sólo tragedias, así que resulta difícil considerarlo un comediógrafo. En este artículo intento probar que todos los argumentos paleográficos, fonéticos, históricos y literarios están a favor de la enmienda del peculiar «Accius» por el esperado «Caecilius» (i.e. Cecilio Estacio).

*Palabras clave:* Accius; Caecilius Statius; Isidoro de Sevilla; comediógrafo; *comici ueteres*; *comici noui*.

In chapter 7 of book VIII of *Etymologies* dedicated to Roman poets (*De poetis*), Isidore draws a dividing line between the so-called *ueteres* and *noui comici*, a line that became so important in medieval genre theory. In the editions of both Arévalo (Rome 1797), reprinted in *Patrologia Latina* 81-83 (1850), and Lindsay (Oxford 1911) this passage reads as follows:

Duo sunt autem genera comicorum, id est, ueteres et noui. Veteres, qui et ioco ridiculares extiterunt, ut Plautus, Accius, Terentius. Noui, qui et Satirici, a quibus generaliter uitia carpuntur, ut Flaccus, Persius, Iuuenalis uel alii (Isid., *Orig.* VIII 7.7).

There are two types of writers of comedies, that is the Old and the New. The Old, who would amuse by means of a joke, such as Plautus, Accius, Terence. The New, who are also called satirists, by whom vices are generally flayed, such as Flaccus (i.e. Horace), Persius, Juvenal, and others<sup>1</sup>.

Regardless of theoretical and literary aspects of Isidore's division of literary genres, it seems worthwhile to take a closer look at Accius, whom Isidore counts among *comici ueteres* together with Plautus and Terence. According to our knowledge, Accius composed only tragedies and can hardly be considered a comic playwright, even in Isidore's interpretation of this expression. This fact had already been observed by Juan de Grial in his edition of *Etymologies* published in 1599 in Madrid and commonly used until the nineteenth century. He emphasized that this place, with the reading «Accius» or «Attius», is most probably corrupt: *neque mihi dubium, quin aut haec aliena, aut ualde deprauata sint*<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, Faustino Arévalo, publishing his edition two centuries later but basing his commentary on De Grial's remarks, only suggested an error and limited himself to stating that Accius had been a tragic playwright: *Accius tragoediarum scriptor fuit*<sup>3</sup>. Lindsay did not take those suggestions into account; he just noticed that manuscript C from Leiden transmitted a different reading for this place, namely: *Accius et Terentius*<sup>4</sup>.

Although Lindsay emphasizes in the preface that his edition is far from being perfect (*editionem inchoatam potius quam omnibus numeris absolutam*, p. v), the Oxford edition of *Etymologies* is regarded as canonical until today and is still almost uncritically used as a basis for translating Isidore's work into modern languages. Among the latest translations, two are especially worth of mentioning: the English one published in Cambridge in 2006 (second edition in 2010) and the Italian one from 2004<sup>5</sup>. In both of them,

<sup>1</sup> Barney, Lewis, Beach, Berghof 2006, p. 180b.

<sup>2</sup> Arevalo 1797, p. 366 (Arévalo cites more important remarks of De Grial in commentary).

<sup>3</sup> Arevalo 1797, p. 367.

<sup>4</sup> Because this codex, as Lindsay 1911, p. vii, notes, contains a text collated from manuscripts belonging to two different families, it is of little value for reconstructing the archetype.

<sup>5</sup> *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, translated, with introduction and notes, by S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, O. Berghof, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 and 2010; *Etimologie o Origini*, a cura di A. Valastro Canale, Torino, UTET, 2004.

however, just as in many others that I had chance to read<sup>6</sup>, the discussed passage is lacking any appropriate commentary. As has already been noticed, the division made by Isidore influenced the later classification of literary genres, based on stylistic and objective criteria, which is why the discussed fragment is frequently quoted not only in publications on medieval Latin poetry, including the so-called elegiac comedy of the twelfth century, but also in more general works dealing with the medieval genre theory. In most cases, the presence of Accius among Plautus and Terence is commented on in a way similar to that of Arévalo, but sometimes it is even explained in terms of... «medieval ignorance». Such is, for example, the explanation proposed by the author of a recent treatise on Fulgentius, a mythographer from the turn of the fifth to the seventh century; the scholar, quoting the passage from Isidore, added the following footnote: «En réalité, Accius est un auteur tragique. Mais le Moyen Age ne connaît plus rien de théâtre antique, depuis la fermeture des théâtres a Rome en 546»<sup>7</sup>.

It is worth noticing that two later medieval texts classifying comic playwrights according to Isidore's principles, namely *Elementarium doctrinae erudimentum* by Papias (11th cent.) and *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherii Comediam* by Benvenuto da Imola (14th cent.), do not count Accius among *comici ueteres*, although they quote Isidore's passage almost literally. In Papias' encyclopaedia, antique *comici* are represented solely by Terence, who gained the simple designation of *Comicus* already in Late Antiquity<sup>8</sup>:

Comici res laetas, tragici argumenta ex rebus luctuosis describunt. Duo sunt genera comicorum, ueteres qui ioculares<sup>9</sup> extiterunt, ut Terentius, noui qui satyrici quibus generaliter uitia carpuntur, ut Persius, Iuuenalis, et nudi pinguntur eo quod uitia denudent (*Elementarium doctrinae erudimentum*, s.v. *comici*).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. *Las Etimologías de San Isidoro romanceadas*, ed. J. G. Cuenca, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Wolff 2009, p. 178, n. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hier., *Ep.* 54 (PL 22, 554).

<sup>9</sup> It is worth considering whether the word «ioculares» is a corrupt form of the phrase «ioco ridiculares», present in Isidore's text, or, the other way around, the original «ioculares», still read by Papias in his copy of *Etymologies*, corrupted into the peculiar expression «ioco ridiculares» in an early phase of the transmission of the text.

On the other hand, in his commentary to *The Divine Comedy*, Benvenuto added Ovid to Plautus and Terence, classifying him as a comic playwright on account of *stylus bassus*:

Satyra est stylus medius et temperatus, tractat enim de uirtutibus et uiciis; et talia describentes uocantur Satyri, siue Satyrici; sunt enim satyri uitia reprehendentes, sicut Horatius, Iuuenalis, et Persius. Comoedia est stylus bassus et humilis, tractat enim uulgaria et uilia facta ruralium, plebeiorum, et humilium personarum; et talia describentes uocantur comoedi, siue comici, sicut Plautus, Terentius, Ouidius<sup>10</sup>.

It is hard to arrive at any unambiguous conclusions concerning the omitting of Horace, Plautus, and Accius by Papias on the one hand and the replacing of Accius with Ovid by Benvenuto on the other. The absence of Accius in both works seems not to be completely accidental, nevertheless.

In attempts at emending the discussed passage of *Etymologies*, a suggestion was made that the word «Accius» could be a corrupt form of «Maccius», alleged<sup>11</sup> Plautus' *nomen gentile*. Although Usener 2010 (1914<sup>1</sup>), p. 39, n. 53, recommended renouncing this conjecture already a century ago, it has recently been recalled in a new edition of *Etymologies* in the *Collection ALMA* series<sup>12</sup>. For this reason, I think that this conjecture should be re-examined. Indeed, at first sight it seems attractive, all the more so since a similar error can be found in codices transmitting Gellius' work. In chapter 3 of book III of *Noctes Atticae*, Gellius cites, after Varro, the opinion of Accius about the authenticity of some plays ascribed to Plautus, perhaps presented in *Didascalica*. The comic playwright appears twice in this fragment, once as Plautus and again as Macc[i?]us Titus, a form that Plautus himself used in the comedy *Mercator*<sup>13</sup>:

M. tamen Varro in libro de comoediis Plautinis primo Accii uerba haec ponit: 'Nam nec Geminei lenones nec Condalium nec Anus Plauti nec Bis compressa nec Boeotia unquam fuit neque adeo Agroecus neque Commorientes Macci Titi' (Gell., *Noct. Att.* III 3.9).

<sup>10</sup> Lacaita 1887, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gratwick 1973, pp. 78-84.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Pociña Pérez 1991, p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Pl., *Merc.* 10-11: *Graece haec uocatur Emporos Philemonis, / eadem Latine Mercator Macci Titi.*

Manuscripts give the reading «m. (with tilde) accii» or «m. (with tilde) accii» instead of «Macci»<sup>14</sup>, presumably under the influence of the form «Accii» appearing earlier in the text. It cannot be excluded either that the copyist assumed that Gellius had in mind an author other than Plautus, who appears one line above, hence he interpreted the form ‘Macci’ as the initial of the *praenomen* («M.») and the *nomen gentile* («Accii»). To acknowledge a similar mistake also in Isidore’s work would require that at least three additional assumptions should be fulfilled: Firstly, that in this place Isidore called the Roman playwright by his *nomen gentile*, while in the remaining seventeen cases he called him simply Plautus; secondly, that he did not precede the *nomen* and *cognomen* with «T.», that is the initial of Plautus’ name; and thirdly, that the form «Maccius Plautus» transformed into «Plautus Maccius» and then into «Plautus Accius», losing on the way the «M» in the onset, differently than in manuscripts with Gellius’ work. It is also hard to suppose that the word «Maccius» was a gloss, inserted in the text by a subsequent copyist, because the name of Plautus did not require additional explanations, and certainly not with the use of the doubtful and unused (except sporadically)<sup>15</sup> *nomen gentile*. The corruption of the form «Maccius» in Gellius’ text could, by the way, be considered a proof that Plautus’ *nomen gentile* was unknown in the Middle Ages.

From the historical and literary perspectives, a person expected in this place should be Caecilius Statius. Just as Cratinus, Eupolis, and Aristophanes constitute the trinity of the Old Attic tragic playwrights, and Philemon, Diphilus, and Menander the trinity of the New Comedy<sup>16</sup>, so Plautus, Caecilius, and Terence are the trinity of *palliata*, among whom Caecilius was awarded the first place by Volcacijs Sedigitus<sup>17</sup>. They are listed together in Varro’s *Saturarum Menippearum*:

<sup>14</sup> For a complete critical apparatus concerning this place, see Hertz 1883, p. 202.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gell., *Noct. Att.* III 3.9.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Vell. I 16.3; Diomedes, *Artis grammaticae libri III*, GL 1.489; Rufinus, *De metris comicis*, GL 6.564 7.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gell., *Noct. Att.* XV 24.1. It is worth noticing that in Republican Rome this playwright was most often called Caecilius (e.g. Ter., *Hec.* 14; Cic., *Att.* VII 3.10), sometimes Caecilius Statius (cited Volcacijs Sedigitus), and only rarely Statius (cf. Cic., *Sen.* 25). From the time of the poet Statius (died AD 96), this name was used exclusively for this latter writer, and the comic playwright Caecilius Statius was almost invariably called by his *nomen gentile*, namely Caecilius (Hor., *Ars* 54, Quint. *passim*, Suet. *passim*, Fest. *passim*, Gell. *passim*, with

... in argumentis Caecilius poscit palmam, in ethesin Terentius, in sermonibus Plautus (Var., *Menip.* frg 399),

and, subsequently, in one of Horace's letters as the only authors of the *palliata*:

Plautus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi,  
uincere Caecilius grauitate, Terentius arte (Hor., *Ep.* II 1.58-59).

Already Usener 2010 (1914<sup>1</sup>), p. 39, n. 53, pointed to Caecilius as the author required in the discussed Isidore's passage, yet he did not venture to propose such a conjecture. He considered it probable that Isidore himself wrote «Accius» in his text, and that the error was on the part of Isidore's source manuscript. A similar mistake, as observed by Usener, can be found in the Evantius' preface to a lost commentary to Terence's plays, published as *De fabula hoc est de comedia*, where Accius is also mentioned, although the whole passage pertains to *palliata*:

Haec cum artificiosissima Terentius fecerit: tum illud est admirandum, quod et morem retinuit, ut comoediam scriberet, et temperauit affectum, ne in traegodiam transiliret. Quod cum aliis rebus minime obtentum et a Plauto et ab Afranio et Accio et multis fere magnis comicis inuenimus (Euanth. 3).

In the nineteenth century the phrase «et Accio» was emended to «et Atta» or «et Atilio». However, already Usener noticed that both these conjectures disregard the preposition «a», which *per analogiam* to «a Plauto» and «ab Afranio» is stylistically prerequisite in this place. Hence, according to Usener's reasoning, the process of corruption could have assumed the following pattern:

a caecilio > a cecilio > accilio > accilio > accio

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the exclusion of IV 20.12, where Gellius explains that the name Statius belonged to slaves and that this was the original name of Caecilius, who only later started to be called Caecilius (Statius). In the second century, the only exception to the rule is Apuleius, who consequently calls the playwright Caecilius Statius (Apul., *Ap.* 5); apart from encyclopaedic works, which sometimes give both his *nomen gentile* and *cognomen* (e.g. Hier., *Chron. Abr.* 1838), all the remaining authors, both ancient and medieval, call him simply Caecilius.

In this way Accius replaced Caecilius and could as well have been regarded as a comic playwright by later readers of Evantius together with Plautus, Afranius, and Terence.

The conjecture put forward by Usener seems very likely and I accept it without question. The hypothesis that the mistake had already been present in the source manuscript used by the bishop of Seville is convincing as well; in fact, so convincing that, to the best of my knowledge, no one has ever tried to reexamine this passage of *Etymologies* since Usener. However, since Evantius belongs to the same group of commentators as Donatus, whom Isidore cites several times, it seems worthwhile to examine the possibility that the source text with the erroneous reading «Accio» was Evantius' treatise *De fabula*. The answer to this question is, in my opinion, negative: even if Isidore knew this text, no trace of this knowledge can be found in *Etymologies*; in contrast to Donatus, Evantius is neither mentioned nor cited nor referred to by Isidore. Moreover, Evantius presented a different classification of the old and new comedy, a division that cannot be found in Isidore. He regarded Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes as the representatives of the *comoedia uetus*, Lucilius as the inventor of a new kind of satire (*quod primus Lucilius nouo conscripsit modo*), and Menander and Terence as the main representatives of the *noua comoedia*, to whom he added Plautus, Afranius, and the author transmitted as «Accio» and plausibly interpreted by Usener as Caecilius. To replace this classification (valid until present, by the way), Isidore proposed his own in which Plautus and Terence were *comici ueteres* and Horace, Persius, and Juvenal *comici noui*, also called satirists (*satirici*). It is obvious that one should not expect the semantic fields of these terms (*comoedia uetus* vs. *comici ueteres* oraz *comoedia noua* vs. *comici noui*) to correlate: classical authors used the phrase *comici ueteres* to denote both «authors of the Old Comedy»<sup>18</sup> and «ancient/earlier comic playwrights», clearly in the meaning «authors of the *palliate*»<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, the term *uetus comoedia* ap-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cic., *de Orat.* III 138; Quint., *Inst.* XII 2.22.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Quint., *Inst.* I 7.22, where Quintilian, citing Terence (Ter., *Ph.* 36), gives an example of the use of the form «heri» next to «here»: «*Here*» *nunc e littera terminamus: at ueterum comicorum adhuc libris inuenio «heri ad me uenit»*; cf. also Gell., *Noct. Att.* XIII 23.16, where Gellius mentions Licinius Imbrex, an otherwise unknown author of the *palliate* from the second century BC, whom he describes with the epithet «*uetus comoediarum scriptor*», and Rufinus, *De metris comicis*, *GL* 6.564 7, where Latin comic playwrights are called «*nostrī ... veteres comoediae scriptores*».

pears to mean both «the Old Comedy»<sup>20</sup> and «the ancient/early comedy»<sup>21</sup>. In view of the above facts, in order to consider Evantius the source of Isidore's mistake, we would have to assume that the bishop of Seville, having Evantius' corrupted text at his disposal, disagreed with the genre theory described there, but he derived from there the information about the authors of the New Comedy, whom, in contrast to Evantius, he called ancient/early (*ueteres*).

Therefore, I believe that Isidore's mistake originated independently of Evantius' *De fabula*, which could by no means be the source of the part of Isidore's work dedicated to the poets (*De poetis*). Where then did Isidore's inspiration to divide the comic playwrights into *ueteres* and *noui (satirici)* come from? Among many authors from which Isidore derived while writing *Etymologies*, St Jerome was certainly the most important. Isidore mentions him by name ten times, which places him after Aristotle (mentioned fifteen times), but before Cato (nine times), Plato (eight times), Pliny (seven times), Donatus (six times), and St Augustine (five times)<sup>22</sup>. He is the only author whom Isidore explicitly cited as his source<sup>23</sup>:

Beatissimus Hieronymus, uir eruditissimus et multarum linguarum peritus, Hebraeorum nominum interpretationem primus in Latinam linguam conuertit. Ex quibus pro breuitate praetermissis multis quaedam huic operi adiectis interpretationibus interponenda studui (Isid., *Orig.* VII 1.1).

The study of Isidore's text has proven that the bishop of Seville made use of not only *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum* but also other Jerome's works, most importantly *Chronicle*, as an indispensable tool in establishing chronological sequence<sup>24</sup>. In this work Isidore found a remark about Accius, which could prevent him from counting the writer among the comic playwrights:

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Cic., *Leg.* II 37, *Brut.* 224; Hor., *Ars* 281; V. Max. VIII 9ext.2.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Plin., *Ep.* 6.21.2, where Vergilius Romanus is mentioned, an author who wrote comedies «ad exemplar ueteris comoediae», imitating plays of Menander and his contemporaries; cf. also Suet. *Aug.* 89.1, where the term *uetus comoedia* almost certainly designates the New Comedy (see Goldberg 2005, p. 163, n.° 49).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Barney, Lewis, Beach, Berghof 2006, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.



Lucius Accius tragoediarum scriptor clarus habetur ... (Hier., *Chron. Olymp.* CLX).

Moreover, he learned from *Chronicle* about the distinction between *scriptores comoediarum* (Caecilius and Terence) and *satirici* (Horace and Persius)<sup>25</sup>:

Staius Caecilius comoediarum scriptor clarus habetur ... (Hier., *Chron. Olymp.* CL).

Publius Terentius Carthagenensis comoediarum scriptor ... (Hier., *Chron. Olymp.* CLV).

Horatius Flaccus, satiricus et lyricus poeta ... (Hier., *Chron. Olymp.* CLXXVIII).

Persius Flaccus, satiricus poeta ... (Hier., *Chron. Olymp.* CCIII)-

However, it is other Jerome's works that appear to be crucial in the interpretation of the discussed passage from *Etymologies*, namely his letters and commentaries, where he presented his views on the best translation method. As a proof of the validity of his concept, put forward in the famous postulate *non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*, Jerome always cites the same set of model translations whose authors did not render original works word for word, but rather attempted at expressing their sense. These examples are Cicero's translations of, most importantly, Plato's *Protagoras* and Xenophon's *Economics*, and the comedies of Plautus, Caecilius, and Terence. The three comic playwrights are referred to in such a context in the letter *Ad Sunniam et Fratellam*:

Dum interpretationis κακοζήλιαν sequimur, omnem decorem translationis amittimus, et hanc esse regulam boni interpretis, ut ἰδιώματα linguae alterius, suae linguae exprimat proprietate. Quod et Tullium in Protagora Platonis, et in Οἰκονομικῶ Xenophontis, et in Demosthenis contra Aeschinen oratione fecisse conuincimus; et Plautum, Terentium, Caeciliumque eruditissimos uiros, in Graecis comoediis transferendis (Hier., *Ep.* IV 106.4),

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<sup>25</sup> Plautus is not attributed to any category, and Juvenal is not even mentioned in *Chronicle*.

in *Commentary on the Book of Prophet Micheas*:

Si enim criminis est Graecorum benedicta transferre, accusentur Ennius et Maro, Plautus, Caecilius et Terentius, Tullius quoque et ceteri eloquentes uiri, qui non solum uersus, sed multa capita et longissimos libros ac fabulas integras transtulerunt (Hier., *Commentariorum in Michaeam Prophetam* 2, Prologus 230-234)

and in the famous letter to Pammachius of AD 395 (*Ep.* 57), known more widely as the treatise *On the best kind of translating (De optimo genere interpretandi)*:

Sed et Horatius, uir acutus et doctus, hoc idem in Arte poetica erudito interpreti praecipit:

*nec uerbum uerbo curabis reddere fidus  
interpretas*

Terentius Menandrum, Plautus et Caecilius ueteres comicos interpretati sunt: Numquid haerent in uerbis: ac non decorem magis et elegantiam in translatione conseruant? Quam uos ueritatem interpretationis, hanc eruditi κακοζήλιαν nuncupant (Hier., *Ep.* LV 5.5).

The term *ueteres comici* used here undoubtedly designates the authors of the New Comedy, Philemon and Diphilus, and not the Old Comedy, as is maintained by Bartelink 1980, p. 55, one of the most prominent commentators of Jerome's treatise. Indeed, Jerome used the term *uetus comoedia* in the meaning «the Old Comedy» in letter CXXV to Rusticus<sup>26</sup>, but in this fragment he wrote about the *ueteres comici* in the same sense as Quintilian quoted above (*Inst.* I 7.22), namely as «other comic playwrights as ancient as Menander». It is worth noticing that for a reader of this letter living at the end of the sixth century, like Isidore, Terence, Plautus, and Caecilius must have been as ancient as Philemon and Diphilus, thus they all were considered *ueteres comici*.

Putting together the pieces of information about the comic playwrights and satirists found in *Chronicle* and the three mentions about Plautus, Ter-

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hier., *Ep.* CXXV 5: *Scio me offensurum esse quam plurimos, qui generalem de uitiiis disputationem in suam referant contumeliam et, dum mihi irascuntur, suam indicant conscientiam multoque peius de se quam de me iudicant. Ego enim neminem nominabo nec ueteris comoediae licentia certas personas eligam atque perstringam.*

ence, and Caecilius, including most of all the one in the letter to Pammachius, I think that it was Jerome who influenced Isidore's concept expressed in the passage under scrutiny. Isidore listed the comic playwrights in the chronological order: Plautus (died 184 BC), Caecilius (died *c.* 168 BC), and Terence (died after 160 BC). He was equally scrupulous in the case of the three *comici noui*: Horace (died 8 BC), Persius (died AD 62), Juvenal (died AD 130). It is worthwhile to note that Isidore did not mention or cite Accius at all, but he very well knew Caecilius by his own name<sup>27</sup>. He even quoted fragments of Caecilius' plays unknown from other sources:

- (1) Si confidentiam adhibes, confide omnia. (fr. 246; *Orig.* X C.40)
- (2) Venerio cursu ueni, prolato pede  
usque ad scaphonem. (fr. 243; *Orig.* XIX 4.5)

Therefore, I conclude that the discussed fragment originally read as follows:

Duo sunt autem genera comicorum, id est, ueteres et noui. Veteres, qui est ioco ridiculares extiterunt, ut Plautus, Caecilius, Terentius.

The corruption of «caecilius» into «accius» resulted from the coincidence of two factors, palaeographic and phonetic. In new Roman cursive as well as in book semicursive scripts deriving from it, the letter *a* is open and resembles a *u* or a double *c* (*cc*). Many instances of mistaking *a* and *u* in codices with Isidore's text prove that the archetype was written in such a script:

*Orig.* VIII 3.6: colant : colunt *K*

*Orig.* VIII 7.10: transducant : transducunt *B*

*Orig.* XIV 6.32: siculo : sicalo *B*

*Orig.* XVII 9.61: Symphytos : semputus *K* : simpatus *DTU*

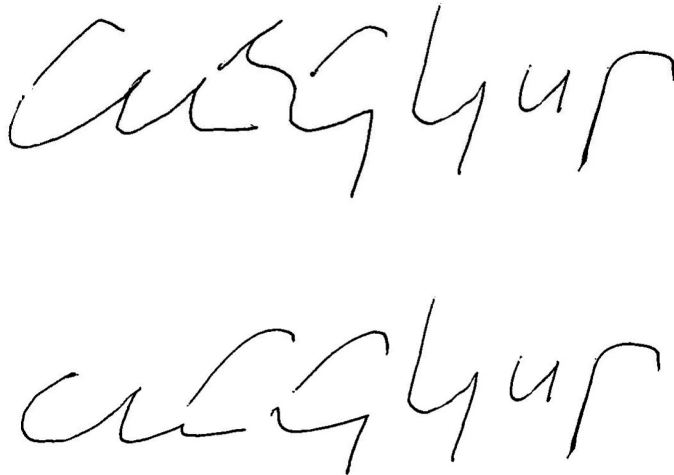
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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted, however, that in the remaining two places where Caecilius is unquestionably meant, his name is corrupt:

*Orig.* XIX 4.5: «De quo Caecilius» (cecilius *N* : cicilius *codd.*)

*Orig.* X C.40: «Unde et Caecilius» (cicilius *codd.* : ciuilius *A* : cilicius *M*).

The letter *c* together with the ligature *ae* can easily be misread for *ac*, which is why, as is shown on the drawing below<sup>28</sup>, the name «caecilius» can be misread for «accilius»:



The phonetic factor added to the problem together with the late Latin tendency to palatalize the *li*-group, a tendency that finds confirmation in epigraphy (*fia* < *filia*, *CIL* 1.1347), diachronic linguistics of the Romance languages (e.g. Spanish *ajo* < *alium*; *paja* < *palia* < *paleam*; *foja*, *foia* (later *hoja*) < *folia*; *mejor* < *meliorem*)<sup>29</sup>, and similar corruptions in codices transmitting Isidore's text. For example, codex T originating from Spain (Toletanus from the eighth or ninth century)<sup>30</sup> gives the reading «lucius» for «lucilius» in two places:

*Orig.* I 33.5: Lucilius centum genera soloecismorum dixit (lucius *T*)

*Orig.* XIX 12: Principaliter autem lacus dicitur, ut Lucilius (lucius *B* [Bernensis from 9th-10th cent.] and *T*)

<sup>28</sup> I would like to thank Tomasz Płóciennik (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw) for helping with palaeographic problems and writing both words in new Roman cursive.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Penny 2002, p. 64.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lindsay 1911, p. xi.

Thus, the palatalization caused the word «accilius» to be written «accius». To conclude, I would like to state that all the palaeographic, phonetic, historical, and literary arguments speak in favour of emending in the discussed passage the peculiar «Accius» to the expected «Caecilius».

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