

In this paper I wish to consider the problems related to editing playwrights whose scripts survive only through indirect tradition. My case-study will be the fragments of the Roman mime which I am currently editing, but references will often be made also to the fragmentary Republican playwrights.

What survives from the scripts of the mimographers comprises a list of titles of plays and a number of fragments, whose length varies from one word to about thirty lines, and whose rhythm is usually identified as iambic or trochaic. These are cited by polymaths (Fronto, Gellius, Macrobius), grammarians (Charisius, Diomedes, and Priscian), and lexicographers (Nonius), not on account of their theatrical merit but for their linguistic peculiarities and literary value. What issues face an editor who is preparing a critical edition of a Roman playwright other than Plautus, Terence, or Seneca?

(1) The indirect tradition of playwrights such as Laberius involves authors whose text has not been edited recently (Priscian, Diomedes, Nonius) or accurately (Charisius); readings of early editions have to be verified and not taken for granted, and MSS whose readings have not yet appeared in print need to be consulted. (2) It should not be assumed that these authors were always reliable when attributing a fragment to a playwright, or that they had access to a corpus of plays by him, or that they even cited all the words originally written by him. (3) When a playwright presents linguistic oddities or coins words for comic effect, it is not always certain that the text needs to be emended so that it may conform to the grammatical and syntactical ‘norm’ established by contemporaries of this playwright or by other playwrights writing in the same genre as he is. For example, we do not have enough material from other mimographers against which we could compare Laberius’ innovative (almost Plautine) vocabulary or his prosodic peculiarities, so it is not always clear to me whether a line was originally scanned as I scan it, and whether a word was originally written as I write it. (4) The previous editions in which these fragments appear seem to be divided into two groups: on the one hand, there are the individual editions of the polymaths, grammarians, and lexicographers who quote the playwright, and, on the other, the anthologies of Latin drama or Latin verse, which became fashionable from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, and include the playwright’s literary output; such collections of fragments have not yet received the scholarly attention they deserve. For instance, in the case of Laberius, these editorial strands sometimes converged and led not only editors of Latin poetry to include in their anthologies fragments of Laberius that were not widely known before the publication of grammarians’ texts, but also editors of grammarians’ texts to adopt emendations suggested in Latin anthologies. I had to look at over four hundred of these early editions to correct misattributions of emendations, and to reject emendations of earlier scholars, most of whom (with the notable exceptions of Müller, in his edition of Nonius, and Hertz, in his *editio maior* of Gellius) tended to emend the text in a way that reflects the Latin style cultivated not by Laberius, but by the author who cited Laberius.

Can any of these issues be solved? Do they also apply to the editing of fragmentary poets? Are such projects recommended in our current research culture which imposes completion deadlines?