

Breaking and Remaking Terence: Beyond the Authorship Debate

The existence of a debate regarding the authorship of William Shakespeare's works has been in the public eye for quite some time, but the existence of a similar debate regarding the Terentian corpus has been ignored as unworthy of consideration, both in antiquity and today. This paper first applies the methods developed by Shakespearean scholars defending Shakespeare's authorship (succinctly and powerfully presented by Edmondson and Wells 2013), where applicable, to establish the authorship of the Terentian corpus, and in particular to examine the claim made in antiquity that Scipio Aemilianus wrote Terence's plays. It also uses data gathered by the University of Texas' Quantitative Criticism Lab to establish whether or not the corpus is the work of one person or more, taking into account the interference arising from the presence of Greek originals for parts of Terence's text in contrast with those portions of the text composed by him *ex novo*, and the alterations made to the *Andria* after Terence's death. This shows that there is no real reason to believe that anyone other than Terence wrote the six plays attributed to him.

The rest of this paper addresses the issue of why an authorship debate should arise in the absence of credible evidence for it. The second part delves into the cultural milieu of Terence's and Aemilianus' time in search of answers, noting the amorphous nature of the élite and the constant jockeying for prestige immediately preceding Aemilianus' time, and highlighting the aristocratic tendency toward exceptionalism, which manifested in all areas of life (Davies 2017). It also brings to the fore the superlative importance of *nobilitas* in defining an increasingly chaotic élite. It goes on to examine the increasing tendency of the aristocracy, as part of this quest for prestige, to become involved with Latin literature, sketched out in Goldberg 2006 for the Late Republic, whether indirectly, as with Marcus Fulvius Nobilior patronising Ennius (Hinds 1998), or directly, as with Cato the Elder writing histories (Astin 1978). This highlights the rather surprising failure of Scipio Aemilianus to attempt to write any literature of his own, leaving the prestige derived from authorship entirely to his enemy Cato. It then concludes that the Terentian authorship debate was

deliberately fabricated by Aemilianus, in collusion with Terence, co-operating for reasons now obscure, in order that he could portray himself as an author on a par with Cato. It also suggests that Aemilianus is not specifically named as the person behind Terence in the prologues to *Heautontimoroumenos* and *Adelphoe*, where our two contemporary *testimonia* for the authorship debate are to be found, precisely because he did not write the plays.

The third part of this paper then examines how the supposition that Scipio Aemilianus wrote a Terentian play would affect its interpretation, taking for granted the idea that Terence collaborated with Aemilianus, for reasons now obscure to us, in promulgating the authorship debate. It takes as its case study *Adelphoe*, where Terence fronts the issue of the authorship debate in the prologue, but rebuts it in a peculiarly toothless fashion, thereby suggesting to the viewer that Aemilianus genuinely might have been responsible for *Adelphoe*. It first establishes what sort of character and values Aemilianus would have had at this young age, relying most heavily on the invaluable testimony of Polybius. This demonstrates that Aemilianus was worried about how the Roman people perceived him, and specifically that he was widely held to be a bloodless, effete Greekling. It then goes on to offer an interpretation of *Adelphoe* from the point of view of a Roman theatre-goer. This shows how the play sets up the expectation that the liberal Micio, compared by Martin (1976) to Aemilius Paullus, will win the contest of educational philosophies, which a Roman theatre-goer would of course expect in a play written by an overly enthusiastic philhellene, and then confounds this expectation with Demea's eventual, if tainted, victory. This would leave a Roman viewer with the impression that Aemilianus was much more favourably inclined to Roman values than had hitherto been believed, and thereby work to Aemilianus' advantage.

Bibliography

Astin, A.E., 1978, *Cato the Censor*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Davies, P.J.E., 2017, *Architecture and Politics in Republican Rome*, Cambridge University Press

Edmondson, P., and Wells, S., (gen. eds.), 2013, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, Cambridge University Press

Hinds, S., 1998, *Allusion and Intertext: dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry*, Cambridge University Press

Martin, R.H., 1976, *Terence: Adelphoe*, Cambridge University Press