NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

TROY DESTROYED (PLAUTUS *BACCHIDES* 973–74 AND 1053)

I offer two points on the text and interpretation of Chrysalus' great monody in Plautus' *Bacchides*; unless otherwise noted, the Latin text is that of W. Lindsay (Oxford, 1910).

1. *BACCHIDES* 973–74

CHRYS. sed Priamus hic multo illi praestat: non quinquaginta modo,
        quadrigentos filios habet atque equidem omnis lectos sine probro.

CHRYS. But this Priam [an antonomasia for Nicobulus] far outdoes that Priam of old,
        because he has not just fifty, but four hundred sons—and all of them of choice
        quality, without a blemish on them.

The "four hundred sons" in question are, of course, the four hundred *philippi*, or gold sovereigns, of which Nicobulus has been swindled. Chrysalus' metaphor is vivid and novel. What occasions its appearance here?

The metaphorical equation of "children" and "coins" is not often found either in Plautus or in Latin literature generally. A more frequent Plautine metaphor for money, one perhaps natural for a language that derived *pecunia* from *pecus*, is rather that of livestock. Thus, for example, we find at *Asinaria* 590 *asinos, si forte occeperint clamare hinc ex crumina*; at *Persa* 265 *amico boves* (ex conj., Spengel) *domitos mea ex crumina largiar*, and at 317 (Woytek) *boves bimi hic sunt in crumina*; at *Truculentus* 655 *ovis crumina hac ⟨huc⟩ in urbem detuli*, and at 956 *pecua ad hanc collo in crumina ego obligata defero*; and so on.[1] On the other hand, the use of "children" for "coins" or "money" is, as we have said, comparatively rare. In all Plautus, I have noticed only two parallels, namely, *Poenulus* 73–74 ([sc. the kidnapper] *vendit eum domino hic diviti quoidam seni, / cupienti liberorum*) and *Menaechmi* 59 ([sc. *Epidamniensi*] *ei liberorum nisi divitiae nihil erat*), both of which, however, probably reflect a common pun in the Greek original on the two senses of τόκος, "child" and "interest as a capital premium," a pun that Aristophanes conveniently illustrates in *Thesmophoriazusae* 845 (ἀξία γοῦν εἶ τόκου τεκοῦσα τοιοῦτον τόκον).[2] Furthermore, Chrysalus' words are different from these, too, because in them we have, not an explicit association of *pueri* and *divitiae*, but the word *filii* as a substitute for the

1. These and other passages are discussed by E. Sergi, *Patrimonio e scambi commerciali: Metafore e teatro in Plauto* (Messina, 1997).
2. Whether there is also a pun in the Latin, readily intelligible to Romans, is unclear; since the same usage occurs twice, perhaps we should admit into the lexicon, as a calque on the Greek τόκος, a rare or short-lived meaning of *pueri*, "interest."

anticipated, but unexpressed, word *philippi*. True, the epithets *lectus* ("choice" and "of full weight," respectively) and *sine probro* ("chaste" and "proof") do double duty, but the words *atque equidem* show that the epithets are adornments of the metaphor, rather than the primary point of contact. What, therefore, is the *tertium comparationis* of "sons" and "sovereigns"?

It is, I believe, the word *filios*, which, both in sound and shape (*fí-lĭ-ōs*), resembles and suggests the expected word *philippos* (*phí-lĭpp-ōs*, where the symbol ˘ indicates a short syllable[3]), and thus creates a midword pun. The example thus belongs to an established class of παρὰ προσδοκίαν wordplay in which Plautus suddenly replaces the word anticipated by the audience with another word of similar sound and metrical shape.[4] We should accordingly place in our texts a dash in the middle of the word *fil-ios* to mark the wordplay for the reader, and thereby to signal that Chrysalus is guilty of defalcation both financial and verbal.

Before proceeding, I will anticipate two objections to this interpretation, namely, the discrepancy in sound between (1) the initial short vowel *i* in *phĭlippos* and the long *i* of *fīlios*, and (2) the initial *p(h)* of the Greek word and the initial *f* of the Latin word.

The first objection we can readily meet, since puns on long and short vowels, especially the letter *i*, are not rare in Plautus. For instance, earlier in the *Bacchides*, Nicobulus had said (284–85) *cum mi ipsum nomen eius Archidēmides / clamaret dĕmpturum esse, si quid crederem*, where the quality of the vowel *e* in one or both words *Archidēmides* (which is long by nature) and *dĕmpturum* (long by position only) is presumably distorted so that the syllable *dem* sounds as alike as possible in each word. (The symbol ˘ above the vowel here and in the following examples indicates only a short closed vowel, not a short syllable.) If, for the sake of brevity, we limit our illustrations to those that involve the letter *i*, we find that some vocalic distortion is virtually required by the puns in *Rudens* 1225–26 (*infelīcet ~ lĭcentia*; cf. 1212–27) and 1305–6 (*medĭcus ~ mendĭcus*), and in *Miles gloriosus* 723 (*divĭtias ~ diu vītam*) and 1424 (*mittis ~ mītis*), and is probably to be assumed in jingles like *Cistellaria* 383 (*scisso atque excīsatis*) or *Persa* 613 (*immo ī modo*). In the *Bacchides*, Chrysalus makes a jingle like this in line 953 (*Īlio . . . illi*), while earlier on, in line 767, he had punned on the word *frictum*, saying *tam frĭctum ego illum reddam quam frīctum est cicer*, for the first *frictum* is from *frĭcere*, "rub" (in an obscene sense: cf. *Pseud.* 1190), while the second is from *frīgere*, "roast." In *Epidicus* 523 (*legum atque iurum fictor, conditor* [P: *condictor* A] *cluet*), the word *condĭtor*, "maker," "establisher," implies also *condītor*, from *condīre*, "a seasoner," which further creates a pun on *iurum* as both "laws" and "sauces." And at *Rudens* 122–23 a pun has been suspected in the words *quin tu in paludem is exicasque harundinem, / qui pertegamus villam*, where *exĭcas*, "cut down," from *exĭcare* (i.e., *ex-secare*), implies also *exsiccas*, from *exsiccare*, "dry

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3. In Plautus, the coin known as the *philĭppus* is always scanned with a short penultima despite the geminate consonant, while the name of the king called *Philĭppus* has a long penultima; this is a well-documented phenomenon, which, however, still awaits a convincing explanation.

4. For similar wordplays in the middle of words, cf. A. Thierfelder, *De rationibus interpolationum plautinarum* (Leipzig, 1929), 34, on *Aulularia* 472: . . . *facta est pugna in gal-lo gallinacio* (for *in Gal-lis*); E. Fraenkel, *Elementi plautini in Plauto* (Florence, 1961), 440, on frag. incert. 59 Monda, *ipsa sibi avis mortem c-reat* (for *c-acat*); and A. S. Gratwick, in his *Menaechmi* (Cambridge, 1993), on verses 1077 and 1078, and passim; cf. also *Capt.* 577–78. The number of these puns is far greater than is acknowledged by our commentaries, as I will illustrate elsewhere in due course.

out." Examples could be multiplied, but I trust that these, which most commentaries point out, will suffice to illustrate our point.

The second objection, however, deserves closer attention, because, as we know, in the time of Plautus the Greek letter φ was still pronounced not as an aspirated voiceless plosive [f], but as a fricative labiodental [pʰ].[5] It may seem startling, therefore, to find that twice in this same play Plautus has paired the same two words *philippus* and *filius* with one another in close proximity (I mark the ictus; the text of 1182b–1183a follows C. Questa, *T. Macci Plauti Cantica* [Urbino, 1995]):

> Nic.   nunc quasi ducentis Phílĭppis emi fílium   919

and

> Nic.   quadringentis Phílĭppis fílius me et   1182b
>   Chrysalus circumduxerunt . . .   1183a

In both instances the collocation of *Phílĭppis* and *fílĭus* stands out sharply, suggesting that the playwright was aiming at some deliberate verbal effect associating these two words. What was it?

In rendering Greek words into Latin, the Romans in Plautus' time primarily associated the Greek sound φ not with their own letter *f*, but with an aspirated [p], spelled by Plautus and his contemporaries *p*, and by later authors *ph*.[6] When rendering Latin words into *their* language, however, Greeks of the same era faced a more complicated situation. Having no sound corresponding to Latin *f*, Greek regularly used the nearest available sound, namely, φ. Greek spellings of Latin names such as Φάβιος, Φόλουιος, and Αὐφίδιος, for Fabius, Fulvius, Aufidius, and so on, are entirely regular.[7] Furthermore, because their language lacked the phoneme, or because they were influenced by "spelling pronunciations," or both, Quintilian tells us that some Greeks found it difficult to articulate properly the Latin *f*; and, in the same breath, he tells us that, as we could have guessed, Romans in a moment of unkindness ridiculed them for it (1.4.14; text and translation of D. A. Russell[8]): *nam contra Graeci adspirare ei* [sc. *litterae "f"*] *solent, ut pro Fundanio Cicero testem qui primam eius litteram dicere non possit inridet* ("The Greeks on the other hand commonly aspirate this letter [sc. *f*]; Cicero in his defence of Fundanius makes fun of a witness who cannot produce the first letter of that name").

I think, therefore, that in the *Bacchides* Plautus is lampooning Greeks' inability to articulate the initial letter *f* of the word *filius*. In the three passages adduced above (lines 919, 974, and 1182), the actors might achieve this most easily by mispronounc-

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5. Transliteration of φ with Latin *f* is first attested on an inscription of ca. 88 B.C.E. bearing *Heliofo* (*CIL* I 2652). It appears sporadically thereafter (e.g., *Orfeus*, *CIL* I 753; *Fedra*, *CIL* I² 1413; *Dafne*, *CIL* IV 680), and only becomes regular by the second century C.E., when grammarians began to prescribe rules for when to spell with *ph* or *f*. See further W. S. Allen, *Vox Latina*² (Cambridge, 1989), 27, and, with fuller discussion, F. Biville, *Les emprunts du latin au grec* (Louvain, 1990), 1:189–94.

6. We do not know, however, how the Romans normally would have pronounced the sound. We may not necessarily infer that, because the spellings *ch*, *ph*, *th*, enter Latin only around the time of Accius, educated or even uneducated Romans in Plautus' day were incapable of reproducing the original sound, for that would be to confuse orthography with orthoëpy. Scholars have traditionally pointed to Catullus 84 as evidence that the new digraphs confused otherwise literate Romans into aspirating words in the wrong places, but that hypothesis has lately been exploded by J. Nicholson, "Catullus 84: 'In Vino Veritas'?" *Phoenix* 52 (1998): 299–304.

7. W. S. Allen, *Vox Graeca*³ (Cambridge, 1987), 22–23.

8. *Quintilian, "The Orator's Education"* (Cambridge, 2001).

ing the word *filius* as **philius*, so that Chrysalus and Nicobulus, though "Greeks" living in "Athens," allow their Greek accents stereotypically to affect their pronunciation of Latin. If we return now to line 974, with which we are primarily concerned, we see that Chrysalus' barbarism permits a pun that cheats the audience's expectation by a mere syllable, and gives an added fillip to his metaphor:

> CHRYS. Priamus hic multo illi praestat: non quinquaginta modo,
> quadringentos *phíli-os* habet . . .

That is, *phíli-os* humorously suggests *phílĭpp-os*. From a theoretical standpoint, such wordplay, of course, very nearly shatters the dramatic illusion.[9]

Malaprop puns like this in Plautus are, if not abundant, certainly attested in a few passages. In some cases, the unusual pronunciation is guaranteed by the response of a second character, as in, for example, the series of misunderstandings and mondegreens perpetrated by the slave Stratulax in the *Truculentus*, of which Edwin Fay, in a little-noticed article, has provided textually the most convincing explanation to date.[10] But not all such wordplays are explicitly signaled by the text, of course, and so, as in the *Bacchides*, it is only through scholarly attention that we can hope to uncover them. In the prologue to the *Rudens*, the star Arcturus' word *caelitum* is to be understood as a lisped pronunciation of *Caeritum* (1–2):

> ARCTUR. qui gentes omnes mariaque et terras movet,
> eius sum civis civitate—caelitum.

> ARCTUR. He who sways all nations and seas and lands,
> In his city of the celestial gods I am a citizen.

From the rare omission of the preposition *in* before *civitate*, a word which means both "city" and "citizenship," Walter Chalmers rightly detected a pun dependent on mispronunciation of the final word. Since Roman citizens by "Caerite franchise" enjoyed only partial civic rights, the joke is that, as Chalmers explains, "the comparatively humble Arcturus was a fellow citizen of Olympian Jupiter by a kind of 'satellite' citizenship."[11]

A more precise parallel to the example in the *Bacchides* appears in the *Curculio*, where Palinurus evidently distorts a word to make a pun (77–79):

> PHAEDROM. nomen "Leaenae" (*Fleckeisen*; leene *P*) est, multibiba[12] atque merobiba.

> PALINUR. quasi tu "lagoenam" dicas, ubi vinum Chium
> solet esse.

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9. For similar Graeco-Latin wordplay in the *Aulularia*, see M. Fontaine, "Ἄγνος κουριῶν," *CP* 99 (2004): 147–52 (where, however, I could have made the point clearer by printing *curiosam*, not κουριῶσαν, in line 562).

10. E. W. Fay, "The Stratulax Scenes in Plautus' *Truculentus*," in *A Memorial Volume to Shakespeare and Harvey* (Austin, 1917), 155–78. (In line 683, we should read *diprax*, "malaprop," following W. M. Lindsay, *CR* 48 [1934]: 60.)

11. W. Chalmers, "Plautus *Rudens* 2," *CP* 57 (1962): 240.

12. This Plautine coinage can only be a distortion pun, too. If Phaedromus lisps the *t* of this word, *multibiba* will suggest **mulsibiba*, "drinker of *mulsum*," or wine diluted with honey, precisely the opposite of *merobiba*, "drinker of *merum*," or undiluted wine, the point being that Leaena drinks, not only heavily and often (*multi-*), but is also content to take her drink any way she can. *Trinummus* 820 furnishes an exact parallel to this distortion, where Charmides calls Neptune by the mock-epic coinages *salsipotens* and *multipotens*; editors rightly suspect he really means *mulsipotens*, though they go too far in emending the text, following Bücheler, to make him say *exclusively* that; the explanation is that Charmides is lisping comically to suggest both words at once.

PHAEDROM.   Her name's Leaena, a weariless, waterless sot.

PALINUR.   You mean a sort of Tankilena, don't you—the kind they store Chian wine
in? (trans. Nixon, modified)[13]

The pun *Leaena ~ lagoena* necessitates palatalization of the letter *g* and reduction of
the diphthong in one or both words, so that both words sound approximately like
[ləyena]. Since this was not the pronunciation of Latin *g* in the classical period,
Palinurus' pronunciation apparently represents the Greek articulation of prevocalic
γ as a voiced palatal fricative [y], favored by some non-Attic dialects already by the
fourth century B.C.E.[14] Here again, then, we have an example of a Plautine "Greek" mis-
pronouncing his Latin by distorting a vowel and suppressing the medial consonant.

I have not so far uncovered further puns in the text of Plautus that, like *phílĭppus ~
fílĭus*, satisfy simultaneously all of the conditions of being (1) implicit, (2) bilingual,
(3) midword, and (4) dependent on malaprop Greek pronunciation, nor do I expect
we will find any. The reason is simple. Because the *only* Latin sound that we are told
Greeks in Plautus' time had trouble articulating was the Latin *f*, we are left to infer
that Greeks could more or less replicate the other Latin sounds pretty faithfully. Since
there are in Greek and Latin very few common words with a φ or *f* that closely resemble
one another, such as do, for instance, φίλος and *filius*, Plautus really did not have
many opportunities for this sort of thing elsewhere. But the examples of *caelitum ~
(Caeritum)* and *Leaenae ~ lagoenam*, taken together, show, I hope, that we have no
reason for doubting the extent of Plautus' prestidigitation or ingenuity in making a
pun when the opportunity did present itself.

I close with a final suggestion. As we know, Menander's Δὶς ἐξαπατῶν served as
the model for the *Bacchides*, but Menander, it has been observed, does not use the word
philippus to denote gold coins.[15] It naturally follows that Plautus could not have found
a pun on *philippus* as such in his model, and so his Greeks' malaprop pronunciation
of the word *filius* three times in this play may constitute a type of inside joke for
those familiar with Menander's play. Earlier in the play, Chrysalus, who had been
named "Syrus" in the Δὶς ἐξαπατῶν, had proclaimed (649–50), *non mihi isti placent
Parmenones, Syri, / qui duas aut tris minas auferunt eris* ("I'm not impressed with
those Parmenos, those Syruses, who've gotten away with two or three *mnas* from
their masters."). Astute members of the Roman audience who were familiar with the
Menandrian original would have caught Plautus' metatheatrical reference lampooning
his Greek model; I think it possible that these same spectators would see also in the
three *philippi ~ filius* wordplays a similarly subtle attempt by the Latin poet to poke
fun at his Greek model.

2. *Bacchides* 1053

CHRYS.   fit vasta Troia, scindunt proceres Pergamum.

CHRYS.   Troy is being looted, the chieftains are cleaving Pergamum.

Such is the meaning of this line, as read by the Palatine MSS and all editors; the
Ambrosianus is unavailable. But to say "cleaving" Pergamum or "breaking it asunder,"

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13. *Plautus, with an English Translation*, vol. 2 (London, 1917).
14. See Allen, *Vox Graeca*[3] (n. 7 above), 30–32, with Herodian's citation of Plato Comicus on p. 163.
15. Cf. Barsby's note in *Plautus: "Bacchides"* (Warminster, England 1986), ad 200.

while meaning "destroying" or "annihilating," is a bit harsh even by Plautine standards of hyperbole. While the compound verb *exscindere* does mean "to destroy," and indeed Virgil will later apply it to Pergama (*nec posse Argolicis exscindi Pergama telis*, *Aen.* 2.177), the simple verb has a fairly narrow semantic range, restricted to "splitting" (a rock, a log, etc.) or "rending" (a veil, clothes, hair, etc.). The dictionaries therefore pronounce the use of *scindunt* here a special case: Lewis and Short translate (s.v. I.B.2) "to destroy," though without parallels, and the *OLD* (s.v. 1 ad fin.) deems it a uniquely "hyperbolic" extension of the meaning "to divide deeply by a violent blow, etc., to split, to cleave." That is doubtful, but even if we do accept it, why are the *proceres* singled out from the rest of the army as the destroyers of Pergamum? One would expect some point to the implicit contrast. Thus while the meaning produced by the transmitted text is tolerable, it is not entirely satisfactory.

Read instead:

CHRYS.   fit vasta Troia, *scandunt* proceres Pergamum.

CHRYS.   Troy is being looted; the leaders are *climbing* Pergamum.

Pergamum is properly the citadel that surmounts the city of Troy. Chrysalus therefore uses the verb to suggest that, while it is the job of the common soldiers to sack the lower city, the prerogative of climbing and capturing the citadel, which constitutes the culmination of the siege, belongs to the foremost warriors. Both image and wording are confirmed by Livy, in whose writings twice (3.68.7 and 4.2.14) an enemy threatens *arcem et Capitolium scandere*. Moreover, since Chrysalus has already parodied Roman tragedy in the surrounding lines,[16] it is possible that this line too alludes to the tragedy that inspired Virgil's description of the Trojan horse as *scandit fatalis machina muros* (*Aen.* 2.237); for tradition had it that it was the Greek chieftans who concealed themselves in the wooden horse.[17]

The delinquent copyist responsible for the error in line 1053 was thinking back to the two earlier occurrences of *scindere* in Chrysalus' canticum, where the verb was used, quite properly, to denote the lintel stone "cracking" or "being sundered": *cum portae Phrygiae limen superum scinderetur* (955) and *nunc superum limen scinditur* (987).[18]

In the *Bacchides*, we are told, the destruction of "Troy" (= Nicobulus, line 945) was fated to follow upon the fulfillment of three events, each corresponding to one of Chrysalus' three deceptions (953–55): (1) the theft of the Palladium, represented by Chrysalus' pirate story (957–58); (2) the death of Troilus, corresponding to the delivery of the first letter, whereby Nicobulus is bilked of two hundred *philippi* (960); and (3) the cracking or sundering of the Phrygian gate's lintel stone, an event that will be complete when Nicobulus is duped into accepting the second letter. This last

16. The lament *o Troia, o patria, o Pergamum, o Priame periisti senex* (933) probably alludes to Ennius' *o pater, o patria, o Priami domus* (from his *Andromache*, scen. 92), or something similar from the *Equos Troianus* ascribed to Livius or Naevius, or Ennius' *Alexander*.

17. In the *Odyssey* Homer calls them the Δαναῶν ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες at 11.526, πάντες ἄριστοι at 4.272 and 8.512, and Ἀργείων οἱ ἄριστοι at 11.524. In the *Aeneid* (2.261–64), Ulysses, Neoptolemus, and Menelaus are among the nine Greek soldiers hiding in the horse.

18. Austin (*Aeneidos liber secundus* [Oxford, 1964], ad *Aen.* 2.234), equates Plautus' *scinditur* in both instances with Virgil's *dividimus muros*, and explains all three passages as a reference to the Trojans' decision to breach their own walls in order to bring the horse in. Is this what Plautus means?

episode begins at 987, when Chrysalus announces that Ilium's destruction is at hand, and concludes when Nicobulus retires to the house to bring out the second two hundred *philippi*. With the words *mane istic, iam exeo ad te, Chrysale* (1052), Nicobulus departs, signaling that the *obsidium* of Troy is now complete.

Hereupon Chrysalus jubilantly exclaims the verse printed above, the meaning of which can now be explained more fully as, "Success: Troy has been sacked! The city is now being looted[19] [sc. by the soldiers], and the chieftains are already ascending the citadel." The repaired text thus restores the contrast apparently intended between *Troia* as the city proper and *Pergamum* as its citadel. But that is not all.

The avowed goal of the third deception (the theft of the second two hundred *philippi*) had been so that the "soldiers" (= Mnesilochus, Pistoclerus, the Bacchises, and Chrysalus) would have *mulsum* to drink during their triumph over the sack of "Troy": *nunc alteris etiam ducentis usus est qui dispensentur, / Ilio capto ut sit mulsum qui triumphent milites* ("And now there's need of another two hundred, to be disbursed so that the soldiery will have honey-wine to drink upon Ilium's capture," 971–72, text as in Questa, *Cantica*). This triumphal mood is emphasized by the meter's switch in 972 to a square trochaic septenarius, the rhythm traditionally used by triumphant Roman soldiers in their marching "jodies" or cadence calls.[20] Since the emended text of line 1053, in announcing that the leaders are mounting the citadel, heralds the commencement of the triumphal procession, the third deception has achieved its ambition.

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19. That *fit vasta* means not simply "is being laid waste," but "is being looted" is shown by Chrysalus' remark in 1058: *ecfertur praeda ex Troia*.

20. See O. Skutsch, "Plautus *Bacchides* 972: A *quadratus triumphalis*," *RivFil* 98 (1970): 300–301.