NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

AGNVS ΚΟΥΡΙΩΝ (PLAUTUS *AULULARIA* 561–64)

In a gesture of magnanimity, the wealthy *senex* Megadorus has proposed to marry the daughter of the impoverished miser Euclio. The acrostic argument tidily sums up the situation (lines 4–5): "volt hanc Megadorus indotatam ducere, / lubensque ut faciat, dat coquos cum obsonio" ("This girl, undowered though she is, Megadorus wishes to marry, and he cheerfully supplies cooks and provisions for the wedding feast"):[1] contrary to custom, Megadorus has not only chosen to forgo a dowry, he has even undertaken to provide the music and catering for his own wedding reception. Euclio, however, suspects that Megadorus' generosity is merely a cover, and that the old man has somehow gotten wind of the secret pot of gold. In scene 3.6, Euclio launches into a tirade against the quality of Megadorus' gifts, complaining: the cooks are Geryonecean thieves! the *tibicen* will sponge up a lake's worth of wine! and, as for the groceries—and at this point Megadorus breaks in: "There's enough for a legion," he protests. "I even sent a lamb." This brings us to the following lines (561–64):

> **EVCL.** quo quidem agno sat scio   561
> magi' κουριῶσαν nusquam esse ullam beluam.   562
> **MEG.** volo ego ex te scire qui sit agnus κουριῶν.   563
> **EVCL.** quia ossa ac pellis totust, ita cura macet. 564

562 κουριῶσαν *Prescott* : curiosam *codd., Nonius 455, 2M* : curionem *Gulielmius*   563 κουριῶν *Prescott* : curio *codd.* (*curiosus B2*), *Nonius 86, 1M*   564 quia *codd.* : qui *Nonius 509, 11M, quem secuti edd. veterr.*   ossa etc. *codd., edd.* : o. a. p. tenos ita macet *Nonius*   cura : κουρᾷ *Prescott per litteras ad Comfort missas, at haesitans*

Ninety-seven years ago, H. W. Prescott proposed in these pages[2] that the words *curiosam* (562) and *curio* (563), which were read not only by all the manuscripts but also in the citation by Nonius, were intended as the Greek words κουριῶσαν and κουριῶν, from the verb κουριᾶν meaning "in need of a shearing." His is the text that I print above, and a typical translation following his line of interpretation would be:

> **EUCL.** Yes, and I know quite well that there's
> no animal anywhere more in need of a shearing than that lamb.
> **MEG.** I wish you would tell me why that lamb needs a shearing.
> **EUCL.** Because it's all skin and bones, it's so wasted from care.

The joke, as Prescott explained it, is that any "lamb" that is fit to be shorn is no lamb at all, but rather a sheep; thus Euclio is scoffing at the age and attendant quality of

---

1. Translation by P. Nixon (*Plautus,* vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library [London and New York, 1916]).
2. H. W. Prescott, "*Agnus Curio* in Plautus *Aulularia* 562, 563," *CP* 2 (1907): 335–36.

the emaciated "lamb." This interpretation accords well both with lines 565–66, in which Euclio virtually recycles the joke by explaining that the lamb is so thin that the sun shines right through it, x-ray style: "quin exta inspicere in sole ei vivo licet: / ita is pellucet quasi lanterna Punica" ("Why, in the sun you can examine its entrails while it's still alive: it's as translucent as a Punic lantern!"), and also with lines 327 and 331, which had already alluded to the lamb's emaciated condition.

In the 1910 addenda to his edition, W. M. Lindsay praised Prescott's suggestion with the words *acutissime refert Prescott,* but chose not to read the Greek words in his text, relegating them instead to his apparatus.[3] Older interpretations of *curiosam* and *curionem* (still espoused by some scholars) sought to establish a connection with *curio,* a "priest of a curia," which was presumed to correspond to *magister curiae* in line 107, but which makes little sense and does not improve the passage. See further the note of Stockert ad loc.[4]

On Prescott's interpretation, the Latinity of lines 563–64 must be construed so as to mean: **MEG.** "Why is the lamb in need of a shearing?" **EUC.** "Because it's all skin and bones, it's so wasted away from care." Later editors, however, rightly objected that on this interpretation the pun on the Latin word *cura* in line 564 remains abstruse, because the punchline does not adequately answer the question "why?"[5] These critics further objected that the sudden appearance of the Greek participles from κουριᾶν in the Latin context is too surprising and wondered whether the audience would have comprehended the word.[6]

These objections, which have never been sufficiently met, reveal that the problem in the passage lies in the word *qui* ("why?") of line 563. The pitfall into which the critics, Prescott included, have fallen, is this: each has translated the Greek words as though they were merely Latin, and as though no distinction is to be drawn between the two languages. But this misses precisely the point of the joke: Megadorus, though a "Greek," speaks Latin, and within the dramatic illusion he does not understand Euclio's Greek word κουριῶσαν, notwithstanding that he instinctively knows how to inflect the word so as to agree with the masculine noun *agnus* when he repeats the word as κουριῶν.[7] The critics have been so misled because each has regarded *qui* in line 563 as the old ablative pronoun meaning "why" (or "how"); naturally so, because the *quia* that begins Euclio's reply in line 564 fairly well demands that mean-

3. W. M. Lindsay, ed., *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae* (1904–5; reprint with addenda, Oxford, 1910).

4. W. Stockert, ed., *Plautus "Aulularia"* (Stuttgart, 1983).

5. E.g., E. J. Thomas (*T. Macci Plauti "Aulularia"* [Oxford, 1913], ad loc). According to a letter quoted by H. Comfort, "*Aulularia* 561 ff.," *AJP* 54 (1933): 373–76 (which also takes issue with the bilingual pun), Prescott himself perceived the difficulty with the pun and admitted that he had hesitantly thought to suggest that *cura* in line 564 should be printed as κουρᾷ. (Comfort's own solution to the lines, tentatively offered, was that *curiosam* refers to the lamb's inquisitiveness which, Euclio fears, will lead to detection of his gold; but that interpretation leaves *curio* unexplained—to say nothing of how a prying lamb bound for sacrifice might locate a pot of gold buried within a house.)

6. A phenomenon now known as "code switching," discussed in detail by J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003), passim. For examples in Plautus of Graeco-Latin code switching, cf. H. D. Jocelyn, "Code-Switching in the Comoedia Palliata," in *Rezeption und Identität,* ed. G. Vogt-Spira and B. Rommell (Stuttgart, 1999), 169–95.

It may be significant to note in defense of Prescott's interpretation that Euclio says *magi' curiosam* rather than *curiosiorem,* which is used by Afranius (*com.* 250: "nemo illa vivit carie curiosior") in the same sense of "more careworn" as *magi' curiosam* ostensibly is in our present passage. That fact alone is not decisive, but it does suggest that Plautus chose to keep the word *curiosam* in the positive inflection for a specific reason.

7. For Cicero's observation of this paradox in Pacuvius, see Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.91.

ing for *qui*. We will dispense with that *quia* shortly (§2 below), but for now, let us more closely examine the context and the exchange of Euclio and Megadorus in lines 561–63.

1. *Qui* Nominative, Not Ablative, in Line 563

Euclio sets up the joke by saying in lines 561–62, "Yes indeed: I know quite well that no animal on earth is more *curiosam* than that 'lamb.'" The word *curiosam* ("snooping" or "inquisitive") is an odd choice of epithet to be applied to a lamb, and Megadorus is ostensibly puzzled by it. The audience should then expect him to reply, "Tell me then: what is a 'prying' lamb?" But by a bit of παρὰ προσδοκίαν in farcical fashion, Megadorus, pretending that *curiosam* is the Greek feminine participle from κουριᾶν, suddenly replaces the Latin word *curiosus* that the audience had anticipated with the masculine Greek participle κουριῶν. The meaning of his line should then become "Tell me then: *what* is a 'κουριῶν' lamb?" The Greek word should be set in quotation marks in order to indicate that Megadorus does not understand it.

Often in Plautus an unusual expression or unfamiliar word elicits the response, *quid istuc verbi est?* This occurs at *Curculio* 31, in response to the word *intestabilis; Epidicus* 350 in response to *parenticidam* (see Duckworth ad loc.[8]); *Pseudolus* 608 in response to *Subballio;* compare also Terence *Phormio* 342–43, in response to the phrase *cena dubia.* But this response is not invariable, for at other times, the strange word serves to introduce an indirect question: at *Mostellaria* 1041, following the word *nauci,* Tranio says "atque equidem quid id esse dicam verbum 'nauci' nescio." The most apposite instance of this in Plautus for our present purposes occurs in *Truculentus* 689, an exchange whose Plautine origin, I might add, is beyond doubt, since the humor involves mispronunciation of Latin in the Praenestine manner. There, in response to the slave Truculentus' "refined" urban pronunciation of the Greek word *arrabo* as *rabo,* the *meretrix* Astaphium asks what on earth that word is supposed to mean (687–91):

> **TRVC.** Tene hoc tibi:
> rabonem habeto, ut mecum hanc noctem sies.
> **AST.** Perii, "rabonem"? quam esse dicam hanc beluam?
> quin tu "arrabonem" dicis? **TRVC.** "A" facio lucri,   690
> ut Praenestinis "conea" est "ciconia."

> **TRUC.** Here, miss, take it:
> Have it for a stallment so as you'll be with me this night.
> **AST.** Mercy on us! "Stallment"? What sort of a beast have I got here?
> Why don't you say "installment"? **TRUC.** The "in" 's savings for me,
> same as Praeneste folks calling a woodpecker a pecker.
>
> (trans. Nixon)

Most notable is that Astaphium's question, "quam esse dicam hanc beluam?" means in English not "*which* beast shall I say that this is," but rather "*what* shall I say that this beast is." Nixon is right to translate, "Mercy on us! . . . What sort of a beast have I got here?" In other words, the interrogative word *quid* that we might have expected Astaphium to use in line 689 has been attracted into the feminine gender of the predicate

---

8. G. E. Duckworth, ed. *T. Macci Plauti "Epidicus"* (Princeton, 1940).

beluam as *quam*.[9] We will return to that point momentarily, but if we juxtapose more specifically *Aulularia* 562–63 with *Truculentus* 689–90, a number of structural similarities in the two passages virtually reveal themselves:

> **EVCL.** magi' κουριῶσαν nusquam esse ullam beluam.
> **MEG.** volo ego ex te scire qui sit agnus "κουριῶν."

and

> **TRVC.** rabonem habeto, ut mecum hanc noctem sies.
> **AST.** perii, "rabonem"? quam esse dicam hanc beluam?

In each case, the exchange turns on a Greek word unfamiliar to the "Greeks," and the setup involves a question. In the *Truculentus,* the slave speaks a word (*rabonem*) unintelligible to Astaphium; in the *Aulularia,* Euclio speaks a word (κουριῶσαν) unintelligible to Megadorus. In their reply, both Astaphium and Megadorus repeat the unfamiliar word and then inquire, either directly or indirectly, what the unfamiliar word means.

We might have expected Megadorus to ask in line 563, "volo ego ex te scire *quid* sit agnus 'κουριῶν,'" using the neuter interrogative *quid* rather than the masculine adjective *qui,* and Ernout in fact reports in his apparatus that the citation of line 563 by Nonius line reads *quid,* not *qui*.[10] Ernout's statement, however, is at odds with the reportings of both Mueller's and Lindsay's editions of Nonius,[11] and so I take it as merely a mistake; even so, I believe that the masculine pronoun is right. Attraction of an interrogative pronoun or adjective into the gender of the predicate is not dealt with by the standard Latin grammars, but a story related by Gellius suggests that such attraction was more common in the *Umgangssprache* than it was in literature, a fact that posed problems in interpretation even for *grammatici.* In the story, Favorinus debates an ostentatious *grammaticus* who failed to grasp the concept of distinguishing *quid homo sit* from *quis homo sit* (4.1.12–13):

> "Si," inquit (*sc. Favorinus*) "ego te nunc rogem, ut mihi dicas et quasi circumscribas verbis, cuiusmodi 'homo' sit, non, opinor, respondeas hominem esse te atque me. Hoc enim, quis homo sit, ostendere est, non, quid homo sit, dicere. Sed si, inquam, peterem, ut ipsum illud, quod homo est, definires, tum profecto mihi diceres hominem esse animal mortale rationis et scientiae capiens vel quo alio modo diceres, ut eum a ceteris omnibus separares. . . ." Tum ille ostentator voce iam molli atque demissa: "philosophias," inquit "ego non didici neque discere adpetivi. . . ."

> "If," said [Favorinus], "I should now ask you to tell me, and as it were to define in words, what a man is, you would not, I suppose, reply that you and I are men. For that is to show who is a man, not to tell what a man is. But if, I say, I should ask you to define exactly what a man is, you would undoubtedly tell me that a man is a mortal living being, endowed with reason and knowledge, or you would define him in some other manner which would differentiate him from all other animals. . . ." Then that boaster,

---

9. I say interrogative "word," the distinction in Plautus between interrogative pronoun (*quis, quid,* etc.) and adjective (*qui, quod,* etc.) being not yet fully developed.

10. A. Ernout, ed. and trans., *Plaute,* vol. 1 (Paris, 1932).

11. L. Mueller, ed., *Noni Marcelli "Compendiosa Doctrina,"* 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1888); W. M. Lindsay, ed., *Nonii Marcelli "De compendiosa doctrina"* (Leipzig, 1903).

now in humble and subdued tones, said: "I have never learned philosophy, nor desired to learn it."

<div align="right">(trans. Rolfe)[12]</div>

Favorinus' distinction makes little sense if the question *quis homo est?* was not felt, at least in colloquial Latin, to be equivalent to *quid homo est?* Even more telling is the response of the *grammaticus* himself, who suspiciously viewed the distinction as some sort of philosophical trick.

Now that we have seen that *qui* in line 563 is best regarded not as the ablative, but rather as nominative singular, this brings us naturally to the following line, where, as we will see, *quia* is no longer tenable.

2. *Qui,* not *Quia* the True Reading in Line 564

All modern editors print line 564 as "quia ossa ac pellis totust, ita cura macet," but inasmuch as *qui* in line 563 is nominative, *quia* in line 564 should be emended to the nominative masculine singular *qui* and understood as a connective relative meaning "one that . . . ," a frequent Plautine usage paralleled by, for example, the response of Phaedromus in *Curculio* 304:

>   **CVRC.** Quis vocat? quis nominat me? **PHAED.** Qui te conventum cupit.
>
>   **CURC.** Who's calling? Who speaks my name? **PHAED.** One who wants to meet you.

But the proposal to read *qui* for *quia,* which had occurred independently to me, is in fact no emendation at all: in his citation of this passage, Nonius actually reads *qui* here, a reading which many earlier editors of the *Aulularia* (e.g., Naudet[13]) had adopted. The *ratio corruptelae* is simple: an early scribe, perhaps because he misunderstood or did not recognize the Greek words, also mistook the *qui* in the line before as ablative. Since that interrogative usually in Plautus requires the answer "because . . . ," expressed by *quia,* it was a short step for the scribe to make the alteration.[14]

Reading *qui* in line 564 necessitates both vocalic shortening and hiatus before *ossa,* both of which are legitimate in this position. Lindsay regards the shortening and hiatus of *qui* (notably as a connective relative) as a reflection of actual pronunciation rather than artificial scansion.[15] The meter of line 564, when emended: "quĭ | ossa ac pellis totust, ita cura macet" can be exactly paralleled by *Menaechmi* 9: "quŏ | illud vobis graecum videatur magis" ("So that it'll seem more Greek to you").

3. *Cura* in Line 564: A Bilingual Pun

We may now return to analyze *cura* in line 564, for the word is obviously the punchline of the joke. As we have seen,[16] Prescott, in his letter to Comfort, felt some discomfort over having the Latin word *cura* pun on the Greek word κουριῶσαν, suggesting

12. J. C. Rolfe, trans., *The "Attic Nights" of Aulus Gellius,* 3 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London, 1927–28).

13. J. Naudet, ed., *M. Accii Plauti Comoediae* (Paris, 1830).

14. G. Lodge (*Lexicon Plautinum* [Leipzig, 1904–33], s.v. *quia* B. qui *cum sententia* = pp. 475, col. 2–476) records more than twenty instances of the exchange *qui? quia.*

15. W. M. Lindsay, ed., *The "Captivi" of Plautus,* ed. maj. (London, 1900), pp. 47–48, with examples; cf. also A. S. Gratwick, ed., *Menaechmi* (Cambridge, 1993), 253.

16. See n. 5 above.

tentatively that κουρᾷ ("from shearing") perhaps ought to be read instead. Although Comfort did not accept this, I believe that Prescott was on the right track, and that *cura* in line 564 should be regarded as a bilingual pun that is simultaneously the ablative of the Latin word *cura* "from care" and the Greek dative κουρᾷ[17] "from shearing."

Bilingual puns do in fact occur in Plautus: in *Poenulus* 994–1028, the slave Milphio puns extensively on Hanno's Carthaginian speech, treating, e.g., Hanno's *donni* (= *adonai* [?], "Sir") in line 998 as the Latin word *doni,* genitive from *donum.* Greek-Latin bilingual puns are especially frequent on proper names in Plautus: examples include *Pseudolus* 1244: "superavit dolum Troianum atque Vlixem Pseudolus" ("Pseudolus has outdone Ulysses and his Trojan trick"), which arises from an intentional misdivision of the Greek name Ψευδύλος (the root is ψευδο-, not ψευ-); or the pun in *Persa* 624–26 on the Greek name of the girl, *Lucris* (i.e., Λοκρίς ["the Locrian"]), and the Latin *lucrum* ("profit"). For bilingual wordplays on common nouns, we may point to the wordplay on μνᾶ and *minaciae* ("threats") at *Truculentus* 948: "meliust te minis certare mecum quam minaciis" ("Competition with me calls for cash, not brash" [trans. Nixon]), or the wordplay on *moros* (from μῶρος) at *Trinummos* 669: "is [sc. Amor] mores hominum moros et morosos efficit" ("He changes men's ways, saps away their wits and makes 'em wayward" [trans. Nixon]); compare *Menaechmi* 571: "more moro." At *Stichus* 641: "more hoc fit, atque stulte mea sententia" ("this is happening *more,* and stupidly in my opinion") the word *more* may be a bilingual pun (i.e., *mor-e* ["as usual"] from *mos;*[18] and μῶρ-*e* ["stupidly"]), a synonym for *stulte* formed in the same manner as the Plautine adverbs *basilice, pancratice,* and *athletice*).

Finally, since a bilingual wordplay serving as the punchline of a joke is by nature surprising, I would insert a dash to indicate that the line is an instance of παρὰ προσδοκίαν.

4. Conclusion

If we accept the interpretation outlined above, and permit the bilingual pun on *cura,* the corrected lines will appear:

> **EVCL.** quo quidem agno sat scio
> magi' κουριῶσαν nusquam esse ullam beluam.
> **MEG.** volo ego ex te scire qui sit agnus "κουριῶν."
> **EVCL.** quĭ | ossa ac pellis totust, ita—cura macet.

which I translate:

> **EUCL.** I know quite well that there's
> No animal anywhere more κουριῶσαν than that "lamb."
> **MEG.** Please tell me: what is a "κουριῶν" lamb?
> **EUCL.** One that's all skin and bones, it's so thin from—(*shearing/care*).

Michael Fontaine
Amherst College/Cornell University

17. Perhaps to be regarded as "ablative" of the Greek noun, since Plautus often applies a Latin inflection to a Greek word; cf. *Bacch.* 240: "opus est chryso"; unless *chryso* stands for χρύσῳ, it should be regarded as ablative.

18. As F. Leo thinks, who remarks, ad loc. (*Plauti comoediae* [Berlin, 1895–96]), "-e non μώρως sed ἐξ ἔθους ut opinor."

APPENDIX: HORACE *EPISTLES* 2.1.94–95

With line 94, Horace begins a new topic by describing his external inconsistencies at which he imagines Maecenas to laugh. The first inconsistency is the appearance of an unfortunate haircut (94–95):

> Si curatus inaequali tonsore capillos
> occurri, rides.

> You laugh if I show up with hair tended by an uneven barber.

On the word *curatus* ("tended") in line 94, the most recent commentator[19] remarks (ad loc.), "*curatus:* used of barbering only here in literature (*TLL* 4.1504.81–82)." The unusual use of the word may therefore warrant a search for a secondary meaning, and in light of the series of puns in the *Aulularia* on *cura* ("care") and κουρά ("cropping, shearing") discussed above, I am inclined to regard Horace's *curatus* here also as a pun on κουρά. Like *tondere,* the verb κείρειν primarily denotes not just "cutting" in a general sense, but "cropping" the hair, and the same word is used for "shearing" an animal: thus Horace's *curatus* puns as though it were *κουρά-tus ("shorn"— utterly or carelessly, like a sheep), securing, incidentally, an exact coincidence in the Greek and Latin elements of vowel length and word accent. The Greek use of the accusative *capillos,* though not rare in Latin poetry, may support my contention, and if the assonance in *curatus* and *occurri* is deliberate, with -*cur*- recurring in the same *sedes* in lines 94 and 95, it can only serve to underline the pun.

I note finally that elsewhere in the *Epistles,* Horace alludes to a Greek word by means of a Latin one: in *Epistle* 1.13, addressed to the courier Vinnius Asina, the word *onus* ("load") in line 12 ("sic positum servabis onus" ["guard your burden, placed so"]) puns on ὄνος ("ass")[20]—regarded as nominative in apposition to the subject— in order to allude to Asina's cognomen. I would suggest too that in line 23 ("Sirenum uoces et Circae pocula nosti" ["you know the Sirens' voices and Circe's cups"]) of *Epistle* 1.12, the theme of which is the Homeric *Odyssey,* the syncopated verb *nosti* ("you know") alludes to the post-Homeric νόστοι ("homecomings"), hinting at the word *reditum* in line 21 two lines previously ("[Vlixes] dum sibi, dum sociis reditum parat" ["in the process of getting a homecoming for himself and for his comrades"]).

19. R. Mayer, ed., *Horace, "Epistles" Book 1* (Cambridge, 1994).
20. Cf. M. Putnam "Horace *epi.* 1.13: Compliments to Augustus," in *Gestures: Essays in Ancient History, Literature, and Philosophy presented to Alan L. Boegehold,* ed. G. Bakewell and J. Sickinger (Oxford, 2003), 107–8.

A BINDING SONG: THE SIMILES OF CATULLUS 61

In Catullus 61, the marriage song for Junia[1] and Manlius, the bride is the focus of figuration. She is like Venus, like myrtle, like a daisy. Whereas previous commentators have pointed to Catullus' use and revision of the typical vegetal imagery of a marriage song, I suggest that Catullus constructs these similes in a ring format

1. I follow Fordyce (1961, 237) in reading *Junia* for the name of the bride. Thomson, the most recent editor of Catullus, considers *Vibia* a possible reading, but ultimately settles on *Iunia* as well (1998, 348).