

THE COOK SCENE OF PLAUTUS' *PSEUDOLUS*

H. Dohm has amply demonstrated how the cook of Plautus, *Pseud.* 790ff. exhibits characteristic features of the *mageiros* of Greek comedy.¹ He has also argued, however, that this scene contains substantial Plautine expansion, comparable with that which has been recognised in the cook scene of the *Aulularia*.² I wish to suggest that Dohm is largely right but that the Plautine expansion is even more extensive than he supposes.

In 790–838 Plautus is probably for the most part following his Greek model fairly closely. One can trace a logical sequence of ideas, as follows. Ballio: 'I couldn't have found a worse cook' (792–7). Cook: 'Why did you hire me then?' (798–9a). Ballio: 'You were the only one left. And why was that?' (799b–801a). Cook: 'I am expensive, but nowadays people look for cheap cooks, who produce only concoctions of seasoned vegetables. That is why men are so short-lived' (801b–25). Ballio: 'You can make men live longer then?' (826–8a). Cook: 'Certainly, for 200 years' (828b–30). The cook then proceeds to give a list of his fantastic sauces for fish and meat (834f. *Neptuni/terrestris pecudes*), until he is cut short by Ballio's 'Damn your lies' (836–8). We have here a typical comic *mageiros*: he is loquacious and boastful (794 *multiloquom, gloriosum*),³ claims magic powers (829f.),⁴ denigrates his rivals (810–25),⁵ reels off lists of foods, real and fictitious (814–17, 831–6), and uses grandiose language (834f. *Neptuni pecudes*).⁶

Within this essentially Greek section there are three short passages which look like Plautine additions. First, Dohm is surely right, following E. Fraenkel,⁷ to see 790f. as a Plautine addition. The point of the lines is the word-play *furinum forum*, and the reference to thieving does not fit the following lines, which attribute to the cook different vices, especially loquacity and boastfulness (794), of which the cook had no doubt given Ballio an earful on their way from the market.

Secondly, 795–7 constitute a joke which not only has no connexion with its context but is not strictly consistent with the dramatic situation. It implies a double insult on the cook: (a) he is so decrepit that one wonders why he is still among the living (795), and (b) he is such a bad cook that he is uniquely fitted to cook a meal for the dead. There is at least nothing in the text to justify (a), and *Orcus* is obviously introduced to prepare for the following two lines. As to (b), whereas Ballio had had an opportunity to suffer from the cook's loquacity (794), he could not yet know anything about his abilities as a cook. The three lines are dispensable; 798 could follow 794. These are sufficient grounds for a strong suspicion, at least, that 795–7 are a Plautine addition. Moreover the joke fits a Roman context better than a Greek one. *Mortuis cenam* can hardly refer to the Greek *perideipnon*. This took place after the burial in the house

¹ *Mageiros* (Munich, 1964), 139–53; cf. W. Theiler, *Hermes* 73 (1938), 286.

² E. Burck, *Wien. Stud.* 69 (1956), 265–77, F. Klingner, *SIFC* 27/28 (1956), 157–70, Dohm, *Mageiros*, 243–59.

³ Cf. Men. *Sam.* 283–5 and A. W. Gomme & F. H. Sandbach, *Menander: a Commentary* (Oxford, 1973), *ad loc.*

⁴ Cf. Philemon fr. 79.24–6 K. ἀθανασίαν εὐρηκα...

⁵ Cf. Posidippus fr. 1 K.

⁶ Cf. Men. *Dysc.* 946–53 and E. W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* (London, 1965), *ad loc.*

⁷ *Plautinisches im Plautus* (Berlin, 1922), 68 = *Elementi Plautini in Plauto* (Florence, 1960), 64.

of the deceased or his nearest relative;⁸ there is no evidence that in the pre-Roman period the deceased was considered to be present,⁹ and it is unlikely that any of the food prepared on that occasion was thought to be for him. In any case most, at least, of the food at a *perideipnon* was certainly consumed by the living mourners and gave full scope to the skills of a *mageiros*.¹⁰ The reference must be to food offered to the dead and the point that its cooking would require no culinary skill. Now in Greece food offerings were made to the dead at the tomb but they consisted of libations or burnt offerings;¹¹ their preparation could hardly be described as cooking at all and did not fall within the normal province of the *mageiros*, so that the joke would lack point. The Romans however regularly had meals at the tomb, at the burial or cremation itself,¹² on the ninth day,¹³ every year at the *Parentalia* or *Feralia* and at other times.¹⁴ On these occasions the deceased was conceived as present as a fellow *conviva* with the living.¹⁵ Offerings to the dead consisted of simple traditional foods,¹⁶ especially beans and other kinds of pulse.¹⁷ It seems that the living partook of these same simple foods, although they might sometimes also enjoy meat from a sacrifice.¹⁸ Some cooking would be involved, such as might be performed by a slave *coquus*. For an audience familiar with such meals Plautus' joke would have its full point.

Thirdly, 817–21 seem to stand out as a Plautine addition. In style they are very

⁸ Artem. *On.* 5.82, Dem. 18.288, D. C. Kurtz – J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London and Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), 146.

⁹ M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (Munich, 1967³), i. 179.

¹⁰ Hegesipp. fr. 1 K. The same would apply to the feasts in honour of the dead which took place from the Hellenistic period, sometimes at the tomb (cf. B. Laum, *Stiftungen in der griechischen und römischen Antike* [Leipzig, 1914], i. 74).

¹¹ Luc. *Luct.* 9, 19; cf. Hdt. 5.92η2–3, Nilsson, *Gesch. gr. Rel.* 179f.

¹² Varro, *Men.* 303 B. = Non. p. 68 L. *funus exequiati laute ad sepulcrum antiquo more silicernium confecimus, id est περίδειπνον. quo pransi...*, Fest. p. 376 L. <silicernium dicitur cena fu>nebris... <Caecilius Ob>olostate [fr. 122f. R.³]: cre<didi silicernium eu>s me esse esurum, Apul. *Flor.* 4.95 *rogum demolirentur, cenam feralem a tumulo ad mensam referrent*, Tert. *Apol.* 13.7 *quo differt ab epulo Iovis silicernium?*, J. Marquardt, *Das Privatleben der Römer* (Leipzig, 1886²), 378, 383, J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (London and Ithaca, N.Y., 1971), 50f. It was natural that the Roman funeral meal, *silicernium*, should be equated with the *perideipnon*, despite the differences. So Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 95, speaks of the Romans using beans *πρὸς τὰ περίδειπνα*.

¹³ Tac. *Ann.* 6.5.1 *cum... epularetur, novendialem eam cenam dixisse*, Porphyr. on Hor. *Epod.* 17.48 *novendiale dicitur sacrificium quod mortuo fit nona die qua sepultus est*, Apul. *M.* 9.31.2 *iamque nono die rite completis apud tumulum sollemnibus*, Cic. *Vat.* 31 *quis umquam in luctu domestico, quis in funere familiari cenavit cum toga pulla?*, Marquardt, *Privatleben* 380.

¹⁴ Varro, *LL* 6.13 M. *feralia... quod ferunt tum epulas ad sepulcrum, quibus ius ibi parentare* (cf. Macr. *S.* 1.4, Fest. p. 75 L.), H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin, 1892–1916), no. 7258 *parental. et rosar. quotann. at sepulcrum suum celebrent*, Tert. *Spect.* 13.4 *neque de sacrificio et parentato edimus*; cf. Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung* (Leipzig, 1885²), iii. 310–13, J. G. Frazer, *The Fasti of Ovid* (London, 1929), ii. 431–5. It seems probable that *cena feralis* (Juv. 5.85) or *epulae ferales* (Plin. *NH* 20.113) could refer to any meal at the tomb, not only the *silicernium* (Apul. *loc. cit.* n. 12).

¹⁵ Tert. *Test. Anim.* 4.5 *in convivio eorum quasi praesentibus et conrecumbentibus*.

¹⁶ Ov. *Fast.* 2.538f. *sparsae fruges parvaeque mica salis inque mero mollita Ceres*, Aug. *Conf.* 6.2 *pultes et panem et merum*, Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 7.20 *salsas fruges*.

¹⁷ Plin. *NH* 18.118 (*puls fabata*) *parentando utique adsumitur*, Calpurn. 3.82 *ferales lupinos*, Plut. *Crass.* 19.5 *φακοὺς καὶ μάζαν*, *Quaest. Rom.* 95 *ὀσπρίοις*, Fest. p. 77 L. *faba*.

¹⁸ Cic. *Leg.* 2.54 *hostia... maxima parentare pietatis esse adiunctum putabat* (implying that this was exceptional). It is clear from Ov. *Fast.* 2.533ff. that the offerings to the dead at the *Parentalia* could be very modest, although they would sometimes be on a larger scale (541 *nec maiora veto*). To sacrifice an animal, which should be black (Marquardt, *Röm. Staatsverw.* iii. 174, 312), was perhaps not very common.

Plautine; we may note the personification and alliteration in *sinapis scelera*, 'murderous mustard', the exaggeration of *oculi exstillent*, the comic identification of spices with screech-owls which eat out the guests' insides, the play with *tero* and *condio* and other examples of alliteration. Moreover the criticism in these lines of other cooks' use of excessively strong spices (*condimenta*) does not fit the general drift of the cook's argument, which, as I have indicated, is an attack on his rivals' use of vegetables, rather than fish or meat, as the basis of their dishes (811–13 *condita prata...proferunt, boves...convivas faciunt herbasque oggerunt*; cf. 822–5). The idea that the cook's cheap rivals use spices as well as strongly flavoured herbs in their vegetarian concoctions may indeed go back to the Greek play, and mustard may have been included;¹⁹ but it seems clear that Plautus has at least altered the emphasis of his model, especially in 817–21 but also in the frequent references to *condire/condimentum* elsewhere (810, 811, 813, 826, 828, 830, 834, 835, 837). This emphasis on the *condimenta* of the cheap cooks (especially 828 *qui ea culpes condimenta*) obscures the fact of their vegetarianism. Yet the latter was surely their chief fault in the original design of the scene; it is clearly the target of our cook's abuse in 810–12, and in his argument provides the explanation of their cheaper price (806–9) and of their harmful effects (822–5).

It seems probable that 839–46 are entirely Plautine. It is implausible that, after Ballio has invoked a curse on the cook's lies in 836b–8, he should in 839 accede to his request to be allowed to continue speaking (even if with another curse) and should tolerantly listen to his further boasting and act as stooge for his jokes in 843–5. 839 is obviously a transitional line designed to introduce the cook's further piece of boasting. The content of this boasting points to Plautine authorship. The play with *demissis* (or *dimissis*) *pedibus/manibus* (841, 843f.), whatever it means, and the *lapsus linguae* are typically Plautine, and the central idea of the passage, that Jupiter is entirely dependent on this cook for his dinner, seems to depart too far from reality even for a *mageiros* and to belong rather in the realm of Plautine fantasy.²⁰ The fact that the passage ends with another curse by Ballio, thus returning to the point from which it started, is a further indication of Plautine expansion.²¹ 847, with or without the repeated curse of 846b, would follow well after 838. 847–50a return to the theme of the cook's price (cf. 804ff.) and probably come from the Greek.

Dohm is surely right that 850b–65, which develop the motif of pilfering at length, are a Plautine addition. To the cook's claim to guarantee that his high price is seen to be matched by his efforts (849f. *pro pretio facio ut opera appareat mea*) Ballio retorts sarcastically *ad furandum quidem* (850b). It is conceivable that the Greek play

¹⁹ The Greek recipe may, however, have contained only the green leaves of the mustard plant, which are included, with coriander, among green vegetables by Thphr. *Hist. Plant.* 5.1.2 and Diocles of Carystus *ap. Ath.* 2.68d (cf. Apic. 4.2.7 *patinam ex...sinapi viridi*, Plin. *NH* 19.171). We cannot hope to reconstruct the Greek recipe in detail. It is not certain that *σίλφιον* (*lasericium*) was included; it is the one item in Plautus' list which cannot be a green vegetable, and to prescribe 1 lb. is a gross exaggeration. Roots (Thphr. *Hist. Plant.* 6.3.2) or dried stalks (Hermipp. fr. 63.4 K.; cf. Ar. *Eq.* 894f.) were imported into Athens from Cyrene; since the flavour was very strong, it was only necessary to grate a little over the food (Ar. *Av.* 1582). If the juice was used, only the smallest drop was needed (Apic. 1.10). Dohm's analysis of this passage is vitiated by a too rigid distinction between *Gewürze* and *Gemüse*; he fails to recognise that for the Greeks coriander, fennel and mustard, as well as garlic, belonged in both categories.

²⁰ A. O. F. Lorenz, *Ausgewählte Komödien des T. Maccius Plautus*, IV: *Pseudolus* (Berlin, 1876), *ad loc.* and Dohm, *Mageiros*, 149, compare the *mageiros* of Hegesipp. fr. 1 K., who has only to lift the lid of his pot to turn the tears of the mourners at a funeral to laughter; but the difference is more significant than the similarity. *Iuppiter incenatus* may be compared with *Aul.* 368 *superi incenati*, which is probably Plautine invention (cf. Dohm, *Mageiros*, 246).

²¹ Cf. Fraenkel, *P. im P.* 111ff. = *El. Pl.* 105ff.

contained something similar, but it is by no means necessary, and it is to be noted that Plautus plays with the ambiguity of *opera appareat*²² in his unexpected continuation of the cook's sentence. When however in 851f. the cook brazenly admits to his employer that all cooks are thieves, that goes beyond the limits observed, so far as we know, by Greek comic *mageiroi*, who only boast of their skill at pilfering in conversation with their assistants or colleagues;²³ G. Jachmann²⁴ already recognised the reference to the rapacious kite in 852 as a Plautine addition. 853f. entirely depend on 851f. in both form and content (the need to keep a close eye on any cook) and must therefore also be attributed to Plautus. All this is the starting point for 855–65, a catalogue of orders by Ballio to a slave, who otherwise has no part in the scene; this is typically Plautine in its accumulation of vivid detail and jingling, pleonastic style, its repetition (859~863) and inconsistency (856~862), and its apparent echoes of Roman legal language (*edico*, repeated *si* clauses, *-to* and *-mino* imperatives).²⁵

The following two lines, 866f., are transitional, the cook's *habe modo bonum animum* looking back to the previous section and Ballio's question *quaeso qui possum doce bonum animum habere...?* leading to the cook's answer in the following section. That section also is (*pace* Dohm) probably to be attributed to Plautus. In it the cook promises to give Ballio a drink which will rejuvenate him as Medea rejuvenated Pelias (he means Aeson). The variation on the cook's claim in 829ff. that he can prolong life suggests the work of the adapter, the mythological comparison is a favourite device of Plautus and the mistake whereby Pelias is substituted for Aeson is more likely to be due to Plautus than to a Greek dramatist.²⁶ Ballio's relatively complaisant reply in 872b *eho, an etiam veneficu's?* contrasts with the curse with which in 836b–8 he put an end to the cook's extravagant claims (cf. 889); as often in Plautus, consistency of characterisation is sacrificed in order to keep a comic dialogue going. Ballio now himself indulges in a verbal joke, which Dohm rightly attributes to Plautus. The cook's claim to be *hominum servator* (873) prompts Ballio to ask for a lesson in his art, *ut te servem nequid surrupias mihi* (876); play on the double meaning of *servare* introduces the pilfering motif again. Thus the whole of 850b–77 is probably a Plautine addition, consisting of a central section, which repeats the idea of the cook's magic powers, framed by two instances of the pilfering motif, all ingeniously but superficially linked together.

²² Apparently idiomatic; cf. Cato, *Agr.* 2.2 *si...opus non appareat*, Cic. *Fam.* 16.18.3 *fac opus appareat*, Ps. Quint. *Decl.* 13.15 *ut tantum factum opus appareat*, Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.224 *lamentamur non apparere labores nostros*, OLD s.v. *appareo* 3, TLL ii. 265.12–21.

²³ Dohm, *Mageiros*, 129–34.

²⁴ *Plautinisches und Attisches* (Berlin, 1931), 57 n. 1.

²⁵ It has something in common with other exaggerated catalogues of orders to slaves which show Plautine expansion: *Pseud.* 133ff. (Fraenkel, *P. im P.* 143–6 = *El. Pl.* 136–9), *Stich.* 58ff. (*Hermes* 111 [1983], 451, Fraenkel, *P. im P.* 162–5 = *El. Pl.* 154–7).

²⁶ Fraenkel, *P. im P.* 82f. = *El. Pl.* 77f. It was an easy mistake to make, since Pelias, Aeson's half-brother, was notoriously also cooked by Medea on the pretext that he would thereby be rejuvenated. Cicero, *Sen.* 83 *quo quidem me proficiscentem haud sane quis facile retraxerit, nec tamquam Pelian recoxerit*, seems to make the same mistake, although he does not go so far as to state that Pelias was in fact rejuvenated. Varr. *Men.* 285 B. *Pelian Medae permisisse, ut se vel vivum degluberet, dum modo redderet puellum* does not necessarily imply that Pelias was rejuvenated, but only that he wished to be (whereas in the usual version of the story the intention was not his but his daughters'). The theory of H. Meyer, *Medeia und die Peliaden* (Rome, 1980), 114–20, that Plautus, Cicero and Varro refer to a lost Greek comedy or satyr-play, which gave a new twist to the myth in depicting the rejuvenation of Pelias, is unconvincing. Meyer shows that there is no evidence in Greek literature or art for the rejuvenation of Pelias (although in some versions of the story Jason was rejuvenated).

878–87 revolve round the phrase *digitos praerodere*. A riddle-like opening (878–80) leads up to the cook's paradoxical suggestion that Ballio should invite his enemies rather than his friends to the meal. He explains that his seasonings will be so delicious that the guests will gnaw their own fingers off (881–4). The joke depends on *digitos praerodere* meaning literally 'gnaw off', so that one could only wish it upon one's enemies. Now *digitos praerodere* has its exact counterpart in the Greek phrase ἀπεσθίειν τοὺς δακτύλους, which, with slight variations, occurs several times in Greek comedy in similar contexts.²⁷ This suggests that Plautus has here probably taken the phrase from his Greek model. The Greek phrase, however, is always used metaphorically or with exaggeration of someone greedily enjoying his food. That is the sense in which one would expect a boastful cook to use the phrase, and that is the sense which 881–4 would naturally bear, if taken by themselves. It is only the preamble in 878–80 which changes the sense by requiring that *digitos praerodere* be taken literally. It therefore seems likely that 881–4 are from the Greek play, but 878–80 a Plautine addition, which has given a new twist to a Greek idiom. 878–80 are in Plautus' manner, and to take literally what was meant metaphorically is one of his favourite types of joke.²⁸ Thus Plautus' long insertion would extend from 850b to 880. This receives some confirmation from the fact that 881–4 would follow excellently after 850a, justifying the cook's high price. The same literal interpretation of *digitos praerodere* underlies Ballio's suggested cure for the cook's thieving fingers in 885–7; but in Ballio's mouth that would be a witty retort to something like προσκατέδει τοὺς δακτύλους and the joke may come from the Greek. The unprovoked allusion to thieving however arouses the suspicion that these lines too are a Plautine addition. If so, the cook's (rather feeble) reply in 888 probably is also;²⁹ 889–91a would follow well after 884.

There seems no reason to doubt that Ballio's speech 889–91a, in which he finally silences the cook and sends him into the house, and his following monologue 894ff. in substance follow the Greek. Ballio's brief reference to *fures* in 895 presents the traditional thieving motif in a form which can well be attributed to the Greek original. About 891b–3 certainty is hardly possible. That there was some derogatory reference to the cook's assistant in the Greek play corresponding to 892b–3, perhaps with some stage business, is not unlikely,³⁰ but it seems probable that 891b–2a at least are Plautine. *Mageiroi* do indeed exaggerate, but the implication of this sentence, whether spoken by the cook³¹ or his assistant, that the meal is almost ready, is inconsistent with the elaborate cuisine of which our cook boasted earlier in the scene; moreover very similar language is used in *Men.* 225 *cocta sunt, iube ire accubitum*, which I argue elsewhere³² to be a Plautine addition.

The cook is on stage for just over 100 lines. If the above analysis is at least approximately correct, about 50 of these are due to Plautus. The first half of the scene has been relatively little altered and the character of the boastful *mageiros* remains essentially unchanged. The second half, however, shows massive Plautine expansion.

²⁷ Hermipp. fr. 24 K. ῥύζων ἅπαντας ἀπέδομαι τοὺς δακτύλους (cf. *Suda* ῥαζεῖν καὶ ῥυζεῖν, τὸ ὑλακτεῖν, Hesych. ῥάζειν: τρώγειν, κυρίως ἐπὶ τῶν κυνῶν), Alexis fr. 172.5 K. ἐὰν παραθῶ σοι, προσκατέδει τοὺς δακτύλους σαυτῷ γε χαίρων, Aristophon fr. 9 K. παράθες αὐτοῖσιν ἰχθὺς ἢ κρέας, κἂν μὴ κατεσθίωσι καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους, ἐθέλω κρέμασθαι δεκάκις. Rather different is Pherecr. fr. 13 K. ὁπότεν δ' ἤδη πεινώσιν σφόδρα... περιτρώγειν αὐτῶν τοὺς δακτύλους.

²⁸ E.g. *Amph.* 309–34.

²⁹ Cf. *Aul.* 306f., *Poen.* 490.

³⁰ Cf. *Men. Asp.* 233ff., *Dysc.* 441, *Sam.* 105.

³¹ Cf. A. Ernout, *Plaute* vi (Paris, 1938), *ad loc.*

³² *Classical Antiquity* (forthcoming).

To a considerable extent the Plautine additions consist of variations on ideas already existing in the original scene. Thus 839–46, 868–73 add to the cook's boasting and repeat his claim to superhuman powers (829f.); 790f., 850b–65, 874–6, 885–7 repeat, with varying degrees of exaggeration, the traditional motif of the thieving *mageiros*, to which there was probably a brief allusion in the Greek (895). In general the effect of Plautus' additions was to prolong a verbal duel between two disreputable characters and to clothe their exchanges in more exaggerated and colourful language. Thus the cook's boasting is enhanced by references to Jupiter (840–6) and Medea (868–71), his abuse of his rivals by the grotesque comparison *condimenta ~ striges* (820). Ballio's abuse of the cook is exaggerated by the repeated accusations of thieving, and the cook's shamelessness by an admission of guilt, using the comic comparison *coqui ~ milvi* (852). Finally Plautus has added touches of Roman colouring (795–7, 855–65) and a sprinkling of verbal jokes (791, 841–4, 873–6, 880, 885–7).

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