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FREUDIAN SLIPS IN PLAUTUS: TWO CASE STUDIES

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Abstract. This paper examines the “Freudian” dimensions of two instances of psycholinguistic performance error in Plautus’ comedies, viz., a slip of the tongue in *Rudens* 422 and a tip-of-the-tongue situation in *Trinummus* 906–22. In each case, I argue, the error serves as a vehicle for puns and ironic jokes. So understood, novel implications for interpretation, staging, and possible modes of delivery are suggested. An appendix discusses the text of *Trinummus* 915 and 922.

FREUD SPARKED AN INTELLECTUAL REVOLUTION A CENTURY AGO when he argued, primarily in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, that unconscious or repressed wishes are laid bare by certain types of psycholinguistic error. A slip of the tongue, or the temporary forgetting of a proper name, argued Freud, will permit us a glimpse of the speaker’s true feelings about a matter. Ever since, Freud’s hypothesis has enjoyed such widespread popular favor that today we generally call these errors (which Freud called *Fehlleistungen*, “bungled actualizations”) “Freudian slips.” Many critics, to be sure, have doubted how universally valid Freud’s ideas are in explaining every single such slip in everyday life; Sebastiano Timpanaro, for instance, perceptively reminds us that speakers may feign a slip of the tongue for various purposes. But what seems to be conceded by virtually everyone, not least by Freud himself, is that slips do perform a “Freudian” psychological function in imaginative literature.¹

We generally grant this assumption in reading modern-day literature, but it was true in antiquity as well. The Roman comedian Plautus, for instance, certainly grasped the “Freudian” function of the slip of the tongue. He masterfully uses the device in *Casina*, where the concupiscent *senex* is made to inadvertently betray, by repeated slips of the tongue (364–70, 670–75, and 701–4; pointed out in Feldman 1962, 354–55),

¹The most accessible and compelling critiques of Freud’s *Psychopathology* are Timpanaro 1976 and Guetti 1988. For recent psycholinguistic research on the errors discussed by Freud, see Poulisse 1999, Hokkanen 2001, and Schwartz 2002.

his secret wish to wed Casina himself. And in *Cistellaria* 512–17, the young man Alcesimarchus is made in a moment of agitation to bungle the divine genealogy, saying “uncle” for “father,” “grandmother” for “mother,” “daughter” for “wife,” and so on (here see Bettini 1991 and Moore 2004).

Slips of the tongue feature in Plautus’ other plays, too, where they are often followed by epanorthosis and the remark *non id volui dicere*, “that’s not what I meant to say.”² But the dramatic purpose of the slips in these latter cases is not always clear; they do not obviously contribute anything to characterization, as they do in *Casina* and *Cistellaria*, nor do they help advance the action of the play. Since a “Freudian” explanation for their origin cannot readily be detected either, they may well seem wholly unnecessary. So why did Plautus include them in his plays?

I offer here one answer to that question by examining two cases of “Freudian” error in Plautus in their dramatic context. In my view, the error and its precipitate serve in each case as a vehicle for puns, jokes, and ironic statements. Specifically, I intend to show (1) that a slip of the tongue in *Rudens* sets up a sight gag by uniting puns and visual cues and (2) that the temporary forgetting of a proper name in *Trinummus* introduces an extended joke based on the conventions of Latin spelling. In both instances, wordplay allows us to reconstruct staging and delivery and, in the case of *Trinummus*, to resolve textual corruption. As I will suggest in conclusion, any insight we gain from these two “case studies” may also allow us, I hope, to broaden our understanding of Plautus’ subtle use of slips and related phenomena generally.

I

In *Rudens* II, iii (331ff.), the prostitute Ampelisca enters with a water jug and instructions to fetch water from Daemones’ cottage next door. Along the way she encounters the slave Trachalio, to whom she recounts the vicissitudes of “last night,” and then proceeds on to the cottage. Here she knocks vigorously on the door and is greeted by Sceparnio, Daemones’ valet, in these words (Scene II, iv, 414ff.³):

² *Amph.* 384 (*Sosiam ~ socium*), *Cas.* 367 (*mi ~ huic*), 674 (*men ~ vilicum*), 704 (*mihī ~ vilico*), *Friularia* fr. 8 Monda (*fraterculabant ~ sororiabant*), *Mil.* 27 (*bracchium ~ femur*), 819 (*sorbet ~ stertit*), *Most.* 830 (*dormiunt ~ conivent*), *Ps.* 711 (*attuli ~ adduxi*), 841ff. (*manibus ~ pedibus*), *Rud.* 423 (*subvolturium ~ subaquilum*).

³ Except as noted, the Latin text reproduced in this paper is Lindsay’s 1910 Oxford text, while translations of Plautus are taken (or adapted by me) from Nixon 1916–1938.

- SCEP. (*gruffly, within*) Who's that making so devilish free with our door?
- 415 AMP. (*sweetly*) It's me. (*enter SCEPARNIO rapidly*)
- SCEP. Oho! What good luck is this? (*ogles her appreciatively*) Hur-ray! A woman, a pretty woman, upon my soul!
- AMP. (*with dignity*) Good-morning, sir.
- SCEP. And a very good one to yourself, my little lady.
- AMP. I've come to your house—
- SCEP. And I'll entertain you like a regular queen if you'll come a little later, in the evening. Why, in these morning hours I can't treat you properly. Well, how about it, my pretty little houri? (*tries to embrace her*)
- 420 AMP. (*pulling away*) Ah! You're being much too familiar with your hands!

Sceparnio, stunned by the unexpected sight of this lovely young visitor, can scarcely conceal his arousal. He starts to molest Ampelisca, but her resistance only excites him further, and turning to himself he ejaculates (420ff):

- 420 SCEP. pro di immortales! Veneris effigia haec quidem est.
ut in ocellis hilaritudo est, heia, corpus quouismodi,
subvolturium—illud quidem, “subaquilum” volui dicere.
- 420 SCEP. (*aside*) Ye immortal gods! She's the very image of Venus. Just see that merry twinkle in her eye! My word! And that body! It's *subvolturium*—no, no, it's *subaquilum*, I mean!

Sceparnio meant to say that Ampelisca's “complexion” (*corpus*) is, like that of the African Gidennis in *Poenulus* (who is *corpore aquilo*, 1112), “a little swarthy” (*subaquilum*). But in his eagerness, he slips and says *subvolturium*, a nonexistent word. Unlike his counterpart in *Truculentus*, however, who is portrayed as the Latin Mrs. Malaprop *par excellence* in a scene that alludes to this one (II, ii; 256ff.), Sceparnio, no matter how uncouth his behavior here, nowhere else manifests any infelicity of language. What explains his *lapsus linguae* here?

The commentators all point out that *aquila* “eagle” and *vultur(ius)* “vulture” are both birds of prey and so suggest, without quite saying as much, that Sceparnio's subconscious confusion of the two is what produces the non-word amalgamation *subvolturium*, the sort of Joycean linguistic monstrosity called by psycholinguists a “contamination” or “compromise structure,” by linguists a “blend,” and by literary critics a “portmanteau.” But why the confusion at all?

Popular psychoanalysis since Freud dictates that the *-volutur-* component of the compromise structure imperfectly represents the sound of a repressed thought. By taking account of the context, then, we might suspect Sceparnio has secretly been thinking of Ampelisca's pretty *voltus*, "face" (cf. Terence, *And.* 119f.) or *voluptas*, either in the upright sense "darling" (cf. 436f. and 439 in this play) or, less nobly, "sexual pleasure" (cf. 459). Then again, in light of "last night's" raging storm sent by Arcturus, whose fierce wind has stirred the sea and wrecked the ship and which Sceparnio has, in his first words onstage, characterized as "no mere wind (*ventus*) but an *Alcumena Euripidi*," Sceparnio has perhaps confused the two winds *Aquilo* and *Volturnus*, secretly hoping this houri from over the sea is "a real hurricane"—not unlike, perhaps, Alcumena herself, whose hearty sexual appetite Plautus lampoons in *Amphitruo*.⁴ Such analysis is, of course, only valid if at least some in the Roman audience intuitively grasped Freudian explanations for slips (as it seems they must have in the case of the *senex*' slips in *Casina*) and understood what repressed thoughts they represent.

However that may be, neither our commentaries nor psychoanalysis adequately answer our question: what is the dramatic purpose of the slip? In other words, why did Plautus put it here in the first place? After all, Plautine drama is scripted, not improvised, and that means that we are not dealing with the slip of an actor—as when, for instance, the actor Hegelochus, performing Euripides' *Orestes* in 408 B.C.E., accidentally slipped and said *γαλῆν' ὀρῶ* "I see a weasel" for *γαλῆν' ὀρῶ* "I see calm" (cf. the scholia to *Orestes* 279 and Aristophanes' *Frogs* 303). No; in the case of Sceparnio's slip, we are rather dealing with the slip of a character. That compels us to consider the speaker's motive and the role of the audience.

A parallel from another of Plautus' comedies may throw light on

⁴ *Aquilo* and *Volturnus* (later called *Eurus*: Seneca *Q.N.* 5.16.4), both being oriental winds, were often confused or conflated in antiquity (Gellius *N.A.* 2.22; Masselink 1956, 130–45) and ultimately identified; thus "Euroaquilo" was the name of the ἄνεμος τυφονικός that later shipwrecked St. Paul en route to Italy from southern Crete (*Act. Apost.* 27.14)—that is, traveling on virtually the same course as the ship carrying Ampelisca and Co. from Cyrene to Sicily. There may be a further topical point to these "mighty wind" ideas, too, since Volturnus was the name of the wind the Romans blamed for roiling the dust that blinded them and caused their grievous losses in battle at Cannae in 216 B.C.E. (Livy 22.43, 22.46), i.e., not long before *Rudens* must have been produced. That, if anything, may explain why the language surrounding Sceparnio's slip at 420f., *pro di immortales . . . corpus quouismodi!* ("Ye immortal gods! What a complexion!"), echoes his first words onstage in 83, *pro di immortales, tempestatem quouismodi!* ("Ye immortal gods! What a hurricane!").

our question in two ways. In *Amphitruo*, Plautus makes the slave Sosia try to extricate himself from Mercury's intimidation by claiming he'd made a slip of the tongue (383f):

MERC. Amphitruonis te esse aiebas Sosiam.

SOS. peccaveram,
nam Amphitruonis "socium" ne me esse volui dicere.

MERC. You kept saying you were Amphitruo's Sosia.

SOS. It was a slip of the tongue!⁵—I certainly meant to say that I was Amphitruo's "associate"!

Sosia, of course, did not actually blunder, as he claims; he is merely lying to escape a beating. This means that his "slip" is ironic because it presupposes a double audience. For within the dramatic illusion, Sosia's explanation for the misunderstanding is sufficiently plausible that Mercury accepts it, as is shown by his reply in the next line, *scibam equidem nulum esse nobis nisi me servom Sosiam* ("Ah, I knew quite well there was no servant Sosia at our place except me"). But we in the audience know Sosia is dissembling, and we see that his point is really to make a pun (*Sosiam ~ socium*) for our amusement. Moreover, both the content and end-stopped delivery of the line expose the pun as an example of what we call a "rimshot" joke—that is, a painfully obvious joke that, in modern performance, is punctuated by a drum roll and cymbal crash (transcribed *ba-dum tish!*) to coincide with the collective groan of the audience.

Sosia's slip is able to address these two audiences (i.e., both Mercury and the audience of the play) precisely because it occurs in dialogue. But Sceparnio's slip in *Rudens* is different. There, the slip is made in an aside. That means it can be addressed to a single audience only, namely, the audience of the play (since asides are always directed outward to the audience of the play). Since Ampelisca does not overhear it, the slip has no meaning within the dramatic illusion proper. This arouses the suspicion, then, that the point of Sceparnio's slip is also, like Sosia's slip in *Amphitruo*, a pun meant for the audience's amusement. And the fact that the pun in *Amphitruo* was created by the corrective word *socium* suggests that the point of Sceparnio's slip here likewise lies, not in the error itself, but in the epanorthosis. At the same time, the end-stopped construction of the line suggests that that word will also form a "rimshot"

⁵*Peccare*, with or without *in sciens*, is Plautus' regular term for "to make a slip of the tongue" (cf. also *Cas.* 370, 673–74, *Ps.* 843; cf. *Bacch.* 443), although at *Cas.* 367–68 *perperam fabulari* is so used, while Cicero at *Pro Caelio* § 32 (see section III below) has *errare*.

pun. That directs our attention toward *subaquilum*, a compound nonce-coinage (i.e., a humorous neologism) whose simplex *aquilum*, “swarthy,” “dark,” was derived in antiquity (cf. Paulus, ex Festo p. 22M s.v. *aquilus*) from *aqua*, “water.”

Let us therefore recall that Ampelisca’s presence onstage has been entirely motivated by her instructions to fetch water, an errand whose purpose she advertises no fewer than three times:

1. (v. 331f., *to priestess within*) AMP. intellego: hanc quae proxuma est <tu> villam Veneris fano pulsare iussisti atque *aquam rogare* (“I understand: I’m to knock at the cottage here next to the Temple of Venus and ask for some water”).
2. (v. 403f., *concluding her conversation with Trachalio*) AMP. ego quod mihi imperavit sacerdos, id faciam atque *aquam hinc de proxumo rogabo* (“I’ll do as the priestess ordered and ask for some water at the house next door here”).
3. (v. 412, *to herself (i.e., to the audience), just before knocking on Sceparnio’s door*) AMP. nunc, ne morae illi sim, *petam hinc aquam*, unde mi imperavit (“But I mustn’t delay her, I’ll ask for the water here where she said”).

It is upon this final announcement of her task that Sceparnio opens the door to find Ampelisca standing there, bringing us back to v. 414, which commences the scene we have been studying and his slip of the tongue just moments later in 422.

Moreover, Ampelisca’s purpose will also visually have been kept at the forefront of our minds because of the sacral water vessel, or *sacra urna Veneria*, with which she has emerged from the shrine in 331 and has been carrying ever since. This vessel bears a label of ownership (cf. 478, *haec* [sc. *urna*] *litteratatast: eapse cantat quoia sit* [“Ha! A lettered pitcher! It lets out who its owner is itself”]) and will also presumably have been elaborately decorated. Since we ostensibly are watching the interactions of Greeks, not Romans, the water jug that Plautus calls in Latin an *urna* (438, 467, 469, 471, 473) is probably what, as the commentators point out, the Greeks called a *hydria*. Now, the *hydria*, which is shaped like an amphora but is smaller and has a third handle on the back, was normally carried, both when empty and full, on top of the head. That practice is securely attested both by the artwork on *hydriae* themselves, which often depict women gathering water with *hydriae* (i.e., *mise en abîme*; see, e.g., fig. 1), and also by the evidence of drama: in Euripides’ *Electra*, the



Figure 1.
British
Museum
Vase B333.
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heroine, whose initial entrance is motivated by an excursion to gather water, three times makes reference to the jug she carries atop her head (55–56, 107–9, 140–41).

The reader will have anticipated the conclusion that, in my opinion, will have been obvious to the Roman audience all along: Ampelisca has, from her entrance onstage in v. 331, been holding the hydria not, as the commentators and translators tell us, in her hand,⁶ but on her head. It is precisely her fear of dropping it that prevents her from adequately resisting Sceparnio's advances (cf. her words *aha! nimium familiariter / me attractas* ["The idea, sir! You're much too familiar with your hands!"], 419f., and *potin ut abstineas manum?* ["Do keep your hands off me, can't you?"], 424), in effect acting out the very same scenario that is depicted on a fifth-century Athenian vase (see fig. 2 and fig. 3; cf. Keuls 1983, 211–12; Moon and Berge 1981, 95, for the interpretation). What then of Sceparnio's slip?

The explanation is that the word *subaquilum* is a "rimshot" pun calculated to elicit a groan from the audience. Its double meaning is activated by visual cues: *-aquilum* is a calque coined for the nonce on the word *hydria* (ὕδρι-ί-α ~ *aqu-i-lum*, with the *-l-* of *-ilum* to be explained by analogy with the instrumental suffixes *-būlum -tūlum, -cūlum, or aqua-lis* "wash basin" [*Curc.* 312]. Gratwick 1990, 309, sees in the Plautine coinage *ver-i-verb-i-um* [*Capt.* 568] a similar calque on ἐτρομ-ο-λογ-ί-α). And since *sub-* means not just "a little" "-ish," but also "beneath," with the expression *corpus subaquilum* Sceparnio is saying simultaneously "her complexion is a bit swarthy" and "her body is beneath-the-hydria." His slip is merely devised to set up and thereby emphasize his buffoonish jest on Ampelisca's exotic appearance, parallel to passages where the entrance of a character in unusual garb supplies the basis for an absurd statement, such as *Trin.* 851 (of the Imposter wearing a sombrero) (*aside, observing his large hat*) "Gad! He must belong to the genus *mushroomum*: he's all covered over with head" (*pol hicquidem fungino generest: capite se totum tegit*), and *Persa* 308 (of a slave standing akimbo) "But what's this two-handed jug with the jaunty stride?" (*sed quis hic ansatus ambulat?*); so, too, *Curc.* 392ff. (of the parasite wearing an eyepatch), and *Poen.* 975–81 (of Carthaginian sailors; see Gratwick 1972).

⁶E.g., Sonnenschein (1891, note on Scene 3, p. 106): ". . . Ampelisca steps out, pitcher in hand"; Marx (1928, note on 331ff., p. 113): "Ampelisca kommt, mit der Hydria, der urna, in der Hand."

Figure 2. Detroit
Institute of Arts
63.13, Attic Red-
figure Hydria with
Men and Women at
Fountain (detail),
475/450 B.C.E., the
Pig Painter. Founders
Society Purchase,
General Membership
Fund. Photograph
© 1983, The Detroit
Institute of Arts.
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Figure 3. Detail of same. Line-drawing by Liz Shaw, 2005.

Seeing that Ampelisca is to carry the hydria on her head allows us to clarify several further points in this and the two adjacent scenes:

1. At lines 428–29, three lines after Sceparnio’s slip, Ampelisca, wearying of his advances, says (427), “But just at present do please say yes or no to what I was sent here for” to which Sceparnio replies:

SCEP. quid nunc vis?

AMP. sapienti *ornatus* quid velim indicium facit.

SCEP. meū quoque hic sapienti *ornatus* quid velim indicium facit.

SCEP. And what do you want just at present?

AMP. (*indicating the pitcher on her head*) A sensible person could see what I want from what I’m carrying.

SCEP. (*suggestively wielding the doorbar in his hand*) Yes, and a sensible person could see what *I* want from the way I’m carrying on.

Why does Ampelisca use the word *ornatus*, “equipment,” here? The usual explanation is so that the polysemous term can set up Sceparnio’s indecent reply and suggestive phallic play using the doorbar (as Fay 1917, 156, rightly suggests). But we may now perceive two further reasons for Ampelisca’s choice of word. First, the word *ornatus* also means “ornamental headdress” (cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 7.74), so Ampelisca implies that the decorated hydria on her head is a “head ornament”; second, because in Latin the syllable [or] preconsonantly sounds exactly or very much like [ur] (cf. *Men.* 170 *furtum scortum*, *Poen.* 970 *sorditudinem* “dirt” and “deafness,” with Gratwick 1972, 230; attested specifically for *urna* by the spelling *orna* in C.I.L. 12.972), Ampelisca suggests her *ornatus* is an **urnatus*—i.e., a nonce-formation pun on *urna* and *ornatus*, as though the neologism were a humorous technical term for a water jug.

2. At line 374 in dialogue with Trachalio, Ampelisca blurts out:

AMP. vae capiti atque aetati tuae.

TRA. tuo, mea Ampelisca!

AMP. A pox upon your head and your life!

TRA. Upon *yours*, my dear Ampelisca!

Trachalio’s choice of *tuo* instead of Ampelisca’s *tuae* (agreeing with *aetati* but used ἀπὸ κοινοῦ with *capiti*) in his reply is nearly unparalleled in Plautine comedy, and so it alerts us to a double meaning: Trachalio wryly restricts his repartee to *tuo* (sc. *vae capiti!*, “damn you!”) in

order to reactivate the literal meaning (“woe to your head!”), while pointing to the hydria with a grin.

3. Ampelisca’s name offers ample scope for wordplay. On the one hand, ἀμπελίσκη means “little vine” “tendril” (ἀμπελῖς, “vine” + ἴσκη, “-ette,” “-ling”), though Plautus naturally will have chosen the name *Ampelisca* for the indecent connotations suggested by Latin *ampl-exus* and *ampl-ectari* (“sexual intercourse” and “sleep with,” respectively; cf. Terence *Andr.* 430, with Donatus, and *Amph.* 465), since prostitutes in comedy as a rule have sexually suggestive names (cf. *Poen.* 1139f.). But in this scene Trachalio may be facetiously etymologizing the name in a different way. In a genre where characters are infrequently called by name, Trachalio speaks Ampelisca’s name six times in just this one scene (334, 336, 341, 352, 364, 375). That arouses the suspicion that he may be distorting the syllable *-pel-* (which always falls in verse *ancipitia*) to *-pull-*, and calling her **Ampullisca*, suggesting a connection with *ampulla*, a type of vessel for holding liquid (*Merc.* 927, *Pers.* 124).⁷

II

Let us now shift our focus to a Freudian slip of a different sort. In the first chapter of the *Psychopathology*, Freud analyzes at length the strange but familiar circumstance whereby we temporarily forget a proper name that we otherwise know perfectly well. Often, when we try to recall the name, we find it takes us several tries to do so; what happens instead is that we recall incorrect, or substitute, names first, and it is only after some time and numerous abortive attempts that we succeed in retrieving the target name. The phenomenon, which Freud considered a type of *Fehlleistung* analogous to a slip of the tongue, is today called by psycholinguists a “tip-of-the-tongue,” or “TOT,” situation, as I will call it here.⁸

⁷That the Romans protracted vowels like this for a pun is securely attested by Suetonius, *Nero* 33.1. Nero, says Suetonius, used to say of the deceased emperor Claudius, “nam et morari eum desisse inter homines producta prima syllaba iocabatur” (“For he, Nero, used to joke that he, Claudius, had ceased to *morari* among men, pronouncing the first syllable long.”). That is, Nero used to pun on the Latin verb *mōrari* “remain” and the Greek word μῶρος, “moron.” For a similar wordplay in Plautus, with distortion, cf. *Bacch.* 284–85 . . . *cum mi ipsum nomen eius Archidemides / clamaret dempturum* (i.e. *dēm-*) *esse, si quid crederem* (“ . . . when his very name, Archidemides, fairly bawled out that I’d be damned easy, if I did trust him with anything”).

⁸The phenomenon is called in Latin *reminiscentia* (Scaliger 1561, 143, b, 1): “Reminiscentia verò est, quum per ambages similes deducimur in memoriam rei quae nobis exciderat.

Plautus puts a very striking TOT situation on stage in *Trinummus*. In Scene IV.ii (843ff.), the *sycophanta*, or Imposter, suddenly forgets the name “Charmides,” and it is only after considerable rigmarole in verses 906–22 that he manages to recover it. Muecke (1985, 175) points out that forgetting a name occurs elsewhere in Roman comedy, comparing *Ps.* 985, *Pers.* 624–25, 646–47, and Terence *Phorm.* 385–90. But in length or development, there is nothing else in Plautus or Terence to compare with what we find here in *Trinummus*. Why, then, does the Imposter forget the name here, and why does he suffer the TOT to go on at such length? The answer lies partly, I believe, in acknowledging the paradox inherent in watching artificial Greeks speak Latin.

At this point in the play, Callicles and Megaronides have already instructed the Imposter to masquerade as a foreign courier sent by Charmides to his son Lesbonicus with money for his daughter’s dowry. The Imposter bears two forged letters, which he has shown to the audience. One is to Lesbonicus, with instructions for the wedding, and the other to Callicles, purportedly containing the money. All is going according to plan, but just as the Imposter reaches the house to deliver the letters, he is suddenly intercepted by Charmides, who has at this very moment returned unexpectedly and who, spying the Imposter, immediately senses mischief afoot. Concealing his identity, Charmides approaches and interrogates the Imposter, who, amid fierce questioning, makes a fatal blunder: when the Imposter confidently proclaims (894–95), “The father of that young fellow, Lesbonicus, gave me these two letters. He is a friend of mine,” Charmides—who actually is Lesbonicus’ father—detects the imposture. We know, then, that it will only be a matter of time before Charmides, like some modern-day Ulysses come home, casts aside his disguise and, to our great delight, gives this doomed fellow the coup de grâce.

But comedy demands a leisurely pace, so Charmides announces to us his intention to toy with his prey: (*aside*) “Yes, indeed, seeing he’s a cheat, I think I’ll take a hand at cheating, too” (*mihi quoque edepol, quom hic nugatur, contra nugari lubet*, v. 900) before the kill. He asks the Imposter, with mock innocence, “Well, then, good sir, you know the man himself? Tell me—what is his name?” (906ff.):

Talis apud Plautinum sycophantam in reminiscēdo Charmidae nomine, in ea fabula quam Trinummum inscripsit” (“*Reminiscētia* is when we arrive via similar twists and turns at the memory of a thing that we had forgotten. Such an instance appears in the case of the imposter in Plautus’ *Trinummus*, when he tries to recall the name of Charmides”).

- 906 CH. quid est ei nomen?
 SY. quod edepol homini probo.
 CH. lubet audire.
 SY. illi edepol—illi—illi—vae misero mihi.
 CH. quid est negoti?
 SY. devoravi nomen imprudens modo.
 CH. non placet qui amicos intra dentes conclusos habet.
- 910 SY. atque etiam modo vorsabatur mihi in labris primoribus.
 CH. temperi huic hodie anteveni.
 SY. teneor manifesto miser.
 CH. iam recommentatu's nomen?
 SY. deum hercle me atque hominum pudet.
 CH. vide modo ut hóminem noveris!
 SY. tamquam me. fieri istuc solet,
 quod in manu teneas atque oculis videas, id desideres.
 915 litteris recomminscar. <C-A-> est principium nomini.
 CH. Callias?
 SY. non est.
 CH. Callippus?
 SY. non est.
 CH. Callidemides?
 SY. non est.
 CH. Callinicus?
 SY. non est.
 CH. Callimarchus?
 SY. nihil agis.
 neque adeo edepol flocci facio, quando egomet memini mihi.
 CH. at enim multi Lesbonici sunt hic: nisi nomen patris
 920 dices, non monstrare istos possum homines quos tu quaeritas.
 quod ad exemplum est? coniectura si reperire possumus.
 SY. ad hoc exemplum est: <char> . . . Chares? an Charmenes?
 CH. num Charmides?
 SY. em istic erat!⁹
- 906 CH. What is his name?
 IMP. It is—(*forgetting*) the name of a fine man, by gad.
 CH. I'd like to hear it.
 IMP. It is—by gad, it is—it is—(*choking*) oh, damnation!
 CH. What's the matter?
 IMP. (*with a wry smile*) I must have swallowed that name unawares
 just now.

⁹915 <C-A-> *addidi* (<C> *edd.*): *om. P*; 922 *sic scripsi*; 923 *erat Acidalius*: *erit P*.
 Verses 915 and 922 are discussed at length in Appendix A.

- 910 CH. (*severely*) It's a poor sort that keeps his friends shut up inside his teeth.
 IMP. And this very moment I was rolling it on the tip of my tongue.
 CH. (*aside*) I forestalled this chap to-day just in time.
 IMP. (*aside*) I'm fairly caught, blast it!
 CH. Have you referreted out that name yet?
 IMP. (*aside*) Heavens and earth, if I'm not mortified!
 CH. Just see how well you know the man!
 IMP. As I do myself. That often happens—the thing you hold in your hand and have your eyes on is the thing that is
 915 missing. I can—referret it out by the letters. The name begins "C-A-."
 CH. Callias?
 IMP. It isn't that.
 CH. Callippus?
 IMP. No . . .
 CH. Callidemides?
 IMP. No . . .
 CH. Callinicus?
 IMP. No . . .
 CH. Callimarchus?
 IMP. No use! After all, not a straw do I care, hang it, when my memory suffices for my own purposes, as it does.
 CH. Ah, but there are many Lesbonicuses here: unless you
 920 give his father's name, I can't direct you to those men you're looking for. What does it sound like? Maybe some guessing will help us hit on it.
 IMP. It sounds like . . . this: (*hawking up; then, very gutturally*) "char" . . . (*thinking*) Chares? Maybe Charmenes?
 CH. It's not . . . Charmides, is it?
 IMP. Aha! What you said—it was that!

In v. 906f., the Imposter suddenly and, ostensibly at least, inexplicably forgets the name. Why? Let us ask three questions: what is the point of the rigmarole that attends his forgetting the name, what triggers the forgetting, and what dramatic value does all this offer?

Let us take our questions in order. First, what is the point of the rigmarole? My own view is that Plautus has inserted in this passage a joke that manages to exploit one of the rare cases in Latin where the spelling of a word presents an ambiguous pronunciation. This ambiguity creates a loophole in Latin orthography whereby Charmides can ironically mislead the Imposter. The joke is therefore significant not only for our

appreciation of *Trinummus* but also as evidence for the pronunciation of Latin in Plautus' time. How does it work?

In Plautus' day, Latin did not yet distinguish in transliteration the Greek consonants χ, θ, φ from their corresponding unaspirated forms κ, τ, π; both were transliterated, respectively, *c*, *t*, and *p*, without the *h* that would later come into use c. 100 B.C.E.¹⁰ But we certainly cannot assume that the Romans were unable to hear and reproduce a difference in pronunciation between the Greek aspirated and unaspirated letters, even if they did not always strictly observe the difference in casual conversation, for that would be to confuse orthography with orthoëpy. The fact that Latin at this time could not graphically disambiguate two homographic syllables that sounded different is precisely what provides Charmides with the loophole he needs to trap his prey. Since Plautus and his contemporaries wrote *Carmides* (a spelling actually preserved by the Ambrosian palimpsest in v. 744), not *Charmides*, that name really did begin in Latin exactly like Greek names starting κ-α-.

So when the Imposter says, "The name begins *c-a-*," meaning the χ-α- of Χαρμίδης, Charmides, in a brilliant travesty of Socratic maieusis, parries by crisply suggesting a series of five Greek names beginning κ-α- (*Callias* [i.e. Καλλίας], *Callippus* [i.e. Κάλλιπος], and so on) to befuddle the Imposter. It is only when the Imposter's recall begins to improve that he interrupts Charmides, clarifying, "No—*that's* not what I meant: *yes*, it begins with a *c*, but it *sounds* like this: *char*."¹¹ And since the guttural sound of Greek χ was rare in native Latin words, it is perhaps not too fanciful to imagine that the Imposter comically exaggerates the foreign sound by hawking or coughing, since his expression *ad hoc exemplum* evidently must mean "it *sounds* like this," and comic expectoration appears again in Plautine comedy at *As.* 39ff. and *Persa* 308.

So much for the rignarole. Let us therefore ask our second question: within the dramatic illusion, why does the Imposter forget the name in the first place?

¹⁰ Cf. Mancini 1990, 9–19, for details.

¹¹ Similarly, Fay 1917, 162–66, has very plausibly emended and explained *Truc.* 264 as a facetious quibble on *sera* ("door bar") and *serra* ("quarrel"), which were in Plautus' time homographs. (The latter word may however have had a disambiguating diacritic mark written above the *r*: see Fontaine 2006.) That passage thus provides an exact parallel to the joke here.

English has a joke that operates on the same orthographic ambiguity: one person asks another how each of the following words are pronounced by spelling out the word, and pausing after the first syllable: (1) m-a-c, b-e-t-h; (2) m-a-c, d-o-w-e-l-l; (3) m-a-c, d-o-n-a-l-d; and, finally, (4) m-a-c, h-i-n-e. The response to (4) is invariably pronounced "Mac Hyne" rather than "machine."

According to Freud, a name is sometimes temporarily forgotten because it conjures up by association an unpleasant thought that the speaker has sought unconsciously, but only partly successfully, to repress; the incorrect substitute names that occur to the speaker in a TOT situation often manifest portions of the target name along with other sounds connected to the repressed thought by associative chains. One example from Freud that closely parallels the passage in Plautus will suffice to show the point. In the 1912 edition of the *Psychopathology*, Freud recounts an anecdote of two men discussing towns in Sicily they had visited together while on a trip (Freud's account is reproduced fully in Appendix B). When they try to recall the name of a certain town, both men draw a blank. The younger man proposes Calatafimi, while the older thinks of Caltanissetta, but both are wrong, and they know it. The younger man then says he is sure that the name must have a "v" sound in it. When the older then recalls that Enna in antiquity was called "Castrogiovanni," the younger at last exclaims the correct name: Castelvetro. The older man, reflecting on his error, concludes he had forgotten the name, he explains, "because the second half, '-vetro', sounds like 'veteran'. I know I don't much like to think about *growing old*. . . ."

The structural parallelism between this anecdote and the situation enacted in *Trinummus* invites us to apply Freud's procedure to the Imposter's TOT. For in each case two men are trying mutually to recover by conjecture the second half of a name whose first syllable alone they can remember. Freud explains that the -vetro portion of the Italian name bore an unpleasant association with a German word (*Veteran*, "veteran, old car"); if, then, we ask what the Imposter is repressing, and what association causes the repression, we will answer both questions at once: namely, he is repressing the Greek patronymic termination -μιδης, because, it seems, in Latin the sound creates an association with *mi(hi) des*, "give it to me."¹²

¹² *Mihi* in Plautus is normally monosyllabic except at line-end, and the jussive second person singular verb, otherwise rare in classical Latin, is actually common in Plautine comedy (cf. Leumann, Hoffman, and Szantyr 1977 vol. 2 §186.II, p. 335).

Timpanaro 1976, 134, discussing the Castelvetro episode, reprehends Freud's "usual recourse to the 'polyglot unconscious'" in elucidating associative connections. Timpanaro's criticism may indeed be valid in real life, where not everyone speaks multiple languages, but in the case of an imaginative genre like the *palliata*, where "Greeks" paradoxically speak Latin to an audience of Romans, one must presume *a priori* a "polyglot unconscious." (And, at any rate, one hardly need be fluent in a second language to create for oneself bilingual associations: in his memoirs, for instance, Wilamowitz says that in his youth [1930, 64], "English was still quite universally outside the horizon . . . we once got a dog called Lovely,

Why? A psychoanalyst might explain that the Imposter, who falsely claims to be carrying gold, senses that this stranger will ask him to give the forged letters or gold and that when he must perforce refuse, his crime will be exposed and lead to a public beating (as indeed is made clear in v. 990, “You’ll get a public flogging, at the pleasure of myself and the new police commissioners” [*vapulabis meo arbitrato et novorum aedilium*], but which will have already been assumed by the Roman audience). In fact, close examination reveals that the language throughout this passage has been “subconsciously” figured to indicate that thoughts of “giving” and “to me” have been prominently on the Imposter’s mind. In the surrounding verses, all of which precede the recognition, forms of *dare* and personal pronouns appear with surprising frequency:

- (1) 875 SY. Calliclem aiebat vocari qui has *dedit mi* epistulas.
 (2) 894 SY. pater istius adulescentis *dedit* has duas *mi* epistulas
 (3) 896 CHAR. (*aside*) me *sibi* epistulas *dedisse* dicit.
 (4) 902 CHAR. ab ipson (=Charmide) istas accepisti? SY. e manibus *dedit mi* ipse in manus.
 (5) 951 CHAR. (*Charmidem*) illum quem *tibi* istás *dedisse* commemoras epistulas
 (6) 960 CHAR. (*aside*) (*mille Philippum*) quod *sibi* me *dedisse* dixit
 (7) 968 CHAR. adulescens, *cedodum* istuc aurum *mihi*. SY. quod ego aúrum *dem tibi*?
- (1) 875 SY. The man that *gave me* these letters (*showing them*) said the fellow’s name was Callicles.
 (2) 894 SY. The father of that young fellow, Lesbonicus, *gave me* these two letters.
 (3) 896 CHAR. (*aside*) Ha! He says I *gave him* the letters!
 (4) 902 CHAR. So you received them from this friend himself? SY. His own hand *gave them to me*.
 (5) 951 CHAR. The fellow you refer to as having *given you* the letters?

and no one doubted that it meant a little lion: the person who had given it the name had obviously had the same view.”)

Elsewhere, Freud recounts (41f.) the case of a young German woman who failed to recall the title of the book *Ben Hur*, though she could remember many other details about it. Upon analysis she explained that she had forgotten the (Hebrew) name “because it contains an expression that I (like any other girl) do not care to use—especially in the company of young men.” (In German *Ben Hur* sounds like *bin Hure* [“I am a whore”].) Freud qualifies: “More briefly: saying the words ‘Ben Hur’ was unconsciously equated by her with a sexual offer, and her forgetting accordingly corresponded to the fending-off of an unconscious temptation of that kind.” Romans, being no less human, naturally felt the same reservations in speaking Greek: see Cicero’s discussion of *κακέμφοτον* (*Fam.* 9.22).

- (6) 960 CHAR. (*aside*) which he said I gave him
 (7) 968 CHAR. Come, young man, give that gold to me. SY. (*startled*) I give the gold to you? What gold?

From a purely literary point of view, such analysis might explain the startled Imposter's psyche within the dramatic illusion, but how does it benefit the performance? We come, then, to our third question: what is the dramatic function of the TOT situation?

Among the greatest enjoyments that drama provides is the suspense that is created when a critical piece of information known to the audience is withheld from the protagonist. This is the impulse that makes the audience of a tragedy want to cry out a warning to Oedipus as he relentlessly demands the truth from those around him, and it is the same impulse that makes any trivia game show on television worth our watching. When a literary author shapes his writing to produce this phenomenon, we call it "dramatic irony" or "Sophoclean irony," but in psychological terms, we could just as easily call it, with Freud, "repression." A consequence of skilfully handled dramatic irony is that the longer the information is withheld from the protagonist, the more prominent it becomes to the audience,¹³ as our agony and sense of anticipation rise apace.

So it is, I submit, with *Trinummus*. It stands to reason that the more times the audience hears a close but incorrect guess at Charmides' name, the more acutely it anticipates the unuttered part of the name, *-mides*. If so, we can see that this entire scene and the seven incorrect guesses that we, the audience, have now heard, have all been building verbally toward the single climactic line in which Charmides, at long last, reveals his identity (970):

- SY. quis tu homo es?
 CHAR. qui mille nummum tibi dedi: ego sum Charmides.
 SY. So who are you?
 CHAR. The one who gave you the thousand dollars: I'm Charmides!

The structure of this line suggests that Plautus has deliberately figured it so that by pausing appropriately in the delivery, Charmides activates in the following way the Latin pun implicit in the second half of his name (970):

¹³In speaking of why a lover should promise gifts liberally but give them only sparingly, Ovid—Rome's greatest psychologist—sums up this state neatly (*Ars* 1.449): *at quod non dederis, semper videre daturus*: "Whatever you haven't actually given, you look like you're always just about to give."

- SY. quis tu homo es?
 CHAR. qui mille nummum *tibi dedi*: ego sum “Char . . .”
 (*pausing, then making a grab at the letters*)—*mi des!*

In other words, he means, “I’m that “char” (you were talking about)—give me (the money)!” The first part, *ego sum* “Char,” is thus a quip meant to counter on the Imposter’s syllable in v. 922, while *mi des!* in effect both repeats his demand of two verses prior *cedodum istuc aurum mihi* (968, [7] above) and expresses a reciprocal relationship to the first half of 970, where he says *mille nummum tibi dedi*. And his use of the jussive subjunctive *des* answers exactly the Imposter’s question in 968 *quod ego aurum dem tibi?*

Like many comedians, Plautus will labor a good joke,¹⁴ and I think that he does so here. As the struggle for the money and the letters continues, the puns in 970 appear to be continued repeatedly, punctuating the lively struggle for the letters the Imposter is holding. The name *Charmides*, in the nominative or vocative case, recurs unusually often in the following lines, and I think that if Charmides performed the line once as I have suggested, that is, with a pause and then a grab at the letters to coincide with *–mides*, then he (and the Imposter) probably performed it like that in all of them, constantly snatching the letters back and forth from each other (as I repunctuate here to show; the symbol] indicates line-end):

- (1) 973 CHAR. Char—mi des!—ego sum.
 (2) 975 SY. postquam ego me aurum ferre dixi, post tu factu’s Char—mi des!]
 (3) 977 SY. proin tu te, itidem ut charmidatus es, rusum re“char”—mi da!]
 (4) 985 CHAR. quia illum quem ementitus es, ego sum ipsus . . . Char—mi des!]
 (5) 988 CHAR. ipsus, inquam, Char—mi des!—sum.
 (6) 997 SY. qui te di omnes advenientem peregre—perdant, “Char—mi des!”] (This is the Imposter’s Parthian shot as he quits the stage for good.)
- (1) 973 CHAR. I’m “Char”—gimme!
 (2) 975 SY. After I said that I was bringing gold, then you turned into “Char”—gimme!
 (3) 977 SY. So the same way you got Charmidized, go get un-“Char”—and gimme!

¹⁴Cf., for instance, the obsessive repetitions in *Rud.* 1212ff. (*licet*), *Rud.* 1269ff. (*censeo*), *Trin.* 583ff. and *Poen.* 428ff. (*i modo*), *Poen.* 731ff. (*quippini*).

- (4) 985 CHAR. Because that man you lied and said you were—I am that very “Char”—gimme!
 (5) 988 CHAR. I myself am “Char”—gimme!—I am!
 (6) 997 SY. Seeing you’re back from abroad, may you be blasted, “Char”—gimme!

At the same time, more uses of *dare* and personal pronouns continue to focus attention on *-mides*, suggesting more back-and-forth action with the letters:

- (7) 981 CHAR. aurum *redde* (“Give back the gold”).
 (8) 982 CHAR. fassu’s Charmidem *dedisse* aurum *tibi* (“You admitted that Charmides gave you the gold”).
 (9) 986 CHAR. quem *tibi* epistulas *dedisse* aiebas (“Who you said gave you the letters”).

Here it is appropriate to address a potential objection. There is, of course, a prosodic difference between the long vowel *i* of Latin *mī* and the short vowel ι in the Greek termination -ἰδης. Now, although it is an observed fact that Plautus does not require that two vowels be of the same quantity to make a pun,¹⁵ the difference here may rather suggest an unusual way for these lines to be delivered.

The meter used in this scene is the trochaic septenarius, a meter in which almost every verse *sedes* normally filled by a short syllable is free to be realized long. In examples (1) and (5) above, therefore, where the syllable *mī* in *Charmides* appears in *anceps*, the name could easily be protracted to *Charmīdes* without destroying the rhythm.¹⁶ In fact, the only *sedes* in the verse that absolutely must be occupied by a short syllable is the penultimate position, which is to say, in other words, precisely that in which the *mi* of *Charmides* falls in v. 970 and numbers (2), (3), (4), and (6) above.

Now, we know on the authority of Cicero that actors occasionally bungled the quantity of a syllable, causing the whole theatre to yell out (*de Orat.* 3.196, cf. *Orat.* 173): *in eis* (sc. *artibus numerorum ac modorum*) *si paulum modo offensum est, ut aut contractione brevius fieret aut productione longius, theatra tota reclamant.* (“If one makes even the slightest mistake in meter, so that he wrongly shortens a long syllable, or lengthens a short one, the whole theater cries out in protest.”) In my opinion,

¹⁵E.g., *Rud.* 1225 (*infelīcet ~ licentia*), 1305 (*medīcus ~ mendīcus*), *Mil.* 723 (*divītiās ~ diu vītām*).

¹⁶Cf. n. 7 above.

therefore, the actors playing Charmides and the Imposter, like Hegelochus in Euripides' *Orestes*, are meant to activate the puns and bring down the house by feigning repeated slips of the tongue to deliberately protract the quantity of the *i* in the name. In so doing, they give their verses the same sort of surprise "limping" effect in the tail produced by choliambic verses like Catullus' *desinas ineptire*.

To be sure, there is no explicit direction in the text either here or anywhere else in the Latin *palliata* to indicate that meter is to be intentionally violated. But the idea is not inherently improbable. Dramatic meter serves as a backdrop to characters' words; because it presupposes an ideal rhythm, its regularity can be emphasized or varied to satisfy or frustrate an audience's expectations. That means that outright mistakes, such as those mentioned by Cicero and those I suggest here, naturally draw attention to the artificiality of the performance. That attention is, of course, unwanted in tragedy (as with Hegelochus in *Orestes*, or Fufius missing a cue in *Iliona* [Horace, *Sat.* 2.3.60–62]) but not necessarily so in Plautine comedy, where direct audience address is very frequent.

What is more, we have a precedent and parallel for "anti-metrical" play like this in Greek comic performance. A fragment of the Ὀρέστας of the Sicilian φλόαξ-poet Rhinthon (*fl.* early third century), whose farces may have influenced Plautus in *Amphitruo* and elsewhere, has a character in a moment of agitation break the dramatic illusion. By protracting the penultimate syllable of an iambic trimeter, he converts the line to a choliamb (fr. 8 Kassel-Austin = fr. 10 Olivieri [1947, pp. 16–17, with commentary]):

A. ὁ σε Διόνυσος ἀντὸς ἐξώλη θεΐη.

B. Ἴππώνακτος τὸ μέτρον. A. οὐδέν μοι μέλει.

A. May Dionysus himself ruin you!

B. That's a Hipponactean meter. A. I don't care!

We have no adequate context for the fragment, but both the response of (B) and the spelling θεΐη guarantee that a slip of the tongue is to be feigned.

We conclude by observing two subtle and superb instances of Sophoclean irony in Charmides' dialogue with the Imposter.

First, in 906 (quoted above),¹⁷ when Charmides asks directly, "What is his name?" the Imposter, startled by the question, stalls by replying

¹⁷I thank Ioannis Ziogas for bringing this point to my attention.

quod edepol homini probo (“It is—the name of a fine man, by gad”). The *cognoscenti* in the audience will have noted that, since Charmides suggests the names *Call-ias*, *Call-ippus*, *Call-idemides*, *Call-inicus*, and *Call-imarchus*, the old man has taken the Imposter’s word *probus* literally, because that word in Plautus’ day was colloquially equivalent to Greek καλός.

Second, in 919f. (quoted above), when the Imposter protests that the “Call-” names that Charmides is suggesting are not right, Charmides replies, “Ah, but there are many Lesbianicuses here: unless you give his father’s name (*nisi nomen patris / dices*), I can’t direct you to those men you’re looking for.” Once again his words are subtly ambiguous, for the expression *nomen patris* can mean not only “his father’s name” but also—because Latin lacks the definite article and readily omits the possessive pronoun—“unless you tell me a ‘father’s-name,’” i.e., treating *nomen patris* as equivalent to *patrium* (*nomen*), “patronymic.”¹⁸ While the Imposter understands Charmides’ words to mean “Unless you say his father’s name, I can’t help you,” the audience understands it to be “Unless you say a *patronymic* name, I can’t help you,” and with special point, for these are “Greeks” who, unlike Romans, gave their sons patronymic names devoid of patronymic force (as, e.g., Thucydides was the son of Olorus). So what the Roman audience understands Charmides to mean is, “Unless you say a name that ends in *-ides*, I can’t help you,” with a teasing allusion to the second half of his own name.

III

Freudian slips are by nature funny,¹⁹ so it is hardly surprising to find that Plautus availed himself of them. Nor is it surprising to find that Plautus uses them specifically as a vehicle for puns, since slips of the tongue, like puns, often result in a word that sounds very much like the one we expected to hear.

What may surprise us, however, is the ingenuity with which Plautus deploys them in his text. The classical scholar Sebastiano Timpanaro, in

¹⁸Cf. similarly *nomen patris* ~ *nomen paternum* at *Rudens* 1156, 1160.

¹⁹This was observed already by the psycholinguist R. Meringer, who pioneered the investigation of slips of the tongue and on whose collection of material Freud was later to draw in the *Psychopathology* (*Wörter und Sachen* 7, 1921, p. 57; my translation): “In poetry, the comic muse is very fond of using slips of the tongue and mondegreens to attain her purpose” (“In der Dichtkunst bedient sich die heitere Muse mit Vorliebe des Versprechens (und Verhörens) zur Erreichung ihrer Zwecke”).

a critique of Freud's slip analysis (Timpanaro 1976), drew the important distinction between an unintentional and an intentional or "feigned" slip, where the speaker merely pretends to slip to elicit a laugh from his audience. Timpanaro illustrated the latter type with an instance in Cicero's *pro Caelio*, where Cicero, wishing to imply that Clodia and her brother Clodius had an incestuous relationship, "accidentally" slips, saying (§ 32), . . . *nisi intercederent mihi inimicitiae cum istius mulieris viro—'fratre' volui dicere; semper hic erro* (" . . . If it weren't for my animosity toward that woman's husband—'brother,' I meant to say; I always make that mistake"). Since Plautus' plays are scripted, not extemporaneous, all of the slips of the tongue in his plays are, like Cicero's, perforce intentional. That further means that we may suspect irony or puns in all of Plautus' characters' slips, and in some cases we must consider the consequences for the text.²⁰ But that is not all.

Since puns and slips are closely related, we cannot necessarily assume that those slips explicitly marked by epanorthosis are the *only* ones Plautus puts in his play. It is quite possible that a lot of the puns that we read as straight one-liners, especially in monologue, were meant as slips of the tongue.²¹ Conversely, it is equally possible that any word might be delivered, with an appropriate intonation or suggestive motion, as a slip of the tongue, since in the absence of ancient punctuation and stage directions, we really cannot know how many lines were meant to be delivered. But that is a proposition that I cannot adequately defend here and hope to discuss at greater length elsewhere.²²

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²⁰In particular, the "polar" slip in *Ps.* 842–44 warrants close investigation, since the manuscripts present contrary evidence: *is odos dimissis manibus (A, pedibus P) in caelum volat. :: Odos dimissis manibus (A, pedibus P)? :: Peccavi insciens. :: Quidum? :: Dimissis pedibus (A, manibus P) volui dicere*. The enthymematic expression suggests a "rimshot" pun, and given that *manibus* could punningly come from *manus* "hands" or *manes* "ghosts" (cf. Seneca *Troades* 191), and *pedibus* from *pedes* "feet" or *pedes* "lice," those possibilities, if properly worked out, may help us resolve the text.

²¹I have recently argued (Fontaine 2006, 95–100) that the prologue's word *sicilicissitat* (for the expected *sicilissitat*) in *Menaechmi* 12 works precisely this way. Similar to this is the speech of the inebriated Callidamates in *Most.* 319 and 331, where *mammamadere*, a slurred form of *madere*, allows a pun (and an uncouth gesture toward Delphium) on *mammam adire*.

²²My thanks to Carole Newlands and Barbara Gold for helpful criticism of this paper, and to Liz Shaw for executing the line-drawing reproduced here as fig. 3.

APPENDIX A:
TRINUMMUS 915, 922

The two verses are closely linked, corrupt, and in neither case do we have the help of the Ambrosian palimpsest. Here I justify my corrections printed in the text above. (Sigla and names in the apparatus, except as marked, are as in *Questa* 1995.)

(1) 915 SYC. litteris recomminiscar. <C-A-> est principium nomini.

<C-A-> *addidi* : om. P : <C> Scaliger, Palmerius Spic. : <C st> Loewe, *Acta Societatis Philologiae Lipsiensis* 5 p. 314 : <Ca> Spengel^l, Bergk^l

In 915 the Imposter says he will recall the name *litteris*. Since the five names Charmides suggests in 916–17 all begin *Calli-*, something has dropped out between *recomminiscar* and *est*; but because the line is metrically complete as it stands, the obvious supplement <Calli-> is one syllable too long to be admitted into the text. Modern editors print Scaliger's <C>, with which Loewe's <c st> (strictly the letter, not just the sound, says Loewe, “da ja der N a m e des Buchstaben (= ce) auf einen Vocal ausgeht,”) is virtually identical. But that emendation fails to explain how the letter *c* alone can plausibly prompt Charmides to suggest, with unparalleled prescience, five names, all of which begin, not just *C-*, but *Calli-*, since most of the proper names in Plautus that begin with the letter *c* not only do not begin *Calli-*, they do not even begin *Ca-*!²³ On the other hand, page after page in the Oxford *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* shows us that, by an enormous margin, most Greek proper names that begin with the letters *κα-* also begin *καλλ-*; so that, in other words, if the Imposter did say *Ca-*, Charmides' guesses that begin with *Calli-* would not only appear natural to the audience, they would also be statistically predestined. We would thus be obliged to accept the syllable <Ca> posited by Spengel and Bergk, if not for the fact that the emendation (“die erste Sylbe, nicht bloß der erste Buchstabe,“ says Bergk) directly contradicts the Imposter's avowed intention earlier in the line to use *litterae*, or letters of the alphabet, to aid his recollection. I therefore propose to read <C-A->, by which I mean the two letters *ce* and *a*, individually articulated but which prodelide with *est* to form a single syllable or sound to suit the meter. This supplement *ca* alone simultaneously (1) prompt the five consecutive guesses beginning *Calli-*,

²³Leaving aside Charmides' suggestions in 916–17 and 922, and including the fragmentary plays, the names in Plautus beginning with the letter *c* are: (masculine) *Cacistus Calidorus Callidamates Callicles Callipho Cappadox Cario Cephalio C(h)aerea C(h)aerestratus C(h)aeribulus C(h)alinus C(h)arinus C(h)armides C(h)remes C(h)rysalus Cilix Citrio Cleomachus Clinia Colaphus Collabus Collybiscus Congrio Corax Cordalus Cratinus Curculio Cyamus Cylindrus*; (feminine) *Canthara Casina C(h)rysis Cleerata Cleobula Cleostrata Crocotium*.

Callidemides etc., from the guttural *Cha-* sound of the chi in *Chares* and *Charmides*. But how?

The explanation is that something very like *CHA* has dropped out of the text after *est*, exactly as (and probably for the same reason that) *C-A-* has disappeared in v. 915. What I suspect happened is that the letters *CHA* were mistaken for a *nota personae* or else a false start in the dialogue for *Charmides*, and they were subsequently “corrected” to the *an* that precedes *Chares*. We must therefore adopt Palmerius’ insertion of the syllable *Char* to complete the sense of *hoc*;²⁸ for a parallel use of an individually articulated syllable, cf. *Truc.* 689–90 (*rabonem ~ arrabonem ~ “ar” facio lucri*).

As for the MSS’ repetition of the name *Charmides*, I assume the prior instance constitutes a corruption of a similar name now lost to us completely. Spengel’s *Charmenes* suits both rhythm and sense, and I adopt it here only *exempli gratia*; if the premise is accepted, we need not resort to reassigning speaker roles, as some editors have.

APPENDIX B

Freud’s account of the episode deserves to be repeated in full (1960, 31–32):

Two men, an older and a younger one, who six months before had made a trip together in Sicily, were exchanging recollections of those pleasant and memorable days. “Let’s see,” said the younger, “what was the name of the place where we spent the night before making our trip to Selinunte? Wasn’t it Calatafimi?” The older one rejected it: “No, it certainly wasn’t, but I’ve forgotten the name too, though I recall most clearly all the details of our stay there. I only need to find someone else has forgotten a name, and it at once makes me forget it too. Let’s look for the name. But the only thing that occurs to me is Caltanissetta, which certainly isn’t right.” “No,” said the younger man, “the name begins with a ‘w’ or has ‘w’ in it.” “But there’s no ‘w’ in Italian,” objected the older. “I really meant a ‘v,’ and I only said ‘w’ because I’m so used to it in my own language.” The older man still opposed the “v.” “As a matter of fact,” he declared, “I believe I’ve forgotten a lot of the Sicilian names already; this would be a good time to make some experiments. For example, what was the name of the place on a hill that was called Enna in antiquity? Oh, I know—Castrogiovanni.” The next moment the younger man had recalled the lost name as well. “Castelvetrano,” he exclaimed, and was pleased at being able to point to the “v” he had insisted on. For a short while the older one had no sense of recognition; but after he had

²⁸This passage of Plautus incidentally proves fatal to the interpretation of Catullus 84 that alleges a Roman inability to articulate or properly distinguish Greek κ from χ. (Nicholson 1998, in arguing that Arrius is inebriated, has supplied what is undoubtedly the right explanation.)

accepted the name it was for him to explain why he had forgotten it. “Obviously,” he said, “because the second half, ‘-vetrano’ sounds like ‘veteran.’ I know I don’t much like to think about *growing old*, and I have strange reactions when I’m reminded of it.”

[Compare with this TOT situation *Trin.* 914, 921, 915, 922, 916–17, 921, and 923, in that order. One parallel in particular illustrates the orthographic loophole that Charmides exploits to trick the Imposter. Freud’s younger man correctly recalls that the target name contains the sound [v], but he wrongly says that the word contains a w: “No,” said the younger man, “the name begins with a ‘w’ or has ‘w’ in it.” “But there’s no ‘w’ in Italian,” objected the older. “I really meant a ‘v,’ and I only said ‘w’ because I’m so used to it in my own language.” (That is, German w = Italian [and English] v, but German v = Italian [and English] f.) The Imposter’s conviction that c is the right beginning of the Greek name *Charmides* illustrates exactly the opposite phenomenon: Freud’s young man has the right sound but the wrong letter, while the Imposter has the right letter but the wrong sound.—MF]

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