Miscellanea

Plautus Rudens 1060-2:
‘Diphilus’ scripsit, Maccus vortit barbare 1)

Since the ‘tug of war’ between Trachalio and Gripus (938-1044) is stalemated, 2) and neither of the opposing parties emerges victorious, the two agree to refer the issue to the arbitration of Daemones (1045 ff.); each slave is convinced that he has managed to trick the other by choosing an arbitrator he believes to be biased in his favor. After a few lines of greetings and enquiries Daemones decides to get down to the essence of the dispute in question (1060-2):

DAE. Quid est? qua de re litigatis nunc inter vos? TR. Eloquar.
GR. Immo ego eloquar. TR. Ego, opinor, rem facesso. GR. Si quidem sis pudicus, hinc facessas. 3)
DAE. What’s the matter? What are you arguing about? TR. I’ll explain. GR. No, I’ll explain. TR. If I’m not mistaken, I’m the one bringing the case. GR. If you were a decent person, you’d get out of here. 4)

The wordplay on the two different meanings of facesso (OLD s.v. 2, [tr. leg.] rem facesere, ‘to be the plaintiff, bring the case’, and ibid. 3 ‘to go away, depart, be off’) 5) in this passage is quite obvious but very difficult to reproduce in English. As

1) I am grateful to professor Michael Fontaine for his stimulating criticism, numerous useful comments and generous help in refining the argument of the paper. I would like also to thank professor Jeffrey Rusten and Mnemosyne’s anonymous referee for their extremely helpful suggestions and corrections.
2) For a detailed discussion of the scene see Scafuro 1997, 166-7; her term, ‘tug of war’, is a very apt description of the function of the prop and in fact of the whole argument between the two slaves in the preliminaries to arbitration in lines 938-1044.
3) The passage does not present any serious textual problems. I follow the text of Marx (1928) here and throughout.
4) ‘Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
5) One might not immediately realize from the entry in TLL (s.v. facesso, I B) that the verb has a technical forensic meaning. TLL paraphrases it as ‘mala excitare, adducere’ and lists it

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so often in Plautus, translators have to wrestle with the problem in order to come up with a rendering that does not only do justice to the literal meaning of the word but also succeeds in bringing out the wordplay.\(^6\)

It has been widely recognized that many Plauntine puns and wordplays cannot have been taken from Greek originals but are Latin through and through; along with other inherently Roman allusions they added a tint of native color and humor to an otherwise Greek setting and must definitely be credited to Plautine originality. A classic example is *Casina* 759 ff., the starting point of Fraenkel’s seminal study,\(^7\) where the *ludi festiui* at Nemea and Olympia serve as a foil to the *ludi ludificabiles* enacted by Lysidamus and Olympio in the previous scene; the joke involving the two meanings of the word *ludus* would of course be impossible in Greek. Some scholars, however, expressed a certain amount of caution about viewing all similar wordplays as unquestionably Roman solely on the basis of their linguistic nature.\(^8\) It seems that the present case, though *prima facie* unimpeachably Plautine, may well provide an additional reason why this caution is justified.

There is certainly no single verb in Greek which, like Latin *facesso*, can mean either ‘to prosecute’ or ‘to go away, depart’. And yet there are quite a few Greek verbs that can represent either one or the other meaning. Consider for instance the following two groups of Greek verbs: (a) ‘to prosecute’—

\[\text{διώκειν, κατηγορεῖν,}\]

only as a sub-category of the regular transitive use. However, although the phrase *rem facessere* occurs only here, other examples of the transitive *facesere* with either *periculum* or *negotium* listed in the entry (e.g. Cic. *Div. Cæc.* 45, Clu. 158, Tac. *Ann.* 1.74) are clearly suggestive of forensic terminology. *OLD* therefore is certainly right in duly emphasizing this aspect of the meaning of the verb and according it a separate section.

\(^6\) *Alii alia*, e.g. Nixon (1932): ‘TR. I am on the stand here, I believe. GR. You’d be on the move out of here, if you only had some decency’.

\(^7\) Fraenkel 1922, 8.

\(^8\) Hough (1940) seems to be right in excluding from his treatment of Roman references all the puns which are not deliberately explained or commented upon by Plautus. “The inclusion of these few”, says he, “will not be questioned; the exclusion of the great mass of puns may seem, at first sight, unjustified since their linguistic nature seems to mark them as Roman. Such may not be the case, however, since we cannot ever be certain that a Greek pun of equal or nearly equal linguistic value may not have stood in the original. The pun may not necessarily have been on the same pair of meanings; unlimited possibilities are therefore opened up for what may have stood in the Greek. Without question Plautus found it easier to compose his own puns than to attempt to translate Greek ones, but there can be no certainty that what stands in the Latin may not represent, if not translate, a Greek original” (195, n.17).