

MISZELLEN

A LOST EXAMPLE OF CODE SWITCHING: *VNVVM SOMNVVM* (Plautus, *Amphitruo* 697)

Accompanied by his slave Sosia, King Amphitruo returns from the war to find his wife Alcumena pregnant. When he greets her by remarking that he has not seen her in many months, she grows bewildered, suspicious that her fidelity has come into question, and accordingly affords her husband a chilly reception. Confusion ensues, and at length Amphitruo, trying to ascertain the source of the mix-up, turns aside to his slave Sosia, commenting (*haec* refers to Alcumena):

AMPH. <i>haec quidem deliramenta loquitur. SOS.</i>	
<i>paulisper mane,</i>	696
<i>dum edormiscat unum somnum. AMPH. Quaene</i>	
<i>vigilans somniat?</i>	697

697 unum P, edd. (deest A) : illum Gertz : dudum in apparatu
nescioquis apud Havet

So the text of all modern editors; but what exactly is *unum somnum* “one sleep” supposed to mean? There is anything but agreement on the point: Weise (ed. 1837): “*unum* redundat interdum,” comparing Aul. 70 *decies die uno saepe extrudit aedibus*; Ussing (ed. 1875): “*unum somnum*, eum quo nunc capta est;” Palmer (ed. 1890): “*unum* is used to justify *paulisper*,” translating, “till she sleeps just one sleep;” Lodge, *Lexicon Plautinum* s. v. *unus* III.B.a.g (p. 895, ll. 24–5) lists this example under the heading “adiectivum numerale, proprie (nonnumquam *idem* vel aliquid simile significare videtur);” Christenson (ed. 2000): “with the indefinite sense of *quidam* (cf. OLD II),” translating, “until she sleeps off a certain sleep.” None of these explanations is satisfactory. Of the two earlier conjectures, *dudum* (which appears in lines 683, 691, 692, 693) may be disposed of without debate; Gertz’s *illum* is better than the vulgate, but assumes an unlikely corruption.

A number of considerations indicate that a word meaning ‘wine’ has been displaced by *unum*, and *vinum* is therefore the natural choice. First is the verb *edormiscere*, which is the vox propria in Latin for ‘sleeping off’ specifically the effects of excessive drinking. Plautus, *Rud.* 586 *abeo . . . ut edormiscam hanc crapulam*; Terence, *Adel.* 786 *aliquo abeam atque edormiscam hoc villi*; Cicero, *Phil.* 2,12 *edormi, inquam, crapulam*; id. *Ac.* 2,17,52 *cumque* (sc. *vinolenti*) *edormiverunt*; Horace, *Serm.* 2,3,61 *Fufius ebrius olim cum Ilionam edormit*; Gellius 7,10,5 *donec discipuli vinum edormiant*. Second, *vinum* and *somnum* are frequent partners in Latin literature; e.g. Ennius’ *nunc hostes vino domiti somnoque sepulti*

(Ann. 8), Virgil, Aen. 2,265 *invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam*. Third is context, since elsewhere in Plautus female confusion is attributed to inebriation, as in Men. 351–431, where the courtesan Erotium, like Alcumena, has been duped by a lookalike lover. There Menaechmus alleges (373) *certo haec mulier aut insana aut ebria est*, where *insana* corresponds to *deliramenta* in 696, and *ebria* to *vinum* in 697. Finally, there is the probability of scribal error, since the difference between VINVM and VNVM is only one minim. Confusion was perhaps compounded by unfamiliarity with the two-word asyndeton (*vinum somnum*) demanded here and which Plautus so often favors.¹ Nevertheless, since the verb *edormire* is regularly found with words meaning ‘wine’ or ‘debauchery,’ as is shown in the examples above, the corruption from *uinum* to *unum* seems less likely than corruption from *unum* to *vinum*. I think it is therefore at least worth examining the possibility that the true reading may be different.

By a sociolinguistic phenomenon now known as “code switching,” a Plautine character will occasionally slip a Greek word or phrase into his Latin expression. By definition, the foreign word appears unpredictably. Pseudolus, for example, is especially fond of code switching; cf. Pseud. 443, 483, 484, 488, 710.² The motivation remains unclear; sometimes the desire for a pun is evident, but at other times it seems to occur merely at whim. Whatever the reason, it may be noticed that code switching into Greek occurs not only with words that have no precise equivalent in Latin, but even with ordinary words or expressions. Thus in Cas. 728, Olimpio says not *negotia mihi exhibes* (cf. Amph. 895, Men. 1072, Merc. 273) but, unexpectedly, *πράγματά μοι παρέχεις*. Senex replies (729) *dabo tibi μέγα κακόν*, where the Greek expression replaces the ubiquitous *magnum malum*. As Questa makes quite clear in the apparatus to his new edition (Titus Maccius Plautus, Casina, Urbino 2001), the Ambrosianus writes these Greek words in Greek; the Palatine tradition in the Roman alphabet.

Consequently, I am inclined to think that the word lurking behind *unum* (where the Ambrosianus is unavailable, and we must rely on the Palatine tradition) is οἶνον, and I translate, “Wait a little while until she can sleep off *ze vino* (and) the grogginess.”³ Sosia thus code switches in making an accusation against his mistress’ behavior, perhaps in an effort to lessen the audacity of such a reproach. The word *oenopolium* in Asin. 200 *quom . . . petimus vinum ex oenopolio* indicates that the Greek word for wine was apparently familiar in the streets of Rome in Plautus’ time. Hence it seems likely that at some early point in the transmission, our line appeared as *dum edormiscat oenum* (or *oinum*) *somnum*, and a scribe faced with

1) E. g. Aul. 399 *congrum murenam*; Epid. 530 *paupertas pavor*; Rud. 23 *donis hostiis*. Further examples are collected in H. Sjögren, de Particulis Copulatiuis apud Plautum et Terentium, Upsala 1900, 1–34. Since Amphitruo’s response *quaene vigilans somniat?* remarks only on the more absurd of Sosia’s two accusations (namely, the charge that the woman with whom they are speaking is asleep), and not on the charge of inebriation, the loss of *vinum* was an easy one.

2) For a full discussion, see H. D. Jocelyn, Code Switching in the Comoedia Palliata, in: Gregor Vogt-Spira und Bettina Rommel (Hrsg.), Rezeption und Identität. Die kulturelle Auseinandersetzung Roms mit Griechenland als europäisches Paradeigma, Stuttgart 1999, 169–195.

3) The trochaic rhythm of the verse imposes a strong ictus on the first syllable of *unum*. Might this be thought to suggest the circumflex accent of οἶνον?

oenum mistook it for the archaic spelling of *unum*;⁴ by hypercorrection he then wrongly reduced the diphthong from *oe* to *u* as has happened, for example, in Men. 960 *coepio* (Nonius; *cupio* P).

The corrected lines will then read:

<i>AMPH. haec quidem deliramenta loquitur. SOS.</i>	
<i>paulisper mane,</i>	696
<i>dum edormiscat oĩvov somnum. AMPH. Quaene</i>	
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Ithaca

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4) We cannot know how Plautus would have spelled the word himself; OINON, OENON, OINVM, and OENVM (the latter two with Latin termination, as often in Plautus) all seem possible, and in majuscule script, the shift from any of these to VNVM is a very short step.

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