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*Graeco-Latina Brunensia*. 2019, vol. 24, iss. 2, pp. 193-210

ISSN 1803-7402 (print); ISSN 2336-4424 (online)

Stable URL (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5817/GLB2019-2-13>

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/141762>

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Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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# Stock Characters from *Atellana* in Plautus' *Palliata* – The Connections between *Dossennus-Manducus* and the Plautine Parasites Reconsidered

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## Abstract

The article answers the question whether the characters from the pre-literary Atellan farce appear in the comedies of Plautus. The author reconsiders and follows Eckard Lefèvre's suggestion that the names of *Bucco* and *Maccus* mentioned by Plautus refer to the stock characters from the *fabula Atellana*, but questions the reference to the figure of *Manducus* in *Rud.* 535-536 – it is unclear whether Plautus is alluding to the figure carried during the *pompa circensis* or to the stock character from the farce. Moreover, the author agrees with J. Christopher B. Lowe's hypothesis that the parasite *Ergasilus* from *Captivi* resembles *Dossennus* from *Atellana* and develops this idea further, noticing that the references to chattering teeth and the mouth gaping wide are the characteristic elements in the portrayal of *Dossennus-Manducus* and that they also occur in the descriptions of other Plautine parasites. To prove this theory the author analyses several passages from the Plautine comedies: *Captivi* (vv. 909–915), *Stichus* (vv. 577; 605) and *Curculio* (vv. 317–325) – thus the author tries to show the possible influence of the Atellan stock character of *Dossennus-Manducus* on the presentation of the parasite in *palliata*.

## Keywords

Plautus; *Atellana*; *Bucco*; *Maccus*; *Manducus*; parasite

*Atellana* existed both before and after *palliata*. The mutual influences between these two types of comedies (Gesine Manuwald calls these relations a cross-fertilisation<sup>1</sup>) run in different directions in two different periods: at first the pre-literary *Atellana* has an impact on the *palliata* and later the *palliata* affects the literary *Atellana*. The first-mentioned relation has been a subject of interest, especially since William Beare published his article *Plautus and the Fabula Atellana* (Beare 1930), but there still remain many questions concerning these literary influences. The scope of my interest in this article will be the stock characters presented in an impromptu performance of the Atellan farce: *Bucco*, *Maccus*, *Pappus* and *Dossennus*. Although the archaic period left us no text of the popular farce to study, the traces of some kind of familiarity with these stock characters may be seen in *fabula palliata*. As Eckard Lefèvre noticed, names of *Atellana* characters are mentioned in Plautus' comedies.<sup>2</sup> Here I wish to recall these passages to give a full picture of the subject matter.

The first example comes from the play entitled *Bacchides* (vv. 1087–1089):

*NI. Quiquomque ubi sunt, qui fuerunt quique futuri sunt posthac  
stulti, stolidi, fatui, fungi, bardi, blenni, buccones,  
solus ego omnis longe antideo stultitia et moribus indoctis.*

“All the weakheads, thickheads, fatheads, mushrooms, idiots, drongos, **cretins**, wherever they are, were, or will be hereafter, all these I alone surpass by far in idiocy and stupid habits.”<sup>3</sup>

The end of line 1088 contains the word *buccones*, which is synonymous to the earlier listed features of stupid men. Interestingly, *buccones* appears as the last expression in this catalogue,<sup>4</sup> so it should be taken as the strongest element of this description. The utterance is spoken by the *senex* Nicobulus, who laments his own stupidity. The humorous tone of his self-condemnation is emphasised by alliteration. But the most important conclusion is that the audience must have known the stock character of *Bucco* from *Atellana* and pictured him as a personification of stupidity – therefore Plautus used the image of *Bucco* to depict a stupid old man (*senex stultus*) in *palliata*. Hence, I believe that Lefèvre is right, suggesting that *Bucco* from the pre-literary Atellan farce appears in the passage from Plautine *Bacchides*.<sup>5</sup>

The second passage alluding to Atellan stock character may be found in the prologue of the comedy *Asinaria*. Line 11 contains a joke about the author's name (vv. 10–11):

(...) *huic nomen graece Onagrost fabulae;*

1 Manuwald (2011: p. 172).

2 Lefèvre (2010: pp. 16–22).

3 Translations of Plautus' comedies: De Melo.

4 The vocabulary is highly colloquial here: *fungus*, *blennus* and *bucco* are used by Plautus only once; *blennus* (a Greek word) is also used by Lucilius (frg. 1063 M) – Barsby (1986: p. 183).

5 This theory is completely rejected by Panayotakis who claims that *bucco* in *Bac.* 1088 is a common noun, a term of abuse, and it does not refer to *Atellana*. The scholar even thinks that *we cannot rule out the possibility that it was Plautus (...) who inspired Pomponius, Novius, and the other playwrights of the literary Atellana in the first century BC or slightly earlier to turn these imaginative terms of abuse [scil. maccus, bucco, manducus – JP] into recognisable stage figures* (2019: p. 42–43). In my opinion if *buccones* in Plautine comedy did not allude to the Atellan character, the joke would not be so funny.

*Demophilus scripsit, Maccus vortit barbare;*

“the name of this play is *Onagos* in Greek. Demophilus wrote it and **Maccus** translated it into barbarian language.”

As scholars nowadays agree,<sup>6</sup> the poet's name was Titus Maccius Plautus. The *Maccus* mentioned in the quoted passage may be a transformation of the writer's name, as it refers to a stupid glutton and a clown from *Atellana*. It is possible that Plautus humorously twisted his name to show that he had changed the *palliata*, modelled on Greek sources, into a play with Italic elements. Therefore, we read that *Maccus*, a character from *Atellana*, changed this play into Latin (*barbare*). Costas Panayotakis (although very sceptical about possible influences of *Atellana* on Plautus' comedies) writes that *the connection between 'Maccus' the author of the Asinaria and 'Maccus' the Atellan character makes sense in the Plautine passage, because it creates the contrasting pairs 'Greek language vs. "foreign" (that is, Latin) language' and 'Greek high culture vs. Italian popular culture'*<sup>7</sup>. Hence it is possible that *Maccus* in *Asinaria* is taken from popular farce, but the passage from Plautus' *Mercator* complicates this hypothesis. In act 1 we find a statement that this play was written by *Maccius* or *Maccus* (Pl. *Mer.* 9–10: *graece haec vocatur Emporos Philemonis, / eadem Latine Mercator Macci Titi*) – the genitive form may be understood in either way and, therefore, it may either confirm the family name *Maccius* or allude to the Atellan stock character of *Maccus*. This matter cannot be solved without any doubt. Christopher W. Marshall notices that, according to a testimony by Gellius (3, 3, 14), our playwright may be connected with *Atellana*, saying that Plautus began his career in *operis artificum scaenicorum*<sup>8</sup> – it is probable that he might have played in popular farces as an actor. But even if this assumption is correct, the playwright did not necessarily act as *Maccus*. Moreover, his nickname *Plautus*, often interpreted as “Flatfoot”,<sup>9</sup> links the playwright with mimes<sup>10</sup> rather than with *Atellana*. However, despite these mentioned doubts, I need to admit that it is probable that *Maccus* in *Asinaria* originates from the pre-literary farce.

The third reference to an Atellan character comes, according to Lefèvre,<sup>11</sup> from the comedy *Rudens*. The quoted passage comprises a discussion between the pimp Labrax and the old man Charmides, who complain that they are shivering because they got wet and cold after a shipwreck (vv. 535–536):

*LA. quid si aliquo ad ludos me pro manduco locem?*

*CH. quapropter? LA. quia pol clare crepito dentibus.*

6 Cf. e.g. Gratwick (1973).

7 Panayotakis (2019: p. 41).

8 Marshall (2006: p. 139).

9 Festus gives two interpretations of the word *plautus* (274 L): <Macci>us poeta, quia Umber Sarsinas erat, a pedum planitia initio Plotus, postea Plautus coeptus est dici; (259 L): plauti appellantur canes quorum aures languidae sunt ac flaccidae et latius videntur patere; cf. Pl. *Cas.* 34: *Plautus cum latranti nomine*.

10 Diom. GL 1, 490, 3–7 K: *Quarta species est planipedis, qui Graece dicitur mimus. Ideo autem Latine planipes dictus, quod actores pedibus planis, id est nudis, proscenium introirent*.

11 Lefèvre (2010: pp. 17–18) after Paratore (1976: p. 67, n. 56) and Fränkel (1960: p. 107 = 2007: p. 79).

LAB What if I hire myself out somewhere as a muncher for the games?

CHAR Why?

LAB Because I make a lot of noise with my teeth.”

In lines 535–536 the pimp jokes that he could be hired as *Manducus* during *ludi*, because he can gnash his teeth in a similar manner – i.e. *clare*, meaning “loudly” or “distinctly”. In fact, his teeth are chattering from the cold.

The figure of *Manducus* from *Atellana* may have had a mask with huge, champing, movable jaws and teeth,<sup>12</sup> suggesting perhaps his gluttony.<sup>13</sup> Marshall claims that the *Manducus* mask may have had a hinged jaw that could be opened so the character could swallow the stage props.<sup>14</sup> But although *Manducus* gnashed his jaws in Atellan popular farce, probably pretending to be eating something, the pimp from Plautus' play had his teeth chattering from the cold.

As Fränkel rightly points out, the passage *Rud.* 515–539 was a Plautine addition to the Greek model of the play.<sup>15</sup> However, some scholars (e.g. Lowe)<sup>16</sup> assume that the name of *Manducus* in the comedy *Rudens* does not refer to the popular farce.<sup>17</sup> Their argumentation rests on Festus' testimony (Paul. Fest. 115 L):

*Manduci effigies in pompa antiquorum inter ceteras ridiculas formidosasque ire solebat magnis malis et late dehiscens et ingentem sonitum dentibus faciens, de qua Plautus ait (Rud. 535)...*

“Effigies of **Manducus** were accustomed to go in the procession of the ancients among other ridiculous and dreadful [effigies], gaping its great jaws widely and making tremendous noise with its teeth<sup>18</sup> about which Plautus says (*Rud.* 535)...”

Festus refers here to the ceremonial circus processions (*pompa*) in which the effigy<sup>19</sup> (perhaps some kind of a huge puppet)<sup>20</sup> of *Manducus* was carried,<sup>21</sup> while Plautus in *Rud.* 535 mentions festivals (*ad ludos*). These festivals, *ludi*, began with the *pompa circensis*, but also included theatrical performances. Therefore, it is unclear to which part of the *ludi* the

12 Cf. the pictures in: Bieber (1961: p. 248) and Nicoll (1963: p. 70).

13 Cf. Nonius (25 L): *Manducones qui manduci dicti sunt et mandones edaces*; Lucil. (frg. 946 M): *omnes mandonum gulae*; Varro (*Men.* 53): *magna uti tremescat Roma et magnae mandonum gulae*.

14 Marshall (2006: p. 144).

15 Fränkel (2007: pp. 78–79); also Lefèvre (2006: p. 109; 2010: p. 18).

16 Lowe (1989: p. 168).

17 Panayotakis is not convinced about the nature of the figure of *Manducus* mentioned in *Rud.* 535 – he writes about (*cultic?*) *figure with clattering teeth* (2019: p. 41).

18 Translation: Latham (2015: pp. 313–314).

19 Other figures carried in the *pompa* were: *citeria* (Fest. 52 L – see above) and *petreia* (Paul. Fest. 281 L: *petreia vocabatur, quae pompam praecedens in colonis aut municipiis imitabatur anum ebriam, ab agri vitio, scilicet petris, appellata[m]*).

20 Lactantius Placidus writes that it could have been a wooden puppet (*glossa: manducum ligneam hominis figuram ingentem, quae solet circensibus malas movere quasi manducando* – Deverling (1875: p. 68, vv. 4–5), but according to Festus (52 L) also a man could play the role of such an effigy (see above).

21 Latham (2015: p. 313; 2016: p. 254).

Plautine expression *ad ludos*<sup>22</sup> alludes. The pimp from *Rudens* may be speaking about hiring himself as an actor playing the character of *Manducus*.<sup>23</sup> He says: *me locem pro manduco*, which means: “I will hire myself as *Manducus*”. The verb *locare*/*se locare*<sup>24</sup> (“to hire/to hire oneself”) appears in Plautus’ comedies several times referring to the contract of renting/leasing something or someone’s services<sup>25</sup> (*As.* 443; *Cur.* 464; *Trin.* 843–844: (...) *nam ego operam meam / tribus nummis hodie locavi ad artis nugatorias*; *Vid.* 27–28). But more important is that the verb *locare* may also be found in Cicero’s speech defending the famous actor Roscius, where it describes hiring him as an actor (*Q. Rosc.* 28: *disciplina* [i.e. of an actor – OLD] *quae erat ab hoc tradita locabat se non minus HS cccicc iccc*). Therefore, the phrase *me locem pro manduco* from *Rudens* may refer to hiring the pimp as an actor to play the part of *Manducus*. Unfortunately, it is possible that the pimp may have been hired to act as the figure of *Manducus* in the circus procession as well. Both of these presentations of *Manducus* could gnash their teeth. Therefore, the meaning of the verb *locare*, although it relates to the sphere of theatre, i.e. to acting, may not help to determine the meaning of *Manducus* in the Plautine passage. What is more interesting, another passage from Festus confirms that a man might have been employed to present other figures carried in the procession, e.g. a loquacious effigy of *citeria*. Festus quotes a fragment from one of Cato the Elder’s speeches to explain the nature of this figure (*Fest.* 52 L= Cato, *orat.* 22, 83 Sbl):

*citeria appellabatur effigies quaedam arguta et loquax ridiculi gratia, quae in pompa vehi solita sit. Cato in Marcum Cae[ci]llium (6): “Quid ego cum illo dissertem amplius, quem ego denique credo in pompa vectitatum ire ludis pro citeria, atque cum spectatoribus sermocinaturum”*

“a kind of effigy, talkative and loquacious to arouse laughter, was called *citeria* which was accustomed to be carried in the procession. Cato against Marcus Caecilius: ‘Why should I keep debating with that man, who – I believe – is willing to go to festival processions exhibited in place of a **caricature-like statue** and to interact with the spectators?’”<sup>26</sup>

Cato turns in his speech against the garrulity and rhetorical performances of Marcus Caelius (a tribune of the plebs); he jokes that this man is so talkative<sup>27</sup> that he could appear in circus processions as *citeria*, a figure constantly chatting with the crowd. The expression *pro citeria* from the above-quoted fragment is analogous to the one from the Plautine comedy (*Rud.* 535) *me pro manduco locem*. Therefore, it speaks in favour of the theory that the reference to *Manducus* in *Rudens* hints rather at the figure from the *pompa circensis* than at the *Atellana* stock character.<sup>28</sup>

22 Cf. the same syntactic construction: *dubitat utrum se ad gladium locet an ad cultrum* (*Sen. Ep.* 97, 9); *quique ad bestias <ut> depugnaret se locauerit* (*D.* XXII, 5, 3, 5).

23 Fay (1991: p. 134).

24 Costa presents the contract called *locatio-conductio* in many passages by Plautus (1969: pp. 374–388).

25 Du Plessis (2012: pp. 110–112).

26 Translation: Sciarrino (2011: pp. 136–137).

27 Cf. other fragments from this speech: Cato *orat.* 22, 81 i 85 Sbl.

28 Versnel argues that the figure of *Manducus* carried during the procession should not be confused with the stock figure from *Atellana* (Versnel 1970: pp. 264–266); however Diehl sees a connection between the

From the quoted passages we may infer that Plautus only twice explicitly mentioned the stock characters of popular farce – in the utterances spoken directly to the audience (e.g. in a prologue). The third reference, a metatheatrical remark about *Manducus*, may not allude to *Atellana*, but to a figure carried during the *pompa*.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, these examples prove that Plautus knew the stock characters from *Atellana*, and so did his audience.

To search for more appearances of the Atellan figures in Plautus' comedies, we should follow Horace's opinion from one of his letters (*Epist.* 2, 1, 168–174):

*Creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere  
sudoris minimum, sed habet comoedia tanto  
plus oneris, quanto ueniae minus. Aspice, Plautus  
quo pacto partis tutetur amantis ephebi,  
ut patris attenti, lenonis ut insidiosus,  
quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis,  
quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita socco;*

“Tis thought that Comedy, drawing its themes from daily life, calls for less labour ; but in truth it carries a heavier burden, as the indulgence allowed is less. See how Plautus plays the part of the youthful lover, how he plays that of the close father, or of the tricky pander; **what a Dossennus he is among his greedy parasites**; with what a loose sock he scours the scene.”<sup>30</sup>

In line 173 the poet writes that there is much of *Dossennus* in Plautus' parasites. Charles O. Brink translates this passage as follows: *how much of a (primitive Atellan) Dossennus Plautus is among (i.e. when he represents) gluttonous spongers*.<sup>31</sup>

What is worth mentioning here is that the figure under discussion of *Dossennus*<sup>32</sup> is sometimes identified with a presented above Atellan stock character of *Manducus*.<sup>33</sup>

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figure of *Manducus* used during *pompa* and the one from theatrical shows (Diehl 1930: pp. 1044–1046, s.v. *Manducus*). Some scholars suspect that both *Manducuses* might have been in fact one and the same figure (Blödhorn 2006: p. 230, s. v. *Manducus*), but employed in two different kinds of performances (first in *pompa* and later in *Atellana*).

29 C. Marshall (2006: p. 144) claims that without any doubt Plautus refers to *Atellana* in *Rud.* 535. The scholar writes that not only does Labrax's mask from *Rudens* have the features of *Manducus*, but that he also sees *Pappus* in Ballio's character from *Pseudolus*; *Dossennus* in the figure of Cappadox from *Curculio* and *Maccus* in the slave named *Pseudolus*. Petrides easily raises objections to these hypotheses (Petrides 2014: p. 437).

30 Translation: Fairclough (1942: p. 411).

31 Brink (1982: p. 213).

32 The character of *Dossennus* appears in the titles (*Duo Dossenni* by Novius) and fragments of literary *Atellana* (as per Frasinetti's edition of Atellan fragments): Pomponius' *Campani*: *dantor Dossenno et fullonibus publicitibus cibaria!*; Pomponius' *Maccus virgo*: *praeteriens vidi Dossennum in ludo reuerecunditer/ non docentem condiscipulum, verum scalpentem natis*; Pomponius' *Philosophia*: *ergo, mi Dossenno, cum istaec memore meministi, indica/ qui illud aurum abstulerit. : : non didici hariolari gratiis!*; *inc. fab. frg. II: hospes resiste et sophian Dossenni lege; inc. fab. frg. III: venit Dorsennus a villa.*

33 *Manducus* is mentioned in the fragment from Pomponius' literary *Atellana* (*Pictores frg. II Frasinetti: magnus manduco's camellus... cantherius*), preserved by Nonius 25 L. (*manducones qui manduci dicti sunt, et mandones, edaces. Pomponius Pictoribus: «magnus... cantherius»*).

However, this identification is frequently considered dubious<sup>34</sup> because it is based on a corrupt passage from Varro's *De lingua Latina* (7, 95) and a conjecture proposed by Karl O. Müller, who substituted the corrupt †*ad obsenum* with *Dossenum*<sup>35</sup>. Nonetheless, some scholars<sup>36</sup> accept this correction as convincing and regard *Manducus* as a variant of the *Dossenus* character. In the passage in question, Varro says that the name *Manducus* means “the chewer” because it originates from *manducari*, to “chew”:

*Dictum mandier a mandendo, unde manducari, a quo et in Atellanis Dossenum vocant Manducum. Mandier “to be chewed” is said from mandere “to chew,” whence manducari “to chew,” from which also in the Atellan Farces they call Dossennus “Humpback” by the name Manducus “Chewer”.*<sup>37</sup>

If Varro's statement can be trusted, we should expect some features of this gluttonous and vulgar Atellan figure of *Dossennus-Manducus* to also be present in the *palliata* character of *parasitus*. Brink says that generally *Plautus' parasites have a primitive and unartistic bearing, they are 'Atellan'*<sup>38</sup>. Michael Fontaine confirms this statement, writing: *Horace (...) seems to be saying that in the parts Plautus wrote for his hungry parasites, he blended in conspicuous traits of the Dossennus of Atellan farce.*<sup>39</sup> Therefore the Plautine parasites inherited some features from the Greek originals (their flattery, wit and predilection for swindles), but they were also substantially modified by Plautus (they are more greedy and more voracious). Eduard Fränkel, in his monumental work *Plautine Elements in Plautus* (Oxford 2007), tries to list the numerous passages that might be Plautus' additions to the Greek originals and he also presents transformations of the parasite figure (e.g. in the comedies *Captivi* and *Curculio*), but the scholar does not mention the possible Atellan influences. Only J. Christopher B. Lowe, in his article *Plautus' Parasites and the Atellana*,<sup>40</sup> offers some speculations about modelling one of Plautus' parasites on the features of *Dossennus*. The scholar presents the parasite Ergasilus from the play *Captivi* and states: *It is a plausible guess that Plautus' description in Capt. 909ff. of Ergasilus attacking the carnarium like a ravening wolf resembles a typical Dossennus in the pre-literary Atellana.* This passage is presented below (Pl. *Capt.* 909–915):

34 Manuwald is of the opinion that the evidence for regarding *Manducus* as another stock character or identifying him with *Dossennus* is “too flimsy” (2011: p. 173, n. 145; similarly: Beare (1951: p. 132); Trapido (1966: p. 388); Duckworth (1994<sup>2</sup>: p. 12). The scholar also undermines the reference to the character *Manducus* in one of the fragments from Pomponius' comedies (*Pictores* frg. II Frasinetti) – see note no.10 above.

35 Müller (1833: pp. 157, 303).

36 E.g. Kent (1938: p. 348); Bieber (1961: p. 151); Nicoll (1963: pp. 70–72); Versnel (1970: p. 265); Panayotakis (2019: p. 41).

37 Translation: Kent (1938: pp. 348–349).

38 Brink (1982: p. 213).

39 Fontaine (2010: p. 222). Panayotakis opposes this statement and writes that Horace evaluated Plautus in relation to *Atellana* from the perspective of the literary farce, which does not prove any influence of *Atellana* on Plautus (2019: pp. 43–44).

40 Lowe (1989: pp. 161–170).



*PV. Diespiter te dique, Ergasile, perdant et ventrem tuom,  
parasitosque omnis, et qui posthac cenam parasitis dabit.  
clades calamitasque, intemperies modo in nostram advenit domum.  
quasi lupus esuriens metui ne in me faceret impetum.  
ubi voltus\*\*sur\*\*ntis\*\*\*\*\* \* \* impetum  
nimisque hercle ego illum male formidabam, ita frendebat dentibus.  
adveniens deturbavit totum cum carni carnarium:*

“BOY May Jupiter and the gods destroy you, Ergasilus, and your stomach, and all hangers-on, and anyone who gives a dinner to hangers-on hereafter. Damage, loss, and misfortune just came into our house. I was afraid that he’d dash at me **like a hungry wolf**. When **the face of the hungry** \*\*\* dash. **I was terribly scared of him**, the way he was **gnashing his teeth!** When he arrived he threw down the whole meat stand with the meat. He grabbed a sword and chopped the sweet-breads off three meat-joints.”

Most scholars (e.g. Mommsen,<sup>41</sup> Fränkel,<sup>42</sup> Lowe) agree that the culinary delights quoted here, especially the various kinds of pork (*glandium*), are quite un-Greek. We may, moreover, note the prevalence of pork in Roman society.<sup>43</sup> It should therefore not be surprising that Lowe writes: *frequent references to pernae, ham, and other forms of smoked and salted pork are purely Roman.*<sup>44</sup> This argument alone does not prove the influence of the popular farce on the passage presented above, but later in his article the scholar also notices: *When Plautus mentions Ergasilus’ fearful gnashing teeth (913) that could be an echo of the clattering jaws of Manducus, if he is to be identified with Dossennus.*<sup>45</sup> I think that this hypothesis may be reasonable, although Lowe does not give any argument supporting it – in fact this is the last sentence in his paper.

Here I wish to summarize the information I have gathered from Lefèvre and Lowe, my overall observations and subsequent research questions. The first of the scholars have established that the names of the Atellan characters are mentioned in three passages from the Plautine comedies: *Bucco* in *Bac.* 1088 really seems to refer to the stock figure from farce; *Maccus* in *As.* 11, despite some doubts, is probably Atellan; however, *Manducus* in *Rud.* 535 remains dubious, because it may allude to the procession figure. Although there are no more explicit references to the characters from *Atellana* in Plautus’ plays, Lowe has noticed that the parasite Ergasilus from *Captivi* has perhaps some features of *Dossennus*. The discussion undertaken by him appeared to me very inspiring, but it ended abruptly with the closing sentence of his article. Therefore I would like to once more raise the question about modelling the Plautine parasites on the features of *Dossennus-Manducus*. Following Lowe’s suggestion, I should like to start by adding a few

41 Mommsen (1874: p. 514).

42 Fränkel (2007: p. 171). The scholar noticed that the preceding passage *Capt.* 901–908 was also probably entirely Plautus’ work.

43 Alcock (2005: p. 68); Wilkins & Hill (2006: p. 149); MacKinnon (2013: pp. 113–114).

44 Lowe (1989: p. 161).

45 Lowe (1989: p. 169).

more arguments to support his theory about Ergasilus – there is some (especially linguistic) evidence that this parasite bears a strong resemblance to the figure from popular farce. While discussing Ergasilus, I will also shortly refer to the parasite Gelasimus from the comedy *Stichus*. Furthermore to consider the possible influence of *Atellana* on other parasites I will focus on the case of Curculio, whose name and characteristics seem Atellan. Finally I would like to give some thought to the meaning of the name Labrax which may reveal some connections with *Atellana*.

## Ergasilus

The reference to chattering teeth is a characteristic element in the portrayal of the parasite Ergasilus. As we may see in line 913 of *Captivi*, the slave says that the parasite attacking the larder in search of food frightened everyone, showing and gnashing his teeth (*male formidabam, ita frendebat dentibus*). So the parasite Ergasilus has similar features to *Dossennus-Manducus*, because the chattering teeth are an element specific to his description (also Festus, when presenting the figure of *Manducus*, mentions the great noise made by his teeth: *ingentem sonitum dentibus faciens*). The second characteristic element of *Manducus* is his wide open mouth (cf. Paul. Fest. 115 L: *late dehiscens*). Juvenal gives a similar depiction of this figure in one of his satires – he recalls the character of *Manducus* and his terrifying mask with the mouth gaping wide (Juv. 3, 172–176):

(...) *ipsa dierum*  
*festorum herboso colitur si quando theatro*  
*maiestas tandemque redit ad pulpita notum*  
*exodium, cum personae pallentis hiatum*  
*in gremio matris formidat rusticus infans,*

“Even on days of festival, when a brave show is made in a **theatre** of turf, and when the well-known farce steps once more **upon the boards**; when the rustic babe on its mother’s breast shrinks back **affrighted at the gaping of the pallid masks**”<sup>46</sup>

The word *persona* probably designates the stock figure from *Atellana* and its mask.<sup>47</sup> Also, the reference to the show presented in the theatre (*theatro; ad pulpita*) as *exodium* indicates that Juvenal is hinting here at the Atellan farce, not at the *pompa circensis* (*Atellana* was frequently presented in dramatic performances as an afterpiece at the close of the whole theatrical show).<sup>48</sup> The mask of *Manducus*, as Juvenal writes, must have been whitened and its appearance with a wide gaping mouth brought fear to the children<sup>49</sup> (Juv. 3, 176). According to the satirist, *Manducus* was terrifying, in a similar way to the

46 Translation: Ramsay (1928: p. 45).

47 Courtney (2013: p. 150).

48 Cf. the Atellan farce by Novius entitled – *Exodium*.

49 Morton Braund (1996: p. 204).

parasite Ergasilus from *Captivi*, as he frightened everyone with his teeth (*male formidabam, ita frendebat dentibus*). The similarity of the vocabulary used by Plautus and Juvenal indicates the same context of the Atellan farce in both passages. Moreover, in *Captivi* the wide-open mouth of the parasite may perhaps be alluded to in the expression *quasi lupus esuriens* (*Capt.* 912), “like a ravening wolf”.<sup>50</sup> And what is more fascinating, the same proverbial phrase is used in the Plautine play entitled *Stichus* when talking about the parasite Gelasimus (v. 577):

*atque eccum tibi lupum in sermone: praesens, essuriens adest*

“And look, here you have **the wolf** in the fable: he’s present, **hungry**.”

and later it is repeated in an augmented version (v. 605):

*nam illic homo tuam hereditatem inhiat, quasi essuriens lupus.*

“that fellow is **gaping** at your inheritance like a **hungry wolf**.”

The parasite is depicted here as a wolf with its mouth open wide (*inhiat*), devouring someone’s inheritance – this description brings to mind the characteristics of *Manducus*, whose wide open jaws were named by Juvenal as *hiatus* (3, 175). The same verb (*inhiare*) is also used by Plautus in *Trinummus* in the description of a very hungry wolf (*Trin.* 169–171):

*ME. adessurivit magis, [et] inhiavit acrius*

*lupus, observavit dum dormitarent canes:*

*gregem univorsum voluit totum avortere.*

“Meg. **The wolf** waited until the dogs were drowsy. He **got hungrier** and **gaped** more fiercely; he wanted to steal the entire flock.”

The presentation of the wolf is similar in all the examples discussed here – it has a voracious appetite and opens its jaws wide to devour an expected meal. Perhaps the parasite Ergasilus in *Captivi*, acting like a wolf, has his mouth likewise open, which obviously resembles the characteristics of *Manducus*.

There is one thing I need to add here – the proverbial Latin phrase mentioned earlier, *lupus esuriens*, might have been modelled, according to August Otto, on the Greek expression λύκος ἔχανεν, found e.g. in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* (629; cf. Diogen. 6, 20).<sup>51</sup> But even if this is so, Plautus certainly employed this expression in a different context and with a different meaning. In *Lysistrata* it refers to the people, who are not reliable and cannot be trusted, just as no one should trust a hungry wolf (vv. 628–629):

καὶ διαλλάττειν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀνδράσιν Λακωνικοῖς,

οἷσι πιστὸν οὐδέν, εἰ μὴ περ **λύκῳ κεχηνότι**.

“to think that they have ventured with Laconian men to deal,

50 About a wolf in Roman comedy: Skwara (2004); especially a short revision of the motif of a ravening wolf pp. 168–169.

51 Otto (1890: p. 198).

Men of just the faith and honour that **a ravening wolf** might feel!"<sup>52</sup>

In the passage from Aristophanes' play, the expression describes imminent danger, but Plautus' use of the phrase has transferred it to the new comical context of a hungry parasite who endangers his master's larder. Even if the writer borrowed this proverbial phrase from a Greek model of the comedy, he certainly reworked it, giving it a farcical tone.

Summarising this motif, we may say that the similarity between the expressions in the above-mentioned sources suggest that the parasite Ergasilus from *Captivi* seems to possess a number of features similar to *Manducus* – he gnashes his teeth, frightens everyone and his mouth is perhaps wide open. David Wiles notices that indeed a gaping mouth reflects the Roman reconception of the role of the parasite.<sup>53</sup> Thus, it is probable that Lowe was correct when writing about the possible influence of *Atellana* on the portrayal of the parasite in this Plautine play.

There remains only one doubt concerning masks (if masks were indeed used in the times of Plautus)<sup>54</sup> – is it possible that the playwright changed the physical appearance of the parasite's mask to make it less Greek and more Atellan? We are not able to say anything certain about this: he may have given the parasite hanging jaws and big teeth, i.e. the features of *Manducus*<sup>55</sup> or he might have limited the change only to the verbal description.

Also, we may wonder whether all the descriptions of the parasite in *palliata* where the teeth are exposed were modelled on *Atellana*. To answer this question, let me present one more passage from the same comedy, *Captivi* (vv. 184–189), which refers to the aforementioned parasite Ergasilus:

*HE. i modo, venare leporem: nunc irim tenes;*

*nam meu' scruposam victus commetat viam.*

*ER. numquam istoc vinces me, Hegio, ne postules:*

*cum calceatis dentibus veniam tamen.*

*HE. asper meu' victus sane est. ER. sentisne essitas?*

*HE. terrestris cena est. ER. sus terrestris bestia est.*

"HEG No, do go and hunt for the hare: at present you have the hedgehog; **my food comes and goes on a stony path.**

ERG You'll never get the better of me that way, Hegio, don't expect to do so: I'll still come, **with shoes on my teeth.**

HEG My food is very rough.

ERG Do you eat briars?

52 Translation: Rogers (1946: p. 65).

53 Wiles (1991: p. 136).

54 There seem to be more arguments supporting the theory about masked performances in Plautine times (Wiles 1991: p. 132–133).

55 According to a theory of visual syncretism which says that *the masks of Plautus were hybrids* (Petrides 2014: p. 434; cf. Wiles 1991: pp. 134–141).

HEG It's a dinner that grows on the ground.  
 ERG The pig's an animal that grows on the ground."

The passage presented above contains a discussion between master Hegio and the parasite Ergasilus, who wants to get an invitation to dinner. Although the master declines to offer such an invitation, the parasite insists and promises to have his teeth always ready for a meal. He says precisely that his teeth will be "shod" (*Capt.* 187: *calceatis dentibus*)<sup>56</sup> – "with boots on", meaning "ready to go", "instantly ready for eating" or "ready to go hunting for a meal". Thus the parasite continues the metaphor created earlier by Hegio, joking that his table and meals take a "rocky road" (*Capt.* 185: *meu' scruposam victus commetat viam*), which means that they are not so easy and pleasing. The joke is built here on the basis of both the literal and metaphorical meaning of the expression *scruposam viam* – the parasite understands it word for word and therefore states that his teeth are equipped with shoes to walk this road. Such double-entendre jokes were, according to Quintilian (6, 3, 47), typical for *Atellana*, but we cannot establish the provenance of this word-play on the basis of this general conclusion.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, a similar metaphor may be found in a fragment from an unknown comedy preserved by Plutarch (*Mor. De adulatore et amico* 54b):

Γαστήρ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα, πανταχῇ βλέπων  
 Ὀφθαλμός, ἔρπων τοῖς ὀδοῦσι θηρίον.  
 "His body is all belly; eyes that look  
 All ways: a beast that **travels on its teeth**."<sup>58</sup>

The passage contains a riddle to which Plutarch gives a solution – he writes that although it may seem that the answer should be "a crab", the animal that walks on its teeth is a parasite. The picture is similar to the one from *Captivi*, which perhaps may have been borrowed by Plautus from a Greek original of the play. However, it was definitely placed by the playwright in a different context and augmented with new images – the parasite is not only travelling on its teeth, but has also shod them. Thus, we may conclude that the motif of the teeth in the presentation of a parasite in this passage may not be an element taken from the popular farce, but from a Greek model of the play. An argument for the Latin transformation of this passage may also be the joke about the pig which, according to the parasite, can be eaten during a vegetarian meal (*Capt.* 189: *sus terrestris bestia est*). As I have noted before, references to pork may prove that Plautus indeed reworked this part of the comedy, adding some elements of native origin, but this time not from *Atellana*.

56 Egli (1892: p. 18); Graupner (1874: pp. 12–13).

57 Also Fontaine claims that Plautine parasites make riddling puns, imitating *Dossennus* from *Atellana* (2010: p. 222).

58 Translation: Babbitt (1927: p. 291).

## Curculio

Considering the possible influences of *Manducus* on other Plautine parasites, I would like to quote a passage from the play called *Curculio*, meaning “The Weevil”.<sup>59</sup> The title obviously refers to the figure of a parasite, who in the paragraph cited below is talking with a young man, Phaedromus (Pl. *Curc.* 317–325):

(...) *CV. perii, prospicio parum,*

*gramarum habeo dentes plenos, lippiunt fauces fame,*

*ita cibi vacivitate venio lassus lactibus.*

*PH. iam edes aliquid. CV. nolo hercle aliquid: certum quam aliquid mavolo.*

*PA. immo si scias, reliquiae quae sint! CV. scire nimi' lubet*

*ubi sient, nam illis conventis sane opus est meis dentibus.*

*PH. pernam, abdomen, sumen suis, glandium – CV. ain tu omnia haec?*

*in carnario fortasse dicis. PH. immo in lancibus,*

*quae tibi sunt parata, postquam scimus venturum. (...)*

“CUR I’m done for, I can barely see, I have **teeth** full of rheum, my **throat** is bleary from hunger: I come with intestines exhausted from emptiness of food.

PHAE You’ll eat something in a minute.

CUR I don’t want *something*: I prefer a definite thing to just something.

PAL Well, if you knew what leftovers there are!

CUR I’m very keen to know *where* they are: they really need to meet **my teeth**.

PHAE **Ham, tripe, udder, pork chops, sweetbread...**

CUR All these things, you say? Perhaps you’re telling me they’re hanging from **the meat rack**.

PHAE No, on the platters; these things were prepared for you after we knew you were coming.”

The parasite *Curculio* first complains about his hunger and later expresses his need to eat various kinds of pig-meat to satiate this hunger: ham, tripe, sow’s udder, sweetbreads. The parasite hopes to find this meat in the larder (*in carnario*), just like *Ergasilus* in the previously presented passage from *Captivi*. This catalogue of pork meat may once again be plausible proof of Plautus’ additions to the play.<sup>60</sup> But if we wish to confirm the possible influence of the popular farce on the parasite’s speech, we should notice his earlier words (*Capt.* 318): *gramarum habeo dentes plenos, lippiunt fauces fame*.<sup>61</sup> The parasite’s

59 It literally means an insect called “a corn-weevil”, cf. in agrarian contexts: Cato, *Agr.* 92; Var. *R.* 1, 57, 2, Verg. *G.* 1, 186.

60 Lowe (1989: p. 165) after Fränkel (1960: pp. 31; 99, n. 4 = 2007: p. 79).

61 The words *gramae* (“rheum in the eye”) and *lippire* (“to suffer from inflammation or watering of the eyes”) usually refer to eye diseases (cf. e.g. Paul. Fest. 85 L.: *gramiae oculorum sunt vitia, quas alii glamas vocant*; Lucil. frg. 195 M.: *lippus edenda acri assiduo ceparius cepa*). It seems that *Curculio* is deliberately misapplying his medical terminology (Wright 1993: p. 65) to create a comical metaphor. This strange joke is probably a forerunner of a later remark made by the *trapezita* that the parasite looks like a one-eyed Cyclops, because his eye is hidden under an eye patch (*Cur.* 392–394: *LY. unocule, salve. CU. quaeo, deridesne me? / LY. de Coclitum prosapia te esse arbitror, / nam i sunt unoculi.* (...)) But *Curculio* from the beginning cannot see with

hunger was so unbearable that it caused an illness in his teeth. But the most significant thing is that once again the image of the parasite resembles the one of *Manducus* from the Atellan farce, especially since his teeth and jaws are exposed (teeth are also mentioned in v. 322).

The last thing we should consider in the context of the parasite *Curculio* is his name, meaning “a weevil”.<sup>62</sup> This insect and its larvae devour grain kernels, just as the parasite in the comedy consumes as much food as possible (cf. the joke on the literal meaning of the name *Curculio*<sup>63</sup> – *Cur.* 586–587: *TH. ubi nunc Curculionem inveniam? CA. in tritico facillume, / vel quingentos curculiones pro uno faxo reperias*). Also the weevil’s appearance may resemble the figure of *Manducus* – this insect has an elongated snout and chewing mouthparts which may bring to mind the huge jaws in the mask of *Manducus*. On the other hand, a similar metaphor comparing the parasite to an insect may be found in frg. 294–295 K-A (Ath. 6, 254c) of a Greek comedy written by Anaxilas, a comic writer of Middle Comedy. In this passage the parasite is called σκώληξ,<sup>64</sup> meaning a kind of worm (“an earthworm”, “a larva” or “a worm eating decayed matter”) which eats his master alive:

οἱ κόλακες εἰσι τῶν ἐχόντων οὐσίας  
 σκώληκες, εἰς οὖν ἄκακον ἀνθρώπου πρόπον  
 εἰσδὺς ἕκαστος ἐσθίει καθήμενος  
 ἕως ἂν ὡσπερ πυρὸν ἀποδείξῃ κενόν.  
 ἔπειθ' ὁ μὲν λέμμι' ἐστίν, ὃ δ' ἕτερον δάκνει

“**Flatterers** are **worms** in the property of the wealthy. Each one slipping into a man of guileless character settles down and eats him until he makes him as empty as a wheat stalk. Then the one is left a husk, while the flatterer bites the other.”<sup>65</sup>

It seems that in the fragment quoted above the parasite is presented as an insect acting in a similar way to the weevil.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, it is probable that the parasite *Curculio* got his name after a character from the Greek model of the comedy or as a result of a similar humorous description as cited above. Michael Fontaine writes that the name *Curculio* seems like a *Plautus’ comical amplification of Anaxilas’ idea*,<sup>67</sup> although the scholar feels that the passage from the Greek play focuses on making a moral point rather than on a literal portrayal of the voracious parasite. On the other hand the scholar also

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his eyes and experiences the world through his mouth. Thus, the mouth takes over the function of the eyes and that is why it is also affected by a disease typical for the eyes (as mentioned in *Cur.* 317–319).

62 Cf. the name of the parasite *Gnatho* (Γνάθω) from the comedy *Eunuchus*, which comes from the Greek word „jaw” γνάθος (Damon 1997: p. 14; Vincent 2013: p. 78; Barsby 1999: p. 80), but it may not refer to *Manducus*, as it was probably borrowed from Greek New Comedy (cf. Menander’s *Colax*).

63 Fontaine (2010: pp. 62, 229).

64 The pair κόλακες and σκώληκες creates a paronomastic wordplay.

65 Translation: Fränkel (2007: p. 114).

66 Cf. Ar. *Frg.* 600 K-A; V. 1111.

67 Fontaine (2010: p. 62).

makes a hypothesis that the name *Curculio* is not a Plautine invention and that it comes from the Greek *Γοργυλίων*, meaning “Fast-and-Furious Man” (from *γοργός*, “fierce, vigorous, quick”).<sup>68</sup> Even if Fontaine is right about the origin of this name, it does not exclude the implied allusion to the common Latin noun designating a weevil. However, the resemblance of the insect named *curculio* to the presentation of *Manducus* may be random or might be a fortunate coincidence, chosen deliberately by Plautus, because it helped to adopt the features of the farcical character to the figure of the parasite. This matter cannot be conclusively resolved.

## Labrax

The same case may concern the pimp Labrax from the Plautine comedy *Rudens*. The character's name suggests that he may resemble “a sea bass” (*λάβραξ*) – he *has a distinguished jaw and a wagging tongue*.<sup>69</sup> This appearance brings to mind the look of *Manducus*, to which the pimp compares himself in *Rud.* 535. What is more, a sea bass is a voracious predator among fish and Labrax is also described as a gluttonous beast (*Rud.* 543–544):

*CH. iam postulabas te, impurata belua,  
totam Siciliam devoraturum insulam?*

CHAR You dirty beast, did you expect you'd immediately **swallow** the whole island of Sicily?

The meaning of the name<sup>70</sup> and the reference to the voracity of Labrax, earlier presented as *Manducus*, might be seen as evidence in support of the theory that *Rud.* 535 alludes to a stock figure from *Atellana* who could devour stage props. Although this theory is very attractive, as stated above, nothing can be said here definitely.

In conclusion, we may admit that Plautus twice explicitly mentions the *Atellana* characters in his comedies, i.e. in: *Bac.* 1088 and *As.* 11. The reference to *Manducus* in *Rud.* 535 is doubtful, because it may allude to the figure carried in circus processions as well – there are arguments in favour of and against this hypothesis. Moreover, there are passages from *Captivi* (vv. 909–915), *Stichus* (vv. 577; 605) and *Curculio* (vv. 317–325) which describe the parasite in a manner similar to the presentation of *Dossennus-Manducus* in *Atellana*. They show the parasite as a ravening wolf with scary gnashing teeth and big jaws as he attacks the larder in search of food, and especially of the pig-meat, a favourite

68 Fontaine (2010: pp. 64–66). The scholar follows Gratwick's suggestion about a different spelling of the name *Curculio* – *Gurgulio*, but contradicts Gratwick's idea that the name *Curculio* derives from the same onomatopoeic root as *gula*, *guttur*, etc. (1981, p. 340). Damon has an opinion similar to Gratwick's: In “*curculio*” there has been a substitution of letters. The weevil's name ought to be *gurgulio*, since it is practically all throat [“*guttur*”] (1997: p. 26). Cf. de Vaan (2008: pp. 156, 276): *curculio* relates to *gurgulio* – “gullet, throat”; *gurgulio* might represent a reduplicated form of the root “devour”.

69 Petrides (2014: p. 437).

70 The name Labrax, referring to a kind of a fish, has also been given to the pimp as a humorous allusion to him being a survivor from the shipwreck.



Roman food. However, as I have tried to show, not all the references to teeth occurring in *palliata* might have been modelled on *Atellana*, but rather they might have been derived from certain Greek sources. On the other hand, some of the passages, although adopted from Greek models of the plays, were probably later placed by Plautus in new contexts and reworked into a more farcical mode, perhaps under the influence of the pre-literary *Atellana*. This is a mechanism for achieving a unique *interplay of Greek, Roman and native Italian elements*<sup>71</sup> which Plautus seems to employ in his works. He, as Antonis Petrides writes, *amalgamates the Greek and Roman ingredients of his art into a new irreducible theatrical product*.<sup>72</sup> The reason to use the Atellan elements in *palliata* is that they help to increase the comicality of characters, thus enhancing the plays' appeal to Roman spectators. In the times of Plautus, *the expectations of a majority of the audience were formed by the extempore theatre*,<sup>73</sup> i.e. especially by *fabula Atellana*, and therefore, the fusion of Greek and Italic theatrical traditions chosen by Plautus could meet their expectations.

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71 Petrides (2014: p. 428) after Vogt-Spira (1998: pp. 111–135).

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