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D I D Q U I N T I L I A N M E N T I O N M Y T A C I S M ?

M a r t t i N y m a n

When discussing violations of ὀρθοέπεια, Quintilian makes the following statement:

Et illa per sonos accidunt, quae demonstrari scripto non possunt, vitia oris et linguae: iotacismus (Bn) / miotacismus (A) et labdacismus et ischnotetas et plateasmus feliciores fingendis nominibus Graeci uocant (Instr. 1,5,32)

The manuscript tradition differs in a minimal, but nevertheless significant, manner. While c. Bernensis (Bn; 9th c.) has *iotacismus* (a kind of mispronunciation of *i*), the other equally reliable manuscript, c. Ambrosianus (A; 9th c.), provides the reading *miotacismus* (a frequent variant spelling of mytacism, i.e. a mispronunciation of *m*).

To account for the manuscript variation, Claussen (1873) proposed the conjunct reading *iotacismus et miotacismus* on the grounds that these terms tend to co-occur in the statements made by grammarians: "Utraque lectione recepta haec scriptura efficietur: 'ἰωτακισμούς et μυτακισμούς et λαβδακισμούς'. quae tria vitia iuncta explicare et vituperare grammatici solent." (327). Claussen's argument implies the prediction that any Textstelle attesting only two members of the triad is likely to be corrupt. Indeed, this predic-

tion seems to be borne out quite well by the variation in the case at hand.

Claussen's proposal has been accepted or supported by many scholars: Meister (ed. 1886), Radermacher (ed. 1907), Niedermann (1948), Pini (ed. 1966) and, hesitatingly, Hofmann in TLL 8:9 (1960) 1392,68. Note that also Winterbottom (ed. 1970) is inclined to accept mytacism: In his critical apparatus he introduces Claussen's emendation with the qualification "fort. recte".

The relatively wide acceptance of Claussen's proposal is no wonder, since it is formally quite reasonable. Furthermore, no cogent argument has so far been advanced against it, despite the attempts made by Colson (ed. 1924:61) and Cousin (ed. 1975:165). However, the conjunct reading can be shown to be unfounded by a simple semantic argument: Mytacism would be conceptually impossible in this context.

In Nyman (1977) it is shown that, as a grammatical term, mytacism was used to denote spelling pronunciation of the word-final *-m* in prevocalic position.¹ This was judged as a barbarism typical of semi-literates in the late Latin period (see Hoppenbrouwers 28-33). According to the norm of correct pronunciation, the word-final

¹ This definition is based on Aelius Melissus' instructions as to how mytacism can be avoided (reconstructable from Pompeius 5,287, 7-20 and 298,19-30 Keil, and reflected in other grammarians, e.g. Consentius, Diomedes and Servius). The discrepancies between Niedermann (1948), whose definition is accepted by Hoppenbrouwers (1960), and myself result from the use of different paradigms of phonetic description. While Niedermann interpreted Melissus in articulatory terms, I am convinced that the correct key is the auditive one. - The definition given by Hofmann in TLL 8:9 (1960) 1392,45 is due to a misinterpretation of Sacerdos' definition (6, 454,22-28 Keil), which pertains to rhetoric (see Nyman 1977 §2).

-m had to be reduced to what was probably a bilabial nasal glide, i.e. [w̃] (for a more detailed formulation, see Nyman 1977). Cato symbolized this by means of an *M* on its side, i.e. Σ (Moore 1898), and Verrius Flaccus symbolized it with the first apex of the *M* i.e. Λ . Thus, both *FACIAE* and *FACIA Λ* served the purpose of emphasizing the intentional character of the reduction of /fakiam/ to [fakiaw̃] prevocally. This phonetic process is described by Quintilian in *Inst.* 9,4,49: The final -m required by the orthography is pronounced very weakly; it is not dropped altogether, rather obscured to a *no-uae litterae sonus*.

Now let us take a closer look at the passage which we have been discussing in the present paper. Quintilian states *expressis verbis* that it is the question of mispronunciations which cannot be represented in spelling ("*quae demonstrari scripto non possunt*"). While this statement puts certain constraints on how iotacism and labdacism are to be interpreted here (cf. Colson 61; Cousin 1936:91; ed. 1975:164-165), it clearly renders mytacism entirely unthinkable in this context. As a fault involving spelling pronunciation mytacism could of course very well have been characterized by means of writing.

The above discussion makes it quite evident that Quintilian did not include mytacism in his list of faulty pronunciations. If he had done so, he would have been contradicting himself.²

² I am obliged to Prof. J. Safarewicz for comments on an earlier version. Responsibility for any inadequacies is my own.

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