



ACT I

A COMPARISON BETWEEN PLAUTUS AND SHAKESPEARE...

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

- The Comedy of the Errors, written by Shakespeare, has as its main theme the double's double;
- ACT I: After several wars between Ephesus and Syracuse, Egeon of Ephesus gets imprisoned once he sets foot in Syracuse.

SUMMARY

MENAECHMI

- Menaechmi is one of Plautus' most famous works: its main theme is the double;
- ACT I: The character of Peniculus explains that the only way to keep a servant in his position is to feed him and take care of him;
- Menecmo kicks his wife out because he's having an affair with Erotio.



ARGUMENTUM

PLAUTUS' ARGUMENTUM

Mercator Siculus, quoi erant gemini filii,

Ei surrupto altero mors optigit.

Nomen surrepticii illi indit qui domist (domi est)

Avos paternus, facit Maenaechmum e Sosicle.

Et is germanum, postquam adolevit, quaeritat

Circum omnis oras. post Epidamnum devenit:

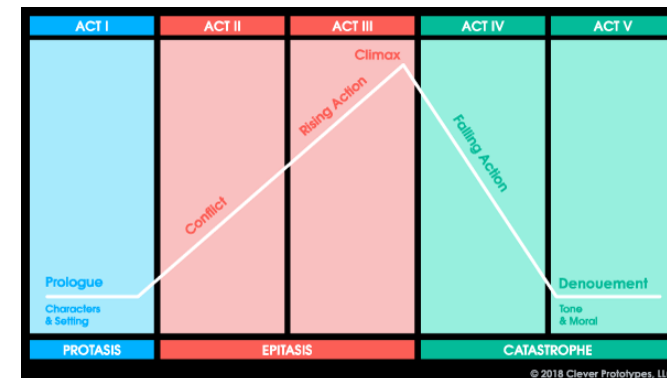
Hic fuerat alitus ille surrepticius.

Menaechmum omnes civem credunt advenam

Eumque appellant meretrix, uxor et socer.

I se cognoscunt fratres postremo invicem.

- The argumentum is an acrostic, made of the letters of the title, meant to explain the general contents of the work.
- Unlike Plautus' work, Shakespeare didn't include an argumentum, which means that Shakespeare didn't add the mechanism of an acrostic.



PROLOGUE

- Unlike Plautus' work, Shakespeare didn't include a prologue either;
- The prologue is the opening that establishes the setting and background details, as well as the main traits of the plot and characters;
- One of the most relevant elements of this prologue is the use of the metatheatre, which is a mechanism widely used by Plautus thanks to which the characters of the drama sometimes become self-aware of their character condition or create a direct contact and dialogue with the audience.

"Salutem primum iam a principio propitiam mihi atque vobis, spectatores nuntio"

"Si quis quid vestrum Epidamnum curari sibi velit, audacter imperato et dicito, sed ita ut det unde curari id possit sibi. nam nisi qui argentum dederit, nugae egerit; qui dederit, magis maiores nugae egerit".

"sicut familiae quoque solent mutarier: modo ni caditat leno, modo adulescens, modo senex, pauper, mendicus, rex, parasitus, hariolus".



THE TIME

MENAECHMI

- In this text, there are no explicit mentions of a date or period in which the story might be set.
- There are some terms with Greek etymology and references to the Greek world.
- The first act is set in a very short period of time, perhaps less than an hour, even though there aren't any symbols or words that indicate it certainly.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

- A historical trait is the war between Ephesus and Syracuse.
- The story begins 5 years after the two Antipholos turn 18.

THE SPACE



- **MENAECHMI** is set in Epidamnum, now called Durazzo;
- The first act is set in Epidamnum as well, the city where Menecmo I lives with his wife, in particular opposite Menecmo's house and inside Erotium's house;
- The setting is formally Greek but there are several elements that are typically Latin
- The scene on the stage was very simple, with 2 or 3 houses and a public street.
- **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS** is set in Ephesus, a Greek city that was an enemy of Syracuse
- This war between the two cities is relevant because Egeon's incarceration is what starts the comedy.

CHARACTERS AND MASKS

MENAECHMI

MENECMO I: The son of the merchant Mosco and the twin of Sosicle, could be an *adulescens*

EROTIUM: represents the role of meretrix

CILINDRO: Menecmo I's cook

SPAZZOLA: he represents the role of the *parasitus*

COMEDY OF ERRORS

SOLINO: The Duke of Ephesus

EGEONE: A Syracusan merchant

ANTIFOLO DI SIRACUSA: twin brother of Antipholus of Ephesus and son of Egeon, *adulescens*

DROMIO DI SIRACUSA: The bumbling, comical slave of Antipholus of Syracuse, *servus*

DROMIO DI EPHEBUS: The bumbling comical slave of Antipholus of Ephesus, *servus*



THEMES

- The main themes of Plautus' work are related to the theme of the double and the switch;
- There are also some quick references to the theme of love, which will gain a bigger value throughout the course of the work;
- The theme of the double is prominent in Shakespeare, even more than in Plautus. In this case, unlike Plautus, there's already a switch once Dromio of Ephesus makes his appearance to Antipholus of Syracuse.
- Relationships and power dynamics.

<<ANTIPHOLUS S. What, wilt thou flout me thus unto my face, Being forbid? There, take you that, sir knave.

DROMIO E. What mean you, sir? for God's sake, hold your hands! Nay, and you will not, sir, I'll take my heels>>

LANGUAGE

- Metaphors
 - Exchanges of characters and twists
 - Puns and playful identifications
 - Combination of refined and crude words
- Parody, a caricatural imitation or accentuation of the protagonists' defects
 - Mixture of languages and linguistic registers
 - Vulgar jokes and exasperation of natural feelings
- The frequent use of half Latin and half Greek words formed with several roots, neologisms, hyperbolic and ridiculous superlatives.
 - Double meanings, especially of sexual nature