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SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF SOURCE MATERIAL

IN THE

COMEDY OF ERRORS

BY

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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The Elizabethan drama as characterized by Shakespeare and his contemporaries was the culmination of several forces which had long been exerting their influence on the English playwrights. Prominent among these forces was that of the classical drama, whose tendencies affected both comedy and tragedy. It was from the tragedies of Seneca that the Elizabethans developed their tragedies of sheer horror and blood. The comedies of Plautus and Terence taught English dramatists "how to build a plot along structural lines of a five act pattern and how to develop a complicated intrigue based on the motif of mistaken identity; it supplied them with new types of comic characters and it brought home to them the difference between crude slap-stick comedy and the more intellectual species of wit." 1 This influence is clearly shown in the following native English plays: Ralph Roister Doister (1534-1541), Gammer Gurton's Needle (1576), and The Supposes (1566).

Not only did the English writers of comedy adopt the structural technic of the Latin exponents but even, at an early date in the history of the English drama, the themes of

Plautus and Terence became favorites of the dramatists. Pre-
Shakespearean paraphrases and adaptations of the Latin poet
existed in French, German, Italian, and English. The earliest
representative is Jack Juggler (1562) which is based on the
Amphitryon of Plautus. ¹ Later a play, the Historic of Error,
based on the Menæchmi, but no longer extant was presented at
Hampton Court in 1576. ²

These adaptations of the Latin poet were not limited
to the early English playwrights. Shakespeare himself made
use of classical sources. Unmistakably his Comedy of Errors
reveals the influence of the Latin drama, since its main plot
was taken, directly or indirectly, from the Menæchmi of Plautus,
a farce of mistaken identity, and the first scene of act three
seems to be suggested by the Amphitryon, another Plautine
comedy. ³ The extent to which Shakespeare made use of the

¹. "Jack Juggler was entered for printing in 1562 or 1563 but
was written very probably during the reign of Mary. The
author states in the prologue that the plot is based upon
the Amphitryon, and it is true that the chief characters
in the Roman play have English citizens equivalents." P.S.
Boas, "Early English Comedy" Cambridge History of English
Literature; V, 120.

². Sidney Lee, Shakespeare's Life and Works, p 32

³. Comedy of Errors, III, i; Amphitryon, IV, ii. Since no
further treatment will be given to this resemblance, it is
best to point it out here. In both the Amphitryon and the
Comedy of Errors the true husband is denied entrance to his
home; while the pretender enjoys the comforts within. In
the Latin play, Mercury, who, filled with love for Alcmena,
the wife of Amphitryon, assumed the appearance of the hus-
band while the latter was at war, tantalizes the real Amphit-
ryon and refuses him admission to his own home. In the
Shakespearean play, Eronio of Syracuse and Luciana refuse
to admit Antipholus of Ephesus to his home; while the false,
husband, Antipholus of Syracuse, is dining with his brother's
wife.
Latin source in the Comedy of Errors; the material changes which he affected; in what way, if in any, these changes surpass the original; and which of these changes reflect the dramatic trends of the time and which his own dramatic genius: these will be the subjects treated in the remaining portions of this work.

The exact date of the composition of the Comedy of Errors is unknown. On the basis of the internal evidence of the play critics place the date as somewhere between 1588 and 1694.¹ In 1589 Meres in his Palladis Tamia mentions the Comedy of Errors as among the six excellent comedies of Shakespeare.² Probably the earliest reference to the play was that occurring in the Gesta Greyorum, referring to the production of the play at Grey's Inn on December 26, 1594.³ From a study of all of the available evidence the majority of editors place the approximate date of composition at 1591. Others place it as early as 1588; others as late as 1594.⁴

¹ "It is plain that Shakespeare still had Henry of Navarre in his mind, for the allusion in Act III, Scene 2, to France 'armed and reverted making war against her heir', refers to the struggle between the Huguenot king, 'heir' to Henri III, and the Roman Catholic League, which continued from 1589 until 1594." Boas, Shakespeare and His Predecessors, p. 168.
³ J.Q. Adams, A Life of William Shakespeare, p 210
⁴ Ulrich and Boas place the approximate date at 1591; Chambers 1592-1593; Brooke 1588-1594; Flora 1594; Stokes and Brandes 1689-1691.
It is a much debated question whether or not Shakespeare used an original Plautine text or an English translation. If we do not assume that Shakespeare read Plautus in the original, then we can scarcely maintain that the *Comedy of Errors* is a free imitation of the *Menaechmi* of Plautus; since, at the time of the production of the play, no known English translation of the Latin poet existed in printed form. Some suppose that Shakespeare had access to the manuscript of William Warner's translation, which was published in 1595; but this seems unconvincing, since it has been demonstrated that certain proper names which are common to both Plautus and Shakespeare do not appear in the translation at all.¹ Others maintain that Shakespeare depended upon the early English play, the *Historie of Error*, which I have already mentioned. Since the question is still debated and there seems to be no conclusive evidence available on either side of the question, I shall assume that Shakespeare read Plautus in the original.

In any case, Shakespeare has dealt with his materials in a very independent way, combining the whole of one Plautine comedy with a portion of another and making important additions of his own. The net result of these changes is to transfer a

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¹ "It has been suggested, but unconvincingly, that the obscure young actor may have had the privilege of seeing the manuscript of Warner's translation before it was printed. As P. J. Enk, in *Neophilologus*, 1920, pp. 359-366, shows, Shakespeare took over proper names from the original that do not appear in the translation at all." J. Q. Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 133, note.
purely farcical comedy into a play of varied interests, still farcical in the main, but crossed by threads of sentiment, and woven upon a sombre background.

It is a point so well known as to require no discussion, explanation, apology, or even frequent statement, that Shakespeare never gave himself the slightest trouble to be original especially with regard to subject matter. Therefore we may expect to find that the Comedy of Errors incorporates the general broad outlines of the Latin source. According to Plautus, misfortune separates two young brothers, Menaechmus and Sosicles, who are "as like as water to water or milk to milk." 1 The father of the twins dies of a broken heart and leaves the surviving son, Sosicles, to the guardianship of his uncle. The uncle changes Sosicles's name to that of Menaechmus, in memory of the lost twin, who was the uncle's favorite. When Sosicles has attained manhood, he sets out from home, accompanied by his servant, to seek his lost brother. The play opens with the arrival of Sosicles, after much traveling and many hardships, arriving at the city of Epidamnus wherein his twin brother resides. Sosicles no sooner arrives at Epidamnus than he is mistaken for his brother by the friends and family of his twin. The errors of judgment ensuing perpetuates the action of the play and are not corrected until the two brothers, with the help of their servants, identify and

1. Plautus, Menaechmi, V, ix, 1089; Neque aqua aquae nec lacte est lactis usquam similis.
recognize each other.

From this plot of mistaken identity, Shakespeare, by adding creations of his own, produces a comedy of incident, of almost farcical nature, which reveals his character as a true dramatist. Aegeon, a merchant of Syracuse, and his wife, Aemilia, were the parents of twin sons, Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus. About the same time as they were born, a poorer woman was also delivered of twin sons, which Aegeon "bought and brought up to attend" his boys. Shortly afterward the party suffered shipwreck. All are rescued, but the husband was parted from the wife; and the twin sons and attendants were separated from their respective counterparts. For eighteen years Aegeon, with Antipholus and his servant, dwelt at Syracuse without a word from the other three. At length, Antipholus and his servant, both having attained to manhood, set forth in search of their brothers; while Aegeon renewed the quest for his own wife. For the next seven years father and son heard nothing of each other nor of the remaining members of their family. The play opens with Aegeon pleading for his life to the Duke of Ephesus. Unknown to his father, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant, Dromio, are also visitors in the city of Ephesus. It further chances that the lost son and servant also reside in Ephesus and are in high favor with the Duke. The plot is generated by a series of errors which constantly grow more baffling and more complexing until
the Abbess, who later proves herself to be the wife of Aegeon, reveals the identity of each. Unlike Plautus, Shakespeare does not stop to tell us how the twins bear the same name.

In general it will be seen that the outlines of both plays are identical, since both depend for their action on the confusion and errors resulting from the presence of the twin brothers whom chance has brought together after years of separation. The Plautine play is entirely concerned with the errors arising from the confusion of the twin Menaeachmi and the final explanation of these errors. Thus there are but two movements in the action: the errors, and their explanation. What little information that is necessary for the spectator to understand the events of the play about to be presented, the author gives in the short prologue. From the opening scene until the final denouement the spectator is concerned only with the twins and the incidents occasioned by their confusion.

The movement of the Shakespearean play resolves itself into three parts. The first and last are very short— the one having more of the nature of an introduction, the other of a hasty close. The first movement is the narrative of Aegeon. Although it is not dramatic yet it provides the serious—almost tragic—setting for the lively action and rough humor of the main plot. The exposition is a masterpiece of invention; and here the playwright had a difficult problem before him. For the spectators to enjoy the swift sequence of
blunders they needed to know all about the two pairs of twins. How is this information to be conveyed to them before either pair of twins appears on the stage? Shakespeare opens the play with Aegeon on trial for his life, than which nothing could more certainly arrest the attention of the audience. In his search for his lost son the merchant has come to Ephesus, in defiance of the decree which forbade any Syracusan to land upon its shores under penalty of death. In self-defence Aegeon explains the potent reason for his rashness; and thus he not only puts the audience in possession of all the information they need for the comprehension of ensuing perplexities, but also awakens interest in his own sad plight, thereby strengthening the serious appeal of the comic story, and, at the same time, forming an integrant of the whole play. This giving of information during the first scene of the play is a marked improvement over the Latin play, but it is not due entirely to Shakespeare, since it was a method characteristic of the dramatic trends of the time.

As is not the case with the Plautine play, the spectator is to witness the final struggle of Aegeon to unite the scattered members of his family whom chance has separated, and kept separated, for over two decades. Chance is again on the verge of frustrating his efforts, this time through the state in the personage of the Duke of Ephesus, who has condemned
Aegeon to be executed at sunset for a transgression of the Ephesian law. In Plautus there is no Duke; hence, the state does not enter into the conflict.

The second movement, which occupies by far the greater portion of the play, shows the errors which are rendered possible by the separation of the family. Here, as in the source play, the action is made up of cleverly contrived situations, situations occasioned not by the confusion of one pair of twins, as in Plautus, but from two pairs of twins: for Shakespeare has tacked on twin servants to the twin Antipholi. This invention of the twin Dromio, a tour de force, doubles the complications and, at the same time, invests the plot with a greater degree of probability. The result is that in Shakespeare we have eighteen incidents of mistaken identity, while in Plautus we have but twelve. Adding the twin servants increases the variety of incident, and the perplexities occasioned by their undistinguishableness are entirely wanting in Plautus. The dexterity with which the threads of the plot are involved, and woven into an even more intricate tangle by the double complications, carried out to the most extravagant pitch of mistakes and misconception, truly reveals the author's powers as a dramatist.

A true comedy, which is the dramatic representation of the humorous or ridiculous side of life, would scarcely permit even twin Antipholi. But a proper farce, a type of comedy in which
the actions and qualities are ridiculously and greatly exaggerated, has an untold freedom and license and even requires it in order to produce strange and laughable situations. It is thus in accord with the principles and character of the farce that Shakespeare introduces the twin Dromios. The story need not be probable; it is enough that it be possible. If there is to be improbability, the greater the improbability, the greater will be the fun which it produces.

In the midst of this embroilment of errors, chance again attempts to crush the efforts of the family to unite itself by introducing the world of business, represented by Angelo, the goldsmith, of whom a chain has been ordered, which he, however, delivers to the wrong Antipholus and afterwards demands payment of the other. The matter is at first treated as a jest, then it grows serious, and at last an officer is called in to enforce the demand. Public order is disturbed; an encounter takes place in the street, when the Syracusan pair flee to an abbey—to the protection of a religious house, whereby the abbess, a representative of the Church, becomes entangled in the fantastic sport of chance. Here again we have two interest entering into the plot which in no way become involved in the Plautine entanglement.

As a further vitalisation of his play Shakespeare adds an element of Romance to his plot in the form of the love scene
On the other hand, Shakespeare depends more upon the nature of
the plot itself than upon witticisms to keep up the interest of
the spectators. Throughout the Elizabethan play the interest is
so evenly sustained by the tangle of events that the spectator
is held in constant curiosity and suspense as to the final upshot
of the whole adventure. However, "now and then the movement is
suspended for the sake of an exchange of word play between master
and servant; but it is generally short and entertaining. Now
and then the action pauses to let Dromio of Syracuse work off
one of his extravagant witticisms. 1

Since both the Menacechmi and the Comedy of Errors are
comedies of situation, whose sole instrumentality is natural
resemblance, it is easily seen that there can be but little dev-
elopment of character in them. Man is thus represented as con-
trolled by chance; his will is reduced to the narrowest limits
possible. All the characters are earnest in the pursuit of
their ends, though these ends are an utter deception. Comic
situation, into which the individual is thrust from without,
through no volition of his own, is the rule of both dramas.
"Character rests upon the internal nature of the person; his
disposition must be shown in his actions, and his actions must,
therefore, be made the means of its portraiture. For the Drama

The third movement is the final explanation of the mistakes, and the restoration of the separated members of the family. Aegeon, the father, is present with the Duke; he recognizes his son, whom, however, he takes to be the Syracusan Antipholus; but resemblance still has sway, for it is the Ephesian Antipholus. Then the Syracusan Antipholus appears; at once the source of the sensuous deception is brought home to the senses themselves when the brothers are seen side by side. Moreover, there is now a mutual recognition between the one son and the father; they have been separated only a few years. The mother is found in the Abbess; Aegeon is pardoned; all the members of the family are again united. The other apparent conflicts of the wife Adriana, of Business, of the State, are fully explained.

Shakespeare indisputably surpasses Plautus in the complexity and the variety of incident of his plot. Yet Shakespeare's play, even if its imbroglio is derived from the Latin play, is much more than a mere adaptation from Plautus. The English dramatist may lean heavily upon the Roman playwright, but he completely rehandles the material he takes over from the Latin; and he adds to it not a few of the most effective episodes.

The source of the fun of Plautus is multitudinous: rollicking jest, witty retort, dry humor, and plays upon words; occasionally sarcasm, satire, and parody. Further relief is obtained from the parasite of Menandrus, who adds to the merry confusion by informing against the one brother when abused by the other.
between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana.  

In this scene his poetic style rises to a beauty and intensity which shows that, although Shakespeare had abandoned himself to light play of intrigue, it is a diversion to which he condescends only for the moment. Here again Shakespeare is true to the Elizabethan characteristic: that of blending the serious with the comic.

A good example of this tendency to blend the romantic and the comic is found in the Bacon plot of Green's Priar Bacon and Friar Bungay. It is to be further noted that this art of blending the serious and the comic was not limited to the comic drama. Numerous examples may be found in tragedies. Among the earliest of these the Pedringano sub-plot of Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, although characterised by tragic irony, is no more than a comic relief scene. Shakespeare himself made extensive use of this method. Especially worthy of note is the porter scene from Macbeth.

A point of close resemblance in the Comedy of Errors and the Menæchmi is the striking psychological improbability which occurs in both plays. Sosicles—Antipholus of Syracuse—sets forth with the express purpose of seeking his lost brother and, in spite of all the obvious mistakes of his identity with another exactly like himself, it never occurs to his mind that he is in the very place where his twin brother has been cast.  

2. F.S. Ross offers an explanation of this improbability, but it does not seem convincing, since there is nothing in the play to substantiate his argument. According to him "Ephesus was notorious as a center of witchcraft and every kind of juggling art, and thus visitors when confronted by bewildering incidents would naturally believe that enchantment was at work.  

takes the human deeds as the vehicle of expressing the feelings, motives, purposes, thoughts, in fine the entire spiritual life and nature of men. Such is the Drama in the highest form. Freedom cannot be wholly obliterated. But, if the individual is made the victim of chance—of unforseen external power—his character has little to do with his destiny. He is determined, not from within, but from without; his enforced actions thus become a very slight indication of his nature. Still, no doubt there is some manifestation of character, even under such circumstances, though it is very superficial and inadequate." 1

The characterization of both plays is subordinated to the action of the plot, but less in the English play than in the Latin. Plautus makes his characters "wear the Motly" to excellent purpose, because he himself could act. Yet he scarcely distinguishes the character of his twin Menacchmi. Shakespeare, on the other hand, draws a rather clear contrast between his twin servants and masters. Still, elaborately wrought characters are not to be found in the Comedy of Errors, for this is Shakespeare's most absolute comic and farcical work; and, in this particular class of work, he never handled the incisive tool of an engraver as did Moliere. Inexperience may be another reason for the lack of characterization, since the Comedy of Errors is one of Shakespeare's earliest works.

In Plautus, Menæchmus, as a husband, is lax in his virtue; but whether or not his laxity is due to the henpecking of his wife is not clear. To me it appears that he uses the distrust railings of his wife as an excuse for his association with the courtesan, Erotium:

'...That you may not watch me for nothing, I'll reward your diligence by taking a wench to dinner and inviting myself out somewhere.'

He takes great pleasure in robbing his wife of her finery to adorn the person of his mistress. Such conduct is in harmony with the traditional mockery of marriage characteristic of the New Comedy. Menæchmus admits his weakness and, unlike his twin, does not boast of a false sense of moral security.

Sosicles is of about the same natural temperament as his brother. He is of a choleric disposition, as he himself states, boastful, and morally lax. At the first opportunity of pleasure, he willingly surrenders all responsibility, even to the extent of entrusting his money bag to a servant whom he knows to be a "greater lover of the ladies" than himself. Like his brother he is clever and resourceful when placed in tight situations. Thus, when confronted by his brother's raging wife and her father, he willingly assumes the role of an insane individual and thereby effects his escape. He is a avaricious and greedy, ever willing to risk his neck for the slightest spoils.

1. Plautus, Menæchmi; I, ii, 122.
2. Ibid., Ego autem homo iracundus, animi perditi; II, i, 439
When Erotium asks him to take the mantle, which the other
Menaechmus had taken from his wife and bestowed on her, to the
embroiderer to have it repaired and some trimmings added, he
immediately sees the possibility of booty. Thus he replies
to the advice and good counsel of his servant Messenio:

Hold your tongue, I tell you. It will hurt
me, not you, if I play the fool. This woman
is a fool, and a silly one; from what I've
just observed, there's booty for us here. 1

On the other hand, the Antipholi of Shakespeare are more
distinguishable in their temperament and moral tone. Antipholus
of Syracuse is an amiable creature. He beats his slave accord-
ing to the custom; but laughs with him and is kind to him almost
at the same time. He is accustomed to habits of self-command;
thus in the love scene between himself and Luciana:

But least myself be guilty to self wrong,
I'll stop my ears against the mermaid's song. 2

Unlike Menaechmus Sosicles of Plautus, he refuses to dine with
the courtezan. When invited to dine with his brother's wife,
he condescends, not through any sensual motive, but

Until I know this sure uncertainty, I'll
entertain this offered falacy. 3

He is firm yet courageous. When the errors are clearing up, he
modestly adverts to his love of Luciana, and we feel that he
will be happy.

2. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*; III, ii, 166.
3. Ibid., II, ii, 187.
Antipholus of Ephesus is inferior to his brother in both temperament and moral tone. He puts himself in the wrong by his imprudence, impatience, and spitefulness. When shut out from his home, rather than wait for an explanation, he hastily revenges himself by giving a bachelor's party at the home of the courtesan. He is neither sedate, gentle, nor truly loving. His temperament is one of sensualism. His furious passion with his wife, and the foul names he bestow on her, justly lead his wife and the courtesan to take him for mad. Though the riddle of his perplexities is solved, he will continue to find cause of unhappiness and entertain "a huge infectious troup of pale dis-temperments."

Likewise there is a clear distinction between the servant Dromios. Though each is a merry jester and each clings faithfully to his master's interests, yet there is a marked difference in the quality of their mirth. He of Ephesus utters his jest with infinite gravity and discretion and approaches a pun with sly solemnity. On the contrary, the mirth of Dromio of Syracuse is the spontaneous overflow of his gladsom heart. He is an untutored wit, making not the least attempt to arrange a joke. His description of the "kitchen wench", although coarse in parts, and that of the bailiff, display what a prodigality of wit is his. Such fun his twin is not capable of producing.

Adriana represents quite a change from the wife of Men-aechmus. The "mulier of Plautus is a shrew, constantly railing
at her husband for his actions, ever suspicious of his doings. Adriana, on the other hand, torments her husband with doubts at bed and board; yet she is ready to die in despair because he does not come home to dinner. Here we see a change from the pragmatical to the psychological drama. In spite of her fretful disposition, she is affectionate and gives promise of improvement in considerateness by abstaining from public out-break against her husband.

The introduction of Luciana, the sister of Adriana, instead of the Father in the Latin comedy, is another note of the author's dramatic skill. The exhortations which Shakespeare puts into her mouth are far more convincing and to the purpose than the reproaches which Plautus makes the old man deal out to both husband and wife.

The place occupied by Aegeon, the father, who is wholly wanting in Plautus, is well expressed by Drake in his *Shakespeare and His Times* (1817): "In a play, of which the plot is so intricate, occupied in a great measure by mere personal mistakes and their whimsical results, no elaborate development of character can be expected; yet is the portrait of Aegeon touched with a discriminative hand, and the pressure of age and misfortune is so painted as to throw a solemn, dignified, and impressive tone of colouring over this part of the fable, contrasting well with the lighter scenes which immediately
follow—a mode of relief which is again resorted to at the close of the drama, where the reunion of Aegeon and Aemilia, and the recognition of their children, produce an interest in the denouement of a nature more affecting than the tone of the preceding scenes had taught us to expect."

Involved in the characterization is a point of dramatic structure which, in my mind, shows a decided improvement over the Latin source. In the Plautine play the madness of Sosicles is but a feigned madness, a clever trick to avoid a difficult situation. In the Comedy of Errors, the seeming madness of Antipholus of Ephesus is the natural result of his actions and conduct, and we cannot doubt that the doctor was practicing on the right patient.

In the matter of the unities, Shakespeare maintains that of time throughout the whole play. The action of the drama extends over less than a single day: from the time that Aegeon is sentenced to death until sunset of the same day. The unity of place is not strictly observed. The scene is set in the one town of Ephesus; but, unlike the Roman play, wherein the scene is a single street before the houses of Menaechmus and Erotium, Shakespeare shifts the scene about the various parts of Ephesus.

Shakespeare does not follow the unity of action as did Plautus. The Latin play has but one plot: the errors occasioned by the twin Menacchmi in the same city after having been separated for years. Three plots enter into the Shakespearean play: the story of Aegaeon and Asmilia, which begins and ends the play; the main plot of "errors" occasioned by the twin servants and masters; and the love story of Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana. The first and last of these are minor subplots, very short, yet each is organically connected to the main plot and contribute its share to the development of the "errors."

It is through the violation of the unity of action that the Elizabethan play owes much of its superiority to its Latin source. The plot of Aegaeon and Asmilia provides a serious element in which the main action moves. Romance between Luciana and her brother-in-law gives a human touch to the play. Thus both of the subplots tend to lessen the bizarre and absolute farcical nature of the play as a whole.

This system of subplots was characteristic of all Elizabethan dramatists and was even demanded by the Elizabethan audience. Kyd's Spanish Tragedy; Shakespeare's Hamlet, Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello; all are good examples of the extensive use made of subplots.

In moral tone Shakespeare is decidedly superior to Plautus. Plautus's object was not to lecture but to amuse, and yet there
is more than infinite jests and trickery in him. Despite the
plot of the _Menæchmi_, there is feeling for the value of some
moral principles. The connecting link between the various
characters of the play is the courtesan. She is the predominating
figure of the play. Throughout the whole work there is much
shameless deceit condoned along with much sexual laxity, and
only a very rough justice is meted out in the play. The char-
acters' outlook on life is a cheerful attitude to what seems
a game, a readiness to take one's lurch, and profit the most
by it. The is especially noticeable in the character of Men-
æchmus Sosicles. Marriage is woefully derided. Menæchmus
does wrong, not because he associates with Erotium, but because
he steals from his wife to adorn his mistress. As long as he
keeps his wife well supplied with fine clothes, maids, and
jewelry, he has fulfilled his duty. Any other relationships
he may have are his own concern and should be accepted as such
by his wife.

In Shakespeare there is no debunking of moral standards.
There is sexual laxity but it is not considered to be something
that is to be paraded before the public, nor it treated with
indifference. The mistress of Antipholus of Ephesus is pushed
into the background and only three times does she appear on
the stage. The relationship existing between them is looked upon
by the author as something that is "vile and Bad." There is
much coarse and crude jesting, but it is generally among the servants.

From this comparison of the *Comedy of Errors* and the *Menæchmi*, I have found that Shakespeare, although he drew the outline for his plot from the Latin play, has dealt with the materials in a very independent manner. By taking advantage of the freedom permitted in a farce, he has produced a drama that surpasses its source in the complexity of its plot, its characterisation, and its moral tone.

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