Classical Tradition in Elizabethan Theatre: The Influence of Latin Comedy on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors.*

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Abstract

Comedy plays have been part of our society at least for two thousand years. Such a rich theatrical culture implies that, historically, many different works have been written by various authors worldwide. Hence, in a bigger or smaller amount, there are many similarities among works which have remarkably different backgrounds. This is the case of the Elizabethan play *The Comedy of Errors*, by William Shakespeare. The mentioned play is highly influenced by Latin comedy, primarily by the play *Menaechmi*, written by Titus Maccius Plautus. This paper aims to analyse the influence Roman comedy and *Menaechmi* had on Shakespeare to write *The Comedy of Errors*. For that, firstly the background of each work was presented, that is to say, the Roman and Plautus' comedy, and the theatre in Elizabethan times with specific mention to Shakespeare. Subsequently, based on particular references from *Menaechmi* and *The Comedy of Errors* and little research made about them, I identified the differences and similarities between them. The results showed that Shakespeare's play is highly influenced by Plautus' one and may be considered a version of it. The outcomes also revealed that *contaminatio* could be applied to Plautus as well as to Shakespeare and literary authors in general. By the same token, not only Plautus influenced Shakespeare's writings but, he also created a whole comedy pattern which was followed by a big amount of theatrical culture. To finish with, it would be worthwhile to focus on further studies regarding the factor *contaminatio* related to the historical development of theatre and the influences the playwrights have had and still have among each other.

Key words: Latin comedy, Elizabethan comedy, *contaminatio*, Plautus, Shakespeare, *Menaechmi*, *The Comedy of Errors*.

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Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin wrote that "there are no voiceless words that belong to no one. Each word contains voices that are sometimes infinitely distant, unnamed, almost impersonal [...], almost undetectable, and voices resounding nearby and simultaneously" (Miola 1). Thus, it could be said that every literary work has traces of earlier works and will track on pieces of the future.

The aim of this paper is to find how Latin comedy, and especially Plautus' *Menaechmi* influenced Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. This work intends to determine the extent to which Shakespeare's play is influenced by Latin literature as well as by Plautus' works. The paper also focuses on the influence each play has from the perspective of the literary method called *contaminatio*, which has been attached to Roman playwrights but may be also applied to Shakespeare and many literature authors in general.

Furthermore, it must be noted that Plautus being a Roman playwright from the second and third century BC and Shakespeare an Elizabethan writer belonging to the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, it is marvellous how two plays with such a similitude can be so well adapted in so distant times. What is more, they still cause laughter nowadays thousands and hundreds of years after they were written, and hence, humour codes which functioned more than two thousand years back also work in our times. The attempt of trying to find the reason for such a success has been the source of inspiration to write this paper and it constitutes the essence of the work.

For that, I will firstly set the background of each work. Presenting the Roman and Elizabethan Comedy and the authors themselves. Then, I will develop a comparative analysis between *Menaechmi* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

1. Roman comedy

1.1. Origins of Roman Literature, Theatre, and Comedy

Roman literature began in the Early Republican period, which lasted from the beginnings of the Roman Republic, 509 BC, until the year 90 BC. Based on the "Chronological Table of Important Dates in Latin Literature and History to AD 200" made by Harrison (ix), the first documented work of Latin literature we nowadays preserve is written by the Greek author Livius Andronicus (c. 240 - 207 BC). He is known, amongst other things, for his translation of Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin (Moore, *Roman Theatre*). This is how Latin Literature began, adapting Greek works into Latin, and so did Roman Theatre. In fact, Moore (*Roman Theatre* 1) defines theatre as the "forefront" of the cultural development of Latin literature. However, some experts believe that Roman literature did not begin with Livius Andronicus. They suggest that taking into account the level of complexity a successful performance requires, the first documented Roman play cannot be the first written one (Goldberg).

The Roman historian Livy (c. 59 BC - AD 17), author of *Ab Urbe Condita*, a work which narrates Roman history, highlighted two important dates in his chronological scheme. The first one is the year 364 BC, which accounts for Roman's first theatrical experience: a performance played by Etruscan dancers and a pipe-player. The second one is set in 240 BC, when, at a festival, Livius Andronicus put on a tragedy and a comedy the previously created elements of the dramatic plot (Goldberg).

Since Livius Andronicus, in Rome's Early Republican period, there have been several playwrights whose works we nowadays preserve. Perhaps, the most important figures are T. Maccius Plautus (c. 264 - c. 184) and P. Terentius Afer (c. 190 - 159). Nevertheless, there were other authors worth mentioning, for instance, Gnaeus Naevius and Quintus Ennius. (Panayotakis).

The plays were first performed on temporary stages and later on permanent stages. In this way, theatre began to find its way in Roman culture and society. Plays were part of the recognized festivals called *ludi* (games). Thus, each year in Rome, there

were twenty-five to thirty performance days. Some of the most popular examples given by Moore (*Roman Theatre*) and Marshall are *ludi Romani*, *ludi Plebeii*, and *ludi Megalenses*. According to Livy, *ludi scaenici* ('theatrical shows') were first introduced in 194 BC in the *ludi Megalenses* and this coincides with the time when Plautus' plays were performed.

Moving back to the origins of Roman theatre, it must be mentioned that drama was an imported genre (Panayotakis). As Rome was militarily successful and victorious amongst its nearby lands, it was a "nation without a strong tradition of theatrical performance" (Panayotakis 131). Hence, Roman playwrights followed the steps of Greek authors, especially of those from the Hellenistic culture. For instance, in comedy, Terence's *Phormio* comes from the Greek play *The Petitioner* by Apollodorus, and Plautus' *Bacchides* is based on the Greek New Comedy *Dis Exapatôn* by Menander. It is worth noting that Plautus was distinguished since he used to add numerous self-made contributions to his Latin versions, such as changing the characters' names, the metric, the characterisation, and the play's division (Panayotakis).

1.2. Greek influences and New Comedy

It is clear that Greek culture highly influenced Latin culture in many aspects. Thus, Greek comedy also contributed to the construction of Roman comedy. Greek plays known as New Comedy were the most important type of play within this genre, and authors, such as Menander, Philemon and Diphilus belonged to it (Panayotakis). In the plays' presentations, Romans used to introduce their plays as an adaptation based on the original Greek version. The example given by Marshall (2) says: "huic Graece nomen est Thensauro fabulae: Philemo scripsit, Plautus vertit barbae" (The name of this play in Greek is *Thensaurus*, "The Treasure"; Philemon wrote it, Plautus made it Latin).

According to Panayotakis' (131), New Comedy is "a type of five-act drama cultivated mainly after the death of Alexander The Great (323 BC)" and Romans followed its features concerning structural and thematic motifs. However, as Marshall stated, Greek theatre had to be altered in order to be successful in Roman society, and, thus, it could be said that Romans were innovative in this genre. According to

Panayotakis, the most remarkable change was the disappearance of the choral interludes. This means that Roman comedies were not interrupted by a break, as they were in the Greek ones. However, as the exception to the rule, in Plautus' *Bacchides*, a pipe-player entertained the audience before a scene. This does not mean that music disappeared from Roman comedy, in fact, music played an important role. Romans used to benefit from the contrast between *cantica* (rhythmical patterns led by music and used by Plautus but not by Terence) and *diverbia*, a term defined by Livy which referred to the spoken parts of the play. In this way, "they serve[d] to stress the emotional atmosphere of a scene" (Panayotakis 134).

Roman adaptations were well received in their society. It must be taken into account that, as I have mentioned before, the plays were performed in a context where there was a strong Greek cultural influence. Furthermore, they were not mere entertainment, as they also transferred strong moral values and traditional Roman disciplines. Hence, these facts contributed to Roman comedy's success. Nevertheless, this success was not because the audience admired the complex way Latin playwrights adapted Greek plays. The Roman citizens could not compare the plays they watched to the period in which Greek ones had been performed, but they rather compared them to other playwrights of their time, and due to this comparison, the Roman authors achieved their success (Panayotakis).

1.3. Fabulae Palliatae

At the same time Rome was being militarily successful, Roman New Comedy, *fabulae palliatae*, was developing. *Fabulae palliatae* was a type of play in which actors used to dress *Pallia* (Greek cloak) and it was an adaptation from the original Greek play. As Marshall stated, it "reflected a sophisticated, cosmopolitan attitude shared by the Hellenistic Greek world" (1). Many Plautus' and Terence's plays are associated with it, so, it can be said that it was a well-known fable in the Early Republic of Rome.

Although *fabulae palliatae* was an important type of fable in Roman literature, it was not the only one, as *fabulae Atellanae* ('Atellan farces') and *fabulae togatae* (plays dressed in a toga) were also part of the genre (Panayotakis). Additionally, another

highly influential genre, particularly to Plautus, was the Hellenistic mime. It is worth mentioning that none of the ancient mime performances correspond to the current mute mime performances.

1.4. Features of Roman Comedy

Many features contribute to a comedy play and in the next sections, I will take a closer look at each of the aspect that a play contains.

1.4.1. Stage

As I have mentioned before, there were two types of stages: temporary and permanent. The first permanent stage was built by Pompey in the year 55 BC, a couple of years after Plautus and Terence had lived. Thus, all stages were temporary before the year 55 BC. Perhaps, one of the reasons was that the leader did not want citizens to go to the theatre, as they thought "spending too much time in the theatre would corrupt the populace" (Moore, *Roman Theatre* 9). Temporary stages only required two elements: a place for the audience and a stage where the play could be performed. Panayotakis indicates that stages were set in many different places all through the city and Moore (*Roman Theatre*) adds that in many cases they were set in front of temples or in forums. Hence, the actors and the play itself had to be flexible in order to adapt to the venue where it was going to be performed (Marshall).

1.4.2. Actors and audience

In Greek comedy times, it was an honour to be an actor, but this was not the case among Romans. In Roman society, actors belonged to a lower social class and were often slaves. Their citizen rights were reduced, for example, they could not do the military service. Together with prostitutes, gladiators and criminals, they belonged to the social status called *infamia*. In comedies, the only speaking actors were men, and women used to participate in plays, but they had a non-speaking role (Moore, *Roman Theatre*; Panayotakis).

The audience was an essential component in the theatre. As S. Bennet (qtd. in Marshall 79) said: "[A play] promises the audience two performances: one of the show

itself and the other is the experience of being in the theatre. To both performances is attached the expectation of pleasure". Moreover, in Roman theatre, the spectator played an active part. Their reactions influenced the actors, and, thus, a "mutual dependency" was created between them (Marshall 73). In some cases, the interaction between audience and actor was also part of the script, for instance, in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* (see Appendix A).

1.4.3. Props and costumes

Briefly defined, props, or stage properties, were "particular physical objects in a drama that create relationships: objects that are separable from their characters, the movements or transfer of which will be reflected in the dramatic action of the play" (Marshall 67). One of the props' purpose may have been to attract the audience's attention with the movement of an object from hand to hand. This can be seen in Plautus' play *Rudens*, in which the rope is the object catching the attention of the spectators. (Moore, *Roman Theatre*) (see Appendix B).

As Marshall indicates, costume played an important role in Roman comedy, among other reasons, because it gave the name to the genre *fabulae palliatae. Pallia* were Greek cloak actors used to wear and due to them spectators perceived that the character was Greek. Moreover, due to costumes, the audience made associations with the character and the roles played. For instance, wearing a *petatus* (a particular type of hat) gave a clue that the character may have arrived from a long journey. Actors also used to wear masks in both Greek and Roman comedies.

1.4.4. Metre

Regarding metre, a wide variation of it can be identified in Roman comedies. This is reflected in Plautus' plays, as he is distinguished due to his use of different metrical patterns in different plays. These distinctions in metres were used to cause diverse emotions in spectators and, usually, they were accompanied by music (Marshall). Two types of metres can be distinguished: stichic and non-stichic. In stichic metre "the same verse form [...] is used for many consecutive verses" (Moore, *Roman*

Theatre 36) and it was the main type of metre used by Plautus and Terence. However, in the non-stichic metre verses can change from line to line (Marshall).

2. Titus Maccius Plautus

Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 264 - c. 184) is considered one of the most imitated playwrights in the whole history of comedy and he is also esteemed as the first known professional playwright. He was highly criticised by Horace (a Roman lyric poet of the first century BC), amongst other things, because he thought Plautus had been a playwright merely for money. Nonetheless, centuries after, he was a source of inspiration for authors such as Shakespeare and Molière (Segal). He also was appreciated by ancient world citizens and, historically, he has been a phenomenon in the world of theatre. As Segal (2) stated: "Plautus' popularity reached such phenomenal proportions that his very name acquired a magic aura".

2.1. Life and works

As stated by Panayotakis, it is not certain that Plautus lived. His life's facts are unreliable because ancient biographers wrote his biography based on the plays he wrote. For instance, according to old sources, he was born in Sarsina, north-central Italy, but this fact is taken from his work *Mostelaria*. It is said that he had a successful playwright career, but, as he lost all the money he had earned, he had to work in a mill. Yet, he did not stop writing plays (Moore, *Roman Theatre*). He may have been also a member of a troupe which used to perform his plays.

Marshall, Panayotakis, and Moore (*Roman Theatre*) believe that a number of 21 Plautus' plays have survived until nowadays. His plays were written in cc. 205-184 BC and they were performed, at least, until the end of the Republic. According to Panayotakis and Marshall, in Ancient Rome, more than 130 plays were considered to be written by him. However, after being closely examined by the scholar, only 21 of them were selected to be his, for example, *Amphitruo*, *Asinaria*, *Aulularia*, *Bacchies*, *Captivi*, *Menaechmi*, *Miles Gloriosus*, and *Mostellaria*.

No other Roman playwright in Plautus' times gained the popularity he had, not even Terence, and his works were very well received in his times. Thus, it could be said that Plautus adapted very well to the Roman society (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger). As we will see later, his plays also fit in Elizabethan society, in Shakespeare's times.

2.2. Greek influences

As aforementioned, Greek New Comedy highly influenced Roman comedy and, in this manner, Latin playwrights developed the *fabula palliatae*. Together with other authors (for instance, Terence), Plautus' plays are also considered to be within this genre and they were mainly based on Greek New Comedy playwrights such as Menander (Panayotakis). Many researchers suggest that Plautus is directly related to him, for example, Plautus *Cistellaria* is an adaptation of Menander's *Synaristosai* (Moore, *Roman Theatre*).

In addition, Plautus did not translate Greek New Comedy plays, as he altered, adapted and changed many features in each play (Panayotakis). Plautus himself defined this practice as *vertere* or *vortere* (to twist). Compared to Terence, who used to translate at least one scene *verbum de verbo* ('word for word'), "Plautus' playwriting is described with the prosaic word *fecit* (made)" (Marshall 4). Marshall stated that as in Plautus' adaptations improvisation was highly relevant, they are "completely different [...] from his explicit model, Greek New Comedy" (257).

Therefore, it can be said that he took many liberties in adapting Greek plays to Roman ones, and, thus, created completely new works of art. For instance, Plautus' plays' dialogues are very extent compared to the original ones. They include many puns which are only possible in Latin, characteristics of Roman everyday life and wide realizations of characters such as the clever-slave. These are details which made Plautus pleasant and brought him close to the Roman audience (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger).

An important term which must be mentioned is *contaminatio*. In the *Dictionary of World Literature*, Shipley defines it as the "method of dramatic composition of adaptation in the *fabula palliatae*; fusing two or more [Greek] originals, or parts of

them, for the production of one [Roman] comedy". Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* and *Poenulus*, two examples given by Fraenkel, are put "together out of two Greek plays with many similar fundamentals and situations" (180). Apart from Plautus, Terence attested this feature in the works of Naevius and Ennius, in fact, Shipley mentions Naevius as the first playwright using this technique. Duckworth highlights the next plays in which *contaminatio* can be identified: *Amphitruo*, *Casina*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Poenulus*, *Pseudolus*, and *Stichus*.

Besides *contaminatio*, Plautus innovated in terms of structure, as he suppressed the typical Greek New Comedy five act structure with four choral interludes which had nothing to do with the play's action. He substituted this model by alternating *cantica* and *diverbia*. In this case, the *cantica* is part of the action (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger).

2.3. Language

Concerning Plautus' language, many scholars consider him linguistically talented, amongst other things, due to his unique writing style. He had Greek author's influences but his stylistic and comic language was not an adaptation of Menander's style, instead, it was created by himself or based on Latin authors (Fortson).

Panayotakis positively defines Plautus' humour as original and exaggerated, with many rhetorical devices, neologisms, elevated vocabulary, and colloquialisms. Moore (*Roman Theatre*) adds that in Plautus' plays alliteration and assonance techniques are highlighted. For example, in a line of *Mostellaria* it can be appreciated (qtd. in Moore, *Roman Theatre* 47): "I**u**ppiter **s**upremus **s**ummis opib**u**s atque ind**u**striis" (see Appendix C).

It is worth mentioning that due to the use of numerous rhetorical figures, the language of his comedies distances from the vernacular one (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger). However, he is recognised for using colloquial language (Segal) which Forston defines as the "colloquial and Archaic Latin of the third and early second century BC" (1). According to Bellido and Ramírez de Verger, the usage of grammatical, lexical and syntactic resources is to make the audience laugh and that is why colloquialisms could

be seen in the following expressions: insults, threats, greetings, farewells, diminutives, sayings, etc. The author notes that the true Plautus' *vis comica* resides in his majestic use of the language and this is what distinguishes Plautus from other Latin authors.

Plautus not only used his native language, but he also used foreign languages. For instance, he used Greek language for characters who belonged to a higher social class. Another feature which makes Plautus distinctive is that his audience was not only educated people, but also citizens belonging to every social class. Thus, the Greek language he used may have been understood by every spectator. Moreover, together with Punic language, Plautus may have utilised Greek to make the play look more realistic (Albicker).

2.4. Characters in Plautus' plays

As we have seen so far, Plautus was innovative in many aspects of Roman comedy, and so was he concerning character in his plays. As Moore (*The Theatre of Plautus*) notes: "some of the funniest moments occur when characters fail to win the alliance they desire with the spectators" (25). As above-mentioned, the actors had direct communication with the audience and they also used to try to persuade the spectators in order to believe what they said and caught their attention (see Appendix D).

Plautus used stock characters in his plays. They refer to the character reappearing from play to play, and, thus, the spectators could predict some of their characteristics. It is worth noting that both genres (Greek New Comedy and *fabulae Atellanae*) in which Plautus was inspired on made use of them. As Moore (*Roman Theatre* 55) writes: "much of the fun of watching a Roman comedy comes from simultaneously recognizing the familiar features of stock characters and observing how characters transcend the expectations produce by their character types". Perhaps, the most typical type of stock characters are the 'Young man in love', 'Clever slave', and 'Harsh old man'.

The names of the characters are also particular in Plautus' plays. Almost all the names are Greek. He sometimes used typical Greek names but in many cases, he invented Greek-sounding names. In this way, he brought extra humour to the play

(Moore, *Roman Theatre*) and those names had a meaning which Plautus made puns on. This is another case in which the playwright expected the audience to understand those Greek words, even if they had many different backgrounds (Albicker). An interesting fact is that in most of the cases the character who represented the Parasite had onomatopoeic names in order "to suit the characters" (Armeling 3). For instance, the parasite Saturio comes from the Greek word "Satur", which means "full of food".

Plautus did not follow the steps that, according to Horace, an appropriate Roman must have followed: a good citizen, worker, and wealth (see Appendix E). Instead, he admitted that his characters do not behave in the way a responsible Roman should have to. For example, many sons want their parents to be dead and many husbands also want their wives to be so. As written by Segal (57): "the characters of Plautus display an attitude diametrically opposed to the markedly Roman".

Plautus used to play with the relationship between the slave and his master. Slaves were naturally in an inferior position towards their masters and they had no rights, so, masters could do whatever they wanted with their slaves. Plautus inverted this relationship and he ascented the slave over his master (Segal). Thus, he created a new society where the ruler is not chosen by birth. Perhaps, the Clever Slave is the most notable Plautine character. He was the one pulling strings in the story. Segal (15) claims that "the most common dilemma presented in Plautine comedy is that of a young man *amans et egens*, "in love and insolvent", turning to his clever slave for salvation". The Clever Slave's aim was not money, instead, he cared about his status and the way he was addressed (see Appendix F).

Another relevant character in Plautus' plays was the Parasite. This character appears in eight of Plautus' 21 plays. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the Parasite originally was the "person eating at another's table". He played an important role in plays such as *Curculio*, *Persa*, *Menaechmi*, and *Captivity* (Damon). The Parasite was a comic element which was introduced entirely to amuse the audience (Armeling).

In Plautus' plays, there was always space for agelasts. Segal states that after the Clever Slave, the Spoilsport is Plautus' favourite figure. The Greed is obsessed with profit and is a caricature of the typical materialistic Roman. The most well-known

example is Euclio in *Aulularia*. The Pimp was the most common agelast figure and, in the story, he was always punished. This character "displays the worst anti-comedy attitudes, namely ill humour and greed" (Segal 79).

3. Elizabethan Comedy

3.1. Introduction to Elizabethan Comedy

The Elizabethan Era (1558-1603) is considered to be one of the history's greatest periods in theatre and it is regarded as part of the Golden Age of English drama. One of the reasons for that success given by Salgādo is the opening of public playhouses. After that, "occurred the greatest efflorescence of dramatic writing England has ever seen" (Salgādo 37). Authors such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, two well-known playwrights worldwide, belong to this time.

The plays were performed for different purposes. As it was in Roman society, in Elizabethan Era, festivals time was play time for both religious and secular plays (Dillon). Another purpose for writing a play was to criticise society and this type of comedy is denominated as Satirical or Critical Comedy. As quoted in Salgādo (56), "critical comedy represents the dominant European tradition from classical times onwards". John Marston and Ben Jonson were two satirical playwrights of the Elizabethan Times. In a similar vein, as well as in the Ancient Rome, theatre was very present in education, as they used to transmit moral lessons through several plays.

As we are going to further later, Elizabethan playwrights were highly influenced by Classic playwrights such as Plautus and Terence as well as sixteenth-century Italian comedy. Gay (5) distinguishes the typical Italian comedy called *commedia dell'arte*, which, as Clubb cited, is the work of travelling playing companies that "ransacked the literary plays for materials for their improvised three-act scenarios or for their own occasional five-act scripted plays" (qtd. in Gay 5). The author also observes that *commedia dell'arte* is a distant resultant of Roman Comedy. Italian troupes belonging to *commedia dell'arte* companies visited England in the 1570-80s, and, in this way, influenced English theatre.

3.2. Roman influences

Throughout history, previously mentioned Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence have been highly influential in Western civilization. As Miola (2) notes: "Plautus and Terence bequeathed to posterity the essential genetic make-up of their genre, dramatic comedy" and they "set the standards for achievement in comic drama" (8). Some well-known authors who were influenced by Plautus and Terence are Machiavelli, Molière, Vega, Shakespeare, and Wilde.

The voices of Plautus and Terence, as well as Greek New Comedy, constituted comedy in the Elizabethan era. The first known classic play performed in court is Plautus' *Menaechmi* which was played in Ferrara in 1486. Dillon (148) highlighted that this is a relevant detail as "their performance at court signalled their arrival into more mainstream culture". According to the author, classic features of comedy adapted in a really appropriate manner in Elizabethan society and they were well received by the spectators. These are some of the mentioned characteristics which are present in Elizabethan comedy: the five-act model, some characters such as the boasting soldier or the clever slave, and the "concluding with the resolution of errors and misunderstandings" (Dillon 148-9).

Peck & Coyle also mention other features: the unity of time and place, specific plots, and dramatic rules. Examples of imitating Plautus' plots and Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, which is based on *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*, and Jonson's *The Case is Altered*, which combines *Captivi* and *Aulularia*. However, playwrights used to introduce English characters too. For instance, in Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, there are typical Roman characters such as a braggart soldier and a parasite, but, the leading figure is Dame Christian Custance, an English widow. By the same token, other English elements are also present in the Renaissance Theatre. For example, in the play *Damon and Pythisas* by Richard Edwards, classical elements are combined with certain conventions of English farce (Baugh).

Classic plays were also present in Renaissance education and this helped in the development of English comedy at that time. They were used to transmit current moral

lessons. Therefore, the citizens were familiar with Roman comedy, which determined the course in the development of Elizabethan theatre along with society (Miola). Some examples given by Baugh where Plautus' direct influence can be noticed are the following ones: the above-mentioned *The Case is Altered* by Ben Jonson; the adaptation of John Dryden's *Amphitryon*; and Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*.

It is worth mentioning that as well as in Roman comedy, *contaminatio* was also a notable feature of Elizabethan comedy. As I have mentioned in Plautus' section, *contaminatio* is the combination of more than one previously written plays. Many authors such as Miola observe that many Renaissance playwrights, to write their plays, inspired in several sources apart from Roman authors, for instance, Italian prose writers, medieval literature, folklore, or romance. Hence, Latin theatre was not the only antecedent for Elizabethan writers. In fact, Bishop (15) considers *contaminatio* a characteristic of the *Errors*: "In then reads *The Comedy of Errors* as an experiment in transformative *contaminatio* between a romantic drama of wandering, Plautine dramatic linearity and Plautine models of sacramental community".

3.3. Features of Elizabethan Comedy

3.3.1. Places of performance

Concerning the spaces where plays were performed in Elizabethan age, the theatre could be "any place where an audience could be gathered, from a town hall to a barn" (Baugh 446). The plays, being religious or secular, could be performed, for instance, in churches, streets, playhouses, or churchyards, that is to say, in front of all sorts and conditions of people, exactly as in times of Plautus (Gay). The first playhouses were built at the end of the sixteenth century. Most of them were constructed in London, but, companies also used to go on tour through England (Dillon). Some renowned Elizabethan playhouses are the Theatre (built in 1576), Red Bull (c.1605), Swan (c. 1595), and Cross Keys (Baugh; Kathman). The Globe (1599) is directly related to Shakespeare, as it is said that the playwright used to write his plays having in mind that they were going to be performed there. The Globe's audience was diverse, "from earls to beggars" (Gurr 195).

3.3.2. Actors and Companies

By and large, the companies were composed of male actors. Even the female characters were played by men, but, in some cases, women also took part in the show (Dilllon). In England, they were not allowed to perform in a play, but, as Trussler (70) stated: "It is ironic that, in an age when women were forbidden to act, their Queen was a great performer - and a lover of pageants and other spectacles". However, Korda considers that the version of 'all-male stage' is relative. Some studies show that women also were part of the theatre. Some of them as performers, others working on the production of a play and even some such as Elizabeth Cary and Mary Wroth working as playwrights.

Initially, the companies used to respond to an invitation to perform a play, but, due to the building of permanent playhouses, the theatre industry enlarged and companies took control of the commerce. In this way, they were the ones inviting spectators to watch a play in exchange for a price (Lancashire).

3.3.3. Audience

Society played an important role in the construction of the plays, and, hence, the audience also was of a great importance. To a certain extent, the success of a comedy play was measured based on the audience: the more the audience laughed, the more successful the play would be. In a similar vein, Jeremy Lopez considers the audience responsible for the success or failure of Early Modern plays (Steggle). Castiglione also speaks of "the disposition of the minds of the hearers" and he identifies the audience as the most vital aspect of the comedy (as qtd. in Gay 2).

Moreover, Elizabethan playwrights occasionally used to interact with the audience while the play was performed. For example, in *Wily Beguilde*'s Prologue, it can be seen how the characters inform the audience that they will laugh: "Be still a while, and ere we goe, / Weele make your eies with laughter flowe" (Steggle 61). Playwrights used to consider the audience's contribution as part of the play. Thus, the audience was neither silent nor passive. As in Roman Theatre, interaction with the

spectators was important for the playwrights and the audience used to laugh and weep freely depending on the emotions the play conveyed.

3.3.4. Characters

According to Coulter many Elizabethan characters are shaped based on classical influences and the author highlights some of them: the hero, master and servant, *pater familias* (old man), aged *lena*, slave, and braggart soldier. A relevant character which has played an important role in the history of comedy is the clown. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the clown as "an entertainer who wears funny clothes, has a painted face, and makes people laugh by performing tricks and behaving in a silly way". It is clear that the character has evolved throughout history, but, the purpose of the character still remains: to make the audience laugh, and, hence, create a bridge between the audience and stage (Gay).

The clown in Elizabethan Theatre was characterized in many ways. Gay distinguishes several types of Elizabethan clowns: Firstly, the Clever Slave or the Servant (typical in Plautus too), which is the case of Dromios in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, is a typical figure in Roman comedy and Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and it "indulges in witty exchanges with his master and others, but is also subject to constant physical abuse, though the genre of farce can make this seem merely comical" (Gay 8). Secondly, the country clown is an English created character "whose view of the world is entirely restricted to his local activities" (8). Related to it is the non-rural worker and it can be represented in many manners: the castle porter, a grave-digger, a pimp or the community constable. Its function is to criticize the high society in a satirical and comic way. Finally, the Fool is "the most consciously witty of Shakespeare's clown roles. [...] His role is to deflate, through wit (at times obscure, perhaps deliberately so), the more pretentious attitudes of those in power" (8-9).

Another relevant character is the Vice. Originally, it appeared in Plautus and Terence's plays and it is also present in Elizabethan works. Usually, it was the leader of the troupe and a skillful actor, and it appeared in a high comic part. According to Dillon (90), "aspects of the Vice are visible in both the clowns and the villains of later drama".

As in classic theatre, in Elizabethan plays, there was also a mingle of king and clowns, very typical in Shakespeare (Dillon).

There are more typical Elizabethan characters, but due to the limited number of words I will not look into that topic in depth.

4. William Shakespeare

4.1. Life and works

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, a village located in the rural centre of England. His precise date of birth is not known, but, there is evidence showing he was baptized in Stratford Trinity Church on April 26 of 1564 (Baugh). He died in the 23rd of April in 1616 (Dutton). He was the eldest son of Mary Arden and John Shakespeare, who owned a successful glove maker. Due to his father's occupation, William Shakespeare could go to university. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway and had three children. One of them was named Hamnet, from whom derived the well-known Shakespearian character Hamlet the Dane (Baugh).

Roston points out that by the year 1592 he was already established in London, where he immediately immersed himself in the world of theatre. Not only was he a playwright, but also an actor (Trussler). His first published work was a tragedy called *Titus Andronicus*, in 1594, and, according to the "Chronology of Comedies" made by Macdonald, *The Comedy of Errors* was the first written one, composed between the years 1592 and 1594. It must be taken into account that numerous of Shakespeare's comedies were composed in a rich English cultural time, the 1590s (Gay). It is worth mentioning that Shakespeare also published non-dramatic poems such as *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594 (Roston).

4.2. The Language of Shakespeare

In the following section, I will delve into what makes the language of Shakespeare so special. In the words of Gibson (140), Shakespeare's language is "powerfully-energetic, vivid, sinewy, active, physical, robust, sensuous, volatile,

immediate and reflective" and Roston highlights the special quality Shakespeare had to make complementary comedy and tragedy "in a manner which deepened and enriched the effectiveness of each" (177). Another characteristic is his varied language which represents different degrees of formality, intimacy, social class, and regional origins. For instance, Scottish, Welsh and Irish accents are present in his works (Crystal, *Shakespeare: an Oxford guide*). This is compared to Plautus' use of Greek language in his plays and Coulter suggests that they are written in the same tone.

Regarding Shakespeare's vocabulary, the expert Crystal (*Shakespeare: an Oxford guide*) points out the importance of it in several of his studies in the two works. On the one hand, there are many words in Early Modern English which are still used in Modern English, thus, in many Shakespearian extracts there is no much trouble in understanding them (see Appendix G). On the other hand, there may be difficulties in understanding some passages. For instance, in lines 4.1.96 of *Romeo and Juliet* (qtd. in Crystal, *Shakespeare: an Oxford guide* 69) there are words which are not easily apprehended: "A cold and drowsy humour; for no pulse" (see Appendix H).

Another difficulty may be due to the use of Classical Greek or Roman mythological elements which the reader might not be familiar with. For example, in the sentence "Venus smiles not in a house of tears" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 4.1.8), there is no linguistic problem, but in order to understand the sentence, one must know who Venus is (Crystal, *Shakespeare: an Oxfod guide*).

Crystal (*The Complete Works*) noted that Shakespeare's richness can also be seen in his particular use of prose and verse. Some plays such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are written almost entirely in prose, and others almost uniquely in verse, which is the case of *Richard II*. Furthermore, in plays like *Hamlet* and *The Comedy of Errors*, the playwright uses verse and prose as a matter of choice. Generally, verse is related to high social class, such as nobles and generals, while prose is related to low social class like clowns and tavern-frequenters. However, Shakespeare mixes verse and prose and their corresponding social classes. Crystal (*The Complete Works*) suggests that this fact is also associated with subject matter. Love, for instance, will mainly be treated in a verse form,

whereas ribaldry will be in a prose form (see Appendix I). Shakespeare's language is directly connected to Plautus' one and concerning metrical variation, it is related too.

4.3. Shakespeare's comedy

Based on the work of Gay, Shakespeare's comedy can be divided into three brands which influence on each other: farce, courtly lovers, and romantic comedy. In the following paragraphs, we will have a look at each of them.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a farce is "a comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterization and ludicrously improbable situations" (OEL). Gay states that the farce of Shakespeare illustrates a connection with the world of romance in his earliest comedies. As G. K. Hunter cited (qtd. in Gay 17):

> The mode of farce… is one in which the complex of plot and character id dominated by its plot aspect, so that characters are shown making series of ad hoc assertions of self against the dominant process of social events moving inexorably through time… The unceasing and manic energy of farce in these plays comes from their central characters' unrelenting determination to reject complicity with the world around them. But… [t]he unity of the play's world demands that the opponents finally admit that they belong to one another… It is necessarily late in the action when the protagonists discover that complicity is possible and rewarding. But the audience has always known this.

Concerning courtly lovers, The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Preminger et al.) defines that "the courtly lover idealizes his beloved; she, his sovereign lady, occupies an exalted position above him. His feelings for her ennoble him and make him more worthy; her beauty of body and soul makes him long for union with her not for passion's sake but as a means of achieving the ultimate in moral excellence" (Gay 35). This idea of courtly love was highly influential since the medieval period in English society and it was used for satire in the late sixteenth century which belongs to Shakespeare's times (see Appendix J).

By the same token, in romantic comedy, the conventional stories of young lovers are parodied. Lovers end up together, but, before, they go through several obstacles, which, most of them, come from internal psychological barriers rather than external problems. As we have already mentioned, this also was a feature of Plautinian comedy. It is worth noting that, for the first time in Shakespeare's plays, women's emotional experience is the focus of the play. Shakespeare's romantic comedies are considered to be *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, all of them written in the years 1599 and 1600. If we compare it to nowadays productions, there is a clear parallelism with Hollywood films, as they are also stories of a couple who undergo several problems to end up together (Gay).

4.4. Roman and Plautus' influence

As above-mentioned, throughout history, Plautus and Terence set the standards in comic drama. Thus, they must not be forgotten when speaking about Shakespeare. John Davis, for instance, refers to him as 'our English Terence' and Robert S. Miola considers him a kind of 'heavy Plautus' in many aspects (Miola). It is worth saying that Plautus adapted very well to Shakespeare's times and he was well received by the audience. The purpose of this section is to see how influential classic features are in Shakespeare's plays.

As Martindale in the introduction of his work, states: "The classics are of central importance in Shakespeare's works and in the structure of his imagination". This influence can be seen in many of Shakespeare's plays such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare, throughout his career, relies on New Comedic dramaturgy based on Roman playwrights (Riehle). Some of the plays, e.g. *The Comedy of Errors*, are a direct adaptation of another Roman play. However, the other plays' adaptation is indirectly noticeable. As aforementioned, there are many Plautus' comedies which have been the source of other works, nonetheless, Miola highlights two Plautus' works as widely imitated and prototype creators: *Miles Gloriosus* and *Rudens*, which "created a vast lexicon of theatrical possibility" (18).

There are many aspects in which Plautus' influence can be seen reflected in Shakespeare. The similarity of the characters is one of the examples, as the following characters are present in both Shakespeare's and Plautus' works. The structure of New Comedy is also used by both authors: a prologue followed by *protasis*, *epitasis*, and *catastrophe* with anagnorisis and peripeteia (Miola). The study made by Miola lists the key aspects of the New Comedy presence in Shakespeare in four categories: "New Comedic errors, intrigue, *alazoneia*, and romance" (18):

> In his errors plays - *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* - Shakespeare translates Plautine confusion into moral folly, and romanticizes classical eros, particulary by expanding the roles of women. In *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Much Ado About Nothing* he delights in intrigue but also explores its limitation and darker potential. The *alazoneia* plays - *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *All's Well That Ends Well* - hark back to the ancient conception, traditions, and expectations. The romances - *Pericles* and *The Tempest* - fluently blend New Comedic motifs and configuration with other sources to produce a *comoedia sacra* and to effect a redefinition of comedic *tyche*.

5. *Menaechmi* and *The Comedy of Errors*

After presenting Plautus, Shakespeare, and their corresponding comedy background, let us delve into two works which are a model of the influence Plautus had on Shakespeare: *Menaechmi* (written by Plautus in the 3rd century BC) and *The Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare's play first performed by his troupe on 28 December 1594). By and large, *The Comedy of Errors*, the only classic comedy Shakespeare wrote (Watt), is considered to be highly motivated by Plautus' *Menaechmi* (and *Amphitruo*). Riehle points out that the majority of the elements highlighted in Shakespeare's play are derived from Plautus: structure, characterization, language, naming, metre, etc. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will develop a comparative analysis of the mentioned plays.

In *Menaechmi*'s Prologue, Plautus narrates the story of the twin brothers who are separated at the age of seven. Their father Moschus, took one of them, Menaechmus, on a trip to Tarentum and he lost the child. Menaechmus ended living in Epidamnus,

adopted by a wealthy merchant from there. Meanwhile, due to the grief the family had for the lost of the boy, the other twin Sosicles was renamed as Menaechmus. After a few years, Menaechmus Sosicles, together with his slave Messenio, decides to find his lost brother. After six years of wandering, they arrive in Epidamnus, and this is when the protagonist characters appear in the scene. The five-act play which follows to the Prologue is a comedy based on the confusions due to the identical twins, who, without knowing it, are in the same city. After numerous mistake situations, the play ends when the twins meet each other (Plautus, *Menaechmi*).

In *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon and Emilia had two identical children: "And, which was strange, the one so like the other / As could not be distinguished but by names." (1.1.51-52). Egeon brought other twins so that each of his sons had a servant. In an unlucky voyage, the family was separated. Thus, Emilia, one of the sons and his servant ended up living in Ephesus, while Egeon with the other two members landed in Syracuse. After some years, Antipholus, the son living in Syracuse went with his servant Dromio to find his lost brother, but, what they did not know was that Antipholus' and Dromio's twins had the same name. The play is set in Ephesus, where, as in *Menaechmi*, being the entire family there brings nothing but confusion. This play also closes when the whole partners meet each other (Shakespeare).

5.1. Mistake of identity

As the title of Shakespeare's play betrays itself, one of the most relevant themes in both plays is the mistake of identity. As cited by Miola (21): "'Errors', from *errare*, 'to wander', suggests mistakes rather than deceits, accidents rather than intrigues, humorous confusions rather than ridiculous vices". As we are going to see in this section, the two plays are full of errors and confusions.

Before going in depth on this topic, it is worth noting that the theme of identity has been widely used in New Comedy. It has provided enjoyment for centuries, even when Plautus used it, it had already been used by other authors such as Antiphanes, Alexis, Aristophon, and Menander (Moorhead). However, as explained by Riehle, Plautus himself was the first author introducing the loss of human identity into world

literature, he even wrote *Amphitruo*, a play which deals with a double loss of identity of two couples: Amphitryon, Jupiter, Hercules, and Mercury. As we are going to see later, together with *Menaechmi*, this play was a source of inspiration for Shakespeare to write *The Comedy of Errors* (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger). Not only Shakespeare was aware of the mentioned theme, for Renaissance playwrights it was also significant, as it was an age when human identity became considerably relevant (Riehle).

Thus, in *Menaechmi* and *The Comedy of Errors*, the character are constantly bewildered due to the existeance of the twins. Even the closest character to them gets confused when she or he is addressing the incorrect one. Notwithstanding, the audience constantly knows which character is playing, and, as Arnott observes, this fact increases the humour of the play (Moorhead).

In order that audience distinguished each twin, there is an object (a prop) in each play so that the audience in every moment knows who of them should have it. In *Menaechmi*, it is the 'mantle' or *palla* mentioned in the example, and, in *The Comedy of Errors*, the object is a chain (Moorhead).

According to Maguire (14), "the characters in *Errors* assume, not unnaturally, that name confers identity". When Syracusan Antipholus meets Adriana for the first time, he does not know her, but she does know him, and she calls him by his name. Nevertheless, as the play goes on and confusions increase, both Syracusans begin to hesitate if the name and identity are really synonymous. For instance, Dromio shows this doubt at 3.2.73-73: "Do you know me, sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?" (Shakespeare). Hence, "the duplicatability and detachability of names, the fact that they can have multiple referents, prevents them being a reliable marker of identity" (Maguire 15). However, in *Menaechmi*, Messenio justifies that the citizens in Epidemnus know the name of Menaechmus by simply telling him that the courtesans of Epidamnus want to "pellexerunt" or seduce (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 343) the foreigners and, in this way, he settles the discussion. Thus, the twins never hesitate about who they are. In every confusion situation, each of them denies what the others tell they have done, for example (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 396) Menaechmus Sosicles denies laughing at Erotium: "Etiam nunc nego." (I deny it still) (see Appendix K).

Moreover, in both plays, the foreigner twins Menaechmus Sosicles and Antipholus of Syracuse take advantage of the situation, and in both cases, it happens when they meet their supposed beloved. After having a confusing conversation with Erotium, Menaechmus Sosicles decides to admit what Erotium says to him (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 418-9): "iam dudum, mulier, tibi / non imprudens advorsabar" (I kept contradicting you a while ago purposely, my girl) (see Appendix L).

Later on, Menaechmus Sosicles confesses this to the bewildered Messenio: "Tace, inquam / mihi dolebit, non tibi, si quid ego stulte fecero. / mulier haec stulta atque inscita est; quantum perspexi modo, / est hic praeda nobis." (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) (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 2.3.338-41). By the same token, in *The Comedy of Errors*, Antipholus of Syracuse finally accepts the invitation of Adriana to have dinner (Shakespeare 2.2.188-9): "Until I know this sure uncertainty, / I'll entertain the offered fallacy" (see Appendix M).

The most highlighted elements that Shakespeare adds to Plautus' play are the twin servants, Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse. It is probable that he took this idea from another Plautus' comedy *Amphitruo*, in which the identical masters and slaves appear (Watt), they are not brothers but gods embodied in the two protagonists as a replica (Plautus, *Amphitruo*). This addition "multiplies the possibilities of confusion and the number of its victims" (Withworth 19). Not only the servant confuses his master, but the master also confuses his servant. Moreover, in *Menaechmus* Messenio does not confuse his master until Act 5, while the citizens of Epidamnus are constantly bewildered. In *The Comedy of Errors* Antipholus of Syracuse is invited to have dinner by Dromio of Ephesus, whereas in *Menaechmi* the Courtesan invites Menaechmus Sosicles. In both cases, Antipholus and Menaechmus puzzled, but the bewilderment in the *Errors* is bigger because Antipholus thinks that his servant is inviting him to an unknown house.

5.2. Family roles

On the one hand, Plautus' story has two main actions: Menaechmus Sosicles looking for his brother, and, the love complications Menaechmus Epidamnus has (a very typical theme in *fabula palliatae*). Each brother is the protagonist of one of the two actions, and it becomes more and more tangled until the final resolution (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger). On the other hand, as aforementioned, *The Comedy of Errors*, also a twin searching for his lost brother, but, instead of Antipholus of Ephesus having merely love disputes as Menaechmus Epidamnus, all the characters move around the "strange but strong bonds of familiar relationships" (Gay 21) (see Appendix N).

As seen in the case above, Shakespeare, reinforces the family motif, which is central to romance. The addition of another servant is also related to it, as, in this way, he "adds another pair of brothers to be reunited in the play's family-romance finale" (Withworth 20). Moreover, comparing the couples in both plays, it is noticeable that in Shakespeare's play, the family is strengthened. In *Menaechmi*, the courtesan is given a name, Erotium, whereas the wife is not. Erotium appears in three scenes (Act 2, 3, and 4) and the wife does not appear until Act 4, thus, the wife has much fewer lines than Erotium. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the situation is reversed: the courtesan's role is reduced, as she only appears at 4.3 and her name is not known. Adriana instead, is called by her name, appears at 2.1 for the first time, and she is present in 5 scenes. She speaks much more than the courtesan, as she has 260 lines (Withworth).

As in *Menaechmi*, the wife in the *Errors* was jealous. Nevertheless, she also was a real woman who is agonized because she believes her husband may forsake her, and, hence, he confides her anguish to her sister. This again further highlights the family motif in Shakespeare's play. The relationship Antipholus of Ephesus has with the courtesan is not so close as the one between Menaechmus Epidamnus and Erotium is. The only time Antipholus goes to visit her to give her the chain he ordered for Adriana is provoked by his wife when she confuses him with his brother and does not allow him to enter home (Shakespeare). In *Menaechmi*, Menaechmus steals the robe from his wife to give it to the courtesan (Withworth).

5.3. Structure

Regarding the structure of the plays, both of them are divided into 5 Acts. However, *Menaechmi* has an extra act at the beginning which is the Prologue. The Prologue, as well as the first act of the *Errors*, begins with a *narratio*, in which the author narrates the past and presents some relevant facts of the present. But, there are some differences concerning the way the playwrights introduce their works. The main distinction is the voice of the narrator. In *Menaechmi*, the Prologue's narrator is an anonymous speaker. Thus, Plautus creates distance between the play and the audience. Apart from presenting the play, in these lines also the playwright and the setting are introduced: "This is the city of Epidamnus while this play is acting" (*Menaechmi* 72, qtd. in Miola 24). As it can be seen, the play is set in Epidamnus, but Athens is mentioned as it was considered to be the usual comic place: "Atque hoc poetae faciunt in comoediis: omnis res gestas esse Athenis autumant," (Now writers of comedy have this habit: they always allege that the scene of action is Athens) (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 7-8). The theatrical fiction is also highlighted, as just after mentioning Epidamnus, it follows: "when another play is performed it will become another city" (*Menaechmi* 73, qtd. in Miola 24).

In the *Errors*, the plot is presented through the conversation between Egeon and the Duke. Egeon is arrested for being a Syracusan who is in Ephesus. This act, together with the characters, are already part of the story of the past and the present. Hence, not emphasizing the theatrical fiction, the information is given transversally. The reason for arresting, for instance, is showed by the Duke in the next manner: "Nay, more: if any born at Ephesus / Be seen at Syracusan marts and fairs; / Again, if any Syracusan born / Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies," (Shakespeare 1.1.16-19).

The difference in theatrical fiction is remarkable also at the end of the play. In *Menaechmi*, the last lines of the play are Messenio asking the audience for applauses: "nunc, spectatores, valete et nobis clare plaudite." (Now, spectators, fare ye well and give us your loud applause) (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 1162). Differently, in *The Comedy of Errors*, Dromio of Ephesus says the last words addressing to his brother: "We came into the world like brother and brother, / And now let's go hand in hand, not one before

another." (Shakespeare 5.1.427-8). Thus, as well as in the Prologue, in these examples the play is closer to the audience in the *Errors* than in *Menaechmi*. The hand in hand exeunt of the Dromios shows "familial and general human solidarity" (Riehle 119). It is directly related to Roman virtues, so, it reveals how closely Shakespeare understood the nature of classical comedy (Riehle).

Concerning the metrical variation in the plays, *Menaechmi*, for the most part, is composed of lyric parts accompanied by a flute. A great part of it is recited in trochaic metre, for instance, the third scene of Act 1 or the fifth one of Act 5. Related to it, the play contains five *canticas* which are sung in trochaic rhythm too. One of them is recited by Menaechmus Epidamnus in Act 1, another by Erotium in Act 2, another one by Menaechmus Epidamnus in Act 4, and in Act 5 one by the Senex and another by Messenio. It should be noted that the play also has scenes that include iambic rhythm, as it is the case of the Prologue and the first two scenes of Act 2 (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger).

In Shakespeare's time, the most used metric pattern was the blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentametre) and it also appears in *The Comedy of Errors*. Nevertheless, in the play, there are more than one case in which the lines rhyme (Baugh). For example, in lines 22.1.34-5: "Are masters to their females, and their **lords**. / Then let your will attend on their acc**ords**." (see Appendix O).

In terms of metre, there is not any special pattern which is used generally in Shakespeare's plays. But, not all lines in *The Comedy of Errors* are written in verse, as there are part of them which are in prose. As cited by Baugh (523):

> "The broken-backed rimes of the interludes (particularly frequent in the *Comedy of Errors*), prose, pentameter couplets, blank verse, and the six-line (*abbcc*) stanza, [...] - all mix themselves in his earlies plays in an anarchy for which it would usually be absurd to seek any special purspose."

5.4. Setting

Another related issue in both plays is the setting, that is to say, the two cities where the stories are situated. It is worth mentioning that many Shakespeare's New

Comic versions' cityscapes are closely related to Plautus' cities. For instance, Illyria of *Twelfth Night*, the non-urban island of *The Tempest*, or Ephesus of *The Comedy of Errors* (Lyne).

Menaechmi is set in Epidamnus, a Greek city, as it was typical in New Comedy. Following this classical idea, Shakespeare's play is also set in a Greek city called Ephesus. There are many facts which justify Shakespeare's choice of Ephesus. The first one is the recently mentioned New Comedy and *fabula palliatae*'s characteristic to set the plays in a Greek locality. This is also the case of the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is set in Athens. Moreover, it agrees with the romances' feature of "never-never lands" (Withworth 50). It is also influenced by Christianism, St Paul lived there and it was seen as a city full of sorcerers and exorcists. The audience was familiar with that too. Hence, it was a perfect place for Shakespeare to set the story, as "it served his artistic intention of simultaneously 'engaging' as well as 'detaching' the audience" (Riehle 116). All in all, and as cited by Withworth (49-50):

> Whatever moved Shakespeare to replace Plautus' Epidamnus with the Ephesus of romance and the New Testament, it gave him two cities in one, a twin: the bustling, mundane metropolis of urban comedy, and the weird and wonderful setting of romance.

Additionally, both playwrights play with the hospitability of each city. As seen by Miola, Epidamnus is exhibited as an inhospitable place. So, it is not a coincidence that for Romans the name Epidamnus means "bad luck" (Bullough 9). Messenio, for example, when he arrives with Menaechmus Sosicles in Ephidamnus, says: "propterea huic urbi nomen Epidamnu inditumst, / quia nemo ferme huc sine dammno devortitur." (This city got its name of Epidamnus for just this reason - because almost everyone that stops here gets damaged.) (Plautus, *Menaechmi* 263-4). Many characters have wishes to fulfill, for instance, Menaechmus wants to give back the stolen robe and Peniculus only thinks about eating. But, Epidamnus is not a hospitable place for such wish-fulfilment (Miola), amongst other things, because, as many Plautine spaces, it is a place were citizens manouvre, overhear, and spy on each other (Lyne).

In like manner, Ephesus also seems to be inhospitable too, but it "threatens not only one's wallet but also one's self and soul" (Miola 26). To put it in another way, Withworth defines it as a "strange" and "hostile" city (55) (see Appendix Q). Moreover, Shakespeare adds another city-problem to his play, which is that Syracusans are not allowed to be in Ephesus as well as Ephesians are not allowed to be seen in Syracuse. This remarks the idea of Ephesus being an inhospitable city, which is even more hostile to Syracusans (see Appendix R).

5.5. Characters

Concerning characters, there are many similarities and differences between the two works. Shakespeare developed many of them based on Plautus' ones, but, he also introduced new ones to the *Errors*, and it is reflected in the number of characters the plays have: while in *Menaechmi* ten characters appeared, in *The Comedy of Errors* there are sixteen. Amongst them, Shakespeare's play has around 8-10 more major characters than Plautus' one. Furthermore, it is remarkable the proportional distribution Plautus' twins have in the play, according to Taladoire almost mathematic. Both Menaechmus appear in seven scenes and they do not see each other until the last one, in the dénouement. Nevertheless, in Shakespeare's play, it is not so. Dromio of Syracuse appears in more scenes than the rest of the twins, and Antipholus of Ephesus emerges in fewer scenes than the others. It is worth mentioning that in both plays it is curious how the foreigner twins could not notice that some bewilderment was happening with his identity and that it may be because he has an identical brother (Bellido and Ramírez de Verger).

As aforementioned, the most distinguished Shakespeare's switch is the adding of another servant, Dromio of Ephesus. According to many researchers such as Watt, Macdonald and Gay, it is probable that he took this idea from another comedy by Plautus called *Amphitruo*, in which the master and servant have each of them a duplicated self, two gods transformed in them (Plautus, *Amphitruo*). In this way, and as cited by Miola (21-22): "Shakespeare multiplies rather than divides: he doubles the

number of identical twins and nearly triples the incidents of error from seventeen to fifty".

Regarding the twin protagonists, it is unlike the way the twins differ from each other in one play and in the other. According to Moorhead, Menaechmus Sosicles is more courageous and direct than the other Menaechmus. In the same fashion, Arnott (178) notes that while Menaechmus of Epidamnus is "slow and pompous, with a ponderous delight in his marital peccadilloes" Menaechmus of Syracuse is "sharper, with a keen eye on his own advantage. Though equally baffled, he is quick to see where profit lies". Comparatively, Antipholus of Ephesus' personality is more physical, as he always has in mind sex, food and money, and Antipholus of Syracuse is more spiritual and sentimental. Thus, together, they "make up the image of a whole human being" (Gay 22).

Given these points, Menaechmus Sosicles, who is tactician for his own benefit, becomes the passionate Antipholus of Syracuse who falls in love with Luciana. Menaechmus of Syracuse's purpose is to find his lost brother, but, when he arrives in Epidamnus he tries to take advantage of the situation "to play along for fun and profit", in other words, for his own personal achievement (Miola 28). Otherwise, since his arrival, Antipholus of Syracuse has been wondering and dreaming about his surroundings. As it is seen in the example given by Miola (Shakesepeare 2.2.15-6): "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? / Sleeping or waking? Mad or well advised?". Two scenes later, he romantically confesses to Luciana his love: "Are you a god? Would you create me new? / Transform me, then, and to your power I'll yield." (Shakespeare 3.2.39-40).

Consequently, Shakespeare's adding of Luciana implies adding another love incident to the play. She could be compared to the Senex of *Menaechmi*, but, she "supplies for her jealous sister a far better foil or contrast than the Senex" (Watt 404). More love episodes are seen in the *Errors* than in *Menaechmi*, but, it is still not a romantic comedy, as the main action does not revolve around a lovers' plot. However, the story constantly shows typical Elizabethan romantic comedy elements. To point out, when the plot begins, Egeon and Emilia (parents of the twins) are separated, Antipholus

of Ephesus and Adriana are at outs, and Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana have not met yet. Before the day ends, the three couples are happily together in an Elizabethan romantic comedy manner.

Following this idea, Maguire studies the marital roles related to wives and womanhood, which are not present in *Menaechmi* and appear in *The Comedy of Errors*. The author mentions a duality in women's attitude of the Renaissance: on the one hand, there is the *divine*, which is related to the spiritual and celestial beauty, and, on the other hand, the *dangerous*, referring to the physical temptation, the lust, gratification, and damnation.

The first mentioned case is the way Antipholus of Syracuse feels about Luciana. In the just noted example, he compares her to a god, and some lines before he says: "Less is your knowledge and your grace you show not / Than our earth's wonder, more than earth divine." (Shakespeare 3.2.31-2). An instance of the other type would be Dromio of Syracuse speaking about Luce. As Maguire (72) mentions: "Dromio of Syracuse, uses the language of demonology to describe his pursuit by the sexually forward maidservant, Luce: Luce "haunts" him (3.2.82), she is a "diviner" [witch], she knows "what privy marks" he has, so that he "amaz'd, ran from her as a witch" (3.2.140-4)". These two types are two sides of the same female stereotype: "the demonic female (the "diviner" who would possess the male) and the divine female (the goddess whom the male wishes to possess)" (Maguire 72). For this reason, it may not be a coincidence that the root of the two names Luce and Luciana is the same, which, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary, is "light".

In this way, Adriana tries to have the two characteristics to resolve her sexual and spiritual roles of her marriage, and, for that, she attends to her husband's body and soul (Maguire). As aforementioned, the idea of marriage and wife is reinforced in *The Comedy of Errors*, because, unlike in *Menaechmi*, the wife is given a name. Whereas in Plautus' play the wife is unnamed or referred as the *matrona*, and the lover is Erotium, in Shakespeare's one, the playwright reverses the situation giving the name of Adriana to the wife and creating the Courtesan (Segal). Menaechmus Epidamnus' and Antipholus of Ephesus' attitude towards the women also differs frome each other. The

only time Antipholus addresses the courtesan is when he is mistakenly locked out of his house by Adriana. Nevertheless, Menaechmus frequently visits Erotium (Macdonald).

Shakespeare's choice to shift the location to Ephesus is associated with this duality. Traditionally, the city of Ephesus is related to two women roles: the Amazons, who are considered to be the unmarried, independent and pagan founders of the cities, and, the obedient and submissive Christian servant, standardised in St. Paul's letters to Ephesians. Thus, "Shakespeare's change of location was presumably designed to exploit the dual associations of Ephesus" (Maguire 72). At first, Adriana seems to be equated with the role of the Amazon, as she says about men: "Why should their liberty than ours be more?" (Shakespeare 2.1.10). It is a response to Luciana because she remarks that "A man is master of his liberty" (2.1.7) and Luciana's speech makes us conclude which role she is following, that is to say, the submissive Christian one. As stated by Maguire, she also knows St. Paul's instruction by heart in the lines 2.1.15-25 (see Appendix S). However, throughout the story, the two roles are constantly questioned (Maguire).

Bishop observes that this is an instance were *contaminatio* can be distinguished. As in St. Paul's letter, in Shakespearian Ephesus the role of marriage as a social and erotic institution is seen. The author mentions (86):

> The crucial importance of Paul's letter to the play thus comes into clearer focus. Paul's vision of erotic desire in marriage as a social counterpart to the Word-as-Flesh undergrids Shakespeare's contamination of boundary with flux, a move that at once dissolves lay and circumscribes ocean.

According to Henze, "the major themes of [*The Comedy or Errors*] are the finding of one's self by losing one's self and the freeing of one's self by binding one's self" (35), and it can also be applied to *Menaechmi*. In both plays, the twin protagonists wonder about losing themselves. For instance, when they arrive, Antipholus of Syracuse tells the first merchant: "Farewell till then. I will go lose myself" (Shakespeare 1.2.30). This brings him to reflect about himself as a human being who is to the world "like a drop of water" (Shakespeare 1.2.35) (see Appendix T). The metaphor of the drop is a significant one in Shakespeare's play and in both of Plautus' plays *Menaechmi* and

Amphitruo. In the scene that follows the just mentioned one, Adriana compares a drop of water with her relationship with Antipholus (see Appendix U).

This remarks the before-mentioned Elizabethan idea of women's submissive role in marriage, the one who cannot live without her husband. The metaphor might be based on Plautus' one, however, he does not use it referring to love relationships. Instead, it compares the identical twin brothers: "No drop of water, no drop of milk, is more like another in any way, trust me, than he is like you and, for that matter, you like him" (*Men*. 1089-90, qtd. in Miola 27). In *Amphitruo* Plautus also uses the metaphor to show the indistinguishable copy of Sosia: "No drop of milk is more like another than that "I" is like me" (*Amph*. 601, qtd. in Miola 28). Miola indicates that both metaphors suggest the necessity people have for each other. Moreover, the different usage of the drop metaphor of the two playwrights again implies that the theme of marriage is higher present in Shakespeare's play than in Plautus' one.

Conclusion

All in all, the aim of the present research was to examine the influence Roman comedy, and particularly Plautus' *Menaechmi*, had on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. The study has shown that Shakespeare's play can be considered a version of *Menaechmi*. Not only due to the similarities the plots and characters in both works have, but also because of the use of the language patterns employed by the two playwrights. However, I have found it hard to put a name to Shakespeare's work in relation to Plautus' one. Some authors consider the *Errors* an adaptation of *Meanaechmi*, others refer to it as a version or copy, and researchers such as Coulter even use *imitatio* to describe Shakespeare's play. In either case, what is clear is that *The Comedy of Errors* is highly influenced and based on Plautus' *Menaechmi*.

Moreover, Shakespeare was not the unique playwright influenced by Plautus, after countless research made about this topic, it may be said that Plautus created an entire comedy mould which the Elizabethan authors followed. What is more, many other recognised playwrights such as Molière, Calderón, Vega, Wilde, and Machiavelli also adopted Plautus' pattern.

Likewise, *contaminatio* is attached to the Roman writers who wrote their works based on Greek authors. But, to some extent, Shakespeare made the same when he wrote *The Comedy of Errors*, as he used sources from Plautus as well as St. Paul's letter. In a similar vein, bringing Mikhail Bakhtin's idea quoted in the introduction, every work is infected by one or more previously written ones. So, is it not that *contaminatio* may be applied to every single literary work? This is a point which would be a fruitful area to develop in further research.

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qui autem auscultare nolet, exsurgat foras,

ut sit ubi sedeat ille qui auscultare volt.

He who doesn't want to listen should get up and leave

So that he who wants to listen can sit in that place.

In this example given by Marshall (74), due to the character's addressing to the audience, no spectator would leave the stage, and thus, the character brings the audience to his side.

Appendix B - Plautus' *Rudens* (qtd. in Moore, *Roman Theatre* 27).

TRACHALIO	(*enters holding the rope to which the chest is tied*) Hey, wait a minute!
GRIPUS	Why?
TRACHALIO	Let me fold up this rope you're dragging.
GRIPUS	Just let go of it.
TRACHALIO	But really, I want to help you: a good deed done for the good is not done in vain.

Appendix C - Lines from *Mostellaria* where the two phenomenon are visible (qtd. in Moore, *Roman Theatre* 47)

Iu**pp**iter s**u**premus s**u**mmis opib**u**s atque ind**u**striis

me **p**eriisse et **Ph**ilolachetem cupit erilem filium.

occidit spes **n**ostra, **n**usquam stabulum est confidentiae,

nec **Sal**us nobis **sal**uti iam esse, si cupiat, potest:

ita **m**ali, **m**aeroris **m**onte**m m**axi**m**um ad portu**m m**odo

conspicatus sum: erus advenit **per**egre, **per**iit Tranio.

Appendix D - extract of the play by Plautus *Casina* (lines 879-80) mentioned by Moore (*The Theatre of Plautus* 29)

operam date, dum mea facta itero: est operae pretium auribus accipere,

ita ridicula auditu, iteratu ea sunt quae ego intus turbavi.

Pay attention, while I recount what I have done; it will be worth your while to listen to me, for the mess I made inside is so funny both to hear and to tell.

Appendix E - what Horace wrote about the everyday life in Rome (qtd. in Segal 42)

Romae dulce diu fuit et sollemne reclusa

mane domo vigilare, clienti promere iura

cautos nominibus rectis expendere nummos,

maiores audire, minori dicere per quae

crescere res posst, minui damnosa libido.

At Rome it was a pleasure and a practice of long standing to be up and about in the early morning, with the house doors open, giving legal aid to clients, carefully investing money with good-risk creditors, heeding one's elders and teaching the younger generation how to increase their wealth and decrease their ruinous urge to be profligate.

LEONIDA: Primum omnium servos tuos nos esse non negamus.

sed tibi si viginti minae argenti proferentur

quo nos vocabis nomine?

ARGYRIPPUS: Libertos.

LEONIDA: Non patronos?

ARGYRIPPUS: Id potius.

LEONIDA: Viginti minae hic insunt in crumina.

LEONIDA: Now first of all, we don't deny we're both of us your
bondmen.

But if we give you twenty *minae*, all in cash,

By what name will you call us?

ARGYRIPPUS: Freedmen.

LEONIDA: Why not *masters*?

ARGYRIPPUS: Al right.

LEONIDA: Here are twenty *minae* in a wallet.

Appendix G - an extract from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (qtd. in Crystal, *Shakespeare: an Oxfod guide* 68)

Although the forms "thou", "thee" and "thy" are not commonly used nowadays, they are familiar due to religious and regional expressions.

JULIET: What o'clock tomorrow

   Shall I send to thee?

ROMEO: By the hour of nine.

JULIET: I will not fail; 'tis twenty year till then.

   I have forgot why I did call thee back.

ROMEO: Let me stand here till thou remember it.

JULIET: I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,

   Rememb'ring how I love thy company.

ROMEO: And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,

   Forgetting any other home but this.

JULIET: 'Tis almost morning. I would have thee gone---. (2.1.212-21)

Appendix H - lines 4.1.93-7 from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (qtd. in Crystal,
Shakespeare: an Oxford guide 69)

Take thous this vial, being then in bed,

And this distilling liquor drink thou off,

When presently through all thy veins shall run

A cold and drowsy humour; for no pulse

Shall keep his native progress, but surcease. (4.1.93-7)

Appendix I - fragment of *Hamlet* by Shakespeare (qtd. in Crystal, *The Complete Works* x):

HAMLET   My ex'llent good friends. How dost thou,

Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz--good lads, how

do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy in that we are not over-happy,

On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET   Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ   Neither, my lord.

Appendix J - extract taken from Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* (qtd. in Gay 36-7):

ROSALIND There is a man haunts the forest that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, defying the name of Rosalind. If I could meet that fancy-monger, I would give him some good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love oupon him.

ORLANDO I am he that is so love-shaked. I pray you tell me your remedy.

ROSALIND There is none of my uncle's marks upon you. He taught me how to know a man in love, in which cage of rushes I am sure you are not prisoner.

ORLANDO What were his marks?

ROSALIND A lean chee, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not - but I pardon you for that, for, simply, your having in beard is a younger brother's revenue. Then your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbottoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation. (3.3.301-18)

EROT. Qui lubet ludibrio habere me atque ire infitias mihi

    facta quae sunt

MEN. S.   Dic quid est id quod negem quod fecerim?

EROT. Pallam te hodie mihi dedisse uxoris.

MEN. S.   Etiam nunc nego.

    ego quidem neque umquam uxorem habui neque habeo, neque huc

    umquam, postquam natus sum, intra portam penetravi pedem.

    prandi in navi, inde huc sum egressus, te conveni.

EROT. (*a little irritated*) Why is it you like to make a laughing-stock of me and deny what you did?

MEN. S. Tell me what it is I did and deny.

EROT. Giving me your wife's mantle to-day.

MEN. S. I deny it still. Why, I never had a wife, and have none now, and never from the day I was born have I put a foot within your city gate here. I lunched on board ship, then came ashore here, and met you.

MEN. S.   Quin tu tace modo.

bene res geritur. adsentabor quidquid dicet mulieri,

si possum hospitium nancisci. iam dudum, mulier, tibi

non imprudens advorsabar; hunc metuebam, ne meae

uxori renuntiaret de palla et de prandio.

nun, quando vis, eamus intro.

MEN. S. See here now, you shut up. Things are going well. I'll assent to whatever the wench says, if I can come in for entertainment here. (*confidentially to Erotium, motioning Messenio back*) I kept contradicting you a while ago purposely, my girl; I was afraid of this fellow (*indicating Messenio*) - that he might inform my wife of the mantle and the luncheon. Now when you wish let's go inside.

Appendix M - extended fragment of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (lines 184-9)

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE (*aside*)

To me she speaks; she moves me for her theme.

What, was I married to her in my dream?

Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?

What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?

Until I know this sure uncertainty,

I'll entertain the offered fallacy.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

He that commends me to mine own content

Commends me to the thing I cannot get.

I to the world am like a drom of water

That in the ocean seeks another drop,

Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,

Unseen, inquisistive, confounds himself.

So I, to find a mother and a brother,

In quest of them unhappy, lose myself.

Appendix O - whole fragment of *The Comedy of Errors* (22.1.15-25)

The assonant rhyme is highlighted, which follows the pattern of ABBAACCAADD.

LUCIANA

Why, headstrong liberty is lashed with w**oe**.

There's nothing situate under heaven's **eye**

But hath his bound in earth, in sea, in sk**y**.

The beasts, the fishes, and the wingèd f**owls**

Are their males' subjects and at their contr**ols**.

Man, more divine, the master of all th**ese**,

Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry s**eas**,

Indued with intellectual sense and s**ouls**,

Of more pre-eminence than fish and f**owls**,

Are masters to their females, and their l**ords**.

Then let your will attend on their acc**ords**.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE Thank me, sir, for what?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE Marry, sir, for this something that you gave me for nothing.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE I'll make you amend next, to give you nothing for something. But say, sir, is it dinnertime?

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

They say this town is full of cozenage:

As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,

Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,

Soul-killing witches that deform the body,

Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,

And many such-like liberties of sin. (1.2. 97-102)

DUKE

Nay, more: if any born at Ephesus

Be seen at Syracusan marts and fairs;

Again, if any Syracusan born

Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,

His goods confiscate to the Duke's dispose,

Unless a thousand marks be levièd

To quit the penalty and ransom him.

LUCIANA

Why, headstrong liberty is lashed with woe.

There's nothing situated under heaven's eye

But hath his bound in earth, in sea, in sky.

The beasts, the fishes, and the wingèd fowls

Are their males' subjects and their controls.

Man, more divine, the master of all these,

Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,

Indued with intellectual sense and souls,

Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,

Are masters to their females, and their lords.

Then let your will attend on their accords.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

I to the world am like a drop of water

That in the ocean seeks another drop,

Who, failing there to find his fellow forth,

Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.

So I, to find a mother and a brother,

In quest of them unhappy, lose myself.

ADRIANA

For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall

A drop of water in the breaking gulf,

And take unmingled thence that drop again,

Without addition or diminishing,

As take from me thyself and not me too. (II. ii. 125-9)