THE MENAECHMI

A Pleasant and Fine Conceited Comdie of the Most Excellent Wit

as

Written in English,
by W. VV.

LONDON

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PENICVLVS PARASITVS</td>
<td>PENICULUS, A PARASITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENAECHMVS I</td>
<td>MENECHMUS CITIZEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENAECHMVS II (Sosici.ES)</td>
<td>MENECHMUS TRAVELLER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EROTIVM MEKETRIX</td>
<td>EROTUM, A COURTESAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYLINDRVS Cocvs</td>
<td>CVLINDRUS, A COOK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MESSENIO SERVS</td>
<td>MESSINIO, A SERVANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANCILLA</td>
<td>MAID TO EROTUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATRONA</td>
<td>WIFE OF MENECHMUS CITIZEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENEX</td>
<td>OLD MAN, FATHER OF MENECHMUS'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDICVS</td>
<td>PHYSICIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVLESCENTES</td>
<td>YOUNG MEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAENA EPIDAMNI</td>
<td>SLAVES AND PORTERS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Note about this Production

In keeping with the farcical nature of the play and Roman Comedy in general, and attempting to suggest the descendants of such comedy in more modern allusions, the production will also feature a small company of ‘Zanni’ who, in Commedia fashion, involve themselves in the main plot by either speeding it along or adding to the confusion and mayhem. Interjected throughout the play will be a series of broadly physical circus-like antics – Lazzi – which may draw in a major character but in all cases thwart objectives and add frustration and confusion. As the scene is a busy street, these clowns will re-appear throughout the story as various vendors and townspeople who disrupt events and add to the general ‘topsy-turvy’ feel of the play. As the Zanni perform others will pop out from the secret doors and windows (unseen at the opening) to play kazooos and other toy instruments which create a raucous circus-like theme music. All of this is played very fast and urgently – as if in a silent film. They, in no way, slow down the action but rather add vitality and spur on the urgency of finding the final resolution. As this is a working script, not all of these lazzi are yet presented but await the momentum of rehearsals for flesh them out.

The stage setting is covered by a large brightly coloured curtain on which projections will be shown as part of the opening explanation in the Prologue.
(A Title page appears on the screen with production credits, etc. yet presented as if an old publication - as the titles above. The Professor enters with a long pointer and signals the projection both to begin. A map appears. He drones on pointing blindly to the map.)

Professor: Good health, citizens! Patience attend you as you hear our play! I bring you Plautus, not on the hand but on the tongue: whom I beg you to receive with gracious attention. Now hear the plot, and give careful ear, which I will set forth as briefly as I may. Note bene: A habit of these poets in their comedies is to set the scene of all their events in Athens, to make you think it all the more truly Greek. This is a known fact. Greek this story is indeed, but not Attic; it is Sicilian. So much by way of preface to my plot. Now for the plot itself, measured not by the bushel or the peck but by the whole barn: see how generous is my measure in telling this tale.

(He turns to face the screen. A map is projected. Satisfied, he turns front to begin his explanation - in Latin.)

Professor: Mercator Siculus, quoi erant gemini filii, Ei surrupto altero mors optigit. Nomen surreptici illi indit qui domist Avos paternus,.facit Menaechmum e Sosicle.

(After a map, the slides begin to go wrong showing us statues of various gods and goddesses. The slide changes to one of Venus. Not looking, he points to her Delta.’ Another slide: Adonis. He points to the penis - slapping it repeatedly in emphasis. Another slide: a Drunken Bacchus. This time he notices this and beats the image repeatedly with his stick protesting the error. The slides run quickly through a series of erotic images.)

Professor: Et is germanum, postquam adolevit, quaeritad Circum omnis oras. post Epidamnum devenit Hie fuerat alitus ille surrepticius. Menaechmum omnes civem credunt advenam Eumque appellant meretrix, uxor et socer. I se cognoscunt fratres postremo invicem.

Translation: THE ARGUMENT
* Two twinborn sons, a Sicily merchant had, Menechmus one, and policies the other : The first his father lost a little lad, The Grandsire named the latter like his brother. This, grown a man, long travel took to seek
His brother, and to Epidamnum came,
Where Brother dwelt enriched, and him so like,
That citizens there take him for the same:
Father, wife, neighbours, each mistaking either,
Much pleasant error, ere they meet together.

(Two men enter from RS crossing to DL carrying a ladder. One holds the ladder upright whilst the other begins to climb up as if to reach something above. He mounts the top of the ladder as a lovely young woman enters from L thus distracting the men. The ladder begins to fall towards center – the man leaps off just in time – the other catches the ladder and holds it – the man lands directly in front of the woman – and in her arms. If possible, she catches him. The Professor notices nothing but drones on. The man with the ladder chases the lovers off RS as the ladder appears to catch on the Professor’s toga slowly ripping it off. The man, ladder and toga vanish unknowingly off RS leaving the professor standing naked facing US pointing and mumbling. BUT before any parts can be seen, a woman enters from RS carrying a large stretch of cloth which is enough to cover the nudity as she crosses just in time. Note: This is not actual nudity but a comically disproportionate body suit giving the younger actor the paunch and drooping buttocks of a much older man. What else is drooping remains to be seen - or rather masked. The cloth continues until we see the end of it appear from RS – carried by the same woman. She continues to LS to exit with cloth as a man carrying a potted palm enters from LS and, reaching C just as she approaches is distracted by her charms and puts the plant down to follow her off – just as the naked Professor turns front – thus avoiding the ‘Full Monty’ by a few fronds of a palm. He is suddenly aware of something – a chill? - but shakes it off and continues. Two young women enter from RS to retrieve the palm. One bends to lift the palm to reveal the second who has crouched down US of the palm to gawk at the Professor’s dangly bits. Her body now masks the Professor’s nudity. One reacts in shock; the second reacts in shock; the Professor murmurs, “Ehhhhhh?” and continues, turning US to the flashing projections. The one woman rushes off RS leaving the second in her shock as the fabric woman enters from LS again with the sheet – and attempts to cover the Professor, but inadvertently wraps both he and the young woman together spinning them around until they are bound up together face to face. She finally realizes that this will not do and with great resolve gives the fabric a good yank towards LS and both girl and Professor unwind spinning off RS as the fabric threatens to reveal more and more until just before he is fully exposed, the fabric runs out and they are both spun off RS to crash noisily in the wings. There is a first cymbal crash for the young woman; a second for the Professor; and a third giving the impression that he had fallen on her. The woman onstage tells us this by her reactions - wincing and giggling at each. Finally, she shrugs, giggles and steps forward to continue the Prologue. Some other of the Zanni may also share in telling the story - as a sort of competition. The story is rudely enacted as a dumbshow done in broad pantomime behind the curtain - the actions often taking on a suggestive tone.)

Clown 1: There was a merchant at Syracuse, an old man, who had two twin sons, boys so much alike that the nurse who fostered them could not tell which was which, nay not their own mother who bore them.

Clown 2: When the boys were seven years old, the father freighted a large ship with merchandise; one of the twins he
took aboard and sailed away with him to Sicily on trading
bent; the other he left at home with the mother. When he
came to Tarentum, it happened that there were games afoot:
amongst the crowd of visitors the boy went astray from his father.

Clown 1: A merchant of Epidamnum who happened to be there,
Took pity on the boy and carried him home to Epidamnum.

Clown 3: The boy thus gone, his father lost heart, and before many days
had past he died of that distress.

Clown 2: Now when the news came to the child's grandfather at Syracuse,
that one of the twins had been lost and the father was dead,
the grandfather changed the name of the other twin,
and called him by the same name as the lost one;
so dearly did he love the child that was lost.

Clown 4: Thus he gave the lost one's name to the one that stayed at
home, Menaechmus, the same name as the other had: and so he
also now went by the same name as the grandfather.

Clown 1: To make all clear, I say once again, that...

All Clowns: Both the twins had the same name!

(At this point, they are interrupted by the staggering return of the Professor - now sloppily re-
dressed - who immediately resumes the Prologue as if only vaguely aware of any mishap.)

Professor: But let us return to the place I came from.
The Epidamnian of whom I spoke lately,
The man that stole the child, had no children but only wealth:
He adopts the child for his own, gives him a wife with a dower,
and makes him his heir when he died. As he was going by
chance into the country, after heavy rain, in fording a swift
river he was carried off by the stream just as he had carried off the child,
and there was an end of him. The lad had all his great fortune,
and here he lives, the stolen twin.

(Several Zanni - tiring of him - creep up on him - one holding a large rubber mallet. He raises it
up and bonks the Professor on the head with a resounding ‘Thunk.’ Dazed, he falls back into the
arms of two women who then carry him off - amidst twittering bird sounds from above. The clown
with the Hammer concludes the Prologue.)

Clown 2: Now the other twin, who lives in Syracuse,
has come this day to Epidamnum with his slave, to look for
this twin brother of his.
(At this point the curtain is torn down and flutters to the ground revealing the stage setting – a classical façade of doors and arches offering several entrance and exit paths. As the play takes place in a street before three houses, once the curtain has been torn down in the path of the madness, we finally see the setting – a city street.)

Clown 4: This is Epidamnum city while our play goes on; when another play shall be acted this stage will be another place, just as the companies of actors often change: now we have a rich husband living here, now a young lover, now an old miser, a down-and-out prince, or a parasite and charlatan.

(Peniculus is shoved out onto the stage. All others have vanished, taking the curtain, offstage.)

ACT I

SCENE I: A PARASITE

Pen. Peniculus was given me for my name when I was young, because like a broom I swept clean away all food set before me. Now in my judgment, men that clap irons on such Captives as they would keep safe, or place in chains, who they think will run away, commit an exceeding great folly: my reason is, these poor wretches, enduring one misery upon another, never cease devising how by some means how they may escape. Yet, if then you would keep a man from running away, the surest way is to tie him is with meat, drink, and ease: let him ever be idle, eat his belly full, and carouse while his skin will hold, and he shall never, I warrant ye, stir a foot. These strings to tie one by the teeth, pass all the bands [15 of iron or steel, for the more slack and easy you make them, the faster still they tie the party which is in them. I speak this upon experience of myself, who am now going to Menechmus, there willingly to be tied to his good cheer: he is well known to be exceeding bountiful and [20 so liberal in his fare, then tis no marvel such guests as myself be drawn to his table, and tied there in his dishes. Now because I have lately been a stranger there, I mean to visit him at dinner: for my stomach thrusts me into the fetters of his dainty fare. Oh! But yonder I see his door open, and himself ready to come forth. Let us stand aside!

SCENE II: LOVERS' QUARREL

Enter MENECHMUS (the Citizen) talking back to his wife within.

Men. Cit. If you were not such a brabbling fool and mad-brain scold as you are, you would never thus cross your husband in his every action.
(He gestures wildly to the unseen wife and turns from her to address the Audience.)

Tis no matter, let her serve me thus once more,
I'll send her home to her Father with a vengeance.
I can never go forth out of the house but she asks where I go?
as though she were a Constable or a Toll gatherer.
I have pampered her too much: she has servants
about her, wool, flax, and all things necessary to busy herself,
yet she watches me and wonders where I go.
Well, she shall now have some cause for
I mean to dine this day abroad with a sweet friend of mine.

Pen. (aside) Now comes he to the point that pricks me;
If he dines not at home, I am undone.

Men. Cit. We that have loves abroad and wives at home, are miserably hampered,
yet would every man could Tame his Shrew as well as I do mine.
I have now filched away a fine cloak of my wife's,
which I mean to bestow upon one that I love better.

Pen. Come, what share have I in that?
Men. Cit. What? Damn! I am caught!
Pen. True, but by your friend.
Men. Cit. What? Oh! My own Peniculus?
Pen. Yours truly! Body and goods, if I had any.
Men. Cit. Have you no goods?
Pen. None.
Men. Cit. But you do have a body.
Pen. But not a good body.
Men. Cit. But... enough. You could never come fitter in all thy life.
Pen. Tush, I ever do so to my friends; I know how to come always in the nick.
Where dine ye to-day?
Pen. O ho, what cloak have you got here?
Men. Cit. Say now I am a brave fellow.
Pen. Of course. Now - where shall we dine?
Men. Cit. Tush! Say as I asked you, man!
Pen. Out of doubt - you are a brave fellow.
Men. Cit. What! Can you add nothing of your own?
Pen. You are a most pleasant gentleman.'
Men. Cit. Keep going...
Pen. No more - unless ye tell me how you and your wife have fallen out.
Men. Cit. I have a greater secret than that to impart to thee.
Pen. Oh?
Men. Cit. Come farther - away from my house.
Pen. So, let me hear.
Men. Cit. Nay, farther yet!
Pen. Oh, come along!
Men. Cit. Yes. Come along. Farther!
Pen. ' Pity you were not made a waterman to row in a boat. 60
Men. Cit. Why?
Pen. Because you go one way, and look at another!
But what's the matter? Is't not almost dinner time?
Men. Cit. See this cloak?
Pen. Well, what of it?
Men. Cit. This same I mean to give to Erotium.
Pen. That's well, but what of all this?
Men. Cit. There I mean to have a delicious dinner prepared for her and me.
Pen. And me?
Pen. O sweet word! Shall I knock her up?
Men. Cit. What?!
Pen. Shall I knock at her door?
Men. Cit. Oh. Yes. Knock on! No wait! Let's not be too hasty. Oh! She is coming!
Pen. You can tell that from here?

SCENE III  THE SWEETHEART

(Enter EROTIUM followed by her handmaiden.)

Erot. Ooooh! Mine own Menechmus! Welcome, sweetheart.
Pen. And what am I, chopped codfish?
Erot. You, sir? (Turning to recognize him.) Oh. You.
Pen. (Aside) I am like a volunteer soldier: always out of pay. 5
Men. Cit. Erotium, my dove, we mean to drink for the heavens; and which of us performs the bravest service with his weapon - the wine bowl; you as captain shall pay him his wages according to his deserts. 10
Erot. Well, that shouldn't take long. Agreed.
Pen. I wish we had our weapons now, for my valour pricks me to the battle.
Men. Cit. Ah, my sweet mouse. I never look upon you, but I am quite out of love with my wife. 1 5
Erot. Yet you bring her with you.
Men. Cit. What?
Erot. You must still wear her cloak?
Men. Cit. What? Oh! This? Oh, such a spoil, sweetheart, as I took from her to put on you.
Erot. Oh? Ooooh, my own little Menechmus.
Men. Cit. Little!?
Erot. Oh, no matter! Well worthy to be my dear, of all dearest.
Pen. (Aside) Now she shows herself: when she finds him in the giving vein, she draws close.
Men. Cit. Take this; and with the same, take my heart.
Pen. (Aside) Thus they must give that are proper lovers; especially if they mean to be beggars before long.
Men. Cit. (Aside to Pen.) I bought this cloak for my wife; it cost me some 40 pieces of silver.
Pen. (Aside to Men.) 40 pieces bestowed very thriftily.
Men. Cit. (to Erot.) But do you know what I would have you do?
Erot. It shall be done; your dinner shall be ready.
Men. Cit. Let a good dinner be made for us three. Let us have capon pie, some doormice - savoury - artichokes, and oysters. We must have oysters, of course! Let our other dishes be as you please.
Erot. You shall have all!
Men. Cit. I have a little - some business in this city; by that time dinner will be prepared.
Farewell till then, sweet Erotium: Come, Peniculus.

(Exeunt [Pen. and Men. Cit. Erotium goes to her servant.)

Erot. Call Cylindrus, the cook.

SCENE IV. ROLLING-PIN THE COOK

(Enter Cylindrus.)
Cyl. You called for me, Domina?
Erot. Cylindrus, take this gold...
Cyl. 'Gold? Many thanks, Domina! May the gods smile upon your every crevice!
Erot. Not for you, jackal-head. Go. Buy all the daintiest meats you can get so as three may dine passing well - and yet no more than enough.
Cyl. What guests have you today, Domina?
Erot. Menechmus and myself - and his Parasite.
Cyl. Peniculus?! That's ten persons in all.
Erot. Go! Dispatch as I bid you, and look you return with all speed.
Cyl. Faster than three shakes of a dead lamb's tail!

(Exeunt.)

ACT II SCENE I THE SECOND SELF

(Enter MENECHMUS SOSICLES (the Traveller from MESSENIO) his servant, MESSENIO and some SAILORS bearing luggage.)
Men. Tra. Surely, Messenio, I think seafarers never take so comfortable a joy as when after being long tossed the wide seas, they at last know land.
Mess. I'll be sworn I should not be more glad to see a whole country of mine own, than I have been at such a sight. But I pray, why are we now come to Epidamnum? Must we go to see every town we hear of?
Men. Tra. If I must as long as I live, I must seek my brother
Mess. Yet six years now have we roamed about thus, Istria, Hispania, Massilia, Illyria,
all the upper sea, all high Greece, all the towns in Italy.

Men. Tra. Till I find my brother, all towns are alike to me: I must try in all places.

Mess. I think if we had sought a needle all this time, we would have found it,
had it been above ground. It cannot be that he is alive; and to seek a dead
man thus among the living, what folly is it!

Men. Tra. If I could find any man that could certainly inform me of his death, I would be
satisfied. But otherwise I can never desist seeking. Little you know, Messenio, how
near my heart it goes.

Mess. This is like scrubbing a leopard to remove his spots. Sir, let’s go home –
unless you mean we should write a comedy of our travels.

Men. Tra. Messenio - no more of these saucy speeches; I perceive I must teach you how to
serve me, not to rule me.

Mess. Ay, so, now it appears what it is to be a servant.
Well, yet I must speak my conscience. Do you hear, sir?
Truly, I must tell you one thing: when I look into the lean estate
of your purse, and consider advisedly of your decaying stock,
I hold it very needful to be drawing homeward, lest in
looking for your brother, we quite lose ourselves. For this
assure yourself, this town Epidamnum, is a place of outrageous
expenses, exceeding in all riot and lasciviousness: and, I
hear, as full of ribalds, parasites, drunkards, catchpoles, conycatchers,
and sycophants, as it can hold. Then for courtesans, why here
are the most
corrupt in the world. Ye must not think here to
scape with as light cost
as in other places. The very name shows the nature,
no man comes hither sine clamno.

Men. Tra. Ye say very well indeed: give me my purse into mine own keeping,
because I will so be the safer, sine damno.

Mess. Why, sir?

Men. Tra. Because I fear you will be busy among the courtesans, and so be cheated of it:
then should I take great pains in belaboring your shoulders.
So to avoid both these harms, I’ll keep it myself.

Mess. Very well, sir. All the better.

SCENE II MY PURSE

(Enter CYLINDRUS.)

Cyl. (Aside) I have tickling gear here in faith for their dinners.
It grieves me to the heart to think how that cormorant
knave Peniculus must have his share in these dainty morsels.

(Discovers Men. Tra.) But what? Is Menechmus come already, before I could
come from the market? Menechmus, sir! How do you happen to come so soon?

Men. Tra. May the gods grant you mercy, my good friend, but do you know me?

Cyl. Know you? No, not I. Where's Mouldychaps that must dine with you?

(Aside) A pox on his manners!

Men. Tra. Mouldychaps? Whom do you mean, good fellow?

Cyl. Why Peniculus' worship, that whorson lick-trencher, your parasitical attendant.

Mess. (to Men. Tra.) Did I not tell ye what cony-catching villains you should find here?

Cyl. Menechmus, sir, listen. You've come too soon. I am just come from the market.

Men. Tra. Fellow, here, thou shalt have money of me, go get the priest to sacrifice for thee. I know thou art mad, else thou wouldst never use a stranger thus.

Cyl. Alas, sir, Cylindrus was wont to be no stranger to you. Know ye not Cylindrus?

Men. Tra. Cylindrus, or Coliendrus, or who the devil you are, I know not, neither do I care to know.

Cyl. I know you to be Menechmus.

Men. Tra. You show you have your wits to call me so; but tell me, where do you know me?

Cyl. Where? Even here, where you first fell in love with my mistress Erotium.

Men. Tra. I neither have a lover, neither know I who you are.

Cyl. Know you not who I am, who fills your cup and dresses your meat at our house?

Mess. What a slave is this? Oh, that I had something to crack the rascal's skull.

Men. Tra. At your house, when as I never came in Epidamnum till this day?

Cyl. Oh, that's true! Do ye not dwell in yonder house?

Men. Tra. Foul shame light upon them that dwell there, for my part.

He begins a strangely spasm-like series of gestures which appear to be some incantation directed towards the house.)

Cyl. (Aside) Without doubt - he is mad indeed, to curse himself thus.

Hark ye, Menechmus!

Men. Tra. What!?

Cyl. If I may advise, you shall bestow this money which you offered me, upon a sacrifice for yourself; for out of doubt you are mad, that curse yourself.

Mess. What a varlet to trouble us thus!

Cyl. Tush, he will many times jest with me thus. Yet when his wife is not by, 'tis a ridiculous jest.

Men. Tra. What's that?

Cyl. This I say. Think ye I have brought meat enough for three of you? If not, I'll fetch more for you and your wenches, and Snatchcrust, your Parasites.

Men. Tra. What wenches? What Parasites?

Mess. Villain, I'll make thee tell me what thou meanest by all this talk.

Cyl. (to Mess.) Away, Jack Napes; I say nothing to thee, for I know thee not: I speak to him that I know.

Men. Tra. Out, drunken fool, without doubt thou art out of thy wits.

Cyl. That you shall see by the dressing of your meat. Go, go, ye were better to go in and find somewhat to do there, whiles your dinner is making ready. I'll tell my mistress ye be here.

(Exit.)


Mess. Tush, mark, I pray. I'll lay forty pound here dwells some courtesan to whom this fellow belongs...
Men. Tra. But I wonder how he knows my name.
Mess. Oh, I'll tell ye. These courtesans as soon as any strange ship arrives at the Haven, they send a boy or a wench to inquire what they be, what their names be, Whence they come, wherefore they come, etc. If they can by any means strike acquaintance with him, or allure him to their houses, he is their own. We are here in a tickle place, master: 'tis best to be circumspect.
Men. Tra. I like your counsel, Messenio.
Mess. Aye, but follow it then.

(Enter EROTUUM)

Mess. Soft, here comes some body forth.
Men. Tra. And that is some body!
Mess. Here, sirs, mariners, keep this same amongst you.

(Messenio hands over a purse of coin to the Sailors as payment. One takes it; weighs it by bouncing it up and down in his hand; finds it wanting and holds out for more. Messinio hesitates. the Sailors growl as if pirates – and Messinio quickly hands over another purse. The Sailors snicker and giggle as the run off. Messinio does a take of long-suffering to the audience.
Men. Tra. Has been pre-occupied with gazing at Erotium so as to notice none of this.)

SCENE III SILVER-TONGUED HACKSTERS

Erot. Let the door stand so. Away, it shall not be shut. Make haste within there, ho! Maids, look that all things be ready. Cover the board; put fire under the perfuming pans: let all things be very handsome. Where is he that Cylindrus said stood without here? (To Men. Tra.) Oh, what mean you, sweetheart, that you come not inside? I trust you think yourself more welcome to this house than to your own. and great reason why you should do so. Your dinner and all things are ready as you willed. Will you come in?

Men. Tra. (Aside) to whom does this woman speak?
Erot. Even to you, sir. To whom else should I speak?
Men. Tra. Gentlewoman, you are a stranger to me, and I marvel at your speeches.
Erot. Yes, sir, but such a stranger as I acknowledge you for my best and dearest friend; and well you have deserved it.

Men. Tra. (Aside to Mess.) Surely, Messenio, this woman is mad or drunk, to use all this kindness upon so small acquaintance.
Mess. Tush, did not I tell ye right? These be but leaves that fall upon you now, in comparison of the trees that will tumble on your neck shortly. I told you, here were silvertongued hacksters. But let me talk with her a little. Gentlewoman, what acquaintance have you with this man? Where have you seen him?
Erot. Where he saw me, here in Epidamnum.
Mess. In Epidamnum? He - who never till this day set his foot within the town?
Men. Tra.  *(Aside to Mess.)*  She also calls me by my name.

Mess.  *(Aside to Men. Tra.)*  She smells your purse.

Men. Tra.  Messenio: take my purse. I'll know whether she aim at me or my purse, ere I go.

Erot.  Will ye go in to dinner, sir?

Men. Tra.  A good idea. Yes. And thanks with all my heart.

Erot.  Never thank me for that which you commanded to be provided for yourself.

Men. Tra.  That I commanded?

Erot.  Ye - and your Parasite.

Men. Tra.  My Parasite?

Erot.  Peniculus: who came with you this morning; when you brought me the cloak which you got from your wife?

Men. Tra.  A cloak that I brought you, which I got from my wife?

Erot.  Tush, what needs all this jesting? Pray, leave off.

Men. Tra.  Jest or earnest, this I tell you a truth. I never had wife nor never was in this place till this instant; for only thus far am I come, since I left the ship.

Erot.  What ship?

Mess.  An old rotten, weather-beaten ship, which we have sailed up and down these six years. Don't you agree it is about time to be going homewards?

Erot.  Come, come, Menechmus, I pray leave this sporting and go in.

Men. Tra.  Well, Gentlewoman, the truth is, you mistake my person: it is some other you look for.

Erot.  Why, you think I do not know you to be Menechmus, the son of Moschus, and have heard you say, you were born at Syracuse, where Agathocles did reign; then Pythia, then Liparo, and now Hiero.

Men. Tra.  All this is true.

Mess.  *(Aside to Men. Tra.)*  Either she is a witch, or else she hath dwelt there and knew ye there.

Men. Tra.  *(Aside to Mess.)*  I'll go in with her, Messenio; I'll see further of this matter.

Mess,  *(to Men. Tra.)*  You are finished then.

Men. Tra.  *(aside to Mess)*  Why so? I warrant you, I can lose nothing; yet something I shall gain; perhaps a good lodging during my abode here. I'll dissemble with her a little while. *(To Erotium)* Now when you please let us go in. I made strange with you, because of this fellow here, lest he should tell my wife of the cloak which I gave you.

Erot.  Will you stay any longer for your Peniculus, your Parasite?

Men. Tra.  Not I, I'll neither stay for him, nor have him let in, if he does come.

Erot.  All the better. But, sir, will ye do one thing for me?

Men. Tra.  What is that?

Erot.  To bear that cloak which you gave me to the dyers, to have it new trimmed and altered.

Men. Tra.  Yes, that will be well; so my wife shall not know it. Let me have it with me after dinner. I will but speak a word or two with this fellow, then I'll follow you in.

*(Exit Erotium.)*

Ho, Messenio, come aside. Go and provide for thyself and these ship boys in some inn; then look that after dinner you come hither for me.

Mess.  Ah, master, will you be conycatched thus wilfully?

Men. Tra.  Peace, foolish knave. Do you not see what a sot she is; I shall cozen her, I warrant you!
Mess. Ay, master.
Men. Tra. Will you not be gone? This is your Exit.

(Men. Tra. Exits into the House of Erotium.)

Mess. (Aside) See, see, she has him safe enough now. Thus he has escaped a hundred pirates' hands at sea; and now one land-rover hath boarded him at first encounter. Come away, fellows. Exeunt.

(He turns to Sailors only to recall that they have gone. Surrounded by the huggage, he sighs and struggles to carry off all.)

ACT III

SCENE I PENICULUS TELLS HIS TALE

(Enter PENICULUS)

Pen. Thirty years, I think, and more, have I played the knave, yet never played I the foolish knave as I have done this morning. I follow Menechmus, and he goes to the Hall where now the Sessions are held; there thrusting ourselves into the press of people, when I was in midst of all the throng, he gave me the slip, that I could never more set eye on him, and I dare swear, came directly to dinner. I would he that first devised these Sessions were hanged, and all that ever came of him, 'tis such a hindrance to men that have belly business at hand. Those men that have nothing to do, that do neither bid any man, nor are themselves bidden to dinner, such should come to Sessions: not we busy few that have these matters to look to. If it were so, I had not thus lost my dinner this day; which I do believe he did purposely cheat me of. Yet - I mean to go see. If I can but discover the trick, I may perhaps get my pennies-worth.

(Enter MENECHMUS the Traveller.)

Pen. But how now? Is this Menechmus coming away from thence? Dinner done, and all despatched? What execrable luck have I!

SCENE II THE TRAVELLER

Men. Tra. (to Erotium within) Tush, I warrant ye, it shall be done as ye would wish. I'll have it so altered and trimmed anew, that it shall by no means be known again.

Pen. (Aside) He carries the cloak to the dyers, dinner done, the wine drunk up, the Parasite shut out of doors. Well, let me live no longer, but I'll revenge this injurious mockery. But first I would hear what he says.
Men. Tra. Good gods, who ever had such luck as I!
Such cheer, such a dinner, such kind entertainment!
And for a farewell, this cloak which I mean shall go with me.

Pen. (Aside) He speaks so softly, I cannot hear what he says.
I am sure he is now flouting at me for the loss of my dinner.

Men. Tra. She tells me how I gave it her, and stole it from my wife.
When I perceived she was in an error tho' I knew not how,
I began to soothe her, and to say everything as she said.
Meanwhile, I fared well, and that o* free cost.

Pen. Well, I'll go talk with him. (Coming forward.)

Men. Tra. Who is this same that comes to me?

Pen. Oh, well met, fickle-brain, false and treacherous dealer,
crafty and unjust promise-breaker. How have I deserved,
you should so give me the slip, come before, and dispatch the dinner,
deal so badly with him that has reverenced you like a son?

Men. Tra. Good fellow, what do you mean? Enough! Rail not on me,
unless you intend to receive a railer's fee.

Pen. I have received the injury already.

Men. Tra. Wait. Tell me. What is your name?

Pen. Well, well, mock on, sir, mock on: do you not know my name?

Men. Tra. In truth I never saw you in all my life; much less do I know you.

Pen. A pox! Awake, Menechmus, awake; you oversleep!

Pen. Begins slapping Men. Tra. so as to force his head to wag back and forth. Finally, Men. Tra.
Grabs his slapping hand to stop it.)

Men. Tra. I am awake: I know what I'm saying.

Pen. Yet you do not know Peniculus?

Men. Tra. Pediculus or Pendulous, I protest I do not know you!

Pen. Did you filch a cloak from your wife this morning, and bring it here to Erotium?

Men. Tra. Neither have I wife, neither gave I a cloak to Erotium, neither filched I any from anybody.

Pen. Will you deny that which you did in my company?

Men. Tra. Will you say I have done this in thy company?

Pen. Will I say it? Yes! I will swear to it.

Men. Tra. Away, filthy mad drivel, away; I will talk no longer with you.

Pen. Not a world of men shall stay me! (He turns away. Aside)
But I'll go tell his wife of all the whole matter, since he is at this point with me. I will make this same as cursed a dinner as ever he ate.

(Exit Pen.)

Men. Tra. (Aside) It makes me wonder, to see how everyone that meets me cavils thus with me. But wait! Why does her maid come forth now?
SCENE III  I'LL GO TELL HIS WIFE

(Enter Ancilla)

Anc.  Sir! Have you forgotten?
Men. Tra.  Forgotten?
Anc.  The robe, sir?
Men. Tra.  Robe? What robe?
Anc.  Sir. The robe? Give it me again then.
Men. Tra.  Wait.  *He pretends to realize he is actually wearing the robe* Oh.  This robe!
         Yes, I remember. I gave it to your mistress.
Anc.  Oh, you think so?
Men. Tra.  Yes. And where are the bracelets that I gave her like-wise?
Men. Tra.  In truth - When I gave this, I gave them too.
Anc.  Bracelets. Oh! Do you mean these?  *He takes them from her.*
         Well, sir, I'll tell her you shall have the robe tied and trimmed as she wished?
Men. Tra.  What? Oh, yes. Tell her she shall have the cloak and these both together.
Anc.  I pray, Menechmus, put a little jewel for my ear to making for me:
         you know I am always ready to pleasure you.
Men. Tra.  Ah. Yes. I will. Give me the gold to pay for the workmanship.
Anc.  Lay out for me; I'll pay it to you again.
Men. Tra.  Alas, I...I have none now. I am all spent.
Anc.  Oh? When you have, will you?
Men. Tra.  Oh. I will. Later. Now, go bid your mistress make no doubt of these.
         I assure her, I'll make the best of these I can

(Exit Ancilla.)

Men. Tra.  (Aside)  Is she gone? Do not all the gods conspire to load me with good luck?
         Well I see 'tis high time to get me out of these coasts, lest all these matters
         should be lewd devices to draw me into some snare. There shall my garland
         lie, because if they seek me, they may think I am gone that way. I will now
         go see if I can find my man Messenio, that I may tell him how I have sped.

(He exits off right - indicating his destination - the port. Just as he is about to leave, Enter from the
house of Men. Cit.  MULIER, the Wife of MENECHMUS the Citizen, and PENICULUS.)

ACT IV

SCENE I

Mul.  Does he think I will be made such a sot, and to be still his drudge, while he prowls and
        purloins all that I have, to give his trulls?
Pen. Nay, hold your peace, we'll catch him in the nick. This way he came bearing the cloak to the dyers. This way he is gone. But wait! See! See, where he comes again now without the cloak.

Mul. What shall I now do?

Pen. What? That which you always do; bait him for life.

Mul. Surely I think it best so.

Pen. Stay. Let us stand aside a little; you shall catch him unawares.

(They cross to the left side of the stage. Enter MENECHMUS the Citizen from Right.)

SCENE II LAWYERS' GAINS

Men. Cit. (Aside) It would make a man at his wit's end, to see how scrabbling causes are handled at the Court. Consider: If a poor man ever so honest have a matter come to be judged, there is he outfaced and overlaid with falsity; yet, if a rich man - ever so vile a wretch - come before them, they are all eager to rule in his favour. Do you see my point? What with supporting bad causes for the oppressors, and patronizing a few just actions for the wronged, the lawyers then pocket up all the gains. Am I right, here? Why, just this morning, as favour to a friend, I went to plead in his defense. I was no sooner entered into it, but his adversaries laid so hard into him, and brought such matter against him, that do what I could, I could neither assist him nor get away from court till now: so long would they debate over trifles! Lawyers! (Suddenly realizing the time.) But I am afraid Erotium will be angry and think ill of me that I stayed so long; yet I think she may not be so angry this time considering the gift I gave her to-day.

Pen. (Aside to Mul.) How think ye by that?

Mul. (Aside to Pen.) I think him a most vile wretch thus to abuse me.

Men. Cit. (Aside) I will go there.

(As he begins to exit, Mul. steps forward calling to him.)

Mul. Sure. Go, pilferer; go with shame. You think nobody sees your lewd dealings and vile thievery.

Men. Cit. How now, wife, what ails you? What is the matter?

Mul. You ask me what's the matter? A pox upon you!

Pen. (Aside to Mul.) Are you ill? Your pulses beat so hard? To him, I say!

Men. Cit. Pray, wife, why are you so angry with me?

Mul. Oh, you do not know?

Pen. (Aside to Mul.) He knows, but he would dissemble it.

Men. Cit. What is it?

Mul. My cloak.

Men. Cit. Your cloak?

Mul. My cloak! Why do you blush?

Pen. He cannot cloak his blushing. (Aside to Men. Cit.) Nay, I might not go to dinner with you. Do you not remember? (Aside to Mul.) To him, I say.


Pen. Ha, hold my peace!
Mul. Whose piece?
Men. Cit. His peace.
Mul. *(To Pen.)* He beckons on you to hold your piece? Here? In the street? Before my house?!
Mul. Oh! What a pair of Jackal-headed salt-licks! *(Aside)* Oh, what a wretched life I live!
Men. Cit. Why, what ails you, woman?
Mul. Ails? Why, you...Are you not ashamed to deny so confidently, that which is apparent?
Men. Cit. I protest before all the gods – I did not beckon him.
Pen. Oh, sir, this is another matter: touch him in the former cause.
Men. Cit. What former cause?
Pen. The cloak, man, the cloak. Go on. Fetch the cloak back from the dyers.
Men. Cit. What cloak?
Mul. No. I’ll say no more, since you know nothing of your own doings.

*Men. Cit. glares at Pen. And turns to his wife in over-done concern to divert attention.*

Men. Cit. But now, tell me, wife, has any of your servants abused you?
Mul. Tush, tush.
Men. Cit. I would not have you to be thus disquieted.
Mul. Tush, tush.
Men. Cit. You are fallen out with some of your friends?
Mul. Tush, tush.
Men. Cit. I am sure that I have not offended you.
Mul. No, you have dealt very honestly.
Men. Cit. Indeed, wife, as you say. I have deserved none of these words. Tell me, are you not well?

*Pen. (to Mul.)* What, shall he flatter you now?
Men. Cit. I do not speak to you, knave. Good wife, come hither.
Pen. So, you bid me to dinner with you, then slip away from me; and when you have done, come forth bravely to flout me. Why, you even pretended not to know me just now.
Men. Cit. You ass! Not only have I not yet dined, I have not been back here until just now since we were here together.
Pen. Who ever heard one so impudent? Did you not meet me here even now, and would make me believe I was mad, and said you were a stranger, and you knew me not?
Men. Cit. Of a truth, since we went together to the Sessions Hall, I never returned till this very instant, as you two met me.
Pen. Go to, go to, I know you well enough. Did you think I would not cry quittance with you? Yes, in good faith: I have told your wife all.
Men. Cit. What? – have you told her?
Pen. I cannot tell you. Ask her.
Men. Cit. Tell me, wife, what has he told you of me? Tell me, I say; what was it?
Mul. As though you did not know - my cloak is stolen from me!
Men. Cit. Is your cloak stolen from you?
Mul. Do you ask me?
Men. Cit. If I knew, I would not ask.
Pen. (Aside) O crafty companion! See how he would shift the matter? (To Men. Cit.) Come, come, deny it not: I tell you. I have betrayed all.
Men. Cit. What have you betrayed?
Mul. Seeing you will yield to nothing, hear me, and you shall know in few words both the cause of my grief, and what he has told me. I say my cloak is stolen from me.
Men. Cit. My cloak is stolen from me?
Pen. (Aside) Look how he cavils! She says it is stolen from her.
Men. Cit. Come, wife, tell me.
Mul. I tell you, my cloak is stolen out of my house.
Men. Cit. What?! Who stole it?
Mul. He knows best that carried it away.
Men. Cit. Well, yes. But who was that?
Mul. Menechmus.
Men. Cit. 'Twas very ill done of him. What Menechmus was that?
Mul. You.
Men. Cit. I! who will say so?
Mul. I will.
Pen. And I, that you gave it to Erotium.
Men. Cit. I gave it?
Mul. You.
Men. Cit. Who?
Pen. You!
Men. Cit. Who?
Pen. Who, who, who! What - are you an Owl?
Men. Cit. Hear me one word, wife. I protest by all the gods, I gave it her not, I - I - I lent it her - to use a while.
Mul. Really? Why, I never give nor lend your apparel. I think you might let me dispose of mine own garments as you do of yours. Very well, then. Fetch it me home again.
Men. Cit. What? Oh! You shall have it again without fail.
Mul. 'And see that you do. Otherwise, you cockerel - do not think to roost within these doors again.
Pen. (To Mul.) Listen - What do say to me now, for bringing this foolishness to your ears?
Mul. I say, when you have anything stolen from you, come to me, and I will help you to seek it. And so, farewell. (Exit.)
Pen. (Aside) Thank Juno for nothing! That can never be, for I have nothing in the world worth the stealing. So now with husband, wife, and all, I am clean out of favour. A mischief on you all. (Exit.)
Men. Cit. (Aside) My wife thinks she is notably revenged on me, now she shuts me out of doors, as though I had not a better place to be welcomed. If she shut me out, I know who will shut me in. Now will I entreat Erotium to let me have the cloak again to stop my wife's mouth withal; and then will I provide a better for her.

(He crosses to the house of Erotium and calls out.)

Men. Cit. Ho! Who is within there? Somebody tell Erotium I must speak with her.
SCENE III WHAT? SO ANGRY?

(Enter EROTUM.)

Erot. Who calls?
Men. Cit. Your friend more than his own.
Erot. Very well. Say your mind.
Men. Cit. My wife now knows all between us.
Erot. So?
Men. Cit. So - now to appease her, I am forced to beg that I may have back again the cloak.
Erot. The Cloak?
Men. Cit. Yes! The one I brought you this morning.
Erot. You want it back?
Men. Cit. I promise you, I'll give you another worth two of it.
Erot. But, my little doormouse - I gave it you to carry to your dyers; and my gold chain likewise, to have it altered.
Men. Cit. Gave me the cloak and your chain? In truth I never saw you since I left it here with you and went to the Sessions. I have only now returned.
Erot. Ah then, I see, sir. So that way goes the game. You would contrive a trick to defraud me of them both. And to think I trusted you! (She puts on Alligator Tears.)
Men. Cit. What? Defraud you? No!! But, My Sweetmeat - my wife now knows about the cloak and the chain!
Erot. Sir. Look. Did I ask you to bring them? No. You brought them of your own free will. Now you require them back again. Take them, then. Make sops of them, you and your wife together. Do you think I value them - or you, for that matter?! Go! Come to me again - when I send for you. Not a jot sooner!

Men. Cit. What?! So angry with me, sweet Erotium? Stay, I pray stay.
Erot. Stay? Oh, no, sir! Do you think I would stay at your request? You?! Hah! (Exits)

Men. Cit. What? Gone in chafing, and clapped to the doors? Now I am every way shut out for a very benchwhistler. Neither shall I have entertainment here nor at home. Well, I were best go try some other friends, and ask counsel what to do.

Men. Cit crosses to exit LS passing a street vendor entering from LS. The vendor is dismissed by Men. Cit. rudely and continues RS just as Men. Tra. Enters RS. The vendor approaches him without seeing the similarity. He treats her kindly. Suddenly she sees his face and does a double-take between him and LS. Momentarily bewildered by the double - she finally shakes it off and staggers off RS. Men Tra. Stands confused by the treatment as Mul. Enters from her house.)

ACT V
SCENE I THE OLD MAN

Men. Tra. (Aside.) Most foolishly was I overseen in giving my purse of money to Messenio, whom I can nowhere find. I fear he is fallen into some lewd company.
Mul. (Aside.) I marvel that my husband comes not yet; but see where he is now, and brings my cloak with him.

Men. Tra. (Aside.) I wonder where the knave should be.

Mul. (Aside.) I will go ring a peal through both his ears for this dishonest behaviour. (to Men. Tra.) Oh, sir, you are welcome home with your thievery on your shoulders. Are you not ashamed to let all the world see and speak of your lewdness?

Men. Tra. (Aside.) How now? What is wrong with this woman?

Mul. Impudent beast, do you stand there to question me about it? For shame! Hold your peace.

Men. Tra. What offence have I done, woman, that I should not speak to you?

Mul. What offence? O shameless boldness!

Men. Tra. Good woman, did you never hear why the Grecians termed Hecuba to be a bitch?


Men. Tra. Because she did as you do now; on whomsoever she met, she ranted and howled - and therefore well-deserved that dogged name.

Mul. Oh! These foul abuses and slanders I cannot endure. No. I would rather live a widow's life to my dying day.

Men. Tra. What care I whether you live as a widow, or as a wife? I can never go out without someone vexing me with strange speech.


Men. Tra. I assure you - for my part, go - live a widow till the world's end, if you wish it!

Mul. Even now you deny that you stole it from me, and now you bring it home openly - in my sight? Are you not ashamed?

Men. Tra. Woman, you are greatly to blame to charge me with stealing of this cloak, which this day another gave me to carry to be trimmed.

Mul. Well, I will first complain to my father. (She turns to the house and calls. A boy, Decio, pops his head out of an upstairs window.) Ho, boy, who is within there?

Decio, go run quickly to my father; desire him of all love to come over quickly to my house. (To Men. Tra.) I'll tell him first of your pranks; He will not see me thus handled.

Men. Tra. (Aside) By all the gods! What means this mad woman thus to vex me?

Mul. I am mad because I tell you of your vile actions; and lewd pilfering of my apparel and my jewels; which you carry to your filthy drabs.

Men. Tra. (Aside) For whom this woman takes me I know not. I know her as well as I know Hercules' wife's father.

Mul. You do not know me, eh? Oh, that's rich. (Enter SENEX.) Well, I hope you know my father for here he comes. Look, do ye know him?

Men. Tra. As much as I knew Calchas of Troy.

Mul. So - You do not know either of us? Not me nor my father?

Men. Tra. No, truly. Nor your grandfather neither.

Mul. This is like the rest of your behaviour.

SCENE II A LAUGHING-STOCK

Sen. (Aside) Though, bearing so great a burthen as old age, I can make no great haste,
yet as I can, I will go to my daughter, who I know hath some earnest business with me, that she sends in such haste, not telling the cause why I should come. But I durst lay a wager, I can guess near the matter. I suppose it is some brabble between her husband and her. These young women that bring great dowries to their husbands, are so masterful and obstinate, that they will have their own wills in everything, and make men servants to their weak affections: and young men too, I must needs say, be naught nowadays. Well, I'll go see, but yonder I think stands my daughter, and her husband too. Oh, 'tis even as I guessed.

Mul. Father, ye are welcome.
Sen. How now, daughter? What? is all well; why is your husband so sad? Have you been chiding? Tell me, which of you is in fault?
Mul. First, father, know, that I have not any way misbehaved myself; but the truth is, that I can by no means endure this bad man to die for it; and therefore desire you to take me home to you again.

Sen. What is the matter?
Mul. He makes me a stale and a laughing-stock to all the world.
Sen. Who does this?
Mul. This good husband here, to whom you married me.
Sen. See, see; how oft have I warned you of falling out with your husband?
Mul. I cannot avoid it, if he doth so fouly abuse me.
Sen. I always told you, you must bear with him. You must let him alone; you must not watch him, nor dog him, nor meddle with his courses in any sort.
Mul. He haunts wicked harlots under my nose.
Sen. Ah! Then, He is wiser, because he cannot be so at home.
Mul. There he feasts and spends, and spoils.
Sen. Would you have your husband serve you as your drudge? You will not let him make merry, nor entertain his friends at home?
Mul. Father! Will you take his part in these abuses, and forsake me?
Sen. Not so, daughter! But if I see cause, I will as well tell him of his duty.

Men. Tra. (Aside) I would I were gone from this prating father and daughter.
Sen. I see that he keeps you well; you want for nothing; apparel, money, servants, meat, drink - all things necessary. I fear there is fault in you.
Mul. But he steals away my apparel and my jewels, to give to his trulls.
Sen. If he has done so, 'tis very ill done; if not, you do ill to say so.
Mul. You may believe me, father, for there you may see my cloak which now he hath fetched home again, and my gold chain - both of which he stole from me.

Sen. (Aside.) Now will I go talk with him to know the truth. [To Men. Tra.] Tell me, Menechmus, how is it that I hear such disorder in your life? Why are you so sad, man? Wherein hath your wife offended you?

Men. Tra. Old man (what to call you I know not), by high Jove, and by all the gods I swear unto you; whatsoever this woman here accusing me to have stolen from her, it is utterly false and untrue; and if ever I set foot within her doors, I wish the greatest misery in the world to light upon me.

Sen. Why, fond man, are you mad to deny the you have ever set foot inside you own house? Where you live?!

Men. Tra. Where I live?! Do I live in that house?
Sen. Do you deny it?
Men. Tra. I do.
Sen. Listen, daughter: are you moved out of your house? I
Mul. Father, he uses you as he does me: this life I have with him.
Sen. Menechmus. I beg of you - leave off this fondness; you jest too
perversely with your friends.
Men. Tra. Good old father, what, I beg you - have you to do with me? Or why should this
woman thus trouble me, with whom I have no dealings in the world.
Mul. Father, see now how his eyes sparkle: they roll in his head; his colour goes and
comes. He looks wildly. See! See!
Men. Tra. (Aside) What? They say now I am mad! Ah! I will feign myself mad indeed, and so be
rid of them.

(He begins to ‘perform’ his mad act with drooling and hanging on Senex.)

Mul. Look! Look how he stares about, how he gapes!
Sen. And Drools! Ugh! Come away, daughter! Come from him.
Men. Tra. Bacchus, Apollo, Phoebus! Do you call me to come hunt in the woods with you?
I see! I hear! I come! I fly! But I cannot get out of these fields. Here is an old
mastiff bitch stands barking at me; and by her stands an old goat that bears false
witness against many a poor man.
Sen. Out upon him, Bedlam fool.
Men. Tra. Hark, Apollo commands me that I should rend out her eyes with a burning lamp.
Mul. O father, he threatens to pull out mine eyes.
Men. Tra. Good gods, these folk say I am mad, and doubtless they are mad themselves.

(He pulls Senex’s robe up over his head. The old man stumbles about groping. His hands land
on Men. Tra’s chest.)

Sen. Daughter?
Mul. Here, father! (She unveils him, shoving Men. Tra. Aside) What shall we do?
Sen. What if I fetch my folks hither, and have him carried in before he do any harm
Men. (Aside) What? They will carry me in if I look not to myself: I were best to scare them
better yet. (Aloud) What’s that, Oh, Phoebus? You bid me tear this dog in
pieces with my nails? If I can but lay hold on him, I will do thy commandment.

(He growls and snaps and begins clutching at Senex.)

Sen. Ah!! Get you into your house, daughter! Away quickly. (Exit Mul. Screaming.)

Men. Tra. Beast! Come to me; and if you command me, Great Phoebus, I will cut his throat
with that dagger that hangs at his girdle.
Sen. Cut?! Come not near me, sirrah.
Men. Tra. Yes, just as you say! I will quarter him, and pull all the bones out of his flesh, and
then will I barrel up his bowels.
Sen. Sure, I am very afraid he will do some hurt.
Men. Tra. So many horrors thou commandest of me, Apollo! What? Wouldst thou have me
harness up wild horses? Climb up into the chariot? And ride over this old stinking
toothless lion? Yeah, Great Phoebus!

*(He begins the elaborate pantomime as Senex cowers.)*

**Men. Tra.** So now I am in the chariot, and now I have hold on the reins: now here is my whip. Come, ye wild jades, make a hideous noise with your stamping. Will ye not go?

**Sen. (Aside)** What? Does he threaten me with his horses?

**Men Tra.** Hark! Now Apollo bids me ride over him that stands there, and kill him. How now? Who pulls me down from my chariot by the hairs of my head? Oh, shall I not fulfil Apollo's commandment?

**Sen. (Aside)** See! See, what a sharp disease this is, and how well he was even now. I will fetch a physician straight, before he grow too far into this rage. *(Exit.)*

**Men. Tra. (Aside)** Are they both gone now? I'll then I must get to my ship. Tis time to be gone from this place! *(Exit.)*

**SCENE III** **I'LL CURE HIM**

*(Enter SENEX and MEDICUS.)*

**Med.** What disease has he, said you? Is it a lethargy or a lunacy, or melancholy, or dropsy?

**Sen.** How am I to know? That is why I have brought you here but that you should tell me what it is, and cure him of it!

*(Enter MENECHMUS the Citizen.)*

**Men. Cit.** Never in my life had I more overthwart fortune in one day, and all by the villainy of this false knave the Parasite, my Ulysses that works such mischiefs against me his king. But let me live no longer but I'll be revenged upon the life of him. His life? nay, 'tis my life, for he lives by my meat and drink. I'll utterly withdraw the slave's life from him. And Erotium she plainly shows what she is; who because I require the cloak again to carry to my wife, says I gave it her, and flatly falls out with me. How unfortunate am I!

**Sen. (Aside to Med.)** Do ye hear him?

**Med. (Aside to Sen.)** He complains of his fortune.

**Sen. (Aside to Med.)** Go to him.

**Med.** Menechmus, how do you, Sir? Why do you not keep your cloak over your arm? It is very hurtful to your disease. Keep warm, I beg you.

**Men. Cit.** Why, go hang yourself! What do you care?

**Med.** Sir, can you smell anything?

**Men. Cit.** I smell a prating dolt!

**Med.** Oh! I would have your bowels thoroughly purged. Pray tell me, Menechmus, what do you usually drink? White wine, or claret?

**Men. Cit.** What do you care?

**Sen. (Aside to Med.)** Look! His fit now begins.

**Men. Cit.** Why do you not as well ask me whether I eat bread, or cheese, or beef, or porridge, or birds that bear feathers, or fishes that have fins?
Sen. (Aside to Med.) See what idle talk he falls into.
Med. (Aside to Sen.) Wait! I will ask him further. (To Men. Cit.) Menechmus, tell me, be not your eyes heavy and dull sometimes?
Men. Cit. What, Do you think I am an owl?
Med. Do not your guts grip you and croak in your belly?
Men. Cit. When I am hungry they do, else not.
Med. (Aside to Sen.) He speaks not like a madman in that. (To Men. Cit.) Do you sleep soundly all night?
Men. Cit. When I have paid my debts I do. Now, may mischief light on you for all of frivolous questions!
Med. (Aside to Sen.) Oh, now he rages upon those words: take heed.
Sen. (Aside to Men.) Oh, this is nothing! Just now he called his wife a bitch!
Med. His wife? A bitch?
Men. Cit. My wife?
Sen. A bitch. And all for nothing.
Men. Cit. Did I?
Sen. You did, indeed, mad fellow! And threatened to ride over me with a chariot and horses, and to kill me, and tear me in pieces. This you did! I know what I say.
Men. Cit. I say, you stole Jupiter's crown from his head, and you were whipped through the town for it, and that you have killed you own father, and married your mother.
Med. Ah, Oedipus!
Sen. What?
Med. Oh, that's very Greek.
Sen. Greek? Oh, no!
Men. Cit. Do you think that I am so mad that I cannot devise as notable lies of you as you do of me?
Sen. Master Doctor, I heartily beg you to make speed to cure him. See how mad he grows?
Med. Bring him to my house, and there I will cure him.
Sen. Is that best?
Med. What else? There I can treat him as I wish.
Sen. Well, it shall be so.
Med. Oh, sir, I will make you take sneezing powder for twenty days.
Men. Cit. I'll beat you first with a club for thirty days.
Med. Oh! Fetch men to carry him to my house.
Sen. How many will serve the turn?
Med. Being no madder than he is now, four will serve.
Sen. I'll fetch them. Stay you with him, Master Doctor.
Med. No! I'll go home to make ready. Let your men bring him to me.
Sen. I go. (Exeunt Sen. And Med.)
Men. Cit. Are they both gone? Good gods, what does this mean? These men say I am mad, who without doubt are mad themselves. I stir not, I fight not, I am not sick. I speak to them, I know them. Well, what were I now best to do? I would go home, but my wife shuts me forth a doors. Erotium is far out with me too. Well, I will rest me here till the evening. I hope by that time, they will take pity on me. (Seats himself apart.)
SCENE IV \ THE LAST RESORT

(Enter MESSENIO, the Traveller's servant, and another servant.)

Mess. The proof of a good servant, is to regard his master's business as well in his absence as in his presence; and I think him a very fool that is not careful as well for his ribs and shoulders, as for his belly and throat. When I think upon the rewards of a sluggard, I am ever pricked with a careful regard of my back and shoulders; for in truth I have no fancy to these blows, as many a one hath. Methinks it is no pleasure to a man to be basted with a rope's end two or three hours together. I have provided yonder in the town for all our mariners, and safely bestowed all my master's trunks and goods; and am now coming to see if he be yet got forth of this dangerous gulf, where I fear me he is overplunged. Pray God he be not overwhelmed and past help before I come.

SCENE V \ HELP! HELP!

(Enter SENEX, 'with four Porters.)

Sen. Before gods and men, I charge and command you, sirs, to execute with great care that which I appoint you: if ye love the safety of your own ribs and shoulders, then go take me up my son-in-law, lay all hands upon him. Why stand you still? What do you doubt? I say, care not for his threatenings, nor for any of his words. Take him up, and bring him to the Physician's house: I will go there before you.

(Exit Senex. The Porters go to seize Men. Cit. who is now asleep. Struggle and mayhem ensue. Finally, they have him bound.)


Men. Cit. Is there no good man will help me?

Mess. Help you, master? Yes! The villains shall have my life before they shall thus wrong you. 'Tis more fit, I should be killed, than you thus handled. Sir! Pull out that rascal's eye that holds you about the neck there. There we are! Now, I'll clout these peasants; out, you rogue; let go, varlet!

Men. Cit. I have hold of this villain's eye!

Mess. Pull it out, Sir! Show him the hole in his head! Away cut-throat thieves!

BE FREE FOR MY PART

Porters Omnes. Oh, oh, ay! (Cry pitifully.)

Mess. Away, get you hence, you mongrels, you dogs! You - you - rascal there, I'll give you something to cry about! Take that. (Exeunt Porters.) It was a good time for me to come along, master; you had been in a good case, if I had not been here now. I told you what would come of it.
Men. Cit. Now as the gods love me, my good friend, I thank you! You have done that for me which I shall never be able to requite.

Mess. I'll tell you how you may, sir.

Men. Cit. How then, may I repay you?

Mess. Give me my freedom.

Men. Cit. Should I give it thee?

Mess. Seeing you cannot requite my good turn.

Men. Cit. But you are deceived, man.

Mess. How so?

Men. Cit. On my honesty, I cannot grant it.

Mess. but wy, sir?

Men. Cit. Why, I am not your master. I never yet had any servant would do so much for me.

Mess. Why then bid me be free: will you?

Men. Cit. Yes, surely: be free, for my part.

Mess. Oh, sweetly spoken; thanks, my good master. What sweet fortune! Oh, master, I'll call you master still. I pray use me in any service as you did before. I'll dwell with you still; and when you go home, I'll wait upon you.

Men. Cit. No, no. There is no need.

Mess. Sir. I'll go straight to the Inn, and deliver up my accounts, and all your stuff. Your purse is locked up safely sealed in the casket, as you gave it me. I will go fetch it to you.

Men. Cit. Do, fetch it.

Mess. Sir. I go! (Exits.)

Men. Cit. (Aside.) I was never so perplexed! Some deny me to be him that I am, and shut me out of their doors. My old father-in-law and the doctor say I am mad. This fellow says he is my bondman, and of me he begs his freedom and then goes to fetch my purse and money. Well, if he brings it, I will receive it, and set him free. But I hope he would then go on his way. Whoever saw such strange demeanours? Well, though Erotium be never so angry, yet once again I'll go see if by entreaty I can get the cloak from her to carry to my wife. (Exit.)

SCENE VII A COMEDY OF ERRORS

(Enter MENECHMUS the Traveller, and MESSENIO.)

Men. Tra. Impudent knave, will you say that I ever saw you since I sent you away to-day, and bade you come for me after dinner?

Mess. Oh! You make me out to be stark mad! I took you away, and rescued you from four great big-boned villains, that were carrying you away even here in this place. Here they had you up; you cried Help! Help! I came running to you; you and I together beat them away by great force. Then for my good turn and faithful service, you gave me my freedom.

Men. Tra. What?!

Mess. Yes, and then I told you I would go fetch your trunks and such. Now in the meantime you ran some other way to get before me, and so you deny it all again.

Men. Tra. I gave you your freedom?

Mess. You did.
Mess       Yes, sir!
Men. Trav. When I do give you your freedom, I'll be a bondman myself; go your way.
Mess.     Well. Thank you for nothing.

(Enter MENECHMUS the Citizen, Talking back to EROTium and her maid who follow.)

Men. Cit. Forsworn Whores! Swear till your hearts ache, and your eyes fall out, you shall never make me believe that I carried hence either cloak or chain.
Mess. Jumping Juno! Master, what do I see?
Men. Tra. What?
Mess. Your ghost!
Men. Tra. My ghost?
Mess. Your image, then - as like you as you can be.
Men. Tra. (looking at Men. Cit.) Surely not much unlike me, as I think.
Men. Cit. (To Mess. not seeing Men. Tra.) Oh, my good friend and helper, well met; thank you again for your good help.
Mess. Sir, may I crave to know your name?
Men. Cit. I were to blame if I should not tell you anything; my name is Menechmus.
Men. Tra. (Slowly crossing to him.) Nay, my friend, that is my name.
Men. Cit. (Seeing Men. Tra for the first time.) I am of Syracuse.
Men. Tra. Syracuse? So am I.
Mess. You are a Syracusan?
Men. Tra. Sicily? So am I.
Mess. Oho, I know you: this is my master: I thought he there had been my master, and was proffering my service to him. Pray pardon me, sir, if I said anything I should not.
Men. Tra. Why, doting patch, did you not come with me this morning from the ship?
Mess. My faith, he says true. This is my master. The gods save you, master: you sir, farewell. This is Menechmus.
Men. Cit. I say, that I am Menechmus.
Mess. What a jest is this? Are you Menechmus?
Men. Cit. Menechmus, the son of Moschus.
Men. Tra. (Aside.) My father's son?
Men. Cit. Friend, I do not take your father nor your country from you.
Mess. (Aside) Oh, immortal gods, let it fall out as I hope; and for my life these two are the two twins, all things agree to jump together. I will speak to my master. Menechmus.
Both. What?
Mess. I do not call you both. But which of you came with me from the ship?
Men. Cit. Not I.
Men. Tra. I did.
Mess. Then I call you, sir. Come hither.
Men. Tra. What's the matter?
Mess. (Aside to Men. Tra.) This same is either some notable cozening juggler, or else..
Men. Tra. Or else, what?
Mess. This is your brother - whom we seek!
Men. Tra. What? Him?
Mess. I never saw one man so like another: water to water, nor milk to milk, is not more alike than he is to you.

Men. Tra. (Aside to Mess.) Indeed I think you speak truth! Go. Question him. Find that he is my brother, and I hereby promise you your freedom.

Mess. (Aside to Men. Tra.) Well, let me about it. (To Men. Cit.) Hear me, sir; you say your name is Menechmus.

Men. Cit. I do.
Mess. Why, so is this man's. and you are of Syracuse?
Men. Cit. True.
Mess. So is he. And Moschus was your father?
Men. Cit. Moschus? He was.
Mess. His father was also called Moschus.
Men. Cit. How odd. And?
Mess. What will you say, if I find that you are brothers?
Men. Cit. Brothers!?
Mess. And Twins!?
Men. Cit. Why, I would think it happy news.
Mess. Nay wait! Masters both: I mean to have the honour of this exploit. Answer me: your name is Menechmus?

Men. Cit. Yes.
Mess. And yours?
Men. Tra. And mine.
Mess. You are of Syracuse?
Men. Cit. I am.
Men. Tra. And I.
Mess. Well, this goes right thus far. What is the farthest thing that you remember there?
Men. Cit. How I went with my father to Tarentum, to a great market and there in the press I was stolen from him.

Men. Tra. O Jupiter!
Mess. (to Men. Tra.) Peace, what exclaiming is this? (To Men. Cit.) How old were you then?
Men. Cit. About seven year old: for even then I shed teeth, and since that time I never heard of any of my kindred.
Mess. Did you never have a brother?
Men. Cit. Yes, as I remember, I heard them say, we were two twins.
Men. Tra. Oh, Fortune!
Mess. Tush, can you not be quiet? We must be certain! Were you both of one name?
Men. Cit. No. As I recall, they called my brother...Sosicles.
Men. Tra. It is he! What need further proof? Oh, brother! Brother, let me embrace you!
Men. Cit. Sir, if this be true, I am wonderfully glad: but how is it that you are called Menechmus?

Men. Tra. When it was told us that you and our father were both dead, our grandsire, in memory of my father's name, changed mine to Menechmus.
Men. Cit. 'Tis very like he would do so indeed. But let me ask you one question more: what was our mother's name?

Men. Tra. Theusimarche.
Men Cit. (Aside.) Ye gods! There can be but one Theusimarche!
(Rushing to embrace Men. Tra.) Brother!

Brother, the most welcome man to me, that the world may hold!

Men. Tra. Such joy! And ten thousand joys more, having taken so long travel and huge pains to seek you.

Men. Cit. Huge pains? For me?

Mess. See now, how all this matter comes about? Thus it was that the gentlewoman had you in to dinner, thinking it had been he!

Men. Cit. True it is I willed a dinner to be provided for me here this morning; and I also brought hither closely a cloak of my wife's, and gave it to this woman.

Men. Tra. Is not this the same, brother?

Men. Cit. How came you by this?

Men. Tra. This woman met me; had me in to dinner; entertained me most kindly; and gave me this cloak, and this gold chain.

Men. Cit. Indeed she took you for me: and I believe I have been as strangely handled being taken for you.

Mess. You shall have time enough to laugh at all these matters hereafter. Do you remember, master, what you promised me?

Men. Cit. Brother, I will entreat you to perform your promise to Messenio: he is worthy of it.

Men. Tra. I am content.

Mess. Triumphs!

Men. Tra. Brother, will you now go with me to Syracuse?

Men. Cit. So soon as I can sell away such goods as I possess here in Epidamnum, I will go with you.

Men. Tra. Thanks, my good brother.

(In the rejoicing there is much noise which draws the attention of Mul. And Penniculus from the house as well as the remainder of the company in the form of vendors, salors, etc. All are present for the final proclamation.)

Men. Cit. Messenio, play you the crier for me, and make a proclamation of my sale.

Mess. A fit office. What day shall your sale be?

Men. Cit. This day.

Mess. (To All.) All men and women in Epidamnum, that will repair to Menechmus' house this day, shall there find all manner of things to sell; servants, household stuff, house, ground and all; so they bring ready money. (To Men. Cit.) Will you sell your wife too, sir?

Men. Cit. Gladly - but I doubt anybody would pay money for her.

Mess. (To All.) Thus, gentlemen, patrons all, we take our leaves, and if we have you here pleased, we would be honoured by your Plaudite.

FINIS
NOTES

p. 14. Peniculus 'a sponge,' 'a brush.'
p. 22, 1. 49. Nay, further yet with a will from the lion's cave.'
'Good for ye! 'tis pity ye were not made a charioteer to drive
in a race,' who had to look behind for fear of a foul from his
competitors.
p. 24, 1. 1. 'I don't count you.' 'Then I am in the same
case as the adscriptivi,' who were enrolled as reserves to fill the
places of the killed: not on the strength of the regiment. Until
a soldier was in numeris, he was not officially miles.
Below, the translator takes tua est legio as 'the legion is under
your command.' Is it possible that legio is used in its original
sense of choice?
'Drink for the heavens' I do not understand. The old texts
read pro Ilio - perhaps the translator had caelo' somewhere in his
copy. He paraphrases freely here, however.
p. 26, 1. 17. 'garter': girdle.
p. 26, 1. 20. 'Thus... lovers'
probably belongs to Erotium; the next line to P. (aside).
'mary-bone: marrow-bone.
p. 27, 1. 42. 'lese': lose.
p. 28, 1. 3. M. says really that he would feel happier to see
his own country again.
p. 32, 1. 44 omitted in trans.; the author here compresses.
p. 32, 11. 7, 8 are run into one by the old texts. The
Ambr. shows that there were two: they seem to have run thus:
Men. Tra. A good day to you, whoever you are.
Cyl. Whoever I am I What I don't you know who I am?
Men. Tra. Not I, i' faith.
Cylindrus then continues: Where are the other guests?
The first word of 1. 8 is certainly non, not noui, as Flection conjectured.
The translation 'no, not I' must be taken ironically. Below,
11. 12-13 are omitted; the Ambr. shows another lost line.
p. 33, 1. 34. 'catchpoles, cony-catchers': constables, cheats.
p. 34, 1. 22. Culindrus should be read here, with a pun on
culleus (leather bag); Coriendrus, a pun on corium (leather).
p. 36, 1. 36. hicquidem: he said I was mad, now I see he is so.
p. 36, 1. 51. 'Well, I'll go and see about dressing the meat.'
p. 36, 11. 53-58 compressed.
p. 38, i ff. The speech is compressed; this is so often done that it will not be noted after this except for some special reason.

p. 45, 1. 63. Pythia' should be Phintia.
(This succession is not in the history.)

p. 47, 1. 84.
'dyers: worker in gold embroidery.

p. 47, 1. 94. 'sot ': fool.

p. 49, 1. 95. 'Ay, master': there is nothing of this in the Latin peril) "I'm done for."

p. 48, 1. I. Twenty: thirty.

p. 54. Ancilla means Maid: it is not a proper name.

Act IV. Mulier: woman.

p. 60, 11. 19-21 are omitted.

p. 79. Senex: old man.

p. 82, 11. 51-2 are omitted, and the speech of Men. Aside inserted.

The last speech of Men. Tra. comes after the first speech of Sen.; the translator has compressed it.

p. 105, 1. 41. * Servus allus: another slave. He is not in the original cast.

p. 109, 1. 17. <Whew . . . ': not in text.

p. 113, 1. 70. This quick dialogue is a paraphrase of a longer speech of Messenio.

p. 119, 1. 157. Plaudits: please applaud. This was the actors' appeal at the end of a play.

Notes taken from the Forward of this Edition

THE MENAECHMI: THE ORIGINAL OF SHAKESPEARE’S 'COMEDY OF ERRORS':
EDITED BY W. H. D. ROUSE,
LITT.D.
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INTRODUCTION
Sources of the Menaechmi. The Latin play was taken from a Greek original, as the custom was and as we are told in the prologue. Nothing is known of the original. Because the Menaechmi came from Sicily, Epicharmus has been guessed as the author; but there is no ground for this, since the art of Epicharmus seems to have been nearer to buffoonery than to comedy, and this play breathes the very air of the New Comedy, what the prologue says about the Sicilissare of his author, is shown by the context to refer to the scene, not the dialect.
The title, Twins," is known amongst the plays of Alexis, Anaxandrides, Antiphanes, Aristophon, Euphron, Menander, and Xenarchus. An attempt has been made to show that Poseidippos was the author, because Cylindrus here is Erotium's slave or servant, and Athenaeus says that Posei
dippos alone brings in a slave as cook. This is probably not true, and if it were, it is not certain that Cylindrus here is a slave. It remains then to say that any of the poets above named may have been the author, or someone else.

Translations: The Mentchmi was acted in Italian a Ferrara, A.D. 1486 (Ruth, Gcsch. der it. Poesie * ii.) and again in 1501 apparently at Milan (Burchardt, Cultur der Ren., 319). It was also drawn upon by Cardinal Bernard Dovitius for his Calandria, and by Cecchi for his Moglie. The plays of J. G. Trissino, / Simillimi (Venice., 1547), and of Agnolo Firenzuola, / Lucidi (Florence, 1549), were also founded upon it. The Spaniard Juan de Timoned a published a version in 1559. Other adaptations exist in French and German, before Shakespeare. After the time of Shakespeare we have Rotrou's Les Menechmes acted in 1632 and Regnard's in 1705, Boursault's Let Menteurs qui ne mentent pas, Cailhava's Les Menechmes greet., and Goldoni's I Due Gemelli Veneziani. Further information may be got in Dunlop's History of Roman Literature, 185 ff., TeufTeil's Hist., i. 137, and Ward's English Dramatic Literature, i. 373, with the prefaces of Wagner and Ussing to their editions of the Latin play, and that of Prof. Gollancz to the Comedy of Errors (Temple Shakespeare) cp. Also Menechmi und Amphitruo im englischen drama bis zur 1661, by Karl Roeder (Leipzig, 1904). In English. The episode of Jack Juggler (1563) is probably the first representation in English of the favourite "farce of mistaken identity." The oldest English translation, which is here reprinted, was by William Warner, and published in 1 595 ; he tells us, however, that it had circulated in MS. before. Shakespeare may have seen it ; but on the other hand, as the Comedy of Errors may be fairly dated 1589-91, Warner may have seen Shakespeare. The only verbal echo is found in the Comedy of Errors, ii. 1. I oo, where Adriana says: "Poor I am but his stale." ; in our translation the Wife says, 'He makes me a stale and a laughing-stock to all the world.'

Comparison of the Latin with the Translation: Warner's translation is largely a free paraphrase; he frequently compresses the original, omitting lines or whole speeches, or giving a pithy summary of the cantica or lyric parts of the Latin. Occasionally a short speech has been interjected with good effect : instances will be pointed out in the notes. It is clear that Warner wrote with an eye on the stage, and his brisk interchange has often the advantage over Plautus.

Comparison of the Latin with Shakespeare: Shakespeare has made the play far more complex by the addition of new characters, Egeon, Balthazar, Angelo, the Abbess, Luciana, and especially the second Dromio. He has also given a touch of suspense and pathos to the play by the episode of Egeon, his plain unvarnished tale, and the risk of death. This is one of his characteristic of the comedy which is almost a tragedy, of which Much Ado About Nothing is one example, and the Merchant of Venice another : the last, indeed, really includes a tragedy, whether Shakespeare felt it or not. But the great triumph of the Comedy of Error is the creation of the two Dromios. This can hardly be said to make the plot more unlikely. The plot anyhow is impossible; and if for fun we allow the convention of two twins exactly alike in person and dress, let us by all means allow a second pair, and make our fun threefold. The existence of the twin Dromios makes it possible to begin the confusion early, and to keep it up with continual variations as long as the play lasts. In the Latin there is no confusion before II. ii., when Cylindrus meets Menæchmus Traveller and his man; Erotium meets them in the next scene, and in the third act Peniculus and the maid are confronted with them. The fourth act works off the result of this confusion on Menæchmus Citizen, and in V. i.-iii. the Traveller meets the wife and the father-in-law of the Citizen. The Citizen then comes in for the effects of these meetings, and finally : the twins meet in the last
scene. Shakespeare, however, is able to begin the fun earlier. His scenes, counted as the Latin, are three in Act I., five in Act II., five in Act III., seventeen in Act IV., and eight in Act V. In the third of these (I. ii.) he brings in the first confusion, when Antipholus the Traveller (if I may use the same title) meets Dromio the Citizen’s man. After an interval, while this begins to work on the Citizen, the same two meet again, and are next confronted with the Citizen’s wife and her sister. The third act opens with a scene in which recognition is near, Antipholus the Citizen and his Dromio trying to get into their own house, where the two doubles already are. Then comes a meeting of the sister with the two Travellers, which makes the confusion worse. The first scene of IV. is made brisk by a confusion of the two Dromios, who enter one after the other to Antipholus the Citizen. In the following scenes we have further meetings between the Travellers and Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtezan, and between the Citizens and the same, the puzzlement increasing when one pair goes out and the other immediately comes in. Finally, the plot works up to its climax and the two pairs meet: Egeon is delivered from death, and finds his wife in the Abbess.

The complexity of Shakespeare’s plot is not realized until the two plays have been analyzed. The analysis of the Menachmi discloses that Menaechmus the Citizen does not meet any strangers until the last scene, when he is confronted with his double. Menaechmus the Traveller has seven such meetings (counting each of the important characters as one); the Wife, the Father, and Messenio have two each; Peniculus, Erotium, Cylindrus, and the maid one each. On the other hand: in Shakespeare Antipholus the Citizen has three such meetings, Antipholus the Traveller twelve; Dromio the Citizen’s man has four, and the other Dromio eleven (counting the house scene as one); Adriana the Wife has seven; her sister Luciana eight; the Courtezan four; and Luce one. The proportion of Shakespeare to Plautus is 50 : 17, or nearly three to one. This was made possible by the invention of the second Dromio.

THE PRINTER TO THE READERS.
The writer hereof, loving Readers, having diven of this Poet’s Comedies Englished, for the use and delight of his private friends, who in Plautus* own words are not able to understand them; I have prevailed so far with him as to let this one go farther abroad, for a public recreation and delight to all those that affect the diverse sorts of books compiled in this kind, whereof (in my judgment) In harmless mirth and quickness offing conceit, the most of them come far short of this. And although I found him very loath and unwilling to hazard this to the curious view of envious detraction, being, as he tells me, neither so exactly written, as it may carry any name of a Translation, nor such liberty therein used, as that he would notoriously vary from the Poet’s own order; yet sith it is only a matter of merriment, and the little alteration thereof can breed no detriment of importance, I have over-ruled him so far as to let this be offered to your courteous acceptance, and if you shall applaud his little labour herein, I doubt not but he will endeavour to gratify you with some of the rest, better laboured and more curiously polished.

Farewell.

:: Where you find this mark, the Poet’s conceit is somewhat altered, by occasion either of the time, the country, or the phrase.
ARGUMENTVM
Mercator Siculus, quoi erant gemini filii,
Ei surrupto altero mors optigit.
Nomen surreptici illi indit qui domist
Avos paternus,,facit Menaechmum e Sosicle.
Et is germanum, postquam adolevit, quaequita
Circum omnis oras, post Epidamnum devenit
Hic fuerat alitus ille surrepticius.
Menaechmum omnes civem credunt advenam
Eumque appellant meretrix, uxor et socer.
I se cognoscunt fratres postremo invicem.

THE ARGUMENT
* Two twinborn sons, a Sicily merchant had,
Menechmus one, and policies the other :
The first his father lost a little lad,
The Grandsire named the latter like his brother.
This, grown a man, long travel took to seek
His brother, and to Epidamnum came,
Where Brother dwelt enrichd, and him so like,
That citizens there take him for the same :
Father, wife, neighbours, each mistaking either,
Much pleasant error, ere they meet together.