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Comic Twins in Plautus, Shakespeare, and the Marx Brothers:

Surrealism and Breaking the Conventions of Social Discourse

*Mistaken Identity*: Plautus’ *Menaechmi*; Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*

*Usurpation*: Plautus’ *Amphitruo*

I.Characters’ explanations

*Menaechmi*

(1)Madness; (2) Drunkenness; (3) Stupidity; (4) Dreaming; (5) “Con Game”

*The Comedy of Errors*

(1) Madness; (2) Drunkenness; (3) Dreaming; (4) Magic; (5) Witchcraft; (6) Satan;

(7) Possession by demons; (8) Miracle; (9) Inspiration; (10) “Cozenage;”

(11) Humor and Mocking

*Amphitruo*

(1) Madness; (2) Drunkenness; (3) Dreaming; (4) Magic; (5) Lying; (6) Mockery;

(7) Nonsense (8) Testing Alcumena; (9) Sosia has already told Alcumena;

(10) Amphitruo took a short cut from the harbor.

II.Surrealism and “Anti-Politeness” Theory

(1) Cyl. Menaechme, salve. Men. Di te amabunt quisquis es.

Cyl. Quisquis…quis ego sim?

Men. Non hercle vero. Cyl. Ubi convivae ceteri?

Men. Quos tu convivas quaeris? Cyl. Parasitum tuom.

Men. Meum parasitum? Certe hic insanust homo.

Cyl. Menaechmus, greetings! Men. Thank you, whoever you are.

Cyl. Whoever you are? Don’t you know me?  
Men. No, by Hercules. Cyl. Where are the other feasters?

Men. What feasters do you seek? Cyl. Your sponge.

Men. My sponge? Obviously this is a crazy man. (*Men.* 278-82)

(2a)Antipholus (from Syracuse): “What? Was I married to her in a dream?

Or sleep I now and think I heard this?”

(2b) Dromio: “I am transformed, am I not?”

Antipholus: “I think thou art in mind, and so am I.”

(2c) Antipholus: “Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?

Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advised?

Known unto these, and to myself disguised!” (*CE* 2.2.193-94, 206-7, 225-27)

(3) Amph. Sed quid ais? [num](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=num&la=la&can=num0&prior=ais) [obdormivisti](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=obdormivisti&la=la&can=obdormivisti0&prior=num) [dudum](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=dudum&la=la&can=dudum2&prior=obdormivisti)? [Sos](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Sos&la=la&can=sos23&prior=dudum).  [Nusquam](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Nusquam&la=la&can=nusquam1&prior=Sos) [gentium](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=gentium&la=la&can=gentium0&prior=Nusquam).

Amph. Ibi forte [istum](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=istum&la=la&can=istum0&prior=forte) [si](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=si&la=la&can=si3&prior=istum) [vidisses](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=vidisses&la=la&can=vidisses0&prior=si) [quendam](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=quendam&la=la&can=quendam0&prior=vidisses) [in](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=in&la=la&can=in3&prior=quendam) [somnis](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=somnis&la=la&can=somnis0&prior=in) Sosiam.

Sos. Non soleo ego [somniculose](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=somniculose&la=la&can=somniculose0&prior=ego) eri [imperia](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=imperia&la=la&can=imperia0&prior=%C3%A9ri) persequi.

Vigilans vidi, vigilans nunc te video, vigilans fabulor,

Vigilantem ille me iam dudum vigilans pugnis contudit.

Amph. Quis homo? Sos. Sosia, inquam, ego ille. Quaeso, nonne intellegis?

Amph. But what do you mean? Did you fall asleep some time ago?

Sos. Never in a million years!

Amph. If perhaps you saw that certain Sosia in your dreams.

Sos. I am not in the habit of carrying out my master’s orders when I’m asleep.

I saw him [the other Sosia] when I was wide awake, as I see you now wide

awake and am talking wide awake.

He was wide awake when he was beating me just now, while I was wide

awake.

Amph. Who beat you up? Sos. Sosia, I say, that other me. Please--don’t you

understand?” (*Am.* 620-25)

(4a) Ma. [non](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=non&la=la&can=non0&prior=meret) [te](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=te&la=la&can=te0&prior=non) [pudet](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=pudet&la=la&can=pudet0&prior=te) [prodire](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=prodire&la=la&can=prodire0&prior=pudet) [in](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=in&la=la&can=in1&prior=prodire) [conspectum](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=conspectum&la=la&can=conspectum0&prior=in) meum,

flagitium hominis, cum istoc ornatu? Men. Quid est?

Quae te res agitat, mulier? Mat. Etiamne, impudens,

muttire verbum unum audes aut mecum loqui?

Men. Quid tandem admisi in me, ut loqui non audeam?

Mat. Rogas me? O hominis inpudentem audaciam!

Wife. Well, you sinner, aren’t you ashamed to appear in my sight

with that thing on? Men. What is it?

Is anything the matter, madam? Wife. Shameless!

Do you dare to bandy words with me?

Men. What crime have I committed that I dare not address you?

Wife. You ask me that? Oh, what shameless brazenness!

(4b). Men. [Non](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Non&la=la&can=non2&prior=Men) [tu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=tu&la=la&can=tu0&prior=Non) [scis](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=scis&la=la&can=scis0&prior=tu), [mulier](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=mulier&la=la&can=mulier1&prior=scis), [Hecubam](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Hecubam&la=la&can=hecubam0&prior=mulier) [quapropter](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=quapropter&la=la&can=quapropter0&prior=Hecubam) canem

Graii esse praedicabant? Mat. Non equidem scio.

Men. Quia idem [faciebat](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=faciebat&la=la&can=faciebat0&prior=idem) [Hecuba](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=Hecuba&la=la&can=hecuba0&prior=faciebat) [quod](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=quod&la=la&can=quod0&prior=Hecuba) [tu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=tu&la=la&can=tu1&prior=quod) [nunc](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=nunc&la=la&can=nunc1&prior=tu) [facis](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=facis&la=la&can=facis0&prior=nunc):

omnia [mala](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=mala&la=la&can=mala0&prior=omnia) [ingerebat](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=ingerebat&la=la&can=ingerebat0&prior=mala), [quemquem](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=quemquem&la=la&can=quemquem0&prior=ingerebat) aspexerat.

Itaque adeo iure coepta appellari est “Canes.”

Mat. Non ego istaec tua flagitia possum perpeti:

nam med aetatem viduam esse mavelim,

quam istaec flagitia tua pati, quae tu facis!

Men. Quid id ad me, tu te nuptam possis perpeti,

an sis abitura a tuo viro? An mos hic ita est,

peregrino ut advenienti narrent fabulas?

Mat. Quas fabulas? Non, inquam, patiar praeterhac

Quin vidua vivam, quam tuos mores perferam.

Men. Mea quidem hercle causa vidua vivito

vel usque dum regnum optinebit Iuppiter.

Men. Don’t you know, madam, why the Greeks used

to call Hecuba a bitch? Wife: I certainly don’t.

Men. Because Hecuba used to do exactly what you are doing now,

pour every kind of abuse on anyone she met.

So she rightly began to be called “The Bitch.”

Wife. I won’t put up with this shameful abuse of yours.

I’d rather live all my life without a husband

than endure such abuse from you.

Men. What is it to me, whether you can endure your married life

or intend to part from your husband? Is it the custom here

to babble your affairs to any stranger who comes along?

Wife. Babble! I tell you, I won’t stand it any longer.

I’ll get a divorce rather than put up with you.

Men. By Heracles, as far as I’m concerned, get a divorce,

and live your life like that as long as Jupiter holds his realm. (*Men*. 708-728**)**

III.(5) [The Marx Bros engaged in] “just the kind of unpredictable and inexplicable behaviour that the Surrealists cherished: behavior ‘in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation,’ to quote the first Surrealist manifesto. Dali even described Harpo to Surrealism’s founder André Breton as one of ‘the three American Surrealists.’” (Davies 2007)

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