The Comedy of Errors Study Guide

The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

The Comedy of Errors is considered one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, possibly his first comedy and certainly his shortest play, written sometime between 1589 and 1594, although it was not printed until1623. The primary source of the play is the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, a Roman comic playwright, but Shakespeare also borrowed from Plautus's *Amphitruo.* From the *Menaechmi* Shakespeare took his central plot, which revolves around "errors," or mistaken identity, involving identical twin brothers. To this Shakespeare added additional characters and episodes.

Much of the Criticism on the play discusses how Shakespeare complicated Plautus's plot Shakespeare added another set of twins, servants to the twin sons of Aegeon. The story of Aegeon—his separation from his wife and one of the twin sons—is also a change from the Roman play Shakespeare gave greater voice to the primary female characters in the play (and thus to issues of gender and the relationships between men and women), especially Adriana, who is merely a shrewish "wife" in Plautus's play, and downgraded the role of an unnamed Courtezan. Shakespeare's selection of Ephesus for the setting of the play (the action of the play takes place in a single day in a single place) has been noted by critics as an important alteration in the play, since Ephesus was associated with sorcery, exorcism, mystery cults, and emerging Christianity. Critics tend to be in agreement that Shakespeare greatly expanded on the generally one-dimensional stereotypical characters in Plautus's play

There was a scarcity of commentary on the play prior to the nineteenth century. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the first to discuss the playas a unified work of art, asserting that it was a farce and therefore should not be Judged by the standards applied to comedy. Some Critics viewed It as an apprentice work, since it was written so early in Shakespeare's career, and few Critics argued that the play displays the full range of Shakespeare's dramatic talent. More recent criticism has focused on the play's genre (its "identity" as a tragedy, farce, comedy, or a combination of these) and the way in which it explores the issues of Identity, gender, and love and marriage.

Plot Summary

Aegeon, a merchant from Syracuse, is apprehended in Ephesus because it is illegal for Syracusans to be in Ephesus. The Duke of Ephesus, Solinus, tells him that he must pay a ransom or be condemned to death. Aegeon then relates to the Duke his tragic tale of separation from his wife and one of his twin sons twenty-three years earlier in a shipwreck. The other son left Aegeon five years earlier with his servant (also a twin; these twins were also separated in the shipwreck) in search of his missing brother. Aegeon decided to follow him and now finds himself in Ephesus. The Duke is sympathetic to Aegeon's plight and gives him twenty-four hours to raise the money.

Unbeknownst to Aegeon, the son he is searching for, Antipholus of Syracuse, has just arrived in Ephesus with his servant, Dromio of Syracuse. Antipholus is unaware that he is in the same city as both his father and long-lost brother, Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Syracuse tells Dromio to go to their inn and guard their money since they are Syracusans in Ephesus. Dromio of Ephesus, servant to the Ephesian Antipholus, then enters and tells Antipholus of Syracuse that his wife, Adriana, wants him to come home for dinner. (Adriana is in fact the wife of his twin brother.) Antipholus, thinking that Dromio of Ephesus is his own servant, asks about the safety of the money, and when Dromio denies knowledge of the gold, Antipholus beats him. Dromio runs away and Antipholus returns to the inn.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The scene opens in a hall in the palace of Solinus, Duke of Ephesus. Egion, a merchant of Syracuse has been brought before the Duke to plead his case. The Duke explains that although he has no personal dispute with Egion, he must abide by the laws of his country, which require that Egion must either pay a hefty fine or be executed. In Syracuse, harsh laws have been enacted against the merchants of Ephesus. Ephesus has been forced to enact similar laws in recompense. Therefore, although he pities Egion's misfortune, the Duke has no choice but to enforce the law, which condemns Egion to death.

Egion tells the duke that he is comforted that execution will put an end to his troubles. The Duke wishes to know why Egion has risked his life by coming to Ephesus. Egion explains that he has not come to cause offense, but because he has been driven by circumstances and proceeds to tell his story.

Egion was once happily married to Emilia and living in Syracuse. As a merchant, he made numerous trips abroad. When one of his trips was extended over several months, his wife decided to follow after him. After arriving safely, his wife gave birth to twin sons. At the same time and in the same inn, another woman also gave birth to twin boys. Egion decided to purchase the second set of twins as attendants for his own sons.

Urged by his wife to return home, Egion set sail for home with his family and attendants. They encountered bad weather, and their crew abandoned the ship in fear of portents of death. Hoping to keep himself and his family safe, Egion had his wife tie herself, their older son and one of the twin servant children to the mizzen mast, and fastened himself and the other two children to the main mast on the other side of the ship. They could see two boats approaching, but the ship at last struck a rock and broke apart, separating the family before either could reach them.

Egion saw his wife and the two children with her rescued by what appeared to be a boat from Corinth. He was rescued shortly afterwards by the other boat which took him, his younger son and one of the servant twins home to Syracuse. The boats never caught up with one another, and he does not know what became of the rest of his family.

When Egion's younger son turned 18, he requested leave to go out in search for his brother, taking his servant with him, since the servant was also seeking a lost brother. Risking the loss of one set of loved ones, for the sake of finding the loved ones he has lost, Egion agreed. When they did not return, he set off to seek them through every land, where men can be found. After traveling through Greece and Asia, Egion passed through Ephesus on his way home. He says that he will die happy, if only he could know that his sons lived.

The Duke is moved by pity, but it against his honor and his crown to break his own laws. He cannot reverse the sentence of death. Instead, the Duke offers to let Egion go out into the city to seek the money he needs to pay his ransom. He can make up the sum by begging or borrowing from any friends he has in Ephesus. If he can pay it before sunset, his life will be spared. Egion leaves without hope of more than putting off his execution until sunset.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Shakespeare sets the scene by using Egion's long tale of woe in the place of a prologue. This back story is crucial to the audience's understand of the rest of the play. Although the most important characters have yet to be introduced, the premise of the plot is carefully outlined, and the stage is set for a comedy that will be driven by the misunderstandings and confusion created by two sets of mismatched twin brothers. The title itself is a clue. A "comedy of errors" refers to a play where a series of mistaken identities lead to dramatic misunderstanding, but everything is happily resolved in the end.

Several conceits are introduced in Act 1, Scene 1, which will help to drive the action. Firstly, although the two sets of brothers are aware that they have lost a twin brother, they are not aware that they are identical twins, because they are living in different cities and have not seen one another since birth. Secondly, the harsh laws against Syracusans visiting Ephesus will make it impossible for the characters from Syracuse to announce themselves and their search for the lost brothers openly within the city. Lastly, we now know that the action must take place within a single day, otherwise there will not be time for Egion to be rescued from execution.

Egion's story introduces the theme of loss. Egion has been physically separated from his family- first by the tragedy at sea and secondly by the twins' determination to search for their siblings. Loss will be the connecting theme in the experience of the serious characters. Egion is so deeply affected by the loss of his family that he is ready to accept the loss of his life.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Act 1, Scene 2 is set in the mart, where Antipholus of Syracuse is speaking with the First Merchant. The First Merchant warns him of the strict laws against foreigners, telling him that a Syracusan merchant is to be executed that very sunset and suggests that Antipholus should pretend that he has come from Epidamnum in order to protect himself. The First Merchant then hands Antipholus a sum of money which has been in keeping for him.

Antipholus sends his servant, Dromio of Syracuse to an inn, the Centaur, where they are staying and instructs him to deposit the money there and then wait for his arrival. "Get thee away," Antipholus tells Dromio. Dromio jokes that if he took those orders seriously, he would run off with the money. Antipholus explains to the merchant that Dromio is fond of jesting and has been lightening his mood with pranks of this kind. Antipholus decides to pass the time by wandering the city. The merchant has business elsewhere and exits.

A moment later, Dromio of Ephesus enters, looking for his master, who is late for dinner. The meal is getting cold, and the mistress of the house is impatiently waiting at home. Antipholus of Syracuse mistakes this Dromio for his own servant of the same name and asks about the money he has only just entrusted to him. Dromio of Ephesus doesn't understand what Antipholus of Syracuse is talking about, but Antipholus mistakes his confusion for more joking around.

Antipholus of Syracuse becomes angry at the seemingly inappropriate jest, given the risks they run as Syracusan merchants in Ephesus. He threatens Dromio of Ephesus with a beating if he does not immediately account for the thousand marks in gold that were entrusted to Dromio of Syracuse. Dromio of Ephesus responds by explaining that all he knows is that his mistress, the wife of Antipholus, is waiting with her sister for Antipholus to come home to dinner and Dromio has been sent to fetch him.

Antipholus of Syracuse is now confused, because he is unmarried. His temper begins to flare as he becomes more frustrated. Antipholus of Syracuse begins to beat Dromio of Ephesus. Dromio of Ephesus flees.

Left alone, Antipholus of Syracuse is concerned for his safety and decides to go to the Centaur to check on his money and his servant.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

In Act 1, Scene 2, the theme of loss is explored as comedy, in contrast to the tragedy described by Egion in the previous scene. Antipholus of Syracuse believes that his gold has been lost, although the audience is aware that this is only a temporary mix-up and

no harm will be done. Antipholus' confusion quickly turns to rage as he tries to obtain assurance that his property is safe. The loss of the gold represents a loss of safety and security.

In his other comic works, Shakespeare prefers to separate the clowns from the more serious characters. It is unusual to find an unabashedly comic character, such as Dromio, playing such an integrated role in the entirety of the play. Act 1, Scene 2 establishes the relationship between Antipholus and Dromio which will apply no matter which of the mismatched twins are interacting. Antipholus will always play the straight man, with Dromio as his comic foil, delivering the jokes and playing out the physical comedy of the play.

Shakespeare also introduces the quick temper of Antipholus, which is crucial to the plot. Over and over again, one Antipholus of Syracuse will be provided with opportunities to solve the misunderstandings. He has, after all, come to Ephesus seeking his and Dromio's long lost identical twins, and one would think that this solution might occur to him very early in the action. Unfortunately, every time he approaches a possible breakthrough, his anger and impatience will get in the way, and he ends by driving the situation further into confusion.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

At the house of Antipholus of Ephesus, Adriana and her sister, Luciana, are impatiently waiting for Antipholus and Dromio to return. Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, is both hurt and jealous because of her husband's absence, but Luciana suggests that perhaps business is keeping her husband away. Adriana will not be comforted and complains of her husband's neglect of her. She dismisses Luciana's comments, saying that an unmarried woman cannot understand what it is like to be a neglected wife.

Dromio of Ephesus returns alone. The women immediately press him for details about Antipholus' whereabouts, and he explains that the master beat him and appears to have gone quite mad. When Dromio asked Antipholus to return home for dinner, Antipholus demanded 1,000 marks in gold and denied his wife and house.

Furious, Adriana insists that Dromio go back out in search of his master. Dromio is reluctant, but leaves as Adriana threatens him with another beating, this time by her hand. Reluctantly, Dromio of Ephesus leaves. Adriana fears that her husband is with another woman and no longer loves her. She decides to go out in search of her husband. Luciana accompanies her, musing that jealousy has made Adriana foolish.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

Adriana represents another instance of the loss theme of the play. She has not physically lost her husband the way that Egion has lost his family, but feels the loss of his attention just as keenly. Just as Egion searches for his family's location, Adriana searches for the reasons behind her husband's apparent disinterest and hopes to regain the attentive man that she married. Like Egion, she is driven to go out in search of her loved one.

Act 2 Scene 1 completes the set up for the rest of the action. We are introduced to the temperamental wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, Adriana, and her gentle sister, Luciana. This introduction sets the stage for a romantic comedy within the plot. Adriana is paired with Antipholus of Ephesus and Luciana can be paired with his twin, Antipholus of Syracuse.

The action throughout the first half of the play is designed to set up a sequence of increasingly comic blunders, later on. By the time the scene ends, most of the major characters are out in the street, with ample opportunity for the groups to be mismatched and misunderstood in a variety of ways.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Act 2, Scene 2 is set in a public place. Antipholus of Syracuse enters, perplexed. He has discovered that his gold was safe at the inn all along, and the innkeeper has informed him that Dromio had only shortly left the premises to seek him out. After comparing their information, Antipholus of Syracuse and the innkeeper came to the conclusion that there is no way that he could have spoken to Dromio earlier. It is a confusing situation.

Dromio of Syracuse enters and Antipholus of Syracuse begins to question him about the conversation he had earlier with Dromio of Ephesus. Dromio of Syracuse does not understand what his master is talking about and denies having had the conversation. Angered, Antipholus begins to beat Dromio, who continues to insist that no conversation took place. Dromio distracts Antipholus' attention by engaging him in banter, playing on words until they are interrupted by the arrival of Adriana and Luciana.

Adriana mistakes Antipholus of Syracuse for her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus. She asks him why he has become estranged from her. Antipholus tells her that he does not know her, and has only just arrived in the city. Luciana supports Adriana, reminding Antipholus that Dromio has only just come to fetch him and mistakes Dromio of Syracuse for Dromio of Ephesus. Dromio of Syracuse denies having come to fetch Antipholus, and says that he does not know Adriana. Antipholus points out that since Adriana knows both his name and Dromio's, Dromio must have spoken with her.

Now thoroughly confused, Antipholus of Syracuse decides that he and Dromio should go home with Adriana. He wonders if perhaps he was married in a dream. Dromio suggests that perhaps they are in fairyland, being tricked by goblins and sprites. The women are confused but assume that the men must be playing pranks and remain determined to bring them home to dinner. All four leave together, headed to the house of Antipholus of Ephesus.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

In Act 2, Scene 2, Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse lose their identity when they are mistaken for the twins from Ephesus and agree to take their place. While the loss of love is explored as a cause for grief, and the loss of objects leads to rage, the loss of identity causes complete confusion. Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse are left not knowing how to feel about their new circumstances.

The play action continues to be driven by characters. Having spoken to the host of the inn, Antipholus of Syracuse knows that Dromio of Syracuse cannot possibly have conversed with him earlier. However, Shakespeare has also established that Antipholus of Syracuse is very quick to anger and believes that Dromio is likely to play jokes at his

expense. At this point in the story, some of the confusion might be easily cleared up if Antipholus was more patient and willing to trust his servant's word. Instead, Antipholus' anger and mistrust leads to even further confusion.

Now that Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse are brought to the household of Antipholus of Ephesus, the stage has been set for the next series of mishaps.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

Act Three begins in front of the house of Antipholus of Ephesus, where Antipholus of Ephesus himself is waiting with Dromio of Ephesus, Angelo and Balthazar. Antipholus complains that his wife is shrewish, and asks Angelo to help him excuse his lateness by claiming that Antipholus has been at his shop. Antipholus now turns to Dromio to discover why Dromio has claimed that he beat him, demanded 1,000 marks in gold and denied his house and wife.

Dromio of Ephesus stands by his story, and says the marks of the beating are his proof. Antipholus calls Dromio an ass, to which Dromio replies that he might as well be, given the treatment he is receiving.

Antipholus now turns to Balthazar, hoping that the hospitality he can offer will improve Balthazar's mood. Balthazar replies, with some good-natured banter, to the effect that he is more pleased by Antipholus' welcome than by the prospect of good food at his table. In a jovial mood, Antipholus goes to open his door to his guests, only to find it locked against him.

Antipholus of Ephesus tells Dromio of Ephesus to bid his servants to let him in. Dromio of Ephesus calls out to some of the servants by name, but is answered by Dromio of Syracuse, who taunts him from inside. Antipholus of Ephesus demands to know who is keeping him out of his own house, and Dromio of Syracuse at last replies that it is "Dromio," much to the shock of Dromio of Ephesus, who finds that both his name and place appear to have been stolen but not the beatings he suffers.

The voice of Luce is heard from inside the house, and Dromio of Ephesus asks her to let the master in. Luce replies that the master is too late. From inside the house, Dromio of Syracuse is heard supporting Luce. Luce banters with Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus. They continue to demand entry, but she and Dromio of Ephesus take them for unruly local boys. The noise eventually attracts Adriana's attention.

When Adriana herself denies entrance to Antipholus of Ephesus, Angelo and Balthazar comment that there is no welcome or cheer for them at this house. Antipholus of Ephesus resolves to fetch a crow bar to break open the gate. Balthazar counsels patience. Adriana has not been false in the past, so rather than besmirching her reputation and stirring up gossip, Antipholus would be better advised to have dinner at the Tiger.

Antipholus of Ephesus agrees with Balthazar's plan, but says that rather than go to the Tiger, they will dine with a woman friend of his, the Courtesan, at the Porpentine. He sends Angelo to get a chain he has purchased, which Antipholus intends to bestow

upon the woman, in order to spite his wife. Angelo agrees, and Antipholus muses that this jest will be expensive. The men then exit.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

Following the loss theme, Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus lose everything but their identities, when they are barred from their home. Their response is a mixture of emotions, as they are cast entirely adrift from home, family and possessions. The gold chain that Antipholus of Ephesus orders from Angelo is a physical symbol of this loss. Angry, Antipholus of Ephesus plans to compound his loss of wife and home with the symbolic loss of the chain, through making a gift of it to the Courtesan.

Antipholus of Ephesus is introduced with a character identical to that of his twin. He is quick to anger and cannot believe that Dromio of Ephesus is not trying to deceive him with the story of an earlier encounter with an Antipholus who beat him, demanded money and denied his house and wife.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

The scene remains the same, as Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse enter. The two are in mid-conversation. Luciana wonders if Antipholus has forgotten his duties as a husband, saying that even if he married Adriana for her money, he still owes her better treatment. If he must love another woman, he should at least hide these intentions from his wife. He should try to look and speak kindly, even if it is to hide his deceitfulness. He should go inside and comfort Adriana.

Antipholus of Syracuse is smitten with Luciana, even though he doesn't know her name. He praises her wisdom and grace and suggests that she should teach him how to think and speak. He tells her that Adriana is not his wife, but he confesses that he is in love with Luciana.

Luciana is shocked and wonders aloud if Antipholus has gone mad. He insists that though he doesn't know how, he was meant to be with Luciana. Luciana continues to reject his advances, insisting that he should turn his interests back to her sister. Antipholus continues to press his affections, until Luciana leaves, saying she will fetch Adriana.

Dromio of Syracuse enters in a state of consternation. In addition to the other confusions of this day, he has now discovered that one of the women of the house claims him. He insists that the woman is a beastly creature, who claims him as one would claim a horse. However, he is not at all happy with her appearance.

Dromio of Syracuse and Ephesus of Syracuse banter about Dromio's newly discovered "wife," comparing her physical attributes to a map of the world. Dromio ends by suggesting that the woman is a witch, who had somehow divined his name and everything about him.

Concerned, Antipholus of Syracuse sends Dromio of Syracuse to the harbor. He abhors Adriana and loves Luciana, and rather than do wrong, he will leave. Angelo enters with the chain Antipholus of Ephesus asked for. He had planned to bring the chain to the Porpentine, but the chain was unfinished and delayed him. Mistaking Antipholus of Syracuse for Antipholus of Ephesus, Angelo gives him the chain. Antipholus of Syracuse is confused and offers to pay for the chain, warning Angelo that he may lose both chain and money, otherwise. Angelo tells him that he'll receive the money at suppertime and suggests that the chain might be used to placate Adriana.

Although he still has no idea what is going, Antipholus of Syracuse decides to take the chain. He decides to follow Dromio of Syracuse towards the harbor.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

Shakespeare introduces a third instance of lost love in Act 3, Scene 2. Egion has physically lost his loved ones. Adriana is emotionally separated from her husband. Luciana's love is physically nearby and emotionally available, but divided from her by circumstances. This is the first instance where a character experiences loss by choice. Luciana prefers the loss of a lover to the loss of honor and family that she would experience should she accept the affections of her sister's husband. As this is a loss by choice, Luciana's sorrow is tempered with understanding and compassion.

The first two sections of Act 3, Scene 2 contrast the experiences of Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse, as they deal with the women of the household of Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Ephesus is discontented with Adriana, and Dromio of Syracuse is similarly discontented with the wife of Dromio of Ephesus. Dromio's comic description of his refusal of a woman's advances is the mirror of Antipholus' encounter with Luciana, who refuses to be wooed.

The last section of the scene completes the set up for the comic climax in the next act. Angelo arrives with the chain, which he places in the hands of the wrong Antipholus, refusing immediate payment for it. The chain symbolizes everything that Antipholus of Ephesus possesses, which is now in the hands of Antipholus of Syracuse. Both Dromio of Syracuse and Antipholus of Syracuse leave the house for the harbor, but the chain remains with them, and continues to mark them with the wrong identity.

Act 4, Scene 1

Act 4, Scene 1 Summary

Act 4, Scene 1 opens in a public place. Angelo and the Second Merchant are accompanied by an officer. The merchant requests the payment of a sum that Angelo has owed since Pentecost. He is leaving shortly for Persia and needs the money for his journey. If Angelo cannot pay, he will be arrested by the officer. Angelo replies that the exact amount is due to be paid by Antipholus for the chain he has purchased. They can go to Antipholus of Ephesus's house to collect the amount due.

Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus enter from the Courtesan's. Antipholus plans to collect the chain from Angelo, in order to give it to the Courtesan. He instructs Dromio to purchase a rope's end, which he will bring to Adriana to pay her back for locking him out. Antipholus greets Antonio, as Dromio leaves to fetch the rope.

Antipholus of Ephesus is delighted to meet with Antonio at such an opportune time, and expects to receive the chain from him. Antonio is prepared with a bill for the value of the chain, which he gives to Antipholus, requesting immediate payment. Antipholus doesn't have the money with him at the moment, but tells Antonio to go to his house with the chain, and Adriana will pay him the sum owed for it. He adds that he might get there at the same time himself.

Antonio asks if this means that Antipholus will bring the chain himself, but Antipholus tells him to bring it just in case Antipholus is not there in time. Angelo asks Antipholus to give him the chain, and he will do so. Antipholus of Ephesus says that he has not received the chain, and will not pay for it unless Angelo can produce it. The pair begins to argue: Antipholus of Ephesus insists that he does not have the chain, and Angelo insists that he does.

The second merchant does not have time to wait for the two men to resolve the issue. Either the sum owed to him by Angelo must be paid, or the officer must arrest him. Angelo again charges Antipholus of Ephesus with the money he owes for the chain, which he believes him to have received half an hour ago. The second merchant gives the officer leave to arrest Angelo, who, in turn, attaches the blame to Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Ephesus is arrested, and has no choice but to submit until someone can bring him bail.

Dromio of Syracuse enters from the bay. Dromio has found a ship from Epidamnum that can take him and his master out of Ephesus. He has already booked their passage, stowed their things on board and purchased items needed for the journey. The ship will leave as soon as the owner, Dromio and Antipholus arrive.

Antipholus of Ephesus knows nothing of a ship and thinks that Dromio must have gone mad. Dromio of Syracuse reminds Antipholus that he himself sent him to procure them

passage on a ship. Antipholus of Ephesus disagrees and insists that he only sent Dromio for a rope's end, but it can be dealt with later. Right now, Dromio must go to Adriana with a key that she can use to access some money hidden in the house, so that Antipholus of Ephesus can pay his bail. Although he is reluctant to meet with the woman who claimed him earlier, Dromio of Syracuse agrees to go to Adriana.

Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis

Act 4, Scene 1 is driven by the loss of freedom. Angelo is about to lose his freedom and responds by shifting the onus onto Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Ephesus has no way to respond as everything he possesses, including the disputed gold chain, has been taken from him and given to Antipholus of Syracuse. Faced with the loss of his freedom, Antipholus looks to his formerly ignored wife, Adriana, to help him.

During Act 3, Angelo mistakenly delivers the chain ordered by Antipholus of Ephesus to Antipholus of Syracuse. Angelo now wants to be paid for a chain that, in reality, has not been delivered. Antipholus of Ephesus needs to receive a chain that has already been given to someone else. The confusion builds, because neither party can account for the real whereabouts of the missing item. Neither the chain, nor payment for it can be produced by any of the characters. The need to produce the chain results in the ensuing confusion and arrest.

There is a secondary character driven element which contributes to the urgency of the missing chain. Since he is quick to anger, Antipholus of Ephesus has impulsively promised the chain to the Courtesan, just to spite his wife. Had he kept his temper and tried to placate Adriana as Balthazar advised, the chain might have been safely in her keeping at his house, rather than placed into the hands of the wrong Antipholus.

Act 4, Scene 2

Act 4, Scene 2 Summary

Act 4, Scene 2 takes place at the house of Antipholus of Ephesus. Adriana and Luciana enter, talking. Luciana has confessed to Adriana that Antipholus has made advances to her. Adriana questions her about the nature of the conversation. Luciana explains that although she tried to plead for Adriana, Antipholus approached her in a manner that would have made an honest woman love him. Adriana is wildly jealous but rails against Antipholus rather than Luciana. For all his faults, Adriana still loves her husband.

Dromio of Syracuse enters in a rush, bidding Adriana to collect the money needed by Antipholus of Ephesus. Dromio explains to the women that Antipholus has been arrested and needs the money in the desk to be rescued from his plight. Adriana sends Luciana to fetch the money, while she questions Dromio more closely about the situation. Dromio insists that time has turned itself backwards, when Adriana attempts to discover when the arrest occurred. Luciana returns with the money and Adriana sends Dromio of Syracuse back out to bring the purse to Antipholus.

Act 4, Scene 2 Analysis

In Act 4, Scene 2 Adriana is at last driven to confess that her anger and jealousy are a result of her feelings for her husband. The theme of loss continues, as Adriana is led to believe that she has lost her husband's affections, as well as his attention. As furious as she is about the encounter with Luciana, she still loves him and doesn't want to lose him further by giving up her marriage. She sends Dromio of Syracuse to his aid.

Act 4, Scene 3

Act 4, Scene 3 Summary

Act 4 Scene 2I is set in a public place, where Antipholus of Ephesus is musing over the strange treatment he has received recently. All of the people he meets know his name and treat him as a friend or an acquaintance. Dromio of Syracuse enters with the gold from Adriana, which will pay for the release of Antipholus of Ephesus.

Dromio of Syracuse is surprised to find Antipholus free from the officer. Antipholus of Syracuse takes this for a jest and asks if a ship has been found to take them out of Ephesus. Dromio replies that indeed, the ship is waiting as he told Antipholus an hour ago while he was detained by the officer. Antipholus of Syracuse finds this to be very strange, but rather than quibble, he is ready to leave the city.

A Courtesan enters and greets Antipholus. Seeing the gold chain that Antipholus of Syracuse received from Angelo, she asks if it is the chain that Antipholus promised her earlier. Antipholus of Syracuse says that she is surely Satan come to tempt him in the form of a wanton woman. The Courtesan takes this for joking and invites him to return with her to dine. Antipholus refuses, insisting that she is a demon.

The Courtesan takes the taunts in stride and says that if Antipholus gives her the ring he took from her, or the chain he promised her, she will be on her way and will not trouble him further. Dromio quips that where some devils might as for nail clippings or blood, this one is more covetous and wants a chain. Becoming irritated, the Courtesan again requests the ring or the chain, suggesting that Antipholus means to cheat her. Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse flee the scene.

Alone, the Courtesan wonders if Antipholus has gone mad. He has promised to give her a gold chain in trade for a ring of hers that was worth forty ducats. Now, he is refusing both. However, this is not the reason she takes Antipholus for mad. He was telling stories at dinner that he was shut out of his own house. Clearly, his wife has realized that Antipholus is subject to fits of madness and locked her doors against him. She decides to go to the house of Antipholus of Ephesus that Antipholus, being insane, rushed into her house and took her ring from her so that she can recoup the cost of the ring.

Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis

This scene represents a change in the character of Antipholus of Syracuse. Earlier in the play, we have seen him quick to anger when presented with confusing events. Now, he has become thoughtful and is more concerned about his situation than infuriated. He listens to Dromio without making threats and doesn't entirely discount his story. He realizes that something beyond his knowledge must be going on, and is eager to escape with Dromio on a ship bound for another city.

The chain, however, continues to link Antipholus of Syracuse with Antipholus of Ephesus, so that neither has his freedom. Antipholus of Syracuse cannot seem to escape from the city and loses confidence in his own perceptions, becoming so unsure of his own experience that he takes the Courtesan for a devil.

Act 4, Scene 4

Act 4, Scene 4 Summary

Antipholus of Ephesus and the officer are waiting in the street. Antipholus promises that he has no intent of escaping. His wife will be upset to hear of his arrest and will certainly send the money that is owed.

Dromio of Ephesus arrives with the rope-end that Antipholus requested earlier, but not the money. Furious that Dromio of Ephesus has come without the money he asked Dromio of Syracuse to fetch, he begins to beat Dromio. The Officer tries to calm him, but Antipholus is too angry and only stops when he sees Adriana approaching.

Adriana enters with Luciana, the Courtesan and Pinch, a conjuror. Dromio of Ephesus makes a joke, prompting Antipholus to begin beating him again, which convinces Adriana and the others that Antipholus is, indeed, insane. Pinch attempts to examine Antipholus, but when Antipholus strikes him, he decides to conduct an exorcism to cure Antipholus of his madness.

Antipholus attempts to end the proceedings by protesting that he is perfectly sane. Unfortunately, everything he says only confirms his insanity in the eyes of Adriana and the others. He insists that he dined with the Courtesan after being locked out of the house. Dromio of Ephesus agrees with this version of events. Adriana contradicts them. She explains that Antipholus did, in fact, dine at home. Antipholus then accuses her of convincing the goldsmith to arrest him and failing to send money needed for his release. Adriana insists that the money was sent to him in the hands of Dromio. Luciana acts as witness, and confirms Adriana's assertions. When Dromio of Ephesus protests, the others take him for mad, as well. Pinch explains that both men are possessed and must be locked up.

Three or four men enter to bind Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus struggles to escape, but it only makes him seem more out of his mind. Pinch intends to take Antipholus away, but the officer steps in and explains that if he releases Antipholus, he will be held responsible for the man's debt. Adriana agrees to go with the officer and discharge the debt. Antipholus and Dromio will be carried home under the care of Pinch. Pinch and the men exit with Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus bound.

Adriana questions the officer about the nature of the debt. He explains that Antipholus had ordered a gold chain from Angelo, for which he owes two hundred ducats. Adriana remembers that the chain was ordered, but has not received it. The Courtesan says that she has seen Antipholus wearing the chain earlier, and just now, she has seen the ring he took from her on his hand. Adriana decides to go to the goldsmith, Angelo, to get to the bottom of the story.

Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse enter again, now with swords drawn. The others all flee from them. Antipholus wants to leave the city at once, but Dromio protests that, outside of the woman who attempted to claim him, their treatment in Ephesus has been very good. They might as well stay the night. Antipholus of Syracuse won't remain another moment and decides that they will collect their things from the Centaur and leave immediately.

Act 4, Scene 4 Analysis

At this point in the play, the loss of the chain has come to its climax. Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus have lost everything that they can lose. Both are separated from their loved ones, due to their apparent madness. They have been separated from their possessions, because as mad men, they can no longer be trusted in society. They have lost their reputations, and they have lost the freedom to act on their own behalf.

Earlier in the play, the confusion could not be resolved due to the bad temper of both Antipholus characters, and the reputation of the Dromios as pranksters. Now that is clear to the four twins that something unexplained is happening, they begin to behave very rationally. Unfortunately, everyone else has come to believe that Antipholus and Dromio are mad.

Act 5, Scene 1

Act 5, Scene 1 Summary

Act 5, Scene 1 is set on a street in front of a priory. Angelo enters with the Second Merchant. Angelo apologizes to the merchant for the delay in his payment. He explains that Antipholus continues to deny having received the chain. The merchant inquires about the reputation of Antipholus in the city. Angelo says that he is held in the highest esteem with excellent credit.

Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse enter. Antipholus is wearing the disputed chain around his neck. Angelo greets Antipholus, admonishing him for claiming not to have had the chain. He notices that Antipholus now wears the chain openly, after causing scandal for himself and trouble for both Angelo and the Second Merchant by denying receipt of the chain.

Antipholus of Syracuse replies that he has never attempted to deny the chain. The Second Merchant insists that he heard the denials with his very own ears. Antipholus of Syracuse is offended by the insult to his honor, but the Second Merchant will not withdraw his claim. The two men draw their swords, only to be halted by the arrival of Adriana, Luciana, the Courtesan and some others.

Adriana calls to the others to take the sword away from Antipholus. She instructs them to bind both Antipholus and Dromio, then to bring them to her house. She explains that the men have gone mad. Dromio of Syracuse tells Antipholus of Syracuse to run into the priory, where they will be safe. The two men exit into the priory.

The Lady Abbess enters, wondering why so many people are gathered. Adriana explains that they have come to fetch her insane husband, so that he can be brought home and treated for his madness. The Abbess inquires about the nature of the possession. She suggests several possible causes, including unlawful love for a woman other than his wife.

Adriana confesses that she believes another love has been drawing Antipholus away from home. The Abbess suggests that she did not rebuke him forcefully enough for this fault, although Adriana protests that she did attempt to do so. The Abbess says that her jealousy may be the cause of the madness. Her anger has scared Antipholus out of his mind. Luciana defends Adriana, saying that Antipholus was rough, while Adriana was mild towards him. However, Adriana, herself, admits some of the fault.

Adriana wants her servants to go into the priory to fetch her husband, but the Abbess refuses to allow it. Antipholus has entered the priory for sanctuary, and the Abbess herself will attempt to cure him to the utmost of her ability. Adriana insists that it is her place to nurse her husband, but the Abbess is adamant that he will not be removed from sanctuary. The pair exchange strong words, but neither will budge. The Abbess exits,

while Adriana decides that she must remain where she is until her husband is returned to her custody.

Luciana advises Adriana to complain to the Duke about the situation. Adriana agrees with the plan. The Second Merchant points out that the time is nearing five o'clock, and the Duke will be passing by very soon on his way to the place of execution. A Syracusan merchant is to be beheaded. Angelo sees the Duke approaching, and Luciana tells the party to kneel to him before he passes the abbey.

The Duke proclaims for the last time that if any friend will pay the fine for the Syracusan merchant, his life will be spared. The proceedings are halted by Adriana's plea for justice. Adriana explains that Antipholus and Dromio are insane and gives a short history of their antics. Now, they are in the abbey, and the abbess will not suffer them to be removed. Therefore, Adriana asks that the Duke command that the men be brought out. The Duke feels that he owes Adriana his assistance, and bids his servants to bring the Abbess to him.

A Servant enters, bringing news to Adriana that Antipholus and Dromio have escaped their bonds. They have taken over the house and are now tormenting Pinch. The Servant fears that Pinch may not survive if Adriana does not send immediate aid. Adriana claims that the report is false, since Antipholus is in the abbey. The conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus. Adriana is amazed that Antipholus and Dromio could have escaped from the abbey. It is beyond reason.

Antipholus of Ephesus asks the Duke for justice against Adriana. Egion recognizes Antipholus as his son, but no one notices him. Antipholus of Ephesus recounts Adriana's wrongs against him to the Duke, namely that she barred him from the house. Adriana denies this and insists that she and Antipholus dined together. Luciana agrees with Adriana, while Angelo sides with Antipholus of Ephesus.

Antipholus of Ephesus recounts the day's events from his perspective. Angelo was with him when he was barred from his own house. Angelo was to bring a gold chain to Antipholus at the Porpentine, but never arrived. When the men met later on, Angelo insisted that he had given Antipholus the chain, and Antipholus was arrested. Antipholus was released into Adriana's custody and handed over to Pinch, the conjurer. At last, he broke free and came directly to the Duke.

The Duke tries to unravel the matter of the chain. Antipholus of Ephesus says he does not have it. Angelo and the Second Merchant have just seen the chain around the neck of Antipholus, as he fled into the abbey. Antipholus of Ephesus says that he never entered the abbey. The Duke wonders if they are all mad. He questions Dromio of Ephesus and the Courtesan, who swear that Antipholus dined at the Porpentine where he took a ring from the Courtesan. Antipholus of Ephesus produces the Courtesan's ring, as proof. However, the Courtesan also swears that she saw Antipholus enter the abbey. The Duke decides to question the Abbess.

Egion steps forward and says that he sees someone who will save his life by paying his fine. He approaches Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus, addressing them by their given names, but they insist that they do not know him. Egion wonders why after only seven years of separation, his son does not know him. Antipholus of Ephesus insists that he has no such father and has never been to Syracuse in his life. The Duke affirms that this is true and blames Egion's mistake on his age.

The abbess enters with Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse. Adriana and the others are thunderstruck. The two Dromios introduce themselves to one another. Antipholus of Syracuse immediately recognizes Egion as his father. The Abbess also recognizes Egion; he is her long lost husband. The Abbess is Emilia. After being rescued by the men of Epidamnum, she was separated from the children and ended up as she is now.

The Duke begins to understand the situation. Egion and Emilia are the parents of the Antipholus twins. Antipholus of Syracuse explains that he was the one who dined with Adriana. He returns the chain to Antipholus of Ephesus along with the purse of money which Dromio of Syracuse had brought from the house of Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Syracuse is now able to renew his suit to Luciana. They realize that the errors arose when one Dromio was mistaken for the other.

The Duke pardons Egion, and the Courtesan at last receives the chain that she was promised. The Abbess invites them all to join her inside for feast. The Duke agrees, and all but the two pairs of twins exit. Even now, the four cannot tell one another apart. Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse embrace as brothers and exit to join the feast. Left alone, the two Dromios banter and at last resolve to go into the feast hand in hand, as equal brothers.

Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis

Act 5 provides a climax and a resolution for the thematic arc of the play. Previously, different kinds of loss have been explored through the experiences of the various characters, with each scene 1ntroducing a new twist on the theme. As the play ends, all of the losses and potential losses are rectified to provide a happy ending for all of the characters, but not before one final loss is explored.

Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus were separated from Emilia as infants, and therefore do not know their own history. They have both lost their past completely. Additionally, they have lost the present, because their identities have been assumed by Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse. Finally, the two become physically lost as well, when they escape from Pinch's custody. Without their past to ground them, they have no chance of resolving the situation or regaining themselves.

Act 5 provides a single resolution for the thematic arc of the play. Previously, different kinds of loss have been explored through the experiences of the various characters, but

all of these losses can be resolved with the revelation of the identical twins. The happy resolution allows Shakespeare to create a comic situation out of a series of tragedies.

The scene can then proceed to the happy ending dictated by the conventions of a comedy of errors. The chain is restored to its rightful owner, three couples are reunited (Antipholus of Ephesus and Adriana; Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana; Egion and Emilia), Egion is rescued from death, the debts are paid, and everyone can join in the celebration of a happy ending.

Characters

Abbess:

See Aemilia

Adriana:

Adriana is the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus. Her husband has spent a good deal of time away from home with his business dealings and in overseeing the making of a ring intended for her. It seems that their marriage is relatively new, and she is concerned that her husband already finds her uninteresting or unattractive. Luciana, her sister, advises her to make herself more attractive by being more gentle and tolerant of her husband's behavior. Adriana fears that his affections are being given to someone else. When Luciana confirms those suspi>cions in Adriana's mind□even though it is Antipholus of Syracuse, her husband's twin, who has made advances toward her sister□she wishes that she could denounce her husband totally and cease caring so much for him.

Adriana really does seem to love Antipholus of Ephesus. She shows deep concern for him when she suspects that he has been possessed and has gone mad. She arranges for Doctor Pinch to exorcise the demons from her husband. Although Doctor Pinch intends to subject Antipholus of Ephesus to what we might consider barbaric treatment, Adriana seems well-intentioned and caring.

Aemilia:

Aemilia is the abbess in charge of a priory, a convent for nuns, in the city of Ephesus. As we learn, somewhat surprisingly, at the end of the play, she is also the wife of Egeon and the mother of Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse. In the shipwreck that separated her from Egeon, she had tied herself, one of her twin sons, and one of the twin servants to a spare mast from the sunken ship. Egeon had done likewise, tying himself, the other twin son, and remaining twin servant to another mast. According to Egeon's account at the beginning of the play, she and her burdens were lighter and were born more quickly by the wind than his own group, and Egeon believed they had been rescued by fishermen from Corinth. But, in the last scene of the play, Aemilia reveals that she and her charges had really been rescued by men of Epidamium, and the fishermen from Corinth had stolen away Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus. She had not seen her son or his servant since, and she has been living in Ephesus for some time, unaware of her son's residence there. Her appearance in the last scene of the play and her recognition of Egeon are the final pieces of the puzzle in explaining the multiple confusions of the preceding action.

Aemilia has a further significance in the play as well. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, Elizabethan England was still working out answers to questions left in the wake

of the Reformation. One of those questions was whether Catholics or Protestants were more effective in exorcising demons from the possessed. When Aemilia proposes to dispossess Antipholus of Syracuse by simply tending to his physical well being and praying for his soul, she represents the limits of what a religious person in Protestant England could do for those who were considered mad. Her treatment is in contrast to the ritualized exorcism proposed by Doctor Pinch, a kind of reverse conjuring and sorcery associated with Catholic exorcism at that time.

Angelo:

Angelo is a goldsmith in Ephesus. He has been commissioned by Antipholus of Ephesus to make a gold necklace for the latter's wife. He mistakenly gives that necklace to Antipholus of Syracuse. Angelo owes money to another Ephesian merchant, intending to pay that debt with the sum owed him by Antipholus of Ephesus. He knows Antipholus of Ephesus to be a reputable man, so he cannot believe it when the Ephesian twin passes by and denies having ever received the necklace. Angelo has him arrested since he has no other recourse. In the last scene of the play, he can only give the duke conflicting testimony about the character of Antipholus of Ephesus. Having earlier accompanied the Ephesian Antipholus to his home and having witnessed the doors barred against the owner, he confirms that the Ephesian Antipholus is telling the truth in that instance. But he must also inform the duke that Antipholus of Ephesus has initially denied receiving the necklace and then later has brazenly displayed the same while freely admitting the source and time of its delivery.

Antipholus of Ephesus::

Antipholus of Ephesus is the twin brother of Antipholus of Syracuse and the son to Egeon and Aemilia. In the shipwreck that separates his family, he is left in the care of his mother, Aemilia. According to her amendment of Egeon's account, she and her infant son and the infant Dromio were picked up by men of Epidamium, and Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus were later stolen away from her by fishermen from Corinth. In the last scene of the play, Antipholus of Ephesus reveals that he was brought to Ephesus from Corinth by the renowned uncle of the duke of Ephesus.

Unbeknownst to Antipholus of Ephesus, his twin has arrived in Ephesus. A series of bizarre incidents follows, in which Antipholus of Syracuse is confused with Antipholus of Ephesus by the latter's wife and friends. They think he has gone mad and arrange to have him undergo an exorcism. He thinks that his wife is conspiring against him, even enlisting his business acquaintances as confederates in her plot. He pleads his case before the duke and reminds the latter that he has served him faithfully in the duke's wars. At the play's conclusion, the confusion of identity is resolved, and Antipholus of Ephesus is reunited with his entire family.

Antipholus of Syracuse:

Antipholus of Syracuse is the twin brother of Antipholus of Ephesus and the son of Egeon and Aemilia. In the shipwreck, he is left in the care of his father, Egeon, living with him in Syracuse until his eighteenth birthday when he requests that Egeon allow himself and his servant Dromio to go in quest of his long-lost mother and twin brother. That search eventually brings him to Ephesus, and he arrives ignorant of his father's presence and his brother's and mother's residence there.

When the residents of Ephesus begin to mistake him for his twin, Antipholus of Syracuse never guesses that the cases of mistaken identity might indicate that they are presuming he is his twin. Instead, he is continually amazed that those residents call him by name, invite him to dinner, give him gifts, and, in one instance, call him "husband." He attributes all of this to the witchcraft and sorcery for which the city is famous and becomes frightened. He resolves to leave that city as quickly as possible but is prevented from doing so by a complication of circumstances. When he is invited to dinner with Adriana and Luciana, he finds himself attracted to Luciana and informs her of his interest. At the play's conclusion, the confusion of identity is resolved, and Antipholus of Syracuse is reunited with his entire family.

Attendants:

The attendants wait on the duke of Ephesus. They appear in the first and last scenes of the play, coinciding with the duke's two appearances.

Balthazar:

Balthazar is a merchant in Ephesus. He accompanies Angelo and Antipholus of Ephesus to the latter's house. When Antipholus grows angry at being locked out of his own home and decides to break in with a crowbar, Balthazar convinces him not to do so. He argues that breaking in would surely be noticed and commented upon, and it would bring suspicion on the wife of the Ephesian Antipholus and, in turn, on her husband.

Courtezan:

The courtezan is the hostess of the Porpentine Inn and a prostitute. Antipholus of Ephesus, still angry at being locked out of his house, proclaims his intention to give the gold necklace intended for his wife to the courtezan. He will do this to spite his wife, who has often accused him, without cause, of fraternizing with the courtezan. The courtezan later encounters Antipholus of Syracuse and requests the gold necklace Antipholus of Ephesus has promised her in exchange for a ring during dinner earlier at the Porpentine. Antipholus of Syracuse views her as a lewd and despicable creature driven by the devil >himself; he flees the supernatural nightmare he sees her to be.

Doctor Pinch:

See Pinch

Dromio of Ephesus:

Dromio of Ephesus is the twin brother of Dromio of Syracuse. He has shared the same fate in the shipwreck as Antipholus of Ephesus, to whom he is a faithful servant. Dromio of Ephesus and his twin brother were born of a poor woman at the same time that Aemilia gave birth to her twin sons. Since the poor woman was in the same inn, this other birth came to Egeon's attention, and he bought the twin Dromios as servants for his own sons. Throughout the play, Dromio of Ephesus confuses his own master with Antipholus of Syracuse. He is sent on a series of errands, always returning to the wrong master with the wrong item or wrong information and is beaten as a consequence. There is little in the play to differentiate the character of Dromio of Ephesus from that of Dromio of Syracuse; however, we do know that they have different tastes in women. Dromio of Ephesus is romantically involved with Luce, a woman that his twin finds extremely disgusting.

Dromio of Syracuse:

Dromio of Syracuse is the twin brother of Dromio of Ephesus. He has shared the same fate as Antipholus of Syracuse, to whom he is a faithful servant. Like his twin brother, he serves, throughout the play, to compound the comic effect of mistaken identities and is beaten by the twin Antipholuses when the objects of his errands do not correspond to the desires of the masters. Although Dromio of Syracuse has been a constant presence in the life of >Antipholus of Syracuse□possibly a childhood playmate□the difference in their social standing is maintained. Antipholus of Syracuse reminds him of that social difference when he thinks that Dromio of Syracuse has been deliberately fooling with him about the gold he was directed to deposit at the Centaur, presuming that the evasive answers given by Dromio of Ephesus on that point were the fooleries of his own servant. He says to the Syracusan Dromio, "If you will jest with me, know my aspect, / And fashion your demeanor to my looks" (II.ii.32- 33). The circumstances of their birth have destined the twin Dromios to a life of servitude. Even the name "Dromio" is suggestive of the twins' occupation as the name derives from the Greek "dromos"□ to run.

Duke of Ephesus (Solinus, Duke of Ephesus):

Solinus:

Egeon is the father of Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse. He is also the husband of the abbess, Aemilia. He is a Syracusan merchant who has arrived in

Ephesus bound to leave no stone unturned in his search for Antipholus of Syracuse, the son he has raised and regrets having allowed to go in search of his mother and brother. When he arrives in Ephesus, he is immediately attached under the Ephesian law that demands Syracusan merchants pay a ransom or forfeit their lives. Egeon cannot pay that ransom, so he is sentenced to die. But the duke is sympathetic to Egeon when he and the audience are acquainted with the sad tale of the separation of Egeon's family in a shipwreck many years before. The duke grants Egeon the rest of the day to somehow secure the thousand marks necessary to pay his ransom.

Egeon's appearance at the beginning and end of the play serves to mark one day's progress, the elapsed time of the play's action. It is also somewhat ironic that Egeon, once a man of means enough to purchase the twin Dromios as servants, finds himself in a situation in which he does not have means enough to pay the ransom for his own life.

First Merchant of Ephesus:

The first merchant of Ephesus befriends Antipholus of Syracuse when the latter arrives in Ephesus. He warns the Syracusan Antipholus that Syracusan merchants are being held for ransom in Ephesus and advises him to pass himself off as being from Epidamium while he remains in the city. He tells Antipholus of Syracuse that just that morning the >duke has sentenced a Syracusan merchant to death for his inability to pay that ransom; however, the first merchant of Ephesus is unaware that the poor Syracusan merchant is Egeon, father to the Syracusan Antipholus.

Headsman:

The headsman enters with the duke in the last scene of the play. He is the head officer of a type of police force the duke maintains to keep order in the city and enforce the law.

Jailer:

A jailer appears in the first scene of the play maintaining custody of Egeon, who has been arrest>ed as a Syracusan merchant banned from the city of Ephesus.

Luce:

Luce is a servant to Adriana. She helps the Syracusan Dromio bar the door against Antipholus of Ephesus when Adriana and Luciana are entertaining Antipholus of Syracuse within, unaware that it is really the husband of her mistress outside. We discover later that she has presumed a familiarity with the Syracusan Dromio, assuming he was his twin brother with whom she is presumably involved. The Syracusan Dromio finds her extremely unattractive and describes her to Antipholus of Syracuse as "the kitchen wench and all grease" (III.ii.95). He describes her complexion as "Swart, like

[his] shoe, but her face nothing like so clean kept" (III.ii.102). And he describes her girth as "No longer from head to foot than from hip to hip: she is spherical, like a globe" (III.ii.113-14). When Dromio of Syracuse is later sent to Adriana's house to procure bail for Antipholus of Ephesus, he shudders at the thought of encountering Luce again.

Luciana:

Luciana is the sister of Adriana and seems inseparable from her throughout the play. Their attitudes toward a "correct" marriage relationship, however, are different. When Adriana complains about her husband's absences from home, intending to chastise Antipholus of Ephesus severely when he returns, Luciana counsels her to be patient and recognize that the husband is lord over his wife. Adriana tells her, "This servitude makes you to keep unwed" (II.i.26), but Luciana replies that she has refrained from marriage because she has seen only troubled marriages as examples around her. She tells Adriana, "Ere I learn love, I'll practice to obey" (II.i.29). Adriana assures Luciana that she will change her tune once she is married and learns that she holds a certain power over her husband. When Antipholus of Syracuse is dining at his twin brother's house with Adriana and Luciana, Luciana takes him aside and advises him to be more attentive to her sister, especially as they are but newly married. She tells him that if he has married Adriana for her money, he needs to treat her more kindly. If he is having an affair, she cautions him to be secretive about it. Thinking that Antipholus of Syracuse is his twin and Adriana's husband, Luciana is shocked when he reveals his desire for her. She tells Adriana about his advances and attempts to console her sister by explaining that the loss of any man who would do such a thing is not worth mourning. Luciana supports her sister's efforts to exorcise the demons from Antipholus of Ephesus when they later conclude that his bizarre behavior is the result of madness and possession.

Messenger:

The messenger appears in the last scene of the play. As Adriana is pleading with the duke to >intervene on her behalf with the abbess, who will not release Adriana's presumably mad husband, the messenger brings her the news that Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus have escaped confinement. He tells the assemblage that the Ephesian Antipholus and Dromio "have beaten the maids" and "bound the doctor" (V.i.170). They have set the conjuring schoolmaster's hair on fire and have doused the fire with buckets of foul waste. As a final insult to Pinch, they have cut his hair in the fashion associated with fools.

Nell:

See Luce

Officers:

These are officers of the Ephesian law. They appear in the first and last scenes of the play, accompanying the duke of Ephesus. An Officer is present to arrest Angelo when the second merchant of Ephesus demands it. At Angelo's insistence, he also arrests Antipholus of Ephesus when the latter refuses to pay Angelo the sum he owes him for the gold necklace. In a later scene, the Officer has Antipholus of Ephesus in his custody and refuses to turn him over to Adriana for fear that he will lose the fee he is to receive for apprehending the prisoner.

Pinch (Doctor Pinch):

Doctor Pinch is a schoolmaster by profession and a conjurer by virtue of his advanced learning. He attempts to exorcise the demons from Antipholus of Ephesus after he has escorted him home. But the Ephesian Antipholus and Dromio break their bonds and turn the tables on the doctor, beating him and humiliating him by cutting off his hair. Doctor Pinch represents the Catholic practice of exorcism rejected by the Protestant doctrine of the Church of England in the late sixteenth century. We know that the brief exorcism Pinch conducts, after the Ephesian Antipholus strikes him, has Catholic associations because he attempts to drive Satan out by saying, "I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven!" (IV.iv.57). The belief in saints was peculiar to Catholicism, and no good Protestant in England would have suggested that the spiritual aid of saints could be enlisted.

Second Merchant of Ephesus:

The second merchant of Ephesus is owed money by Angelo, the goldsmith. When he requests payment, Angelo assures him that he can secure a similar amount from Antipholus of Ephesus in exchange for the gold necklace he has given him. When the Ephesian Antipholus denies owing the money, Angelo cannot pay the second merchant of Ephesus. The latter has no other alternative but to have Angelo arrested for non-payment of debt. Angelo, in turn, has Antipholus of Ephesus arrested on the same grounds. In a later scene, Angelo apologizes to the second merchant of Ephesus, who has been delayed in a business voyage by Angelo's inability to pay his debt. The second Merchant of Ephesus asks Angelo about the Ephesian Antipholus's reputation, and Angelo assures him that, in all but this particular instance, Antipholus of Ephesus has always conducted himself as a reputable man of business.

Solinus (Solinus, Duke of Ephesus):

The duke appears in the first and last scenes of the play. In the opening scene, he sentences Egeon to death, in accordance with the Ephesian policy of retaliation against the duke of Syracuse, who has held Ephesian merchants in Syracuse for ransom. The duke of Ephesus represents law, but that law is tempered with mercy. When he hears

Egeon's sad tale of shipwreck and separated family, the duke wishes that he could suspend Egeon's sentence of death but cannot since that leniency would establish a dangerous precedent in Ephesus. He does, however, allow Egeon until the end of the day to accumulate the thousand marks necessary to pay his ransom. In the last scene, the duke appears to enact the sentence against Egeon but is prevented from immediately doing so by several suits which he must settle. When the abbess appears to say that Antipholus of Syracuse has been wronged in being treated as if he were possessed and recognizes Egeon as her husband, it is the duke who is first to put the pieces of the puzzle together and figure out what has happened.

Character Studies

Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus

Critics often note the similarities between the Syracusan and Ephesian Dromios, but they rarely note any similar qualities in their masters, the Syracusan and Ephesian Antipholi twins. Physically they are identical, but their personalities are vastly different. We first meet Antipholus of Syracuse as he arrives in Ephesus, a somewhat downtrodden, melancholy man in search of his long-lost brother. He believes he will somehow find his identity in his twin. Antipholus of Ephesus, on the other hand, knows exactly who he is a well-known, well-respected businessman with a wife, home, and flourishing business. The chaos and madness that serve as foils to their reunion, which ultimately takes place in the closing scene, cause them both to confront their own identities in their interactions with the people of Ephesus. Antipholus of Syracuse is met and greeted by people he has never seen before as though they know him quite well, causing Antipholus to think that he must be mad or everyone around him has gone mad. Antipholus of Ephesus, on the other hand, finds that the people he knows or with whom he does business every day react to him as though he is someone other than himself. They recognize him as Antipholus, but as the wrong twin. His reaction to these odd events is one of fury and violence, and he, like Antipholus of Syracuse, believes that either he or everyone around him is mad. Critics generally agree that when the brothers are brought together at last in the end, we do not find them overjoyed or ecstatic; their reunion is somewhat flat. Some critics argue that their identities are secured or renewed when they are finally reunited. Others are not as sure. We do not know for certain (although it is highly probable) that Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana will wed, and we do not know how Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus will reconcile after all of the threats to their identities.

Most critics tend to regard Antipholus of Syracuse as the more interesting twin (at least he is the twin on which they generally focus) with a depth of character not found in Antipholus of Ephesus. They assess Antipholus of Syracuse's quest for identity as particularly engaging. Some give his search psychological or Freudian undertones, arguing that it comes from a desire to be "reunited" with his mother as he was united with her as a child. He is reluctant to "merge" or "unite" completely with Luciana, even though he loves her, because he thinks he might lose his identity in the process. Antipholus of Ephesus also worries about his identity, but he is more concerned that it appears as though everyone he knows has gone utterly mad. His rejection by everyone he knows causes him to become enraged, which is, according to one critic, entirely reasonable and justified. Antipholus of Syracuse is in a dream; Antipholus of Ephesus is stuck in a nightmare.

Adriana and Luciana

In Plautus's play, the character of Adriana hardly existed—the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus was named merely "wife" and characterized simply as a shrew.

The character of Luciana did not exist at all. Thus, they are almost exclusively Shakespeare's creations in *The Comedy of Errors.* One of the most commented-upon pieces of dialogue in the play is one in which Adriana and Luciana discuss marriage, Adriana railing against the commonly held opinion that wives must be subservient to their husbands, and Luciana serving as a proponent of a wife's "proper" role. As another of Shakespeare's pairings, Adriana and Luciana revise their opinions as the play progresses, leaning more toward the other woman's point of view, and we see how their opinions are reflected in their relationships with the twin brothers.

Although in early criticism of the play Adriana was generally considered a shrew like the Plautine "wife," most modern criticism has discarded that characterization and considers her as a more multidimensional character (although she still has her detractors). In light of the greater attention given to such issues as gender and marriage, Adriana's character has undergone reevaluation, as has the play itself. Some critics now portray Adriana as a very early voice condemning society's gender-based double standard.

Luciana is considered by at least one critic as the most complex character in the play. Most acknowledge her position next to Adriana as the voice of pious womanhood, accepting of her station in life as a woman. However, through her interactions with Antipholus of Syracuse and the Abbess (Aemilia), we see that she is not entirely satisfied with being merely a subservient wife. By the end of the play, Adriana too steps back a bit from her earlier position of condemning the restrictions marriage imposes when she is rebuked by the Abbess. At least one commentator has noted that this is not surprising, as Shakespeare was too conservative to completely reject the established system of marriage in Elizabethan society.

Conclusion

Although *The Comedy of E rrors* is Shakespeare's shortest play, it has generated a good deal of literary criticism. Critics will likely continue to offer commentary about the play's "identity" (genre) and the popular to p ic of the identity problems, journeys, and resolutions 0 its characters. Perhaps, too, the thus far limited exploration of the characters of Aegeon and Aemilia (the Abbess) will continue. With the topics of gender and male/female relationships becoming more popular in the criticism, more commentary in these areas is likely forthcoming, now that Adriana has been "rescued" from being considered as only a "shrew." Some critics continue to see the playas an apprentice work of Shakespeare's, preferring his major works instead, but many are also finding in it much more meaning than simply a story of mistaken identities .

Themes

Identity

The concept of identity is one of the most discussed topics in the criticism on *The Comedy of Errors,* going well beyond the obvious theme of mistaken identity. Some critics focus solely on personal identity (usually with regard to the twin brothers Antipholi or Adriana, though other characters' identities are also addressed), while others look at how public social and private identities intersect.

It is generally acknowledged that Antipholus of Syracuse enters the city of Ephesus to make himself "whole" and find his identity, which he believes will happen when he finds his twin brother. However, the strange encounters he has (his social identity) make him question his sanity and that of others who speak to him as if they know him. Antipholus of Ephesus, on the other hand, clings to his personal identity when assailed with threats to it for reasons unknown to him. His wife, Adriana, finds her identity as Antipholus's wife threatened by the perilous course their marriage *is* taking. Most critics agree that the characters' "original" identities are returned to them or renewed at the end of the play, but not before the social order is seriously threatened.

Genre

In most of the commentary on the play, critics devote at least some attention to its genre or classification, even if it is not the subject of the critical piece. It remains a topic of ongoing interest and debate. Some modern critics see the playas pure (or almost pure) farce and important in Shakespeare's canon, unlike early critics who dismissed it as merely a stepping-stone in Shakespeare's career and not worthy of much critical attention.

Commentators who find elements of tragedy and romance in the play usually point first to Aegeon's story at the beginning of the play and his impending death as keeping the play from being pure farce. Antipholus of Syracuse's wooing of Luciana, Adriana and Luciana's debate about love and marriage, and the family reunion at the end of the play are other non-farcical elements critics discuss. Those critics who argue that the play has elements of comedy, too, and not simply farce, note that the characters in the play have more depth and dimension than would characters in a farce— they are real, not mechanized characters.

Love and Marriage

Discussion of love and marriage in *The Comedy of Errors* tends to focus on either the relationship between Adriana and her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, or the debate between Adriana and Luciana on marriage (or both), both of which are deviations from Plautus's play. One critic argues that Shakespeare's introduction of these concepts in

the play sets the stage for the romantic love so central in his later romantic comedies, maintains that that is all Shakespeare intended to do, and reads nothing further into the play. Other critics demur, citing Shakespeare's vast deviation from his Plautine source— for example, Adriana's speeches about her unhappiness (and the fact that she has a name in this play— Plautus's name for the wife of Antipholus was "Wife"), the attention given to her marriage, the reduced role of the Courtezan, and the budding love between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse. Other commentators explore the changing nature of male/ female relationships in courtship and marriage.

Gender Issues

The topic of gender in *The Comedy of Errors* is closely aligned with the topic of love and marriage, with most of the commentary focusing on the women in the play (particularly Adriana, Luciana, and Aemilia). The critics who touch on the role of the men in the play tend to regard them with less enthusiasm than they do the women, except perhaps in the case of the Aegeon.

Some critics point to the dual nature of the women in the play— they possess "masculine" as well as "feminine" traits; they are "dominant" in courtship and "submissive" in marriage. One critic calls these "halves" of the "unified feminine principle" "outlaw" and "inlaw." Another commentator notes the division of public (commercial) and private (domestic) spheres represented in the play and the conflict that ensues between Antipholus of Ephesus and Adriana because of these spheres' seeming incompatibility.

Critics also point out the significance of Aemilia's appearance at the end of the play and the role of women in general in being catalysts in the outcome and resolution of the play.

Modern Connections

The Comedy of Errors is believed by many scholars to be Shakespeare's first play. (Some argue it may have been written as early as 1589). Many elements of the play seem unbelievable and are deliberately contrived for their comic effect. The confusions of identity in the play turn on the highly unlikely possibility that each pair of twins, the Antipholuses and the Dromios, would have the same name. It is also highly unlikely that the abbess could have lived >so many years in Ephesus unaware of the presence, in that city, of her son, Antipholus of Ephesus. And it is improbable that Egeon and Antipholus of Syracuse would simultaneously end up in Ephesus. More importantly, Antipholus of Syracuse never speculates that people in Ephesus might be mistaking him for his twin brother, a brother for whom he has been diligently searching. As the title of the play suggests, the play is a comedy and, perhaps, is not meant to be taken at all seriously. But Shakespeare's selection of Ephesus for the setting points to a more serious element in the play and underscores a stark contrast between Elizabethan and modern conceptions about the "truth" or "reality" of experience.

Ephesus was a place long associated with witchcraft and sorcery, most notably in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Antipholus of Syracuse alludes to that witchcraft and sorcery on several occasions. When Dromio of Ephesus mistakenly calls him home to dinner, unaware that Antipholus of Syracuse has just entrusted Dromio of Syracuse with a fair amount of gold, he says, upon the Ephesian Dromio's exit,

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. . .
(I.ii.97-100)

He is constantly amazed that the citizens of Ephesus give him gifts, invite him to dinner, and seem to know him through supernatural means. His suspicions about witchcraft culminate in his confrontation with the courtezan, a lewd woman who presumes some intimacy with him. He cries, "Avaunt, thou witch!" (IV.iii.79), and he and Dromio flee in fear.

Antipholus of Ephesus has similar problems. He has lived in that city for many years and has a solid reputation as a businessman. When his friends and colleagues encounter the different demeanor of Antipholus of Syracuse, they conclude that the Ephesian Antipholus is behaving madly. They attribute that madness to possession by evil spirits at the instigation of the witches and sorcerers associated with Ephesus. Adriana believes her husband is possessed and has asked Doctor Pinch, a conjurer, to counteract, with his own kind of sorcery, the demonic spirits troubling her husband. The Ephesian Antipholus vehemently denies that he is possessed and strikes Doctor Pinch. To which the doctor responds,

I charge thee, Sathan, hous'd within this man,
To yield possession to my holy prayers,
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight:
I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven!
(IV.iv.54-57)

Adriana and Luciana, according to the best wisdom of the age for dealing with the possessed, intend to establish Antipholus of Ephesus in a dark vault and allow Doctor Pinch to perform a ritualized exorcism. The abbess, having been told that Antipholus of Syracuse is possessed, will bring him to his senses again "With wholesome syrups, drugs, and holy prayers" (V.i.104). Although the methods of the abbess and Doctor Pinch differ, they both treat madness and possession as a consequence of external manipulation.

Curiously, neither Antipholus of Syracuse nor his twin ever questions his own sanity. Any modern treatment of characters in a similar situation, if it dealt at all with the characters' reactions, would almost certainly focus on internal doubts about sanity and the characters' grasp of an external reality. For Elizabethans, concerns about witchcraft and possession were very real and served, within a religious framework, to explain anything odd or unusual in human experience. Most modern audiences are perhaps more likely to believe in psychological explanations for insanity rather than in witchcraft or demonic possession as causes. The abbess suggests a modern notion of psychological problems when she concludes that Antipholus of Syra>cuse, whom she believes is Adriana's husband, is troubled by the sharp and persistent tongue of a shrewish wife. Modern audiences would be apt to agree with her explanation and would be much more likely to expect distortions in human experience to be framed in sociological and psychological terms than framed by witchcraft and demonic possession.

Overviews

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
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Critical Essay #1

Source: "Introduction," in *The Comedy of Errors,* Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 12-18.

[In the following excerpt, Dorsch covers the main action and characters in the play. He notes especially that the twin Dromios are vastly different in character; that the women in the play "stand out more vividly than the men" (the Courtezan is 'just the kind of girl a sensible man would look far if he had a nagging wife"); and that the Abbess (Aemilia) is a powerful presence in the play.]

The Comedy of Errors is not only very good theatre, it is also very good reading. It is a finely-balanced mixture of pathos and suspense, illusion and delusion, love turned bitter and love that is sweet, farce and fun. The fun begins in the second scene with the entry of the Syracusan pair and is sustained with great verve and vivacity through the next three acts. It arises from the farce of mistaken identity which is the stuff and substance of the play—from all the improbabilities that result from the use of two pairs of identical twins who in the course of a single day repeatedly encounter people whom they *know* they know, but do not know. 'If we are in for improbability', said Dowden, 'let us at least be repaid for it by fun, and have that in abundance. Let the incredibility become a twofold incredibility, and it is none the worse.' The fun is of course greatly increased by our knowledge of everything that the characters in the play do not know. Even if Shakespeare did not at all times make clear in the dialogue who is who, we should know from his looks and voice who is speaking to whom. One would suppose that no producer in his senses would put on the stage two pairs of actors who could not be told apart. The only possible surprise for us is the advent of the Abbess in the final episodes, and that should not be much of a surprise, for we have learnt from romances that if a wife disappears at the beginning she is more likely than not to reappear at the end.

The keynotes of the play are illusion and delusion. The Abbess and Egeon are the only persons who are not wholly deluded by appearances, and even they are so far deceived as not to know that all their family are alive and well, and close at hand in Ephesus; and Egeon is, naturally enough, bewildered when he is unexpectedly faced by two sons who cannot be told from each other even by a wife and two personal slaves. The illusion, like the fun, begins in the second scene when the visiting Antipholus is accosted by a slave whom he *knows* to be his own Dromio, who precipitately tells him that his dinner is spoiling and he must hurry home, and who emphatically denies that he has in his keeping money that Antipholus has entrusted to him. Newly arrived in Ephesus, he has been thinking about his long and seemingly hopeless quest, and has felt that he is like a drop of water

That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
(1.2.35-8)

After his encounter with the wrong Dromio he recalls having been told that Ephesus 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)

The Roman-style comedy of misunderstanding is teasingly haunted by moral implications owed to the distant echoes of St Paul. The phrase 'liberties of sin' could not have come from Plautus, and suggests that those who fall under the spells of Ephesus are in need of spiritual conversion as well as material enlightenment. The mind of Antipholus of Syracuse remains 'changed' until the end of the play. A little later in the day, when Adriana claims him as her husband, he is led to wonder whether he was married to her in a dream from which he is not yet awake (2.2.173-4). His Dromio, too, is struck with a horrified wonder:

This is the fairy land.
O spite of spites, we talk with goblins, owls, and sprites.
(2.2.180-1)

So it continues. He wonders whether he is 'in earth, in heaven, or in hell'. When Dromio brings him money to save him from the imprisonment with which his brother is threatened, he *knows* that he is wandering 'in illusions' (4.3.36), and when, immediately after this, he is greeted as an old friend by the Courtesan, he *knows* that she is the devil (43), and Dromio agrees that she is at least 'the devil's dam'.

All the other figures in the farce are similarly bemused by error. The Duke thinks that they 'all have drunk of Circe's cup'. Antipholus of Ephesus in all his encounters thinks the wrong to be the right person. His wife more than once believes the other Antipholus to be her husband (as does Luciana), not only when she is entertaining him in her home, but even at the very end. 'Which of you two did dine with me today?' she asks (5.1.369). Luciana is surprised, and not a little shocked, when she is so warmly and elegantly courted by her brother-in-law, as she supposes Antipholus of Syracuse to be; perhaps, nevertheless, she enjoys a little quiet fun in hearing him, and in reporting him to her sister—nothing in this play is to be taken too seriously. Strangely, we are not told at the end that she is to be a wife—she and Antipholus would make a gentle and happy pair. In the theater the swiftness of the action allows us no time to wonder at all these mistaken beliefs and weird occurrences; everywhere, as Johnson says, *'Shakespeare* approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful.'

Most of Shakespeare's comedies contain pathos, separations within families, or potential tragedy. *The Comedy of Errors is* no exception. In strong contrast to Plautus's jaunty prologue, Shakespeare opens with the pathetic figure of Egeon, standing in peril of his life. Although at the back of our minds we know from the title and from our reading

of romances that in the end all will be well, we must, while he is before us, feel deeply for Egeon as he tells his woeful story, and is told that, unless someone can within the day find a thousand marks to redeem him, he must die— just as we feel deeply for the later heroines who must suffer deprivation or banishment or cruelty before they are brought to happiness— Rosalind or Viola or Hermione. The pathos returns briefly in the final scene, together with a touch of suspense, when Egeon is led in with the Headsman, and again when he is bewildered by the sudden appearance of his long-lost wife and son. These moments are in keeping with all the earlier improbabilities, but they are not farcical. That they follow so hard upon the binding of the one Antipholus and the narrow escape of the other from being locked up as a madman makes the final reunion all the happier. That the close of the play should be placed in the hands of the slaves is a final incidence of fun, and, in this particular play, entirely appropriate.

It is commonly said that in farce situation is everything, characterisation little or nothing. Shakespeare knew better. In Johnson's phrase, he drew his characters, like his scenes, 'from nature and from life'. To every one of his characters he gave an individuality of his own and a distinctive voice; it is a skill that enlarges farce into comedy.

The Dromios are not, as is often said, as like as two peas. Dromio of Ephesus is the more sprightly, and the more in command of all the tricks of language that make for the comic and the witty. His opening lines are the first irruption in the play of high comedy, not only for their shock-effect on the recently-arrived Antipholus, but also in their masterly display of the rhetorical device called *anadiplosis,* by which words at the end of one line are picked up at the beginning of the next. As an introduction to Dromio, to his idiom, to the treatment that a slave expects to receive, and to the spirit of the play, the whole speech is worth quoting:

Returned so soon? Rather approached too late.
The capon bums, the pig falls from the spit.
The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell;
My mistress made it one upon my cheek
She is so hot because the meat is cold.
The meat is cold because you come not
home.
You come not home because you have no
stomach.
You have no stomach, having broke your
fast. But we that know what 'tis to fast and pray
Axe penitent for your default today.
(1.2.43-52)

This playing upon words is characteristic of his voice, and, like all witty slaves, he has at his disposal a fund of proverbial wisdom. His Syracusan twin is less voluble, less ebullient; his comedy (apart from his drubbings) is more dependent on puns and proverbs. However, he shows some spirit when he is barring the entry of the Ephesians into their own house, and when he is describing Nell (3.2.77-130).

Nor are the Antipholuses, except in their appearance, alike. Weary with travel and sorrow, Antipholus of Syracuse is quiet and despondent, though quick enough, at the contrariness of slaves, to flare into anger and strike blows. When not harassed, he is gentle and courtly, given to calling ladies 'fair dame' or 'gentle mistress', and he is eloquent in his wooing— we must hope Luciana in the end said yes. The other Antipholus is more robust, ready to smash down a door (though his own) if it keeps him from his dinner. He feels a little henpecked, and is ready to seek comfort from a woman who is not his wife and to ask his goldsmith to make his excuses for him. He is embroiled in the same kinds of confusions as his twin, but reacts to them by beating slaves and not by sinking into dismay and despair; he is, or thinks he is, secure in his knowledge of Ephesus, and his knowledge that he knows everyone who needs to be known. He has for many years been held in high favour by the Duke, and is, in the opinion of his fellow citizens ,

Of very reverend reputation, . . .
Of credit infinite, highly beloved,
Second to none that lives here in the city.
(5.1.5-7)

He is a man of substance. He lives in a large house of two storeys ('Husband, I'll dine above with you today', says Adriana), probably with a balcony (see pp'. 23-4 below), and has, for Shakespeare's purposes in 3.1, six maidservants in addition to his slave and a kitchen-maid.

The women of the play stand out more vividly than the men. The two who might have been twins— how thankful we are that they are only sisters— are more clearly differentiated than the pairs who really are twins. Adriana is temperamental; she nags her husband to the last, even complaining of him to the Abbess, but wails at great length when in exasperation he sometimes goes off to find congenial company elsewhere— after all, she keeps a good house and is herself faithful. She needs to be taught a lesson or two by her more even-tempered sister. In her worse moments she thinks Antipholus to be

deformed, crooked, old, and sere;
ill-faced, worse-bodied, shapeless everywhere;
Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.
(4.2.19-22)

When she thinks he is going to be put in jail or a madhouse, she rushes to his help and calls him 'gentle husband'. Naughty as he is, she loves him dearly, as indeed she has from the beginning, if too possessively; even her sharpest railings have come from her mouth, not her heart, as she has shown in her dialogue with Luciana at the end of 2.1, and, in so many words, in 4.2.18, 28. She will, we trust, when she has been shown her own faults, behave better in the future.

Luciana is somewhat given to preaching (as is the Abbess, but then that is her vocation) and at the same time a very agreeable and pleasantly-spoken young woman, as she was when played by Francesca Annis, with Judi Dench beside her as a not too querulous Adriana. She is of course disconcerted when Antipholus woos her so fervently, thinks that perhaps he is mad, but after her first sermon does little to stop him, and can scarcely be said to chide him as she chides Adriana. She is as anxious about her brother-in-laws welfare as her sister, and would be incapable of reviling him, as Adriana does. The gentle Antipholus knows what he is saying when he addresses her as 'Sweet mistress'.

From Dromio's graphic portrait we know all we want to know about Nell— globose, sweaty, red nose, bad of breath. Out of Plautus's courtesan Erotium Shakespeare fashioned someone entirely new. Erotium is exactly what the word courtesan means, what would at one time have been called a gold-digger, ready to clutch at cloaks or bracelets or 'brass'. Shakespeare's unnamed Courtesan is different. Of course she likes being given presents (who doesn't?) and would not have her own costly jewellery go astray, but she can scarcely be said to be rapacious, even if she is as much concerned for her lost baubles as for what appears to be Antipholus's madness. She is good company, 'of excellent discourse, Pretty and witty; wild, and yet, too, gentle' (gentle in both the modern sense and in the usual Elizabethan sense of 'well-bred', though Antipholus of Syracuse thinks otherwise)— just the kind of girl a sensible man would look for if he had a nagging wife. Her wildness is not seen, and there is no vice in her. Shakespeare chose to celebrate the loves and marriages of nice young women rather than fornication.

All the lesser figures contribute something. Doctor Pinch, Plautus's *medicus* new-apparelled, can be quickly disposed of; it is enough to quote Antipholus of Ephesus:

one Pinch, a hungry, lean-faced villain, A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
A threadbare juggler and a fortune-teller,
A needy, hollow-eyed, sharp-looking wretch,
A living dead man
(5.1.238-42)

a magnificently Shakespearean vignette. We may note in passing that, although in his introductory stage direction he is called a Schoolmaster, in the dialogue he is always addressed, referred to, and in his pretentious way behaves, as a conjurer.

Another moment of exquisite comedy is provided by the officious and boldly-spoken Jailer; he has had the Ephesian pair carried off to prison, and is rounding off the case, when he is suddenly confronted by Antipholus of Syracuse (yet once more taken for his twin) and Dromio, with rapiers in their hands. Let the situation speak for itself:

LUCIANA God, for thy mercy, they are loose again!
ADRIANA And come with naked swords. Let's call more help
To have them bound again.
JAILER Away, they'll kill us!

Exeunt omnes [apart from Antipholus S. and Dromio S.], as fast as may be, frighted
(4.4.138-40)

The devil-witch-courtesan, now apparently at one with Adriana, is one of those that run away as fast as may be. For the first time Antipholus and Dromio feel they have the upper hand of the terrifying creatures that beset them. 'I see these witches are afraid of swords', Antipholus dryly comments, and at last Dromio 'could find it in [his] heart to stay [in Ephesus] still, and turn witch'. He is disposed to join what St Paul called 'the users of curious crafts'.

There remains a very important character, the Abbess. She, 'a virtuous and a reverend lady', is a splendid figure, a woman of great authority and, we must feel, of commanding presence; for the most part of few words, and those always to the point and peremptory. 'Be quiet, people', she says as she comes in upon a brabble, and tumult turns to mere clamour; a little later, firmly, 'Whoever bound him, I will loose his bonds.' She will not kow-tow to the Duke, as the sisters do; her power is as great as his. She will have no nonsense, has no patience with nagging wives and tells them so; Adriana has to put up with a severe scolding from her. It does not take this competent and formidable woman long to straighten out all the entanglements of the day; chaos gives way to order, confusion of mind to practical good sense. The Bible has taught her, as it has (at times) taught Luciana, to see clearly. Shakespeare wittily conjoins the idea he found in Acts 19.26, that the whole city of Ephesus was 'full of confusion', with the *epitasis,* or thickening of the plot, in Roman comedy. The Abbess offers proper Pauline counsel to those who come to hear her, and she is the *dea ex machina* who resolves the play's complications in its *catastrophe.* It is she who, in her final words, 'After so long grief, such nativity', sums up the theme of regeneration with which the play is brought to its conclusion. We rejoice with her when, after the long years, her husband and her sons are restored to her, and we wish that we could celebrate with her at her well-organised 'gossips' feast'. . . .

Critical Essay #2

There is not a great deal of disagreement among critics as to the importance of identity in the play. More than debating the components of a certain character's identity, critics instead offer myriad examples of how identity is manifested in the play through Aegeon, the twin Antipholi, and Adriana. Barbara Freedman dismisses the notion that the play is merely a farce about mistaken identities, and sees Aegeon's twin sons as representative of Aegeon's divided self, connecting the two plots of the story, and providing resolution and a new sense of self at the end of the play. Gail Kern Paster also notes the importance of Aegeon's personal identity; it is so powerful that the Duke grants him an entire day to save his life instead of condemning him to death outright.

Many critics discuss the identity issues facing Antipholus of Syracuse. Laurie Maguire and R. A. Foakes argue that Antipholus finds a new identity by losing himself in falling in love with Luciana, not by finding his twin, which Antipholus had thought would restore his identity. Gwyn Williams argues that his falling in love with Luciana begins the long process of finding his identity, but his belief that she has supernatural powers keeps him from entirely surrendering.

There is some disagreement as to what happens to the identity of Antipholus of Ephesus in the play. Maguire argues that this self-assured twin clings to his identity in the midst of the madness that ensues. Dorothea Kehler finds that he loses his identity and takes on Adriana's identity when he suddenly experiences what she does what it feels like to be betrayed. As Jonathan V. Crewe, Stanley Wells, and Douglas Lanier note, appearances and recognition are important to the characters— their social environment helps determine their personal identity. This is why the idea of twins never crosses the minds of any of the characters. Paster and Barry Weller discuss the intersection of personal and social identity, Weller arguing that at the end of the play, personal identities are overshadowed by "corporate" or civic identities.

Source: "Egeon's Debt: Self-Division and Self-Re demption in *The Comedy of Errors,"* in *English Literary Renaissance,* Vol. 10, No.3, Autumn, 1980, pp. 360-83.

[In the following essay, Freedman explores the concept of identity (primarily as it is evidenced in the characters of Aegeon and the Antipholi) in the play, integrating such discussions as what she sees as the plot's three-part structure, the centrality of monetary and marital debts (and their intersection), and the importance of redemption.]

Virtually every good critical introduction to *The Comedy of Errors* apologizes for the play. Shakespeare was a mere youth, so the story begins, when he wrote the work, "still without too much to say about love, politics, or human nature." The generic conventions of farce provided their own peculiar restraints, since farce is a kind of drama "that not even Shakespeare could extend beyond somewhat narrow limits." Repeatedly, the reader is warned not to waste time searching for latent meanings in the text. Rather, we are advised to be grateful for what we do have: a "superb farce," a "pure comedy of event." We may value it as an "assimilation and extension of Plautine comedy," for its

"symmetry and near flawlessness of . . . plot," or finally, for its rich "harmonic structure" of interrelated themes and patterns of imagery, but we should never expect this "primitive" to stand up to Shakespeare's mature comedies. Or so the story goes.

One cause of all this genial patronage appears to be an intriguing problem in criticism. Critics have been unable to resolve two major issues central to an understanding of the play as a meaningful unity: first, the purpose of the farcical confusion of the twins' identities in the main plot, and second, its relation to their father's progress in the frame plot from separation to reunion with his family, and *from* crime and debt to redemption. The main plot, derived from Plautus' *Menaedmi* and *Amphitriio* is generally considered a random "rearranging [of] human puppets" in an essentially static situation, and is often compared to the farcical confusion of the four lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Critics frequently regard its opening and conclusion as arbitrary. One critic maintains that "the confusion is really the result of accidental circumstances and is as accidentally cleared up"; another muses that "the arabesques of absurdity in *The Comedy of Errors* might continue indefinitely." While it is granted that each character is, at least, forced to confront the horror of mistaken identity, it is equally observed that "no one learns more about himself *or* his neighbor as a result of the errors." Since "in no other play. . . is the purpose of the confusion less apparent," the work is thought to reflect a vision of a meaningless universe, its intent "no more and no less than the sheer merriment of controlled confusion."

The purpose of the frame plot, adapted from *Apollonius of Tyre,* has been less easy to dismiss, though it has proven equally obscure. Critics complain that the frame plot is poorly integrated into the rest of the play, *or* they weakly defend the way it humanizes the farce and "contributes an emotional tension. . . to what would otherwise have remained a two-dimensional drama.'" While studies of the play's themes and patterns of imagery have demonstrated its artistic unity, such approaches have failed to prove the frame plot intrinsic to the play *or* the main plot purposive.

To explain the relationship of *Errors'* main plot and frame plot, we must accept Shakespeare's focus on a specific context for the farcical confusion of the twins' identities, and decipher its significance. Bracketing the twins' confusion are two problems—Egeon's debt and his Syracusan son's search for a familial identity—and their resolutions, Egeon's redemption and his son's rebirth into a familial identity. The confusion of the twins, then, is not the problem which the play solves, just as the play's resolution is not "simply a recognition of who, physically, is who." The confusion of identity is instead a necessary step in the recreation of identity, a problem-solving device through which the frame plot is fulfilled. When we consider *The Comedy of Errors* in the context of problem-solving techniques in Shakespearean comedy, what appears as a disjunctive double plot is revealed as a fully integrated three-pan structure.

In *The Comedy of Errors,* where a secondary romance plot frames the farce, we can perceive the rudimentary beginnings of the three-part structure which Shakespeare was to employ in his later comedies. The introductory scene of the play in which Egeon, while searching for his lost family, is doomed by Ephesian law to die by sundown unless he can raise an unlikely sum of money, corresponds well to the harsh world of law, the

cruel and problematic reality with which so many of Shakespeare's romantic comedies commence. The main plot's nightmarish Ephesus corresponds to the improbable, fantastic, dreamlike realm of the imagination, familiar to us as a second stage in Shakespearean comedy, and perhaps best described as an example of the "second world" in fiction: an explicitly imaginative *or* fictional word within a work which purports to imitate reality. While *The Comedy if Errors* doesn't shift to a fantastic setting inhabited by characters capable of magical action, when Antipholus of Syracuse enters Ephesus and confusion begins, the town suddenly appears fantastical. By not removing the play's action to a magical island *or* forest, Shakespeare stresses the essence of nightmare: the imagined fulfillment of repressed fears and desires in everyday reality. Thus, while the irrational events in the main plot appear to us as plausible and subject to rational explanation, the events remain fantastic and horrifying to the characters. Antipholus of Syracuse's bewildered cry, "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? / Sleeping or waking? mad or well advised?" (II. ii. 211-12) echoes many other Shakespearean descriptions of an essentially imaginative world. The play's conclusion, in which Egeon's problems are astonishingly solved, corresponds to the customary third phase resolution: a return to a world of law now tempered by mercy, a world of reality enriched by imaginative insight.

In such imaginative worlds as the wood outside of Athens or the Forest of Arden, the dramatic stage set before Christopher Sly or Prospero's stage and island, the customary laws of dramatic reality are suspended in favor of dreamlike, imaginative action which gives expression to the plays' problems and makes solutions possible. The functional relationship of second world to first world is the relationship of the imagination, whether in the form of dream, drama, or play, to reality. The second world is an adaptive mechanism through which problematical situations can be submitted to personal, creative re-enactment, control, and mastery.

One example of this problem-solving activity in the early comedies is the transformation of characters from the frame plot into dream-like characters equipped with superhuman powers to overcome their problems. For example, Christopher Sly's problems with the domineering alehouse wife in the introductory framework of

The Taming of the Shrew are mastered in the main plot through the fictional Petruchio, the fantastic woman tamer in a play performed before Sly. In the frame plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Theseus has not yet conquered his Amazonian queen on the battlefield of marriage, whereas he has a chance to do so through the magical actions of the fairy king Oberon in the play's major plot. A more complex mode of problem-solving in the comedies is the decomposition of a major frame plot character into multiple, contradictory attitudes which are personified in the main plot, thus enabling an intra-psychic dialogue to ensue in the play's second world. We see this device in the Forest of Arden, where Rosalind and Orlando combat their own pessimism through the figure of Jaques, and their romantic idealism through the characters of Phebe and Silvius, before they are prepared to enter into marriage and return to society. The principle of the hero's decomposition into quasi-allegorical characters as a problem-solving device may be traced from Shakespeare's early comedies to such diverse plays as *Henry IV, Part* One, *King Lear,* and *The Tempest.*

The disjunctive double plot of *The Comedy if Errors* is the prototype of the tripartite comedies that follow, and functions according to the same problem-solving strategies. First, the main plot dramatizes a psychological space; characters are idealized or dissociated internalized objects, whose speech and actions are coded in the symbolic language of dream. Second, the relationship of main plot to frame plot, like that of second world to first world, is the relationship of creative experience to everyday reality. The main plot's function is adaptive; it restates, in symbolic form, the problem posed in the frame plot and provides a model for its solution. The complex mirroring structure of Shakespearean comedy often enables clarification of an original problem only through *its* restatement in the second world. Hence it is difficult at first to recognize that the actions of Egeon's sons restate and resolve his problems. One must be adept at reading backwards and forwards, equating all the problems stated until a common denominator is found which stresses the context of the frame plot (e.g., Egeon's debt equals his crime equals Antipholus of Syracuse's problem of familial division equals that which is solved by the confusion of the twins' identities). Read in this manner, *The Comedy of Errors* no longer appears to be a random and senseless farce of mistaken identities, but a carefully orchestrated psychological drama in which dissociated parts of the self are meaningfully united. The twins, as allegorical representatives of Egeon's divided state, connect main plot and frame plot issues and provide a way to resolve them. The farce of mistaken identities and punishment in the confrontation of debts doubles as a complex drama of self-redemption.

II

The Comedy of Errors dramatizes the nightmare of a sudden, inexplicable disjunction between personal and communal accounts of one's identity. Those who are most familiar proclaim one a total stranger, whereas strangers evince a mysterious familiarity. Out of this confusion of the familiar and the strange grows that sense of the *unheimlich* which we translate as "uncanny." In Freud's famous paper "The 'Uncanny,'" he argues that "the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch,* homelike, familiar,"_ and maintains that the uncanny "can be traced back without exception to something familiar that has been repressed."_ This explains, Freud states, "why the usage of speech has extended *das Heinilichee* into its opposite *das Unheimliche;* for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old- established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression.'" It is this experience of familiarity-in-strangeness which characterizes each twin's perception of the day's errors and Egeon's nightmare of non-recognition at the play's close. A recent production of *Errors* underlined this sense of the uncanny at the climax of the play's mistaken identifications. Egeon's pathetic query:

Not know my voice! O time's extremity,
Hast thou so cracked and splitted my poor
tongue
In seven shalt years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of untuned cares?
(V. i. 307-10)

was delivered to a winking, snickering crowd, and at each piteous lament the uncomprehending townspeople laughed the louder.

Egeon attempts to be logical about this curiously disjunctive experience and to explain phenomena that the play attributes to a fantastic comedy of errors. However much the Ephesian crowd may laugh at his attempts, the Shakespearean critic should not; for if the fantasy presented here endures, as theatrical history attests, then it must convey an archetypal experience which has significant psychological if not physical validity. Egeon's accusation that change, or "Time's deformed hand," is the logical culprit of the mix-up of identities, ties into the theory of a repression of the familiar, and may provide the source of the uncanny experience that *The Comedy of Errors* presents.

Consider, for example, the meaning of the Syracusan twin's experience. What *is* the meaning of a fantasy in which one is continually recognized, literally "known again" as someone else? While a logical explanation would be to posit the existence of another person who looks like oneself, a physical twin, the status of the main plot as a second world suggests the viability of a psychological twin. For the only self that looks like oneself and is not oneself, that can be remembered or "known again" by others, is a part of the self which has been lost or denied in time, a part of the self with which one no longer identifies. To the extent that the former self is repressed, we have a situation in which others "know one again" as another and one does not remember them: one is no longer who one was. Pirandello focuses on this problem of recognition in *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* when the Father complains of the Daughter's ability to freeze him into a past self with which he no longer identifies:

So we have this illusion of being one person for all, of having a personality that is unique ill all our acts. But it isn't true. We perceive this when, tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were suspended, caught up in the air on a kind of hook Then we perceive that all of us was not in that act, and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone, as If all our existence were summed up in that one deed. Now do you understand the perfidy of thIs girl? She surprised me in a place, where she ought not to have known me, just as I could not exist for her; and she now seeks to attach to me a reality such as I could never suppose I should have to assume for her in a shameful and fleeting moment of my life.

From this perspective, the Syracusan can represent a present persona confused with a past, denied personal part of the self with which he no longer identifies.

Yet it is this dissociated persona which the Syracusan must seek in his quest for wholeness, and which he has inadvertently found in the gaze of the other.

Antipholus of Ephesus's experience presents a necessarily complementary but distinctly different fantasy: the perceptions of a past persona when it finds itself replaced by its double in the present. Rather than being mistaken for another, Antipholus of Ephesus is simply denied as himself, and by the very people he knows best. Bewildered at the widespread rejection he encounters, he imagines conspiracy and revenge to be its cause. Yet the actual situation is far more serious; not only are the doors of his home

shut upon him, but so are the doors of his entire world. Antipholus of Ephesus is faced with the startling fact that his life is going on quite well without him— but with another version of himself in the starring role.

Again change is the logical cause of mistaken identities, yet for the Ephesian twin the community as "mirror" continues in time, along with one persona of the individual, while the persona which would be recognized has somehow escaped "time's deformed hand." A more contemporary version of this fantasy is Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle," the well-known story of a henpecked husband who returns home after an afternoon's nap only to learn that twenty years have mysteriously slipped by:

Strange names were over the doors- strange faces at the windows— everything was strange. His mind now mis-gave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains— there ran the silver Hudson at a *dis* tance— there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been.

A twenty years' sleep may appear improbable and fantastic, but its logical psychological equivalent is a sud enly awakened twenty-year-old self which must confront the reality of the present. For Rip Van Winkle, as for Antipholus of Ephesus, that confrontation includes not only the horror of being shut out of one's world, but the insidious sense that one has been successfully replaced by one's double. In both situations, the double is a younger— because newer— version of the self; in Rip Van Winkle's case, it is his son who replaces him. In answer to his forlorn request:— "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"—the following conversation ensues:

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three; "oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself as he went up the mountain; apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name.

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself— I'm somebody else— that's me yonder-no-that's somebody else got into my shoes— I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am"

We could accept that this double is indeed Rip Van Winkle's son, as the story tells us, were it not that twenty years cannot pass by in one nap. And we could accept that Antipholus of Ephesus and his Dromio are simply replaced by identical twins, were it not that twins are not identical within. These fantastic stories in which disjunctive selves and worlds meet are valid on a psy chological level; the son, the twin brother, are simply metaphors for what has been termed the "second self in time." Finally, there is a motive

for Rip Van Winkle's prolonged absence which is curiously similar to Egeon's and Antipholus of Ephesus's: a nagging wife at home, and hence a marital identity from which the husband is tempted to escape.

What we are dealing with, then, is a temporal disjunction as the cause of identity confusion. Total recognition depends upon two parties remaining the same; lack of recognition occurs when neither patty remains the same. Mistaken or disjunctive recognition occurs when one person has changed so drastically that he bears no resemblance to his former self—as Egeon fears he has changed physically or as we might posit he has changed psychologically. A change in time, and hence in self concepts, can also account for the birth and confusion of the Antipholi. Either one identifies with the past and is disturbed that others in the present have forgotten who one was (Antipholus of Ephesus), or one identifies with the present and is disturbed that others relate only to a self with which one no longer identifies (Antipholus of Syracuse). What if one were to shift rapidly back and forth in one's identification with each of these perspectives? Egeon's attempt to recover home, wife, and a marital identity lost in a tempest long ago can account for just such a complex and uncanny fantasy.

When the action of the storm separated Egeon from ills former life, the Ephesian twin was, literally, that part of Egeon which was lost. The Syracusan twin was the part of Egeon which remained with him to the present time. Accordingly, the Ephesian twin's distinguishing characteristics are those which differentiated Egeon's former life from his present one. Antipholus of Ephesus, like the former Egeon, is the settled, respectable citizen. Antipholus of Syracuse is the present image of his father— an unhappy sojourner. The Ephesian twin is ensconced in a familial situation, complete with nagging wife; the Syracusan is a free bachelor, seeking the domestic stability which Egeon has lost. Antipholus of Ephesus is a pragmatic businessman, recalled in Egeon's description of his former life to Duke Egeon (I. i. 39-43). Antipholus of Syracuse is the impractical romantic, hazarding all in an apparently bootless journey, much like his "hopeless and helpless" father. The Ephesian homebody is commonly accepted as the elder of the two, befitting the representative of Egeon's past, whereas the travelling Syracusan is the newer and hence younger identity. Finally, only Antipholus of Ephesus has no knowledge of his brother: as the "pre-tempest" persona, he feels unified and secure in himself. Antipholus of Syracuse, as the "post-tempest," dissociated persona, knows of his brother and seeks his identity in unity with him. Thus the woefully divided brother lodges at the Centaur, mythological symbol of self-division, and seeks symbolic death and rebirth through imagined union with his double at his lodging, the Phoenix.

This allegorical schema clarifies the relationship of the mix-up of the twins' identities in the main plot to Egeon,s problem in the frame plot. The tempest which divided Egeon from his wife divided his past and present, marital and single identities as well, represented by Egeon's separated twin sons. Antipholus of Ephesus is Egeon's long-lost marital identity; Antipholus of Syracuse is Egeon's present persona, willing to lose himself to find himself in reunion with his brother. The Ephesian community's mistaken identification of the Antipholi enables their proper identification with each other. Thus, out of the mistaken identifications of the traditional comedy of intrigue Shakespeare fashioned a complex psychological drama of self-integration.

III

We can see how the play works as a psychological drama in which a long-lost marital identity is sought, "mistakenly" identified with, and ultimately recovered. Curiously enough, however, that self-division, depicted in the division of Ephesus and Syracuse, is associated with crime and unpaid debts. Self-recovery is depicted as dependent upon the payment of a series of debts, and self-integration is associated with release from crime and debt. It is a little recognized fact that the situation which functions to confuse the twins is not simply the mistaking of one for the other, but the two being so mistaken that one is recurrently debited or credited for the transactions of the other. Only when we discover the nature and validity of the debt can we explain the crime for which Egeon is arrested in the frame plot, its relation to the farcically mistaken punishment of the twins in the main plot, and its role in the miraculous redemption of Egeon by both Abbess and Duke at the play's close. Only through a close examination of the play's debts can we understand the role of the assumption, punishment, and forgiveness of debts in this comic drama of self-redemption.

There is hardly one scenario in *The Comedy of Errors* which is not concerned with debts. Egeon's search in the play's romantic frame plot has led to an actual, although apparently meaningless, monetary debt upon which his very life depends. Charged with crossing the forbidden boundary between the hostile cities of Syracuse and Ephesus, Egeon must raise an exorbitant sum of money or die at sundown. Inasmuch as we never learn the cause of the two cities' "mortal and intestine jars," the crime of crossing from Syracuse to Ephesus has no significance for us. And since Egeon has had no means of learning of this law in advance, he is innocent of criminal intent. Although we see no more of Egeon until the play's end, his two sons are repeatedly placed in similar situations of indebtedness.

Antipholus of Syracuse no sooner enters Ephesus than he is led by the device of mistaken identities to believe that he has lost all his money. Having just learned of the precarious state of Syracusans in Ephesus, Antipholus of Syracuse fears that he will incur the debt which, unknown to him, his father has contracted. His financial situation is no sooner clarified than he is mistakenly accused of marital neglect by his sister-in-law, Adriana, who claims of him the obligations of husband to wife. The substitution of marital for monetary indebtedness is significant; it leads to the first possibility of redemption in the play. Antipholus of Syracuse follows Adriana to his brother's home, where he is promised a full dinner and Adriana's forgiveness. The first pattern that emerges, then, is the association of Egeon's monetary debt with his son's potential monetary debt, in turn equated, through replacement, with a mistaken marital debt, which is promptly discharged. That Egeon's debt is acquitted through such acts leads us to question the purely monetary content of the frame plot debt as well as the mistaken nature of the debts in the main plot.

Antipholus of Ephesus's far more troubled route leads from marital to monetary indebtedness, neither of which is resolved until the play's end. We first meet him imploring Angelo, a goldsmith, to manufacture excuses and a gold chain for his wife to explain his absence from home. The acquittal is forestalled and the Ephesian's

indebtedness compounded when he returns home to locked doors, only to discover that another man is paying his marital debts within. In revenge, he asks Angelo to deliver the gold chain to a courtesan with whom he will dine instead. But Angelo mistakenly presents the chain to Antipholus of Syracuse. Presented with the bill, Antipholus of Ephesus refuses payment and is promptly arrested for debt. The horror of indebtedness is underlined by the repeated failure of his attempts at bail. He mistakenly sends his brother's slave to Adriana for bail, and the slave mistakenly brings the money to his own master. His own slave returns not with bail but with the rope that was earlier required of him. Thus Antipholus of Ephesus remains helplessly in bondage, anxiously awaiting gold to redeem him, exactly fulfilling his brother's earlier fears and confronting his father's fate. The pattern here, then, is an exact reversal of Antipholus of Syracuse's misfortunes. Just as the Syracusan twin progresses from fear of actual monetary debt to payment for a mistaken marital debt, so his brother moves from fear of an actual marital debt to payment for a mistaken monetary debt. The play's initial comparison of Antipholus of Syracuse's indebtedness with his father's is also paralleled by the comparison of Antipholus of Ephesus's indebtedness with Egeon's at the play's climax. This complex pattern suggests far more than thematic harmony; it implies the essential equivalence of the three characters and their three debts.

The plot reaches a climax when Antipholus of Syracuse is again placed in debt, this time to the courtesan for the chain promised her by his brother in return for her ring. Monetary and marital debts are joined in this final image of the chain (or alternately, the ring) due a woman. The chain, like the ring, is valued both for its intrinsic monetary value and as a symbol of marital bonds. This final debt suggests the equivalence of the marital and monetary debts accrued throughout the play and hence their general validity. At this point in the plot Antipholus of Ephesus is released from the law only to be bound at home; Antipholus of Syracuse, mistaken for his brother, escapes all debts as he dashes into the Priory, and his brother escapes from his bonds at home as well. All at last meet before the Duke and Egeon, at which point the errors are clarified, Egeon is released from debt, and his family is reunited.

The series of debts of differing content and validity may be reduced to one certain, identifiable debt. The three debtors are equated through the allegorical reading of the twins as symbolic representatives of Egeon. The three debts are equated through the unity of the double plot; if the twins' confrontation of debts in the main plot effectively discharges their father's debt, then they must all be confronting the same debt. This reasoning is further substantiated by the play's curious pattern of redemption, according to which one debt is replaced by, and discharged through, a debt of differing content and validity throughout the play. There is a single, valid debt being paid off here— but what? Marital debts are paid off by money, and marriage discharges monetary debts. Is Egeon's debt marital or monetary? Insofar as all the monetary debts in the play are related to payment for marital debts, we must accord the marit debts priority. The ubiquitous chain which causes such a fuss is Antipholus of Syracuse's present to his wife, an excuse for his absence from home. If the chain cannot be paid for, however, neither can the marital debt be paid; the horror of financial obligations is here directly associated with the horror of unmet marital obligations. Egeon's obscure monetary debt is also associated with specific marital obligations, since he is charged with crossing

from Syracuse to Ephesus, symbolic terms for his own single and marital identities. The debt owed in Ephesus is the debt owed one's wife, the debt that must be confronted if Egeon is to recover his past.

The play's marital debts lead back to Egeon's history and to the theme of identity as the monetary debt cannot. Adriana, the play's spokeswoman for neglected marital obligations, "mistakenly" confronts Antipholus of Syracuse with this debt:

How comes it now, my husband, O, how
comes it,
That thou art then estranged from thyself?
Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
That, undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better part.
Ah, do not tear away thyself from me!
(II. ii. 118-23)

Adriana describes her husband's neglect of her in terms of his own self-estrangement. Their shared marital identity ("thou" or "me") which is "undividable" and "incorporate" has been denied by him in favor of a more attractive single identity ("thyself"). To separate from one's wife, then, is to divide oneself in two, to deny the half of one's self associated with one's wife and to deprive her of her rights in the other half. Yet it is Egeon who has been separated from his wife and hence divided into marital and single identities. It is Egeon's attempts to recover his past, to reintegrate a denied marital identity (Antipholus of Ephesus) left with his wife, that are prevented by Adriana's and the Duke's demands: payment of the remaining, present, single identity (Antipholus of Syracuse) denied Adriana. Hence separation is equated both with self-division and with crime and debt, while reunion is equated with self-integration and the payment of debts.

IV

At the point of death, Egeon is ordered to relate the story of his wanderings. He begins with his married life, and the question of Egeon's "hap" or happiness in his marriage is crucial. It can easily escape notice that the cruel fate which serves to separate husband and wife merely duplicates actions previously ascribed to Egeon's will. Egeon tells us that he was responsible for his separation from his wife, led on by the call of business. He appears to have desired to maintain that divorce, despite his protests to the contrary. He is careful to note that it was his wife, not he, who made provisions for her to follow him (a common fate of heroines in Shakespearean comedy), terms her pregnancy "pleasing punishment," and finally admits that he was unwilling to return home with her: "My wife . . . / Made daily motions for our home return. / Unwilling I agreed" (I. i. 58-60).

That unwillingness may explain Egeon's curiously passive acceptance of obstacles to his return home. When confronted with" A doubtful warrant of immediate death" (I. i. 68) in the form of a ship-tossing tempest,

Egeon tells us it was a fate which he "would gladly have embraced" (I. i. 69), were it not for his family's pleas for rescue. Yet rescue of a different sort is provided, for the storm not only prevents Egeon's return home, but serves to separate husband and wife once again. Fate functions here as a disowned aspect of Egeon's will, undoing his wife's efforts to retrieve her husband and remain with him, and restoring the prior marital separation which Egeon had enforced. The woeful tale of a "helpful ship. . . splitted in the midst" (I. i. 103), of fortune's "unjust divorce" of a family (I. i. 104), of a man "severed from my bliss" (I. i. 118), is a highly elaborated and very well disguised fantasy of a man's desire to cut himself off from his previous life.

Egeon's story is the missing link which turns an arbitrary plot into a meaningfully directed fantasy. His denial of his marital identity and obligations explains his mysterious offense. It explains the use of twin sons, divided selves, to represent him. Finally, it reveals the twins' confrontation of debts throughout the playas a means of working through and resolving that original problem. The validity of the marital debt explains the apparently arbitrary harassment of an innocent man as a meaningful submission of a guilty self to the attacks of its own superego. The action of this punitive conscience is purposive as well. An acknowledgement of marital debts and a submission to self-punishment for their denial are necessary steps towards the resumption of Egeon's marital identity. Egeon,s curious acceptance of harsh Ephesian punishment, and Antipholus of Syracuse's willingness to "entertain the offered fallacy" of being no less than the object of Adriana's sharp lectures on marital neglect and her threats of vengeance, are the first clues to this superego punishment in the play. With the haunting figures of Luce, the Police Officer, and Dr. Pinch, these incarnations of a punitive conscience become grotesque caricatures, nightmarish phantoms. The sense of indebtedness, like Luce herself, is blown out of all proportion. She is the literal embodiment of the monstrous extent of Egeon's guilt and the dreadful capacity of the self for self-punishment.

That such morally punitive action should be transformed into farce is not surprising; farce derives humor from normally unacceptable aggression which is made acceptable through a denial of its cause and effect. The apparently cost-free nature of aggression in farce leads it to be characterized as a comedy of the id, yet if we distinguish between the libidinal transgressions of individual characters, and the punitive aggressive action of plots against those characters, a radical preconception of farce is possible. In *The Comedy of E rrors,* as in most farces, the absurdly punitive aggression of the plot is well-disguised superego aggression. Normally unacceptable aggression is directed against the self, but made acceptable through a denial of its meaning. The actual cause of this play's obsessive punishment— Egeon's marital debt— is displaced; only the mistake, the unexpected confusion of the twins' identities, is blamed for the play's aggressive action. The effect of that aggression is similarly denied. Dromio may complain of his beatings or Antipholus of Ephesus of his treatment by cruel Dr. Pinch, but as these actions are senselessly delivered, so they are senselessly received. No one is harmed and all is forgotten in the flurry of events. The fast pace, complexity, and extraordinary subject matter of the plot further contribute to this general distortion of the sense of reality, vital to our humorous acceptance of unacceptable fantasy.

Through the genre of farce, Shakespeare transformed a private nightmare of self-punishment into a public vehicle for the pleasurable release and gratification of aggressive impulses. Equally important, farce provided an acceptable means of confronting wrongs and a pattern in which forgiveness could be won: a way of mastering, as well as releasing, feelings of guilt and aggression. The play works out the marital debt in its progression from Egeon's separation from his wife, through his son's confrontation of marital debts, to his final release from bondage and reunion with his wife. This pattern is paralleled as Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana move from a state of aversion to marriage, to mutual love and the promise of marriage. Finally, there is a corresponding assumption of guilt for marital mishap on the wives' parts, as both Adriana and Emilia learn to accept, or at least confront, the separation of husband and wife: first, through Emilia's stay at the convent, where, as Adriana complains, the Abbess enacts "the separation of husband and wife"; next, through Emilia's lectures on the sins of possessiveness and jealousy in marriage, which draw from Adriana and admission of guilt. Both episodes work to provide the forgiveness and acceptance of marital separation necessary for the final reunion.

V

In its first recorded performance, on December 28, 1594, *The Comedy of E rrors* was presented as a Christmas play for the customary Christmas revels at Gray's Inn. It was therefore perhaps not surprising to its audience that the play's theme of debts should be contained within the larger and more significant theme of redemption. Indeed, in Aristotelian terms the play may be reduced to the imitation of a single action: to redeem.

The simplest meaning of "to redeem" is "to regain or recover" something lost, whether material or immaterial. This activity is given complex comic treatment in Dromio of Syracuse's parody of learned arguments, in which he proves that there is "no time to recover hair lost by nature" (II. ii. 101-02), and at the climax of the play, where he labors to convince Adriana that "The hours come back!" (IV. ii. 55). The comic treatment of "recovery" is actually related to a more precise sense of "redeem" - "to save time from being lost" and points to the play's major concern with the recovery of what time has stolen, "As if time were in debt" (IV. ii. 57).

Egeon's attempt to recover what has been lost in time, to redeem his past, is thwarted at the very beginning of the play. The reason given by the Duke for his arrest appears arbitrary and unrelated to his struggles:

since the mortal and intestine jars
'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us,
It hath in solemn synods been decreed, Both by the Syracusians and ourse!ves,
To admit no traffic to our adverse towns: Nay more, if any born at Ephesus
Be seen at Syracusian marts and fairs;
Again, if any Syracusian born
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies,
His goods confiscate to the Duke's dispose,
Unless a thousand marks be levied,

To quit the penalty and to ransom him.
(I. i. 11-22)

The jarring towns of Ephesus and Syracuse find their only correlation in this text in the characters of Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse, yet these characters are not enemies. Only as the twins in turn represent Egeon's contradictory personae does this interdict have meaning. The forbidden boundary between the two towns and the penalty for crossing it would seem to represent the precariousness of a split identity. If the Syracusan persona meets the Ephesian, one or the other must be destroyed, for one cannot maintain two identities simultaneously. A way out of this dilemma is provided by the thousand-mark debt, which would seem to permit the coexistence of both identities and their ultimate integration. Yet how?

This brings us to a second sense of the word "redeem" which is really a qualification of the first. "To redeem" literally means "to buy back," to recover only "by payment of the amount due, or by fulfilling some obligation." Egeon's desire to recover his past marital identity demands his recovery of neglected marital obligations as well. He can only recover that identity by confronting those debts; therefore, one can only cross from Syracuse to Ephesus if one is prepared to pay a debt.

Egeon would seem to be prepared— psychologically if not financially. For if the solution to the problem of self-estrangement is for the present single self to confront and identify with the past marital self and its obligations, then this explains why Antipholus of Syracuse enters Ephesus, is reprehended by Adriana for neglected marital obligations, and dutifully returns home with her. Adriana's mistaken identification makes possible a meaningful psychological association. It permits the single self's assumption of a past marital identity while simultaneously maintaining its own identity. It also enables a return to one's wife and the long-due fulfillment of marital obligations. Antipholus of Ephesus is equally identified with his brother; forced upon the past are the trappings of the present, particularly its guilt. So Antipholus of Ephesus is forced into situations of debt for which he is not responsible. Through the device of mistaken identity, Shakespeare makes each twin simultaneously confront both personae; only through their mutual identification is a sense of self-continuity and, hence, self-integration possible. The play's development may be charted as the movement from a rigid, repressive sense of identity in the frame plot, through the main plot's temporary state of madness in which ego boundaries dissolve in encounter, to a new sense of self in which past and present are integrated.

A third, fourth, fifth, and sixth definition of "redeem" may be brought together to explain the climax of the play: "to ransom, liberate, free (a person) from bondage, captivity or punishment"; "to rescue, save, deliver"; "to free from a charge or claim."; and [of God or Christ] "to deliver from sin and its consequences." Adriana releases Antipholus of Ephesus from monetary debt, thereby symbolically freeing him of his marital debt, yet the play refuses to let him off so easily. He is released only to be bound by one Pinch, an exorcist, to undergo a mock purgation of his sins. Although one sort of redemption (to deliver from sin) appears to be substituted for another (to ransom), in another, quite vivid sense, the plot is denying a much longed-for release and merely continuing its

guilty pattern of bondage and punishment. With Pinch's entry, the guilty conscience in control of the punitive plot becomes vividly evident and threatens to run amok. Yet Antipholus of Ephesus's cruel bondage actually serves to emphasize the finality of his ensuing release. The self is finally freed from the superego's sadistic action as Antipholus of Syracuse escapes from his bonds and revenges himself upon this pinching, punishing parasite.

The final release from self-punishment for unmet obligations is paralleled at this point in the play in Antipholus of Syracuse's actions. While his brother is attacking Pinch at home, Antipholus of Syracuse, with his Dromio, enters the marketplace with drawn rapier, frightening away Adriana and the Officer, who have threatened to bind him as well. The final mastery over self-punishment and the attendant release which characterizes this last part of the play are also represented by Antipholus of Syracuse's fortuitous escape into the Priory at this point, where neither the law nor Adriana can get at him.

The escape into the Priory heralds a new sense of release from bondage: a Christian sense of redemption which prevails to the end of the play. Just as Christian redemption is associated with a movement from father to son, from law to mercy, from bondage to freedom, from separation to reunion, and from death to rebirth, so this movement is paralleled in the text and completed at the end of the playas Egeon,s sons are freed from bondage, Egeon's separated family is reunited, he is released from the penalty of death, and that death itself is replaced by his sons' symbolic rebirth. Shakespeare's decision, at the play's close, to change the twins' age from twenty-five to thirty-three, the sacred number of the years of Christ's life, further associates their rebirth with Christian redemption. As Adriana concludes:

Thirty- three years have I but gone in travail
Of you, my sons; and till this present hour
My heavy burden ne'er delivered.
The Duke, my husband, and my children
both,
And you the calendars of their nativity,
Go to a gossips' feast, and go with me;
After so long grief such Nativity!
(I. i 402-08)

Or as the apostle Paul witnesses:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. (Romans 8.22-24)

A final sense of "redeem" "to restore or bring into a condition or state" - is thus exemplified at the play's end. Yet the sons who are freed, united, and adopted by the father in *The Comedy of Errors* are reborn in a secular as well as a religious sense; their

recovery presents a reorganization and rebirth of the self. The play demonstrates how one redeems (recovers) oneself through redeeming (making payment for) one's debts in a complex process whereby one can redeem ("go in exchange for") one's alter-ego, and how one is thereby redeemed (released) from bondage only to share in the fruits of redemption as rebirth.

Shakespeare's association of the process of self-integration WIth Christian redemption may owe less to Elizabethan psychology, or even to the occasion of the play's famous Gray's Inn performance, than to the exigencies of literary form: the Christian morality play provided an obvious model for a symbolic drama of intra-psychic events. Although the morality play parallels are too extensive to be convincingly presented here, let me briefly suggest some connections. The play's grim opening, with a common man in bondage for sin, facing death, and despairing of mercy, presents a conventional portrait of natural, unredeemed man, corresponding to the Mankind figure of the morality plays. The conclusion, in which Egeon's wife emerges from the Priory in time to save him, Egeon is released from bondage, and his sins are forgiven by a merciful judge, completes the morality-patterned action from sin to Christian salvation. The main plot of the twins dramatizes the symbolic, psychological journey of the self towards the goal of redemption, centering on acts of sin and penance, including the conventional temptation and regeneration provided by the contrasting vice (the courtesan) and virtue (Luciana) figures. The twins serve as symbolic equivalents of Egeon's and Everyman's divided, contrary state, and are sharply differentiated to suggest the warring earthly and heavenly elements in Everyman's nature. The Ephesian brother's worldly interest in material and physical pleasures is throughout contrasted with the piety of his younger brother. The neglected marital identity, like the sinful aspect of man, is presented as being in need of redemption, and the single Identity is associated with a spiritual agent, willing to undergo penance to redeeem its fallen counterpart.

The twins, then, can be understood on three different levels: as long-lost brothers in a family, as dissociated parts of the self, and as warring earthly and heavenly elements in the nature of Everyman. The action of the play is similarly threefold. On one level, the play is a conventional romantic comedy moving from separation, through bewilderment, to reunion and harmony of familial members and lovers. On another level, it follows a psychological formula from repression through confrontation to an integration of parts of the self. Finally, on a third level, the play's action follows a morality pattern from self-division and bondage, through penance, to redemption. . . .

A fourth reading of the twins and of the action of the play is provided by one of Shakespeare's sources: Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The story of the apostle Paul has long been accepted as a model for the play. No other source includes such elements as years of wandering, a shipwreck, the Aegean (Egeon?) and Adriatic (Adriana?) seas, Syracuse, Corinth, Ephesus and its demonic magic, revenge taken upon evil exorcists, and a conflict between law and mercy, between bondage and redemption. The significance of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, however, has yet to be noted fully. The letter's primary message, for which Paul is being held prisoner, is a call for the union of two hostile nations, Gentiles and Jews, in the body of Christ:

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. . .. For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles (Ephesians 2.14-3.1)

The imagery which Paul uses— of the creation of "one new man in place of the two," of one body in which two hostile people are joined in peace and harmony may have suggested to Shakespeare the idea of using Paul's story to depict the unity of two hostile identities within one man, one body. Shakespeare retains the two hostile nations in Syracuse and Ephesus, and joins them in the body of one common father, Egeon, by equating the two nations with the two sons and equating the two sons, in turn, with two aspects of Egeon. Thus Egeon is imprisoned for trying to unite the separated sons or selves named after these nations instead of, like Paul, the nations themselves. Interestingly enough, Paul's letter has never been cited as a source in this context, despite the fact that no other source for the play has been found which connects the frame p lot of the prisoner and the main plot of the separate brothers whom the prisoner has sought to unite. No other source presents a traveller imprisoned for crossing a "dividing wall of hostility," seeking to redeem the separated stranger, attempting to "create in himself one new man in the place of the two." Finally; no other source also associates the denial of marital identity with self-estrangement- or, stated more positively, identifies one's union with and love of one's wife with the unity and love of oneself: "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. . .. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'" (Ephesians 5.28 31). Here, as in *The Comedy of Errors,* external relationships are conceived of as internalized; one's wife is envisioned as a part of oneself, whom one rejects at the cost of self-hatred and self-division.

VI

The Comedy of Errors is a surprisingly rich and complex comedy, working simultaneously on various levels and in various directions. Perhaps the best way, finally, to contain the play is to summarize briefly its view of identity. Actually, the play offers us at least three different conceptions of identity. Two of these definitions correspond to the contradictory configurations of the self-embodied by the twins, while the final definition is one that resolves and integrates the former two.

The most prominent conception of identity in the play is Adriana's. According to her view, one's sense of identity is dependent upon significant relationships in one's past. What we would call the self is a composite of internalized others or relationships with others. As a sum of identifications with others, identity appears to be purely interpersonal, fixed and irreversible:

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. 124-28)

Yet Adriana's view of identity only partially applies to Egeon's quest. Antipholus of Ephesus, the long-lost married brother, the long-denied marital identity, is a part of Egeon which must be accepted, yet it is only one aspect of a more complex self-image. The flaw in Adriana's argument is manifest in her language. According to Adriana, there is no "thyself," no sense of identity separable from one's identification with others. Yet her language simultaneously acknowledges a self-separable from her, just as the play acknowledges an Antipholus of Syracuse separate and different from an Antipholus of Ephesus.

The contradiction in Adriana's language is the conflict of the play: the simultaneous and interdependent existence of two mutually exclusive self-concepts. Egeon's identity is not simply the sum of his past identifications with others; it is equally an agency capable of some autonomy. Antipholus of Syracuse is also an essential part of Egeon, born in Egeon's denial of the past, nurtured and sustained apart from home and wife. While this single Syracusan identity is bound to Egeon's former self, it nonetheless remains radically different from it. And, while Egeon is willing to hazard this new-forged persona to retrieve and reintegrate his former self, he is unwilling, if not unable, to abandon it. He explains his delay in seeking the son left behind, "whom whilst I labored of a love to see, / I hazarded the loss of whom I loved" (I. i. 130-31), and then relates how he followed Antipholus of Syracuse in the boy's search for his twin.

It would be as foolish to assert that Egeon's identity is found through the actual restoration of past relationships with others as it would be to assert that it is found in their denial. Egeon has neither set out in search of his beloved Emilia, his "bliss," nor does he mention ever having a desire to do so, despite the twenty-five years that they have spent in apparently needless separation. When Emilia finally does make an appearance at the play's end, Egeon's words to her are a request for his son. It is only Antipholus of Ephesus that he "labored of a love to see," and only himself (Antipholus of Ephesus) that he hazarded himself (Antipholus of Syracuse) for. Further, were Egeon truly to find himself in the renewal of past relationships, then this would be tantamount to denying his single, Syracusan identity and equating the resolution of the identity crisis with its annihilation. Rather, Antipholus of Syracuse loses himself to find himself *in relationship to* his past, not in total, self-destructive acquiescence to the past. Egeon seeks his identity in the relationship of his present to his past, not in the denial or elimination of either.

In its most basic sense, identity is the perception of self-continuity: the identification and integration of various self-concepts. Shakespeare employs the comic formula of mistaken identity ill *Comedy of Errors* to resolve a problem of self-dissociation. In the confusion of the Ephesian with the Syracusan twin, Egeon's past and present, marital and single personae are united. By the play's conclusion change is perceived as growth instead of self-division, and duality and contradiction give way to self-continuity. The twin Dromios conclude the comedy with a humorous re-enactment of the play's conflict

and solution. Debating upon the subject of which brother should rightly exit through the stage door first, they finally come to an agreement: for the future, they decide, the two will "go hand in hand, not one before another" (1. i. 427-28).

Critical Essay #3

Source: "Identity and Representation in Shakespeare," in *EIH,* Vol. 49, No.2, Summer, 1982, pp. 345-46.

[In the following brief excerpt, Weller explores haw Antipholus of Syracuse ultimately fails in his search far the "confirmation and completion of his identity" in his twin brother. Not only is their reunion "diminished" by the second pair of twins, the Dromios, but more importantly, the "priority of corporate identities" takes precedence over personal identities. Weller uses Paul's letter to the Ephesians to show his solidarity subsumes selfhood.]

. . .. The problems which the discovery, or recovery, of the self may raise announce themselves very conspicuously in *The Comedy of Errors,* in which one twin voyages the Mediterranean in search of the other, the brother and mirror image from whom he has been separated since infancy. The object of his search is also, one might say, himself, refracted through otherness, or a figure who is at once self and its representation. However, Antipholus of Syracuse seeks the confirmation and completion of his identity in the very form which in other fictions has figured as a subversion of the self, a *Doppelganger.* If the label is too redolent of nineteenth-century German romanticism, the phenomenon and the psychological dislocations it implies are less historically specific. Not every encounter of twins in Renaissance texts questions the integrity and uniqueness of the self, but unlike Viola and Sebastian, Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus cannot be said to be complementary personalities. The union of male and female attributes which is doubly signaled by the weddings and the reunion of the twins at the end of *Twelfth Night* is absent from *The Comedy of Errors.* Either each Antipholus is already self-sufficient, or their face-to-face encounter, a multiplication of nullities, can accomplish nothing. The self-important sense of metaphysical crisis which the brothers might feel at their moment of mutual encounter is diminished by the repetition of their situation between their twinned servants, the Dromios, who tilt uncanniness towards comedy.

It is not, however, only the doubling of the deuterogamists which tugs against the notion of a wholly distinct personal existence. The familial embrace with which the community of Ephesus eventually receives and reassembles the scattered members of Egeon's household intimates the priority of corporate identities over the single and limited life of the individual consciousness. Such union and reunion is of course a romance motif, but it is strengthened in the Christian context which both the play's allusive texture and the events of its resolution imply, since the supranational community of the church, as constituted by the participation of all Christians in a common creed rather than by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, is not only the most inclusive and enveloping form of fellowship which Shakespeare knew, but the one which least particularizes its members. Within it, each person belongs not as a whole but as a part. To be a member of a family or even of a society is to accept some constraints on one's autonomy, to be a member of a body is to have no true possibility of autonomy. "For we are members of [Christ's] bodie, of his flesh, and of his bones." St. Paul's language in the Epistle to the Ephesians

reawakens the metaphorical sense of membership, atrophied in common usage, but for Paul the language is more than metaphorical. The continuity of our bodies with Christ's is physical; as the gloss of the Geneva Bible points out, we "are not onely joyned to him by nature, but also by the communion of substance, through the holie Gost and by faith: the seale and testimonie thereof is the Supper of the Lord."

The point, here at least, should be not so much that Shakespeare was attentive to the intricacies of Pauline discourse or even that he performed an extraordinary intertextual exercise in conflating the concerns of works as disparate as Plautus' *Menaechmi* and St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Rather, in Paul's exposition of the Christian community Shakespeare found a version of selfhood so overshadowed by the imperatives of solidarity that it represents a complete alternative and challenge to the selfhood which the character in search of definition hopes to achieve. Antipholus of Syracuse is, or hopes to be, literally self-regarding- he wants to be able to look at himself as mirrored in his brother.

Measured by a Christian standard, he may be morally self-regarding as well. . . .

Critical Essay #4

Source: "The Nature of Our People: Shakespeare's City Comedies," in *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare,* University of Georgia Press, 1985, pp. 178219.

[In the following excerpt, Paster argues that "only by attending to the nature of the urban environment. . . can the play's deep concern with the ambiguities of personal and civic identity be come fully revealed." She explores this idea primarily through commentary on Aegeon and his twin sans; specifically, how their personal identities are called into question in the social environment in which they find themselves.]

. . . . *The Comedy of Errors, The Merchant of V enice* , and *Measure for Measure* come together by presenting urban environments faced with fundamental dilemmas, paradoxical situations whose implications call the idea of any normative urban community into severe question. In each, the city is confronted with the self-imposed necessity of enforcing a law whose consequences are so clearly inhuman that they can only make mockery of a city's reason for being. The particular logic of the comic action appears to require the city to dismantle itself, either by enforcing a monstrous law or by refusing to. Although the procedure for resolving the comic impasse differs from play to play, the end result is always to reconstitute the city for a greater inclusiveness largely achieved by means of redefinition and conversion. . .

In the three comedies that are the subject of this chapter . . . the social implications of individual behavior and circumstance are everywhere to be found, even in *The Comedy of Errors.* One of the first issues to be broached in all three plays is the noticeable tension between social identity and individual experience. Particularly apparent in *Errors* is the potential conflict between two different, separately valued kinds of identity. The first of them is clearly historical and public: a captive man is led onstage by his enemies to receive his sentence. The unnamed Syracusan merchant seems to be a political victim, forfeit for belonging to the wrong group. The relentless symmetry of this twin-filled play starts here, where the Syracusan citizen finds an enemy duke bent on using him to complete a pattern begun by "the rancorous outrage of your Duke / To merchants, our well-dealing countrymen" (1.1.6-7). No other identity but the citizenship that dooms him (as it would doom his mirror image, the Ephesian caught by a duke in Syracuse) would seem relevant here. Yet the duke's curiosity about a man who would trade life at home for death abroad allows the merchant to construct a powerful personal identity that so commands sympathy and pity that the desire to kill the stranger is transformed into the desire to save a fellow man. Egeon's implausible romantic story of shipwreck and separation serves not only structurally as exposition but also thematically as the creation of a personal identity that throws the predominance of his civic identity into question. The two identities could hardly be more distinct, the one betokening anonymity, hostility, and death and the other individuality, sympathy, and life.

Not only is the emotional disparity of the two identities troubling in this context; so also is the duke's obligation to divorce sympathy from judgment and see citizenship as identity. Egeon will not return to the stage until well into act 5, but we do not forget his

situation. . . because his brief ambivalent experience of the two faces of Ephesus is played out in full by his twin sons. One finds himself an outcast in his own city, the relationships comprising his identity in collapse, and the other finds a mysteriously rich civic identity where none exists. . . .

By complicating social identity so early in all three plays, Shakespeare highlights the relation of the individual to a specific social environment. More important, perhaps, the environment in each case seems to contain a hazard- as yet unclear- from which the characters will not escape. Thus the wandering Antipholus no sooner steps onstage in Ephesus than he is warned to conceal his citizenship. In *The Merchant of V enice* , imagery of risk and jeopardy is all the more ominous because of Antonio and Bassanio's expressions of confidence in self and Fortune. The duke in *Measure for Measure* withdraws from his city in a haste so precipitate that it "leaves unquestion'd / Matters of needful value" (1.1.54-55). In each case, characters register a marked degree of interest either in the nature of the urban environment they are about to experience or in the power that they feel able to exercise over it. When Antonio makes no question of his power to raise money for Bassanio, we expect danger.

Admittedly, interest in their environment is not unusual in dramatic characters. What is unusual in Shakespeare is that these environments are so distinctly urban. Shakespeare insists upon the mercantile atmosphere of Ephesus and Venice; he locates the critical hazard initially in aspects of trade. A law barring traffic between trading towns like Ephesus and Syracuse is cruel and unnatural to ongoing civic life, especially when the trade war interrupts a private need as compelling as that of Egeon and the traveling Antipholus to locate their family. The irony of Antonio's mercantilism in *The Merchant* of *Venice* is that it prevents him from lending to Bassanio directly (with his fortunes all at sea, Antonio has a liquidity problem) but enables him to stand security. Antonio's combination of strength and vulnerability expresses the nature of money and love. It also underscores how central Antonio's character as loving merchant is to the dynamic of Venice. And it is his opposite, Shylock (another combination of strength and vulnerability), who understands this in his ironic wordplay with Bassanio over the nature of Antonio's goodness: "my meaning in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me that he is sufficient" (1.3.13-15). *Measure for Measure,* as we have seen, replaces the localizing detail of the other two plays with a definition of the city as idea first, rather than as place. But the play also sharply limits the individuality as presented in the first scene to that which is demanded by society- defined as "the nature of our people, / Our city's institutions" and its need to be governed. In this play, the essential relation between self and city comes before there is any dramatically presented inner life in self or city to make that relation problematical. The valid test of Angelo's mettle can only come, as the duke knows, with direct experience of power. For us, as for Angelo, this transfer of power makes possible a direct experience of the city in 1.2.

In each play, then, the city becomes not just a resonant context for the central comic experience of the characters onstage, but an essential agent and object of change in that experience. Only by attending to the nature of the urban environment in *The Comedy of Errors* can the play's deep concern with the ambiguities of personal and civic

identity become fully revealed. The "restless, schizoid condition" of the play's characters is first a feature of their environment. Thus, in seeing two Egeons where only one exists, Ephesus betrays its profound dualism, a communal dualism given literal, individual embodiment when the wandering twins step onstage.

The wandering Antipholus's first moments onstage also suggest the potential doubleness of Ephesus, for even as he is told of its dangerousness for him, he accepts a bag of gold- the gesture emblematic of the commercial exchanges at the heart of urban life. More importantly, by characterizing Ephesus as alternately welcoming and hostile, as home and alien city, Shakespeare associates the city with the closely related archetypal motifs of the pursuing double and of fraternal rivalry. Our awareness of the solution waiting at the denouement helps to distance us from the violence in the play and to see it as farce, but it should not prevent us from recognizing in the action sophisticated literary expression of primitive fears about shadows, reflections, resemblances, and name sharing which Otto Rank has given classic psychoanalytic treatment in *The Double.* Certainly the well-known Pauline associations of Ephesus with witchcraft suggests the potential of the action for terror. The relevance of such archetypes- particularly the fraternal rivalry that we have already come to connect with the idea of the city- allows us to see how Shakespeare uses the farcical action of the doubled twins not only as a paradigm of personal self- fulfillment in family reunion, but also as a paradigm of the radical connectedness of social experience, an ideal relation of self and city which gets tested in the two later plays.

In complementary ways, both Antipholuses have incomplete relationships with the outside world here represented so ambivalently by Ephesus. In the wandering twin, melancholy subjectivity is so overpowering that it displaces social identity, causing him to perceive himself as invisible in Ephesus. The quintessential tourist, he anticipates a unilateral experience of Ephesus because he cannot imagine himself an object of Ephesian experience:

I'll View the manners of the town,
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings,
And then return and sleep within mine inn.
I will go lose
myself,
And wander up and down to view the city.
[1.2.12-14;30-31]

His presumption of invisibility is particularly comic given the experience of his father. Antipholus is even more visible than Egeon, although not as the alien he feels himself to be. It is ironic that Ephesus will claim to know him at a time when he fears to have confounded himself. And it is even more ironic- virtually the comic expression of a kind of social revenge-that Ephesus's great gift of mother, brother, and father can come to him only after the city compels him to experience a complex of inexplicable social relationships. Significantly; the order of those imposed relationships moves outward from the domestic world to the world of commerce, so that the wandering Antipholus's experience has the effect of reconstructing from inside out a coherent yet persistently

mysterious social self. At first the city threatens his one film relationship with his servant- when the other Dromio calls him home to dinner. His experience of Ephesus begins, far more than our own, *in medias res:* "The capon bums," he is told, "the pig falls from the spit; / The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell" (1.2.44-45.) His intended view of public Ephesus- manners, traders, buildings becomes a concrete view of private Ephesus; he changes from spectator to participant. His melancholy egotism receives its first real jolt when he encounters Adriana, claiming him as her husband. The weakness of his cognitive foundations and his sense of formlessness or invisibility cause the wandering Antipholus to accede to the domestic identity being thrust upon him. His civic identity as a Syracusan provides no advantage in Ephesus. And his personal formlessness can provide no protection from a city whose undeniable solidity inheres in the homely picture of burnt capons and cold meat, the powerful conviction of the outraged wife, and her uncanny recognition of that emblem of personal form- his name. As invisibility gives way to visibility, his sense of firm reality recedes:

"To me she speaks, she moves me for her theme;
What, was I married to her in my dream?" (2.2.181-82).

The resemblance of this scene to that first encounter in *Twelfth Night* between Sebastian and Olivia should clarify Shakespeare's greater interest in social nuance here. Social identity matters deeply in Ephesus, as Egeon finds out in discovering the consequences of being a stranger. His son begins to discover the consequences of being a citizen. He could not remain the invisible onlooker in Ephesus because he looks like an Ephesian; he is a twin. But being a twin in Ephesus is virtually a symbolic shorthand for existence in the city of man. Being in Ephesus not only means having a brother, but- such are this city's powers of bounty and intimacy- having his home, his wife, his community, and his dinner too. In this city one cannot take a brother's place without displacing him and those who, like the other Dromio and the two merchants, move in his company. The immediate effect of bringing the wandering Antipholus home to dinner is to lock out the resident Antipholus and to begin the gradual destruction of civic identity in him.

The comic power of the scene at the locked door derives not only from the ancient joke of cuckoldry as is the case with the parallel scene in the *Amphitruo* but from its flirtation with incest. The picture of a man locked out of his house and ready to break the doors down is an emblem of domestic civil war. The picture of a man ready to break down his doors because his place within has been usurped by his brother is an emblem of civic self-annihilation, the city-as-family symbolically dismantling itself with the twin disloyalties of wife and brother. The scene presents an image of archetypal fraternal rivalry as clear in its broadly comic way as the opening scene of *Titus Andronicus* where the imperial brothers challenge each other outside the gates of Rome for the right to rule within. Here, although the house certainly contains the possibility of incestuous usurpation, it also contains Luciana who stands for sexual inhibition, the peaceful resolution of conflict, and the continuing maturation of the family.

Furthermore, Shakespeare does not bring the two brothers together until their separate experiences approach equivalent portions of gain, loss, and ensuing disorientation.

Although the alien Antipholus has lost a community in the search for a brother, the resident Antipholus has constructed a civic identity without firm familial foundations, without knowing he is a brother. For him, citizenship through marriage in Ephesus must always threaten incest. Thus it is significant that the persuasion the merchant Balthasar uses on the Ephesian Antipholus not to break in should so explicitly make use of the powerful social weapon of shame- the withdrawal of community approval even into the afterlife:

A vulgar comment will be made of it;
And that supposed by the common rout
Against your yet ungalled estimation,
That may with foul intrusion enter in,
And dwell upon your grave when you are dead.
[3.1.100-04]

The resident Antipholus is sensitive to the twin threats of slander and scandal as his twin, having no stake in the regard of this society, would not be. The humiliation of the resident Antipholus, moreover, has been both sexual and social: being barred from his own door has not only revealed him semipublicly as a possible cuckold, but it also has made a mockery of his expansive gestures of warm hospitality to the two merchants. Psychologically, his decision to entertain his guests at the Porpentine is both understandable and realistic, as is his bravado gesture of turning over to the courtesan there the gold chain promised to his wife. His masculine self-image, in some question due to his need to invent stories to defuse her shrewishness, requires compensation for the rebuff it has suffered.

From this point of view, the courtesan plays a key role. The two sisters within the house of Antipholus represent two potential unions for his twin- an ideal one with Luciana and an archetypally destructive one with Adriana. The courtesan completes the pattern by providing the resident Antipholus with an unlawful sexual partner and an alternative, illicit household. The interconnectedness of social life in Ephesus is confirmed: locked out of his house, Antipholus occupies another. Refused by his wife, he turns to a whore- a contrast emblematic of rival cities.

It becomes increasingly evident that the presence of twins has consequences not only for the twins themselves but for the meaning of experience in the interdependent social system in which they move. The economy of structure in the play, in other words, is dramatic and social at the same time since the language and actions of everyone in Ephesus undergo divergent subjective interpretations whose coherence is known only to us. And, even for us, at times, the mirror experiences of the twins reveal an uncanny convergence of action and interpretation: thus the attraction of the wandering twin to the unmarried Luciana reflects a providential loyalty to his brother but she reproaches him for a domestic disloyalty of which his brother is in fact guilty. Luciana attempts to persuade the wanderer of die shame of open disaffection and the wisdom of duplicity:

'Tis double wrong to truant with your bed,
And let her read it in thy looks at board;

Shame hath a bastard fame, well managed;
Ill deeds is doubled with an evil word.
[3.2.17-20]

The stranger cannot be shamed as the husband could. There is broad humor and social irony in this recommendation to incest, especially since the real cause of coldness to one sister is warmth of feeling to the other. The love of the stranger is thus an act of involuntary social beneficence, a removal of the threat of incest that can only appear like madness to Luciana: "What, are you mad that you do reason so?" (3.2.53).

Thus the escalating social effects of the phenomenon of twins are first felt within the household of sisters and servants. But the ongoing life of the city quickly becomes involved in what is, in effect, a social emergency as well as a personal one. One aspect of this social emergency is, of course, factitious: differentiating the twins will point up the perversity of separating Ephesians from Syracusans; the self-protection of Ephesus will turn out to be self-denial. In a more immediate and practical sense, however, differentiating the twins is critical because civic relationships, like marital ones, depend upon the congruence of appearance and reality, upon the possibility of taking one's neighbors at face value. The multiplication of selves which threatens incest and fraternal rivalry within the family threatens the destruction of credit and the collapse of trade in the city. What the twins experience as metamorphosis, the merchants in Ephesus understand as the betrayal of trust. Indeed the two themes of metamorphosis and betrayal begin to come together at the end of act 3, when the Syracusan master and servant articulate for each other their sense of transformation at the hands of women and plan to escape or be "guilty of self-wrong" (3.2.162). The promise of dangerous enchantment which Antipholus associates with Ephesus in general and with Luciana in particular becomes tangible in the mysterious offer by Angelo the Jeweler of a chain for which he refuses to accept payment. The moment is one of high comedy not only because of the consequences that we can foresee but also because it so blithely contradicts the probabilities of urban existence the defensive stratagems that the wandering Antipholus, like other city dwellers, had accepted as axiomatic:

What I should think of this I cannot tell;
But this I think, there's no man is so vain
That would refuse so fair an offer'd chain.
I see a man here needs not live by shifts
When in the streets he meets such golden
gifts.
[3.2.178-82]

Another source of comedy is the contrast between the traveling twin's growing bewilderment about this city and our own increasingly firm sense of the ordinariness of life in Ephesus-a sense that the growing disorder of acts 4 and 5 does nothing, really, to disturb. The interconnectedness and intimacy of the city does harbor a potential for destructive fraternal rivalry. And the underside of its apparent generosity to the alien twin may be a form of possessiveness: Adriana will not let him go. But we have already seen a rather idealized version of bourgeois fraternity in the exchange of courtesies

between the resident Antipholus and other merchants in act 3. Concern for Antipholus's reputation prompts the merchant Balthasar's advice that he return home in the quiet of evening to find out why a wife of "her wisdom, / Her sober virtue, years and modesty"

(3.1.89-90) locked him out. Antipholus attributes the jeweler Angelo's failure to meet him at the Porpentine with the chain to concern for his marriage: "Belike you thought our love would last too long / If it were chain'd together, and therefore came not" (4.1.25-26). Social experience in Ephesus also exhibits an almost perfect paradigm of trade, a bourgeois tidiness about debt, credit, and reputation which we do not find in Venice, for instance, and which only the extraordinary duplication of Antipholuses can disrupt. Angelo owes to the second merchant "even just the sum" (4.1.7) he expects to receive from Antipholus. The second merchant has refrained from importuning his debtor, "nor now I had not, but that I am bound / To Persia, and want guilders for my voyage" (4.1.3-4). The intensity of the quarrel that erupts between Antipholus and the jeweler is a measure of the sense of personal betrayal on both sides and of the authority of the mercantile code which both believe the other to have violated. They too did not need to live by shifts in Ephesus.

Ironically the civic importance and prestige of the resident Antipholus and the normality of Ephesus are clearest when the fortunes of the brothers are completely transposed and they themselves are disoriented. Just after the resident brother has been hauled off to the prison that the Syracusan twin is legally forfeit to, the wandering Antipholus attests with wonder to the fullness of his Ephesian brother's civic life:

There's not a man I meet but doth salute me
As if I were their well-acquainted friend,
And everyone doth call me by my name:
Some tender money to me, some invite me,
Some other give me thanks for kindnesses,
Some offer me commodities to buy.
[4.3.1-6]

His Dromio's punning description of the arresting officer- "not that Adam that kept the paradise, but that Adam that keeps the prison" (16-17)-is more appropriate to the antithetical experiences of the two brothers who seem to be moving about in two different cities. One city arrests you for reasons unknown, another keeps giving you something for nothing. This is the largest symmetry of the play: one city has become two, two brothers have become one. All differences between the twins-that one is a Syracusan, the other an Ephesian; that one is a melancholy loner, the other an eminent, sociable, married, and impatient Rotarian collapse in the face of the inability of the community to distinguish them. In the course of the action, however, the effect of the identity of the brothers is paradoxically to intensify their sense of personal distinctiveness- even to the point of paranoia. The Syracusan twin, imagining himself the victim of a supernatural conspiracy, perceives the courtesan as the devil: "Satan avoid, I charge thee tempt me not" (4.3.46). His brother rages at his wife: "Dissembling harlot, thou art false in all, / And art confederate with a damned pack / To make a

loathsome abject scorn of me" (4.4.99-101). For both twins now, the treachery of the city seems to be symbolized by the falseness of its women, strumpets all.

Shakespeare's point here is partly, of course, to suggest the fragility of normative social life and the essential cooperation of the community at large in objectifying individual self-perception with coherent civic identity. Also, the image of two brothers perceived as one in one city experienced as two expresses, as an idea of the city, the different kinds of self embodied in the two brothers- the one brother feeling incomplete without his twin and losing, in him, a whole city; the other feeling complete, not "twinned," thanks to the customary esteem of Ephesus yet in truth crucially deprived in a way that brings disorder to the whole community. Their antithetical experiences- of inexplicable bounty and recognition on the one hand and inexplicable shame and persecution on the other- bring both to the point of warfare against the city. The crisis between the individual and the city necessitates appeal to higher authorities represented for the stranger twin by the universal maternal sanctuary of the Abbey, for the resident twin by the duke to whom he owes his Ephesian citizenship. It is only partly true to say, as R A. Foakes has argued, that the final scene before the Abbey reveals the participants all engaged in a private ordering of experience. What so defeats the characters and the duke as well is that they have all sought corroboration from the community for their experiences and have partly found it. Subjectivity and objectivity cannot achieve a reconciliation because the ordinary source of confirmation in comedy- the sense of the comic community- has broken down. And this has happened not because the community has been excluded from the experience of the central protagonists, but because it has been so involved.

The play finally reveals the inevitable participation of community in the most private of searches, when the only thing sought is the specific mirror of self in a twin. Here the self finds a fuller mirror in the city at large and twinship becomes not a destructive aberration that threatens all Ephesus but an intensified image of the new communal norm- a civic fraternity in which even Syracusans belong. There is no more geography at the play's close, no more Corinth or Epidamnum, no more

Syracuse and Ephesus. In its enemy city, Ephesus has recognized a twin. And the twins, by finding a family, turn the whole city of Ephesus into a feast of gossips. Ephesus, the city of man, becomes a secular image of the promise which St. Paul makes to the Corinthians: "now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). . . .

Critical Essay #5

Russ McDonald and Jack A. Vaughn argue that we should take the play for what it is- a farce. McDonald in particular notes that "farce" and "Shakespeare" need not be mutually exclusive terms. Vaughn argues that although the play should be classified as a farce, it is not a "simple" one because Aegeon's framing story gives the play depth. J. Dennis Huston and Robert Ornstein stop short of classifying the playas an outand-out farce. Huston refers to the playas "nearly unmitigated farce," tempering his classification by noting the elements of tragedy (Aegeon's story) and romance (Aegeon's separation from Aemilia and his other son). Ornstein argues that Shakespeare adheres almost exclusively to Plautus's play even though he begins *The Comedy of Errors* with Aegeon's tragic tale.

Stephen Greenblatt, Ralph Berry, Maurice Charney, and David Bevington all propose taking an evaluation of the play's genre beyond farce. Greenblatt, Charney, and Bevington all take note of the play's romance elements that transcend farce- for example, the courting of Luciana by Antipholus of Syracuse and the end of separation in the reunions in the closing scene of the play. Berry argues that if the play were a farce only, it would be simply a story of mistaken identities. The play is also a comedy, as it examines how the characters react to the farcical situations in which they find themselves.

Source: "Fear of Farce," in *"Bad" Shakespeare: Re valuations of the Shakespeare Canan,* edited by Maurice Chamey, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988, pp. 77-89.

[In the following excerpt, McDonald first surreys previous criti cism on the play regarding its classification as a farce and its positron in Shakespeare's canon. He notes that critics have tended to "elevate" the play abovethe "vulgar" level of farce in explaining its meaning (although its farcical elements are obu00$) because it is sometimes perceived as a source of "embarrass ment" in the canon. McDonald then examines "how meaning comes about in farce" through the play's "theatrical complexity," concluding that the play should be examined for what it is - a farce and a "source of wonder. "]

Zeus's sexual lapses notwithstanding, gods are not supposed to be indecorous, and a characteristic of modern Bardolatry has been its insistence on Shakespeare's artistic dignity, particularly his attachment to the approved dramatic forms. The popular image of Shakespeare as the embodiment of high culture, the author of *Harriet* and certain other tragedies, as well as a very few weighty comedies, is merely a version of a bias that also, if less obviously, afflicts the academy. What I am talking about is a hierarchy of modes, or, to put it another way, genre snobbery. That tragedy is more profound and significant than comedy is a prejudice that manifests itself in and out of the Shakespeare Establishment: in the impatience of undergraduates who, taking their first class in Shakespeare, regard the comedies and histories as mere appetizers to the main course, the tragedies; in Christopher Sly's equation of "a community" with "a

Christmas gambol or a rumbling trick"; in the disdain of the tourist at the Barbican box office who, finding *Othello* sold out, refuses a ticket to *The Merry Wives of Windsor;* in the decision of that Athenian student to preserve his notes from Aristotle's lecture on tragedy but not to bother with the one on comedy.

If there is a hierarchy of modes, there is also a hierarchy within modes: *de casibus* tragedy is less exalted than Greek, for example. So it is with the kinds of comedy, and the play to which I shall address myself, *The Comedy of Errors,* rests safely in the lowest rank. Farce is at the bottom of everyone's list of forms, and yet Shakespeare is at the top of everyone's list of authors. Thus, the problem I mean to examine is generated by competing hierarchies. Most literary critics have little occasion to think about farce, and those who concern themselves chiefly with the creator of texts such as *Macbeth* and *Coriolarius* do their best to avoid the form. For many years the earliest comedies were treated unapologetically as farces and Shakespeare was praised, if mildly, for his skill at contriving such brilliant and pleasing trifles. But the need to preserve his association with higher things has led in the last three or four decades to a revision of this opinion. It seems inappropriate that the cultural monument known as Shakespeare should have anything to do with a popular entertainment that we connect with the likes of the Marx brothers (Groucho and Harpo, not Karl and Moritz). Criticism resists a Shakespeare capable of wasting his time on such a trivial form.

My purpose is to suggest that Shakespeare could be "bad," but my definition differs somewhat from those of most of the other contributors to this volume. Rather than re-examine texts that may have been overvalued or seek to locate weaknesses in dramatic technique, I shall argue that Shakespeare's taste was not invariably elevated and that certain plays are less "significant" than others (or at least that they signify different things in different ways). By addressing myself to what is and is not considered "Shakespearean," I claim an interest in one of the fundamental issues of this collection: canonicity. A work like *The Comedy of Errors* must be deformed if it is to conform to that category known as Shakespearean comedy-as a farce it is non-canonical and such misrepresentation demands a rejoinder.

The first part of this essay surveys the evasions that critics have devised for treating Shakespeare's efforts in farce, with concentration' on the dodges applied to *Errors.* The remainder, a straightforward study of that play's theatrical action, proposes to identify the playwright's strategies for the production of meaning in farce. In light of the concerns of this volume, to contend that *Errors* succeeds not as an early version of a romantic comedy or as an allegory of marriage but as an out-and-out farce is risky, for such an argument looks like yet another defense of the artistic experiments of a novice and thus seems to exemplify the very Bardolatry that many of these essays vigorously dispute. In fact, however, my aim is to establish Shakespeare's delight in and commitment to a dramatic form that has become infra dig. To recognize such a bent is to augment our sense of Shakespeare's actual range. We whitewash our subject by refusing to admit his attraction to farce and declining to explore his talent for it.

I

Suspicion of farce has fostered two main critical maneuvers, here summarized by Barbara Freedman: "The first is represented by that group of critics who know that Shakespeare never wrote anything solely to make us laugh and so argue that Shakespeare never wrote farce at all. . .. The more popular critical approach, however, is to agree that Shakespeare wrote farce, but to consider *Errors* (as well as Shakespeare's other predominantly farcical plays) to be nonsensical *insofar* as they are farce." To begin with the first group, its members are undaunted by Shakespeare's demonstrable choice of classical or Italian farces for source material: in such cases he may be seen "transcending the farce which a lesser writer might have been satisfied to make," and thus the form is mentioned so that it can be dismissed.

The most familiar and pernicious tactic of those who would dissociate Shakespeare from the vulgar category is to discuss the early plays as precursors of the mature style, as seedbeds, that is, for ideas and methods that will flower in the later comedies and even in the tragedies. (In fact, hothouses would make a better simile, since the ideas and methods are found blooming in the early play itself by the time the critic finishes.) A. C. Hamilton, for example, asserts that *The Comedy of Errors* provides a foundation for the later comedies by revealing "their basis in the idea that life upon the order of nature has been disturbed and must be restored and renewed through the action of the play." Hamilton's reticence to detect inchoate forms of particular dramatic themes from later works is not shared by Peter G. Phialas, who identifies "certain features of structure and theme, and even tone, which anticipate significant elements of Shakespeare's romantic comedies." Specifically, *"The Comedy of Errors,* though in the main concerned with the farcical mistakings of identity, touches briefly a theme of far greater significance, the ideal relationship of man and woman." This anticipatory practice amounts to reading the career backward: a play *is* conditioned by what follows it, and its distinctive qualities may be underrated or deformed. The prophetic approach tends to manifest itself in and to merge with the second defensive strategy.

Put simply, this way of thinking involves deepening the farces, exposing their profundity. It has become the preferred means of protecting Shakespeare against his own immature tastes or the vulgar demands of his audience, and it has attracted some eloquent and powerful advocates. Derek Traversi, for example, unites the two critical defenses, seeing *Errors* as both serious in itself and important in its tonal prefiguration of the later work He emphasizes "the deliberate seriousness of the story of Aegeon, which gives the entire action a new setting of gravity, a sense of tragic overtones which, elementary though it may be in expression, is yet not without some intimation of later and finer effects." In other words, the play is profound but not too profound.

That the dignifiers succeeded some time ago in making this serious position canonical is apparent in the following passage from R. A. Foakes's Introduction to the New Arden edition, published in 1962:

These general considerations may help to illustrate the particular quality of *The Comedy of Er rors.* The play has farcical comedy, and it has fantasy, but it does more than merely provoke laughter, or release us temporarily from inhibitions and custom into a world free as a child's, affording delight and freshening us up. It also invites

compassion, a measure of sympathy, and a deeper response to the disruption of social and family relationships which the action brings about. Our concern for the Antipholus twins, for Adriana and Luciana, and our sense of disorder are deepened in the context of suffering provided by the enveloping action. The comedy proves, after all, to be more than a temporary and hilarious abrogation of normality; it is, at the same time, a process in which the main characters are in some sense purged, before harmony and the responsibility of normal relationships are restored at the end. Adriana learns to overcome her jealousy, and accepts the reproof of the Abbess; her husband is punished for his anger and potential brutality by Doctor Pinch's drastic treatment; and Antipholus of Syracuse is cured of his prejudices about Ephesus. Behind them stands Egeon, a prototype of the noble sufferer or victim in later plays by Shakespeare, of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice,* and of Pericles, central figure in a play which uses more profoundly the story on which Egeon's adventures are based.

A variation of this argument is found in Harold Brooks's much-cited essay, which associates *Errors* not with a farce such as *Supposes* but with a recognition play such as the *Ion* or *The Confidential Clerk.*

Those who see Shakespeare as "transcending" farce must consent to a divorce between the "serious" issues that they elect to stress and the main business of the play. In other words, the critics analyze delicate sentiments while the characters knock heads. The discovery of gravity requires great emphasis on the frame stoty of Egeon, or Adriana's matrimonial laments, or the wooing of Luciana. Brooks candidly declares the incongruity between his emphasis and Shakespeare's: "The *Comedy* appeals first and foremost to laughter, as is obvious at any performance. I have dwelt on its serious themes and strands of romance because it is these that student and producer are prone to discount.'" One might respond that student and producer would in this case be taking their cue from the author, who was himself prone to discount the serious themes and strands of romance at this stage of his career. We should question critical means that seek to convert the early comedies into something other than they are.

The Comedy of Errors is a superlative example of dramatic farce, a simple form 0 comedy designed chiefly to make an audience laugh. Freedman points out that farces are almost always characterized by an "insistence on their own meaninglessness, an insistence which by no means should be accepted at face value." In other words, to regard the playas a highly developed form of farce is not to outlaw ideas. Mistaken identity is at the heart of *The Comedy of Errors,* as Antipholus of Syracuse explains in the final moments: "I see we still did meet each other's man, / And I was ta'en for him, and he for me, / And thereupon these errors have arose" (5.1.388-90). This basic formula is the source of pleasure and of meaning in the farcical comedy. My goal is to increase, if only slightly, our sense of how meaning comes about in farce, and my method for doing so is to concentrate on what an audience sees and hears in the main action. It seems reasonable to conclude- and worth pointing out, given the critical history of the text in question- that dramatic significance ought to proceed as much from the essential as from the ancillary features of a text.

II

To err is human, and one way of describing the imperfect condition of our experience is to say that we inhabit a state of division, of disunity, of separation from God, from nature, from one another. Lest this seem too portentous a beginning for a discussion of a farcical comedy, let me hasten to say that splitting (of ships, of families, of other human relations) is one of the most important of the play's patterns of action. In one sense, of course, the plot *of The Comedy of Errors* is founded on the natural division of twinship, for nature has split a single appearance into two persons. In the source play, Plautus exploits the confusion inherent in this division by geographically separating the Menaechmus brothers, and Shakespeare has increased the complexity of the original plot, as everyone knows, by doubling the twins. What is less familiar is his tactic of making the normal avenues of reconciliation into obstacle courses laid with traps and dead ends. Virtually all comedy represents characters' attempts to overcome their isolation through marriage or reconciliation, with farce throwing the emphasis on the amusing difficulties involved in such efforts. Marriage, systems of law, commerce, language- all these are forms of communion or institutions through which people seek or give satisfaction, social instruments and (implicitly) comic means for joining human beings in a happy and fruitful relation.

And yet, for all their value, these means are naturally imperfect and likely to collapse under various pressures, either of accident or human will or their own liability to misinterpretation. When they break down, the confusion that frustrates the characters delights the audience. To a great extent, the comedy of *Errors* arises from the number of barriers Shakespeare has erected and the ingenuity with which he has done so. The greatest obstacles arise in the principal characters' relations with their servants, in the arena of commerce, and in the realm of speech itself. Shakespeare generates amusing conflict by exaggerating the forces that separate people and by weakening the media that connect them.

The presence of four men in two costumes leads first to the attenuation of the normal bonds between servant and master and between husband and wife. From the twin Sosias in Plautus's *Amphitruo,* Shakespeare creates in the Dromios a pair of agents, go-betweens who link husband to wife or customer to merchant. They are extensions of their masters' wills, instruments by which each of the Antipholuses conducts business or gets what he wants. In the farcical world of the play, however, the will is inevitably frustrated as these servants become barriers, sources of confusion, gaps in a chain of communication. For Antipholus of Syracuse, lost in a strange, forbidden seaport, his one sure connection, his "bondman," seems to fail him. This treatment of the twin servants, moreover, is representative of Shakespeare's method with other characters, including Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtesan. Although the females are often said to contribute to the play's Pauline analysis of proper marriage, their primary value is as comic troublemakers. Adriana's eloquence and Luciana's charm make the two women memorable, to be sure, but they are hardly complex. Adriana's main function is to doubt her husband, to rail against his neglect, to chase him in the streets, to enlist a conjurer to minister to him; Luciana's role is to attract Antipholus of Syracuse and thereby to fuel her sister's rage.

The disintegration of personal bonds is accompanied by the weakening of the multiple commercial connections. Although the thematic importance of debts is familiar enough, it is also relevant that many of the play's amusing confrontations are grounded in thwarted commercial exchanges. Ignoring the maxim that it is best to eliminate the middleman, Shakespeare has added a host of them. Angelo the Goldsmith, Balthazar, and the First and Second Merchants are all Shakespearean inventions- businessmen, literal agents who exist to get in the way. Each functions as an additional barrier separating the twin Antipholuses, as another hedge in the maze at the center of the comedy. The Second Merchant, for instance, appears only twice and exists for no other reason than to make demands and increase the comic pressure: he has been patient since Pentecost and now needs guilders for a journey; he presses Angelo to repay the sum; Angelo must seek payment from Antipholus of Ephesus who, not having received the chain for which the money is demanded, refuses to accommodate him. In short, this importunate stranger is unnecessary: Angelo might have pursued compensation on his own initiative.

In the critical rush to find "meaning" or "tonal variety" in the addition of Luciana, Egeon, and Emilia, the structural value of the lesser auxiliary figures may be overlooked. Their untimely or mistaken demands for payment increase the confusion on the stage and damage the ties that connect them to their fellow citizens. Adriana joins the line of claimants when she tries forcibly to collect the love owed her by her husband, and her vocabulary indicates that Shakespeare has established an analogy between marital responsibilities and the cash nexus.

The setting of the comedy, as the occupations of the secondary figures remind us, is mostly the street, or "the mart," and from the beginning we observe that the business of the street is business. Most of the confrontations between characters and much of the dialogue concern the physical exchange of money or property, and other personal dealings are figured in financial terms. Egeon is a Syracusan trader unable to make the necessary financial exchange- a thousand marks for his freedom- and this fine or debt seems to have resulted from a protracted trade war. Many years before, after a period in which his "wealth increas'd / By prosperous voyages," Egeon had found himself separated from his wife by his "factor's death, / And the great care of goods at random left" (1.1.41-42). Now without family or funds, the insolvent businessman leaves the stage, whereupon Antipholus of Syracuse enters with an Ephesian merchant who tells him of the stranger's plight- "not being able to buyout his life" and warns the young traveler to conceal his identity "lest that your goods too soon be confiscate." The citizen then returns Antipholus's bag of gold and pleads the need to pay a business call: "I am invited, sir, to certain merchants, / Of whom I hope to make much benefit" (1.2.24-25). He leaves Antipholus to his "own content, . . . the thing [he] cannot get."

This endearing soliloquy is usually said to prefigure the theme of self-understanding in the later comedies, but what is less often said is that Antipholus analyzes his dilemma in terms of self-possession: he fears that in seeking to recover his family he will "lose" himself. At the end of the same scene he frets about the loss of his treasure, worrying that Dromio "is o'er-raught of all [Antipholus's] money" and recalling the city's reputation for "cozenage," "cheaters," and "mountebanks."

The bag of gold that Antipholus gives to Dromio to deliver to the inn is the first in a list of theatrical properties that provoke farcical contention. The initial dispute occurs with the entrance of Dromio of Ephesus, to whom "the money" demanded can only be the "six pence that I had O' Wednesday last, / To pay the saddler for my mistress' crupper"; the "charge" is not a bag of gold but a command "to fetch you from the mart"; the "thousand marks" are not coins but bruises administered by master and mistress. As Antipholus of Syracuse worries about fraud, Dromio of Ephesus reports the misunderstanding to his mistress in a speech whose opposing clauses suggest the nature of the impasse: ""Tis dinner time," quoth I; 'my gold," quoth he." The metal becomes a metaphor at the end of the first scene of act 2, when Adriana speaks of reputation as a piece of enameled gold (2.1.109-15), and thus Shakespeare uses it to link the end of the scene with the beginning of the next: Antipholus of Syracuse enters puzzling over the bag of money, apparently not lost at all, whereupon his own Dromio enters, denies any knowledge of the recent dispute over the gold, and earns a beating. The pattern of confusion thus established with the thousand marks is repeated in squabbles over control of a chain, a ring, a dinner, a house, a spouse, a bag of ducats, a name, a prisoner, and a pair of strangers seeking sanctuary.

The vocabulary of these disputes is almost invariably the parlance of the marketplace: Antipholus of Ephesus and his business cronies politely debate the relative value of a warm welcome and a good meal ("I hold your dainties cheap, sir, and your welcome dear"); Nell "lays claim" to the Syracusan Dromio; to the Courtesan, "forty ducats is too much to lose"; the Officer cannot release Antipholus of Ephesus for fear that "the debt he owes will be required of me"; Antipholus of Ephesus is known to be "of very reverend reputation, . . . / Of credit infinite"; Dromio of Ephesus, declared mad and tied up, describes himself as "entered in bond" for Antipholus; and when the Abbess sees Egeon in act 5, she offers to "loose his bonds, / And gain a husband by his liberty." The great scene before Antipholus's house (3.1) becomes a dispute not just over property but over ownership of names and identity. In their efforts to get paid or to pay others back for wrongs suffered, characters often speak of "answering" each other:

Eph. Ant. I answer you? Why should I
answer you?
Angelo. The money that you owe me for the
chain.
(4.1.62-63)

The merchants become enraged when their customers refuse to answer them with payment; Adriana is furious that her husband will not return a favorable answer to her requests that he come home to dinner; Antipholus of Ephesus will make his household answer for the insult of locking him out; and neither Antipholus is able to get a straight answer from either of the Dromios. This financial use of "answer" links cash to language, the most complicated and potentially ambiguous medium of all.

Exploiting the pun as the linguistic equivalent of twinship, Shakespeare creates a series of verbal equivalents for the visual duplications of the action. Initially, it seems to me, his practice is to please the audience with repeated words and images: most obviously, he

develops the conflicts by ingeniously employing the language of commerce. The normal give-and-take of business activity and family life is impaired by the mistakings of the action, and when the members of the household take Antipholus of Ephesus for a troublemaker in the street, his Dromio describes him as having been "bought and sold." The "loss" of one's good name or "estimation" is risky in this world of commerce, as Balthazar explains: "For slander lives upon succession, / For ever housed where it gets possession" (3.1.105-6). Adriana's anger at her husband leads Luciana to charge her with possessiveness, and then when Antipholus of Syracuse confesses that Luciana,

Possessed With such a gentle sovereign grace,
Of such *enchanting* presence and discourse,
Hath almost made me *traitor* to myself,
(3.2.158-60; italics mine)

the diction of ownership ("possessions") is cleverly modulated into that of witchcraft and madness ("possession"). This ambiguity pays its most amusing dividends when Doctor Pinch attempts to exorcise the demons from Antipholus of Ephesus:

I charge thee, Satan, hous'd within this man,
To yield possession to my holy prayers,
And to thy state of darkness lie thee straight;
(4.4.52-54)

The problems of confused identity and the loss of self-control are soon compounded by the question of freedom of action. The Dromios' lives are not their own, as they reiterate in complaining that, as slaves, they are not adequately rewarded for service. These various senses of bondage- to service, to customers, to wives, to the law, to business commitments (the Second Merchant is "bound to Persia"), to a rope- reinforce each other, especially in the last two acts, as the lines of action intersect:

Egeon. Most might duke, vouchsafe me speak
a word.
Haply I see a friend will save my life,
And pay the sum that may deliver me.
Duke. Speak freely, Syracusian, what thou wilt.
Egeon. Is not your name, sir, called Antiphohis?
And is not that your bondman Dromio?
Eph. Dro. Within this hour I was his bond
man, sir;
But he, I thank him, gnawed in two my
cords.
Now I am Dromio, and his man, unbound.
(5.1.283-91)

Egeon, expecting to be set at liberty, is mistaken, bound by the limitations of his senses. And here Dromio, the "freedman," steals from his master the privilege of response. As mistakes are exposed and corrected, Shakespeare relies upon the commercial

vocabulary that has served him from the beginning: Antipholus of Syracuse wishes "to make good" his promises to Luciana; when Antipholus of Ephesus offers to pay his father's line, the Duke pardons Egeon and restores his freedom and self-control ("It shall not need; thy father hath his life"); and the Abbess offers to "make full satisfaction" to the assembled company in recompense for the confusion of the day.

Words offer a way of resolving the divisions that the play explores, but at the same time they entail enormous possibilities for error. Given the present critical climate, some remarks about the unreliability of language are to be expected, but if words are included among the other media of exchange that Shakespeare has chosen to twist and complicate, then such a conclusion seems less fashionable than useful. Shakespeare almost from the beginning expands the wrangling over who owns what to include a series of battles over words and their significance. The two Dromios again offer the sharpest illustrations of such cross-purposes, usually in their interchanges with their masters. In the first meeting of Antipholus of Syracuse with Dromio of Ephesus, the shifts in meaning of "charge" and "marks" I have already cited represent the struggle for control of meaning that underlies the farcical action. Both servants are adept at shifting from the metaphorical to the literal:

Adr. Say, is your tardy master now at hand?
Eph. Dro. Nay, he's at two hands with me,
and that my two ears can witness.
(2.1.44-46)

When Antipholus of Syracuse threatens Dromio of Syracuse, "I will beat this method in your sconce," the servant resorts to linguistic subversion: "Sconce call you it? so you would leave battering, I had rather have it a head; and you use these blows long, I must get a sconce for my head, and insconce it too, or else I shall seek my wit in my shoulders" (2.2.34-39).

Yet the servants can speak highly figurative language as well: both describe the arresting officer in metaphors so elaborate that they baffle the auditors (4.2.32-40 and 4.3.12-30). Some of the verbal excursions resemble vaudeville turns, particularly the banter between the two Syracusans on baldness, and such jests represent verbal forms of what happens dramatically in the main action. In showing that "there is no time for all things," Dromio of Syracuse jestingly disproves an indisputable axiom, just as the errors of the main plot raise a challenge to the reality that everyone has accepted until now. This is more than what Brooks deprecatingly calls "elaborations of comic rhetoric."

The struggle over what words signify quickens as the characters sense that reality is slipping away from them. The locking-out scene (3.1) depends for its hilarity on the stichomythic exchanges between those outside (Dromio and Antipholus of Ephesus) and those inside (Dromio of Syracuse and Luce, and later Adriana). The contestants, particularly those in the security of the house, manipulate meanings and even rhyme and other sounds as they taunt the pair trying to enter, for possession of the house is apparently an advantage in the battle of words. The Dromios' attitudes toward language are almost always playful and subversive, so that even at their masters' most frustrated

moments, the servants take pleasure in twisting sound and sense, as in Dromio of Ephesus's puns on "crow" ("crow without a feather?"; "pluck a crow together"; and "iron crow").

The trickiness of language can cause characters to lose the direction of the dialogue:

Adr. Why, man, what is the matter?
Syr. Dro. I do not know the matter; he is
'rested on the case.
Adr. What, is he arrested? tell me at whose
suit?
Syr. Dro. I know not at whose suit he is
arrested well;
But is in a suit of buff which 'rested him, that
can I tell.
Will you send him, mistress, redemption, the
money in his desk?
Adr. Go, fetch it, sister; this I wonder at,
Exit Luciana. That he unknown to me should be in debt.
Tell me, was he arrested on a band?
Syr. Dro. Not on a band, but on a stronger
thing;
A chain, a chain, do you not hear it ring?
Adr. What, the chain?
Syr. Dro. No, no, the bell, 'tis time that I
were gone,
It was two ere I left him, and now the clock
strikes one.
(4.2.41-54)

Rhetorically, the key to this passage is antanaclasis: Dromio wrests a word from Adriana's meaning into another of its senses, as with "matter" *(trouble* and *sub stance),* "case" and "suit" (both meaning *case in law* and *suit of clothes),* "band" *(bond* and *ruff).* The ambiguous pronoun reference in "hear it ring" illustrates the power of words to entrap: Adriana and the audience need a moment to adjust as Dromio abruptly shifts the focus from his narrative to the present.

Just as words are apt to slip out of their familiar senses, customers or husbands or servants seem to change from moment to moment. Dialogue and stage action illustrate the limits of human control as characters try to react to these confusing turns of phrase or of event. Antipholus of Syracuse, offered a wife and a dinner, can be flexible: "I'll say as they say" (2.2.214). But words may conflict with other words and realities with other realities, as the Duke discovers in seeking the undivided truth: "You say he dined at home; the goldsmith here / Denies that saying. Sirrah, what say you?" (5.1.274-75). Conflicts of personal identity, of contracts, of words, of stories, all make the truth seem elusive and uncertain.

Shakespeare's strategy of breaking the integuments that bind human beings to one another accounts for much of the mirth in *Errors* and for much of the significance as well. By interfering with familiar and normally reliable systems of relation- master to servant, wife to husband, customer to merchant, speaker to auditor- the dramatist achieves the dislocation felt by the characters and the "spirit of weird fun" enjoyed by the audience. There is, moreover, an additional verbal medium that Shakespeare has twisted to his own use, that of the play itself. The ironic bond between playwright and spectator, that relation which Shakespeare inherited from Plautus and cultivated throughout the first four acts and by which he assures us that we know more than the characters know, is suddenly abrogated when the Abbess declares her identity at the end of the fifth act: we have thought ourselves superior to the errors and assumptions of the ignorant characters, but we too have been deceived. Emilia's reunion with her husband and sons completes the comic movement of the action. This is farce, so the emphasis throughout is on the delights of disjunction; but this is also comedy, so the drama moves toward a restoration of human ties and the formation of new ones. Sentiment asserts itself in the final moments, of course, but Shakespeare does not overstate it, and the shift from pleasure in chaos to pleasure in order need not jar. The confusion must end somewhere, and it is standard practice for the farceur to relax the comic tension by devising a mellow ending to a period of frenzy.

Shakespeare attempted to write farce in *The Comedy of Errors,* and he succeeded. Certain effects and values are missing from this kind of drama: there is no thorough examination of characters, no great variety of tones, no profound treatment of ideas, no deep emotional engagement. But farce gives us what other dramatic forms may lack: the production of ideas through rowdy action, the pleasures of "non-significant" wordplay, freedom from the limits of credibility, mental exercise induced by the rapid tempo of the action, unrestricted laughter- the satisfactions of various kinds of extravagance. Indeed, farce may be considered the most elemental kind of theater, since the audience is encouraged to lose itself in play. This is bad Shakespeare in the sense that the young dramatist was content with an inherently limited mode; the play is not *Twelfth Night.* Its value is in its theatrical complexity. And yet the boisterous action does generate thematic issues. To admit that Shakespeare willingly devoted himself to farce is to acknowledge a side of his career too often neglected or misrepresented. That the author of *King Lear* was ca pable of writing *The Comedy of Errors* should be a source of wonder, not embarrassment.

Critical Essay #6

Peter G. Phialas stands somewhat apart from other critics on the subject of love and marriage in *The Com edy of Errors.* He argues that the relationships between men and women in the play are not explored in any significant way, concluding that the inclusion of the contrasting male/female relationships (Antipholus of Syracuse/Luciana and Antipholus of Ephesus/ Adriana) is merely a precursor of things to come in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Ralph Betty argues that Shakespeare avoids "taking sides" in the marital troubles of Adriana and Antipholus and that overemphasizing what has been called Adriana's "possessiveness" gives too much credence to her view of love.

Marilyn French calls the "marriage relation" the "central concern" of the play. She argues that there are too many deviations from and expansions of Plautus's play to conclude otherwise. Dorothy Kehler agrees that Shakespeare does explore love and marriage, but that he does not provide an answer to the question, "Con love and marriage coexist?" She especially notes the powerlessness of Adriana, who is stuck in her "role" of wife at home. Laurie Maguire and Charles Brooks explore how the roles of men and women change when they transition from a courting couple to husband and wife. In courtship, the man is the worshiper; the woman is his object of love. In marriage, however, the man becomes governor and the woman the devoted wife and worshiper. It is no wonder then that Adriana and Antipholus find themselves in a marital predicament.

Source: *"The Comedy of Errors ,"* in *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies: The Development of Their Form and Meaning,* Univer sity of North Carolina Press, 1966, pp. 10-17.

[In this excerpt, Phialas argues that Shakespeare's use if the concept of romantic 1ove in The Comedy of Errors sets the stage for its function as the "chief structural principle" if his later romantic comedies. Although, Phialas argues, love and marriage are not treated in any great depth and there is not much that is especially memorable about the relationships be tween men and women in the play, the fact that Shakespeare addresses such issues is significant in and of itself, far more so than the them: if mistaken identity.]

. . . . In *The Comedy of Errors ,* it is clear, [Shakespeare] . . . essayed to express, however briefly and obliquely by placing side by side conflicting points of view- an idea concerning love and wedded happiness. The wooing of Luciana by Antipholus of Syracuse, and her own views about marriage, are juxtaposed with the contrasting attitudes of Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus. And thus the protestations of love addressed to Luciana by Antipholus of Syracuse serve as a counterpoint to the mutual recriminations and to the strain and unhappiness of the married pair. Although the idea which the dramatist is trying to express never achieves explicitness, and although the relationship of Luciana and her Antipholus remains unresolved, what is of great significance is that here in a farce, in what may well have been his earliest comedy,

Shakespeare introduces the chief structural principle of his romantic comedies: the juxtaposition of attitudes toward love and toward the ideal relationship of man and woman.

The contrast of attitudes is introduced early in the play, in II, i, where Adriana and her sister engage in semiformal disputation on the relations of husband and wife. Adriana, impatient and jealous, objects to her sister's "fool-begg'd patience," rejects the notion that the man should be master in the home, and wishes to curtail her husband's liberty. She blames him for everything, including her faded beauty, which she erroneously believes has driven him away:

Hath homely age the alluring beauty took
From my poor cheek? Then he hath wasted
It.. ..
What ruins are in me that can be found
By !urn not ruin'd? Then is he the ground
Of my defeatures.
(II, 1, 89-98)

Later on, believing that her husband had wooed her sister, she calls him

deformed, crooked, old and sere,
Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere:
Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.
(IV, ii, 19-22)

Here, then, is one of the causes of what Luciana calls Adriana's "troubles of the marriage bed." Adriana misconceives the proper basis of her union with her husband. In a startlingly romantic passage she recalls with pain his courtship of her which has now receded into the distant past:

The time was once when thou unurg'd
wou!dst vow
That never words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never touch well welcome to thy hand,
That never meat sweet-savour'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake, or look'd, or touch'd, or
carv'd to thee.
(II, ii, 115-20)

The attraction she is here said to have held for her husband appears gone, and this loss is precisely what she is lamenting. It should be noted, incidentally, that his courtship had been couched in the exaggerated phrasing of the romantic lover, the hyperbolic: idealizing of the sonneteer! And now, she asks,

How comes it now, my husband, 0, how
comes it,
That thou art then estranged from thyself?
Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
That, undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better part.
(II, ii, 121-25)

The conception of "undividable, incarnate" union of lovers Seems beyond Adriana's capabilities, and in such passages we may perhaps detect a great deal more of the young dramatist himself than of his character. Nevertheless, what is significant is that Adriana, wooed in the romantic vein by her husband, and perhaps even possessed of the notion of an ideal union with him, misconceives the basis of such a union.

Adriana thinks of love in terms of possession, ownership, mastery. And this is not strange, seeing that the concrete basis of her marriage had been financial, in terms of gold in the form of dowry. And even as she may still control and even repossess that dowry, that is, take back what she has given, she insists also on possession of her husband's liberty, a possession she Calls her "right." Adriana's concept of love is the right to possess, to receive and own and be master of, whereas both her sister and Antipholus of Syracuse oppose to that concept their view of love as giving. It might be added here that the financial or commercial attitude towards human relationships is reinforced by the analogous misconception which underlies the Duke's judgment on Egeon:

Therefore, merchant, I'll limit thee this day
To seek thy [life] by beneficial help.
Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus;
Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum,
And live; if no, then thou art doom'd to die.
(I, i, 151-55)

The folly of possessiveness as contrasted with love's giving forms a very small part of the action. But its dramatization here anticipates the much more extensive and meaningful treatment of it in *The Tarring if the Shrew* and especially *The Merchant if Venice.* In the latter play the contrast between the commercial and human relationships, between gold and love, is at the very center of the play's thought. One passage from it may illustrate the relationship between that later play and *The Comedy of Errors* , and thus demonstrate the unity and continuity of Shakespearean comedy. Before turning to that passage, let us note that in what may have been his earliest comedy, at least in the one treating of love most briefly, Shakespeare asks, however indirectly, the question: What is Love? And we should note also that that question, which is to be Shakespeare's continuing concem in the comedies, is most directly asked in *The Merchant if Venice* "Tell me where is fancy bred," sings Nerissa while Bassanio, by some considered an ideal lover, contemplates the caskets. Within the song the reply is indirect, offering tentatively what love is not, but a more pertinent answer is given by Portia and Bassanio

a moment after he has made his choice. "Fair lady,"_ says he, kissing her, "I come by note, to give and to receive." To which she returns the notes of the ideal:

You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am. Though for myself a! one
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better; yet, for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself,
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich. . . .

And she adds that she is happy that

She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
(III, ii, 150-67)

This surrender of the self to her husband, to her "lord, her governor, her king,"' is precisely what Adriana rejects in her colloquy with her sister, to which allusion was made above. Though she is aware of the uniting of lovers' identities, she invokes the principle in order to justify her rights of possessing her husband. In the concluding episode she refuses to let anyone minister to him. In this she comes into conflict with Emilia, and a tug-of-war follows the refusal of each to yield to the other the man who has sought sanctuary ill the abbey, who happens to be Antipholus of Syracuse, not Adriana's husband. That her concept of love as possession leading to jealousy is unacceptable and indeed dangerous is enforced upon Adriana by the abbess:

The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth. . . .
The consequence is, then, thy jealous fits
Hath scar'd thy husband from the use of
Wits.
(I.i, 69-86)

There is no space in *The Comedy of Errors,* and perhaps neither inclination nor skill on Shakespeare's part, to pursue in detail the ideal basis for lovers' union and wedded happiness. This he was to do in the romantic comedies which followed. Nevertheless, he is able here to isolate, obliquely and in the briefest compass, one of the central conceptions of those later plays: that love does not possess, that it gives without needing to receive, for it gives to another self. "Call thyself sister, sweet, for I am thee," says Antipholus of Syracuse to Luciana.

Adriana's other misconception of the ideal union of lovers is the belief that such union is based on extemal beauty: that her husband has been driven away by her loss of physical attractiveness. That ideal love is not based on external beauty alone is much

more directly and forcefully presented in the later comedies. And it is of especial interest to note that a much quoted passage in *The Merchant of Venice?* which rejects the notion of love as possession-which opposes possession and love- likewise rejects love's concern with external beauty. "All that glisters *is* not gold,"' the Prince of Morocco is told after choosing the golden casket. But the idea is given direct and unmistakable expression in Nerissa's song as well as in Bassanio's speech which follows it.

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, reply.
It is engend'red in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it *lies.*
(III, ii, 63-69)

And on his part Bassanio affirms that "

The world is still deceiv'd with ornament,"' and that external beauty is but
The seeming truth which cunning times put
on
T'entrap the wisest.
(III, ii, 100-1)

In *The Comedy of Errors* the idea is viewed from the other side: Adriana fears that she has lost her husband's love because her beauty is gone, and the bitterness of that loss turns into jealousy and vents itself in violent nagging. And that nagging, born of disappointment with the motion and change of things, sends our minds over a half dozen comedies to the tete-a-tete of Orlando and the disguised Rosalind in *As You Like It.* To his bookish protestations that he will love her "for ever and a day" she replies: "Say 'a day,' without the 'ever.' No, no, Orlando. Men are April when they woo, December when they wed; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more newfangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey." (IV, i, 146-53) The managing of the complex ironies here was quite beyond Shakespeare's abilities when he wrote *The Comedy of Errors.* Yet there is a palpable contact between the two plays and another instance of the unity of Shakespearean comedy. What puzzles Adriana, what in her own conduct remains beyond her awareness, is for Rosalind the most obvious fact in the nature of things. Both husbands and wives change, but their happiness need not be touched by such changes since that happiness should be based on something that remains constant: not outward beauty, not physical attraction, but inner beauty and worth.

The multiple attitudes toward love which are most skillfully woven into the fabric of *As You Like It* have no place in *The Comedy of Errors.* Here what we should note is the presence of the master-principle which controls the structure of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, namely the juxtaposition of attitudes toward love represented by different

characters. This is a most significant aspect of *The Comedy of Errors,* a play dealing in the main with matters quite alien to romantic love. And it is certainly surprising to find that Shakespeare, in a severely limited space, could put in such a play so much of what was to be the chief matter of his romantic comedies. The treatment of love and the related motifs which we have noted above is elementary, lacking utterly the incisiveness as well as the ironic dramatization which we find in the later plays. But the fact remains that *The Comedy of Errors,* though in the main concerned with the farcical mistakings of identity, touches briefly a theme of far greater significance, the ideal relationship of man and woman. And it is here, rather than in the confusions of identity, that we find the element of reflectiveness and concern with something deeper than accident and the surface show of things to which we alluded at the beginning of this chapter. It is true that upon arriving at Ephesus, Antipholus of Syracuse is driven by his strange reception there to question his own identity:

So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.
(I, ii, 39-40)

But it is likewise true that he discovers not only his identity but a new and larger self in his love of Luciana. In her, he tells her, he has found

mine own self's better part,
Mine eye's dear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart,
My. food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's
aim,
My so!e earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim.
(III, ii, 61-64)

In these matters, then, *The Comedy of Errors* prefigures some of the significant features of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. It shows his general predilection for combining multiple actions into mutually qualifying relationships. More particularly, it initiates his custom of enclosing a comic action within a serious or neartragic framing story or subplot. And most important of all it introduces into a farcical story of classical origin the theme of romantic love and attempts, in elementary fashion, to comment upon that theme by representing contrasted attitudes to it. In so doing, the play employs for the first time in Shakespeare's career the central thematic and structural characteristics of his romantic comedies.

Critical Essay #7

Source: *"The Comedy of Errors* as Problem Comedy," in *Rocky Mountain Review of Language & Literature,* Vol. 41, No.4, 1987, pp. 230-36.

[In this excerpt, Kehler notes that Adriana and her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, "could pass far a well-to-do modern couple headed for divorce." She points out that part of the problem in their marriage is the "inevitable imbalance of love" between them, which is worsened by Adriana's powerlessness to change the Situation.]

. . . . The specific problem Shakespeare explores through the relationship of Adriana and E. Antipholus is both timeless and peculiarly modern: can love survive marriage? C. L. Barber notes [in "Shakespearean Comedy in *The Comedy of Errors"]* that, unlike Plautus, Shakespeare "frequently makes the errors reveal fundamental human nature, especially human nature under the stress and tug of marriage." Considering Shakespeare's depiction of a marriage "subjected to the very unromantic strains of temperament grinding on temperament in the setting of daily life," Barber concludes of Adriana and E. Antipholus, "No doubt their peace is temporary." Certainly, despite their classical origin, Adriana and E. Antipholus could pass for a well-to-do modern couple headed for divorce. He, successful in business but bored at home, is ripe for more entertaining companionship; she, too much at home and insecure about his attachment to her, becomes impatient and demanding. Although a divorce in law may not be a customary Ephesian alternative, a divorce of hearts within a stifling marriage is universal. In *Errors,* Adriana and E. Antipholus enact that incipient emotional divorce as a psychodrama whose *anagnorisis,* if not to them, may yet be intelligible to us.

More than any other character in *Errors,* Adriana subverts farce. Because we know her more intimately than we do her husband, she lays first claim to our interest. Although most often described as a jealous and possessive shrew, of late she is not without defenders. Marilyn French, in an illuminating reading [in *Shakespeare's Division of Experience],* sees Adriana's problem as powerless ness created by economic, political, and social structures. But if the key to Adriana's personality and predicament is powerlessness, it is powerlessness of another sort as well. The play focuses on the *emotional* structure of a marriage, depicting the almost inevitable imbalance of love between spouses- an imbalance often aggravated to the woman's disadvantage by societal conditioning and restrictions- and the plight of a woman dependent on her husband for her sole identity as beloved wife. Byron knew the world's Adrianas: "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart, / 'Tis woman's whole existence" *(Don Juan* Canto I, st. 194). [In *Shakespeare's Comic Rites,*] Edward Berty clarifies the generic issue raised by Adriana's emotional isolation and loss of identity, expressed in her neo-Platonic, Pauline speech (II.ii.119-29) on the melding of husband and wife into one soul:

In their explorations of the self, the comedies are in some ways not unlike the tragedies, for in both genres Shakespeare consistently maneuvers his central characters into positions of psychological isolation, leaving them exposed and vulnerable both within

and without. While this kind of isolation is conventional in tragedy, in comedy it is unique to Shakespeare.

While a seminal model for the heroines of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, Adriana is also a precursor of Juliet and Desdemona. For all that Adriana is a character in a play long received as farce, her nature and situation are no less tragic than comic, and this duality creates yet another generic complication of *Errors.*

Powerless over her husband's heart, Adriana grows restive and irritable, questioning the restrictions on women's freedom: "Why should their [men's] liberty than ours be more?" (II.i.10). When Luciana replies that the husband is the bridle of the wife's will, Adriana asserts, "There's none but asses will be bridled so" (II.i.14). Male supremacy turns marriage into "servitude" (II.i.26). Although for the audience these lines imply a feminist manifesto, for Adriana they seem to hold no more lasting significance than does her threat to break Dromio's pate across. Tormented and confused, Adriana lashes out indiscriminately at all male authority, at E. Antipholus, and at an ineffectual slave; it is not sexual equality she seeks, however much she might profit from it, but only the husband she had in her spring of love:

The time was once when thou unurg'd
wouldst vow
That never words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never touch well welcome to thy hand,
That never meat sweet-savour'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake, or look'd, or touch'd or
carv'd to thee.
(II.ii.113-18)

What Adriana cannot accept is that the honeymoon is over, that she is no longer all in all to her Antipholus. Institutionalizing desire within marriage frustrates this husband and this wife. While E. Antipholus wards off claustrophobia by lingering on the mart, despite his complaint that "My wife is shrewish when I keep not hours" (II.i.2), Adriana becomes obsessed with the conviction of her husband's infidelity, assured that to be excluded from two hours of his life is to be excluded from his heart forever. Unable to smile at grief, she becomes, in Luciana's words, one of the "many fond fools [who] serve mad jealousy" (II.i.116). In her company are Othello, Posthumus, and Leontes, who respond to suspected cuckoldry with privileged male fury. The jealous bourgeois wife merely nags, but her situation, like that of her male counterparts, can be seen as the stuff of tragicomedy or tragedy rather than farce. Implicit in *Errors* is a transgression against the codified genre.

As Adriana's eloquent "nags" reveal her fierce hunger for a caring husband, Luciana's stilted set speech on male rule dwindles in importance, becoming, if not a non-sequitur, a red herring for which critics ill-advisedly have fished:

There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
But hath his bound, in earth, in sea, in sky.
The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls
Are their males' subjects, and at their controls;
Man, more divine, the master of all these,
Lord of the Wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
Imbued 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.
(II.i.16-25)

Just as Adriana's profound love for E. Antipholus undermines this speech's relevance, so the delineation of the male characters undermines its validity. "Man, more divine" is sadly represented in *Errors.* Most worthy are the loving but powerless Egeon, and Duke Solinus, who requires a miracle to enable him to tolerate foreign merchants as easily as he does native courtesans. The divinities with whom Adriana has more to do are even less awesome: the mountebank Pinch; the deluded, broken-pated Dromios; and their equally deluded, violent masters. Not surprisingly, Shakespeare bodies forth the principle of male supremacy through characters whose preeminence is dubious; Susan Snyder points out [in *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Trap]* that the Elizabethan audience expected comedy to overturn accepted truths and customs, and [In *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women]* Juliet Dusinberre points to those Elizabethan women who rejected the status quo, even to the extent of wearing men's clothes and weapons. Dusinberre notes that both liberated women and Humanist-influenced Puritans sympathetic to women comprised a significant part of Shakespeare's audience. For the more politically, intellectually, and theologically venturesome, Adriana must have evoked more compassion than amusement.

Nevertheless, the traditional interpretation of act 2, scene 1 reminds us that Adriana's emotional problems are compounded by her social situation: "revolt against a wife's place in the cosmic hierarchy," according to Harold Brooks [in "Theme and Structure in *The* Comedy *of Errors"*] *,* "is the original source of discord in Adriana's marriage." In the cosmos as envisaged by men, woman is subordinate; hence, in the social system, she readily becomes a possession. At this Adriana has not balked. By marrying E. Antipholus, Adriana has accepted the authority of both the Duke and her husband, "who I made lord of me and all I had / At your important letters" (V.i.137-38). She revolts not against her place but against lack of love; her longing to be a vine to her husband's elm (II.ii.174-76) reveals her deepest desire: to subjugate herself in marriage. It is her misfortune that, in a male-dominated society, the possession who becomes possessive is regarded as a shrew.

Adriana's error is not refusal to accept male supremacy but the nagging tongue that provides her only relief. Even when she thinks E. Antipholus is courting her sister, she admits, "My heart prays for him, though my tongue do curse" (V.ii.28). She is trapped in a painful cycle. Feeling rejected, she desires her husband all the more desperately, but her incessant recriminations, later confessed to the abbess (V.i.62-67), elicit only further

rejection from E. Antipholus. He labels her shrewish and "breaks the pale" (II.i.l00), having found "a wench of excellent discourse, / Pretty and witty; wild and yet, too, gentle" (III.i.109-10). "Mad jealousy" prevents Adriana from realizing how self-defeating and absurd is the attempt to moralize another into love. Although a character's blindness is fundamental to farce, Adriana's pain is so keenly felt and lyrically expressed that sympathy undercuts laughter, and the problematic aspects of marriage- and genre- assert themselves. Adriana's inability to comprehend the effect she produces upon E. Antipholus is the psychological reality behind the convention of indistinguishable twins in *Errors.* She is unable to distinguish her husband from his brother because she no longer knows her husband, having become totally engrossed in her own needs. Errors of physical identity aside, she speaks an emotional truth in her reply to Luciana:

Luc Then swore he that he was a stranger here.
Adr. And tine he swore, though yet forsworn
he were.
(IV.ii.9-10)

Adriana mistakes the newcomer for her husband because S. Antipholus is the honeymoon-lover of her heart's desire, like her husband in appearance, unlike him in spirit: sea-fresh, unspoiled by a stale marriage, trailing no minions in his wake. Most pitiful- and certainly at odds with *Errors'* farcical temper- is our realization, based on Adriana's intelligence, spirit, and capacity for love, that this out-of-control "shrew" must herself once have been "a wench of excellent discourse, / Pretty and witty; wild and yet, too, gentle" another twin!

Despite her "venom clamours" (V.i.69), Adriana seems singularly restrained and chaste compared to her husband, a chief vehicle of farce in *Errors.* On stage, E. Antipholus strikes the Dromios (IV.iv.17,42) and Doctor Pinch (IV.iv.51), and attempts to pluck out Adriana's eyes (IV.iv.102). A messenger reports that E. Antipholus beats the maids, singes off Pinch's beard, throws pails of puddled mire on Pinch, encourages E. Dromio to nick Pinch with scissors (V.i.169-77), and vows to scorch and and disfigure Adriana's face (V.i.183). E. Antipholus compounds violence with insensitivity to his wife's feelings; by withholding love and attention he induces a jealousy that is not entirely paranoid. At his first entrance, he asks Angelo to assist him in deceiving Adriana as to his whereabouts (III.i.3-4); more important, his acquaintance with a courtesan would distress a wife as patient as Griselda. Although Luciana tries to allay her sister's fears, secretly she suspects that E. Antipholus wed Adriana for her wealth and that he likes "elsewhere" (III.ii.5-7). Although Shakespeare apparently departs from his sources, making E. Antipholus guilty of thoughtless or spiteful congeniality rather than adultery, French penetrates the underlying fable: "on the mythic level, the play deals with serious disruption: a man neglects his wife for his prostitute." Matthew would have agreed: "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (5.28). In fact, Shakespeare does not rule out the possibility of E. Antipholus's having committed adultery. Edward Berry suggests that "The ring [which E. Antipholus receives from the courtesan] is an appropriate symbol of the sexual and economic ambiguities in Antipholus's extra-marital relationship." In *Errors* the distinction between having the name without the game or the name with the game is not so much

a matter of substantive moral difference as of genre: if E. Antipholus has fallen only in spirit but not in flesh, the sin is revocable, a comic rather than tragic error. A happy ending, or some semblance of one, remains a contingency.

Luciana's admonition and the intrigue plot collaborate to reveal a means of perhaps achieving that happy ending, if husband and wife allow themselves to be instructed. Luciana's speech on male supremacy misfires, but its introduction does not: "Why, headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe" (II.i.15). Directed at Adriana, this admonition applies with equal if not greater force to E. Antipholus. Adriana, awash in emotion, has only worsened her situation by abusing the liberty of her tongue as a quick-tempered mistress, contentious sister, and discontented wife. Her husband, abusing the liberty of Ius eye, has ravaged the marital peace; abusing the liberty of his hand, he is taken for mad. The woe such headstrong liberty has brought them could be alleviated through the self-government endlessly enjoined by Renaissance moralists, through the subjugation of our infected will to our erected wit. To do other is mutual madness. During her exchange with the courtesan, Adriana finds a name for her husband's fault:

Cour. How say you now? Is not your
husband mad?
Adr. His incivility confirms no less.
(IV.iv.43-44)

Will she realize that she too is guilty of incivility, a concomitant of headstrong liberty, of the will's mastery? Erasmus can tell us whose fault is greater: "Of an evyll husbande (I wyll well) a good wyfe may be mard, but of a good the evyll is wont to be refourmed and mended. We blame wyves falsly. No man (if ye gyve any credence to me) had ever a shrewe to his wyfe but thrughe hus owne defaute" (sig. Dii). Nevertheless, both the unthinking husband and the neglected, powerless wife suffer, having forfeited contentment by insisting on their own satisfactions.

The plot, undervalued for lacking an intriguer "to make the confusion delightfully purposeful," actually achieves the thematic purpose of forcing E. Antipholus to lose his identity and take on his wife's: serving mad jealousy, he feels what she feels. Thinking himself sexually betrayed- *is* he projecting his own guilty conscience onto her?- he discovers the pain of being "abused and dishonour'd / Even in the strength and height of injury" (V.i.199-200). In another comedy involving a shipwreck, trade war, twins, jealousy, and madness, Malvolio, like E. Antipholus, is bound and imprisoned in darkness. The practical joke suits, for in the world of cakes and ale, Malvolio's confusion of ambition with love and his denial of harmless pleasure mark him as insane. Shakespeare first employs this jocular punishment in *Errors,* with himself, the playwright, rather than his characters, as intriguer. For his incivility E. Antipholus suffers the treatment of a madman. (Adriana is also punished for incivility: betrayed by the abbess to her own reproof and public embarrassment). The plot holds a mirror up to husband and wife, showing them how their headstrong liberty has guided time's deformed hand in writing strange defeatures on their marriage. Of course this couple may prove no more capable of profiting from their lessons than did Malvolio. The play remains curiously open-ended.

Directors who impose a happy ending have a good case. Happiness being preferable to unhappiness, Adriana and E. Antipholus are likely to opt for it; theirs, after all, is a comic world. The audience also opts for the happy ending in comedy. Even in James Cellan Jones's BBC production, which stressed the non-farcical aspects of *Errors,* the beginning of a reconciliation is suggested as E. Antipholus places the chain about Adriana's neck. After all, Adriana and her husband have been party to a miracle, the reunion of a family sundered for a generation; to blast such unlooked for joy with self-indulgent discord touches upon sacrilege. Thanks to the miracle of reunion, their nuclear family is now extended: Adriana's isolation turns to a gossips' feast, and E. Antipholus may find wholesome recreation within his enlarged family. Ironic as it is that the only incontrovertibly happy couple has been separated for thirty-three years, even so the advice and example of loving parents may foster civility in their children.

Perhaps most important as a persuader to civility is the future of S. Antipholus and Luciana. Luciana, who makes no reply to S. Antipholus's proposal (V.i.37476), had indicated earlier, when she mistook him for her brother-in-law, only that his words *"might* move" (IV .ii.14, italics added). The psychological reality behind the convention of indistinguishable twins for Luciana the reason she cannot tell her would-be husband from E. Antipholus- is that, expecting no more of men than that they be "secret false" (III.ii.15), she has little motivation to sift their appearance from their reality. Her commitment phobia, as it were, may be explained by a last act in which errors of identity are clarified but errors in love are not. Luciana's sixth-act response depends on the reflection of her own future that she sees in her sister's and brother-in-law's problematic marriage. Will brother and sister, for the sake of brother and sister, learn to curb their infected wills? After the players have left the stage, will problem comedy resolve to romantic comedy?

Whether Shakespeare's personal experience of marriage accounts for this novel admixture of genres in his first comedy is an intriguing but unanswerable question. His portraits of Kate, Emilia, and Paulina suggest, however, that the stock character of the shrew proved too narrow for Shakespeare's breadth of understanding. Adriana's uncomic potential is released as Shakespeare, unlike earlier writers of shrew plays, considers the causes of shrewishness and the ordeal of a shrew. Such considerations, dictating a more realistic view of personality and marriage, take us beyond the classical pale into something rich and strange. (Later, Shakespeare's sensitivity to the stock Jew will change the generic coloration of *The Merchant of Venice* .) But whatever causes begot this generic experiment, *Errors* succeeds. The demons that frighten us the most evoke the most cathartic laughter. The difficulty of sustaining a loving relationship as nuances of feeling inexorably change is just such a demon. The farce of mistaken identities and hallucinatory situations creates the *verfremdungseffekt* that allows us to laugh when the pain of human isolation brings us closer to tears. Through generic disjunction, Shakespeare demonstrates how complex are the responses an audience can experience when Plautine intrigue bows to *genera mista,* creating, most notably, a timeless vision of dissonance in the comedy of errors we call marriage.

Critical Essay #8

Charles Brooks and Marilyn French explore the binary nature of women in the play. Brooks argues that Shakespeare intended to show, through the characters of Adriana and Luciana, that women possess both male and female traits. Adriana's vocal dissatisfaction with her marriage represents "male dominance" and Luciana's insistence on the proper role of a wife constitutes "female submission." French also sees Adriana and Luciana as complementing one another- Adriana's resistance to submission is "outlaw" and Luciana's acceptance of it is "inlaw."

Ann C. Christensen argues that the play shows the competition between the commercial/ public and domestic/private spheres. Antipholus of Ephesus is free to move about, conduct his business affairs, and meet with friends. Adriana, as his wife, is confined to the home, bored, and understandably angry when her husband will not leave his "world" for hers.

Ann Thompson notes, as many critics do, that because Shakespeare sets the play in Ephesus (a city associated with witchcraft and sorcery), it is not particularly surprising that Antipholus of Syracuse might think that Luciana is a witch, given all the strange things happen ing to him. What is unusual, Thompson notes, is that the "mother" is restored in the end. This is uncharacteristic of Shakespeare's early and middle comedies. Robert Ornstein takes note of the growing solidarity of the women in the play (for example, Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtezan band together to present their case to the Duke at the end of the play) and how crucial they are to the play's outcome.

Source: "'Because their business still lies out a' door': Resisting the Separation of Spheres in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors,"* in *Literature and History, 3rd series,* Vol. 5, No.1, Spring, 1996, *pp.* 19-37.

[In the following excerpt, Christensen explores the intersection of the "home" and the "marketplace"- the private and public spheres- particularly through the characterization of Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus. She also shows haw the two realm are united at the conclusion of the play, when all misunderstandings haw been resoled]

. . .. *The Comedy of Errors*illustrates the gendered competition regarding the functions of the domestic and the commercial spheres, which the play depicts as distinctly gendered and spatially separate, yet mutually constitutive. The husband-merchant of Ephesus appears divided between his home-life and his work, with his business associates and "the mart' thematically and structurally opposing his wife and their home. C. L. Barber and Richard Wheeler suggest that *Errors* afforded Shakespeare a way to manage his own experience of division- between his roles as country husband, father, and son, on the one hand, and as a successful urban professional, on the other:

the young dramatist has split himself into a stayat-home twin, married and carrying on in a commercial world. . . and into a wandering, searching twin for whom the world of Ephesus, including the situation of marriage, is strange.

Setting to one side Wheeler and Barber's biographical approach, one infers that the sense of conflicting duties was probably common for the newly urbanized and increasingly mobile class of professional men in early modern London. Douglas Bruster, for example, argues that the propertied urban merchants gained in literary representation a "special reputation for anxiety'. In its double plots, and in its distinct discourses of home and trade, this early comedy dramatizes the competing demands within and between the commercial and domestic spheres- a conflict which playwrights continued to explore on the Jacobean stage.

The dining table (metaphorically speaking), where the meaning of meals and mealtime is hotly debated, constitutes one crucial arena in which this competition plays itself out. Indeed the restoration of identity and the resolution of the plot devolves from Adriana's question, 'Which of you did dine with me today? (V.i.370). For Adriana, the neglected and disgruntled wife, a family that eats together stays together or, more pertinently, sleeps together. She therefore identifies meals at home with domestic harmony, even associating the physical structure of their dwelling with her body: private, enclosed, nurturing. But, because her husband conceptualizes time and space in commercial terms, Adriana must remind him to spend time and eat meals with her at home. On more than one occasion, she sends her servant Dromio to fetch him 'from the mart, / Home' (I.i.75;IV.ii.64), eventually pursuing him herself, accosting his brother by mistake (II.ii.110 ff), and finally defying both state and church in her quest to keep him at home in her care. Adriana so believes in the prophylactic nature of her household that she blames the day's madness on her husband's absence from home where, had he 'remain'd until this time, / [he would be] Free from these slanders and this open shame' (IV.iv.6667).

But the modern bourgeois notion of home as safe haven was neither established in Elizabethan society nor uncontested on the Shakespearean stage. The play surges forward by Antipholus of Ephesus's (hereafter, following speech tags, Antipholus E.) refusal to identify himself with home, and by the comic clashes between household and mart, inside and outside, !ocal and stranger. Dorothea Kehler attributes the husband's centrifugal movement to his experiences of claustrophobia and boredom at home. However, a more primary struggle for domestic power and authority- a struggle to define the meanings of home, food, and family informs those feelings. Adriana's husband wants to use their domicile to entertain business associates; so when he is unintentionally denied entty, he spurns the home and meal altogether and uses a public tavern for both business and pleasure. For spite, Antipholus E. 'eats out' with a courtesan and 'keep[s] not his hours' (III.i.2). Delinquency from meals conveys his neglect of spousal duties. This conflict has as cultural ancillary the gradual shift in early modern England from manorial socioeconomic organization to that of nascent capitalism. The differences between the masculine world of commerce and law and the feminine domestic environment articulate themselves over the contested cultural form of 'dining', *The Comedy of Errors* registers a historical moment of social transition and dislocation within the not-yet distinct public and private spheres. Forcing oppositions between desire and profit, leisure and work, women and men, Shakespeare explores contemporary anxieties attending the development of the separation of the spheres. . . .

The play's central issues of dining, time, and money punctuate the first meeting between the visiting Antipholus and his servant's twin. This encounter also shows how the 'private' life of home impinges upon and is affected by the 'public' life of commerce- how the two spheres, like the brothers and the states they trade for, are inextricably linked. Dromio E. describes the impact on the family of the master's absence:

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell
My mistress made it one upon my cheek;
She is so hot, because the meat is cod,
The meat is cold because you come not
home:
You come not home, because you have no
stomach:

Along with marking the confusion over lost gold and cold meat, Dromio E. delineates the ideological and spatial opposition beneath the scene: 'My charge was but to fetch you from the mart / Home to your house . . . to dinner' (74-75).

While the play sets up such opposition between husbands and wives, the worlds of trade and home, it ultimately insists upon their ever-shifting interrelations. No definite hierarchy emerges; instead the demands of business and family alternately and farcically interfere with each other. So as we might expect, the Antipholi and their male associates-merchants, the goldsmith, and city magistrates- appear in public scenes and talk in terms of economic exchange and legal sanctions, while women converse inside, their talk focusing on 'private' topics such as marriage and family, as in Act two, scene one, when Adriana and Luciana discuss 'troubles of the marriage bed' (27), and in the beginning of Act five, when the Abbess catechizes Adriana about wifely duty.

However, these discourses are not discrete: the men's business in the mart sustains the household economy, while the household, through both consumption and (re)production, fuels the mart. Similarly, the opposing settings-borrowed from Plautus: the mart or public square and 'the house of Antipholus of Ephesus', where Adriana frets as the spit turns- coexist in a mutually constituting relation. For example, Adriana delivers her most moving speech about the sanctity of marriage at this public thoroughfare (II.ii.109-145), while their home, the Phoenix, apparently ordinarily entertains merchants, its threshold the site of a 'public scene'. Nor is the family dwelling totally distinct from the shop, but sits 'above' the business (II.ii.206)- an arrangement resem bling the situations of sixteenth-century urban tradesmen. The two other loci, the Porpentine, where the courtesan serves her clients, and the Abbey, where the action is resolved in Act five, provide symbolic syntheses of public and private, being both private residences and crossroads of community.

Domestic space in *Errors* open up possibilities for community. While the more centripetal, domestic values espoused by the wives seem large enough to accommodate commercial interest in the name of the family romance, the husbands' business 'errors' or wanderings cause the division of families. Both parents and married

children are separated directly or indirectly because of business trips. Egeon reports that his 'prosperous voyages "drew me from the kind embracements of my spouse', while she, though pregnant, joins him abroad, 'daily' urging their return home (I.i.40, 43, 59). Because of Egeon's mercantile obligations, the family has been separated once; whence wife and children too had left their home initially. Moreover, on the return voyage, which Egeon 'unwillingly' undertook, as he himself admits, a shipwreck separates them again. Like his grandfather from whom Egeon inherited the family business, and like Egeon before him, Antipholus E. seems to find embarking on 'prosperous voyages' to the mart more compelling than home-cooked meals. In certain instances, then, business forges a wedge within families: the '"husband's office" [is] neglected in pursuit of his prospering business'.

Despite the seeming incompatibility of loyalties to work and home, duplicate 'errors' in fact reunite the family, resolving confusion and clearing debts. The play constitutes economic, public, and civic bonds in relation to private, affective ties; and the interdependence of the 'separate spheres' everywhere inflects the action. For example, Adriana and Antipholus E.'s marriage is apparently a state project: not only in as much as marriage is a public institution, but also because the Duke's 'important letters' (V.i.138) had arranged the match.

Out of a sense of both civic and personal debt, the Duke had recommended Antipholus:

Long since thy husband serv'd me in my wars,
And I to thee engag'd a prince's word,
When thou didst make him master of thy
bed,
To do him all the grace and good I could.
(V.i.160-164)

In a similar recognition of the personal investment in and exchange value of 'service', Antipholus E. invokes his military career:

Even for the service that I long since did thee,
When I bestrid thee in the wars, and took
Deep scars to save thy life; even for the blood
That I then lost for thee, now grant me justice.
(V.i.190-94)

All sorts of quids pro quo entangle personal and impersonal identifications: the merchants are all friends who employ credit and exchange money for goods; the courtesan does not give her man a gift token, but rather *trades* her ring for a gold chain of equal value; Adriana expects some recompense for her 'housewifery'; the right amount of money can buy Egeon out of legal trouble. Thus, personal and 'official' business operate on similar terms.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare portrays affective bonds more favorably than economic bonds because the former allow greater flexibility and humanity than the latter. By

granting some foundation to Adriana's mistrust of her husband, Shakespeare portrays her far more sympathetically than Plautus's 'Mulier', who is simply an unreasonable shrew. Furthermore, Adriana's plight contrasts the profit-minded paranoia which drives the merchants. It is not an invisible hand that guides macro-economy, but the long arm of the law. The enmity between the state and Syracusa frames the action and provides the model for civilian interaction: in Ephesus men do not enjoy each other's trust for long; rather, they are bound by contracts, the inflexibility of which creates mutual suspicion among partners and a hasty reliance upon public officers to settle disputes. The legal code in Ephesus is firm: it requires the Duke to 'exclude all pity' in the execution of Syracusans; it ensures that the responsibility for unpaid debt devolve upon the officers ill charge of debtors (IV.iv.114-15); and it makes former friends enemies when contracts seem to be dishonored. The fact that the 'chain' which binds Balthazar, Angelo, the goldsmith, and Antipholus is credit not trust, when measured against Adriana's loyalty, compromises the humanity of mercantile associations. In a telling pun, Antipholus E. queries Angelo: 'Belike you thought our love would last too long / If it were chained together' (IV.i.25-6). As a catalyst to the recog nition scene, the merchant exacts his due from Angelo, warning, 'Or I'll attach you by this officer'. In turn, Angelo remarks: 'just the sum I do owe to you / Is growing to me by Antipholus' (IV.i.6,7-8). As he hires the officers to arrest (the wrong) Antipholus, the goldsmith vows, 'I would not spare my brother in this case' (IV.i.77)- a hyperbole especially suited to this play abounding in brothers. Similarly, master turns on servant when he 'greatly fear[s his] money is not safe' (I.ii.105).

In contrast to the litigious sphere of trade, the domestic sphere in Ephesus generally keeps problems inside, as if respectful of the private nature of its commitments. For example, from the local Dromio's first speech, we imagine Adriana pacing at home, in 'fast[ing] and prayer' while awaiting her husband's return. Driven outside only reluctantly by the accretion of impatience, uncertainty, and jealousy, she initially eschews the public sphere and prefers to bypass the law and the Abbess in administering punishment, justice, or a cure for her husband's putative madness. When she snares her dinner companion in Act two, scene two, Adriana locks him in tightly: 'Dromio, keep the gate. / . . . Sirrah, if any ask you for your master, / Say he dines forth, and let no creature enter. / . . . Dromio, play the porter well' (205, 208-10). Similarly, both the Abbess and Luce, the kitchen wench of Adriana's house, stand as sentinels to defend their respective households from intrusion. Even the courtesan, that 'public woman', shows discretion in stating her grievance: when she perceives herself cheated by Antipholus, she consults his wife in the matter rather than an officer (IV.iii.87-91).

Adriana clearly exemplifies the home/body. Some critics identify her as the play's spokesperson for Protestant companionate marriage. The private family meal she offers, according to Joseph Candido, 'serves as a convenient social vehicle for the larger issue of forgiveness, and her insistence on privacy metaphorically links confidential family matters with the . . . regenera tive power of the confessional'. This spiritual dimension of housewifery is nonetheless underpinned by its material basis- the furnishing of nourishment and safety, which Adriana feels uniquely qualified to provide. At first, rather than invoke the impersonal and dehumanizing legal system to 'cure' her spouse, Adriana orders him 'safe convey'd/Home to my house' (IV.iv.122-23), a wish

repeated in her confrontation with the creditors and the Abbess (V.i.35, 92). But later, when physically threatened by him she hires an exorcist and then concedes to law, begging the Duke to intercede in the matter of her husband's return home. Of course, as a woman, she would lack recourse in the law within 'the late Elizabethan" sex/ gender system"' that Ephesus replicates. Nor does Shakespeare provide a family outlet for Adriana's redress: unlike Plautus's 'Mulier', who calls in her father to arbitrate, Adriana relies on her own resources and hired help. Her conception of the nuclear family- a haven safe from creditors as well as from the interventions of church and state- reflects the transition toward the separate spheres ideology. That the play elsewhere undermines this idealization of the bourgeois domicile further underlines the uneasy coexistence of ideologies and social practices. The relationship between home and marketplace is continually renegotiated in the play, as it was in Elizabethan society.

At times the household Adriana supervises nearly spoils Antipholus's mercantile ventures rather than supporting them. Although she possesses intimate knowledge of her husband's book-keeping, as when she admits surprise, 'That he, unknown to me, should be in debt' (IV.ii.48), Adriana recognizes that the marketplace poses threats to marital relations. And her husband recognizes the cost of his domestic responsibilities. Notions of family-as-obstacle unfold in Act three, scene one, where a spatial and ideological stand-off transpires concerning the function and government of the household. Antipholus E. and his cronies appear outside his home awaiting hospitable entertainment, while Adriana and her guest (the twin she mistakes for her husband) 'dine above' and forbid intrusion. A kind of Lysistradian battle of the sexes with the women and their spoils inside and the men outside trying to get in, the scene forms the climax of the play. The 'heroine', that operative symbol of domestic authority, is Luce, the enormous kitchen wench betrothed to Dromio E. and feared by his visiting twin ('She is too big, I hope, for me to compass' [IV.i.111]. In a long exchange of rhyming threats and retorts, formally extending yet undercutting the content of the men's Ephesian dialogue on 'welcome' and 'cheer' preceding it, Luce jeopardizes the foundation of her master's identity. She threatens to have him thrown into the stocks (III.i.59-60), and forces the men to 'part with neither [the cheer nor welcome]' that the householder had promised (67). Such domestic conduct is decidedly bad for business.

That this disappointed meal gets tangled up in the confusion about mercantile debts shows the deep and materially efficacious connection between men's homelives and their public estimation in the marketplace. Discussing Adriana's behavior in terms of Antipholus's 'reputation', Balthazar reveals the dependence of commercial credit on domestic harmony, warning that '[a] vulgar comment. . . / [a]gainst [Antipholus's] yet ungalled estimation' would compromise his standing in the community (III.i.100, 102). For his part, Antipholus E. perceives the women's insubordination as a consolidated assault on his power and authority as master of the house, since he promises to punish 'my wife and her confederates' for the incident (IV.i.17). Furthermore, the men perceive female unruliness as an affront to domestic order; and they sexually encode this unruliness and associate women with feeding in the play. The husband becomes increasingly convinced that Adriana had feasted and made love to the only man she's seen with-Pinch, the schoolmaster (IV.iv.57-61). Meanwhile Luce's association with the kitchen is inseparable from her massive and threatening body, and the courtesan invites

Antipholus S. to 'mend [his] dinner' at her place (IV.iii.54). His frantic, moralistic refusal of her offer: 'Avoid, then, fiend! What tell'st thou me of supping'? (IV.iii.60) makes explicit the sexual nature of dining. at a woman's table, especially when compared with his earlier quest for male dinner companions (I.ii.23). Thus, it seems that men fear women's domestic control and their sexuality, both of which are related to food-provision. As we shall see, however, these fears are unfounded: Adriana wants nothing more (or less) than to administer to her husband's needs, fully accepting her proper sphere of the home, while insisting simultaneously on its sanctity and its correspondence with his business life.

The Roman source play offers some insight into this localized fear of 'feeding and dependency'. *The Menaechmi* opens with a statement about the binding effects of hospitality. As the longest speech in the play, its subject becomes a major theme. Peniculus, a Parasite on the table of Erotium (subsidized by Menaechmus, her married lover), conjectures that the way to a man's loyalty is through his stomach. He envisions a prison system based on the provision of meals:

If then ye would keep a man without all suspicion of running away from ye, the surest way is to tie him with meate, drinke, and ease: Let him ever be idle, eate his belly full, and carouse while his skin will hold, and he shall never, I warrent ye, stir a foote. These strings to tie one by the teeth, passe all the bands of iron, steel, or what metal so ever. . .

Having cut this character from his version, Shakespeare disperses his sentiment among the male characters who flee rather than enter the bondage of feeding at women's tables. So Antipholus E. refuses to come home to dinner, while the Syracusan men renounce the women who cook and invite them to meals, calling them variously 'beastly creature', witch, devil (III.ii.88, 154; IV.iii.58).

Women as well as men recognize the contractual nature of meals- the 'strings to tie one' to the domestic sphere; and this recognition becomes the vehicle for reconciliation in the play. So Luce and the courtesan as well as Adriana and Emilia express desire, power, and protection through dining and food imagery. Adriana's lament for her neglect ranges fully through connotations of feeding, and suggests how crucially food-service defined the domestic on the Shakespearean stage and in early modern society. In language which collapses her self with her home, she complains:

His company must do his minions grace
Whilst I at home starve for a merry look. . .
But, too unruly deer, he breaks the pale and feeds from home.
Poor I am but his
stale.
(II.i.87-88, 100-1)

Adriana uses the metaphor of feeding as loving. Punning on 'grace' as the prayer before meals and the 'gracious' presence Antipholus denies her, Adriana emphasizes both the ritualized nature of meals and the enclosed-ness of their marriage vows which he

'breaks' by dining out. She further acknowledges the reciprocal nature of 'feeding' (the verb, like 'nurse' and 'suck', itself admits both transitive and intransitive definitions): he 'feeds' himself and his ego (and perhaps his sexual appetites) abroad, where his largess also 'feeds' the company. Meanwhile, he does not 'feed' her the recognition ('merry look') she needs, nor does he 'feed' with her. The first two lines contrast the pub(lic) 'company' with 'I at home', and construct one version of mart! house, public private opposition at work in *Errors.* Finally, punning on 'stale' as both whore and unappetizing food, Adriana's metaphor encapsulates the problem: the love/food she offers is no longer appetizing to her husband. By breaking the pale herself to fetch her husband, Adriana- unknowingly mirroring her mother-in-law- performs not so much an act of 'transgression' as an attempt to construct a home to contain the family. Her flight is at once remarkable and understood in the context of the play's farcical action.

The action of the play, which depends on deferring the meeting of characters crossing the same stage at different times, progresses via the presence of real or symbolic boundaries, and a sense of proper place. So, as we have seen, Syracusan merchants are out of bounds in Ephesus, and one's home ought to be off limits to strangers. Throughout her disquisition with Adriana, Luciana appears resigned to the 'bounds' that circumscribe each species and sex, and endorses the hierarchy at the top of which reigns 'Man, more divine, the master of all these' (II.i.20). Luciana's metaphysics assumes the fixed boundary between men's public roles and women's domestic duties, as she consoles her sister about Antipholus's absence from the meal: 'Perhaps', Luciana offers, 'some merchant hath invited him, / And from the mart he's somewhere gone to dinner' (II.i.4-5). She continues to argue, 'Because their [men's] business lies out 0' door', they may enjoy greater 'liberty' than their stay-at-home counterparts (11). This line of argument, challenged elsewhere in the play, depends on the separation between inside and outside, home and business- fissures not yet formed, and arguably never fixed in Elizabethan society.

Angered by the double standard Luciana embraces, Adriana nonetheless endorses a type of gendered separation of the spheres, as her own identity is bound up with domestic issues. Her language borrows heavily from close-to-home imagery: taste, 'service', and eating. At one point, she accosts Antipholus S., administering a dose of marriage-tract logic that moves even the wrong audience. She first accuses her 'husband' of feeding his 'sweet aspects' to another woman. Next, she recalls a past time when they 'ate' together:

The time was once when thou unurg'd
wouldst vow
That neVer words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never touch well welcome to thy hand,
That never meat sweet-savour'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake or look'd or touch'd or carv'd
to thee.
(II.ii.113-18)

This speech depicts a wife's willing service to a man who is home to appreciate it. The scenario illustrates what Karen Newman calls the 'special nearness of wives' in early modern England, their importance in the household economy and their proximity to husbands' affairs which might threaten patriarchal control. In medieval and renaissance noble households, the meat carver was not properly a 'servant', but, possibly a function of his being entrusted with knives, he held the highest position among servers, and the privilege was often reserved for esteemed friends of the lord. Moreover, because of the nature both of the game to be served and the high occasion, the role demanded great skill and finesse. Wives fulfilled this function in middle- and upper-class households of the seventeenth century. 'When great personages shall visit' wives were expected to 'sit at an end of a table and carve handsomely', as the ninth Earl of Northumberland instructed his son in 1609. 'Let huswife be carver', Thomas Tusser charges with his characteristic and terse pragmatism. In pointing to her own carving duties, then, Adriana aligns herself with this special brand of service, skill, and trust newly designated to middle-class wives. Adriana calls for nothing radically new in their relations but rather aims to reinstate herself as Antipholus' cook, confidante, and server.

III

The only other married woman in *Errors,* Emilia endorses this domestic and meal-centred value system. Although she holds a small part in the play-text, materializing only- and at first anonymously- in the last act and discussed in Egeon's deposition (I.i), this matriarchal presence- mother, wife, abbess-looms large on stage. Like her daughter-in-law, Emilia stands firmly on the side of 'home', and, like the young wife, fights for her family's togetherness. Both she and Adriana make a religion out of their 'service' in reclaiming or sustaining their men-folk and seem prototypes of the 'domestic woman' emerging in eighteenth-century Europe described by Nancy Armstrong. Emilia is a sacrificial figure: it is she who '(almost fainting under / The pleasing punishment that women bear) / Had made provision' to follow her traveling salesman to Epidamnum; she who *impor* tunes the family's return home. Her 'incessant weepings' aboard the ship '[f]orc'd' Egeon to arrange for another voyage. Emilia, like Thaisa in *Pendes,* betakes herself to a religious retreat until such time (in her case, 33 years) as she may be restored to her role as wife and mother. When her own husband wanders, Adriana waits in fasting and prayer-the metaphor suggesting her almost religious devotion to the marriage we see her enact throughout the play.

Both Emilia and Adriana spin out practical theories of marital roles, both employing eating and consuming imagery to establish nurture as vital to the household economy and to the satisfaction of men. We have already examined Adriana's manifesto in her reminis cence of carving; in hers, Emilia acknowledges her skill in simples and medicines- knowledge she ascribes to her religious vocation, but which also fell under the auspices of 'housewifery' in the period. Their doctrines, along with Luciana's view of marriage, reflect the emergent notion of the separation of the spheres. Luciana, who understands that commercial engagements and world affairs distract men from the hearth, accepts as 'natural' the gendered division of labor and leisure, whereas the experienced wives lament this division, blaming 'other women' and scolding partners for men's distance from home. In all we note an uneasy recognition that domestic life may

not satisfy men, that family matters may be incompatible with the contingencies of mercantile experience.

These problems generate further inquiry by the chief representatives of domestic life, Emilia and Adriana, who share a commitment to providing nurturing homes for their families. *As* the matriarch interrogates Adriana, each speaker uses the circumstances of Antipholus's dining as an indication of the state of his health and sanity, and as an index of the domestic situation itself. For example, Adriana confesses to 'urging' the subject of his fidelity '[a]t board' as well as in bed. Emilia chastens this harping habit of Adriana's with proverbial wisdom:

Thou say'st his meat was sauc'd with thy
upbraidings:
Unquiet meals make ill digestions;
Thereof the raging fire of fever bred,
And what's a fever, but a fit of madness? . .
In food, in sport, in life-preserving rest
To be disturb'd would mad or man or beast.
(V.i.73-76, 83-84)

The repeated emphasis on meals reveals both the mother's concern for her son's well-being and her familiarity with affairs of the hearth, while also reinforcing the centrality of nurture in the domestic economy.

Antipholus' wife and mother compete for the authorship of his cure, each invoking her feminine 'office' as justification, demonstrating a struggle for domestic authority between women in different relationships to the man of the house. Perhaps because she knows that Antipholus S. is neither mad nor married, and perhaps because of reawakened maternal duty, the abbess defends her house, her son, and her right to care for him- 'a branch and parcel of mine oath, / a charitable duty of my order' (106-107). But Adriana voices equal devotion:

I will attend my husband, be his nurse,
Diet his sickness, for it is my office,
And I will have no attorney but myself;
And therefore !et me have him home with
me.
(98-101)

Adriana again asserts the sanctity of the home in her desire to get him out of the hands of what seem to be strangers. Thus thwarted by the abbess, only at this point does Adriana resort to state aid in the person of the Duke. As we have seen, she has before opted to handle domestic strife privately ('And I will have no attorney but myself'), while in the commercial world contracts are enforced through officials and surrogates. Her calling upon 'official' intervention here to settle the problem heralds the final feast which celebrates the resolution; both unite private and public experience.

The only festive meal hosted by a woman in Shakespeare's canon, Emilia's gossips' feast symbolically celebrates, *inter alia,* childbirth- an achievement uniquely within the province of women. Not, as in other festive comedies, a wedding feast for the presumably espoused Luciana and Antipholus S., nor a marital reunion banquet, as in the romances, 'a gossips' feast' celebrates the delayed delivery of '[her] heavy burden' (406, 403). The Duke promises, 'With all my heart I'll gossip at this feast' (408). This communal supper not only achieves official endorsement, it also promises that Adriana and Antipholus will at last eat together, and likewise transforms the vexed interrelationship of 'public' and 'private' haunting the play all along. Not exactly the romantic dinner for two that Adriana had planned, and a far cry from her husband's pub-crawls, the gossips' feast offers the *via media* between private and. public dining. Here, the immediate and extended family, along with city magistrates and merchants, will feast together. With the confusion cleared up, a measure of reconciliation is possible between the young couple, augmented by Emilia's motherly (if bossy) advice to the wife.

A 'broken christening', similar to the 'broken nuptials' Carol Neely ascribes to the romances, Emilia's feast consummates the woman's pan in all forms of family: her restoration to wifehood, the reunion with her children-now expanded to include Adriana and Luciana and the rejoining of siblings, including the Dromios for whom she serves as a kind of godmother. Emilia feels re-bom ('such Nativity'!) into the family romance, and her feast places wifehood, as well as motherhood and nurture, in the limelight. As social histories of childbirth indicate, from advising their kinswomen and neighbors about aphrodisiacs, to procuring their 'longings' during pregnancy, and assisting during and after childbirth, early modern women played principal roles in their community's 'reproductive rituals'. 'There were. . . aspects of birth celebrations that were essentially female rituals, in which participants were drawn from a wide social spectrum and united by gender and biological experience'. Women's protracted activities culminated in this ritual meeting. Held after and serving as a secular counterpart to the 'churching' of the young mother, the gossips' feast ritually acknowledged and 'socialized' women's reproductive power as well as their aid along the way.

Emilia's gossips' feast celebrates the newly restored community- its domestic, mercantile, and political components- at the same time as it confirms the unique achievements of women in that community. The feast is centered in private space-the abbey hitherto having been cordoned off from the town opened up through a ritual which crosses boundaries between public and celebrates women's 'labor'. In accepting the invitation, the male mercantile community grants that this domestic intervention is as compelling as the 'intestine jars' which confront them in their pons, fairs, and marts. . . .

Critical Essay #9

Many critics note the binary pairing of Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus, as they do with other obvious combinations (the Dromios, Adriana and Luciana, Aegeon and Aemilia). Catherine M. Shaw argues that the differences in their personalities and their relationships with women (Luciana and Adriana, respectively), "provide the distinction in tone between the high and middle comedy of the play." William C. Carroll notes that the" doubling" they experience through the confusion over their identities is largely a result of their conversations with other characters, particularly the Dromios, Adriana, and Luciana. Their language is transformed, just as they are.

W. Thomas MacCary and Ann Thompson explore the Freudian aspects of Antipholus of Syracuse's quest for identity, especially in relation to the "mother." Ralph Berry sees him as a precursor to Hamlet, a "spiritual" younger brother unsure of his identity in search of an elder brother who is certain about his. A. C. Hamilton finds Antipholus of Ephesus's behav *ior* perfectly justified in the face of all that is happening to him. It is no wonder that he becomes angry when he is refused entry to his home (and thus is embarrassed in front of a business associate), falsely accused, and imprisoned.

Roben Ornstein is dubious that Antipholus of Ephesus's character has changed much if at all by the end of the play and notes that we are not witness to reconciliation between Antipholus and Adriana. John P. Cutts argues that not only has Antipholus of Syracuse found his own identity, he now has a family identity in being reunited with his mother, brother, and father.

Source: *"The Comedy of Errors:* A Different Kind of Comedy," in *New Literary History,* Vol. 9, No.3, Spring, 1978, pp. 528-34.

[In the following excerpt, MacCary examines Antipholus of Syracuse from a Freudian perspective, in terms of his relation ships with Adriana, Luciana, Aemilia, and Antipholus of Ephesus. MacCary notes in particular the Significance of both Adriana's and Antipholus of Syracuse's use of the phrase "drop of water" in separate conversations.]

. . . . If we were to formulate a kind of comedy which would fulfill the demands associated with the pre-oedipal period, it would have many of the aspects which critics find annoying in *The Comedy of Errors.* The family would be more important than anyone outside the family, and the mother would be the most important member of the family. Security and happiness would be sought not in sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex but in reunion with or creation of a person like the person the protagonist would like to become, i.e., his alter ego, or, more correctly, his ideal ego. There would be an ambivalent attitude toward women in the play, because the young child (male) depends upon the mother for sustenance but fears being reincorporated by the mother. Such fears of the overwhelming mother might be expressed in terms of locked doors and bondage, but the positive, nurturing mother would occasion concern with feasting and drinking. There might even be ambivalent situations, such as

banquets arranged by threatening women, and ambivalent symbols, such as gold rings or chains, which suggest both attraction and restriction.

How much do we want to know about the pre-oedipal period? Can we really believe that certain conceptions of happiness develop in certain stages and all later experience is related back to these? To what extent is our appreciation of comedy based on our ability to identify with its protagonists? If we answer this last question affirmatively, then we must at least consider the implications of the other two. Most of us do not have twin brothers from whom we were separated at birth, so the pattern of action in *The Comedy of Errors* cannot encourage us to identify with Antipholus of Syracuse-clearly the protagonist, as I hope to show below- on the level 0 superficial actuality. There must be a common denominator, and thus the action of the play must remind us, by way of structural similarity or symbolic form, of something in our own experience. If a play has universal appeal, the experience recalled is more likely to be one of childhood than not, since the earliest experiences are not only the most commonly shared, but also the most formative: what we do and have done to us as children shapes all later experience. A good comedy "ends happily," which means it follows a pattern of action which convinces us that we can be happy. Happiness is different things at different periods in our lives, and if the argument on development is accepted, the greatest happiness is the satisfaction of our earliest desires. By this I do not mean that comedy should feed us and keep us warm, but rather that it should cause us to recapture, in our adult, intellectualized state, the sensual bliss of warmth and satiety.

I do not think that many critics today would label *The Comedy of Errors* a farce and dismiss it as deserving no more serious analysis. The patterns of farce, like all the patterns of action in drama, are appealing for some good reason. Clearly the comic pattern involving mistaken identity appeals to us because it leads us from confusion about identity- our own, of course, as well as the protagonist's- to security. The most effective version of that pattern would be that which presents to us our own fears and then assuages them, so it must speak to us in language and action which can arouse memory traces of our own actual experience of a search for identity. While it is true that this search goes on throughout the "normal" man's life, it is most intense in the early years. When Antipholus of Syracuse likens himself to a drop of water in danger of being lost in the ocean, he speaks to us in terms which are frighteningly real:

He that commends me to mine own content
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling 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.
(I. ii. 33-40)

The image is based on a proverbial expression in Plautus' *Menaechmi:* "neque aqua aquae nee lacte lactis, crede me, usquam similius / quam hie tui est, tuque huius

autero', ("water is not to water, nor milk to milk, as like as she is to you and you are to her") (1089-90). From a purely physical comparison, Shakespeare has developed a metaphysical conceit which has vast philosophical implications, but its immediate impact is emotional. The plight of the protagonist is felt almost physically, his yearning for his double accepted as natural and inevitable. Water itself is the most frequent dream symbol for birth, and with the mention of the mother and brother, we are set firmly in the child's world. The brother, in our own experience, is not a brother, but another self, the ideal ego which the mother first creates for us and we strive to assimilate. We are reminded of the Narcissus myth, since water can reflect as well as absorb, and Antipholus of Syracuse seeks himself in his mirror image. The water here, as ocean, is the overwhelming aspect of the mother, the mother from whom the child cannot differentiate himself. She projects to us the image of what we shall become; but it is a fragile image, and if we lose it we risk reintegration with her, re-absorption, a reversal of the process of individuation which we suffer from the sixth to the eighteenth month. Only later, when we have developed a sense of alterity, can we distinguish ourselves from the mother, and her image of us from ourselves.

Plautus, of course, does not frame his comedy of twins with a family romance the way Shakespeare does. Neither mother nor father appears; there is not even any serious romantic involvement for either twin. In fact, the negative attitude toward marriage which spreads through Shakespeare's play derives from Plautus', where the local twin lies to his wife and steals from her, and finally deserts her entirely to go home with his brother. As Shakespeare expands the cast and devel ops themes only implicit in the *Menaechmi,* he provides a complete view of the relation between man and wife and clearly indicates the preparation for this relation in the male child's attitude toward the mother. In Plautus we have only one set of doubles, the twins themselves, but Shakespeare gives us two more sets: the twin slaves Dromio and the sisters Adriana and Luciana. We see these women almost entirely through the eyes of Antipholus of Syracuse, our focus of attention in the play. From his first speech onwards it is from his point of view we see the action, and the occasional scene involving his brother selves only as background to his quest: he is the active one, the seeker. We meet the two sisters before he does, in their debate on jealousy, and then when he encounters them, our original impressions are confirmed. They are the dark woman (Adriana, *atro)* and the fair maid (Luciana, *luce)* we meet with so frequently in literature, comprising the split image of the mother, the one threatening and restrictive, the other yielding and benevolent. The whole atmosphere of the play, with its exotic setting and dreamlike action, prepares us for the epiphany of the good mother in Luciana, the bad mother in Adriana. Antipholus of Syracuse, who seems to have found no time for, or shown no interest in, women previously, is entranced and wonders that Adriana can speak to him so familiarly.

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?
(II. ii. 183-86)

The extraordinary aspect of his reaction, though quite natural in the context of the play's system of transferences, is that he should take for his dream the strange woman's reality: in other circumstances we might expect him to say that she is dreaming and has never really met him, but he says instead that perhaps he had a dream of her as his wife which was real. She is, then, strange in claiming intimacy with him, but not entirely unknown: she is a dream image, and he goes on to question his present state of consciousness and sanity:

Am I in earth, in Heaven, or in Hell?
Sleeping or waking? Mad or well advised?
Known unto these, and to myself disguised!
(II. ii. 214-16)

If these women were completely alien to him, had he no prior experience of them in any form, then he could have dismissed them and their claims upon him. As it is, he doubts not their sanity but his own, and wonders whether he dreams or wakes as they persist in their entreaties, suggesting he has dreamed of them before, and not without some agitation.

The exact words of Adriana's address which creates this bewilderment are, of course, very like his own opening remarks. She seems to know his mind exactly, and this makes her even more familiar to him though strange in fact. She takes his comparison of himself to a drop of water and turns it into a definition of married love; this, then, is sufficient to drive him to distraction:

How comes it now, my Husband, oh, how
comes it
That thou an then estranged from thyself?
Thyself I call It. being strange to me,
That, undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better pan.
Ah, do not tear away thyself from me!
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. 121-31)

Most critics would acknowledge the central position of these two passages in the argument of the play, but they do not account for their effectiveness. The impact of the repetition is due to the reversal of the protagonist's expectations. He came seeking his mirror image, like Narcissus, his ideal ego, his mother's image of himself, and finds instead a woman who claims to be part of himself; and she threatens him with that absorption and lack of identity which he had so feared: she is the overwhelming mother who refuses to shape his identity but keeps him as part of herself. In his speech he was the drop of water; in her speech the drop of water is let fall as an analogy, but he

becomes again that drop of water and flees from the woman who would quite literally engulf him.

He flees, of course, to the arms of the benign Luciana, she who had warned her sister to restrain her jealousy and possessiveness, to allow her husband some freedom lest she lose him altogether. This unthreatening, undemanding woman attracts Antipholus of Syracuse, and he makes love to her in terms which recall the two drop of water speeches:

Lue What, are you mad, that you do reason so?
Ant. S. Not mad, but mated; how, I do not know.
Lue It is a fault that springeth from your eye.
Ant. S. For gazing on your beams, fair sun, being by.
Lue Gaze where you should, and that will dear your sight
Ant. S. As good to wink, sweet love, as look on night.
Lue Why call you me love? Call my sister so.
Ant. S. Thy sister's sister.
Lue:. That's my sister.
Ant. S. No, It is thyself, my own self's better part,
Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart,
My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim,
My sole earth's Heaven, and my Heaven's claim.
(III. ii. 53-64)

There is as much difference between Adriana and Luciana as between night and day: Adriana *is* the absence or perversion of all that is good in Luciana. It is not the difference between dark women and fair women we find in the other comedies- Julia and Sylvia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* Helena and Hermia in *Midsummer Night's Dream*- but much more like the difference in the *Sonnets* between the dark lady and the fair youth: on the one side we have all that *is* threatening and corruptive, while on the other there *is* truth and beauty. Again, all *is* a dream: Antipholus of Syracuse has seen Luciana before, in dreams, in madness, but then she was indistinguishable from Adriana, the two opposites bound up as one. Now, as if by the dream mechanism of decomposition they are separate, and he can love the one and avoid the other. He has overcome his fear of the overwhelming mother and projects now his image of the benevolent mother upon Luciana.

The relation between these two young women and Aemilia, the actual mother of Antipholus of Syracuse, becomes clear in the climactic scene. He has been given

sanctuary in the priory, after having been locked up by Adriana and escaping her; Aemilia emerges, like the vision of some goddess, to settle all confusion. Her attention focuses on Adriana, and she upbraids her son's wife for the mistreatment she has given him. It is a tirade not unlike others in early Shakespearean comedy against the concept of equality and intimacy in marriage. We hear it from Katharina at the end of *The Taming of the* Shrew, and we see Proteus fleeing from such a marriage in *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* as do all the male courtiers in *Love's Labor's Lost.* In the later romances this antagonism between the man who would be free and the woman who would bind him home *is* equally apparent and more bitterly portrayed; e.g., Portia's possessiveness in *The Merchant of Venice* and Helena's pursuit of Betram in *All's well.* The identification of the threatening woman with the mother in the man's eyes *is* developed to varying degrees in these different instances- the maternal aspect of Portia is remarkable, as are Helena's close ties to the Countess- but here it is transparent: Aemilia must instruct her daughter-in-law on the proper treatment of her son, and we see this through the eyes of Antipholus of Syracuse: he has finally been able to conquer his fear of losing his identity in his mother's too close embrace because she herself tells him that this is no way for a woman to treat him:

The venom clamors of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems his sleeps were hindered by thy
railing,
And thereof comes it that his head is light.
Thou say'st his meat was sauced with thy
upbraidings;
Unquiet meals make ill digestions.
Thereof the raging fire of fever bred,
And what's a fever but a fit of madness?
Thou say'st his sports were hindered by thy
brawls.
Sweet recreation barred, what doth ensue
But moody and dull Melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless
Despair, And at her heels a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures and foes to life.
(I. i. 69-82)

This description of madness reminds us of the mythical monsters Harpies, Gorgons, and Furies- all female, like Shakespeare's Melancholy and Despair- bitch-like creatures who hound men to madness. Clearly this entire race *is* a projection of male fears of female domination, and their blood-sucking, enervating, food-polluting, petrifying attacks are all related to pre-oedipal fantasies of maternal deprivation. By identifying this aspect of the mother in Adriana, he can neutralize it. Antipholus of Syracuse, then, finds simultaneously the two sexual objects Freud tells us we all originally have: his own benevolent and protective mother and the image of himself in his brother he has narcissistically pursued. . . .

Critical Essay #10

Source: "To Be and Not To Be: *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night,"* in *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean* Comedy, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 67-79.

[In the following excerpt, Carroll discusses haw Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus undergo "transformation by doubling," Antipholus of Syracuse enters a world (Ephesus) that is unfamiliar to him geographically, but the familiarity with which people greet and address him makes him wonder whether he's gone mad, is experiencing a dream, or whether Some external Ephesian force is at work. A ntipholus of Ephesus has a similar yet opposite experience- all that is familiar to him is now strange, which angers him and nearly drives him mad. Much of the confusion is due to the "transformations in everyday language" in their conversations with the Dromios and with Adriana and Luciana.]

. . . . The kind of experience Antipholus of Syracuse undergoes serves as a model of transformation by doubling. He begins the play in what we deduce *is* an altered state: he has fallen from his customary state to being "dull with care and melancholy" (I.ii.20). This change is unexplained and troublesome, and will be reversed by the end of the play; but melancholy is soon forgotten when madness seems to enter. *As* he falls into the plot's manifold errors, Antipholus will alternate between two theories to explain what is happening: first, that some force external to him, in Ephesus, deceives his eye and deludes his senses; second, that he has in fact gone mad. The two explanations are by no means exclusive. His long-lost twin, Antipholus of Ephesus, will undergo a similar trans formative dislocation, made perhaps even worse because the "familiar" everyday world he has lived in becomes completely strange. He too enters the play already changed-estranged from his wife Adriana, who accuses him (in the person of his brother) of being "strange to me," and taunts him that she has been unfaithful, because he has supposedly avoided her for another.

For, if we two be one, and thou play false,
I do digest the poison of thy flesh,
Being trumpeted by thy contagion.
(II.ii.143-5)

The ideal of two becoming one, which takes on increasing suggestiveness in the play, marks only an unfortunate dislocation here. Antipholus' reply is confused, and Luciana exclaims, "Fie, brother, how the world is changed with you" (I. 153). The Other inhabitants of Ephesus decide more simply that no matter which Antipholus is present, the poor fellow is mad.

As the scene proceeds, Antipholus of Syracuse lights upon a third explanation, that he lives a dream: "What, was I married to her in my dream? / Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?" (11.183-4). He accepts this transformation for the time being, in a spirit of

adventure, for something in him sympathetically recognizes that error (in the root sense of wandering) is what his own life has been, and is still the way to new revelation:

What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?
Until I know this sure uncertainty,
I'll entertain the offered fallacy.
Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advised?
Known unto these, and to myself disguised?
I'll say as they say, and persever so,
And in this mist at all adventures go.
(II.ii.18S-7, 213-17)

Mist, water, error: metamorphosis thrives in unstable regions, and it takes some courage to step into "this mist" - here, not the obliviousness of Bottom, but some thing self-conscious and risk-taking. Antipholus also understands his position as existence in some kind of fiction, wondering at the paradox that he may be "to myself disguised," that he can be not himself and yet know it at the same time.

Both Antipholi are increasingly startled by unexplained transformations in everyday language. Faces are the same, names the same, but nothing fits:

S. *Antiph.:* "How can she thus then call us by our names, / Unless it be by inspiration?" (II.ii.167-8).

His brother's servant echoes him, in a now familiar trope, when he confronts his unseen twin:

0 villain, thou hast sto!'n both mine office
and my name.
The one ne'er got me credit, the other mickle
blame.
thou hadst been Dromio today in my
place,
Thou would have changed thy face for a
name, or thy name for an ass.
(III.i.44-7)

Later, he rudely remarks, "A man may break a word with you, sir, and words are but wind; / Ay, and break it in your face, so he break it not behind" (ll. 75-6). Words are but wind (as unstable as water) in this play because Shakespeare has taken special pains to create a symbolic world in which language itself, among other things, is constantly transformed and so "fails" in the strict constructionist sense. Nothing could be more disorienting than a world which precisely resembles the ordinary one except for the fact that customary language no longer operates there. The Antipholi and Dromi believe, alternatively, that they are transformed; that everyone else is transformed; and that their mere words have been mysteriously transformed.

Of all the words that have once been effectual but are now without stable meaning, that ordinarily establish the boundaries of identity, none is more important than one's name:

There's not a man I meet but doth salute me
As if I were their well-acquainted friend;
And everyone doth call me by my name.
Some tender money to me, some invite me;
Some other give me thanks for kindnesses;
Some offer me commodities to buy.
Even now a tailor called me ill his shop
And showed me silks that he had bought for me,
And therewithal took measure of my body.
Sure, these are but imaginary wiles,
And Lap! and sorcerers inhabit there.
(IV.iii.1-11)

The method of creating this linguistic and social dislocation-twins with the same name- is quite mechanical, as the play's detractors are always pointing out; but the effects created are anything but mechanical. The linguistic transformations are both cause and effect of the extensive psychological changes. Small wonder that at the end of the play Emilia asks everyone to "Go to a gossips' feast, and joy with me / After so long grief such nativity" (V.iAO6-7). These people need not only a re-birth but also the re-naming that a christening party will provide. Antipholus of Syracuse especially needs a new beginning, his last one having failed in all ways:

In Ephesus I am but two hours old,
As strange unto your town as to your talk;
Who, every word by all my wit being scanned,
Wants wit in all one word to understand.
(II.ii.149- 52)

The new names at the gossips' feast will, of course, be the same as they always were, but the people, paradoxically the same outwardly, will change once again. So the gossips' feast is both renewal and repetition, since the names- what started the confusion in the first place are and are not unique.

As identity and language begin to transform, and comfortably familiar boundaries collapse, the inevitable erotic obligato begins to sound. Pleading for her neglected sister, Luciana succeeds only in making the wrong brother (Antipholus of Syracuse) fall in love with her:

Sweet mistress, what your name is else, I
know not;
Nor by what wonder you do hit of mine;
Are you a god? Would you create me new?
Transform me, then, and to your pow'r I'll yield.
But if that I am I, then well I know

Your weeping sister is no wife of mine,
Nor to her bed no homage do I owe;
Far more, far more, to you do I decline.
(III.ii.29-30, 39-44)

Like every other Renaissance annotator faced with the powerful combination of woman, water, and metamorphosis, Antipholus next resorts to the legend of the siren to represent his experience:

0, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note,
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears.
Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote;
Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs;
And as a bed I'll take them, and there lie,
And, in that glorious supposition, think
He gains by death that hath such means to
die.
Let Love, being light, be drowned if she sinks
(II. 45-52)

Antipholus is not much of an Odysseus, to be sure, but the audience knows what he means. The Renaissance fascination with metamorphosis finds a perfect culmination in the related myths of Circe and the sirens the figure of the female temptress who could transform a warrior into a Gryll or, conversely, a naive young man into a mature and worthy lover. If she was a fleshly temptress for some, she could also be (as for Antipholus) a kind of muse. She might signify lust for Homer or Ovid, or the "glorious supposition" of romantic love. This stereotyped double nature- virgin or whore- may be partly seen in Antipholus of Syracuse's two references to the siren. The first, above, is one of rapture. But near the end of the same scene, after a little more thought about his "wife" Adriana and his new love for Luciana, it all seems more difficult:

There's none but witches do inhabit here,
And therefore 'tis high time that I were hence.
She that doth call me husband, even my soul
Doth for a wife abhor. But her fair sister,
Possessed with such a gentle sovereign grace,
Of such enchanting presence and discourse,
Hath almost made me traitor to myself.
But, lest myself be guilty to self-wrong,
I'll stop mine ears against the mermaid's
song.
(II. 157-65)

He is already *not* himself in this situation; but his determination to hang onto his inner self of honor, his last shred of identity, insures that his metamorphosis will remain incomplete. Clearly, the audience recognizes that there is nothing in fact wrong with his love for Luciana; somewhat less clearly, we see that there is something wrong instead

with the entire situation. Antipholus of Syracuse will not *become* someone else, though he is mightily tempted as a way of fulfilling desire; what he doesn't realize is that he has *already* been transformed into someone else by his situation.

The Plautine convention rarely leads as deeply as Shakespeare is about to take us. He seems, in short, to have rejected the basic assumption that identical twins are identical. For dramatic purposes, the most important fact about identical twins is that they are and must be finally different. If they were *completely* identical, there would be no play. Their overwhelming similarity allows the playwright to construct a complex transformational situation, but only their difference allows it to come to dramatic life. The situation is a vivid illustration of one we will see again and again: a man resists transformation, though attracted to it; he resists it even though it could never, in human imagination, be easier to accept; and even though he resists it, it still happens. Metamorphosis appears as both change *and* stasis, then; it manifests itself simultaneously as being (remaining the same) and not-being (the metamorphosed other). The "comic horror" attached "to the notion of the *complete* identity of two human beings," as G. R. Elliot notes, underlies the play's doubling, but like any metamorphosis, which is and is not, absolute identity is only asymptotically approached, and difference, the "is not," is preserved. That Antipholus blames local "witches," finally, reminds us from Murray's accounts that the complicity of the viewing audience (onstage for now) is also required.

Antipholus of Syracuse's existential predicament finds a comic mirror in his servant's. Dromio's transformation similarly derives not only from his situation in Ephesus but also from the power of love:

S. Dromio. Do you know me, sir? Am I
Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?
S Antiph. Thou are Dromio, thou art my
man, thou art thyself.
S. Dromio. I am an ass; I am a woman's
man, and besides myself.
(III.ii.73- 8)

That love transforms one, makes Dromio both himself and "besides myself," is by now a commonplace, though Dromio's capture at the hands of Nell (or Luce) seems rather desperate. After his famous comic blazon of her parts ("She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her"-ll. 114-5), Dromio leaves with the familiar animalistic fears on his mind: "And, I think, if my breast had not been made of faith, and my heart of steel, / She had transformed me to a curtal dog, and made me turn i' th' wheel" (ll. 146-7). As she is a "globe," so engulfment by her would be a total loss of self, as complete as a drop of water falling into the ocean. As in *A M idsummer Night's Dream,* the characters in *The Comedy of Errors* fear the impingement of the animal, and the lowering or abolition of human boundaries. To stop one's ears is all a mariner can do. Not to be oneself, to be an "other," is as much as being an ass or a curtal dog.

As the play progresses and the "errors" multiply, the characters experience more and more transformations through situational changes in vision. Hearing that her husband's

brother has wooed Luciana, Adriana begins to find her "husband" deformed, crooked, old and sere, i ll-faced, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere:

Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
Stigmatical in making, worse ill mind
(IV.ii.19-22)

This description of course applies to her as well. From the start her shrewishness has been a given from which, we expect, she will be changed by the end of the play. The madness spreads rapidly, for S. Dromio soon describes a simple jailor as "A devil . . . a fiend, a fairy . . . a wolf. . . a hound that runs counter" (IV.ii.32-9). His master sees a routine courtesan as "the devil. . . . Avoid, then, fiend!" (IV.iii.65-6). But for all its strange occurrences, local eccentrics, and ambiguous reputation, Ephesus is after all a fairly conventional Renaissance city of commerce. The chief citizens are all merchants, and money remains their chief interest. Gold chains (and prompt payment) still take precedence over questions 0 the supernatural. The courtesan is not a witch but a local merchant herself; the brilliance of the play is to make her *both* things, depending- and this is crucial- on one's point of view.

The final act of *The Comedy of Errors* offers a series of contrasting perspectives. Adriana, for example, attributes her husband's sudden transformation to demonic possession (the infamous Dr. Pinch is brought in): "This week he hath been heavy, sour, sad, / And much different from the man he was" (V.i.45-6). Emilia, however, explains his changes as the result of "the venom clamors of a jealous woman. . . his sleeps were hind'red by thy railing. . . thy jealous fits / Hath scared thy husband from the use of wits" (11. 69-86). The Abbess's version is not necessarily the whole story, though, for S. Antipholus's history shows that melancholy is widespread. Emilia, at any rate, intends to nurse him, like a mother, "With wholesome syrups, drugs, and *holy* prayers, / To make of him a formal man again" III. 104-5), as if he had in fact lost his form; to be normal is to be formal here. As the competing stories are offered, Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus suddenly burst in with an hysterical account of their escape from Dr. Pinch. Confusion, accusation, and denial increase, and the Duke resorts, for the third time in the play, to the myth of the sorceress: "Why, what an intricate impeach is this! / I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup" (11. 270-1). At the moment of maximum confusion on stage, when transformations and dislocations have generated the greatest chaos, discovery begins. Appropriately, the discovery must be not only an uncovering of error but also a recovery of lost names, normal perspectives, and secure boundaries to identity.

Egeon ironically initiates the discoveries with still another error: "Is not your name, sir, called Antipholus? / And is not that your bondman Dromio?" (11. 2878). He is both right and wrong. When E. Antipholus fails to recognize him, Egeon refers to his own transformation as an explanation:

to, grief hath changed me since you saw me
last,
And careful hours with time's deformed

hand
Have written strange defeatures in my face.
Not know my voice! O, time's extremity,
Hast thou so cracked and splitted my poor
tongue
In seven shon years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of unturned cares?
(II. 298-300, 308-11)

Time's hand, itself both deformed and deforming, may produce metamorphoses as great as any magic; the ravages of simple mutability, "winter's drizzled snow," can change one as greatly as the pangs of jealousy or the raptures of love. Mutability may slowly achieve what transformation gains in an instant.

In trying to outdo the Plautine conventions, Shakespeare has shown remarkable ingenuity, multiplying the twins, the complex situations, and the consequent errors are dramatically feasible. To engineer the resolution of his complications, Shakespeare need only bring the twins together before everyone, and then neatly "explain" all. but he has other questions on his mind, not to be disposed of mechanically, and so the ending takes some odd turns. With both sets of twins on stage, the following exchange occurs:

Adriana. I see two husbands, or mine eyes
deceive me.
Duke. One of these men is genius to the other;
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? Who deciphers them?
S. Dromio. I, sir, am Dromio; command
him away.
E. Dromio. I, sir, am Dromio; pray let me
stay.
(II. 332-7)

This kind of recognition scene is modeled partly on Lylyesque or Italian pastoral drama, as I will argue more fully in discussing the ending of *Twelfth Night.* What stands out here are the rich implications of these lines. Adriana has indeed seen "two husbands," one of them mis-seen as "deformed, crooked, old and sere." The Duke makes the understandable assumption that one of the Antipholi cannot be real, but a "genius" or "spirit," with possibly sinister overtones; only one can be "the natural man." Of course, nature has given us both menjust as she will give us the "natural perspective" at the end of *Twelfth Night*— but the achievement of this play allows each Antipholus to feel that he has an attendant spirit, or perhaps is himself such a spirit. The Duke's final question, "Who deciphers them?" leads even further. No one on stage can answer him nor do the deciphering, and in fact the Dromii immediately make rival but identical nominal claims and self-assertions, as if to reveal the impossibility of answering the Duke. We might say that only the audience can decipher them, but if the actors are indeed identical twins, as in Komisarjevsky's famous production, and they are dressed the same, then how can the audience ever decipher them? In practice, they will appear as different. But

we know they are different chiefly from their asides and what they say in given situations— they are different because they say they are. To "decipher" them is to be able to "read" them in a special way. The difficulty in doing this recurs throughout the final scene:

Duke. Antipholus, thou can'st from Corinth
first.
S. Antiph. No, sir, not I; I came from
Syracuse.
Duke. Stay, stand apart; I know not which is
which.
(11. 363- 5)

But standing apart won't help much. The crucial difference between them, the key to deciphering them, lies in their language; only that finally marks them apart. If the Antipholi had lost the power of speech, as Lucius and Apuleius do when metamorphosed, then they would have been, for all intents, completely identical. Here is an anomalous case where the retention of speech becomes ironic cause for further transformation. And yet names, and all language, have been revealed as generically susceptible to metamorphosis. To say "I, sir, am Dromio," is to announce and to undermine one's identity at the same time, because our names uniquely mark us and yet do not mark us. Words are but wind— our own breath and the world's.

Shakespeare turns the Plautine conventions back upon themselves, then, and in the process of challenging the tradition raises much larger questions. For the play shows us what it is like— in large part what it must *feel like*— to be and not to be at the same time. Each man acknowledges his own self, yet feels his own self violated, slipping away, its normal boundaries gone; each experiences the paradoxes of duality. On the one hand, Antipholus becomes Antipholus; on the other hand, Antipholus becomes Antipholus. When Egeon and Emilia speak of their long separation and present reunion, each twin (and certainly the audience) must recall his departure from being into notbeing and his return. Amid the other reunions and re-namings in the play, this re-formation of the self is essential.

Even then, the reunion cannot be entirely unambiguous. "I know not which is which," the Duke says even now. "And are not you my husband?" Adriana wonders. Even the life-long servants remain confused:

S. Dromio. Master, shall I fetch your stuff from shipboard?
E. Antiph. Dromio, what stuff of mine hast
thou embarked?
S. Dromio. Your goods that lay at host, sir,
in the Centaur.
S. Antiph. He speaks to me. I am your
master, Dromio.
(II. 409-12)

Still, even S. Antipholus' assertion is ambiguous, for it could refer to either master or either servant. The entire complication of the plot serves to focus our attention on questions of language and intention, specifically on the linguistic loss that so often accompanies metamorphosis and makes it more fearful. It is hardly a coincidence that the inn in question is the Centaur- half man, half animal, yet another example of the metamorphosed human shape.

The doubling of doubles, so baroque in its excess, represents more than a display of mechanical virtuosity on Shakespeare's part. This situational confusion also allows Shakespeare to link speech and identity, and to dramatize how this link may be served, or at least called into question, through metamorphosis. Moreover, if we identify with either Antipholus, or through some fluke of nature happen to undergo a similar experience, we will understand how, in this play at least, metamorphic doubling leads to self-alienation. In a technical sense, the Antipholi are both literally beside themselves and "mad," since the referents of their speech become dislocated from their words, and their own names and identities seem to be appro priated by some Other. . . .

Critical Essay #11

Among Adriana's detractors are Russ McDonald and E. C. Pettet; McDonald also finds little to praise in Luciana. McDonald assesses the value of the two women primarily as "comic troublemakers" and little else. Adriana's role is to doubt and become angry with her husband; Luciana's job *is* to attract Antipholus of Syracuse (whom Adriana believes is her husband) and make Adriana angry. Pettet, while finding virtuous and admirable qualities in Luciana, concludes that Adriana is little more than the stereotypical shrew. When comparing Adriana to Shakespeare's other heroines, Charles Brooks concludes that Adriana is a shrew, albeit an intelligent one with a strong will.

Robert Ornstein, to the contrary, finds much to praise in Adriana and argues that her "powerful indictment" of the Elizabethan double standard and jealousy are hardly shrewish. She holds the marriage vow as sacred and feels defiled by what she thinks is Antipholus of Ephesus's adultery (it is never made entirely clear whether Antipholus did indeed commit adultery with the Courtezan; all that is known is that he fled to her when rejected by Adriana). It is generally considered that it is not unreasonable for Adriana to be angry and upset. Thomas P. Hennings notes that Adriana never sought political or social equality with her husband; she is concerned only with their marital unity. As Jack A Vaughn points out, she is devoted to her husband: in the midst of all the confusion in the events of the play, she sends money to release him and later goes to bring him home from the priory when she thinks he is hiding there.

Kenneth Muir argues for considering Luciana as a more worldly woman than the one first heard from during her debate with Adriana about marriage. She does not seem overly shocked by Antipholus of Syracuse's amorous advances toward her (Muir argues that she is in fact pleased by them) when Adriana is not present (Luciana thinking that Antipholus is Adriana's husband), and requests that he at least be discreet in his indiscretions. At the end of the play, when Adriana is rebuked by the Abbess, Luciana is a loyal sister, standing up for her in public and repudiating her earlier words on the role of a wife.

Laurie Maguire explores how Adriana and Luciana work through their initial characterizations at the beginning of the playas "pagan Amazon" (Adriana) and "submissive Christian servant" (Luciana). Like the identities of the twin brothers with whom they are romantically aligned, their identities become less polar opposites and begin to merge as the play progresses. By the end of the play, Luciana is defending her sister's speech on marriage to the Abbess, and Adriana submits to being rebuked by the Abbess for her words.

Source: *"The Comedy of Errors,"* in *Shakespeare's Comedies,* University of Delaware Press, 1986, pp. 29-32.

[In this excerpt, Ornstein briefly discusses the characters of Adriana and her sister, Luciana, both of whom he terms "sympathetically drawn intelligent women" He maintains that Adriana's expectations of her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, are

reasonable, and certainly not shrewish. He assesses Luciana as not simply a pious, moralistic woman, but rather one who "knows too much about the world to haw any illusions about the way men treat women."]

. . .. There is no place in the dramatic world of *Errors* for Plautus's gluttonous Parasite or for the crass Senex, who is replaced as a sounding board for the Wife's complaints by Luciana, Adriana's sister, and later by the Abbess. The presence of these sympathetically drawn intelligent women radically alters the nature of the dramatic action because Ephesus is no longer a man's world in which women exist as household scolds or harlots, but one in which men and women are equally prominent, and the latter are more interesting and fully developed as dramatic personalities. Refusing to see her marriage as simply a domestic arrangement, Adriana regards the bond between husband and wife as intrinsic as that which links father to child. Indeed, when she speaks of her oneness with Antipholus E., it is with the same metaphor that Antipholus S. uses to describe his impossible search for his brother. For her the marriage vow is like a tie of birth and blood in that her sense of self depends on her husband's love and fidelity and she feels defiled by his adultery:

For it we two be one, and thou play false,
I do digest the poison of thy flesh,
Being strumpeted by thy contagion.
(2.2.142-44)

These lines evoke the noblest Renaissance ideal of love— one soul in body twain— and do not allow us to dismiss Adriana's complaints as shrewish jealousy.

The lack of any scene in which Adriana directly confronts her erring husband is striking because her misery and insistence on the inequity of her situation give *Errors* much of its emotional ballast. First she complains to her sister, then to her husband's twin, and lastly to the Abbess, but her husband is not present to hear any of these speeches. Perhaps Shakespeare feared that any direct confrontation of husband and wife would make the other farcical misunderstandings of the play seem trivial by contrast, and he was not prepared to jettison the farcical supposes that keep his plot moving. And yet he allows Adriana to make a powerful indictment of the double standard that must affect an audience even though her speech is directed to the wrong man—her husband's twin. She protests the conventional attitudes that allow men their casual philandering but condemn an unchaste wife to her husband's pitiless revenges:

How dearly would it touch thee to the quick,
Shouldst thou but hear I were licentious,
And that this body, consecrate to thee,
By ruffian lust should be contaminate?
Wouldst thou not spit at me, and spurn at
me,
And hurl the name of husband in my face,
And tear the stain'd skin off my harlot brow,
And from my false hand cut the wedding

ring,
And break it with a deep-divorcing vow?
(2.2.130-38)

Although some critics have suggested that Adriana alienated her husband by a jealous possessiveness, she is not the eternally suspicious comic shrew that other dramatists portray. Her manner is never strident or undignified; her requests are never unreasonable. Balthazar, a voice of sanity in the play, speaks of her "unviolated honor," of her "wisdom, / Her sober virtue, years, and modesty" hardly the attributes of a jealous nag. The worst that Antipholus E. can say of her is that she is shrewish if he "keeps not hours" — that is, if he is not home at a reasonable time. Even Luciana, who at first accuses her sister of "self-harming jealousy," stoutly defends her against the Abbess's intimation that her shrewishness caused Antipholus E.'s derangement. Where Plautus's husband is indifferent to his wife's continual complaints, Antipholus E. seems ignorant of his wife's unhappiness and is guilty, so it seems, of insensitivity rather than habitual infidelity. He is obtuse and quick-tempered, ready to engage in a flying match with his servants or to tear down the gate to his house with a crowbar, but he is not loutish in the manner of his Plautine counterpart. He intended to give the necklace to his wife and presents it to the Courtesan only when he is locked out of his house. Although he is familiar with the Courtesan he does not boast of her sexual favors to Balthazar. She is, he claims, "a wench of excellent discourse, / Pretty and witty; wild and yet, too, gentle." This circumspect description does not come from the lips of a libertine; Antipholus E. is a successful businessman who uses his wife's mistreatment of him as an excuse for a night on the town. Because he is too coarse-grained and attached to his comforts to spend years in search of a lost brother, one doubts that he would understand Adriana's ideal of marriage even if he heard her pleas.

Antipholus S. is a more interesting character who not only embarks on a hopeless quest for his twin but also demonstrates his romantic temper by falling in love with Luciana at first sight. Like many later romantic heroes he is a rapturous wooer, one who has read many sonnets and knows by heart the literary language of love, the appropriate conceits and hyperboles with which to declare a boundless passion. He protests that Luciana is "our earth's wonder, more than earth divine"; nay, she is a very deity. Like many later heroines Luciana seems wiser than the man who woos her, even though she seems at first priggish in advising her sister to accept her unhappy lot without complaint. A man *is* master of his liberty, she explains, and his liberty *is* necessarily greater than a woman's because he is the provider and must be away from the home. To this practical reason, Luciana adds the metaphysical argument that a husband is the rightful bridle of his wife's will because of his superior position in the universe. If Luciana's sermon on order and degree smells a bit of the lamp, it *is* nevertheless seriously offered, compete with the usual commonplaces about the hierarchy of nature that all animals recognize and obey:

Man, more divine, the master of all these,
Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
Imbu'd with intellectual sense and souls,
Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,

Are masters to their females, and their lords.
(2.1.20-24)

These high sentences are deflated, however, as soon as they are delivered. "This servitude," Adriana dryly re sponds, "makes you to keep unwed." "Not this," Luciana says, "but troubles of the marriage-bed." "Were you wedded," Adriana suggests, "you would bear some sway." Luciana's lame response is, "Ere I learn to love, I'll practice to obey," a tacit confession that she will have to school herself to the submissiveness that she claims is natural to women. When Luciana says that she would forbear a husband's wanderings, Adriana loses all patience with such pieties:

Patience unmov'd! no marvel though she
pause [in marrying]
They can be meek that have no other cause:
A wretched soul, bruis'd with adversity,
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;
But were we burd'ned with like weight of pain,
As much, or more, we should ourselves
complain.
(2.1.32-37)

Inevitably Adriana has the last word because here as elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays, platitudinous counsel and painted comforts shaner against the hard reality of suffering and anger. Moreover, Luciana is not simply a spokesman for conventional pieties; she knows too much about the world to have any illusions about the way men treat women. When Antipholus S. woos her, she is not horrified even though she thinks him Adriana's husband Indignant at his advances, she does not, however, threaten to expose his "adulterous" (indeed, "incestuous") lust to her sister and she does not rebuff him with pious sentences. Instead she pleads with him to be circumspect in his philandering and thereby considerate of his wretched wife. She would have him be prudent if he cannot befaithful:

If you did wed my sister for her wealth,
Then for her wealth's sake use her with more
kindness:
Or, if you like elsewhere, do it by stealth,
Muffle your false love with some show of
blindness:
Let not my sister read it in your eye;
Be not thy tongue thy own shame's orator look sweet, speak fair, become disloyalty;
Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger.
(32.5-12)

On other lips this might seem Machiavellian advice, but Luciana's anger shows through her seeming acceptance of the cynical way of the world. She knows too well the emotional dependence of women on men and their willingness to deceive themselves about their marriages if their husbands will give them half a chance:

. . . make us but believe
(Being compact of credit) that you love us;
Though others have the ann, show us the sleeve;
We in your motion turn, and you may move us.
(3.221-24)

It is remarkable that the pathos of a woman's subservience in marriage should be made more explicit in *Errors* than any other comedy to follow. The issue is not explicitly resolved in the play; but then Shakespeare never assumes the role of social critic or reformer. On the other hand, the prominence that he allows Adriana, Luciana, and the Abbess in the denouement of Errors makes an important if oblique comment on the relations of women and men. . . .

Further Study

Literary Commentary

Arthos, John. "Shakespeare's Transformation of Plautus." *Comparative Drama* 1, No.4 (Winter 1967-68): 239-53.

Discusses how Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* differs from and parallels its predecessor, Plautus's *Menaechmus.*

Baker, Susan. "Status and Space in *The Comedy of Errors ." Shakespeare Bulletin* 8, No.2 (Spring 1990): 6-8.

Argues that in *The Comedy of E rrors,* the characters re peatedly "encounter sites and situations where the status they're prepared to play is not allowed to them," and these" spatial transgressions, dislocations, and displacements" (instances of mistaken identity) are more than simply confusion.

Barton, Anne. "The Comedy of Errors." In *The Riverside Shakespeare,* edited by J. J. M Tobin, Herschel Baker, and G. Blakemore Evans, pp. 79-82. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997.

Provides an overview of *The Comedy of Errors* by comparing it to Plautus's *Menaechmi,* noting Shakespeare's additions and changes. Barton notes, for example, that Shakespeare explored more thoroughly the Syracusan Antipholus (the traveling/wandering brother), while Plautus was more concerned with the native brother.

Berry, Ralph. "'And here we wander in illusions.'" In *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form,* pp. 24-39. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Provides an overview of *The Comedy of Errors,* arguing that the play should be viewed" as an anticipation of what Shakespeare is to write." Berry discusses the play's classification as both farce and comedy, the problem of identity among the characters, and the significance of the gold chain.

Bevington, David, ed. "Introduction." In *The Comedy of Errors,* pp. xvii-xxiii. New York: Bantam Books, 1988.

Provides a brief overview of *The Comedy of Errors ,* dub bing it a "superb illustration of Shakespeare's apprenticeship in comedy."

Brooks, Charles. "Shakespeare's Romantic Shrews." *Shakespeare Quarterly* XI, No.3 (Summer 1960): 351-56.

Discusses the characterization of Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors* and Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* as shrewish. Brooks also uses Adriana and Kate to discuss love, courtship, and marriage in Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

Bullough, Geoffrey, ed. "Introduction." In *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare,* pp. 3-11. New York: Columb ia University Press, 1957.

Provides short but detailed commentary on the sources of *The Comedy of Errors.*

Charney, Maurice. *"The Comedy of Errors ,"* in *All of Shakespeare,* pp. 3-10. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Provides an overview of *The Comedy of Errors .* Charney includes discussion of the classical style of verse in the play.

Crewe, Jonathan V. "God or The Good Physician: The Rational Playwright in *The Comedy of Errors." Genre* 15, Nos.12 (Spring/Summer 1982): 203-23.

Discusses the "playwright" of *The Comedy of Errors* as an omnipotent, omniscient divinity versus a healing physician.

Cutts, John P. *"The Comedy of Errors."* In *The Shattered Glass: A Dramatic Pattern in Shakespeare's Early Play,* pp. 13-21. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

Discusses how the characters in *The Comedy of Errors* are incapable of seeing "beyond the mirror of Identical twins, to see any further than outward semblances."

Elliott, G. R "Weirdness in *The Comedy of Errors." University of Toronto Quarterly* IX, No.1 (October 1939): 95-106.

Discusses how *The Comedy of Errors* is an example of "structural! excellence" and a "beautifully carved gem" through its romantic and comic "weird light."

Felheim, Marvin, and Philip Traci. *"The Comedy of Errors.* " In *Realism in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies: "Oh Heavenly Mingle,* " pp. 13-28. Lanham, MD. University Press of America, 1980.

Explores realism in *The Comedy of E rrors.* The authors discuss the importance of "middle-class objects" in the play the rope, gold chain, and ring-as well as the centrality of the concepts of order, balance, and tune.

Foakes, R A, ed. "Introduction." In *The Comedy of Errors,* pp. xi-lv London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1962.

Discusses the play in three parts through a technical introduction (arguments and hypotheses regarding the play's text, date, sources, and its staging), a critical intro duction (in particular, the problem of classifying the play's genre), and a stage history.

Freedman, Barbara. "Errors in Comedy: A Psychoanalytic Theory of Farce." In *Shakespearean Comedy* , edited by Maurice Charney, pp. 233-43. New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980.

Argues for a "re-evaluation of Shakespearean farce in light of a psychoanalytic theory of the dynamics of meaning in farce." Freedman also analyzes myriad defi nitions of farce and offers her own. "Reading Errantly: Mis-recognition and the Uncanny in *The Comedy of Errors."* In *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean* Comedy, pp. 78-113. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Explores such issues as the text and reader's level of awareness in *The Comedy of Errors,* how the" reading process is implicated in the principles of identity and repression," and why the instances of mistaken identity in the play are not as important as the "misrecognitions . . . that occur because of the play of character itself."

French, Marilyn. "Marriage: *The Comedy of Errors."* In *Shakespeare's Division of Experience,* pp. 77-81. New York: Summit Books, 1981.

Briefly discusses the feminine and masculine "principles" in *The Comedy of E rrors* and argues that Shakespeare was deliberate in having the marriage relation take center stage in the play, and argues that the play" is devoted to the ends of the in-law feminine principle."

Garton, Charles. "Centaurs, the Sea, and *The Comedy of Er rors." Arethusa* 12, No.2 (Fall1979): 233-54.

Discusses Shakespeare's creation of the name "Antipholus" for the twin sons of Aegeon and argues that this name "becomes nodal to the patterning of the play as a whole, to Its complex of themes and images, to its symbolism and its mythopoeic qualities."

Girard, Rene. "Comedies of Errors: Plautus- Shakespeare Mo!iere" In *American Criticism in the Poststructuralist Age,* edited by Ira Konigsberg, pp. 66-86. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981.

Discusses the use of identical twins in several of Shakespeare's plays, including *The Comedy of Errors,* as well as in the work of Plautus and Moliere. Girard notes that in *The Comedy of E rrors,* the use of the twins "constitutes a source of misunderstanding structurally identical with the ones caused by mimetic desire and endowed with the same dramatic possibilities."

Greenblatt, Stephen. *"The Comedy of Errors."* In *The Norton Shakespeare,* edited by Stephen Greenblatt, pp. 683-89. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Provides a very brief overview of *The Comedy of Errors.* Includes comparisons between Shakespeare's play and its forebear, Plautus's *Menaechmi,* as well as discussion of the loss and reacquisition of identity in the play.

Hamilton, A C. "The Early Comedies: *The Comedy of Errors."* In *The Early Shakespeare,* pp. 90-108. San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1967.

Argues that in *The Comedy of Errors* Shakespeare emphasizes plot above all else—"the plot expresses his idea of comedy and becomes the soul" of the play.

Hasler, J org. *"The Comedy of E rrors."* In *Shakespeare's Theatrical Notation: The Comedies,* pp. 132-34. Bern: A Francke AG Verlag, 1974.

Examines briefly the final exit of *The Comedy of Errors.*

Hennings, Thomas P. "The Ang!ican Doctrine of the Affectionate Marriage in *The Comedy of Errors." Modern Language Quarterly* 47, No.2 *(June* 1986): 91-107.

Argues that the Anglican doctrine of affectionate marriage establishes the" normative pattern of the marital roles" in *The Comedy of Errors.*

Huston, J. Dennis. "Playing with Discontinuity: Mistakings and Mistimings in *The Comedy of Errors."* In *Shakespeare's Comedies of Play,* pp. 14-34. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

Discusses how Shakespeare "builds a plot of mistaking, self-consciously contrived," in *The Comedy of Errors.* Shakespeare does this through, for example, the false beginning of the play (where the play appears to be a tragedy or romance, not a "comedy" as the tide suggests) and through the characters of Aegeon and the Duke of Ephesus.

Jardine, Lisa. *"'As* boys and women are for the most part cattle of this colour': Female Roles and Elizabethan Eroticism." In *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare,* pp. 44-46. Sussex, Eng.: The Harvester Press, 1983.

Discusses briefly how *The Comedy of Errors* " wittily ironises the consequences of the wife's maximized obligations and minimal redress."

Lanier, Douglas. "'Stigmatical in Making': The Material Char acter of *The Comedy of Errors." English Literary Renaissance* 23, No.1 (Winter 1993): 81-112.

Discusses self-presentation as it pertains to social rank and class in Elizabethan England; how *The Comedy of Errors,* "by staging disruptions of identity-effects, is preoccupied with interrogating the curious material logic of Renaissance self-presentation"; and how analyzing the "materiality of Shakespearean character" can facilitate challenging the "traditional notion of Shakespeare's artistic 'development'" and reexamining the early comedies in light of his other work.

Levin, Harry. "Two Comedies of Errors." In *Refractions: Essays in Comparative Literature,* pp. 128-50. New York Ox ford University Press, 1966.

Compares Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* with its predecessor, Plautus's *Menaechmi.*

Macdonald, Ronald R *"The Comedy of Errors:* After So Long Grief, Such Nativity." In *William Shakespeare: The Comedies,* pp. 1-13. New York Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Provides an overview of *The Comedy of Errors ,* touching on its origins; its farcical elements; how Shakespeare's use of "doubling" is "part of a larger meditation on the

problem of identity, an extreme instance of the play of likeness and difference through which a workable sense of self is finally attained"; and how the play manifests elements of what Freud characterized as an oedipal struggle.

Maguire, Laurie. "The Girls from Ephesus." In *The Comedy of Errors : Critical Essays,* pp. 355-91.

Points out the many polarities and doublings in the play- characters, events, the nature of Ephesus, marriage, and the master-servant relationship. Maguire also comments on the productions of the play throughout these discussions.

Miola, Robert S. "The Play and the Critics." In *"The Comedy of Errors": Critical Essays,* pp. 3-38.

Provides an introduction to *The Comedy of Errors,* covering the play's sources; various commentary on the play's genre, characterization, and language; feminist criticism of the play and the New Historicist approach to interpreting the play; and stage and television adaptations of the play worldwide.

Muir, Kenneth. *"The Comedy of Errors."* In *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence,* pp. 15-22. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1979.

Provides a brief overview of *The Comedy of Errors,* noting that "Shakespeare was feeling his way for an appropriate form and his varying success is one sign of his immaturity," another sign being the weak characterizations in the play.

O'Brien, Robert Viking. "The Madness of Syracusan Antipholus." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.1 (1996): 3.1-26.

Discusses madness in *The Comedy of E rrors,* particularly with respect to the character of Antipholus of Syracuse, as well as Elizabethan conceptions of madness.

Parker, Patricia. "Elder and Younger: The Opening Scene of *The Comedy of Errors."* *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34, No.3 (Autumn 1983): 325-27.

Argues that lines 78-85 of *The Comedy of Errors* have been misinterpreted by previous critics who have concluded that Shakespeare introduced an inconsistency in Aegeon's recounting of the shipwreck that separated his family.

Parrott, Thomas Marc. "Apprentice Work *The Comedy of Errors ."* In *Shakespearean Comedy* , pp. 100-108. New York Oxford University Press, 1949.

Discusses the differences between Plautus's *Menaechmi* and Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors.* For example, in Shakespeare's version, there are two pairs of twins, not one, thus increasing the confusion over mistaken identity; the play ends with a reunion of the *entire* family; and the character of Adriana is "firmly conceived and realistically developed."

Pettet, E. C "Shakespeare's 'Romantic' Comedies." In *Shakespeare and the Romantic Tradition,* pp. 67-100. Brooklyn, NY: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1976.

Groups *The Comedy of Errors* with *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor-the* "oddities" of Shakespeare's romantic comedies-arguing that it is "clearly distinguished from the majority of Shakespeare's comedies, if not their antithesis as a type of drama." Pettet also provides discussion on *The Taming of the* Shrew, *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and the "main body" of Shakespeare's comedies, *including Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice.*

Salgado, Gamini. "'Time's Deformed Hand': Sequence, Consequence, and Inconsequence in *The Comedy of Errors ."* In *Shakespeare Survey, Volume* 25, edited by Kenneth Muir, pp. 81-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Discusses the importance of the movement of time (public and private time, clock-time, dream-time) in *The Comedy of Errors.*

Shaw, Catherine M. "The Conscious Art of *The Comedy of Errors ."* In *Shakespearean Comedy* , edited by Maurice Charney, pp. 17-28. New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980.

Argues that *The Comedy of Errors* is an "Elizabethan hybrid," in its drawing from Plautus and Terence, the English stage and Renaissance thought, and its "multileveling of character and narrative tone and superimposition of various layers of dramatic representation on the Latin base."

Slights, Camille Wells. "Time's Debt to Season: *The Comedy of Errors,* IV.ii.58." *English Language Notes* XXIV, No.1 (September 1986): 22-25.

Examines one line of *The Comedy of Errors ,* focusing on the interpretation of the word "season."

Smidt, Kristian. "Comedy of Errors?" In *Unconformities in Shakespeare's Early Comedies,* pp. 26-38. London: Macmillan, 1986.

Finds "signs of disturbance" in *The Comedy of Errors ,* indicating that the play was perhaps revised from an earlier, longer version.

Thompson, Ann. "'Errors' and 'Labors': Feminism and Early Shakespearean Comedy." In *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies,* edited by Michael J. Collins, pp. 90-101. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997.

Argues that more attention needs to be paid by feminist critics to *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost.* Thompson reviews some of the feminist literary criticism of the plays, particularly with regard to their primary female characters, and argues for a feminist production of the play.

Vaughn, Jack A *"The Comedy of Errors."* In *Shakespeare's Comedies,* pp. 12-21. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1980.

Provides an overview of *The Comedy of E rrors.* Vaughn includes discussion of the play's classification as a farce and the differences between Shakespeare's version and Plautus's *Menaechmi,* and he argues that Adriana is a sympathetic, multidimensional character, not a shrew.

Von Rosador, K. Tetzeli. "Plotting the Early Comedies: *The Comedy of Errors, Lare's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen if Verona." Shakespeare Survey* 37 (1984): 13-22.

Discusses the way in which the plot of *The* Comedy *of Errors* is one of "repeated evasion or postponement of danger," and that the" calm" after the "turbulence" is usually a result of a beating of one of the Dromios. Von Rosador also examines how Shakespeare avoids formulaic plotting. A discussion of the plots of *Love's Labour's* Lost, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* follows.

Wells, Stanley. "Comedies of Verona, Padua, Ephesus, France, and Athens." In *Shakespeare: A Life in Drama,* pp. 52 57. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995.

Provides a very brief overview of *The Comedy of Errors ,* touching on its staging, its genre classification, and its approach to identity.

Williams, Gwyn. *"The Comedy of Errors* Rescued from Tragedy." *A Review of English Literature* 5, No.4 (October 1964): 63-71.

Argues that *The Comedy of Errors* could have ended up being classified as a tragedy, had not the second pair of twins, the Dromios, been added. These twins "save the playas a comedy," and the farcical instances in the play revolve almost entirely around them.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Shakespeare for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Shakespeare for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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