

Discussions of Plautus' relationship to his Greek generic precursors have often taken the methods of traditional approaches of deducing paternity: because we are unable to ascertain origins directly, we use surface resemblances to decide whether a group is related by pedigree. Analytical searches for Plautus' relationship to real or imagined Greek "originals" (e.g., Fraenkel 1922 and 1960; Anderson 1993) represent the comedian as reworking or departing from his models in varying degrees and presuppose fixed and exclusive rubrics of "Greek" and "Roman." This paper attempts to enrich this discussion by examining the *Menaechmi* and its representation of the categories "Greek" and "Roman" in light of their functional overlap and interaction in the second century BCE Mediterranean. In this play, Plautus creates an idea of Roman "Greekness" as a middle-term between a Middle/New Comic Athens and the stage in Rome by using the Greeks of Sicily and Southern Italy (7-12), already within the orbit of the Roman *Imperium* by the second century BCE. These Roman Greeks, represented on stage by the Menaechmus brothers and off-stage by their grandfather, frame the resolution of their crises of command by their return to a space of Roman authority, to the customs of fatherly power and their fatherland.

The *Menaechmi*'s prologue characterizes the brothers' move from paternal hierarchy to a place of nonhierarchical interchange through the Epidamnian's Menaechmus' removal from Roman space and consequent death of the father (24-43). The twins' interchangeability is echoed dramatically in the prologue itself by expressions of the instability on stage both of character identity (72-76) and of space, in the transition from Roman-occupied Greek lands to a Greek city out of Roman control (49-56). In the action of the play, the transposable position of the brothers during the errors is further emphasized by the circulation of the address *adulescens* among virtually all the male characters, a series of differentiations and assimilations which only comes to an end at the reunion of the brothers and a return to a notably congruent fatherly power and fatherland. Yet previously unnoticed exit staging from city and sea (cf. 555) serves to divide the brothers and highlight the differing generic and power crises which each of these young men encounters in a foreign Greek city. The Epidamnian Menaechmus' unmasterly style of management and beleaguered social position (McCarthy 2000, 52-59 and 38) and the Syracusan Menaechmus' financial instability consistent with the *adulescens* at sea (cf. Leigh 2004, 145) are only resolved by the reestablishment of consanguine over agnatic kinship at the end of the play, and their consequent incorporation into Roman generic and cultural norms of behavior. Through the family interactions in the adoption of the Epidamnian Menaechmus and "the dramatic *telos* of divorce" (Gratwick 1993, 30) that ends the play, an implied, foreign Greek double is mediated by the domestic Greek, Sicilian style of Roman "Greekness." The play concludes by moving spatially back to the Roman *Imperium* as the twins find the solution to their separate inadequacies by exercising Roman management of others and themselves in their combined use of the fatherly prerogative (1145ff).

For further reference:

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