

Discuss the use of errors in the brothers menaechmus to produce comedy. do you ag...



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number Errors in the play The Brothers Menaechmus are the principal source of the action in the play. They enable the progress of the play. The error of identity that the play is based on is the principal error that the play is based upon. A series of errors arise out of this and the play hurtles towards a climax that is possible only through a resolution of the principal error that is committed. This paper shall attempt to understand how the errors in the play The Brothers Menaechmus produces comedy. Comedy in The Brothers Menaechmus The comedy that is a part of The Brothers Menaechmus has as its principal source, the errors that the characters that are a part of the play commit. The play revolves around a case of mistaken identity, where identical looks are mistaken for the same identity. The play, through comedy and laughter, forces the readers to rethink their ideas about appearance and reality and the fragile nature of an identity that is based solely on appearances. Plautus tries to redefine the limits that were traditionally assigned to comedy as merely a means of eliciting laughter and tries to take it beyond. However, the play tends to mostly do so through a derisive treatment of the women characters. There is also a subversive element in the play; one that is brought about by the resourcefulness that the slave displays, something that wins him his freedom. The principal error in the play leads to a lot of complications within the plot. It however, allows for the production of comedy, as the trope of the mistaken identity creates a lot of situations where the audience shares a certain piece of knowledge with the playwright that the other characters do not. This leads to a situation where the errors are funny. If a situation had to arise where the audience too was in the dark regarding the action in the play, then the play would create

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situations of suspense. Instead, *The Brothers Menaechmus* gives the reader situations where the reader and the playwright are in the know about the events that happen onstage. Thus a certain brand of slapstick humor is produced that is seen in a lot of the plays that have been produced by Plautus. The humor in the plays of Plautus, and specifically, in *The Brothers Menaechmus*, is of the slapstick variety; however, it is not of an inferior variety. The effect of the humor that is produced through the mistaken identities of Menaechmus and Sosicles is one that forces the audience to rethink their notions of appearance and reality. The basis of identity in the play that leads to Erotium and Menaechmus's wife mistaking either for the other is that of the appearance of the brothers, which is identical. Plautus seems to be saying that this is a false and unsuitable method of basing one's identity upon. The brothers themselves are unable to divorce themselves from their physical appearances. Plautus challenges these notions and urges his audience to shed them. The situations that help create comedy as we have seen are those that arise as a result of the errors that the characters of the play commit in recognizing Menaechmus and Sosicles. By this error they demonstrate the futility of basing one's identity on one's appearance. By this simple but effective method, Plautus enables a rethinking of the methods of acquiring knowledge and the ways of living of the society of his times. Plautus's greatness lies in the fact that he is able to deliver this message through the medium of laughter and comedy. Works Cited Plautus. *The Braggart Soldier*. New York: Oxford U. P., 1996. Print.