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COMICAL FEATURES IN CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION AND IDENTIFICATION MOTIFS IN PLAUTUS' COMEDIES[1]

ABSTRACT. Eliášová Buzássyová Ľudmila, *Comical Features in Constructions with Transformation and Identification Motifs in Plautus' Comedies* (Elementy *komizmu w konstrukcjach opartych na motywie transformacji i identyfikacji w komediach Plauta*).

In this paper, constructions with transformation and identification motifs (Fraenkel, *Plautine Elements in Plautus* 2007) are analysed against the background of Lakoff and Johnson's concept of metaphor (*Metaphors We Live By* 2003, 1st ed. 1980). The typology of these constructions as well as their wider context is presented. The paper shows that constructions with transformation and identification motifs can range from easy-to-understand figurative expressions to riddles where two domains from distant semantic fields are connected on a very unusual ground. The constructions are highly contextual phenomena. In them, there is a playing out of various connoted meanings that depend on cultural, pragmatic, and other contexts.

Keywords: transformation; identification; metaphor; domain; context; Plautus; comedy

INTRODUCTION

When reading Plautus, we come into contact with constructions that contain motifs characterised by Eduard Fraenkel in his monograph *Plautine Elements in Plautus* (2007: Chapter 2, 17–44) as 'transformation and identification motifs'.[2] Fraenkel described these constructions from a literary and historical viewpoint. His analysis aimed to postulate the unique character of these structures, which, although sometimes based on Greek models, are specifically

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[1] This paper is partly based on an older version written in Slovak (Buzássyová 1996/1997), where the present author used the same methodology but did not work with the full database of examples from Plautus' texts. The older text had a comparative perspective, whereas in this text the role of context is accentuated. The results of the analyses differ in several significant details.

[2] The book was originally written in German with the title *Plautinisches im Plautus* (1922). It was later translated into Italian as *Elementi Plautini in Plauto* (1960) and into English. This paper refers to the English edition from 2007.

'Plautine' in the way they resonated with the Roman sense of farcical humour and rough comedy.[3]

In order to broaden the view on transformation and identification constructions, this paper analyses these constructions against the background of the conceptual metaphor formulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By* 2003, 1st ed. 1980). With this tool, and taking into account the larger context of the constructions, the paper points to the sources of the humour in Plautus' comedies.

CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION AND IDENTIFICATION MOTIFS: A SYNOPSIS OF FRAENKEL'S SECOND CHAPTER

Fraenkel characterised transformation and identification constructions as certain casts of the Plautine imagination, where a joke is produced by making a connection between the matter the author is speaking of and something very distant (2007: 19), such as making a connection between a father and a fly in *Mer*. 361: *Muscast meus pater*. Instead of saying 'the object behaves as or is like something or someone', Plautus says that the object is or becomes something or someone and takes on the properties or functions of another person or thing. In such a form, the connection between two objects is more intense than in a mere simile (2007: 19). After the construction, the explanatory phrase with the actual point of departure of the idea usually follows.

Fraenkel mentioned or analysed in some detail ninety-four examples from Plautus' comedies,[4] including four cases that actually have the form of a simile.[5] In the *addenda* attached to the English edition and adopted from the Italian one, two other constructions of this type are mentioned,[6] and one is

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[3] Some of the constructions identified by Eduard Fraenkel as Roman or Plautine at their core were later analysed in greater depth and joined with their Greek counterparts (see Fontaine 2016). Michael Fontaine rightly points out that although it is possible to find the origin of a Plautus joke or pun in a Greek source more often than in the examples admitted by Fraenkel, this does not detract from Plautus' originality: 'The examples suggest Plautus' genius lay as much or more in inspired translation as it does in his 'originality'.' (Fontaine 2016: 417).

[4] *Am*. 305, 814, *As*. 290, 374, 619, 713, *Aul*. 226, 585, 704, *Bac*. 50, 63, 155, 156, 241, 361, 471, 665, 810, 1148, *Capt*. 96, 796, 888, 951, *Cas*. 124, 307, 360, 527, 720, *Cist*. 657, *Curc*. 100–101, 112, 140, 150, 160, 397, 689, *Epid*. 139, 178, 187, 311, 349, *Men*. 160, *Mer*. 361, 572, *Mil*. 209, 321, 325, 608, 1000, *Most*. 137, 218, *Per*. 74, *Poen*. 248, 609, 612, 630, 704, 862, 886, 969, 1139, 1145, 1168, *Ps*. 23, 75, 191, 198, 614, 700, 747, 911, 952, 1189, 1251, *Rud*. 372, 527, 535, 584, 721, 886, 999, St. 239–40, 630, *Trin*. 226, 851, 1015, 1027, *Truc*. 614, 788, 818, 840, 853, *Vidul*. Fr.1 (de Melo =17i), 36. This list includes the hidden identification *lingua est patrona* from *Asin*. 290 and a less suggestive example *Mer*. 572. It also includes the examples *Capt*. 951 and *Ps*. 911 mentioned by Fraenkel, although they are mere swear words.

[5] *Bac*. 913, *Cas*. 319, *Per*. 11, *Ps*. 38.

[6] *Per*. 293, *Ps*. 308.

hypothesised[7] (2007: 392, ref. 32). Even with these examples, the database of identification and transformation constructions is not complete. My research yielded another seventy-five such constructions,[8] which completed the database at one hundred sixty-nine units.

Based on the primary material and Fraenkel's description, the following can be briefly summarised about these constructions.

There are two basic types of these constructions according to the character of the predicate.

    a. change or transformation (*facere, fieri, vorti, nomen mutare*[9])
        Bac. 665: *Herculem fecit ex patre*   'He's made a Hercules out of his father.'[10]

    b. full identity (*esse,* various verbal predicates)
        Mer. 361: *Muscast meus pater*   'My father is a fly.'

There are marginal cases in which the transformation or identification is not literally expressed in the predicate. They are actually found in the deep structure of the sentence, and the reader (or viewer) must uncover them, such as in *Truc*. 735 with the identity construction *hetaera est magistra* hidden within.

From the viewpoint of syntax and text structure, the explanatory phrase can be connected to the transformation/identification construction: (a) asyndetically, distinguished usually with a colon; (b) with a paratactical conjunction (*et, -que, atque, itaque…*); (c) with a hypotactic conjunction (usually *ut,* other conjunctions also appear); and (d) a new utterance – usually a question from the second participant in the dialogue (*quid ita?*) – followed by a response.

From the viewpoint of semantics, utterances with identification or transformation motifs may vary from those which are semantically clear and do not need an explanatory phrase (*Aul*. 704 *Ego sum ille rex Philippus*; 'I am that famous King Philip'; *Bac*. 155 *Fiam, ut ego opinor, Hercules, tu autem*

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[7] *Men*. 1012.

[8] *Am*. 375, 1031, *As*. 219–221, 241, 277, 301, *Aul*. 77, 85, 152, 561–564, 597, *Bac*. 200–202 (hidden identification), 371, 936, 981, *Capt*. 369, 863–4, 962, *Cas*. 319, 498, 811, *Cist*. 80, *Curc*. 30–31, 127, 393, 414–416, 691, *Epid*. 34–35, 223–226, 488–490, *Men*. 117, 935, 1012, *Mer*. 524–6, *Mil*. 193, 436, 746, *Most*. 163–166, 609a, 888, *Per*. 22, 103, 317, 323, 572, *Poen*. 584, 597, *Ps*. 38, 136, 328, 404, 607, 736, 925a, *Rud*. 86, 517, 525, 822, 1014, 1284, *St*. 155, 305, 312, 639, *Trin*. 368, 456, 668, *Truc*. 104, 134, 170, 224, 228, 568, 655, 727. Concerning the problematic classification of some marginal cases, even this may not be a complete or accurate list.

[9] Constructions with *nomen mutare* (e.g. *Aul*. 585, *Asin*. 374, *Ps*. 191, etc.) refer to the area of nominal realism (first described by Jean Piaget), in the framework of which the names of things are considered to be an inseparable and essential part of these things: when somebody changes his name, he himself changes. For more about nominal realism, see Piaget 2007: 61–87.

[10] Unless otherwise indicated, Wolfgang de Melo's translations of Plautus' comedies in his Loeb edition published from 2011 to 2013 are used herein.

Linus; 'I will become Hercules, I think, and you Linus') to enigmatic and riddle-like constructions, where the explanatory phrase is necessary (*Mer*. 361 *Muscast meus pater: nil potest clam illum haberi*; 'My father is a fly: nothing can be kept secret from him'; *Most*. 218 *in anguinam ego nunc me velim verti, ut veneficae illi fauces prehendam…*; 'I'd like to turn into a quinsy right now so as to grab that witch by her throat…'). The explanation in the additional phrase or sentence brings the joke of the construction to its climax. As can be concluded from Fraenkel's description, enigmatic constructions with an explanatory phrase introduced by a colon or a new utterance formulated as a question are highly effective in comedies.

From a lexicological point of view, the comical features of the identification and transformation constructions are often underlined by puns: (*Bac*. 361 *facietque extemplo Crucisalum me ex Chrysalo*; '... and immediately [will] turn me from Chrysalus to Crossalus').

As a literary device, transformation/identification constructions are figurative forms based on colloquial speech,[11] as can be seen in analogical constructions from Petronius, some of which might have functioned as aphorisms (cf. 41.11 *Calda potio vestiarius*; 'A hot drink is as good as an overcoat'[12] – literally: 'A hot drink is a dresser'; 42.7 *antiquus amor cancer est*; 'An old love pinches like a crab' – literally: 'An old love is a cancer/mental disease').

The playful form, riddle-like characteristics and imagery of these constructions allow them to be interpreted as metaphors.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE METAPHOR

The basis of metaphor is the concurrence of two conceptual domains which are usually not joined into one whole.[13] In metaphor, part of the knowledge of the source domain (usually concrete and tangible) is transferred to the target domain (usually abstract and difficult to grasp).[14] This transfer is called mapping[15] or metaphorical projection. There is partial compatibility between the source and target domains. In the metaphorical sentence 'Your eyes are stars' the target domain is represented by the word 'eyes' and the source domain is represented by 'stars'. The mapping between these two domains (based in

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[11] For identifications in colloquial speech, see Hofmann 1936 (2. ed.): 157–158.

[12] Heseltine's (1913) translations of Petronius' *Satyricon* is used herein.

[13] Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 5) characterise the essence of metaphor as 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another'.

[14] Instead of the terms 'source domain' and 'target domain' (Lakoff – Johnson 2003: 252, Knowles – Moon 2006: 26), the terms 'source frame' and 'target frame', as suggested by Dancygier – Sweetser (2014), are also used.

[15] Lakoff – Johnson 2003: 252, 254–255.

qualities as brightness, beauty, energy…) is asymmetrical:[16] In the target domain, brightness represents a striking feature, whereas in the source domain it has an inconspicuous or ordinary quantity.

The metaphor is condensed in terms of content, and the connotations and associations related to it are fundamentally unlimited (Krupa 1990: 26). This is why there is a great variety of metaphors – conventional and novel, every-day and artistic; some of them are easier to decipher than others, depending on various cognitive and affective factors on both sides of the communication: the utterer and the recipient. Also, the understanding of metaphor changes over time as the original connotations disappear and the context changes. In poetry – especially modern poetry – revealing the surprising connections upon which the metaphor is built is an individual artistic experience for the reader (often coming after reading in silence) and the very meaning of the poem. On the other hand, when the audience is waiting for an immediate joke on stage, the network of connotations and associations of images cannot be limitless. The viewer should be given a clue, and the metaphor should be deciphered in the way the author intended.

PLAUTUS' CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION AND IDENTIFICATION MOTIFS AS METAPHORS

In metaphors such as 'Your eyes are stars' there are understandable connections between the brightness of one's eyes and the brightness of stars. In Plautus' identification construction *Musca est meus pater* – formally similar to 'Your eyes are stars' –[17] it is difficult to find an intersection between the two domains, *musca* 'fly' and *pater* 'father'. The reason for the lack of transparency of the construction is that the mappings do not evoke a comprehensible source domain. In connection with the word 'fly', today's reader can recall a wide range of connotated meanings. The fly can be small and annoying, it can transmit diseases, and someone can be as weak as a fly. The semantic fields of the two lexemes (a fly and a person) might meet in various spheres.

In Plautus' comedy, what follows the identity construction *Musca est meus pater* is a sentence with an explanation of where the intersection of the semantic fields of the two domains is supposed to be seen: *Nil potest clam illum haberi* with the meaning 'the father – as a fly – gets everywhere; he is curious, he wants

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[16] Membrez 2019: 210.

[17] The identification construction (X is Y) is close to simile (X is like Y). In the simile, its ground is called a *tertium comparationis*. Joanna Pieczonka (2009: 114) uses this term also for Plautus' transformation/identification constructions. The close relationship between metaphors and similes was well known to Quintilianus, who writes in his *Institutiones oratoriae* VIII 6, 8 that the metaphor is actually a shortened simile: *In totum autem metaphora brevior est similitudo.*

to control everything.' The connotation 'curiosity' that forms the grounds for the metaphorical identification seems unexpected, because it does not belong to the encyclopaedic knowledge associated with the source domain – the lexeme 'fly'. In English, there is no metaphorical saying 'Somebody is a fly' or the simile 'He is curious as a fly.' The evidence for such a saying in Latin comes only from Plautus himself. In addition to *Mer*. 361, the fly has also been referred to as a symbol of curiosity in *Poen*. 690 and *Truc*. 284.[18]

As Plautus hyperbolised a feature that was very marginal or fully absent from the semantic field of the source domain, he had to guide the possible associations and connotations of the viewer (or listener) and regulate the mapping; however, it was not only this explanatory phrase that made the identification in *Mer*. 361 understandable. The construction is set into the whole context. First and foremost, this can be seen in the preceding and following verses:

> *Mer*. 360–362
> *nequiquam abdidi, abscondidi, abstrusam habebam:*
> *Musca est meus pater, nil potest clam illum haberi,*
> *nec sacrum nec tam profanum quicquam est, quin ibi*
> *ilico assit.*
>
> In vain did I conceal her, hide her, keep her out of view:
> my father is a fly, nothing can be secret from him,
> and there's nothing so sacred or profane that he wouldn't be
> on the spot immediately.

The whole monologue of Charinus (335–363) describing the characteristic behaviour of the father controlling all the activities of his son created the pragmatic context for the proper understanding of the identification construction of *Mer*. 361.

The management of connotations as described in the case of *Mer*. 361 is typical for riddles. In riddles, the distance between the target and the source domain is so great that it prevents the addressee from deciphering the riddle without prior preparation or information (Krupa 1990: 65). The comical effect of the riddle comes from revealing the denotated meaning deliberately obscured by the author.

Dozens of identification and transformation constructions of this type could be listed here; it is worth at least mentioning *Trin*. 851 *hicquidem fungino genere est: capite se totum tegit*; 'This chap belongs to the mushroom variety: he's

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[18] See the explanation in the footnote in de Melo's edition of *Poenulus* (Plautus. *The Little Carthaginian* 2012: 91). In vocabularies, the figurative meaning of 'curiosity' is only mentioned in connection with Plautus' verse in *Mer*. 361. See Forcellini 1868, s. v. *musca*: *Muscam vocat Plautus curiosum hominem, et hac illac discurrentem*. Also see *OLD* 1968. Inspiration from Greek cannot be excluded but is not evidenced. In Lucianus' appreciation *The Fly*, curiosity is not included in the list of the typical qualities of this insect.

completely covering himself with his own head', metaphorically describing a man with a big head, or, more precisely, with a hat on his head. In the verse, the meaning 'big head' is the ground of the metaphor. In *Ps*. 75, someone who cannot (or does not want to) cry is described as having his 'eyes made from pumice': *Pumiceos oculos habeo: non queo lacrumam exorare*; 'I have eyes as dry as flint; I can't persuade them to spit out a single tear.' In *Epid*. 311, we read about someone who will be beaten up: *quod pol ego metuo si senex resciverit, ne ulmos parasitos faciat, quae usque attondeant*; 'I'm really afraid that if the old man finds out about this, he might turn elm rods into hangers-on to lick me to the bone.' In *Ps*. 747, there is mention of a cunning slave (a villain) who is difficult to catch: *Anguillast: elabitur*; 'He's an eel, he slips away'. In *Cas*. 527, a pun with *vocare* 'invite' and *vacare* 'be empty' is used: *fac habeant linguam tuae aedes. Quid ita? quom veniam, vocent*; 'Make sure your house is hungry. How so? When I come, it should be empty.'[19]

There are other identifications, such as that from *Aul*. 704: *ego sum ille rex Philippus*; 'I am that famous King Philip' without a short explanatory sentence. As pointed out by Fraenkel, Plautus did not consider it necessary to add an explanation to this identification (2007: 41): its understanding is made possible by the cultural context. The convincing evidence that the saying refers to well-known facts can also be seen in the pronoun *ille*, used as the determiner 'that' (cf. Pinkster 2015: 49); here it means 'that well known and rich'. Similarly, there is a reference to the rich King Philip in *Aul*. 85, mentioned here with another rich king, Darius: *Mirum quin tua me causa faciat Iuppiter Philippum regem aut Dareum, trivenefica*; 'It's quite extraordinary that Jupiter doesn't turn me into King Philip or Darius for your sake, you evil witch.'

Even though these figurative expressions with identification and transformation motifs (in some cases conventional metaphors and metonymies) do not need an explanation, they have it in the wider context in the drama. The identification *Aul*. 704: *ego sum ille rex Philippus* is framed by two parts. Verses 701–703 present the connotated meanings and prepare the ground for an identification. Helped by the lexical connectors *divitiis, aureos, reges ceteros*, Plautus points out the cultural context of the identification that follows in verse 704. Afterwards, a broadly elaborated explanation points to the specific situation of the slave Strobilus finding a pot of gold. In the text, the meaning of the identification with antonomasia 'King Philip' is actualised and revived in the current pragmatic context:

Aul. 701–709
SER.
Picis divitiis, qui aureos montes colunt,
ego solus supero. nam istos reges ceteros

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[19] See the explanation of the joke in de Melo's translation of *Casina* (2011: 68).

memorare nolo, hominum mendicabula:
ego sum ille rex Philippus. o lepidum diem.
nam ut dudum hinc abii, multo illo adveni prior
multoque prius me conlocavi in arborem
indeque spectabam aurum ubi abstrudebat senex.
ubi ille abiit, ego me deorsum duco de arbore,
exfodio aulam auri plenam....

I alone surpass the griffins in wealth, those creatures in-
habiting the mountains of gold. Well, I won't even men-
tion those other kings, those poor beggars. I am that
Famous King Filip. O what a wonderful day! Well, after
going away from here, I got there long before him and I
positioned myself in a tree. From there I observed where
the old boy buried the gold. After he'd gone, I climbed
down from the tree and dug up the pot full of gold.

In the identification with the lexeme 'Hercules' from *Epidicus*, a very tricky play with connotated meanings can be observed when two old men (*senes*), Periphanes and Apoecides, meet and talk about married life. Periphanes complains about the life with his wife, now dead. In the scene, he portrays himself as Hercules:

Epid. 178–180
PER. *Hercules ego fui, dum illa mecum fuit;*
neque sexta aerumna acerbior Herculi, quam illa mihi
obiectast.
AP. *Pulcra edepol dos pecuniast.*
PER. *Quae quidem pol non maritast.*

PER. (wryly) Oh, I was a Hercules as long as she was with me. The
sixth labour of Hercules wasn't harsher than the one
that was thrown my way.
AP. A dowry is beautiful money.
PER. Yes, if it comes without the wife.

From the viewpoint of today's language user, the meaning of the figurative expression *Hercules ego fui* seems obvious; it should be the strength of the hero. But this is not the case for Plautus. He first directs the audience's attention to the ancient cultural context of Hercules' labours: Periphanes depicts his life with his wife as hard as the life of Hercules completing the twelve labours. Then Plautus refers to one of Hercules' labours (the sixth, according to the text), which entails killing and robbing the queen of the Amazons, Hippolyte, whom Hercules killed before taking her golden girdle.[20] The content of the labour does

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[20] In the usual order, based on the mythographer Apollodorus, the sixth labour of Hercules is the slay of the Stymphalian birds, while obtaining the belt of the Amazon Hippolyte is the ninth.

not correspond to the traditional one known from the myth but was modified by Plautus: Periphanes' rich wife was not killed; the 'killing' is likened to outliving. She also was not robbed; stealing the girdle from Hippolyte in the myth is linked by Plautus with inheriting a big dowry in the comedy.

The poetic imagery is very complex: carefully gradated, it leads to the main gag: the dowry is good when the wife is dead. The dowry (or some valuable object) is the ground, which, in Plautus' world of imagery, connects the target domain (the character from the play *Epidicus*, Periphanes) and the source domain (Hercules). The whole passage is actually a game with connotated meanings, directed by Plautus and set in a specific pragmatic context. An important part of this game is that it is a dialogue in which the two participants help to escalate the comic effect of the identification.

In *Aul*. 561–564, Plautus meticulously elaborated the play with connotations in the riddle-like identification. Here, too, the dialogic form helped to escalate the joke. The participant of the dialogue Megadorus *expressis verbis* proclaims that he does not understand the riddle and requires explanation from the other participant, Euclio:

> *Aul*. 561–564
> **MEG.** ....
> *etiam agnum misi.* **EVCL.** *Quo quidem agno sat scio*
> *magis curionem*[21] *nusquam esse ullam beluam.*
> **MEG.** *Volo ego ex te scire qui sit agnus curio.*
> **EVCL.** *Quia ossa ac pellis totust, ita cura macet.*[22]

> MEG. I've even sent you a lamb. **Evcl.**
> I know for sure that I haven't seen a beast that takes more
> care to find out what's going on than this lamb anywhere.
> **Meg.** I'd like to know from you how the lamb can be a care-
> taker.
> **Evcl.** Because it's entirely skin and bones, it's so thin from its / cares.

As Duckworth-Wheeler pointed out in their edition of *Epidicus* (1940: 218), according to common Roman versions, the sixth labour of Hercules was that of the belt of Amazon Hippolyte.

[21] The reading of *curionem* according to Henry W. Prescott (1907: 335) relies on Gulielmius' edition, followed by Goetz and Schoell, Leo, Wagner, Ussing, and Langen. Paul Nixon (1916), Walter Stockert (2017) and Wolfgang de Melo (2011) prefer the *curiosam* reading. This form, as transmitted in the manuscripts, has generated much discussion in Plautine philology (cf., for instance, commentary and references by Maclennan and Stockert, 2016: 169). Prescott's solution (1907) of seeing in the Latin *coriosam* the Greek participle *kouriosan* – from the verb *kourian* 'to need a shearing' – seems neither simpler nor more satisfying. With regard to the identification, which is assumed here, the reading with *curionem* might seem more convincing. In all these cases, Plautus achieved a comic effect with some considerable effort.

[22] In de Melo's translation, the word pun with *cura – curio – curiosus* is based on the meaning of 'taking care of somebody'. The alternative meaning 'worry, concern' and 'being emaciated by worries' could also be hypothesised.

If we recollect the delimitation of the source and target domains, then in the riddle-like identification *agnus est curio* the emaciation would be a striking feature in a lamb and an ordinary one in the mayor. Both domains have a property attributed to them with the support only being in Plautus' play on words; in this case, this can be seen in the *ad hoc* folk etymology between the *cura* and *curio* lexemes.[23] This folk etymology thus formed a context for metaphorical identification. This is a clue for solving the riddle.

The difference between the identifications of *Epid*. 178–180 *Hercules ego fui* and *Aul*. 561–564 *agnus est curio* is in the character of the context that Plautus used. In the first case, Plautus played with the shared cultural context and possible connotations arising from it, while in the second he artificially constructed a specific 'linguistic' context.

The genius of Plautus as an inspired translator (cf. footnote 3) playing with Latin can be seen (among other cases) in *Aul*. 228, in which the original Greek proverb was transposed into a Latin comedy. There are actually two metaphorical identifications in the passage: *tu es bos, ego sum asellus*:

Aul. 226–235
EVCL.
Venit hoc mihi, Megadore, in mentem, ted esse hominem divitem,
factiosum, me autem esse hominem pauperum pauperrimum;
nunc si filiam locassim meam tibi, in mentem venit
te bovem esse et me esse asellum: ubi tecum coniunctus siem,
ubi onus nequeam ferre pariter, iaceam ego asinus in luto,
tu me bos magis haud respicias, gnatus quasi numquam siem.
et te utar iniquiore et meus me ordo inrideat,
neutrubi habeam stabile stabulum, si quid divorti fuat:
asini me mordicibus scindant, boves incursent cornibus.
hoc magnum est periclum, ab asinis ad boves transcendere.

Evcl. This is what comes to my mind, Megadorus: *you* are a
rich man with a great following, but *I* am the poorest man
of the poor. Now if I were to give you daughter in mar-
ridge to you, it springs to mind that *you* are an ox and *I* am
just a donkey. When I'm hitched up with you and can't
carry burden the same way, I, the donkey, would lie
in the mud; you, the ox, would take no more notice of
me than if I'd never been born. I wouldn't have you as
my equal and the people of my class would laugh at me.
On neither side would I have a stable stable if there
should be a divorce: the donkeys would tear me up with
their teeth, the oxen would run into me with their horns.
There's a great danger in crossing over from the donkeys
to the oxen.

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[23] If the reading *curiosam* is accepted, this word play also includes the adjective *curiosus* (see n. 21 above).

The potentially connotated meanings of the lexemes *bos* and *asellus* are guided by verses 226–228 with the lexical connectors *homo dives* and *homo pauper*, based on which the audience deciphers the compatibility between the source and target domains of the two identifications in verse 229. In the first identification, the compatibility is based on physical power (metaphorically social and economic power), and in the second identification it is weakness and insignificance. The explanation following these two identifications does not take the form of a simple phrase. On the contrary, it requires an elaborate image occupying six verses. In them, Plautus further develops the comic effect of the identifications with the help of parallelism, analogies between the world of humans and the world of animals, and playing with the literal and figurative meaning of words such as *onus ferre*, *coniungi*. In this way, the verses framing the identification complete its pragmatic context. The whole picture culminates in the closing verse 235 *hoc magnum est periclum, ab asinis ad boves transcendere*, which parodies the Greek phrase 'to move from donkeys to horses', meaning 'to advance on the social ladder, to become well off'.[24] With this verse, Plautus actualises the proverbial saying, thus also placing the identification into a broader cultural context.

We can find other complex images, usually with a mythological theme, in which the construction with the transformation or identification motif is set in a similarly elaborated context, such as a scene from the comedy *Pseudolus* with the closing transformation construction in verses 192–3: *ut civitas nomen mihi commutet meque ut praedicet lenone ex Ballionem regem Iasonem*; 'so that the city changes my name and calls me King Jason instead of pimp Ballio'. Only the context of the preceding verses 167 (*magnifice volo me viros summos accipere, ut mihi rem esse reantur* …. 'I want to have a magnificent reception for distinguished men so that they think I have money') and 174–191, from which Ballio's desire for power comes to the fore, and indeed the entire monologue of Ballio (from the verse 133) revealing his absolute power in the household, guides the connotations associated with the name of King Jason. The basis for the transformation 'Ballio changes his name to Jason' is absolute power. Ballio is a tyrant like Jason, the tyrant of Pherae. Moreover, an essential part of the joke is a play on words – the very name Ballio, which, according to Christenson, can refer to both the Greek *phallos*, 'phalus' and *phallaina*/Lat. *ballaena*, 'whale'.[25]

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[24] Maclennan and Stockert (2016: 134) refer to Babrius 76 and Gow's commentary on Theocr. 14.43. (Gow 1952, Vol. II, 255–256). However, only the reference to Babrius' fable, where lowering status from horse to donkey is mentioned, seems correct. In Gow's commentary to line 43 in Theocritus' idyll XIV it is only generally referred to beast-fables and some in detail to the motif of bull which deserts the herd.

[25] Christenson (ed.) (2020: 162).

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

A TYPOLOGY OF PLAUTUS' CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION
AND IDENTIFICATION MOTIFS

If we look at Plautus' constructions with transformation and identification motifs through the lenses of the structure of metaphor, we can see that they vary from easy-to-understand figurative expressions to riddles. Formally, they form two main groups. In the first – and most frequent – type (1), identification (normally with two expressed components: the target and the source domain) is followed by a short simple sentence explaining the compatibility of the domains: *Mer*. 361 *Muscast meus pater: nil potest clam illum haberi*. In the second type (2), identification is not followed by a short sentence. This can have two causes: (2a) the identification is a figurative expression that can be deciphered based on the cultural or actual pragmatic context and thus easily understood, as is the case of *Aul*. 704 *Ego sum ille rex Philippus*, *Bac*. 155 *Fiam, ut ego opinor, Hercules, tu autem Linus* or *Capt*. 796 *meus est ballista pugnus*. Swear words, threats and easy-to-understand puns, such as *statua verberea* in *Capt*. 951, *Ps*. 911, also belong to this group. The other cause explaining the absence of the short explanatory sentence is: (2b) the construction with transformation or identification motif is so complex that it cannot be described or summed up in just one simple sentence or short phrase. As a result, a longer explanatory passage and wider context is necessary, as in *Aul*. 226–235 *Tu es bos, ego sum asellus*, *Aul*. 561–564 *Quo quidem agno sat scio magis curionem nusquam esse ullam beluam…*, *Epid*. 346–352 *... patrem faciam parenticidam...* The database analysed in this paper contained ninety-four units identified by Fraenkel and seventy-five units with which I extended the original corpus. Of these one hundred and sixty-nine constructions, one hundred and twenty-seven (ca. 75.2%) represent the first type (*Muscast meus pater*),[26] twenty-one (12.4%) constructions represent type 2a (*Ego sum ille rex Philippus*),[27] and twenty-one (12.4%) constructions type 2b (*Tu es bos, ego sum asellus*).[28]

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[26] *Am*. 375, 1031, *Asin*. 241, 277, 619, 713, *Aul*. 77, 152, *Bac*. 50, 63, 155, 156, 241, 471, 665, 810, 981, 1148, *Capt*. 96, 369, 888, 962, *Cas*. 124, 307, 319, 360, 498, 527, 720, 811, *Cist*. 80, *Curc*. 30–31, 112, 150, 160, 393, 397, 414–416, 689, 691, *Epid*. 34–35, 139, 178, 187, 223–226, 311, 488–490, *Men*. 117, 160, 1012, *Mer*. 361, 572, *Mil*. 193, 209, 321, 325, 436, 1000, *Most*. 137, 218, 609a, 888, *Per*. 103 317, 323, 572, *Poen*. 248, 584, 597, 609, 612, 630, 704, 862, 969, 1139, 1145, 1168, *Ps*. 23, 38, 75, 136, 328, 404, 607, 614, 700, 736, 747, 952, 1189, 1251, *Rud*. 372, 525, 527, 535, 584, 721, 822, 886, 999, 1284, *St*. 155, 305, 312, 639, *Trin*. 226, 368, 456, 668, 851, 1015, 1027, *Truc*. 104, 134, 170, 224, 228, 568, 614, 727, 788, 853, 818, 840, *Vidul*. 36.

[27] *Asin*. 374, *Aul*. 85, 704, *Bac*. 371, 936, *Capt*. 796, 863–4, 951, *Curc*. 102, 140, *Men*. 935, *Mil*. 608, 746, *Per*. 22, *Poen*. 886, *Ps*. 911, 925(a), *Rud*. 86, 1014, *St*. 239–40, *Vidul*. Fr.1.

[28] *Am*. 305, 814, *Asin*. 219–221, 290, 301, *Aul*. 226–235, 561–564, 585, 597/592–598 (Leo), *Bac*. 200–202 (hidden identification), 361, *Curc*. 127, *Epid*. 349, *Per*. 74, *Mer*. 526, *Most*. 163–166, *Ps*. 191, 198, *Rud*. 517, *St*. 630, *Truc*. 655.

THE ROLE OF THE CONTEXT

A detailed analysis showed that almost all identification and transformation constructions are deeply embedded contextually, including those self-evident ones. I found only thirteen examples in which context plays no role. These are immediate short, harsh jokes, insults, threats, orders, etc., for instance, in *Capt.* 951 *interibi ego ex hac statua verberea volo erogitare...*, *Curc.* 689 *Quia ego ex te faciam pilum catapultarium atque ita te neruo torquebo, itidem ut catapultae solent*, *Cas.* 527 Lys. *Fac habeant linguam tuae aedes*. Alc. *Quid ita*? Lys. *Quom veniant, vocent.*[29]

AUTHORS OF CONSTRUCTIONS WITH TRANSFORMATION AND IDENTIFICATION MOTIFS

It will probably come as no surprise that most constructions with transformation and identification motifs are pronounced by a slave (*servus*) (ca. 47%). The remaining constructions come from the mouth of a pimp (*leno, leaena*), a parasite (*parasitus*), a young man (*adulescens*), an old man (*senex*), a soldier (*miles*) or a maid/female slave (*ancilla*). It appears from the analysis that any of these personages can use constructions with transformation and identification motifs, be they the most elaborate or everyday ones, although in total, naturally, replicas by slaves predominate.

MONOLOGUE OR DIALOGUE?

In the text, the constructions are represented about equally by both (longer or shorter) monologue and dialogue passages. From those dialogical ones, there were twenty-seven cases in which dialogic form with a brisk exchange of question and answer help to escalate the joke, as in *Cas.* 527 Lys. *Fac habeant linguam tuae aedes*. Alc. *Quid ita*? Lys. *Quom veniant, vocent.*[30] Among these twenty-seven dialogue passages, there are seventeen in which at least one of the dialogue participants is a slave, three in which the dialogue participant is a parasite and one in which a participant of the dialogue is a female slave. Other participants in dialogues are old men, young men, a pimp, a husband and a god.

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[29] The remaining nine examples are: *Capt.* 888, *Cist.* 657, *Curc.* 140, *Mil.* 321, 325, *Most.* 218, 888, *Per.* 22, *Poen.* 862.

[30] The remaining twenty-six examples are: *Am.* 1031, *Asin.* 301, 619, *Aul.*561, *Bac.* 50, *Capt.* 888, *Cas.* 720, 811, *Curc.* 30–31, *Epid.* 223–226, 488–490, *Men.* 160, *Mil.* 321, 324, 1000, *Most.* 888, *Per.* 317, *Poen.* 609, 704, 862, 1145, *Ps.* 607, 952, *Rud.* 535, 999, *Truc.* 170.

CONCLUSION

Plautus' constructions with transformation and identification motifs represent a wide range of examples that can be analysed in different ways and classified according to different criteria. In this paper, the viewpoint chosen on them as *sui generis* metaphors has allowed for a better penetration of Plautus' creativity in imagery. Among the constructions, type (1) *Mer*. 361 *Muscast meus pater: nil potest clam illum haberi*. predominates, in which an explanatory sentence is needed. The main comic effect of these constructions lies in their riddle-like character. As if the author, in the process of creating his metaphors, accompanied the reader (or the viewer) and, at the same time, misled and played with him. It is not surprising that in comedy, which is also known as 'slave comedy', the person who holds in his hands this effective comic tool supported by all available means from various language levels is most often a slave, be it in a dialogue or a monologue. Identifications are also highly contextual phenomena. Their imagery is based on the context-bound meaning of the lexemes involved. Plautus plays with the connotated meanings, depending on the cultural, pragmatic or other meticulously elaborated context. This creates a colourful and highly comic image.

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CARACTÉRISTIQUES COMIQUES DANS LES CONSTRUCTIONS
AVEC TRANSFORMATION ET MOTIFS D'IDENTIFICATION DANS LES COMÉDIES
DE PLAUTE

R é s u m é

La présente étude analyse des constructions recélant des motifs relatifs à une transformation ou à une identification (Fraenkel, *Plautine Elements in Plautus* 2007) dans le cadre du concept de métaphore développé par Lakoff et Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By* 2003, 1ère éd. 1980). Le point de vue retenu sur les constructions en tant que métaphores *sui generis* a permis de mieux appréhender la créativité des images de Plaute. La source principale du comique des constructions repose sur leur caractère énigmatique. Formellement, les constructions mettant en jeu des motifs de transformation ou d'identification forment deux groupes principaux. Dans le premier type (1), l'identification ou la transformation (dans le cas normal, deux composantes sont exprimées, le domaine cible et le domaine source) est suivie d'une brève phrase simple expliquant la compatibilité des domaines : *Mer*. 361 *Muscast meus pater* : *nil potest clam illum haberi*. Dans le deuxième type (2), l'identification ou la transformation n'est pas suivie d'une brève phrase. Cela peut tenir à deux causes : (2a) l'identification est une expression figurative qui peut être déchiffrée en fonction du contexte culturel ou pragmatique réel et donc facilement comprise, comme c'est le cas dans *Aul*. 704 *Ego sum ille rex Philippus* ; (2b) la construction avec le motif de transformation ou d'identification est si complexe qu'elle ne peut être décrite ou résumée en une seule phrase simple ou une phrase brève ; par conséquent, un passage explicatif plus long et un contexte plus large sont nécessaires, comme c'est le cas dans *Aul*. 226–235 *Tu es bos, ego sum asellus*. La base de données analysée dans cet article contenait cent soixante-neuf constructions dont cent vingt-sept constructions (environ 75, 2%) représentent le premier type (*Muscast meus pater*), vingt et une (12, 4%) constructions représentent le type 2a (*Ego sum ille rex Philippus*), et vingt et une (12, 4%) constructions le type 2b (*Tu es bos, ego sum asellus*).Une analyse détaillée a montré que presque toutes les constructions d'identification et de transformation sont profondément ancrées dans le contexte, y compris celles qui vont de soi. On a repéré seulement treize exemples de la base de données où le contexte n'a aucun rôle. Plaute joue avec diverses significations connotées en fonction de rapports culturels, pragmatiques ou autres précisément élaborés.

Il n'est guère surprenant que dans la comédie, également connue sous le nom de « comédie d'esclaves », celui qui manipule cet outil comique efficace, soutenu par tous les moyens disponibles à différents niveaux de langage, soit le plus souvent un esclave, que ce soit dans un dialogue ou un monologue.